

# ALGERIA

September 2021

 **7,830** REFUGEES  
IN URBAN AREAS

 **2,450** ASYLUM-SEEKERS  
IN URBAN AREAS

 **90,000** MOST VULNERABLE  
SAHRAWI REFUGEES

UNHCR Algeria strives to foster an environment where all refugees and asylum-seekers in the country have access to basic rights, lifesaving assistance and essential services and live in dignity with self-reliance through meaningful community participation and socio-economic inclusion (and available durable and alternative pathways to solutions).

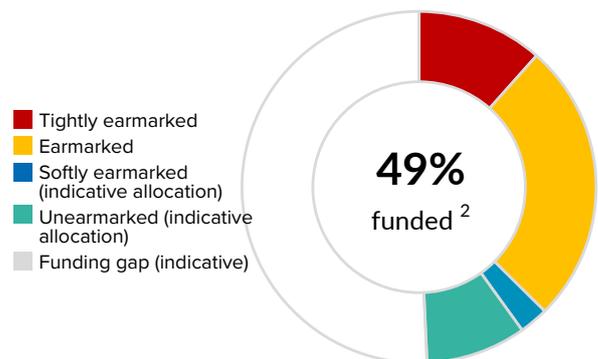
In urban areas, UNHCR engages with governmental and non-governmental actors to build a more favorable protection environment for persons of concern and strengthen their inclusion in the existing national protection system. UNHCR also fosters community participation in the provision of protection and the search for solutions.

In the five Sahrawi 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 community self-reliance.



A refugee receives treatment from a trained refugee doctor in the Sahrawi camps in Tindouf. © UNHCR/Ohanusi

**\$40.7 million**  
UNHCR's financial requirements 2021



## COVID-19 RESPONSE

Tindouf: UNHCR has played a lead role in responding to the pandemic in the Sahrawi refugee camps, gradually resuming regular presence in the camps after the three waves that have affected the camps, while respecting COVID-19 prevention and response protocols. By the end of July 2021, the Sahrawi camps experienced a virulent third wave with more than 1,460 cases and 63 fatalities, with infections particularly affecting the elderly. Vaccinations for Sahrawi refugees started in May 2021, thanks to donations from the Government of Algeria. UNHCR is supporting the vaccination campaign by contributing to capacity-building efforts and providing incentives for refugee health workers, along with logistics support. UNHCR is actively involved in the sensitization campaign to strengthen awareness and debunk myths and reduce vaccine hesitancy. More than 2,500 Saharawi refugees have positively responded to the vaccination campaign. UNHCR has provided 10,000 rapid antigen tests and 50,000 masks, soap, hand sanitizer and bleach for disinfection of public places.

In Algiers, UNHCR and partners continued raising awareness among refugees about COVID-19 prevention and successfully advocated for their inclusion in the national vaccination plan. To prevent the spread of the virus, the Office adopted new remote and mixed modalities to provide protection services such as issuance of UNHCR documentation through mobile teams and remote protection interviews. In addition to usual assistance for refugees, emergency cash assistance was distributed to the most vulnerable asylum-seekers and UNHCR distributed tablets among refugee students to support new learning modalities.

Furthermore, UNHCR strengthened communication with communities by setting a call centre with three mobile lines operating in French, English and Arabic. Additionally, a 24-hour emergency hotline, a bulk SMS system and an online website provide information and receive feedback from refugees and asylum-seekers (<https://help.unhcr.org/algeria/>).



## 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 persons in need of international protection. Despite the ongoing closure of borders, asylum applications are on the rise with 1,570 recorded in the first half of the year, a monthly increase of 20% compared to 2020, due to the progressive easing of COVID-19 restrictions. UNHCR monitors and advocates for the release of refugees and asylum-seekers in detention for irregular entry or stay and for the halting of deportations which may affect people of concern. UNHCR provides specialized assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers with specific needs, including through the provision of mental health and psycho-social support, housing and cash assistance. UNHCR also provided legal assistance to 32 refugees and asylum-seekers during the first semester of 2021, through a team of three lawyers.

UNHCR works to prevent, identify and address risk of violence, exploitation and abuse of refugee and asylum-seeker children in urban areas. During the first half of 2021, 45 Unaccompanied or Separated Children were identified by UNHCR, which

initiated best interests procedures for them, and 47 children with specific needs received shelter and protection assistance. Moreover, UNHCR supports survivors of GBV by facilitating access to public health services and to legal remedies as well as psychological and psychosocial support and improves their physical safety through access to safe shelter. In 2021, UNHCR donated technical equipment (colposcopy-directed and computational) to support the clinical management of rape (CMR) in the Mustafa Public hospital, one of the most important medical centres in the country.

In Tindouf, where Sahrawi refugees are recognized as prima facie, the majority possess documentation issued under the refugee leadership system. UNHCR strengthens the protection coordination mechanisms and participatory approaches 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 Persons with Specific Needs (PSNs) in camps. UNHCR also promotes a favourable protection environment through the provision of capacity building for refugees, legal institutions, social workers, teachers, and physiotherapists, along with incentive payments.



## Education

In Algeria, all refugees and asylum-seekers have free access to the public education system, however administrative, language and other barriers persist. During the first semester of 2021, UNHCR and partners in Algiers supported the enrolment of 280 refugee and asylum-seeker children in public schools and provided transportation, school supplies, daily meals and support lessons while organizing recreational activities. To aid distance learning, UNHCR distributed 164 e-tablets to refugee children living in Algiers. UNHCR also supports the enrolment of children in kindergartens, focussing on households headed by single parents.

In the camps, almost all school-aged children are enrolled in primary and lower intermediate schools. Psychosocial and mental health support is also provided for students, including children with specific needs in specialized education centres. To ensure a safe learning environment, UNHCR supports refugee children by providing teaching aids, stationery and books. UNHCR contributes to capacity building of the refugee teachers and provides monetary incentives for more than 1,000 qualified refugee teachers and staff. UNHCR also promotes access to higher education, including through programmes such as the DAFI scholarship, awarded to 265 students in the country, which helps young refugees access and complete their tertiary education.



## Health and nutrition

In Algeria, refugees and asylum-seekers have access to free and public primary healthcare. During the first half of 2021, UNHCR and partners provided medical information and referrals to more than 1,200 refugees and asylum-seekers living in urban areas, accompanying 225 of them to health centres to mitigate language barriers and discrimination. Where necessary and possible, UNHCR supports medical treatment not covered by the national scheme, including specific medications and laboratory tests. In urban areas, UNHCR and partners assist refugees and asylum-seekers with specific needs, by focusing on the provision of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and emergency shelter. Since the beginning of the year, 57 refugees and asylum-seekers have received either individual or psychosocial group sessions.

In Tindouf, UNHCR supports the Sahrawi Health Information

System and covers 70% of the medical costs and incentives for 40 Sahrawi refugee doctors in the five regional hospitals in the camps, funds the Sahrawi Midwife and Nursing School and offers capacity-building activities on the integrated management of paediatric disease, psychosocial support, and non-communicable diseases, to ensure provision of specialized healthcare. UNHCR supports the Sahrawi referral system by maintaining ambulance fleets and guest houses in Algiers and Bechar and regularly provides medicine and medical equipment to the camps' health centres. Furthermore, in collaboration with WFP and the Algerian Red Crescent, UNHCR supports the supplementary feeding programme for malnourished children and pregnant or lactating women and conducts awareness and prevention campaigns about anaemia, chronic malnutrition and mental health. UNHCR has also collaborated with the Algerian Red Crescent and relevant stakeholders to support Sahrawi families suffering from malnutrition.



## Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

In 2021, UNHCR Algeria's 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 m3 of water per year to the Sahrawi refugees living in the camps and has been able to maintain the supply thanks to the management and repairs of existing water facilities, the installation of new facilities, and the monitoring of water quality.

UNHCR continues to renew the fleet of trucks for the distribution of water to refugees. In 2021, a new water chlorination effort was completed in Awserd camp and three new submersible pumps were installed in Layoune camp as part of efforts to make water accessible to all persons of concern. UNHCR also supports the waste management system in the camps through the procurement of necessary equipment, garbage collection

trucks, waste management innovations and the payment of incentives to refugee workers. In 2021, UNHCR purchased four new trucks which were handed over to partner ATTSF under the right of use agreement. UNHCR also supports the provision of necessary equipment, and pays incentives to 82 refugee workers. In addition, UNHCR is beginning the roll out of a plastic recycling project to reduce the quantity of garbage waste.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR is supporting the camp-based refugees through disinfection campaigns to clean and sterilize areas of the camps through the provision of PPE and cleaning materials and solutions. UNHCR and partners regularly produce soap bars and bleach for the chlorination of water distributed to all refugees and 123 health and education facilities. Furthermore, UNHCR provides soap bars and sanitary materials to 48,400 women and girls of reproductive age.



## Food security

In Tindouf, UNHCR regularly complements the monthly food distributions provided by WFP by providing yeast for baking bread and fresh food items. UNHCR distributed 33 metric tons of dates and 180 kg of fresh food, each person received 1kg onions, 1 kg of potatoes and 0.5 of kg carrots during the month of Ramadan.

In the camps, UNHCR and WFP track refugees' access to food through monthly food basket monitoring at distribution points and post-distribution monitoring at the household level and jointly conduct nutrition surveys in camps. Due to COVID-19, the survey was not conducted in 2020, and is currently on hold for 2021 as the COVID-19 situation evolves.



## Shelter

To mitigate the socioeconomic effects of the pandemic and allow refugees and asylum-seekers in urban areas to cover basic needs like housing, food, hygiene and shelter, UNHCR expanded its quarterly Multi-Purpose Cash-Based Assistance programme.

In the first semester of 2021, a total of 880 refugees received multipurpose cash grants, while 180 women received cash assistance to purchase hygienic kits and 200 refugees received cash support for covering rental payments. Additionally, UNHCR provided shelter for 223 refugees and asylum-seekers in Algiers.

To cover the increasing needs of shelter in the Sahrawi refugee camps, UNHCR provides shelter materials to the most vulnerable refugee families.

Some 48% of refugee households in Tindouf are in need of shelter; from January - June 2021, 3,015 traditional tent accessories were provided for refugee households, covering 21% of humanitarian needs. UNHCR provided 1,000 efficient cooking stoves to Sahrawi refugees (out of a gap of 14,000) along with 67 tons of soap, which was distributed to refugee households from January - June 2021.



## Access to energy

In Tindouf, UNHCR provides safe cooking fuel to 28,092 Sahrawi families in the form of one gas cylinder per household per month. Safe cooking energy covers 60% of local needs. From March - June 2021, UNHCR and partners distributed 109,420 cooking gas cylinders (for refilling) to households, with a rate of one cylinder per household.



## Logistics

To ensure the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance in Tindouf, UNHCR maintains a large fleet of trucks and organizes the delivery of assistance from Oran harbour to Tindouf. Through partner ATTSF and TGH, UNHCR maintains mechanical workshops for the maintenance and repair of the operational fleet, water trucks, programme vehicles, ambulances, garbage collection trucks and generators.



## 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. Thanks to efforts made by UNHCR and partners, since 2018 refugees and asylum-seekers have had access to national vocational training centres in Algiers. However, these centres have remained closed throughout the pandemic. Nevertheless, UNHCR and partners have facilitated the enrolment of nine refugees in private vocational centres, supporting equal access for women and girls to become independent and self-reliant.

UNHCR's livelihoods 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 has been developed and is under implementation to reinforce vocational training in the camps. Vocational training centres provide 9-to-18-month courses including 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 was developed based on a refugees' original idea. The app has more than 4,000 users, more than 1,000 items and services advertised, and more than 800 sales have been made through since its launch in April 2020. UNHCR, through DRC, strengthens existing businesses, supports the establishment of youth-led businesses which meet local needs and enhances the development of entrepreneurial ecosystems in the camps.



## Durable solutions

In urban areas, most recognized refugees have little prospect of voluntary repatriation due to the situation in their countries of origin or due to their individual profile (LGBTIQ+, women at risk, survivors of torture, etc.). Other refugees have spent several years in Algeria and have few ties or reason to return. Resettlement remains the most appropriate durable solution for most recognized refugees in the absence of local integration prospects in Algeria.

After being paused since the beginning of the pandemic due to travel restrictions, resettlement departures have gradually resumed, with 35 refugees resettled during the first half of the year. The Office reinforced its processing capacity and has seen its yearly quota increased to 250 individuals. UNHCR also promotes complementary pathways for admission to third countries to help more refugees attain sustainable solutions, including family reunification and further education.



## Working with partners

UNHCR is a member of the UN Country Team (UNCT) and works closely with the Algerian Government, WFP, UNICEF, WHO and 13 NGOs: three in Algiers and ten in Tindouf.

Algerian Red Crescent (ARC), Association Femmes Action et Développement (AFAD), Asociación de Trabajadores y Técnicos sin Fronteras (ATTSE), Danish Refugee

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