

# ALGERIA

February 2022

## Operational Statistics

**8,227** Refugees in urban areas

**2,776** Asylum-seekers in urban areas

90,000 Most **vulnerable Sahrawi refugees** in the camps near Tindouf

\*The total number of people in need of humanitarian services in the camps is estimated to be far higher than this figure.

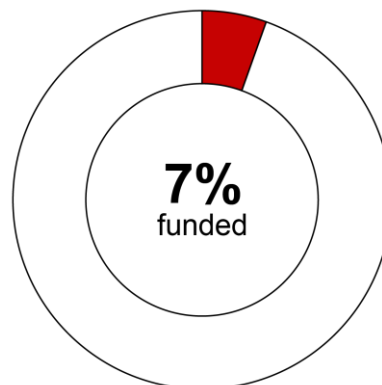
UNHCR Algeria **advocates for the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers** in the country's national plans to enable them have **access to basic rights, lifesaving assistance and essential services** and also live in dignity and health.

In **urban areas**, UNHCR engages with government and non-government actors to build a more favourable protection environment for refugees and asylum-seekers and to strengthen their **inclusion in the existing national protection system**.

In the five **refugee camps near Tindouf**, UNHCR ensures access to basic rights and services while improving living standards of refugees through innovative ways of delivering humanitarian interventions that enable and foster economic inclusion and community self-reliance.



## UNHCR's financial requirements for Algeria in 2022



**\$44.9 million required**

- Tightly earmarked
- Funding gap (indicative)

## COVID-19 response

**Tindouf:** UNHCR continued to play the lead role in the response to the pandemic in the Sahrawi refugee camps. The waves of COVID-19 in the camps have caused 85 fatalities and affected over 1,900 refugees. By mid-November 2021, UNHCR, sister agencies and partners reactivated the COVID-19 taskforce to prepare and respond to the fourth wave. With the technical support of WHO, a new Health Information System 'Go Data' was installed in the camps. The data enables epidemiological management of diseases as well as the regular collection. Data analysis of COVID-19 statistics in the camps are shared regularly by the Sahrawi health department on their website. UNHCR is contributing to response in the camps by building the capacity of the refugee health workers, providing incentives for the frontline workers, logistics support, and reinforcing testing capacities by the provision of 10,000 rapid antigen tests. In terms of prevention, UNHCR provided 70 masks and funded six sensitization sessions. To increase the low number of vaccinated refugees in camps, which was around 16,671 as of February 2022, UNHCR and sister agencies stepped up Communicating with the Community (CwC), sensitization and awareness raising on the efficacy and importance of the vaccination.

**In Algiers,** COVID-19 affected the lives of refugees and asylum-seekers, many of whom lost their informal jobs and saw the deterioration of their living standards, suffering from an increase of food prices nationwide, limited access to health, education, food security, livelihoods and vocational training. UNHCR successfully advocated for their inclusion in the national vaccination plan and continue raising awareness among refugees about COVID-19 prevention and vaccination. This was done through the provision of masks and the dissemination of reliable information through dedicated hotlines, which received an average of 300 calls per month, a bulk SMS system, an online website to provide information to refugees and asylum-seekers (<https://help.unhcr.org/algeria/>), as well as sensitization sessions carried out by a UNHCR medical partner and the newly established community outreach volunteers. Additionally, UNHCR and partners provide medical orientation and referrals for refugees and asylum-seekers and facilitate vaccination procedures.

 **Protection**

In the absence of a national asylum law and protection framework, UNHCR continues to assume key activities, such as **registering asylum-seekers, determining refugee status and issuing documentation, while advocating for the adoption of legislation to protect people in need of international protection.**

In 2021, UNHCR registered 1,521 people of concern to UNHCR living in urban areas and received 3,061 new asylum applications. New monthly asylum applications increased by 20 percent compared to 2020 due to the progressive easing of COVID-19 restrictions, although numbers remain lower than before the outbreak of the pandemic, owing to ongoing border closures. This upward trend is expected to continue in the coming years, particularly with an increase in mixed movements arriving through the central Mediterranean route, while barriers to access asylum, including risk of arrest and expulsion, are still the main protection concerns in Algeria. In total, 142 new refugees were recognized by UNHCR in 2021.

UNHCR monitors and advocates for **the release of refugees and asylum-seekers arrested for irregular entry or stay and for halting of deportations** which affected more than 120 people of concern to UNHCR in 2021, a decrease compared to 300 in 2020. Among them, 45 were released following UNHCR's timely intervention, thanks to the 24/7 emergency hotline, dedicated to report aggressions, arrest or refoulement as well as to receive council, intervention and legal aid.

In 2021, UNHCR continued working to involve authorities in discussions for the introduction of a number of measures to **strengthen the asylum system** and the protection environment for asylum-seekers and refugees across the country. UNHCR established new means of collaboration with government officials. Thus, in 2021 UNHCR resumed its **periodical trainings for Algerian officials** who play a role in the protection of refugees reaching 259 magistrates, senior officials of the national gendarmerie, chiefs of brigade and senior officials of the national police, from 49 municipalities, who received capacity building on international refugee law and its practical application in Algeria.

UNHCR provides specialized assistance to **refugees and asylum-seekers with specific needs in urban areas**, particularly gender-based violence survivors, unaccompanied or separated children, LGBTQI+ people and people with disabilities, who receive cash, safe shelter, psychological or medical support and legal assistance, UNHCR works to prevent, identify and address risk of violence, exploitation and abuse of refugee and asylum-seeker children in urban areas.

In 2021, UNHCR supported 151 survivors of **gender-based violence**. The Operation noted an **increase of 50 percent of reported gender-based violence cases** when compared to 2020. Referral pathways include legal remedies, medical and psychosocial support as well as physical safety through access to safe shelters. Moreover, UNHCR donated technical equipment to support the clinical management of rape in hospitals in Algiers, leading to the creation of the first integrated centre of clinical management of rape in Algeria. In the second half of 2021, UNHCR has initiated cooperation with the Algerian NGO SOS Femmes en Detresse which provides safe shelter and a holistic accompaniment to survivors of gender-based violence and women and girls at risk. In 2021, the **child protection** response was reinforced and UNHCR provided protection services to 153 children at risk. 48 unaccompanied or separated children were supported with temporary informal foster care arrangements. UNHCR and partners conducted Best Interest Assessments (BIAs) for 63 children at risk.

To strengthen **community participation**, UNHCR established a community Outreach Volunteer (OV) Network for urban refugees. UNHCR recruited six volunteers who completed a three-week training to build their capacity on different protection areas relevant to UNHCR mandate and its specific work in Algeria, including safe identification and disclosure, Age Gender and Diversity approach, and psychological first aid, among others. This initiative will strengthen two-way communication, facilitate information sharing, build trust, serve to understand community structures better and to create additional feedback opportunities. The OVs serve as an interface between the people of concern communities and UNHCR.

In Tindouf, Sahrawi refugees are recognized on a prima facie basis, the majority possess documentation issued under the Sahrawi identification system. **UNHCR leads the humanitarian Coordination of Protection in the**

**camp, strengthens the protection mechanisms and participatory approaches of the Sahrawi refugees that encourage community-based engagement, self-management and empowerment**, particularly for youth, women and civil society organizations while ensuring specific assistance for more than 3,000 People with Specific Needs (PSNs) in the camps. **UNHCR also promotes a favourable protection environment through the provision of capacity building for refugees, legal institutions, social workers, teachers, and physiotherapists and payment of incentives to refugee workers across the sectors.**

## Education

In Algiers, all refugees and asylum-seekers have free access to the public education system. However administrative, language, cultural and other barriers make it difficult for refugee children to enrol in schools. Changes of address due to searching for livelihood opportunities, parental inability to pay rent, and unaffordability of transport or scholastic materials affect children education. In 2021, UNHCR through its partner NADA supported the **enrolment of 463 refugee and asylum-seeker children in public schools** (329 in primary and 134 in secondary school) and provided transportation, school supplies, daily meals and private Arabic lessons, as well as access to kindergartens for households headed by single parents. Despite efforts of UNHCR and partners, to support 2,500 school-aged refugee children in Algiers, more than 500 are out of school. In 2021, UNHCR partner NADA enrolled 70 refugees in vocational trainings, and 31 Arabic speaking refugees were able to attend university in the framework of a DAFI scholarship.

In **Tindouf camps**, almost all school-aged children are enrolled in primary and lower intermediate schools. On 17 November, UNHCR and sister agencies launched the **2021-25 five-year education strategy** for the Sahrawi refugees in Algeria. The strategy was built on the 2019-21 education strategy and will enhance the inclusive access of quality education for Sahrawi refugee children and adolescents. **Special Needs Education (SNE)** is also provided for children with physical and learning impairments. To ensure a safe learning environment, UNHCR supports refugee children by providing teaching aids, stationery and books. UNHCR contributes to the capacity building of the refugee teachers and provides **incentives** to 1,100 qualified refugee teachers and staff. UNHCR also promotes access to **higher education**, including through programmes such as the DAFI scholarship, awarded to 117 students for 2021-22 academic year, which helps young refugees continue their education in tertiary institutions.

## Health and Nutrition

Refugees and asylum-seekers have access to free public healthcare, they are not obliged to pay for treatments and other primary healthcare. In 2021, UNHCR and partners provided **medical information and referrals to more than 1,800 refugees and asylum-seekers living in urban areas**, accompanied **308** people of concern to UNHCR to health centres in order to mitigate language barriers. Furthermore, 500 medical appointments were arranged in both public and private sectors.

UNHCR supports medical treatment not covered by the national scheme, including supporting specific medications and laboratory tests. In 2021, more than 140 refugees and asylum-seekers with chronic conditions received reimbursement for their medical consultations, medicines and surgeries, as exceptional assistance under the emergency response plan. In 2021, UNHCR succeeded to integrate refugees and asylum-seekers in the national MHPSS plan and HIV/STIs plan, giving them priority for medical care and access to free medication and voluntary testing. In parallel, UNHCR contributes to equipping health centres that receive refugees and asylum-seekers, especially those involved in the clinical management of gender-based violence/rape survivors (gynaecology, orthopaedic, and forensic services) by donating medical equipment and supplies to the university hospital of Mustafa Pacha, as well as three health centres in the capital.

In **Tindouf**, UNHCR supports access to healthcare in the camps through the provision of medical equipment, rehabilitation of infrastructures, covering 85 percent of the medical needs of the refugees, assisting with the incentives of 48 Sahrawi refugee doctors in the five main hospitals in the camps and 265 other skilled health workers. UNHCR funds the Sahrawi Midwife and Nursing School which enrolled 121 students in 2021, offers capacity-building to strengthen specialized healthcare on the integrated management of child illnesses (IMCI), psychosocial support, and non-communicable diseases and supports the Sahrawi referral system by maintaining ambulance fleet and medical guest houses in Algiers. Furthermore, in collaboration with WFP and the Algerian Red Crescent (ARC), UNHCR supports the supplementary **feeding programme for malnourished children, pregnant and lactating women** and conducts **awareness and prevention campaigns** about anaemia, chronic malnutrition and mental health. The joint UNHCR/WFP nutrition survey is implemented every two years to regularly monitor the nutrition situation in the camps.

 **Food Security**

In **Tindouf**, UNHCR and partners regularly complement the WFP's monthly food distributions by providing yeast for baking bread and fresh food items. UNHCR provides therapeutic feeding products (plumpy nuts and milk) to treat Severe Acute malnutrition (SAM) for those in need of malnutrition treatment in the camps. During the Ramadan of 2021, UNHCR distributed 33 metric tonnes of dates and 180 kg of fresh food, each person received 1 kg onions, 1 kg of potatoes and 0.5 of kg carrots. **Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM)** is conducted by UNHCR and WFP to track refugees' access to food at the household level and to obtain information about the nutrition of the refugee community in the camps.

 **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)**

UNHCR Algeria's 2020-24 strategy to improve refugees' access to water is to stop water trucking by extending water distribution in the five camps, while training and engaging refugees in the management and repairs of such systems. UNHCR provides **about 700,000 m<sup>3</sup> of water per year to the Sahrawi refugees** living in the camps and maintains the water supply, thanks to the repairs of existing water facilities, the installation of new facilities, and the monitoring of water quality. UNHCR through Solidaridad Internacional Andalucía (SI-A), also installed a new reverse osmosis facility for the treatment of water in Smara, Boudjour, and Rabouni and began the installation of the water distribution network that covers two municipalities of Laayoune camp, where the refugees heavily depend on water trucking. In Awserd camp, the first and only camp to be fully covered by a water distribution network, UNHCR, partners and local community members established a water management plan to improve the efficiency of the distribution network as part of efforts to make water accessible to all people of concern.

UNHCR and partners regularly produce **soap bars, bleach for disinfection, and treats** water distributed to all refugees and 123 health and education facilities with **chlorine**. Furthermore, UNHCR provides soap bars and sanitary materials to 48,400 women and girls of reproductive age, supports the waste management system in the camps through the procurement of equipment, garbage collection trucks, recycling of plastic wastes and payment of incentives to 82 workers. In 2021, UNHCR purchased four new trucks which were handed over to partner, Asociación de Trabajadores y Técnicos sin Fronteras (ATTSF), under the right of use agreement. In the efforts to promote innovative solutions for the management of waste in the camps, UNHCR and partners constructed a **plastic waste recycling plant** which became fully operational in September 2021.

 **Shelter and Core Relief Items**

Refugees in urban areas lack means to pay for decent accommodation due to lack of livelihoods, high rentals and demand for advance rentals. To respond to this need, UNHCR ensures access to shelter through cash assistance for the most vulnerable people of concern to UNHCR such as unaccompanied or separated children, women at risk and survivors of gender-based violence, female heads of household and people with disabilities in 49 rented apartments to ensure housing for 305 refugees/105 households in UNHCR rented apartments and distributed core relief items.

In the Sahrawi camps, UNHCR provides shelter materials for the most vulnerable refugee households to enable them to erect traditional tents that can withstand the harsh weather conditions in the desert. In 2021, UNHCR procured 3,015 traditional tents for vulnerable households in the camps. Despite UNHCR's efforts to increase refugees' access to shelter and mitigate the use of unsustainable shelter solutions, such as building with mudbricks that are susceptible to the impact of disasters like sandstorms and flooding, there is still a gap of more than 13,000 Sahrawi traditional tents. UNHCR needs support to cover the gaps of shelter in the camps and to increase the quantities of the tent materials required for the erection of the shelters.

**Cash Assistance**

UNHCR expanded its quarterly multipurpose cash assistance programme, benefitting nearly 760 refugees to mitigate the socio-economic effects of the pandemic and allow refugees and asylum-seekers in urban areas to cover basic needs like **housing, food, hygiene and shelter**. Furthermore, **520 asylum-seekers received one-time exceptional multipurpose cash assistance** and more than **300 women and girls** received cash assistance to purchase hygienic kits. Additionally, in December UNHCR and partners launched an extraordinary winterization cash distribution for the most vulnerable Syrian, Yemeni and Palestinian refugees living in urban areas. Thus, almost **2,400 refugees living in urban areas** were able to meet their basic needs in a safe and dignified way.



 **Access to Energy**

The cooking needs of the Sahrawi refugees are supported by UNHCR through ARC who distributes gas cylinder refills to 28,000 households at one cylinder per household per month. However, this support covered only eleven months in 2021 due to budget limits. In addition, energy-efficient cooking stoves which are compatible to the cooking gas are also provided to the vulnerable households of which some 7,585 households received energy cooking stoves out of a gap of 14,000 reported since the beginning of 2021.

 **Logistics**

To ensure the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance in **Tindouf**, UNHCR through ARC, maintains a large fleet of trucks, namely, 49 water and waste management trucks, 18 light vehicles, nine ambulances and one forklift in addition to organizing the delivery of assistance from Oran harbour to Tindouf. Through partner ATTSEF and Triangle Génération Humanitaire (TGH), UNHCR supports the mechanic workshops to maintain and repair the Operation fleet including servicing some 30 generators used across the institutions in the camps.

 **Self-reliance**

In Algeria, access to work for refugees and asylum-seekers is challenged by administrative barriers, and self-reliance opportunities are limited, leading to increased dependence on UNHCR assistance and heightened vulnerabilities for those working in the informal sector. Since 2018 refugees and asylum-seekers in Algiers have **access to national vocational training centres**. However, these centres have remained closed throughout the pandemic. Still, UNHCR has been able to enrol refugees in private centres.

In 2021, to **enhance innovation using online tools to promote livelihoods and self-reliance**, UNHCR and partners implemented an online digital skills training through the **Google Maharat programme** that benefitted more than 250 refugees and asylum-seekers (225 Sahrawis and 30 in Algiers). Courses were delivered by six trained refugee instructors in six classrooms (one in each of the five Sahrawi refugee camps in Tindouf, as well as one in Algiers), all of which had been refurbished and equipped with computers, internet access, and learning materials. Furthermore, UNHCR has enhanced access of refugees and asylum-seekers to the online **platform Coursera for refugees**, where they can enrol in a diverse range of online self-study programs.

**The livelihood strategy in Tindouf** focuses on developing skills and facilitating access to financial and productive assets for small enterprise development and employment, in addition to reinforcing the entrepreneurial ecosystem in camps. UNHCR supports **production workshops** in the camps, including a soap factory, sewing workshops, five vocational training centres and a business innovation centre. In partnership with the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM), a multi-year strategy of 2022-24 is under implementation to **reinforce vocational training in the camps**. Vocational training centres provide 9-to-18-month courses in the areas of auto mechanics, electricity, carpentry, sewing, and digital media and computers.

With support from UNHCR's **Community Connectivity Fund**, an Android app to facilitate trade within the camps

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