

Boats carrying Mauritanian returnees from Podor, Senegal back to Mauritania



Algeria
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Mauritania
Morocco
Tunisia
Western Sahara

North Africa



| OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS |

- Mixed migration movements pose serious challenges for UNHCR in North Africa. Thousands of migrants and asylum-seekers arrived in the region in 2008. While some managed to cross the Mediterranean to Europe, many others remained in North African countries. Those left behind lacked clear legal status and were often detained or deported.
- Governments and non-governmental entities are increasingly recognizing UNHCR's 10-Point Plan of Action on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration as a valid framework for reconciling States' migration-management interests with the imperatives of refugee protection.
- UNHCR collaborated with governments and non-governmental partners to ensure the well-being of a large number of urban refugees in North Africa. This included a series of training sessions in refugee law, particularly in Morocco.
- UNHCR signed several accords to strengthen protection in North Africa in 2008, for example, a country agreement was signed with the Government of Morocco and a quadripartite agreement with international, Libyan and Italian non-governmental institutions.
- The Office collaborated with the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Western Sahara on the Confidence-Building Measures programme (CBM) for Sahrawi refugees. This programme facilitates family visits and provides free telephone services to promote personal contact between the refugees in the Tindouf camps and their family members in the Western Sahara.
- UNHCR worked to bring Mauritania's national refugee status determination (RSD) procedures into line with international standards. The voluntary repatriation of Mauritanian refugees from Senegal continued, and some 7,500 had returned by the end of 2008.



Working environment

Each of the five countries in the North African subregion has ratified either regional or international refugee instruments. For instance, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, which is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, has ratified the OAU's 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. However, refugee issues are not high among State priorities in the region. Indeed, with the exception of Mauritania, no country in the Arab Maghreb Union has yet developed national refugee legislation or asylum procedures consistent with international standards.

In the absence of national and regional strategies to deal with mixed movements, the existing national migration structures in North Africa are straining to cope with the large numbers of migrants and asylum-seekers arriving in the region. Accordingly, strengthening the capacity of the relevant State institutions and ensuring protection for asylum-seekers arriving in mixed migration movements are major components of UNHCR's strategy in North Africa.

The humanitarian situation of the Sahrawi refugees in camps in Tindouf, Algeria, remains dire. The refugees' health has been affected by their protracted exile, the harsh climatic conditions in the Tindouf desert and nutritional deficiencies. The vast majority of the camp population is dependent on international aid.

Achievements and impact

In 2008, UNHCR worked to protect and assist large numbers of refugees and others of concern throughout North Africa. The Office provided monthly subsidies and education and housing allowances to the most vulnerable among the urban refugee caseloads.

UNHCR's advocacy and capacity-building efforts have generated support for the 10-Point Plan of Action and forged partnerships aimed at protecting people of concern to the Office in mixed migration movements to and through North Africa. The establishment of national asylum procedures or a national asylum process in Mauritania, and the Moroccan Government's keen interest in creating a national asylum system, are the fruit of these efforts.

In the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, UNHCR's partnership with the authorities has resulted in the drafting of a national refugee law and the conclusion of a partnership agreement with the National Association of Youth Voluntary Work, as well as improved access to refugees and asylum-seekers in detention.

In collaboration with WFP and other partners, UNHCR provided the Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps in Algeria with food, shelter, water, sanitation, health care and education. To improve the refugees' nutritional status and address rampant anaemia among women and children, UNHCR widened the range of foodstuffs provided to the refugees by including more fresh meat, fruits and vegetables.

Constraints

The large mixed migration movements in North Africa are straining the capacities of national migration management structures and challenging UNHCR's ability to protect and assist refugees and other people of concern in the region. A lack of national or regional strategies to tackle the mixed migration phenomenon, weak or non-existent asylum structures and legal frameworks, and security concerns among governments are hampering the emergence of responsive asylum regimes in the region. Furthermore, the prospect of finding durable solutions for the Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps will remain remote as long as there is no political solution to the problem of the Western Sahara.

Operations

The operation in **Algeria** is covered under a separate chapter.

In the **Libyan Arab Jamahiriya**, UNHCR worked to ensure the protection and well-being of hundreds of urban refugees by providing living allowances, housing, health care, educational assistance, legal support and counselling, as well as vocational training and micro-credits. The programme has a strong focus on the specific needs of refugee women and children.

Productive partnerships with both the national authorities and non-governmental institutions in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya resulted in major breakthroughs, such as renewed respect for the principle of *non-refoulement* and permission for UNHCR to visit asylum-seekers and refugees in detention. After gaining access to a group of several hundred Eritreans in detention in Misrata, UNHCR referred 217 of them for resettlement in 2008. Durable solutions are being sought for the remaining caseload of some 400 people.

In addition, UNHCR signed a quadripartite agreement with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, the International Organization for Peace, Care and Relief – a leading Libyan non-governmental organization – and a partnership agreement with the National Association of Youth Voluntary Work.

Mauritania is a transit point for mixed migration movements to North Africa and Europe. To ensure that people of concern to UNHCR are identified and protected, the Office helped the Government to establish RSD procedures capable of distinguishing those in need of international protection from others who may be migrating for economic reasons.

The voluntary repatriation of Mauritanian refugees from Senegal was a major component of the organization's work in the country, and by the end of 2008 some 7,500 had returned with UNHCR's assistance. The Office provided transportation to the returning refugees and, in collaboration with the Mauritanian authorities, implemented returnee reintegration activities in areas of return. Assistance included support in the shelter, health, water/sanitation and education sectors.

The remaining 12,000 Mauritanian refugees, mostly in Senegal, are expected to repatriate or avail themselves of the option of local integration by mid-2009. To enhance the absorption capacity in Mauritania, UNHCR concluded partnership agreements with two international NGOs.

Morocco is a major transit point and a destination country for thousands of migrants and asylum-seekers, mostly from sub-Saharan Africa. In the absence of a legal framework and responsive asylum structures, protecting and ensuring the well-being of people of concern to UNHCR has been a challenging task.

In 2008, UNHCR had a two-fold strategy in Morocco. On the one hand, and as part of a comprehensive approach to broader migration movements, it aimed to strengthen the protection of asylum-seekers and refugees; on the other, it promoted the self-reliance of refugees and sought durable solutions for them through voluntary repatriation and the strategic use of resettlement.

The Office conducted RSD for a large number of asylum-seekers. It provided refugees with specific needs with food, shelter, health care, education and legal

counselling, besides supporting income-generation activities.

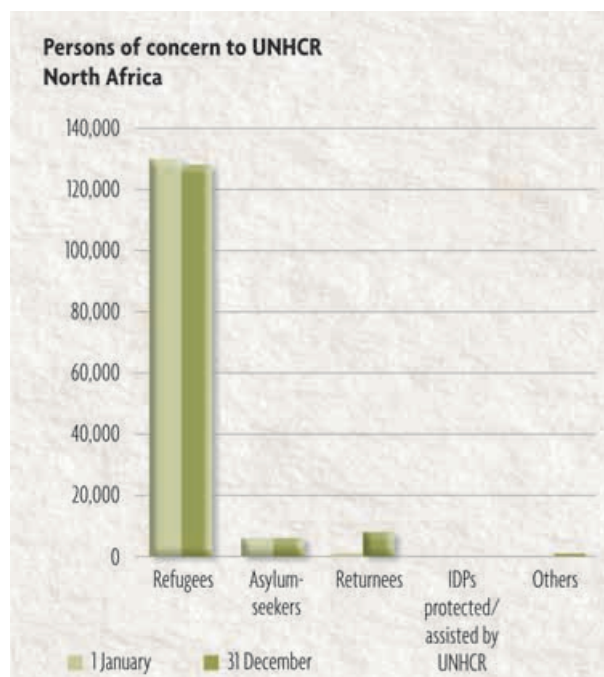
UNHCR worked with the Moroccan authorities on a series of capacity-building activities, including refugee law training for the judiciary, academia and other civil society institutions. The Office has also begun refugee law training for law-enforcement bodies, such as *la Gendarmerie Royale*. As a result of the productive partnership established with the Moroccan authorities, the Government has expressed interest in establishing a national asylum system.

In **Tunisia**, in the absence of a national asylum procedure, UNHCR conducted RSD under its mandate and ensured respect for the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers. The Office also promoted refugees' self-reliance through vocational training. In addition, several long-staying refugees were given monthly allowances to cover their needs in food, housing, health care and education, while those with special protection needs were submitted for resettlement in third countries. Tunisia expressed readiness to prepare asylum legislation as part of a comprehensive asylum system.

The Confidence-Building Measures (CBM) programme for **Western Sahara**, designed to facilitate contacts between the Sahrawis in refugee camps in Tindouf and their families in the Western Sahara, has two components: exchanges of family visits and provision of free telephone services.

Some 2,270 Sahrawis from the Tindouf camps in Algeria and the Territory benefited from family visits in 2008, bringing the total number of beneficiaries since 2004 to some 7,600. The free telephone services in four refugee camps benefited some 13,600 Sahrawi refugees in 2008, bringing the total number of calls since 2004 to more than 103,000. Based on requests made in 2008, the Office will soon establish a new telephone centre in the remote Dakhla refugee camp.

The Office is now working on expanding the number of visits conducted under the CBM programme through the use of road transportation, which would minimize the costs and maximize the number of participants. Currently, all visits are by air.



Financial information

UNHCR operations in the North Africa subregion, including the supplementary programme for the CBM in the Western Sahara, received full funding. Activities to ensure

the protection of refugees in the context of mixed migration movements to and through North Africa were fully funded under a joint partnership project to support capacity building of affected governments in dealing with the mixed migration movements in North Africa.

Budget and expenditure in North Africa (USD)						
Country	Final budget			Expenditure		
	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total
Algeria	8,372,630	1,091,015	9,463,645	7,407,744	778,177	8,185,921
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	2,262,124	248,989	2,511,113	1,711,666	176,665	1,888,331
Mauritania	1,678,843	4,705,324	6,384,166	1,247,124	4,510,281	5,757,405
Morocco	1,373,145	384,138	1,757,283	1,354,976	265,180	1,620,156
Tunisia	484,135	236,326	720,461	483,170	156,118	639,288
Western Sahara	0	3,294,729	3,294,729	0	2,791,790	2,791,790
Regional activities ¹	0	1,982,393	1,982,393	0	1,374,225	1,374,225
Total	14,170,877	11,942,913	26,113,790	12,204,680	10,052,437	22,257,117

Note: Excludes indirect support costs that are recovered from contributions against supplementary programmes and the "New or additional activities - mandate-related" (NAM) reserve.

¹ Includes activities for refugee protection within broader migration movements in North Africa

Voluntary contributions to North Africa (USD)				
Earmarking	Donor	Annual Budget	Supplementary Budget	Total
Algeria	Austria	256,610		256,610
	European Commission	2,186,589	296,131	2,482,720
	Italy		305,988	305,988
	Australia for UNHCR	62,582		62,582
	United States of America	750,000		750,000
Algeria Subtotal		3,255,781	602,120	3,857,900
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	European Commission		193,695	193,695
	Switzerland	188,259		188,259
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya Subtotal		188,259	193,695	381,954
Mauritania	European Commission	438,336	2,110,439	2,548,775
	France		203,353	203,353
	Netherlands	44,427		44,427
	Norway		179,641	179,641
	United Kingdom	54,962		54,962
	United States of America		2,092,500	2,092,500
Mauritania Subtotal		537,725	4,585,932	5,123,658
Morocco	European Commission		384,138	384,138
	HRH Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein (United Arab Emirates)	22,500		22,500
	Spain	259,067		259,067
	Switzerland	95,726		95,726
	UN Millennium Development Goals	7,500		7,500
Morocco Subtotal		384,793	384,138	768,932
Tunisia	Denmark		94,500	94,500
	European Commission		43,230	43,230
Tunisia Subtotal			137,730	137,730
Western Sahara	Germany		248,347	248,347
	Italy		100,277	100,277
	Norway		329,145	329,145
	Spain		903,108	903,108
	United States of America		837,000	837,000
Western Sahara Subtotal			2,417,877	2,417,877
North Africa Subregion	Denmark		303,611	303,611
	European Commission		1,200,000	1,200,000
	Liechtenstein	87,719		87,719
	Sweden	616,333		616,333
	United States of America	1,500,000		1,500,000
North Africa Subtotal		2,204,052	1,503,611	3,707,663
Total		6,570,610	9,825,104	16,395,714

Note: Contributions shown exclude indirect support costs that are recovered from contributions against supplementary programmes and the "New or additional activities - mandate-related" (NAM) reserve.