

HUMANITARIAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (HIP)

NORTH AFRICA

The full implementation of this version of the HIP is conditional upon the approval of the transfer by the Budgetary Authorities.

AMOUNT: EUR 21 000 000

The present Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) was prepared on the basis of financing decision ECHO/WWD/BUD/2024/01000 (Worldwide Decision) and the related General Guidelines for Operational Priorities on Humanitarian Aid (Operational Priorities). The purpose of the HIP and its annexes¹ is to serve as a communication tool from DG ECHO² to its partners and assist them in the preparation of their proposals. The provisions of the Worldwide Decision and the General Conditions of the Agreement with the European Commission shall take precedence over the provisions in this document.

0. MAJOR CHANGES SINCE PREVIOUS VERSION OF THE HIP

MODIFICATION 2 (SEPTEMBER 2024)

This modification consists of a top-up of EUR 3 000 000 to address the urgent needs of people who continue fleeing the fighting in Sudan. Eighteen months after the start of the hostilities, the conflict in Sudan continues to drive displacement across the region, including to Egypt and Libya. Today, Egypt hosts over 1 million refugees and asylum seekers of which 778 215 are already registered with UNHCR. Between the onset of the Sudan conflict and 17 September 2024, 740 939 newly displaced persons approached UNHCR for registration appointments; about 326 000 individuals are pending registration. The additional funding in Egypt (EUR 2 000 000) aims at addressing the most pressing needs through Multi-purpose Cash Assistance. In Libya, and more specifically in Al Kufra, the influx of Sudanese refugees is putting under serious strain all public services. This new funding (EUR 1 000 000) aims at addressing basic health services and WASH.

MODIFICATION 1 (APRIL 2024)

This modification consists of a top-up of EUR 2 000 000 to address the urgent needs of people fleeing the fighting in Sudan that began in April 2023. One year in, the conflict in Sudan continues to drive displacement across the region, including to Egypt. According to most recent figures received by UNHCR from Egyptian authorities, 500,000 Sudanese and 8,827 individuals of other nationalities have crossed into Egypt between April 2023 and 17 March 2024; this number only accounts for regular entries. This additional funding aims to address the most pressing needs through Multi-purpose Cash Assistance and reinforce the Education in Emergencies priorities.

1. CONTEXT

The 2024 HIP for North Africa has a twofold objective. First, it addresses the most dire humanitarian needs in the context of the Sahrawi refugee crisis in Algeria and those of the refugees/asylum seekers in Egypt. Second, it targets specific humanitarian protection challenges in North Africa through dedicated regional actions.

¹ Technical annex and thematic policies annex

² Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)
ECHO/-NF/BUD/2024/91000

This HIP is published against the background of the major crisis taking place in the Middle East, and may also respond to sudden or slow-onset new emergencies in North Africa, if important unmet humanitarian needs emerge. DG ECHO does not intend to extend funding for the response to the sudden onset disasters in Morocco and Libya beyond the funding that has been allocated in 2023.

1.1. The Sahrawi crisis

Gathered in five camps in the Sahara Desert around Tindouf under extreme climatic and environmental conditions and limited livelihood opportunities, the Sahrawi refugees are mostly dependent on external humanitarian assistance with no perspective for return, integration, or resettlement in the foreseeable future. The ceasefire brokered in 1991 by the United Nations (UN) between Morocco and the Polisario Front in Western Sahara collapsed in November 2020, leading to low intensity hostilities. Although these exchanges of fire have very limited direct impact on the situation in the camps, an aggravation of the conflict cannot be excluded and might worsen the humanitarian situation.

DG ECHO's Funding Information Tool for 2023-2024 identified high humanitarian needs, with a medium INFORM severity index. The impact of the crisis on the population in the Sahrawi refugee camps is assessed to be high. The long-lasting underlying conflict has largely escaped international attention.

1.2. Refugees in Egypt

Egypt remains both a destination and transit country for refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants. The drivers of these movements are interrelated: climate change and environmental degradation, demographic changes, lack of economic opportunity, persecution, and violent conflicts. Egypt's inflation rate³ has reached an all-time high of 41% in June 2023. This has severely affected all population groups. According to WFP, 38.4% of Egypt's population lives below the national poverty line⁴. After Chad, Egypt is the second largest arrival country for people fleeing the conflict in Sudan, with nearly 317 230 new arrivals since 15 April⁵. This has exacerbated the situation, overstretched available capacities and services, and risks further increasing social tensions. The economic crisis has eroded the coping capacities of many of the over 370 000⁶ refugees and asylum seekers registered with UNHCR. Notwithstanding a relatively sound asylum space, refugees face severe and multiple barriers in accessing basic services. Despite efforts to implement a 'one-refugee' approach, Sub-Saharan refugees experience higher vulnerability and discrimination, while receiving less assistance, and face greater difficulties to access basic services, also due to earmarked donor funding.

DG ECHO has provided humanitarian support to refugees and asylum seekers, most of them living in densely populated urban centres. DG ECHO's Integrated Analysis Framework for 2023-2024 identified high humanitarian needs for refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt. The vulnerability of the population affected by the crisis is assessed to be high.

³ Information by WFP, July 2023; the annual urban inflation rate in Egypt accelerated to 36.5% in July 2023, up from 35.7% in the previous month, Egypt's annual core inflation rate, which excludes volatile items such as food, reached 41% in June; source: <https://tradingeconomics.com/egypt/inflation-cpi>

⁴ WFP update, July 2023

⁵ Some 310,000 Sudanese and 7,230 third country nationals (TCN), information by MOFA, as of 14 September

⁶ UNHCR Monthly Statistical Report 30 September 2023

	Algeria	Egypt
INFORM Risk Index (0-10)⁷	3.6	4.7
Hazard and Exposure	3.6	6.0
Vulnerability	2.9	3.8
Lack of Coping Capacity	4.4	4.6
INFORM Severity Index (0-5)⁸	2.6	1.9
Impact of the crisis	3.8	1.9
Condition of people affected	1.8	1.8
Complexity of the crisis	2.4	2.2
Number of People in Need	173 600	
Human Development Index (0-1)	0.745 ⁹	0.73 ¹⁰
Total Population¹¹	44 180 000¹²	112 716 598¹³

1.3. The protection crisis in the region

North Africa and the wider Middle East region are marred by violations of IHL, a shrinking humanitarian space and restrictions against civil society organisations, criminalisation of aid and aid workers and attacks against civilian infrastructure often linked to Armed Groups and De facto Authorities (AGDA).

The region also remains a destination and transit point for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Displacement is triggered by accelerated climate change, increased competition for resources, conflict and tensions. As a result of their fragile legal status, displaced people are particularly exposed to insecurity, threats, harassment, sexual and gender-based violence and legal intimidation, as well as fear of retaliation.

DG ECHO considers that these specific humanitarian challenges, which cut across national borders, need to be addressed through targeted and innovative regional initiatives.

2. HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

2.1. People in need of humanitarian assistance:

The Sahrawi crisis

According to a report by UNHCR based on an interagency study from 2018, the Algerian government estimates the number of refugees living in the camps around Tindouf at 173 600. WFP's 2018 food security assessment (FSA) found that 88% of the Sahrawi refugee population is vulnerable to food insecurity or food insecure. WFP estimates the number of food insecure people living in the camps at 133 672 people (77% of the whole population). Further analysis of this caseload shows that it is constituted of 49% females and 51% males, and that 37.6% are children. 2022 Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) results indicated that 37% of the Sahrawi refugee population have no source of

⁷ INFORM Risk is a global, open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters <https://drmhc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk> (country profile 2023)

⁸ The INFORM Severity Index is a way to objectively measure and compare the severity of humanitarian crises and disasters globally. <https://drmhc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Severity> (update from 22/07/2023)

⁹ Algeria has place 92 of 191 countries of the HDI

¹⁰ WB 2021, Egypt is ranking 97 out of 191 countries of the HDI

¹¹ World Bank data, 2021

¹² World Bank, 2021

¹³ Worldometer: Estimation mid-year

income. Formal registration of the Sahrawi refugees by UNHCR does not exist and more recent multi sector needs assessments by UN agencies are lacking.

Refugees in Egypt

According to most recent figures received by UNHCR from Egyptian authorities, 500,000 Sudanese and 8,827 individuals of other nationalities have crossed into Egypt between April 2023 and 17 March 2024; this number only accounts for regular entries. The number of Sudanese refugees registered with UNHCR increased by 384 percent between April 2023 and the end of March 2024, reaching almost 294,000 individuals, while the overall UNHCR registered population increased by 94 percent reaching approximately 570,000.¹⁴ UNHCR projects that over 800,000 refugees and asylum seekers may be registered by the beginning of 2025. UNHCR has described this increase as "exponential and expected rise since entry restrictions were imposed in June 2023".

Increased numbers of detentions of refugees, even those in the registration process or waiting for a residency appointment, and deportations into Sudan continue. Registered refugees face challenges accessing services they are entitled to under GoE policy, including health care and education. Due to limited resources, Egyptian hospitals are turning patients away or charging unaffordable fees. Rising rent, food, health, and education costs have significantly impacted refugees in Egypt, both those who have resided in Egypt for 5 to 10 years and those who have arrived recently following the escalation of hostilities in Sudan.

The economic crisis has eroded the coping capacities of many of the over 570 000 refugees and asylum seekers registered.

Notwithstanding a relatively sound asylum space, refugees face severe and multiple barriers in accessing basic services. Access to protection, public education, and health services is severely constrained. This is in part due to the overstretched capacity for the host population itself, the low quality of services and discrimination. Despite efforts to implement a 'one-refugee' approach, Sub-Saharan refugees have often experienced higher vulnerability and discrimination, while receiving less assistance, and face greater difficulties to access basic services.

Refugees and asylum-seekers encounter a wide range of vulnerabilities and threats. The lack of valid residence permits limits livelihood opportunities and exposes the most vulnerable, notably those of sub-Saharan origin, and in particular girls and women, to increased protection risks. Significant administrative barriers and fear for their physical safety limit access to basic services, causing refugees and asylum-seekers to resort to informal, exploitative, and often dangerous employment opportunities or other negative coping strategies. In March, UNHCR noted an influx of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC); registering a total of 6,848 UASC as of 31 March.⁴⁹ Most of those registered are Eritreans, followed by Sudanese. The regular waiting period for UASC registration appointments is currently 7 days, thanks to UNHCR having increased the number of registration slots for UASC to 860 per month, up from 600 in December 2023.¹⁵

	Algeria	Egypt
Category of beneficiary (such as IDPs, refugees, food insecure people etc.)	173 600 refugees of which 133 627 food insecure	374 725 refugees and asylum seekers

Protection needs in North Africa

¹⁴ 1 UNHCR Egypt, Sudan Emergency Response Update (17 April 2024)

¹⁵ UNHCR, Child Protection Sub-Working Group (March 2024).

Specific protection challenges that cut across borders affect civilians, people on the move and aid workers in various ways. Civilians are often impacted directly by IHL violations, including attacks or occupation of civilian infrastructure. Displaced people often lack access to basic services as a result of their fragile legal status or their lack of civil documentation. They are often in need of specialised protection services. Finally, aid workers and their dependents are affected by the criminalisation of aid in many countries in the wider region.

2.2. Description of the most acute humanitarian needs

2.2.1 Food and nutrition

The Sahrawi crisis

The latest available data on food security dates to 2022¹⁶. According to WFP, 77% of the refugees depend on humanitarian assistance for their minimum daily food intake and access to basic services. The share of households with acceptable Food Consumption Score (FCS) fell from 60.3% in 2019 to 55.3% in February 2022. The percentage of children whose food consumption complied with the minimum dietary diversity score (DDS) reduced significantly from 54.3% in 2019 to 34.6% in 2022. According to WFP's latest available nutrition survey, released in June 2022¹⁷, levels of malnutrition in all its forms increased between 2019 and 2022 among the most vulnerable group of women and children younger than 5 years. The Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rate rose from 7.6% in 2019 to 10.7% in 2022. Anemia affects more than half of children under 5 years of age and women in reproductive age. The 2022 Joint Assessment Mission performed by WFP and UNHCR found that 60% of the Sahrawi refugees are economically inactive and one third of them are without any source of income. Those refugees that have income spend about 75% of it on food. Sharp price increases of food and fuel resulting from the Russian war on Ukraine are likely to further worsen the situation of refugees. The increased costs provoked significant reductions in food quantities delivered by WFP in 2022¹⁸.

2.2.2 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

The Sahrawi crisis

Access to enough drinking water remains challenging in the Sahara Desert. For many years Sahrawi refugees in the five camps only benefitted from 12 litres per person per day on average, delivered mostly by water trucks, whereas SPHERE¹⁹ standards set a minimum of 15 litres. The multiannual WASH strategy implemented since 2019 has decreased the dependency on unsustainable water trucking from 70% in 2019 to 49% in 2022. 51% of the water is now supplied via the water network, thus significantly improving access to water and meeting the SPHERE minimum standard. The extension of the water distribution network will gradually replace water trucking. The WASH strategy shall be fully implemented by 2026. Important investments need to continue until then to achieve considerable savings in the longer term.

Most of the water has high salt content and requires specific treatment to ensure quality. About 1/3 of the distributed water is treated by reverse osmosis as it contains high levels of fluorides and minerals which constitute a health risk. The global inflation also impacted the water sector with notable price increases for construction material and services. As a result, the strategy's implementation risks being delayed, if not halted as other key donors remain reluctant to engage.

2.2.3 Health

The Sahrawi crisis

¹⁶ New Food Security Assessment is undergoing and should be completed at the beginning of 2024.

¹⁷ WFP Nutrition survey June 2022

¹⁸ WFP's funding requirements per year increased from US\$ 20 million to US\$ 35 million.

¹⁹ SPHERE: humanitarian minimum standards for life-saving assistance

The healthcare system in the refugee camps fully depends on international aid. Health service delivery is weak in terms of access, quality coverage, and referrals to specialised services. There is scarcity of qualified medical staff, due to high staff turnover as incentives for work are low. Essential drugs are not always available and biological waste management is erratic. Health Information System as well as epidemiological preparedness, response and surveillance require further improvement. Specific health needs of the most vulnerable groups (children, persons with disabilities, elderly, etc.) are covered only partially. Over one third (35.2%) of women in reproductive age are at heightened risk of preventable morbidities, poor birth outcomes and other forms of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular diseases. Capacity to respond to health shocks is limited.

Protection needs in North Africa

Vulnerable groups such as refugees, asylum seekers and migrants face specific challenges to access public healthcare services, including Mental Health and Psychosocial support (MHPSS). The barriers to access public healthcare combined with the lack of legal status enhance the exposure of vulnerable displaced people to epidemics and non-communicable diseases. Discrimination is a strong deterrent for people on the move to seek medical care. The lack of access to healthcare is worsened in remote or conflict affected areas.

2.2.4 Education in emergencies

The Sahrawi crisis

Access to free early childhood, primary and secondary education is in principle guaranteed for all Sahrawi refugees; a five-year Education strategy outlines the necessary steps to ensure children's access to quality education²⁰. However, its implementation requires continuous international support. The quality of education for the 41 390 schoolchildren in the camps has remained relatively poor due to lack of teachers' capacity, insufficient teaching and learning materials and dilapidated infrastructure. Teacher incentives remain low resulting in high staff turnover. Weak educational performance of children, dropouts and constrained progression have been observed. Access to education for children with disabilities remains limited.

Refugees in Egypt

The country hosts a predominantly young refugee population in need of adequate education services at all levels. Refugee children's access to education is dependent on an annual ministerial decree that allows South Sudanese, Sudanese, Syrian, and Yemeni refugees access to public schools on equal footing with nationals. According to information obtained by UNHCR from the Ministry of Education, there are 43 906 Syrians, 11 500 Sudanese (and South Sudanese), and 4 902 Yemeni students enrolled in public schools across Egypt, totalling around 60 500 children²¹. Most of them have experienced disruptions to their education in their country of origin and during their subsequent displacement to Egypt²². Education challenges range from enrolment, through retention and progression, to integration and learning. Legal and language barriers, limited knowledge of education options, concerns of quality, including protection and safety, economic constraints, and gaps in education and curriculum differences, are amongst the causes of exclusion from education. Before the recent arrival of children forced to flee the conflict in Sudan, approximately 90% of refugee children were enrolled in basic education (Egyptian and community schools), however, dropouts, especially at secondary level, have increased with the deteriorating economic situation. Access to, and continuation of education, has emerged as one of the key priority needs. Agencies working in the field of refugee education in Egypt have stepped up their efforts to include the growing number of new arriving children from Sudan in their programming and assist them to sit exams. Documentation requirements constitute an increasingly significant barrier to refugees' access to public education. There have been

²⁰ Stratégie quinquennale de l'Éducation dans les camps Sahraoui, 201-2025

²¹ Information by UNHCR August 2023

²² Information by UNICEF August 2023

continued reports of refugee students in public schools denied access to national exams due to lack of residency. There are also reports of refugee children being expelled from public schools due to a lack of valid residency permits. Waiting periods for refugee residency permits are over 11 months now; for many it is impossible to meet the residency requirement. UNHCR is advocating with the Ministry of Education to exceptionally allow students to sit the exams and withhold results until a valid residency permit is made available. Coordination of the education sector work continues to improve, but needs to be sustained to enable a comprehensive, harmonised response, based on standardised and sustainable approaches to ensure safe access to quality education.

Protection needs in North Africa

Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants' children have huge difficulties accessing public education systems, often as a result of missing official documentation. They risk becoming a lost generation as the lack of access to formal education systems prevents them, in many cases for years, to access any kind of certification limiting their opportunities for future gainful employment.

2.2.5 Protection

Protection needs in North Africa

The protection needs observed in North Africa and the Middle East are triggered by conflicts, a shrinking humanitarian space and attacks against civilian infrastructures such as health facilities, water installations and schools, often linked to Armed Groups and De Facto Authorities (AGDA).

Many refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, including unaccompanied children, are reportedly suffering from serious human rights violations, such as modern forms of slavery, sexual and gender-based violence, abusive expulsions and forced returns. Anti-immigrant sentiment is on the rise in North Africa with xenophobic violence targeting particularly African migrants and refugees from Sub-Saharan Africa. Humanitarian actors regularly call for an end to attacks against, and arbitrary detention of migrants and refugees and the coordinated release of those currently detained.

Humanitarian workers and organisations, including those involved in humanitarian assistance to vulnerable migrants and refugees, are facing an increasing number of attacks and criminalisation of their work, exposing them to severe risks. National aid workers constitute the majority of aid staff in the field and undertake the bulk of the frontline work in assisting beneficiary populations. They are most affected and least protected from targeted incidents including attacks, arbitrary arrest and detention, legal intimidation and harassment. Female aid workers are often exposed to additional risks, including sexual harassment and assault.

Refugees in Egypt

Access to Egyptian territory is challenging for those forced to flee the conflict in Sudan, particularly for third-country nationals, those without valid travel documents, and those unable to obtain visas, who are at risk of exploitation by smugglers. The four Freedoms Agreement²³ allowing for entry with valid passports, was suspended in June. As of 10 June 2023, all Sudanese, regardless of gender or age, need to obtain a visa at the Egyptian consulate. In order for individuals to obtain visas, they must have valid passports.³⁷ According to UNHCR, the new regulations constitute barriers to admission to the territory.³⁸ Conditions in border areas have been reported to remain precarious. People who recently fled the conflict in Sudan, most of them women and children, have been exposed to threats and various forms of violence, including extortion and gender-based violence during their journey, and need medical, mental health, and psychosocial support. The barriers faced by refugees and asylum seekers in obtaining and renewing national residency permits severely limit their

²³ The 2004 Four Freedom Agreement between Egypt and Sudan stands for freedom of movement, residence, work and property ownership.

access to livelihood opportunities, and protective and basic services. This exposes the most vulnerable, notably of sub-Saharan African origin, and in particular girls and women, adolescents, youth, and unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), to increased protection risks.

Between 15 April 2023 and 17 April 2024, 476,000 refugees newly displaced by the Sudan conflict approached UNHCR for registration appointments; 48 percent of them (228,480 individuals) have been registered. The economic situation has exacerbated social tensions and worsened vulnerabilities and stigmatisation, especially toward sub-Saharan African refugees and migrants.

2.2.6 Basic Needs Approach

Refugees in Egypt

Most refugees and asylum-seekers cite the ability to meet their basic needs as one of their most pressing challenges in Egypt, a situation aggravated by Egypt's soaring inflation rate in 2023²⁴, resulting in massive price increase for food and other essential commodities²⁵. The recent arrival of people from Sudan has aggravated the competition for affordable accommodation and job opportunities²⁶. Those who were forced to flee the conflict in Sudan, often arrived with their bare essentials, making cash a priority need for purchase of transport, food, and other basic necessities. Due to low funding levels, as of August 2023, multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA) provided by the UNHCR targeted 16 783 households (53 810 individuals), 49% of those assessed eligible for assistance²⁷, highlighting the need for scale up of support. UNHCR can also only provide about 25% of the survival minimum expenditure basket (SMEB) of a refugee household of 4 individuals²⁸. Negative and harmful coping strategies are prevalent among refugee populations struggling to meet their basic needs. Without sustainable livelihood options or inclusion in social safety net schemes, refugees and asylum-seekers remain dependent on humanitarian aid.

2.2.7 Coordination

The Sahrawi crisis

Efforts are underway to improve coordination, information exchange and cooperation amongst the humanitarian actors. These are crucial to ensure pertinent situational analyses and sector responses, and to enable the development of cross-sectorial strategies, such as in the area of nutrition. Contingency planning is not fully effective, even if the camps are regularly affected by small to mid-scale natural disasters, caused by strong winds and torrential rains. At operational level, a 2-year joint interagency Sahrawi refugee response plan (SRRP) was prepared by UNHCR in view to establish a more harmonised, coordinated and cost-effective response. At donors' level, an informal coordination group, established by ECHO in 2021, meets regularly for enhanced information sharing and donor coordination, as well as joint advocacy actions.

Refugees in Egypt

Coordination is organised through sector working groups. While in the past coordination has been weak, the Sudan crisis triggered significant improvements in sector coordination, with strengthened sector leads and co-leads, and efforts to work towards common sector strategies. Strongly promoted by DG ECHO, UNHCR and partners are continuing to shift towards a full 'one-refugee approach', seeking to respond based on needs and vulnerability rather than nationality. The joint migration platform, established in 2021, provides the forum for strategic dialogue amongst international donors, specialised

²⁴ The annual urban inflation rate in Egypt accelerated to 36.5% in July 2023, up from 35.7% in the previous month, Egypt's annual core inflation rate, which excludes volatile items such as food, eased to 40.7% in July, down from 41% in June; source: <https://tradingeconomics.com/egypt/inflation-cpi>

²⁵ See 29

²⁶ UNHCR Protection Update August 2024

²⁷ Information from UNHCR Egypt, August 28, 2023

²⁸ UNHCR presentation June 2023

agencies, and ministerial counterparts, and has promoted a better understanding of the dynamics of migrants and forcibly displaced persons hosted in Egypt. The identification and implementation of projects that enhance self-reliance of the refugee population should be pursued in consultation with development and stabilisation actors.

2.2.8 Environmental impact

The Sahrawi crisis

Waste management in the camps remains limited and requires further investment. The most important component of humanitarian assistance is provided in-kind (food aid and nutrition, WASH, health), adding to waste and pollution that affects the environment. In 2022 and 2023, some efforts were made to improve medical waste management system. The design and implementation of the medical waste management plan consistent with international environmental standards is urgent. For enhanced environmental sustainability of the camps, more environmentally friendly solutions are needed for including disposal and management of waste, beyond medical waste.

Refugees in Egypt

Apart from the emergency response carried out at the two main border entry points, where the Egyptian Red Crescent, supported by UN agencies, provides food and bottled water, as well as non-food items (NFIs), the humanitarian actions undertaken to address refugee needs rely mostly on 'immaterial' assistance (cash transfers, education, health, protection), with limited impact on the environment. There are no refugee camps in Egypt. Refugees and asylum seekers live in private, mostly rented accommodation, in predominantly urban centres.

3. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND COORDINATION

3.1. National / local response and involvement

The Sahrawi crisis.

Algeria provides substantial assistance to the Sahrawi refugees such as access to water resources, free electricity, access to healthcare (including specialised care) and scholarships for secondary and high school education. Refugees also receive some support from civil society, channelled through the Algerian Red Crescent (ARC). Algerian authorities respond proactively and effectively to natural disasters in the Sahrawi refugees' camps and included the population in its COVID response plan. Education and Health services in the camps are organised by the Sahrawi camps' authorities whereby refugees volunteer to serve their community. The volunteers receive incentives for the service provided. The level of these incentives is insufficient to motivate qualified health and education personnel. Consequently, high staff turnover rates make repeated rounds of trainings mandatory to ensure a minimum of quality service delivery in the health and education sectors. While incentives for teachers were increased in 2023, they are far from the level of Algerian salaries.

Refugees in Egypt

In the absence of a national asylum system, all activities pertaining to registration, documentation, and refugee status determination for asylum seekers are carried out by the UNHCR under a framework agreement signed with the government in 1954. With the support of the European Union Agency for Asylum (EASO), now the European Union Asylum Agency (EUAA), Egypt has drafted a national asylum law. Besides the provision of an overall conducive asylum space, which includes access to public health and education for most Arabic speakers, and access to public education for other nationalities on a case-by-case basis through specified procedures, the Government of Egypt does not provide direct material assistance to refugees. Since the onset of the current Sudanese conflict in April 2023, the Egyptian Red Crescent has been the main first line responder to the needs of individuals and families arriving at border entry points between Egypt and Sudan. Community-based Organisations

(CBOs) in the border governorate of Aswan have provided generous ad hoc support to new arrivals. Cross-border assistance into Sudan has been facilitated by the Government of Egypt.

3.2. International Humanitarian Response

The Sahrawi crisis

UNHCR is the leading UN agency for the response to the Sahrawi refugee crisis, and is responsible for the coordination, protection, health, and WASH sectors through dedicated working groups. UNICEF leads on education and WFP on food security. The operations in the refugee camps are implemented by international actors, the Saharawi Red Crescent and the refugees themselves. Under the 2023/24 2-year consolidated joint interagency Sahrawi refugee response plan (SRRP), UN Agencies, and International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) laid out multiannual sectorial strategies for a more efficient, coordinated, sustainable and cost-effective assistance to the refugee population and to mobilise additional resources. As of April 2023, pledged donor funding amounted to about USD 46 million leaving a gap of USD 54 million²⁹ to the yearly requirement of the SRRP of USD 100 million. EU humanitarian funding allocated in 2023 represents 9 % of the total funding required and about 20% of the donor pledges. Most funding provided by donors is allocated to operations of WFP and UNHCR. The rest supports operations of UNICEF and a few international NGOs. Development assistance is almost inexistent as only a small number of development donors and actors are present in this protracted crisis.

Refugees in Egypt

In Egypt, the humanitarian funding architecture was structured around two appeal mechanisms: the Egyptian component of the 3RP-Syria for Syrian refugees, and the Egypt Response Plan (ERP) for all other nationalities, however, in 2023, no ERP was published. In May 2023, in response to the Sudan crisis, the UN declared Egypt a level 3 emergency and issued a regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP), requesting USD 114 million until end 2023, and targeting 358 000 persons fleeing the conflict in Sudan. By August 2023, the 3RP of USD 154 million was at 11% funded. The RRP had received 27% of the requested funding.³⁰

Protection needs in North Africa

Humanitarian organisations, especially local NGOs, who work on migration-related needs are particularly scrutinised by authorities. The operational and humanitarian space continues to shrink for CSOs in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. This has an impact on their ability to access hard-to-reach vulnerable people as well as on the safety of staff implementing humanitarian programmes. As part of the ECHO-funded mechanism for the protection of humanitarians, organisations will increasingly exchange on incidents faced by their staff and different types of support needed. Ongoing regional efforts on the promotion of IHL also focus on unimpeded humanitarian access.

3.3. Operational constraints in terms of:

3.3.1 Access/humanitarian space

The Sahrawi crisis

The physical access to camps is guaranteed. However, the host country and the refugee camps' authorities exert tight control on international organisations as well as on the planning and delivery of aid. Sahrawi camps' authorities act as local counterparts for the organisations involved in the delivery of humanitarian aid. This increases the ownership of projects and reduces the cost of humanitarian operations. Yet, it is also a constraint when it comes to transparency. Additionally, at times implementing partners face difficulties to get long-term visas and registrations in Algeria.

²⁹ Yearly funding requirement of the draft RRP (refugee response plan)

³⁰ UNHCR update 29 August
ECHO/-NF/BUD/2024/91000

The use of armed escorts, movement restrictions and curfew are compulsory for all international actors working in the camps. The capacity of local actors is in most cases low due to limited resources, weak technical expertise and /or high staff turnover.

Refugees in Egypt

Humanitarian space has faced some restrictions due to the legislation regulating NGO work. The implementation of the reformed NGO Law (adopted in 2021), and its bylaws, have however not significantly impacted humanitarian actors, who are still able to access beneficiaries and deliver required multi-faceted services, including on sensitive protection related issues. Access to the Sudan-Egypt border entry points has been limited for UN agencies and impossible for INGOs, however, permanent presence at border crossing and humanitarian assistance has been delivered by the Egyptian Red Crescent and the Ministry of Health and Populations.

Protection needs in North Africa

Humanitarian organisations continue to struggle to access people in need in Libya and Tunisia as a result of security constraints, bureaucratic hurdles, logistics challenges and difficulties in obtaining visas. This also led to increased remote management modalities, with local staff effectively implementing activities on the ground in very restrictive circumstances. The limited operational presence of humanitarian actors on the ground severely impacts their ability to reach people in need.

3.3.2 Partners (presence, capacity), including absorption capacity on the ground

The Sahrawi crisis.

Presence and capacity of international humanitarian actors are limited. This is due to security constraints, administrative hurdles with the accreditation, project clearance difficulties, and cumbersome procurement procedures. Additionally, working and living conditions are harsh and restrictive. Therefore, international humanitarian actors with physical presence in the camps are limited to three UN agencies and a few INGOs. The challenging working environment has an impact on the quality of implementation of humanitarian activities.

Refugees in Egypt

International humanitarian actors are limited to UN agencies and a few INGOs, whose operational capacity is constrained by restrictive barriers and delays in accreditation and project clearance, and operational challenges and government scrutiny faced by their local implementing partners. These remain able to access beneficiaries and deliver required multi-faceted services, including on sensitive protection related issues. Refugee organisations are also active, supporting existing refugee communities and new arrivals alike, and functioning within the above-mentioned restrictive environment.

Protection needs in North Africa

UN agencies and most international NGOs have limited reach beyond the major cities and surrounding areas along the Mediterranean coast. In addition, bureaucratic hurdles slowing down international procurement, banking restrictions, and difficulties to obtain visas, hamper partners' capacity to deliver effectively, in particular in remote and hard to reach areas.

3.3.3 Other

The Sahrawi crisis

Given the geographical location of the camps, the logistical costs of the operation are very high. Ensuring local purchases of goods such as medicines and medical consumables might lead to lowering

of some of the costs. The joint interagency Sahrawi refugee response plan (SRRP) for 2023 and 2024 will help to improve the coordination, quality, and cost efficiency of the response.

4. HUMANITARIAN – DEVELOPMENT – PEACE NEXUS

The Sahrawi crisis

The ongoing stalemate in the resolution of the conflict continues to deter development actors from a more active involvement in the response. In the past, DG ECHO cooperated closely on an 18-month EUR 800 000 project funded by the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) to foster opportunities for the Sahrawi youth. DG NEAR funded a regional environmental project. Some projects that aim at the improvement of livelihoods have been supported by few donors, charities and/or with diaspora remittances. The results in terms of sustainability are mixed. Development actors are still hesitant to engage more significantly, for instance in water infrastructure, support to livelihood projects or environment preservation activities. DG ECHO continues to pursue any possibility to explore nexus opportunities by engaging with other donors, including EU Member States.

Refugees in Egypt

Given the protracted nature of the refugee crisis and expected trends, once the newly arrived population from Sudan has stabilised, multi-year development financial instruments could be better placed to address the needs, rather than short-term humanitarian funding, including in support of national social services. Several EU services, such as DG NEAR and DG HOME are, and will, continue to fund programmes in several sectors relevant to refugee and asylum seeker needs.

Egypt's declared intentions to promote the inclusion of refugees and migrants in the national solidarity system, with the support of international donors, could facilitate humanitarian-development-peace nexus programming, but will require continuous advocacy and enhanced coordination amongst donors and implementers. Current multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA) programmes will require time to transition into nationally led systems, while the recent efforts of the Education Working Group (EWG) on the education strategy for refugees could lead to a gradual phase out of humanitarian funding for this sector.

The establishment of the UN/Government of Egypt Joint Platform for Migrants and Refugees in 2021 could facilitate coordination and integration efforts, and provide an avenue for collaboration, programming, and resource mobilisation for new assistance and protection modalities for migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and host communities. It could contribute to durable solutions through sustainable financing and delivery modalities, supporting the implementation of Egypt's Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. DG ECHO will continue to explore nexus opportunities in relevant coordination fora on this matter.

Protection needs in North Africa

Supporting an enabling environment for CSOs and promoting human rights in third countries is a prominent focus of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and is supported by the thematic programmes for civil society organisations as well as human rights and democracy of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation (NDCI) framework. The DG ECHO-funded mechanism for the protection of humanitarian workers complements the EU Human Rights Defender Mechanism ([ProtectDefenders.eu](https://protectdefenders.eu)) implemented by DG INTPA.

5. ENVISAGED DG ECHO RESPONSE STRATEGY AND EXPECTED RESULTS OF HUMANITARIAN AID INTERVENTIONS

5.1. Envisaged DG ECHO response

5.1.1 Priorities

The Sahrawi crisis

DG ECHO will continue to contribute to meeting humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable Sahrawi refugees while promoting actions aimed at reducing dependence on in-kind assistance. The four dimensions of protection mainstreaming (access, accountability, safety/do no harm/dignity/participation) need to be integrated into all actions (see the policy annex for details). Generation of evidence and lessons learned, as well as efforts to strengthen coordination, strategic planning and resourcing are important. In line with DG ECHO global commitments, partners need to demonstrate efforts aiming at reducing the environmental footprint of humanitarian aid in all DG ECHO funded actions.

DG ECHO will prioritise funding for the following sectors and priorities:

Food Assistance: timely access to safe and well-balanced fortified food, in sufficient quantity and quality is crucial for food insecure households, in particular the most vulnerable. The negative influence of the global inflation on the purchasing power of humanitarian actors and the risk of food pipeline breaks makes adjustments in the food assistance programme necessary. It calls for a gradual shift from the blanket assistance (general food distribution, GFD) to a targeted approach based on clearly defined vulnerability criteria. Introduction of different assistance modalities such as cash or vouchers should also be considered. A new food security assessment (FSA), in addition to a Nutritional Causal Analysis (NCA) will provide the basis for a more strategic multi-annual planning. Timely communication on project progress and challenges encountered are necessary.

Nutrition: DG ECHO funding will contribute to improving the nutritional status of the Saharawi refugee population, especially children under five years of age and pregnant and lactating women. The assistance in this sector should enable their healthy physical and cognitive growth and reduce morbidity and mortality. In this context, developing and implementing a multi-year, interagency nutrition strategy covering the whole malnutrition spectrum is critical and urgent. To prepare the ground for the strategy, a Nutritional Causal Analysis (NCA) should be conducted. DG ECHO will focus on nutrition-sensitive food distributions, management of acute malnutrition (CMAM) and the promotion of appropriate maternal, infant and young child feeding (MIYCF) practices. A targeted response to the specific nutritional needs of vulnerable groups (e.g., celiac, or diabetic people), through specific interventions integrated in the health response is relevant if based on solid evidence.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: DG ECHO's priority remains the expansion and further improvement of the water distribution network in order to provide access to safe piped water to more households and reduce dependency on costly water trucking. This gradual change also aims to reduce the environmental footprint. The response may include drilling of new boreholes and optimising use of existing ones, as well as the improvement and /or addition of water treatment facilities. Operations and maintenance plans are mandatory for all water infrastructure. The strengthening of local WASH authorities shall ensure that they progressively undertake the maintenance of the existing water infrastructure.

Health: DG ECHO will focus on the provision of basic healthcare, and the provision of essential drugs and supplies (including medicines for non-communicable diseases). Support to emergency health services as well as specific health needs of people living with disabilities and the elderly will also be considered. Partners are expected to support epidemiological surveillance, integrate into their projects the appropriate emergency preparedness measures and stand ready to support health authorities in case of another epidemic outbreak. Medical waste management needs to be considered to reduce the environmental impact of health-related actions.

Education in Emergencies (EiE): DG ECHO will continue the support to the implementation of the 2021-2025 multi-annual strategy aiming at ensuring inclusive access to quality education for all children in the Sahrawi camps. DG ECHO pays particular attention to children not enrolled or at risk of dropping out and discontinuing the learning process. Actions may include provision of teacher

incentives and teaching and learning material as well as training for teachers. Projects should strive to enhance effectiveness, efficiency, and the impact of education. DG ECHO promotes a holistic approach to education that may include (light) school rehabilitation and ensure WASH minimum standards in schools. Where possible, environmental activities should be included in the day-to-day running of schools.

Coordination: Coordination among the humanitarian actors, advocacy and visibility are instrumental to raise the profile of the crisis and attract development/stabilisation as well as non-traditional donors. DG ECHO expects all the implementing partners to include this dimension in their project proposals.

Refugees in Egypt

Based on emergency needs identified in the context of economic hardship, and the recent arrival of 509.000 fleeing the conflict in Sudan, as well as over 570 000 refugees and asylum seekers registered with UNHCR, DG ECHO will prioritise multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA) to maximise the impact of its available funding for Egypt in 2024. Cash assistance is considered the most effective tool to address some of the most pressing basic needs. DG ECHO will maintain its engagement in Education in Emergencies, and strengthen integrated Child Protection. The four elements of Protection Mainstreaming shall be included in all proposals: 1) Safety and dignity: “do no harm”; 2) Access; 3) Accountability, 4) Participation and empowerment.

Basic Needs Approach (BNA)/Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA): Considering the negative impact of the ongoing socio-economic crisis and its effect on the most vulnerable, DG ECHO will continue funding MPCA to address their basic needs. This will be based on a full-fledged one refugee approach, a robust needs analysis, and well-defined targeting criteria to ensure those most in need receive assistance.

Education in Emergencies (EiE): DG ECHO will support actions that enable sustainable access to safe and quality education, with a differentiated and equitable response targeting out-of-school children/adolescents, and those at risk of dropping out. In line with the Education sector working groups education strategy for refugees and asylum seekers, DG ECHO’s sectorial approach will focus on i) strengthening the inclusion of refugees within the Egyptian education system; ii) enhancing the quality of refugee community schools and iii) promoting out of school children’s access to education and mitigating the risk of dropout.

Child protection: shall be integrated within EiE interventions and shall be based on thorough analysis of child protection needs. It must ensure the appropriate quality response, through specialised child protection services, such as mental health and psychosocial support, case management, and referral of children at risk, or targeted to those who have been exposed to violence, abuse, and exploitation.

Coordination: DG ECHO will continue to promote enhanced coordination and advocacy for an effective, and efficient humanitarian response based on a full one-refugee approach. Inter-sectoral coordination has improved in 2023 and could be strengthened further to ensure timely and appropriate referrals across sectors. Coordination will also be of essence to promote the operationalisation of a nexus framework.

Protection needs in North Africa

DG ECHO will continue to address the specific humanitarian challenges that cut across national borders via targeted and innovative regional initiatives³¹:

³¹ Please refer to the Technical Annex for details on the precise geographical scope of these regional initiatives
ECHO/-NF/BUD/2024/91000

Reinforcing protection and compliance with IHL by Armed Groups and De facto Authorities (AGDA): DG ECHO will continue to support evidence-based advocacy and efforts to promote respect for IHL through engaging with Armed Groups and De facto Authorities, religious and tribal leaders and civil society in the region.

Empowering local responders and local protection networks: DG ECHO will address the humanitarian consequences of the migration crisis through the identification of pockets of humanitarian needs and legal protection gaps for hard-to-reach vulnerable people on the move. It will encourage work through local legal service providers and community-based protection networks.

Protecting humanitarian workers: DG ECHO will continue to support the regional mechanism that provides legal, medical, psychological, and material support to humanitarian workers affected by arrest, detention, attacks or other security incidents.

5.1.2 Programmatic Partnerships

ECHO embarked on a 4-year programmatic partnership (PP) with WFP as of 1 August 2023 in order to better address food and nutrition needs of the Sahrawi refugees. By providing with the predictability of funding, ECHO will increase the cost efficiency and WFP will be able to plan its operation on longer term basis.

No further Programmatic Partnership opportunities have been pre-identified for 2024 under the North Africa HIP.

5.2. Other DG ECHO interventions

The Emergency Toolbox HIP may be drawn upon for the prevention of, and response to, outbreaks of Epidemics. Under the Emergency Toolbox HIP, the Small-Scale Response, Acute Large Emergency Response Tool (ALERT) and Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) instruments may also provide funding options.

In view of the importance of logistics for humanitarian operations, DG ECHO remains also committed to contribute to logistics operations, via funding or any other tool, such as the European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC), at its disposal.

The European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC) is a global initiative, aiming at supporting the delivery of humanitarian assistance with a gap-filling approach. Under the EHRC the Commission has at its disposal several tools that can be activated in case of sudden onset disasters, e.g. a series of Common Logistics Services (including air operations, warehousing services, last-mile ground transportation, etc.), and a stockpile of emergency WASH and shelter items to be pre-positioned in regional warehouses worldwide.