



North Africa

Working environment

The flow of economic migrants and asylum-seekers transiting North Africa *en route* to Europe is difficult to quantify. Many seem to continue to attempt to reach southern European shores, yet the number of those actually arriving in southern Europe seems to have decreased in the past year. This may be attributed to the increasing dangers of the journey, or the development of alternative routes.

With funds specifically earmarked for this purpose, UNHCR has developed a regional strategy to strengthen asylum in North Africa. From mid-2005, UNHCR has increased the capacity of its offices in the region to identify asylum-seekers and refugees within the flows of migrants to Europe. The project will continue in 2008.

Until now, no feasible solutions have been found to the plight of the Sahrawi refugees from Western Sahara currently living in camps in the Tindouf region of Algeria. UNHCR continues to provide basic assistance to the refugees in the camps. In close coordination with the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), UNHCR also fosters the Confidence-Building Measures (CBM) Project initiated in 2004. This enables family visits, telephone communications, and seminars on non-political topics between refugees in the Tindouf camps and their family members in Western Sahara.

Should the political situation remain unchanged, the agreement of the parties will be sought to continue the CBM project through 2008 and 2009. In 2007, two meetings were held between Moroccan authorities and representatives of the POLISARIO Front in an effort to identify possible solutions to the long-standing conflict. UNHCR will monitor developments closely and will adjust its planned operations for 2008 and 2009 accordingly.

Algeria

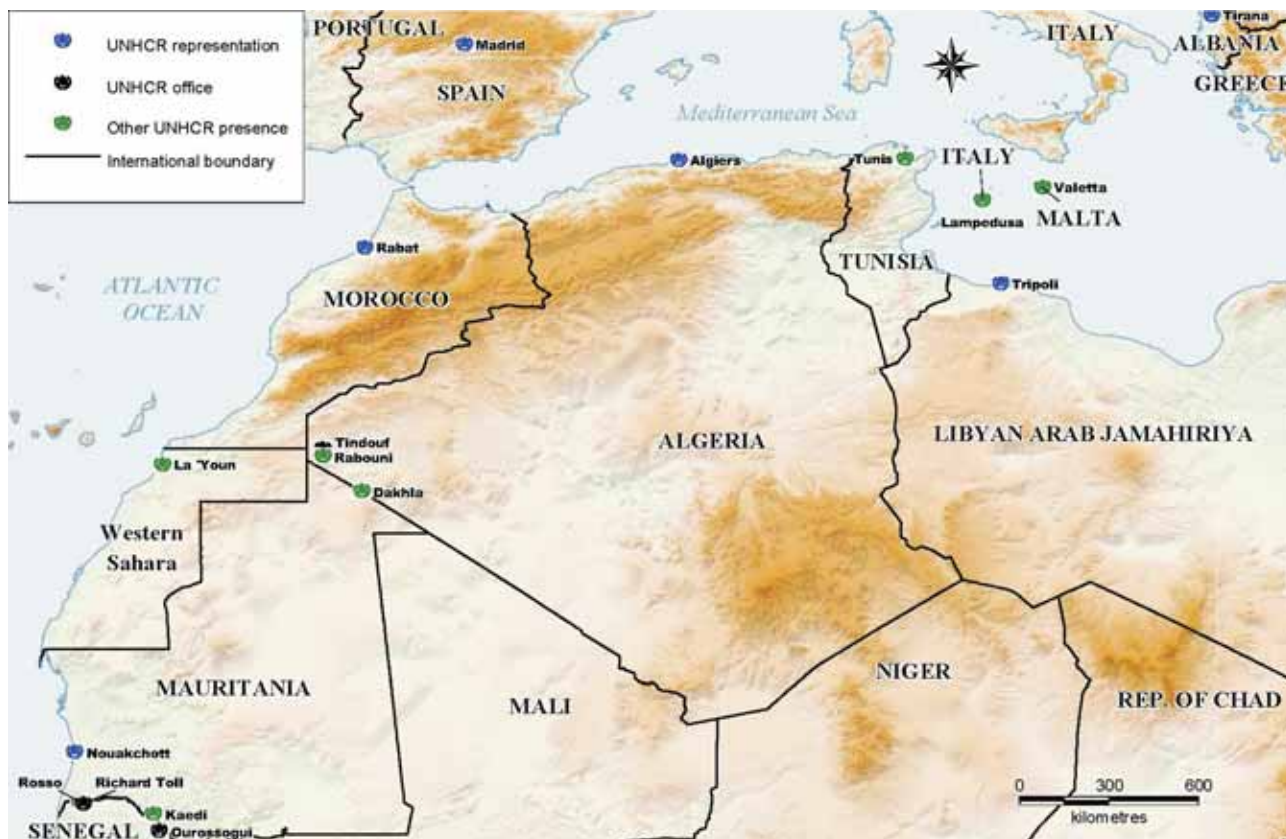
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya

Mauritania

Morocco

Tunisia

Western Sahara



Strategy

UNHCR will help Governments in the region to build their capacity to manage migratory flows in a protection-sensitive manner, consistent with international law. Regular regional meetings between Government officials, NGOs and staff from UNHCR Headquarters and regional offices will refine strategies and develop concrete programmes to better address asylum and migration issues.

The 10-Point Plan of Action will serve as the framework for UNHCR's approach with regard to regional asylum and migration policies. The Plan entails a dual strategy which helps UNHCR to structure and strengthen its interventions, as well as to define lines of cooperation with partner governments, NGOs and civil society (see box).

Constraints

UNHCR has reinforced its presence and strengthened its capacity and resources in all countries in the region. This has required a significant increase both in staffing and financial needs, which have been met mainly through earmarked contributions. The scale of the problem, however, will require the Office to maintain the additional staffing and resources in order to consolidate operations through 2008 and 2009.

Without a political solution to the Western Sahara situation, UNHCR is faced with a protracted refugee population for whom no durable solutions appear feasible. Basic—but insufficient—assistance continues to be provided for the refugees, who live in very harsh desert conditions and without opportunities for self-reliance.

Operations

In **Algeria**, an average of 200 urban refugees and 250 asylum-seekers will receive protection and assistance to cover food, housing, health and educational needs. The majority of the urban refugees and asylum-seekers in the country originate from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Somalia, Chad and Burundi. Some 4,000 Palestinian refugees in Algeria are well integrated and receive no support from the Office.

Pending a political solution to the Western Sahara situation, UNHCR will continue its assistance programme for the Sahrawi refugees living in the camps in Tindouf through 2008 and 2009. This programme will supplement support for the refugees by governmental bodies and NGOs. The main activities within this programme include the provision of supplementary food, the distribution of butane cooking gas and support for health and nutrition services. Educational facilities will also be provided, including special computer courses, language training and



UNHCR/J. Gagné

Asmara camp, Western Algeria. UNHCR airlifted emergency supplies for more than 50,000 Sahrawi refugee flood victims.

programmes for adolescents. The project will ensure the provision of potable water and adequate sanitation in all camps.

The Confidence-Building Measures Project launched in March 2004 is being pursued. In 2008, some 5,700 beneficiaries in Tindouf and in the Western Sahara will exchange visits. A project aimed at using land transportation for these visits to increase the number of participants is currently under consideration. Interest in this programme remains high among the camp populations: more than 20,000 people have already registered to participate.

In the **Libyan Arab Jamahiriya**, UNHCR will support self-reliance activities for refugees with the aid of local partners. Micro-credit schemes, vocational training and apprenticeships aimed at enhancing self-employment and remunerated employment will be implemented. Refugee representatives will be involved in the design and establishment of the activities to ensure that the needs of women are adequately addressed and that proposals from the refugees are given due consideration.

Close to 14,000 refugees and persons of concern are registered with UNHCR in Libya. Of these about 9,000 are Palestinians, 3,000 are Somalis and another 2,000

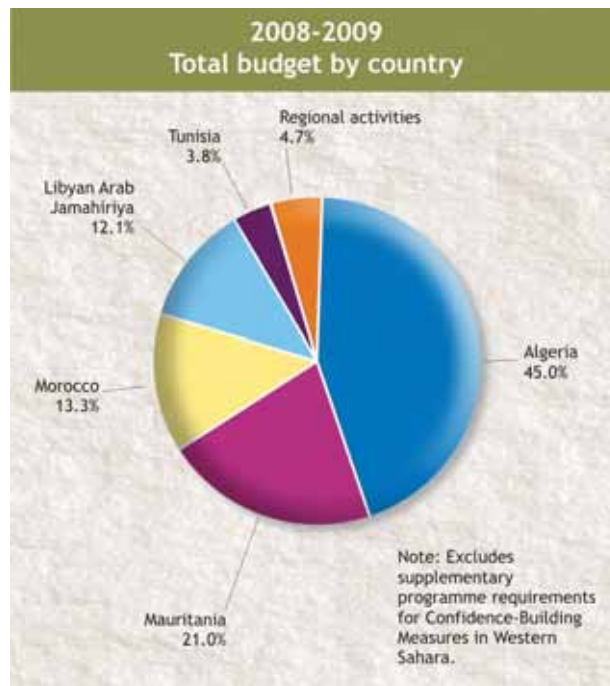
are of various nationalities, including Guinean, Chadian, Liberian and Sierra Leonean. Currently, 5,000 refugees from Sudan, Eritrea, Liberia and Sierra Leone receive support with basic living allowances, shelter, medical assistance, primary education and legal counselling in Libya.

In **Mauritania**, UNHCR will reinforce the Government's capacity to manage asylum within migratory flows transiting the country. A basic care-and-maintenance project will be provided to the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers. On World Refugee Day, 20 June 2007, the Government invited Mauritanian refugees—many of whom have been in exile for 18 years—to return home. In the last quarter of 2007 and in 2008 UNHCR will cooperate with government authorities and NGOs to support the return and reintegration of up to 24,000 Mauritanian refugees mainly from Senegal and Mali.

Morocco continues to receive thousands of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and others from as far away as South-East Asia who are attempting to reach Europe. In the past two years, the Office has concentrated on distinguishing refugees and asylum-seekers from economic migrants, and offering help to identified people of concern. This effort will be pursued and strengthened in 2008.

There are currently some 700 asylum-seekers and 500 refugees in Morocco, and the figure is expected to increase. In 2008 and 2009 UNHCR will assist around 400 of the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers, covering their food, shelter, health, educational and legal needs. Income-generating activities leading to enhanced self-sufficiency will continue to be supported in 2008 and 2009.

In **Tunisia**, the office of the Honorary Representative will undertake refugee status determination on behalf of the Government, ensuring that the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers are respected. In coordination with government agencies and NGOs, the Office will promote and disseminate information on refugee law. UNHCR estimates that 80 refugees and asylum-seekers, mostly from sub-Saharan Africa, will be assisted with food, housing, health care and educational grants. The Office will work to establish a fully-fledged representation in Tunisia through discussions with concerned governmental authorities.



Improvement of refugee protection within broader migration movements in North Africa

“Mixed” migratory movements involving refugees, asylum-seekers and economic migrants pose specific challenges in protection, especially in ensuring access to safety. As States redouble efforts to “manage” migration, it is important to identify refugees and asylum-seekers within mixed movements and enable them to access protection and assistance. To address these challenges, UNHCR’s 10-Point Plan of Action sets out ten key areas in which action is needed to address the phenomenon of mixed and irregular movements, focusing on activities within UNHCR’s mandate.

The elements in the Plan of Action are undertaken through a two-year project titled *Improvement of refugee protection within broader migration movements in North Africa*. The project is co-funded by the European Commission and Denmark under a specific supplementary programme.

Within this framework, the activities under this project mainly focus on:

- Reinforcement of UNHCR’s presence in North Africa through increased staffing and deployment schemes.
- Establishment of burden-sharing arrangements to promote solutions for refugees, including self-reliance and voluntary repatriation.
- Building partnerships to support the capacity of competent government and non-governmental organizations.
- Adopting of a national legislative framework in asylum and refugee matters for each country in the region.

The collaborative approach underpinning the 10-Point Plan of Action has proved valuable in strengthening partnerships and operational cooperation between UNHCR and key actors in the field. The Office’s relationships with governments in the region, civil society and other partners have broadened. In Morocco, a UN Thematic group on migration (chaired by UNHCR) has finalized a framework for joint activities. In the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, UNHCR is building its cooperation with the International Organization for Peace, Care and Relief around the implementation of some aspects of the 10-Point Plan. Similarly, joint projects have been explored for partnership with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development.

While the positive impact of such measures on concerned populations as well as the institutional and operational capacity in the region has been noted, achieving long-term and sustainable solutions will require more coherent policies on migration and asylum on both sides of Mediterranean. Only then will a proper balance be struck between migration-control priorities and refugee-protection imperatives.

Budget (USD)

Country	2007			2008			2009
	Annual Programme Budget	Supp. Programme Budget	Total	Annual Programme Budget	Supp. Programme Budget	Total	Annual Programme Budget
Algeria	4,268,794	633,842	4,902,636	4,900,313	330,957	5,231,270	4,900,313
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	984,270	17,736	1,002,006	1,314,586	89,300	1,403,886	1,314,585
Mauritania	885,472	2,175,171	3,060,643	897,903	2,924,223	3,822,126	907,212
Morocco	983,475	593,900	1,577,375	1,202,897	462,765	1,665,662	1,335,282
Tunisia	358,096	22,038	380,134	406,312	37,031	443,343	406,312
Western Sahara	0	2,667,257	2,667,257	0	0	0	0
Regional activities	0	823,625	823,625	0	1,061,907	1,061,907	0
Total	7,480,107	6,933,569	14,413,676	8,722,011	4,906,183	13,628,194	8,863,704

Note: The Supplementary Programme Budget excludes a 7 per cent support cost that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.