

52. Country profile: Western Sahara



1. Development profile

The legal status of the Western Sahara and the issue of sovereignty are still unsolved today. When Spain withdrew in 1976 the territory was split between Mauritania and Morocco; Morocco claimed the rest in 1979 and Mauritania abandoned all claims due to pressure from the Polisario guerillas. A guerrilla war started between Morocco and the Polisario Front and lasted until an UN-brokered cease-fire ended it in 1991. Since then an UN-organised referendum on the territory's final status has repeatedly been postponed. Morocco has proposed that the Western Sahara stays under Moroccan sovereignty with some local administration while the Polisario fights for the independency by demanding a popular referendum.¹

Western Sahara is situated in the northern Africa with Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania as its neighbors. The terrain is primarily low flat dessert with large areas of rocky and sandy surfaces and wind causes haze 60 percent of time making visibility severely restricted. The country suffers from sparse water and lack of arable land, meaning that most food must be imported. Morocco controls trade along with all other economic activities within the country. The main source of income in Western Sahara is pastoral nomadism, fishing, and phosphate mining, with phosphates being the territory's only natural resource along with iron ore.²

The country has a population of less than half a million. It ranks 15 in both population growth rate and birth rate, but has one of the lowest life expectancies in the world, at only 54.32 years.³

Because there is no government in Western Sahara, there is no political will that will allow for increases in social protection programmes.

¹*The World Factbook: Western Sahara*. (2010, September). Retrieved from United States Central Intelligence Agency: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/wi.html>

²Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Socioeconomic indicators⁴	
Population (millions)	0.49
GNI per capita, PPP (current USD)	n/a
GDP (current USD) (billions)	0.9
GDP composition by sector 2005 (%)	Agriculture –n/a Industry- n/a Services- 40
GDP growth rate (%)	n/a
Percent below poverty line (%)	n/a
Inflation (%)	n/a
GINI index	n/a
Adult literacy rate (%)	n/a
Life expectancy (years)	54.32 60.74
Child dependency ratio	41
Elderly dependency ratio	3
HIV prevalence (%)	n/a
Overseas development aid per capita (current USD)	n/a
Net official development assistance (USD millions)	n/a
Remittances as % of GDP	n/a
2009 Human Development Index (HDI) ranking	n/a

2. Vulnerability analysis

2.1 External shocks

There is no data on the economy of Western Sahara; however, the country is closely tied to Morocco and may face similar shocks.

2.2 Political instability

The political instability in the Western Sahara is a major problem due to Morocco claiming the territory and the Polisario Front, supported by Algeria, wanting the country to be independent. Due to earlier war between the two, many Western Sahara people live in camps in Algeria, relying on humanitarian aid to survive.

2.3 HIV/AIDS

No data available of HIV/AIDS in Western Africa.

⁴ Ibid and *UN date: Western Sahara*. (2010, October). Retrieved from United Nations data: <http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=PopDiv&f=variableID%3A43>

2.4 Climate concerns

The country faces problems of lack of natural water supplies and arable land.⁵

2.5 Food security

There does not appear to be any data on food security issues facing the Western Sahara territory. Though, it can be deduced that issues arise over a lack of arable land.

3. Monitoring and evaluation

No information available.

4. Social assistance programmes overview

There is no information on programs in Western Sahara, but Western Saharan refugees in Algeria are helped by United Nations World Food Programme (also listed in the country profile of Algeria).

*All currency conversions are based on 17 February 2010 rates:

- 1 DZD = 0.01341 USD
- 1 EUR = 1.369 USD
- 1 GBP = 1.57161 USD.⁶

Programme# 6: World Food Project	Programme name	Assistance to Western Saharan refugees in Algeria⁷
	Programme overview	▪ World Food Project assisting the government.
	Programme objective	▪ The programme gives basic food assistance to the most vulnerable Western Sahara refugees in southwest of Tindouf, Algeria.
	Programme components	▪ Basic food commodities (90,000 general food rations and 35,000 supplementary general rations)
	Programme duration	▪ 1 May 2010 – 31 October 2011

⁵ *The World Factbook: Western Sahara*. United States Central Intelligence Agency.

⁶ OANDA. *Currency Converter*.
<http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>

⁷ Table drawn from *Assistance to Western Saharan refugees* (n.d). Retrieved from United Nations World Food Programme:
http://one.wfp.org/operations/current_operations/project_docs/200034.pdf

	Programme coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Western Sahara refugees in southwest of Tindouf, Algeria ▪ WTP moves food from the port of Oran to the Rambouni complex in Tindouf. From here the food is collected by the refugees' authorities who have the responsibility of dispatching and the final distribution to the vulnerable people in the camps.
	Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Operational Requirements: \$36,280,988 ▪ Different countries and organisations helping with \$15,633,024 of the requirements.
	Monitoring and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ WTP and UNHCR conduct joint field monitoring visits including distribution and post-distribution/beneficiary contact monitoring. ▪ 6 people from WTP and UNHCR based in Tindouf are responsible for monitoring all aspects of the food redistribution.
	Program barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The food pipeline for the program has been very fragile with pipeline breakdowns occurring monthly and only being partly covered by bilateral donations ▪ An important concern in Algeria is terrorism which can make the work dangerous for the humanitarians working in the country.