WFP Algeria | Brief

Reporting period: 01 October–31 December 2015

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COUNTRY STRATEGY

WFP in Algeria supports the most vulnerable refugees from Western Sahara meet their basic food and nutritional needs, as well as maintaining and strengthening their livelihoods. WFP provides 90,000 general food rations and 35,000 supplementary rations on a monthly basis. Under its nutrition programme, WFP targets some 22,500 pregnant women, nursing mothers and malnourished children aged between 6 and 59 months, and distributes mid-morning snacks to 32,500 primary schoolchildren under the school feeding (SF) activity. WFP plans to build the resilience of the Sahrawi refugees and explores several distribution modality options. While maintaining general food distributions, efforts are underway to increase collaboration with the Algerian Government in other sectors, as well to fortify locally purchased wheat flour. WFP has been present in Algeria since 1986.

OPERATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Description</th>
<th>Project Duration</th>
<th>Planned number of rations</th>
<th>Total requirements (in USD)</th>
<th>Total received (in USD)</th>
<th>Total Funded (%)</th>
<th>6 Months Net Funding Requirements (in USD)*</th>
<th>Top 5 Donors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assistance to Refugees from Western Sahara</td>
<td>Jan 2013–Dec 2016</td>
<td>124,960</td>
<td>91,604,103</td>
<td>69,399,804</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>5,176,017</td>
<td>USA, ECHO, Switzerland, Spain, CERF</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*January – June 2016

Summary of WFP assistance: WFP currently represents the only regular and reliable source of food for refugees from Western Sahara living in Algeria. These refugees are located in five camps near the town of Tindouf, some 2,000 km southwest of Algiers. This is an isolated and economically vulnerable desert area of south-western Algeria, where the climate and living conditions are harsh and opportunities for self-reliance extremely limited. Affected refugees, therefore, rely almost entirely on protracted humanitarian aid from the international community. In 2014, the Sahrawi refugee crisis ranked first in the European Commission Humanitarian Office’s (ECHO) Forgotten Crisis Assessment.

WFP assistance to refugees from Western Sahara contributes to Millennium Development Goals 1 (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger), 2 (achieve universal primary education), 4 (reduce child mortality) and 5 (improve maternal health). WFP provides a basic food basket to the refugees through general food distributions (GFD), with a diversified dry ration comprising of wheat flour, barley, rice, lentils or beans or split peas, Supercereal, vegetable oil and sugar. The overall caloric value is 2,166 kcal/ration/day. Mid-morning snacks are distributed among kindergarteners and primary school pupils, and specialised nutritious products are provided to malnourished pregnant women and nursing mothers and children below the age of five. Since January 2014, WFP has assumed a central role in the management of all nutrition activities in the camps and coordinates with UNHCR, national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The Algerian Red Crescent (Croissant-Rouge Algerien: CRA) provides transport and implementation support, in coordination with the Western Sahara Red Crescent (WSRC), now referred to as the Saharawi Red Crescent (Media Luna Roja Saharaui: MLRS) and the Sahrawi Health Authorities (SHA).

Refugees from Western Sahara are notably organised. Along with governing structures, civil society groups are mandated to administer various functions, including food distributions at the local level. MLRS participates throughout the different stages of the project cycle. Women and girls’ contribution is critical to manage and deliver food at the final distribution points, where they are the main entitlement holders. In addition, WFP supports the rehabilitation of existing warehouses and food storage platforms damaged by extreme weather conditions.

WFP leads efforts aimed at the harmonisation of food security and nutrition interventions in the camps by chairing the Food Coordination Cell (CdC) meeting in Algiers and, together with WSRC, the Food Sector Meeting in Tindouf, both on a monthly basis. The CdC provides strategic guidance and brings together UN agencies, Algerian authorities, implementing partners and donors, while the Food Sector Meeting addresses operational issues with implementing partners at the Tindouf level and feeds into the CdC.

http://www.wfp.org/countries/algeria
OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

**ACHIEVEMENTS**

- In response to the flood crisis of October 2015, WFP distributed a total of 205 mt of food commodities, including wheat flour, barley, Supercereal, vegetable oil, sugar and dates, totalling 85,000 rations. Sufficient for up to seven days, this action bridged the gap until the November GFD. This distribution was in replacement of household food losses.
- As a result of increased fund raising efforts, the Country Office received contributions from USA (USD 1.5 million), Norway (USD 583,000), Spain (USD 190,000) and UN Central Emergency Response Funds (CERF) (USD 3 million) to ensure regular distribution of full food rations to refugees in the aftermath of the floods crisis and allow for an Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA), the rehabilitation of distribution points and storage platforms, and monitoring costs.
- WFP is exploring the use of alternative transfer modalities, such as Cash Based Transfers (CBT). A training on CBT took place between 27 September and 01 October in Algiers, followed by several assessments in Tindouf and neighbouring refugee camps.
- WFP continues to actively advocate for additional funding from public and private donors. Requirements for current activities (GFD, nutrition, school feeding) are prioritized, but funding for new resilience activities and starting costs for the gradual implementation of the CBT distribution modality are also included.
- An EFSA was conducted by WFP in the refugee camps from 08-15 December to assess the impact of the recent floods on the food security situation of the refugee population. The EFSA report is expected in early February 2016.
- A fortification mission also took place to assess the feasibility of fortifying wheat flour procured from WFP suppliers. This would allow WFP to procure locally less costly fortified wheat flour to continue covering nutritional requirements, while relying less on international purchases.

** ISSUES/CHALLENGES**

- Persistent rains and floods hit Sahrawi refugee camps late October, destroying refugee shelters and food stocks from the October GFD. The floods crisis occurred against a backdrop of funding shortfalls and pipeline breaks that started in early 2015.
- Funding shortfalls have also resulted in the replacement of the more costly commodities (chickpeas, peas, rice, and barley) and the prioritisation of local purchases (unfortified wheat flour and vegetable oil). These measures reduce food basket diversification and the availability of fortified foods, thus jeopardising nutritional improvements attained during the last years.
- Over the next ten months, WFP will be facing a shortfall of close to 16,142 mt of food commodities (valued at USD 13.8 million), in addition to the repayment of immediate response advances.
- Both the Algerian and Sahrawi authorities are apprehensive to any programmatic change (CBT, resilience); this complicates the assessing, formulating and implementation of new activities. Nonetheless, advocacy efforts have been intensified to obtain buy-in from both authorities. Any such activities would be more easily acceptable if they were considered additional to current food assistance.
- There is increasing frustration in refugee camps among the youth which is targeted at the UN without distinction between humanitarian actors and United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). Any change in food assistance could have implications on political negotiations and stability.

**PARTNERSHIPS**

WFP's programme is implemented in partnership with UNHCR, CRA and, through the latter, MLRC. CISP and WFP partner for school feeding and post distribution monitoring. WFP also supports the improvement of infrastructure and equipment and plans to extend water pipelines to schools with insufficient water supply in the remote camp of Dakhla, in collaboration with Solidaridad Internacional de Andalucía (SI-A). Under the nutrition programme, WFP has an agreement with the NGO Médicos del Mundo to reduce risks associated with malnutrition and anemia during pregnancy and breastfeeding, through enhanced pre- and post-natal visits to clinics. WFP Spanish Red Cross (SRC) and Oxfam are coordinating distributions, to complement the WFP food ration with 2 to 3 kg per person per month of fresh produce. Collaboration exists on storage capacity at Rabouni with SRC, Oxfam and the MLRC.

**COUNTRY BACKGROUND**

Algeria is a middle income country and is almost debt free with around USD 200 billion of monetary reserves. The presence of WFP in Algeria is to support refugees from Western Sahara, hosted by the country since 1975. WFP started providing basic food support to the most vulnerable refugees in 1986, upon the request of the Government of Algeria. Despite continued negotiations, there is little sign of a durable solution to the political stalemate.

The 2013 Joint Assessment Mission report confirmed that most refugees from Western Sahara are still highly reliant on humanitarian assistance, albeit with some disparities in vulnerability within the camp population. The November 2012 Nutrition Survey indicated that there had been a slight improvement in the overall nutrition situation of women and children, however, global acute malnutrition among children 6-59 months is under 8 percent while chronic malnutrition stands at 25 percent.

School attendance is below the official enrolment data, reflecting seasonal illnesses, among other factors. Short term hunger among primary school children has been observed through monitoring visits, when food assistance is not provided.