



# ALGERIA OPERATIONAL UPDATE

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 **8,000** REFUGEES  
IN URBAN AREAS

 **2,600** ASYLUM-SEEKERS  
IN URBAN AREAS

 **90,000** MOST VULNERABLE  
SAHRAWI REFUGEES

\*The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance is estimated to be higher.

Algeria remains a country of transit and destination that hosts refugees and asylum-seekers in urban areas and in the five Sahrawi refugee camps near Tindouf. Due to the absence of a national asylum system, refugees and asylum-seekers do not have access to government-issued documentation and residency permits, which limits their access to public services and/or national protection services. UNHCR carries out registration, Refugee Status Determination (RSD), and issues UNHCR documentation, while advocating to improve the protection space and build capacity for local stakeholders.

In **Algiers**, UNHCR and partners provide assistance and complementary specialized services (education, health, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), legal

advice, shelter assistance, multipurpose cash assistance and livelihood support) for refugees and asylum-seekers, with a particular focus on those with specific needs, while working to foster community participation.

The **Sahrawi** refugee situation in Tindouf is compromised by the harsh climatic environment and remoteness of the camps, where livelihood opportunities are slim, and frustration is growing particularly among the youth born in the camps. UNHCR provides lifesaving humanitarian assistance by facilitating access to health, water, education, livelihoods, energy, food security and dignified shelter, while ensuring the participation of women and girls, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities.

## Operational developments

In August 2021, several provinces were devastated by widespread forest fires, particularly in the Kabylie region in the northeast. An estimated 200 hectares of forest was destroyed, while more than 90 persons lost their lives and many others their homes and livelihoods.

UNHCR conducted a rapid survey to identify the most urgent needs of the 600 people of concern (PoCs) living in the affected region, providing \$ 35,000 worth of firefighting equipment, and \$ 10,000 worth of education materials, while offering cash support and medical and psychosocial counselling to affected refugee and asylum-seeking families.

## COVID-19

After reaching the highest number of **COVID-19** cases in late July 2021—during which some 2,000 new daily cases were recorded nationwide—the incidence rate decreased beginning in August. By the end of September, there were 170 new daily cases, a total of 203,000 cumulative cases and 5,800 fatalities since the beginning of the pandemic. In the Sahrawi refugee camps, cases decreased with seven active cases as of 31 September 1,747 cumulative cases and 66 fatalities since the arrival of the pandemic.

In July 2021, due to the rising number of cases, UNHCR offices in Algiers and Tindouf temporarily reduced its physical presence of staff and limited movements to the camps to implement lifesaving activities. Following a one-and-a-half-month suspension, face-to-face registration and RSD activities resumed in September. The number of PoCs that can be received at UNHCR premises remains limited due to COVID-19 precautionary measures in place.

## Responding to the needs of refugees and asylum-seekers in urban areas

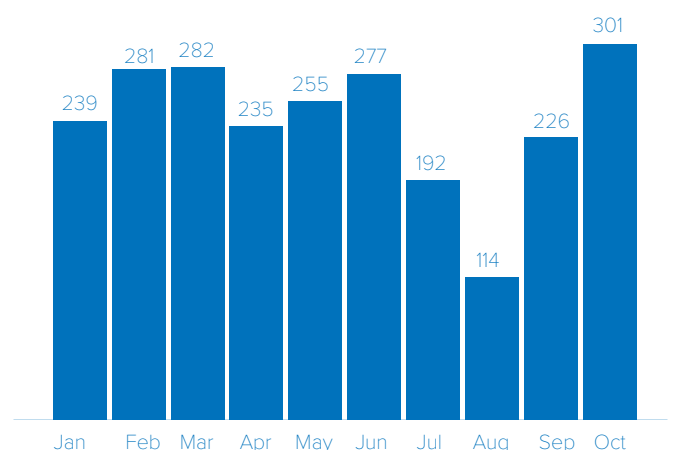
From July to September, UNHCR **registered** 226 PoCs living in urban areas and received 520 **asylum applications**. **Resettlement** departures continued, with 47 refugees resettled as of September 2021. UNHCR delivers cash-based interventions (CBI) to provide protection assistance and services to the most vulnerable and to help them meet their basic needs in a dignified manner. UNHCR provided **multipurpose cash assistance** (MPCA) to 670 refugees and asylum-seekers at heightened risk in urban areas from July – September 2021. Among them, 143 received cash to purchase hygiene items, while 267 were provided with cash for emergency shelter.

UNHCR and its health partner, Green Tea, provided **health assistance** to 650 refugees and asylum-seekers living in Algiers from July – September 2021, while UNHCR partner's emergency hotline received over 250 calls. Additionally, more than 100 most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers were accompanied to their medical appointments, to address access and language barriers and ensure effective access to health services.

While refugees and asylum-seekers have access to public **education** in Algeria, administrative, language and financial barriers continue to hinder their learning, as well as their integration and inclusion in the community. To support school enrolment and prevent dropout, UNHCR and partners provide transportation, school supplies, daily meals, tutoring and recreational activities. Recent data collected by UNHCR suggests that among the 2,451 school-aged refugee children in urban areas, 539 (22%) were not attending school. During the first semester of 2021, UNHCR and its education partners facilitated the enrolment of 280 children in primary education.

To strengthen accountability towards affected populations and promote the inclusion of **refugee voices** in UNHCR's strategic planning, UNHCR in Algiers conducted participatory assessments with over 110 refugees and asylum-seekers of all ages, genders, and backgrounds. These series of focus group discussions help UNHCR to understand current challenges faced by PoCs, identify obstacles faced in their daily lives, and provide a direct channel for PoCs to seek support and suggest solutions. To adapt to the COVID-19 situation, the Office used various outreach methods, including an **online discussion with youth**. Furthermore, to address the needs of at-risk women and girls and survivors of gender based violence (GBV), UNHCR entered a new partnership with Algerian NGO *SOS Femmes en Détresse* to provide safe emergency shelter.

Monthly asylum applications in 2021



## Responding to the needs of Sahrawi refugees

The Sahrawi refugee population is organized under a well-established structure that facilitates community mobilization and self-management despite a critical ongoing dependence on humanitarian assistance. UNHCR provides **capacity building and monetary incentives** for refugees working in the health and education sectors (including special needs education centres and youth centres) as well as social workers, staff of the Sahrawi Identification Centre (SIC) and the women promotion group. UNHCR also provides supplies and equipment to support the functioning of these essential community centres.

In September, UNHCR and partners conducted a workshop on **legal assistance** for 45 Sahrawi judges and lawyers, providing training for 16 clerks on preparing civil status records and held a two-day workshop for 25 members of the Sahrawi refugees' human rights committee on international legal Instruments, human rights, and gender equality. Furthermore, to strengthen the **prevention and response of GBV** in the camps, UNHCR and partners held a training for the Technical Mechanism for Women Empowerment (MTEM) on the use of social media for awareness-raising on GBV, children's rights and enhancing existing reporting mechanisms within the community. With the support of UNHCR and partners, Sahrawi social workers provided daily visits to 233 **people with physical impairments** and more than 3,000 people with disabilities, who received tailored care and one-on-one assistance to meet their individual needs.

To **improve the quality of education** and ensure enrolment of Sahrawi students in schools, UNHCR provided learning supplies including some 80,000 textbooks for schools in the camps, to ensure Sahrawi children were prepared for in-person learning following several months of distance learning due to COVID-19. In September, UNHCR and partners provided a pedagogical training for 36 kindergarten teachers across the camps, as well as furniture for schools across the camps.

UNHCR supports **access to healthcare** in the camps through the rehabilitation of infrastructures such as hospitals and community health centres. During the reporting period, UNHCR completed construction of the Boujdour camp hospital, including procuring equipment and medical supplies. Additionally, UNHCR built an emergency ward in the hospital of Smara camp, installed a new electricity network and procured a new power generator. UNHCR also rehabilitated the water networks in Rabouni camp hospital and reinforced the electricity network through procurement of a new generator. Additionally, UNHCR rehabilitated the roof of the nursing school in Smara camp, while equipping the building with a new concrete water tank.

**Anaemia and chronic malnutrition** remain prevalent in Tindouf camps, due largely to the scarcity of fresh food items. Beyond the provision of therapeutic feeding products such as plumpy nut and fortified milk to treat Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) for children under five, UNHCR and partners provided five

## HIGHER EDUCATION

UNHCR provides Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) scholarships for 104 refugees in Algeria (73 Sahrawi and 31 of different nationalities living in urban areas) for the school year commencing October 2021. These scholarships help refugee youth access higher education while strengthen their resilience by promoting self-reliance and lifelong learning. In addition to the financial support provided through DAFI, UNHCR promotes online training opportunities on public speaking and professional skills development in Algiers.

Furthermore, to enhance innovation using online tools to promote livelihoods and self-reliance, UNHCR and partners provided online digital skills training through the Google Maharat programme for 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.





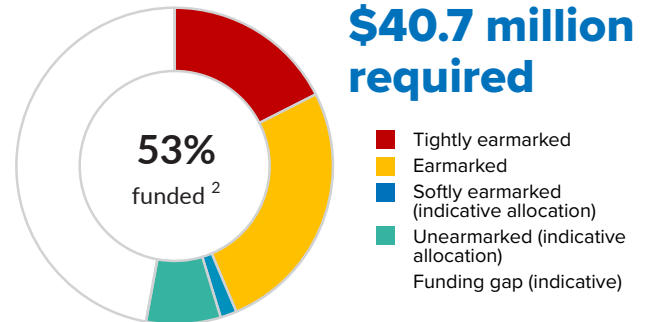
training sessions (one per camp) for 75 community health workers, covering anthropometric measurements, community screening and nutrition referral systems. Additionally, to compliment WFP's monthly food basket, UNHCR distributed 22,400 metric tons of dried yeast to bake bread.

In line with the 2020-24 strategy to **improve access to water** in the Tindouf camps and reduce water trucking, UNHCR and partners installed a new reverse osmosis facility for the treatment of water in Smara, Boudjour, and Rabouni camps, and began installation of the water distribution network that covers two municipalities of Laayoune camp, where water is entirely distributed by water trucks. In Awserd camp—the first and only camp to be fully covered by a water distribution network since April this year—UNHCR, partners and local community members established a water management plan to improve the efficiency of the distribution network.

In September, UNHCR and partners completed the construction of a **new plastic recycling plant** and received experts who installed machines and trained Sahrawi refugees on their use. UNHCR will continue to promote innovative solutions for delivering humanitarian assistance in protracted situations such as the Sahrawi refugee context.

UNHCR supports access to **shelter, hygiene, and energy** through the distribution of 1,000 traditional tents to the most vulnerable households in the camps, soap for health and education facilities and households, as well as hygienic kits (sanitary kits and personal hygiene items) for 28,400 women and girls of reproductive age. Despite efforts to increase access

## UNHCR's financial requirements for Algeria 2021



to shelter, there remains a gap of 11,100 households in need of shelter support, while the distribution of 250 grams of soap per person / per month amounts to only half the recommended Sphere standards. Additionally, UNHCR provided new and efficient cooking stoves to 1,000 Sahrawi refugee households and provided a monthly refill of one cooking gas cylinder per family/ per month for 28,000 households.

With the technical support of UNHCR, WHO installed a new **Health Information System** known as 'Go Data', which will enable the regular collection, analysis and dissemination of COVID-19 data in the camps. This digitalized system is currently operational across the five camps in Tindouf since mid-September. Weekly reports will be shared regularly by Sahrawi refugee health authorities on their website.

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In October, UNHCR and partners resumed **donor missions** to the Sahrawi refugee camps in Tindouf to allow donors to observe UNHCR's activities



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