MOROCCO

UNHCR OPERATIONAL UPDATE

January-March 2015

HIGHLIGHTS

- End of February, the Bureau des Réfugiés et des Apatrides started the regularisation process of the refugees identified through UNHCR’s refugee status determination procedure after September 2013. At the end of March, 28 new refugees had been auditioned by the inter-ministerial Committee on regularisation and all were regularised.

- UNHCR registered a pick in Syrians approaching the office in January, with 222 persons. In February and March, the trend is back to what it was during the last quarter of 2014 (around 100 persons per month).

- On March 10, the Ministry of Moroccan residing abroad and of Migration Affairs presented to the donor community its “National strategy for Immigration and Asylum”. The strategy includes 11 sectorial programmes aiming at supporting refugees and immigrants to have access, i.a., to education, health, housing, social and humanitarian assistance and employment. It also includes the creation of a Moroccan Office for Refugees and Stateless Persons.

- On March 31, the Ministry of Migration Affairs organized the second annual forum on immigration under the theme “Challenges of multiculturalism and integration issues”. The forum was an opportunity to begin a national dialogue on the various dimensions of interculturalism, studying the achievements and limits of integration policies in other countries, focusing on the lessons which should guide public action in the construction of a Moroccan model of cultural integration.

KEY FIGURES

224
Children, adolescents and higher education students who have been supported in their schooling and studies

82
Families who have received a home visit from IP/UNHCR staff or refugee community workers

25 feasibility studies
Refugees who have been given the opportunity to develop a new income generating activity

141
Vulnerable refugee families who have benefited from cash assistance to cover their basic needs

12
Refugees who have departed for a resettling country in 2015

FUNDING

USD 3.4 million requested for the operation in 2015

Population of concern

A total of 3,580 persons of concern to UNHCR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population of concern</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asylum seeker population</td>
<td>2,937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee population</td>
<td>643</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

USD 3.4 million requested for the operation in 2015
OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

- **Migration** – On January 19, Morocco and the EU started a new round of discussions on readmission agreement and visa facilitation for Moroccans. These discussions take place within the Morocco-EU mobility partnership signed in June 2013. On February 9, the Government of Morocco held a press conference for announcing the final results of the one-time regularization campaign organized throughout 2014 by the Moroccan authorities for migrants in irregular stay. According to the Ministry of Interior, 27,332 applications were filed, of which 17,916 were accepted. After the Senegalese (6,600), the Syrians are first beneficiaries of the operation (5,250), followed by the Nigerians (2,380) and the Ivorians (2,281). During the same press conference, the Ministry communicated its intention to dismantle the settlements of irregular migrants located in the forests of Nador, surrounding the Spanish enclave of Melilla. The first operations of dismantlement have started effectively on Tuesday 10 February evening. Some 1,200 migrants have been arrested and displaced by bus towards southern cities of the country. Within this group, UNHCR has been able to identify 14 asylum seekers. Later on, between February 21 and March 6, all known detention centers across the country released the arrested migrants and no refoulement or deportation had been registered. According to the Spanish Minister of Equipment, 5,330 irregular migrants were rescued at sea by the Moroccan and Spanish authorities in 2014. 3,500 migrants were brought to Spain and 1,830 to Morocco. On the Spanish side, rescue-at-sea operations increased by 55% in comparison with 2013 (2,253 persons).

- **Human Rights** – On February 25, Amnesty International released its 2014-2015 report on the situation of human rights in the world. The document paints a grim picture of the situation in Morocco and still points to the practice of torture, restrictions on freedom, unlawful expulsion of migrants or maintaining the death penalty. Moroccan authorities denied the content of the report, claiming that it contains erroneous data and that the assessments do not reflect the reality of human rights in the country. On March 19, the Euro Mediterranean Network on Human Rights released a similar report, pointing out infringement against freedom of demonstrations and movement, and torture. The same report also lists improvements such as progress towards separation of powers and parity, Military Courts Act, the release of a man whose confession was obtained under torture, etc. On March 19, the Ministry of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development announced the official creation of the Instance for parity and fight against violence.

- **Politics** – On March 24, the EU released its report on the European Neighborhood Policy. The report acknowledges a continued reform process throughout 2014, including the development of the new policy on migration and asylum, the reform of the Code of Military Justice and the adoption of an organic law on finance, but stresses on improvements still to be done, notably regarding the fight against corruption, the access to information and the reform of the justice. Earlier during the month, the EU announced a 70 million € program to support this reform. On March 4, the AON company, specialized in the risk management, published its 2015 Political Risk Map, rating 163 countries worldwide. According to AON, Morocco is exposed to a medium political risk due to its stability and business environment, relatively better than other countries in the MENA region.

- **Security** – On January 21, the Moroccan Parliament adopted a new law to prevent terrorism (Law 86-40). It sentences to 5-15 years of prison the association with terrorist groups, the military training inside or outside of Morocco, the apology and the incitement to terrorism. The Ministry of Interior recently shared the information that more than 1,200 Moroccans reportedly joined Iraq and Syria to fight with the Islamic State. Morocco is very vigilant about people who can potentially return to Morocco to carry out terrorist acts. On March 22, Morocco announced the dismantling of a terrorist cell planning attacks against political and military figures on behalf of the Islamic State (IS). The operations took place in several cities of the Kingdom (Agadir, Taroudant, Marrakech, Boujaad, Tiflet, Tanger, Ain Harouda-Casablanca and Laayoune). The cell was active in the recruitment and the
sändning of young Moroccans in Syria and Iraq to fight in IS ranks. Two days earlier, the Minister of Interior and the Minister of Justice announced the creation of a new security body, the Central Bureau for Judicial Investigations. The CBJI is empowered to operate nationwide and will be in charge of crimes related to robbery, drug, weapons and explosives trafficking, terrorism and state security. The establishment of CBJI was presented by the Government as a way to consolidate and adapt the legal arsenal to address the major developments related to security challenges.

**UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS**

**Registration (REG)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reporting period</th>
<th>Cumulative since January</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>Persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Syrians</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Others</strong></td>
<td>220</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>318</td>
<td>679</td>
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</table>

The interviews of Syrians by the Regularisation Commission are on-going, but no decision taken on their status. The number of non-Syrian asylum-seekers approaching the office has remained stable over the reporting period. This is despite the end of the regularisation initiative for irregular migrants on 31 December 2014.

At the end of March, the waiting period between first contact and registration interview was 4 months for Syrians and 2 months for non-Syrian asylum-seekers. New registration staff will start in April to give support to reduce this waiting period to 1 month and a half for Syrians and 1 month for the others.

** Refugee status determination (RSD)**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First Instance</th>
<th>Appeal</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewed</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reporting period</strong></td>
<td>187</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cumulative since January</strong></td>
<td>187</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The number of asylum-seeker cases pending interview was¹:

- **1,094** at the beginning of 2015
- **1,094** at the beginning of the reporting period

¹ The figures mentioned do not include Syrian cases, as they are dealt in a distinct manner from other nationalities (*prima facie*, temporary protection)
From February, the RSD unit gave priority to vulnerable cases who had not been interviewed earlier (women at risk, UM, LGBTI, SGBV cases). This explains the increase of the number of cased recognised during the reporting period. The office also started the interviews with asylum-seekers from Central African Republic, Iraq, Palestine and Yemen with a high recognition rate due to the prevailing situation in those countries.

Outreach and community based activities

- **Number of asylum-seekers referred to UNHCR Rabat by UNHCR partner in Oujda (North Eastern Province):**
  - During the reporting period: **75 cases (141 persons)**. Among them: 59 men, 12 unaccompanied children and 4 women principal applicants. By nationality: Syria (55%), Cameroon (9%), Guinea Conakry (5%), Central African Republic (5%), Mali (4%), Nigeria (3%) and other (19%).

- **Number of home visits:**
  - During the reporting period: **82 home visits** (68 by IP and UNHCR staff; 14 by refugee community workers), 44 in Rabat, 23 in Casablanca, 4 in Kenitra, 11 in Tanger and Tetouan.

- **Number of vulnerable refugee families assisted with regular monthly cash assistance:**
  - During the reporting period: **141 families** (with an increase of over 50% compared to December 2014, mainly due to assistance provided to Syrian refugees).

Legal counselling and representation

- **Number of cases/persons of concern referred to UNHCR legal aid partner which received free legal aid and counselling:**
  - During the reporting period: **57 cases/68 persons** (22 refugees, 46 asylum-seekers).

78% were requests for judicial assistance, including 50% for lodging complaints. 35% of the persons assisted are minors (17% are unaccompanied) and 37% are women or girls. The applicants are mainly from Ivory Coast (26%), Democratic Republic of Congo (22%) and Syria (9%). 14 persons were assisted for legal documentation, including 7 for birth documentation. The Rabat first instance court took two dismissal judgments for two cases of single mothers requesting the registration of their children. The court rejected the cases because the mothers did not present attestations for the choice of the family name and for the choice of the father name (Muslim names as stated in the articles 16 and 3 of the Civil Status Law n°37.99). The lawyer introduced the same request before another judge of the same court. The second judge took two positive decisions and issued birth declaratory judgments for the two children. However, the Public prosecutor appealed both judgments. UNHCR legal implementing partner will plead using past case law, best interest of the child and international covenants.

Sexual and gender-based violence

- **Number of SGBV survivors identified and referred to UNHCR operational partners:**
  - During the reporting period: **39 persons of concern**

36 asylum-seekers and 3 refugees declared they had been victim of an SGBV incident. 21 cases occurred in the country of origin, 9 along the way to Morocco or at the north-eastern border between Algeria and Morocco, and 9 in Morocco. Out of the 39 persons of concern, 25 are women or girls and 14 are men or boys.
Number of refugee SGBV survivors who received an assistance from UNHCR implementing partners (medical, material assistance, legal aid, psychosocial counselling, and/or security/safety measures):
- During the reporting period: asylum seekers survivors were referred to ALCS for assistance, whereas the three refugees were assisted by UNHCR implementing partners. They all received medical, psychological and material assistance. 8 survivors of SGBV were referred for legal assistance and 5 lodged effectively a complaint.

Number of information/sensitisation sessions conducted/number of participants: three information sessions were held on SGBV and HIV/AIDS in collaboration with the operational partner ALCS. 67 persons of concern attended (34 women and 33 men).

The office finalised the multi-year SGBV strategy. In order to increase prevention of and protection against SGBV, the multi-year (2015-2016) strategy will focus on the following main objectives: 1) Reduce the risk of SGBV for persons of concern; 2) Improve the early detection of SGBV survivors of concern; 3) Improve the quality of SGBV response services; 4) Strengthen interagency coordination on SGBV and collaboration with relevant civil society organizations and other stakeholders; 5) Support Government/institutional capacities on SGBV.

Education

Number of refugee children supported to access kindergarten education level (grants covering registration and tuition fees):
- During the reporting period: 16 children.

Number of refugee children and adolescents supported to access primary/secondary education level (remedial classes, grants covering the purchase of essential school supplies and transportation costs):
- During the reporting period: 195 children and adolescents, 67% of children of concern in primary school age.

Assistance has increased by 47% in the first trimester due to the identification of school needs of Syrian refugees’ children.

Number of refugee students supported to access higher education level (scholarships):
- During the reporting period: 13 refugee students.

Health

Number of refugees and asylum-seekers referred to primary health care centres:
- During the reporting period: 205 refugees (Asylum seekers who are referred by UNHCR are consulted by AU).

Number of refugees and asylum-seekers who benefitted from sensitization on health-related issues (HIV/AIDS, nutrition, other):
- During the reporting period: 67 persons of concern (34 women and 33 men).

Number of refugees with chronic disease who benefitted from appropriate health care:
- During the reporting period: 166 refugees.

These 166 chronic patients are followed by AU, including 31 severe cases. These are patients with diseases justifying a monthly treatment: hypertension, diabetes, hyperthyroidism, hypothyroidism, asthma, viral hepatitis, epilepsy,
glaucoma, syndrome of anxiety and depression, others benefit from treatment on demand in case of acute exacerbation such as osteoarthritis, back pain, mucocutaneous allergies, etc.

- **Number of deliveries:**
  - During the reporting period: 7 deliveries.

### Livelihoods and Self-Reliance

- **Total number of refugees benefitting from vocational training:**
  - During the reporting period: 20 refugees. Another 30 refugees were identified to start vocational training in May 2015.

- **Number of new refugees whose income generating activity has been accepted:**
  - During the reporting period: 25 refugees.

The feasibility studies conducted by the enterprise counselors include commercial projects in general like (juice shop, poultry, perfumery, cosmetics, mobile phones, snakes, vegetables, spare parts, clothing), Restoration and pastry. There are also new project ideas such as a project on solar energy, dental prosthesis and shoemaker. The team prepared 10 additional feasibility studies. This increases the total feasibility studies on track to 25. 10 other studies are planned for early April aiming at financing at least 30 or more refugees, considering the projects in association.

- **Total number of refugees supported to develop their income generating project:**
  - During the reporting period: 10 refugees

Over 10 financial strengthening files are being processed. The financial strengthening was postponed to April with a target of at least 10 reinforcements.

### Accommodation

- **Number of refugees and asylum-seekers who have newly benefitted from emergency shelter (short term housing)**
  - During the reporting period: 13 persons

Among these 13 POCs, 10 were refugees and three were asylum seekers in DSR procedure with an elevated risk of protection. Among these 13 POCs, four were identified as LGBTI, five as UAM, one single parent with his child, one homeless refugee with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), one asylum seeker with psychiatric disorder in DSR procedure.

- **Number of refugees and asylum-seekers currently benefitting from emergency shelter:** 13 persons (10 refugees and three asylum seekers).

- **Number of refugees and asylum-seekers who have placed in safe houses (long term housing) during the reporting period:** six persons.

- **Number of refugees and asylum-seekers currently benefitting from safe houses:**
  - During the reporting period: 23 persons.

20 visits were conducted by the Fondation Orient-Occident for monitoring the situation in the protection homes. Out of the 23 beneficiaries, 12 are unaccompanied minors, three young adults (former UAM with specific needs), seven LGBTI refugees, one single woman with a serious medical condition In order to respond to the increasing need to
accommodate UAMs in protection houses (nine new accompanied minors were recognised between January 1 and March 31, 2015).

Durable Solutions

Resettlement

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cases identified for resettlement</th>
<th>Cases submitted for resettlement</th>
<th>Cases departed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>Cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting period</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative since January</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of the 12 refugees who departed on resettlement, seven went to Canada, four to France and one to Belgium.

Percentage of cases submitted under the category of women and girls at risk in 2015: 71% (5 cases).

Voluntary repatriation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Repatriation demands</th>
<th>Cases departed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>Persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting period</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cumulative since January</td>
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<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
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Working in partnership

- On February 7-8, UNHCR organized with the legal aid association *Droit et Justice* a training for NGO representatives from the region of Tanger – Tetouan on registration, refugee status determination and other asylum and protection issues.
- On February 19, a meeting of the Protection Working Group (PWG) took place in Oujda. The PWG discussed ways to improve information dissemination among women/girls on the asylum seekers. The number of women who are referred remains low, and one of the reasons is that women/girls do not usually live at the University campus but rather share private accommodations in Oujda, which makes it more difficult to reach them.
- On February 20, UNHCR took part in a training for 14 young journalists on diversity, migration and asylum organized by the Media Diversity Institute (20 February).
- On March 13-14, UNHCR took part in a workshop on migration and trafficking for civil society organizations of the Oriental Province organized by IOM in Oujda and made a presentation on the refugee status determination for victims of trafficking and persons at risk of being trafficked.
UPDATE FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The earmarked recorded contributions for UNHCR operations in Morocco in 2015 amount to 630,000 USD.

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed directly to this operation, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds.

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