



Western Sahara Operation
UNHCR/MINURSO
Confidence Building Measures

2005
SUPPLEMENTARY APPEAL



©UNHCR 2004

March 2005

Introduction

Pursuant to the United Nations Security Council resolution 1282 of 1999 and subsequent resolutions, UNHCR and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Western Sahara (SRSG) have been promoting with Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO as well as Algeria, as the asylum country, a series of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) that would facilitate person-to-person contact between the Saharawi refugees in the Tindouf camps in Algeria and their community of origin in Western Sahara Territory.

The first phase of the exchange of family visits programme was implemented between 5th March and 31st August 2004 with the full cooperation of the parties, as well as Algeria as the asylum country. In the light of its positive outcome, the conclusions of the evaluation carried out with the parties and Algeria and pursuant to the UN Security Council Resolution 1570, UNHCR and United Nations Identification Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) expressed their readiness to carry on with the programme.



©UNHCR 2004

The UN Security Council members expressed support for the CBMs in Resolution 1570 (2004) on 28th Oct. Paragraph # 3 of the Resolution “Calls on Member States to consider voluntary contributions to fund Confidence Building Measures that allow for increased person-to-person contact, in particular, the exchange of family visits.”

The 2005 Appeal

This Appeal, issued for 2005, explains the background of CBMs operation and presents the agreed upon measures for implementation. The overall budget is USD 3.19 million covering a period of 10 months from 1st March to 31st December 2005. The CBMs Programme will be reviewed regularly and adjusted in the light of developments. Progress on the implementation of the Programme will be periodically reported to the UN Security Council, by the Secretary-General.



©UNHCR 2004

Background

UNHCR continues to provide basic material assistance and life sustaining assistance to a total population of 165,000 Saharawi refugees as estimated by the host country. Despite several initiatives taken under the UN auspices to find a solution to the Western Sahara problem, the political stalemate persists and refugees continue to live in difficult conditions in the harsh environment of the Algerian desert and to depend on international aid.

In early 1999, UNHCR had submitted to the parties a proposal to implement CBMs to link the refugee populations in Tindouf with their community of origin in the Territory. The UN Security Council strongly supported the proposal and, through several subsequent resolutions, called upon the parties to cooperate with

UNHCR for their implementation.

In early 2004, following several rounds of talks conducted by UNHCR and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, with Morocco, the Frente POLISARIO as well as Algeria as the asylum country, all parties concerned have expressed their final approval of a Plan of Action for the implementation of CBMs, including the telephone connections and the exchange of family visits.

The parties have requested the continuation of the programme in 2005, and have expressed their agreement in principle to the implementation of an additional CBMs component consisting in the organisation of seminars involving prominent members of the Saharawi communities from both sides. This is considered to be an important element of the confidence-building measures. Further consultations are still underway regarding the mail services component of the CBMs.



©UNHCR 2004

Overall Objectives

The Confidence Building Measures as proposed by UNHCR fall strictly under UNHCR's mandate and its action to improve the protection conditions of the Saharawi refugees. They are not linked in anyway to the political options that may be under consideration concerning the resolution of the Western Sahara conflict. The immediate objective of these measures is to allow refugees living in the camps of Tindouf in western Algeria to have additional means of communication with members of their communities of origin living in the Western Sahara Territory and vice versa. Another objec-

tive is to meet the humanitarian needs of families who, because of the conflict, have been separated for a prolonged period of time. Moreover, the purpose of the Programme is to shake the long standing status quo marking this refugee situation. The CBMs are also likely to contribute to the establishment of a certain level of confidence between the parties concerned by the conflict over Western Sahara, thus facilitating a negotiated solution to the problem.



©UNHCR 2004

CBMs Activities

Key CBMs activities proposed by UNHCR

- **Telephone service** between the refugee camps and the Western Sahara Territory
- **Exchange of family visits**
- **Seminars on non-political topics** involving Saharawis from both sides
- Mail service between the refugee camps and the Territory (consultations are underway)

These are basic humanitarian actions, to be operated directly by UNHCR in close cooperation with MINURSO and implemented within UNHCR's protection mandate.



©UNHCR 2004

A limited **telephone service** is currently implemented in order to enable communication between the Saharawi refugees living in the refugee camps in Tindouf, Algeria with the members of their community of origin in the Territory. Using the existing MINURSO network, this project calls for the operation of rural telephone links in designated sites in the camps of Layoune, Awsard, 27 February School and Smara. As for the remote camp of Dakhla, 160 kms south of Tindouf, a 3.7 M VSAT terminal and a generator will need to be installed.

All necessary technical equipment and labour to set up the service in the first 3 camps were provided by MINURSO, at minimal cost to UNHCR.

Three rural lines have been already established in the 27 February School, the Layoune and Awsard refugee camps. Work is currently under way to expand the telephone network to the other locations. It should be noted that, as of end of February 2005, 17,171 refugees, mostly women, have been able to contact their relatives in the Territory through the telephone connections established under the project in the camps of Tindouf, Algeria. Approximately 25,000 refugees are expected to benefit from this service through 2005.

CBMs Activities

Exchange of family visits is the most important component of the CBMs as it allows for direct contacts between separated family members.

On 5 March 2004, UNHCR launched the family visit programme following extensive negotiations and consultations with all concerned. So far 1,476 Saharawis have benefited from this programme and have been able to meet their close relatives after nearly three decades of separation.

The participation of women exceeded 60% of the beneficiaries. This unprecedented development, combined with the cooperation shown by all concerned authorities as well as the large number of Saharawis who applied for the project (over 19,000 persons), allow for optimism as to the future of this activity and give sufficient assurances to UNHCR to pursue its implementation in 2005 in an active and confident manner.

i. Description of the project

With the substantive logistical support of MINURSO, UNHCR shall continue to implement and supervise this activity. A maximum of 40 persons shall participate in weekly visits, each of which shall last for five days, leaving on Fridays and returning on Wednesdays of the following week. In view of the large number of people who applied so far for the benefit of this service, UNHCR, in cooperation with the SRSO office and upon a request of the concerned parties and the refugees, will continue the project for 2005. A total of 2,400 persons are expected to benefit from this activity during the implementation period. The visits will take place on both sides. The visits in the Territory shall take place in the four main towns of Layoune, Smara, Boujdour and Dakhla. Other destinations may be determined on a case-by-case basis. The visits in the Tindouf region in Algeria shall take place in the refugee camps at Layoune, Awsard, Dakhla and Smara as well as in the 27 February School.

MINURSO, depending on the level of voluntary contributions, shall provide UNHCR



©UNHCR 2004

with administrative assistance and logistical support to carry out this activity, while UNHCR will maintain the overall supervision, and administration of the project.

A UNHCR itinerant team, comprising a Head of Operations, two liaison officers, protection and logistical staff, shall be deployed in the region to handle the management and the supervision of the project and will work in close collaboration with the Office of the SRSO and MINURSO. The overall coordination of the operation will remain with the CASWANAME regional Bureau/Desk at UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva.

ii. Criteria for the selection of participants

All persons living in the refugee camps in Tindouf and in the Western Sahara Territory able to prove that they have direct family links (mother, father, daughter, son, spouse, sister, brother) on the other side, may participate in this project. Applications for participation shall be made available to the candidates in registration centres established by UNHCR in the refugee camps in Tindouf and in the UNHCR office in Layoune in the Territory.

On the basis of its mandate, UNHCR shall be responsible for the decision on the admissibility of candidates wishing to participate in the programme. The existence of a direct family link shall remain the basis for selection. UNHCR shall make particular efforts to encourage the participation of women and children and shall give priority to humanitarian cases. Participants shall be selected within different refugee camps in Tindouf, Algeria and towns in the Territory, so as to ensure an ample participation of the communities concerned.



©UNHCR 2004

iii. Operational aspects

The exchange of family visit is a labor intensive and logistically complex operation where UNHCR and MINURSO have to deal with a variety of operational matters ranging from registration, selection, verification of family links, briefing of participants, ground-air transportation, protection monitoring, to airport formalities and liaison with the coordinators designated by the authorities on both sides.

An information campaign, including posters, brochures, radio announcements, shall be organized in the refugee camps as well as in the Territory to inform the Saharawi communities of the project and to call interested persons to apply for it.

With the logistical support of MINURSO, UNHCR shall guarantee the beneficiaries free transportation between their place of residence to the residence of the family to be visited and back. Beneficiaries shall travel on weekly flights operated by MINURSO. Each group will be composed of 40 persons. Each participating family shall be provided with a "Travel Manifesto" bearing UNHCR's seal, which will be the unique official travel document, used by the beneficiaries for boarding the UN flights.

The visit programme must take place in conditions of safety and dignity for the participants. Each participating refugee family receives a grant varying between USD 30 to USD 150, based on the size of the family, to cover their basic needs during the visit. The physical security of the participants shall remain under the responsibility of the authorities on both sides. UNHCR

CBMs Activities

staff and that of the MINURSO Civilian Police (CivPol), bearing distinctive signs, shall escort the participants throughout the visit. The parties as well as Algeria shall commit themselves to ensure the freedom of movement of the participants and their free and unhindered access to UNHCR staff as well as the latter's free access to the beneficiaries at all times. Prior to their travel, participants will be informed of their rights and obligations during the visit.

UNHCR shall strive to ensure that the visits remain within the intimacy of the family and to preserve their humanitarian character. Participants as well as their host fami-

lies shall not take advantage of the visit in any manner whatsoever to disseminate political opinions, or undertake acts that may disturb public order in the places of their visit.



©UNHCR 2004

Two **seminars** are foreseen under this Programme during 2005. The organisation of seminars involving prominent members of the Saharawi communities from both sides is an important element of the confidence building measures. This element has been reiterated in the draft Plan of Action for the second phase. The objective of the seminars is to offer opportunities for dialogue and interaction on topics of a non-political nature between persons from the civil society of the Saharawi communities living in the Tindouf area refugee camps in Algeria and in the Territory. The parties concerned have expressed their agreement in principle to this activity in 2004, with a view to implementing it as of 2005.

Around 15 participants from each side will be invited to participate in each seminar. The selection of the participants will be conducted by UNHCR in consultation with the SRSG. Each seminar will last for three days and will take place in a neutral location to be designated by UNHCR and the SRSG. Experts on the topics for discussion will be invited to serve as resource persons to facilitate the seminars.

Co-operation with MINURSO

MINURSO is UNHCR's main operational partner in the implementation of the CBMs and will support UNHCR with logistical and administrative contributions as well as the cost of CivPol.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between UNHCR and MINURSO outlining the roles of each Organization in relation to this operation, and defining the practical arrangement for its implementation.

UNHCR will maintain the overall supervision of the programme and ensure that the protection benchmarks are upheld.



©UNHCR 2004



©UNHCR 2004

Financial Requirements and Funding Overview

The details of the Supplementary Programme Budget are as follows:

- Overall protection monitoring and counselling;
- Registration of applicants to the programme;
- Fuel costs for CBM flights (Antonov aircraft) and costs of aircraft hours;
- Maintenance and fuel costs for a fleet of six minibuses and two pick-ups;
- Computers, printers and telecommunication equipment;
- Information campaign;
- The organisation of two seminars involving Saharawi community leaders to debate on non-political topics;
- Communication equipment and costs (monthly charges) for the telephone connections between the refugee camps and the Territory;
- Communication costs for the needs of the staff assigned to the Programme;
- Staff costs for coordination and supervision of the operation;
- Refugee grants;
- Administrative and Programme management services; and
- Ground transportation for beneficiaries and UNHCR Staff.



©UNHCR 2004

This Programme will be implemented over a period of 10 months from 1st March to 31st December 2005. Future steps will be decided in the light of developments and in close consultation with all concerned. The Secretary-General's report to the Security Council will include information on the implementation of the Programme, which will be shared with all concerned as well as with donor countries.

Financial Requirements and Funding Overview

Funding Overview 1 January - 28 February 2005	
Donor	Contributions
France	132,626
Ireland	254,453
Grand Total	254,453

The above contributions received through the Operational Reserve Category II will cover expenditures during the period from 1 January to 28 February 2005. The balance will be recorded as income against the Supplementary Budget.

CBMs Supplementary Budget USD 3,193,659 1 March - 31 December 2005	
Sector	Requirement
	(USD)
Protection , Monitoring and Co-ordination	871,612
Domestic Needs/Household Support	86,000
Legal Assistance/Protection	711,334
Transport/Logistics	1,097,600
Total Operations	2,766,546
Support Cost (7%) (*)	193,658
Programme Support	233,455
Grand Total	3,193,659

(*) A 7% support cost has been added to the total operational requirements and will be recovered from each contribution to meet indirect support costs in UNHCR (Field and HQs).