Operational Context

Algeria has been hosting refugees from Western Sahara since 1975. These refugees are in camps in the harsh and isolated desert environment of western Algeria, where opportunities for self-reliance are limited, forcing them to depend on humanitarian assistance for their survival. Upon the request of the Algerian Government, WFP has been present in the country since 1986.

The latest 2018 food security assessment confirmed the dependence of the Sahrawi camp population on food assistance; 30 percent of the population is food insecure, while 58 percent is vulnerable to food insecurity. A mere 12 percent of the Sahrawi population is food secure.

WFP meets the basic food needs of refugees through the provision of general food assistance, nutrition-sensitive school feeding and complementary livelihood activities. WFP works on improving the nutrition status of refugees through the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition and the prevention of malnutrition in pregnant and lactating women and girls, women and girls of reproductive age and children aged 6–59 months.

WFP currently represents the main regular and reliable source of food for the Sahrawi refugees in Algeria.

Operational Updates

- In February WFP distributed 133,672 food rations that included 8 kg of wheat flour, 1.9 kg rice, 2.1 kg barley, 2 kg of lentils, 200 g of corn soy blend, 750 g sugar and 920 g of fortified vegetable oil. About 2,139 kcal per person per day were received by beneficiaries during the month of February.

- For the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) and anaemia in pregnant and lactating women (PLWGs), WFP distributed daily rations of wheat soya blend mixed with sugar and vegetable oil to 663 women. In addition, around 8,251 PLWGs received fresh food vouchers to provide a more nutritious diet and to prevent MAM and anaemia.

- As part of treatment of MAM in children, 554 children aged between 6-59 months received daily rations of specialised nutritious food throughout February, while MAM prevention activities reached 13,853 boys and girls aged 6-59 months, who also received specialized nutritious food in health centres.

- Schooling in the refugee camps resumed in September with a strict health and safety protocol. In February, 39,347 boys and girls in all the camp schools were able to benefit from WFP’s school feeding programme, which had the aim of encouraging and maintaining student enrolment and class attendance. Every child received a mid-morning or afternoon snack consisting of high energy biscuits and a glass of milk.

- In February, the TV show called “Min choy naadel chi zein” (“cooking something nice with little”), funded by WFP, resumed. In the show a chef uses all commodities included in the WFP-provided food basket to prepare meals and addresses such topics as malnutrition, anaemia, stunting and diabetes through while promoting healthy cooking practices. The TV show is greatly appreciated by the communities and has an impact on the culinary habits of the refugee community by promoting a diversification of dishes.

In Numbers

133,672 people assisted in February 2021

2,121 mt of food assistance distributed

2,139 kcal/person/day provided through the general food basket

US$ 7.9 m six-month (April – September 2021) net funding requirement
Strategic Result 1: Everyone has access to food

**Focus area:** Crisis response

**Activities:**
- Provide general food assistance to targeted food-insecure refugees in camps near Tindouf.
- Provide nutrition-sensitive school feeding.
- Provide refugees with complementary livelihood opportunities that benefit women and men equitably.

Strategic Result 2: No one suffers from malnutrition

**Focus area:** Crisis response

**Activities:**
- Provide children aged 6–59 months and pregnant and lactating women and girls with assistance for the treatment and prevention of moderate acute malnutrition.

The situation in the camps

- According to the authorities, there have been no cases of COVID-19 in the Tindouf refugee camps in February.
- To prevent the spread of coronavirus, WFP and partners continued their prevention and safety measures as part of the various assistance activities. This included adjusting the procedures for food and voucher distributions to encourage social distancing and the use of personal protective equipment.
- In schools and kindergartens, students are taught in two separate sessions to avoid overcrowding of classrooms. Also, strict health & safety measures are enforced, including regular handwashing. Schools and kindergartens are equipped with hand sanitizer and all pupils wear masks during lessons. A comprehensive approach to protect students was formulated as part of the ‘safe back to school strategy’.
- WFP and its partners’ monitoring teams continued their regular monitoring activities in the camps during February.

- The UN base (Weather Haven) opened partially as of 7 February at 50 percent capacity.

**Challenges**

- The COVID-19 crisis with its many health, social and economic implications continues to pose a threat to the Sahrawi refugees that find themselves in a difficult context with a weak health system and highly constrained water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) situation.

**Deputy Regional Director visit**

- From 1–4 February, WFP’s Deputy Regional Director Kate Newton conducted a visit to the Tindouf refugee camps. The visit included all of WFP’s projects across the camps, including school feeding activities, as well as visit to warehouses in Rabouni. Furthermore, nutrition prevention projects at health dispensaries focusing on the prevention and treatment of moderate acute malnutrition for pregnant and lactating women, as well as children from 6-59 months were visited, as was the fish farm project at N’khaila. The delegation also visited retailers that participate in the cash-based transfer project.

**Photo caption:** WFP’s Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa visiting the H2Optimal project in the refugee camps in Tindouf. This project uses innovative techniques to enable agriculture in the desert. Groasis© water-boxes use 90 percent less water and help vegetables and trees grow in arid desert environments.

**Donors**

Andorra, Brazil, ECHO, Germany, Italy, France, Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Switzerland, UK, USA, Choithrams and Mastercard