



COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN

Executive Committee Summary

Country: Algeria

Planning Year: 2007

Part I: OVERVIEW

1. Protection and socio-economic operational environment

Algeria is signatory to the 1951 UNHCR Convention, the 1967 Protocol and the African Union (AU) 1969 Convention on Refugees. UNHCR established an office in Algiers in 1995 and a Sub-Office in Tindouf was created in 1996.

Considering the limited prospects of a peaceful settlement and repatriation of the Saharawi refugees in the near future, UNHCR continues to provide them with basic humanitarian assistance aimed at supplementing that of other government agencies and NGOs, while looking at ways to improve both the immediate and long-term needs of these refugees living in harsh desert conditions.

The Western Sahara refugee situation is unique given the highly organized administrative structures existing within the camps, which are run by the refugees themselves. Indeed, schools, hospitals, dispensaries and transport systems are fully managed by refugees. The majority of the refugees have received secondary and higher level education in many key areas such as health, medicine, law, counseling and pedagogy. Women play a key role within the refugee community and often hold key positions in the Saharawi institutions. In all the camps, women supervise the distribution of food and water, on top of their traditional family care responsibilities.

Currently, UNHCR provides assistance to 90,000 vulnerable refugees, out of a total population estimated by the Government of Algeria at 165,000 people. The refugees are settled in four refugee camps –namely Alayun, Awserd, Dakhla and Smara, - in the Tindouf governorate (wilaya) in the south-west of Algeria.

The UNHCR office in Algiers provides care and maintenance assistance to a small number of urban refugees – mostly from Cameroon, Iraq, DRC, Ivory Coast, Somalia and Liberia. There are also an estimated 4,000 Palestinian refugees, who are well integrated in Algeria. They do not maintain contact with UNHCR.

An increasing number of composite flows made up of irregular migrants and refugees, transit via Tamanrasset and Adrar, in the south of Algeria, in a bid to reach European shores. Due to various factors, such as the restoration of peace and security in the country, the brisk pace of economic growth and the restrictive asylum policies in the EU zone, Algeria is in the process of becoming an asylum country for a growing number of sub-Saharan Africans. These new developments require an innovative response from UNHCR and the relevant government agencies.

1. Operational goals and potential for durable solutions

Saharawi refugees in Tindouf

Pending a long term solution to their plight, UNHCR will continue to provide in 2007 protection and assistance to the Western Sahara refugees, in close co-operation with the Government of Algeria, the Algerian Red Crescent Society, the refugee community and its UN partners, particularly MINURSO, UNICEF and WFP. The

AGDM approach is in the process of being mainstreamed into the strategic protection and assistance policies of UNHCR in the camp sites.

Urban refugees and asylum seekers

With access to the EU ever more difficult, Algeria is likely to witness in 2007 an increase in the mixed migration flow of sub-Saharan Africans, including refugees and asylum seekers, who may find themselves stranded in the country. UNHCR's goal will be the safeguarding the right to seek asylum and prevention of *refoulement*. Assistance programs, in cooperation with appropriate agencies, will be delivered to deserving, vulnerable cases. Durable solutions will have to be identified to a large extent locally. UNHCR will discuss with the Algerian government on the principles and modalities of asylum for recognized refugees as well as the adoption of a limited resettlement program for vulnerable cases.

Part II: COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS AND PARTNERSHIP

1. Outcomes of joint planning and management of identified gaps

Saharawi refugees in Tindouf

During the AGDM participatory assessment exercise, the multifunctional team in Tindouf interviewed more than one hundred refugees of all ages (girls, women, boys and men). Refugees expressed their concerns openly, sometimes touching on social taboos and cultural sensitivities. Insufficient quantity and poor quality of food aid was a recurrent theme in all sub-groups. Adult refugee women expressed concern about the poor quality of reproductive health services. Adolescent girls mentioned the provision of hygienic products and sanitary materials as one of their top priorities.

Women are actively involved in camp management issues and have integrated every sector of life including administration, health, education, etc. Women are in charge of the monthly distribution of food rations and non-food items (blankets, tents, clothes, gas cylinders and hygienic products). They are therefore responsible for the reception, handling and distribution of all basic humanitarian assistance provided within the camps, in collaboration with the Saharawi Red Crescent. Most of the items are distributed on a family basis, with women acting as de facto head of household. Likewise women are in charge of water distribution, sanitation and waste management projects at the community level. The social assistance structures are fully managed by refugee women. Every *daira* has appointed a social assistant ensuring care and support for the most vulnerable persons. Finally, women constitute the vast majority of those who volunteer their services to health facilities, and represent a sizable proportion of primary school staff.

UNHCR's projects will continue to promote women's empowerment through acquisition of professional skills, which will further their role within the camps and upon return to their country of origin, in the fields of agriculture, use of computers, sewing, solar energy. The specific needs of children will be looked at especially in the context of Health and Nutrition activities. UNHCR will provide the most vulnerable refugee children with therapeutic supplementary feeding and supplementary micro-nutrients through a joint UNHCR-WFP program. The efforts deployed by UNHCR

and WFP in the field of nutrition will be complemented by other programs funded by bilateral donors and ECHO.

UNHCR will seek ways to improve the quality of education through training of teachers and advocacy with interested NGOs. It will provide basic school materials for school-age children and maintain the educational facilities restored at camp level.

Due to the psychological hardships associated with extended periods in exile, many young people in the camps suffer from lack of motivation and feel disillusioned about the future. Juvenile delinquency is becoming a problem in the camps as is the feeling of hopelessness among young people, due partly to the fact that there are very few activities for young people. One of UNHCR's priorities will be to continue to work with adolescents with the aim of providing them with educational and recreational facilities through sports activities.

Water will remain one of UNHCR's key priority sectors in 2007. UNHCR will ensure the maintenance and upgrading of the water supply system in the four camps and maintain and expand the standards achieved in previous years. Coupled with infrastructural work, UNHCR will run information campaigns on best water and sanitation practices to promote proper storage of water, safe disposal of human waste, maintenance of latrines, raising livestock away from domestic food stores and children's playgrounds, so as to prevent the spread of disease.

Urban refugees and asylum seekers

As regards the urban caseload, UNHCR will place emphasis on consultations with the Algerian authorities to promote the implementation of the provisions of the 1951 Convention, the 1967 Protocol and the 1969 AU Convention. In line with global strategic directions, UNHCR in Algiers will focus efforts on capacity-building of BAPRA, the eligibility organ attached to the MFA, academic institutions, as well as provincial authorities and Wilayas responsible for border control and interception.

Cooperation between the Algerian authorities and UNHCR on establishing good asylum practices within a broader migratory framework must be enhanced with a focus on building local capacity at peripheral level. In consultation with the authorities, UNHCR Algeria will plan seminars in sensitive Wilayas like Algiers, Oran, Adrar, Tamanrasset and Annaba, targeting officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Gendarmerie/Police Nationale, and Human Rights NGOs. In the course of training events the rights of refugees and the obligations of States Party to international asylum instruments will be addressed in the broad framework of irregular and transit migration.

Comprehensive needs and contributions

a) Contributions by the host government, refugee and/or local communities

The Algerian government, the Algerian Red Crescent and several international agencies and NGOs provide considerable support to the Saharawi refugees in Tindouf on a regular basis. This support was also essential to help the Saharawi refugees cope with the February 2006 flooding of the refugee camp sites, when significant quantities

of aid were rushed to Tindouf by the Algerian army and other State organs. The European Union has also supported relief efforts with US\$ 1,000,000, while a host of international NGOs also donated generously for this emergency operation.

b) Financial contributions of partners for regular operations

| Needs-based budget for the country operation | Total | US\$ |
|--|------------------------|------------|
| of which, estimated | UNHCR | 3,000,000 |
| | WFP (where applicable) | 21,000,000 |
| | Operational partners | 2,000,000 |
| | Implementing partners | 860,000 |
| | Unmet needs | |