

WESTERN SAHARA



UNHCR's Confidence Building Measures (CBM) Programme for Western Saharan families

In 2018, UNHCR is revitalizing its CBM programme to initiate new cross-border activities to benefit **families separated between the Western Sahara territory and refugee camps located near Tindouf, Algeria**, since the conflict in 1975. UNHCR stands ready to promptly resume family visits between the territory and the camps, after almost four years of suspension.

Reflecting on the impact of family visits on participants

UNHCR supported the study visits of researchers from Tufts University (USA) to review the impact of UNHCR's CBM programme. As outlined in the report "[A frozen conflict and a humanitarian programme that works: UNHCR's confidence building measures in Western Sahara](#)", and introductory video "[Reuniting Sahrawi families](#)", with CBM, UNHCR created a 'humanitarian bridge' between separated families from 2004 to 2014 and proved that '*humanitarian activities are possible even where politics and lack of media attention make them difficult*'. The report indicated why the time is right to re-start this unique humanitarian programme.

With this in mind, UNHCR is maintaining and building capacities to allow for a prompt resumption of activities as soon as Parties reach agreement on this. In early 2018, UNHCR **rehabilitated three CBM coordination offices** in Boujdour, Smara and Awserd. UNHCR is also **electronically archiving the files** of registered beneficiaries. When family visits were suspended in 2014, 12,114 individuals were still to benefit from family visits. Since then, some families may have lost, or welcomed family members, or may have moved away. UNHCR is therefore going through cases to ensure that persons of concern are able to benefit from family visits, once resumed.

"The first day of the visit was filled with extreme happiness, we had missed our family so much. We met with our relatives and with the whole community. I would like family visits to reopen and for a longer period than just five days. They were very important to us."

An elderly women from Tindouf camps who travelled to the Western Sahara Territory through CBM
January 2018

Broadening the scope of future cross-border activities

From September to December 2017, UNHCR, through its partner the American Institute for Research (AIR), evaluated **youth needs in terms of non-formal education, positive youth development and resilience**. This assessment will guide activities conducted in 2018 to create opportunities for youth

development and leadership, to promote and preserve cultural and national identity and to facilitate possible exchanges and dialogue between separated Sahrawi communities. UNHCR is planning these new initiatives in close coordination with Sahrawi youth.

External Relations

Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2018

United States of America (124 M) | Sweden (98 M) | Norway (43 M) | Netherlands (39 M) | United Kingdom (32 M) | Denmark (25 M) | Priv Donors Spain (19 M) | Australia (19 M) | Canada (16 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | Italy (11 M)

Thanks to other donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2018

Algeria | Argentina | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Canada | China | Estonia | Finland | Germany | Iceland | Indonesia | Kuwait | Lithuania | Luxembourg | Monaco | Montenegro | New Zealand | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Serbia | Singapore | Sri Lanka | Thailand | Turkey | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Private Donors

CONTACTS

Filip Papas, Head of Operations, wshla@unhcr.org, Tel: +212 52 88 92 36