

UNICEF IN ALGERIA OUR ROADMAP FOR CHILDREN

unicef 
for every child

COOPERATION PROGRAMME BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT
OF ALGERIA AND UNICEF (2023–2027)



FOREWORD

When I first arrived in Algeria in 2023, I was struck by the country's rich cultural heritage and natural beauty. The Sahara Desert covers more than 80 per cent of the land and the majestic Atlas Mountains run alongside the 1,000-kilometre coastline, providing stunning landscapes in Africa's largest country.

Yet it was the young people who impressed me even more. Take, for example, Amani who at 24 has strong leadership skills and an unwavering commitment to child rights. We met the year I arrived following the launch of our five-year country programme of cooperation with the Government of Algeria. She had been assisting the UNICEF Algeria country office to adapt the UNICEF Adolescent Kit for Creativity and Expression by developing an adolescent entrepreneurship kit to improve adolescents' social skills and employability.

Amani, who has albinism and is visually impaired, had gone beyond what was asked of her by UNICEF and insisted on translating the adolescent kit – all 70 pages – into braille. She continues to use the braille kit in workshops to help other young people who are visually impaired. Her drive is typical of many children and youth in Algeria who make up almost half of the country's 44 million people.

I have also been impressed that since Algeria's independence in 1962, social equity has been at the heart of economic and social development. Government investment has resulted in significant progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Algeria is now classified as a 'high-middle-income' country.

Notably, in the past two decades, Algeria has improved access to quality healthcare, especially making healthcare available for all. This has resulted in a sharp decline in maternal and child deaths.

Primary education enrolment is high throughout the country and gender disparities have been significantly reduced. Today girls are more likely to complete secondary school than boys.

Although, like everywhere in the world, there are child protection challenges, children are better protected than before following the adoption of the Child Act in 2015 which fulfilled the recommendations made in 2012 by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Committee Review. In addition, the penal code has been revised to address violence against women.

Due to the steady investments in the social sectors and human development over the years, the UNICEF Algeria country office has shifted its support from increasing access to services to providing technical expertise to improve the quality of those services. This involves the UNICEF country office consulting with UNICEF's regional and headquarter offices as well as experts in other countries in the region so we can share the latest expertise and relevant knowledge. We are paying particular attention to the emerging priority areas that the Government of Algeria has identified, such as mental health, disability inclusion, overweight and obesity, and digitalization. Also, as Algeria is leading the way in innovation, we share Algeria's experience with other UNICEF offices around the world.

Another critical area of support is social, and behaviour change interventions which is part of all programme areas, ensuring people, including children with disabilities and those living in remote areas, are able to use the services.

In addition, we have a strong humanitarian focus on one of the most vulnerable groups in the country – one hundred seventy-three thousand six hundred Sahrawi refugees whom the Government of Algeria has hosted for 50 years. However, the Sahrawis' challenges and basic needs remain huge and have been mounting following the COVID-19 pandemic and during the global economic and humanitarian crises. A critical shortfall in donor funds is having a devastating impact on the most vulnerable refugees, particularly young children and children with disabilities. Despite this, during my several visits, I have been struck by how well the Sahrawi people have organized the camps with women playing leading roles in all sectors, especially in education, and maternal and child health.

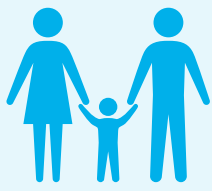
In this booklet, you can find out more about how we work with the Government of Algeria and other partners, including young people like Amani. With our partners, we continue to find innovative ways to enhance the lives of all children and youth, and to accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

Katarina Johansson

UNICEF Representative, Algeria



ALGERIA AT A GLANCE



Population
46.7
Million people¹

Total
fertility rate
3



Population under
the age of 27:
52.9%

Population under
the age of 18:

33%



63.4% of the total population live in urban areas

36.6% of the total population live in rural areas

49% are girls **51%** are boys

52.9% of the 44 million populations
is under 29 years old

Life expectancy
77.50 years²

Official languages
**Arabic,
Tamazight**

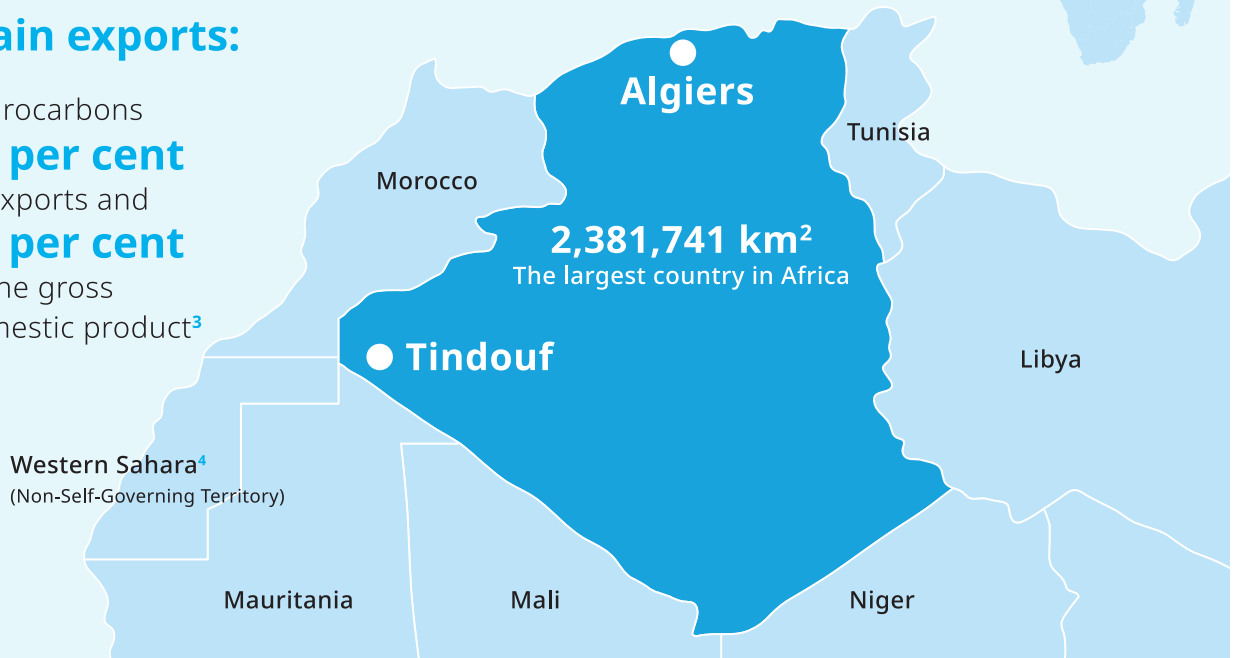
Other spoken language
French

Independence
1962



Main exports:

Hydrocarbons
95 per cent
of exports and
20 per cent
of the gross
domestic product³



¹ Office for national statistics (ONS), 2024.

² Office for national statistics (ONS), 2019

³ Office for national statistics (ONS), 2024.

⁴ United Nations/Non-Self-Governing Territories

Algeria is an upper middle-income country (L-MIC) and the largest country in Africa with four-fifths of its land covered by the Sahara Desert. Most of the estimated 44 million people in this north African country live along the Mediterranean coastline and in urban areas. Around 52.9 per cent of its population is under the age of 29 years and 33 per cent is under the age of 18 years.² The average number of children for a woman is three.

Following the Algeria War of Independence between 1954 and 1962, the country became independent. In 1989, Algeria ushered in a new constitution and multiparty democracy. Yet stability was disrupted from 1991. Since those turbulent years, peace has returned to the country. The economy has grown steadily, and the country is now classified as an upper-middle income nation. Economic growth averaged 3.3 per cent between 2010 and 2016. It fell to 0.8 per cent in 2019 before falling to negative 4.9 per cent in 2020, mainly due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Then in 2021, the economy started to recover with an increase in gross domestic product of 3.8 per cent. Hydrocarbons account for more than 95 per cent of exports and 20 per cent of the gross domestic product.⁵

As shown in its 2019 voluntary national review, Algeria confronts several challenges in its efforts to continue to improve the population's well-being and achieve progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. These challenges include the need for economic diversification and energy transition; unemployment, especially among young people and women; geographical and socioeconomic disparities; and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of public spending.

Despite the challenging economic situation, throughout 2021 the Government maintained spending on social transfers, education, and health at 23 per cent, 14.5 per cent and 7.7 per cent, respectively.⁶ Also, the country has put in place national response structures to manage the impacts of climate change. However, as Algeria is a predominantly arid and semi-arid country, it remains vulnerable to desertification and major natural hazards, including earthquakes, floods, and forest fires.

Algeria has hosted tens of thousands of Sahrawi refugees in camps in Tindouf (southwestern Algeria) for 50 years; they live in challenging conditions in the desert, and they mostly depend on external humanitarian aid for their basic needs. Meeting these needs is huge, particularly for the children, most of whom were born in the camp.

Yet despite the challenges, Algeria is a country of huge economic potential with rich historical and cultural diversity and a young population.

⁵ Algeria, Voluntary National Review, 2019.

⁶ Ministry of Finance, 2021

UNICEF SUPPORT

Since 1962, UNICEF has worked in close partnership with the Government of Algeria to ensure every child survives, thrives, and reaches their full potential. The current five-year programme focuses on providing technical support for child-centered policies, strategies, and programmes that uphold children's rights and empower adolescents to contribute meaningfully to Algeria's socioeconomic development. Our national-level engagement spans child health and nutrition, education and adolescent development, child protection, and social policy with a particular emphasis on the most vulnerable children, including those in the southern and highland regions and children with disabilities.

UNICEF Algeria's humanitarian response for Sahrawi refugees across five camps in Tindouf aims to meet the essential needs of children and their families while strengthening local systems to withstand future shocks. The multi-sectoral approach encompasses child and maternal health and nutrition, improved access to quality education, and the inclusion of children with disabilities.



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JOIN US IN PRIORITIZING THE CHILD RIGHTS AGENDA IN ALGERIA

UNICEF Algeria collaborates across sectors with government institutions, civil society, and UN agencies to advance child rights and well-being. Under the 2023–2027 programme cycle, the components are supported by a planned budget of USD 16.4 million, including USD 8.7 million to be mobilized through voluntary contributions from public and private sector partners. The humanitarian funding target amounts to about USD 10 million.

With the generous support of donors and partners, UNICEF will continue to address disparities and reach the most vulnerable children.



SURVIVE & THRIVE

- Health systems strengthening
- Expanded Immunization Programme and Digital Solutions
- Health promotion
- Nutritional practices



LEARNING & SKILLS

- Equity in access to education and vocational training
- Quality education for better learning outcomes and life skills
- Education Systems strengthening
- Inclusive education
- Youth engagement and climate action



CHILD PROTECTION

- Data, policies & legislation as part of child protection system strengthening
- Access to justice & social welfare workforce to effectively manage prevention, referral & coordinated care of children & adolescents at risk
- Prevention of violence & positive caregiving practices
- Disability inclusion



SOCIAL POLICY

- Strengthening capacities to generate rigorous data and analysis on child & adolescent poverty & social protection
- Social protection system strengthening
- Public financing for children and local governance with focus on child friendly public spending and budgets



HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE FOR SAHRAWI REFUGEE CHILDREN & FAMILIES

- Strengthening capacities to generate rigorous data + analysis on child & adolescent poverty & social protection
- Social protection policies for children
- Public financing for children and local governance with focus on public spending and budgets

About UNICEF Algeria

In alignment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2023–2027, UNICEF's partnership with the Government of Algeria focuses on ensuring that girls and boys will fully enjoy their rights and fulfil their potential to contribute to socioeconomic development as an engaged population. Every child has the right to survive, develop, be protected, and participate in family and society.

The programme is geared to the national scope in terms of advocacy and support for public policies, strategies, and programmes for a child-friendly environment. It contributes to national efforts in the priority areas of the south and highland regions to address disparities and to maximize synergies between the programme areas. The interventions also contribute to accelerating the results of UNICEF in the Middle East and North Africa region, particularly in learning and skills, primary health care and social protection.

Our work focuses on the following areas:

- Child health and Nutrition.
- Education and Adolescent Development.
- Child Protection.
- Social Policy.
- Humanitarian response to Sahrawi refugee children and families.

Based on the lessons learnt from the previous cooperation framework, UNICEF's support puts a strong emphasis on support to:

- Improve the production and systematic use of evidence-based data and analyses regarding the well-being of children and young people to better understand the disparities in inclusive access to high-quality social services, boost advocacy and inform child focused public policy and financing.
- Optimize and scale up promising innovative models and digital solutions (electronic vaccination records, geolocation of child protection establishments, etc.) developed during the cycle by children and young people through a strengthened partnership especially with academia.
- Strengthen the collaboration with other United Nations entities to further accelerate synergies and results for children and young people.

UNICEF collaborates with many partners to help make child rights a reality in Algeria. Under the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UNICEF engages with a broad range of lines of ministries and public institutions, civil society organizations, development and humanitarian partners and the UN country team.

HEALTH & NUTRITION

Every child, including adolescents, survives and thrives, with access to nutritious diets, quality health care, nurturing practices and essential supplies



HEALTH AND NUTRITION AT A GLANCE



Maternal mortality ratio is
48.5 per **100,000**
live births

Neonatal mortality rate is
17 per **1,000**
live births



Accounting for **70%** of infant mortality

99% of births
are assisted



The rate of full
immunization is **61%**

Exclusive
breastfeeding is

28.7%

Children under the age of **5**
years who are overweight is

12.8%

Overweight in school-aged
children: **31%**

**Prevalence in general
population**

Overweight:

Men **34.5%**

Woman **33.2%**

Obesity:

Men **14%**

Woman **30.2%**

The Algeria Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), sixth edition, 2019.



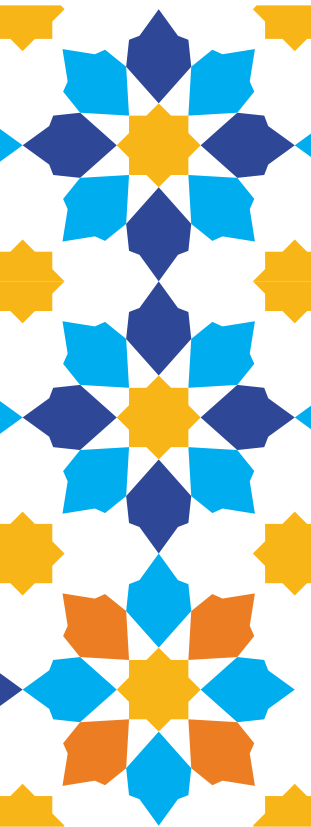
PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

UNICEF in action

“ My name is **Manoubia Aouam** and I'm the oldest nurse in **Ouargla**, proudly and devotedly serving the immunization of children for 34 years. Recently, during the polio immunization campaign, I had the opportunity to go into the heart of Ksar, an enclave that is difficult for health professionals to reach. There, I had the privilege of vaccinating **750 children**. Every drop was a gesture of love, a protective shield woven from the precious vaccines provided by UNICEF. Despite the logistical challenges, accomplishing this mission was a source of deep joy for me. Every look of gratitude exchanged with the mothers, eager to preserve the health of their little ones, strengthened my determination. For beyond the drops of vaccine, an unbreakable bond has been forged between us, I'm honored to have been able to contribute, however modestly, to protecting these precious lives. And it is with infinite gratitude to UNICEF and all those who support this noble cause that I continue my mission. ”

In the past two decades, Algeria has exponentially improved and expanded its health infrastructure and access to healthcare, especially in community and primary healthcare, making it freely available for all, including migrants. This has resulted in a sharp decline in both communicable diseases as well as maternal and child deaths.

The World Health Organization (WHO) certified that Algeria has eliminated three major communicable diseases: polio in 2016, neonatal tetanus in 2018 and malaria in 2019. Maternal mortality fell from 117.4 to 48.5 per 100,000 live births between 1999 and 2019 and neonatal mortality decreased from 16 to 12 per 1,000 live births between 2013 and 2019. Maternal healthcare coverage is nearly universal with 99 per cent of births assisted.



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Yet Algeria's health system is faced with challenges in the quality of services and some disparities in service delivery. For example, infant and neonatal mortality rates were higher in the north-east region (24 and 18 per 1,000 live births, respectively), the south (23 and 16 per 1,000 live births, respectively) and among the poorest quintile (23 and 17 per 1,000 live births, respectively).

Overall neonatal mortality and exclusive breastfeeding rates have stagnated and the uptake of immunization has regressed. Neonatal mortality accounts for 70 per cent of child deaths. The full immunization rate fell from 83.1 per cent in 2013 to 61 per cent in 2019 mainly due to parental hesitancy over vaccination, a weak supply chain and challenges in the management of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) at central and local levels. The lowest rates of full immunization were in the central highland regions (31 per cent) and among the poorest quintile (47.4 per cent). Exclusive breastfeeding at 28.7 per cent is low although it has increased slightly from 25.5 per cent in 2013.

New challenges have emerged as a result of an aging population and a shift from acute infections and deficiency diseases to chronic illnesses, typical of industrialized countries, and possible pandemics while still putting in place measures to manage COVID-19. Being overweight is now a major public health concern and is a growing threat to women's and children's well-being in Algeria, largely driven by unhealthy and highly processed foods combined with a lack of physical activity and sedentary behaviour. The country has an obesity rate of 22 per cent and is among the top 20 countries in the world that have high rates of obesity.¹ About 12.8 per cent of children under the age of 5 are overweight. The prevalence is even higher in the north-central region and north-west region where 15.4 per cent and 15 per cent respectively are overweight.

Being overweight undermines children's physical and emotional well-being and increases the risk of being overweight later in life, making them susceptible to non-communicable diseases and putting individuals, families, and societies at a disadvantage economically. In Algeria, it is estimated that if there is no intervention to tackle obesity, by 2030, 46 per cent of the population will be obese.

UNICEF SUPPORT

Key areas of focus for UNICEF support:

UNICEF support aims to ensure that newborns, young children, adolescents, pregnant and lactating women and families benefit from quality healthcare services and adopt good health behaviors.

To achieve this, UNICEF contributes to the priority areas of the Government Action Plan 2021–2024 and the joint UN strategic outcome on human development which in turn contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2 and 3 on health and nutrition, and UNSDCF 2023–2027 strategic outcome 3.

UNICEF supports the strengthening access of quality health services, accelerating the reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality, and reinforcing the prevention and control of communicable diseases, including vaccine-controllable diseases, and enhancing communication for the promotion of good parenting practices on health and nutrition.

Primary health care services for mothers and their children need to be resilient and inclusive. UNICEF supports access to essential packages of high-quality maternal and newborn services, such as promotive and preventive lifesaving interventions delivered by well-trained health professionals to assist births and provide pre- and post-natal care. The focus is on expert care for small and sick newborn babies, including kangaroo care for premature babies that use skin-to-skin contact between parents and babies to increase their chances of survival. UNICEF also supports increased vaccination uptake particularly supporting the monitoring of the implementation of a new vaccine schedule as well as addressing vaccine hesitancy among some population groups. A strong health information system is needed and is being built on the experience and lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In nutrition, the focus is on the promotion of infant and young child feeding, and healthy eating practices for older children to prevent childhood overweight and obesity. Evidence-based behaviour change campaigns are being adapted, exclusive breastfeeding is being encouraged in regions with low rates, and healthy eating is promoted in schools and the community at large.

Cross- and intersectoral collaboration need strengthening. This means integrating early childhood development in cross-sectional national programmes based on an evaluation and subsequent recommendations of Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes. The first 1,000 days of a child's life from conception to 2 years of age and the prevention and early detection of physical and mental health disabilities are prioritised. It also includes reinforcing cross-sectional collaboration with the education sector. The school health programme involves enhancing the mental and physical health of school children and adolescents, including the early detection of autism, and promoting healthy eating habits and exercise to avoid overweight and obesity.

What we do to achieve better health and nutrition outcomes for children:

1 The health system is strengthened in the areas of planning, implementation and monitoring-evaluation to ensure quality care services for the target populations.

UNICEF supports the strengthening of the national health system by providing technical training for planning, developing an evidence-based national reform plan and updating national maternal and child health programme. Innovative methods are supported to improve quality implementation and governance of maternal and child health programmes, including at a decentralized level. Priority is given to reducing maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality, and improving the quality of services, particularly in the most vulnerable regions, in line with national priorities which are included in the Government's Action Plan (2020). This is critical for the implementation of the President's Programme which is focused on reducing regional disparities.

2 The capacities of health structures are strengthened to ensure better prevention of vaccine-preventable diseases.

UNICEF supports the expanded programme on immunization (EPI), the in-depth analysis of vaccine data from MICS 6, the extension of the implementation of the electronic vaccination record and the conducting of socio-anthropological surveys to identify the socio-cultural barriers that hinder vaccination. In addition, UNICEF assists with cold chain equipment in the geographical areas with greatest disparities and capacity building for their professionals. Emphasis is also placed on strengthening communication strategies for the promotion of vaccination.

3 Families and health personnel have enhanced knowledge that promotes healthy nutrition practices, particularly for infants and young children.

UNICEF supports evidence-based social and behavior change programmes that improve parental knowledge and practices in infant and young child feeding, particularly the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding by targeting regions with low rates. In addition, UNICEF supports initiatives to prevent overweight and obesity in children and young people. UNICEF assists with the sharing of information through traditional channels, such as radio, television, face-to-face and religious gatherings and also social media and the private sector (mobile telephone operators).

“ After the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a detrimental impact on healthcare, we supported the Government to build a more resilient health system, particularly improving maternal and child healthcare to reduce neonatal mortality and increase immunization at community level. For example, we donated cold chain equipment that has been used to improve the expanded immunization programme, and the oxygen donated for COVID-19 treatment is now being used to improve maternal and neonatal care, including treating newborns with low oxygen levels in their blood that if left untreated can lead to death. UNICEF has also supported training to improve both cold chain management for vaccinations and the use of oxygen for neonatal survival, two key priority interventions for child survival.”

Dr. Tarek Hadjoudj, Chief of Health and Nutrition, UNICEF Algeria.



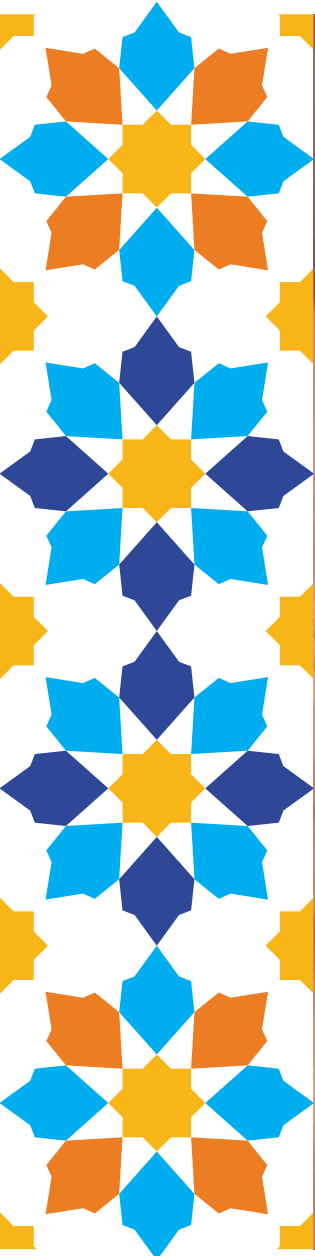
MAIN PARTNERS

Government partners:

- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of National Education
- Ministry of the Interior, Local Authorities and Regional Planning

United Nations partners:

- World Health Organization (WHO)
- Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (civil society organizations, UNAIDS)
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).



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A TOP FEMALE BOXER, IMANE KHELIF, DREAMS OF GOLD TO INSPIRE YOUNG PEOPLE

“I started with nothing and now I have everything”



©UNICEF Algeria

When Imane Khelif, 24, one of Algeria's top female boxers is asked what achievements she is most proud of, she says, *"It's being able to overcome the obstacles in my life."*

Imane recalls how at 16 she managed to excel in football in her rural village in Tiaret in western Algeria despite football not being seen as a game fit for girls. Moreover, the boys in her village felt threatened and picked fights with her. Ironically it was her ability to dodge the boys' punches that got her into boxing.

Yet taking up boxing proved even more of an obstacle for her than football. It meant travelling for training each week to the next village, 10 kilometres away, which also meant money for bus fare. She was unable to ask her father who, besides being away working in the Sahara Desert as a welder, did not approve of boxing for girls. To raise money for transport, Imane sold scrap metal for recycling and her mother sold couscous. Together they were able to afford the bus to the town for Imane to have regular boxing training sessions.

Three years later, following long training hours every week, and at 19 years of age, Imane came 17th at the 2018 World Championships in New Delhi and then represented Algeria at the 2019 World Championships in Russia, where she came 33rd. Now she is preparing for the summer Olympics Games in France. *"I started with nothing and now I have everything,"* says Imane, in an interview in the UNICEF office in the capital, Algiers. *"Both my parents come to support me. They are my biggest fans,"* she says, a large, charming smile lighting up her face.

Imane stresses how important sport is in a country like Algeria where opportunities for girls in sport can be restricted particularly in villages and where overweight and obesity are becoming a serious public health challenge, particularly for women. Algeria has an obesity rate of 22 per cent and is among the top 20 countries in the world that have high rates of obesity ⁷. About 12.8 per cent of children under the age of 5 are overweight ⁸, and it is predicted that in 2030, 46 per cent of adult Algerians will be obese if no interventions are put in place to reverse the trend. *"Many parents are unaware of the advantages of sport, and how it can improve not only your physical fitness but also your mental wellbeing,"* adds Imane.

Yet Imane is not just driven to make a difference in her own life, but also for other Algerians. Her new role as UNICEF children's rights ambassador, which she officially took up on 31 January, gives her the chance to do that. UNICEF Representative in Algeria, Katarina Johannsen, on appointing Imane as an ambassador says, *"We feel honoured that Imane has accepted to be an ambassador for us. She is already a great role model for young people to get involved in sports in Algeria, and she can now extend her influence to push forward the child rights agenda."*

On her part, Imane says, *"I am deeply honoured to be an ambassador for UNICEF. My message to young people is to follow your dreams. Don't let obstacles come in your way, resist any obstacles and overcome them. My dream is to win a gold medal. If I win, mothers and fathers can see how far their children can go. I particularly want to inspire girls and children who are disadvantaged in Algeria."*

⁷ Prevention of Overweight and Obesity in Children and Adolescents, UNICEF 2019

⁸ Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), 2019

EDUCATION AND ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

Every child, including adolescents,
learns and acquires skills for the future



EDUCATION AT A GLANCE

77%

of children **aged 3 to 4 years** are on track to reach their full potential⁹

14%

of children **36 to 59 months** attend preschool

About **78%** of children **aged 4 to 5 years** have attended a preparatory school

The primary education completion rate is **94.5%**



The net school attendance rate (adjusted) at primary school is

97.1%

85.3% at middle and **49.6%** at secondary

Average completion rate is

68.9%

(girls **78.2%**, boys **60.5%**, urban areas **73.7%** & rural areas **60.0%**)

Secondary school completion rate is

46.4%

(girls **59.2%**, boys **34.6%**, urban areas **52.6%** & rural areas **35.5%**)

26.6%
of boys



13.7%
of girls

are at risk of dropping out of middle school

The Algeria Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), sixth edition, 2019.

⁹ Office for national statistics (ONS), 2024.



PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

Education is now the second highest investment of the Government's domestic budget. The Government's increased public investment in education to 14.5 per cent in 2023, which has resulted in high primary education enrolment throughout the country and a significant reduction in gender disparities, with girls now more likely to complete secondary school than boys.

Preschool attendance has increased over the past decade which is the foundation for children to attain the developmental milestones and the skills that they need as adults to earn a living in a highly competitive market. The proportion of children aged 3 to 4 years who are on track to reach their full potential increased from 72 per cent to 77 per cent between 2013 and 2019.¹⁰

Yet challenges persist. There is a high adolescent dropout rate and a lack of equal educational opportunities for certain groups. Of the 50 per cent of adolescents who do not complete secondary school, most are from poor or rural households, live in the south and the central highland regions, come from the poorest or rural households and/or have disabilities. In 2019, almost 600,000 children were at risk of dropout. Children with disabilities are among the most disadvantaged groups; only 38.2 per cent of children aged 3 to 4 years with functional impairments are on track in their development.

The quality of education needs to be improved at all levels to increase learning and make education more relevant to students' lives and ambitions. Adolescents and young people (aged 15–24 years), who make up nearly 14 per cent of the population,¹¹ often struggle to find employment after they have completed education or vocational training as they lack the skills required by the job market. About 26.9 per cent of young people aged 16 to 24 years are unemployed (23.6 per cent for men and 45.1 per cent for women) and 26.2 per cent of those aged 15 to 24 years are neither in education nor employment.

To overcome these challenges, more investment is required in teacher training, and the education system needs strengthening to identify and support children at risk of dropping out of academic education. Importantly, vocational training should be better integrated into academic studies so that young people leave schools having benefitted from a rounded education that will better meet the demands of the labour market and civic life.

UNICEF supports the Government's priorities in the education sector so that the nearly 12 million children and adolescents in school, particularly the most vulnerable, have better opportunities to learn and develop skills that help them to engage in socio-economic and civic life. This is a key element in achieving goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'.

Much of UNICEF's technical assistance to the Government focuses on innovation, which has become even more critical following the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 crisis. While the pandemic has compromised education goals, it has provided an opportunity to develop innovative approaches and interventions that reduce disparities. This is also in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), which guides the UN's

¹⁰ Office for national statistics (ONS), 2019

¹¹ Office for national statistics (ONS), 2024.



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“ Education is a transformative force and a powerful driver; it plays a crucial role in reducing poverty, offers opportunities for individual freedom and contributes to improving the status of girls and women in society. ”

**Nawel Abdessemed, Chief of Education and Adolescent Development,
UNICEF Algeria.**



UNICEF'S SUPPORT

Key areas of focus for UNICEF support:

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What we need to do achieve better learning outcomes for children

1 Strengthen capacities to allow equitable and inclusive access to education for the most vulnerable children and adolescents, in particular, those at risk of dropping out of school. UNICEF provides technical support to the Government to put into practice government policy to prevent and address the high adolescent dropout rate. This includes supporting programmes that identify adolescents at risk, putting in place remedial and psychosocial support, and establishing a distance-learning system for adolescents in rural and remote areas. In addition, UNICEF supports the Ministry of Vocational Training with a training of trainers for the ministry staff on teaching life skills. The focus is on integrating life skills, such as communication skills, critical thinking, decision-making, creativity and problem-solving into technical vocational curricula. There is special attention on adolescent girls as they tend to lose out more than their male peers on job opportunities.

2 Provide children and adolescents with quality learning and opportunities to develop their life skills and participation. Building a solid foundation in education is important for a child's success in the future. Therefore, at the start of the current country programme, UNICEF supported the Ministry of National Education (MEN), in collaboration with the World Bank, to develop the country's first preschool module based on international standards. Preschool inspectors have been trained on the module which includes videos showing best teaching practices. Also, UNICEF, in partnership with MNE, supports the training of teachers in primary and secondary school psycho-pedagogical and innovative classroom practices as well as life- skills integration, including those in special education. In addition, learning from the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF supports training of trainers' courses for primary school inspectors in digital learning and assists with the development of distance education to prepare for times of crisis.

Climate change too has been integrated into the education programme. Water scarcity and forest fires have been identified as one of the main climate change challenges in Algeria. With UNICEF assistance, the World's Largest Lesson on Climate Change has been embedded in the curriculum in primary and lower and upper secondary levels. UNICEF is also supporting the Climate Landscape Analysis for Children (CLAC) and the development of action plans based on CLAC recommendations.

3 Reinforce the education system to coordinate and manage results, in learning and school retention. UNICEF's role in capacity building at the national level focuses on the establishment of an education management information system (EMIS) that will allow the regular production, availability, dissemination, and effective use of reliable, relevant and disaggregated data right down to community level. Also, UNICEF assists with the analysis of data, such as MICS 6 and administrative data, and performance for planning and monitoring-evaluation at central and decentralized levels in line with SDG 4. In addition, UNICEF assists with the development and implementation of national policies, strategies and guidelines that define the norms and standards of interventions in quality inclusive education.

4 Inclusive Education Strengthen inclusive education systems and protection for the most vulnerable children and adolescents, including those with disabilities. UNICEF provides technical support to the Government to strengthen coordination mechanisms, to provide more learning opportunities for children and adolescents, analyses in the areas of public finance for children and inclusive education, and analysis of public finances allocated

children and inclusive education. This includes supporting efforts to ensure education personnel have specialized skills to ensure better care for children and adolescents with disabilities. UNICEF also supports the strengthening of protection systems for the most vulnerable, ensuring prevention, quality of care, and safety within families and communities. Furthermore, UNICEF supports the development and implementation of national policies, strategies and guidelines that establish norms and standards for quality inclusive educational interventions.

“ People have a misconception that pre-primary teaching is the easiest form of teaching, but it is not. Early learning education requires many different skills and it is critical to prepare children for primary education and for life,” says Senhadji Mounir, a head teacher of a primary school in Algiers who participated in a UNICEF-supported training of trainers on interactive teaching methods for pre-school children. The training will be offered digitally on a new platform that was designed with UNICEF support and also in-person. Mounir who has been in education for over 20 years and loves his job, feels confident that the pre-school teachers will find the platform useful, even if the older teachers, some of whom may not be used to digital learning, could be hesitant at first. “This platform is revolutionary as it will make the teaching accessible to pre-school teachers throughout the country even in remote areas. I am excited about it, he says. ”



MAIN PARTNERS

Government partners:

- Ministry of National Education (MEN).
- Ministry of Vocational Training and Education (MEFP).
- Ministry of National Solidarity, the Family and the Women’s Affairs (MSNFCF).
- Ministry of Youth (MJ).
- Higher Youth Council (CSJ)

United Nations partners:

- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
- The International Labour Office (ILO).
- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Civil society organizations:

- Algerian Muslim Scouts (SMA).
- And Children and young people.

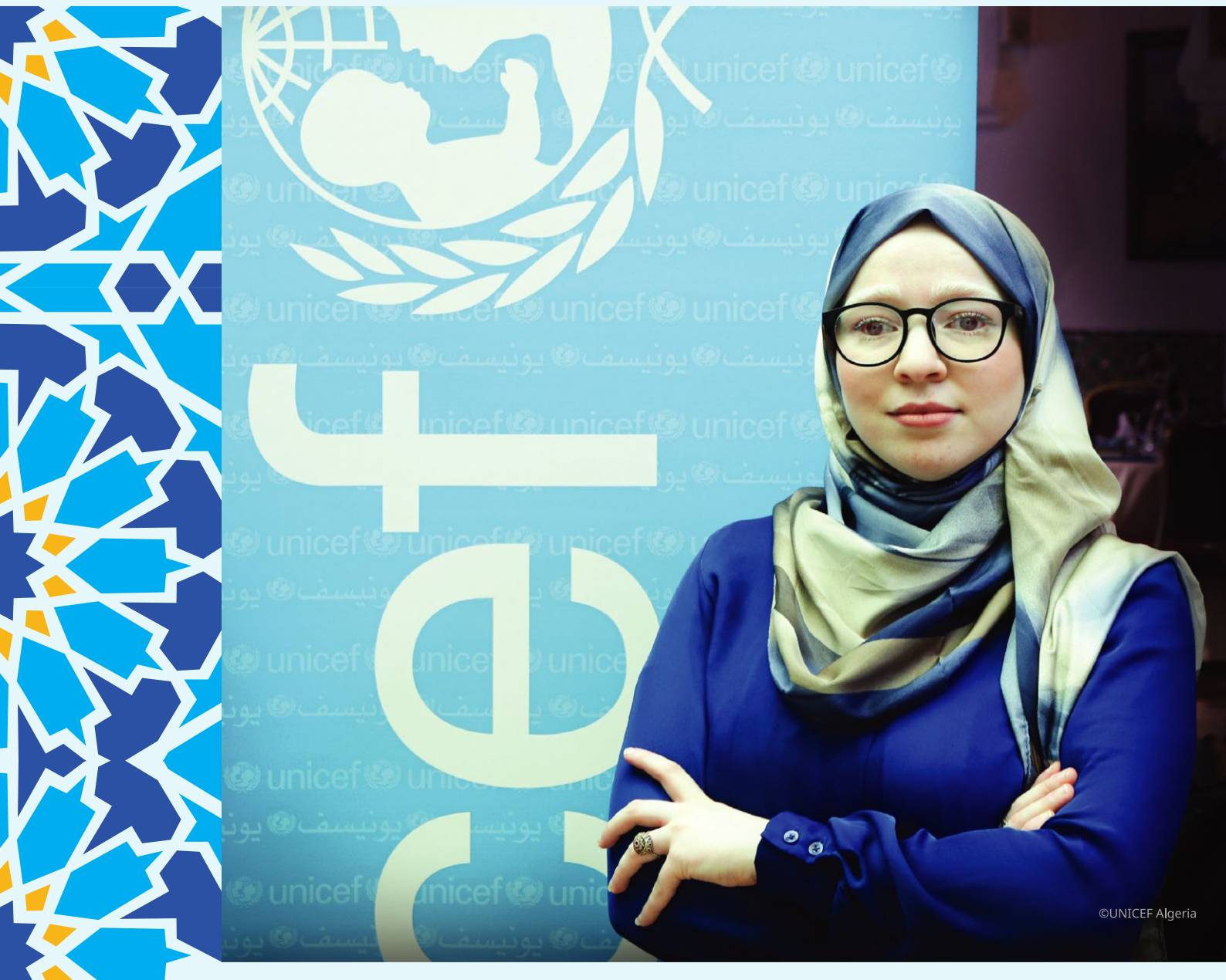


WHO I AM?

When Amani Bensekhria took part in a social entrepreneurship boot camp for young people, she was determined to fit in despite being the only one with a visible disability.

Amani, 24, has albinism and is visually impaired; she uses braille to read and write. “Only the first few minutes were a bit challenging, then it was fine,” she says. Not only did Amani fit in but she was a team leader, and her team came first with their entrepreneurial idea to produce gluten-free products.

The boot camp, organised by the Future of Development Association and supported by UNICEF, had 75 participants, and took place in 2021. Since then, Amani has hosted her own radio show at university called ‘Let Me Talk’ and graduated with a master’s degree in audio-visual communication. She speaks fluent Arabic, English, Spanish and French.



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“Being born with albinism and impaired vision has never been an obstacle for me,” she says. “It has made me stronger. I see my condition as a privilege, as it helps me to experience humanity from a different perspective.”

Amani has used this ‘privilege’ to volunteer for the UNICEF Algeria country office, in particular supporting adolescents, including those with special needs. One of the challenges for adolescents is staying in school or at least being engaged in learning activities. In Algeria, the secondary school completion rate is only 46.4 per cent, (girls 59.2 per cent, boys 34.6 per cent, urban areas 52.6 per cent and rural areas 35.5 per cent).¹² Those who continue with school often lack the soft skills critical for employment and success. Girls and young women are especially disadvantaged; around 32 per cent of girls and women compared to 20.4 per cent of boys and men are neither in education nor employment.¹³

To help empower adolescents, UNICEF developed the Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation, a package of guidance, tools, activities and supplies to support those aged 10-18. Amani participated in the training to be a facilitator, and has facilitated sessions in her home city, Batna, in north-eastern Algeria and has also travelled to other parts of the country. Moreover, Amani volunteered to translate the kit, about 70 pages, into braille, a task that took her several months. *“I’m proud to be able to do this work. The kit is a gift for all visually impaired adolescents around the world. And volunteering is my passion because it hasn’t only given me a voice, but it has also allowed me to serve people with special needs, to help them feel included, build their personalities, and achieve their goals.”*

She adds, *“I believe that people with special needs are not just people with needs. They are people with vision and great capacities, and if given the opportunity they can make positive changes.”*

Amani says some of the most memorable sessions that she has facilitated have been with young people who are blind or with impaired vision like herself. *“They all were eager to participate and we just had to adapt a few activities; so for example, instead of drawing with crayons, the adolescents used slime.”*

She remembers a 12-year-old boy who took part in a session where they had to reflect on three questions: ‘Who am I?’, ‘What do I have?’ and ‘What could I be?’. Amani says the boy told her it was the first time he had said to other people he was blind, and by doing so it had given him a chance to realise the many possibilities in front of him.

¹² The Algeria Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), sixth edition, 2019

¹³ The Algeria Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), sixth edition, 2019

CHILD PROTECTION

Every child, including adolescents, is protected from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices



CHILD PROTECTION AT A GLANCE



Birth registration is

100%

100,562

child with disabilities
enrolled in schools

Over **12,859** professionals
provide multidisciplinary support
to ensure schooling

Source: Ministry of National Education & MSNFCF, 2024



PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

Since independence, Algeria has made significant progress in legislative, administrative, social, and educational measures to protect the rights of the child. One of the main achievements has been the adoption of the 2015 Child Act which fulfilled the recommendations made by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) committee review in 2012.

As stipulated by the Constitution, the protection of children is ensured by the family and the State, considering the best interests of the child and punishes all forms of violence against children, their exploitation and abandonment. In addition, the penal code has been revised to address violence against women.

The National Body for the Protection and Promotion of Children (ONPPE) was established along with a toll-free child helpline for reporting violations of children's rights. Also, to provide cross-sectoral coordination on child protection, a committee has been set up comprising 16 ministerial sectors and the Directorate-General for National Security, the National Gendarmerie Command and civil society representatives.

The strengthening of child protection systems and services and the child protection information system are priorities particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic has made children more vulnerable than ever to violence and exploitation, including online exploitation.

The Child Protection Act provides a framework to improve access to justice for children in line with international standards. Efforts are being stepped up to develop a justice system that promotes child-friendly services and procedures, in accordance with the principle of the best interests of the child.

Despite measures against violence, the family environment is still characterized by a certain acceptance of violence as a form of discipline. To this end, parenting skills need to be strengthened through family support and parental guidance programmes that include skills to promote positive disciplinary practices.

To leave no child behind, the inclusion of children with disabilities is a cross-cutting priority that must be accelerated so that they have access to their full rights.

Other groups that tend to be more vulnerable and require specific support are children in institutions, children separated from their families and children on the move.





UNICEF'S SUPPORT

Key areas of focus for UNICEF support:

The Child Protection programme is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; SDG 8 which promotes inclusive and sustainable growth; and SDG 16 which provides for just, peaceful, and inclusive societies, and the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child following the 2012 Algeria periodic reports, and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of 2022.

The child protection system is strengthened to promote prevention, referral, and early intervention.

National capacities will be improved in (a) coordinating the various actors, particularly through support to the intersectoral committee of ONPPE; (b) collecting and analysing administrative data to establish an information system on the situation of children; (c) training of those responsible for child protection, particularly in relation to social services, the judicial system and civil society organizations; and (d) promoting positive social norms consistent with the national context that foster the protection and participation of children and adolescents.

What we do to protect children and ensure their well-being.

- 1 The national integrated child protection information system is available and operational to strengthen decision-making and develop evidence-based policies and programmes.** UNICEF supports national efforts in coordination of various institutional actors through support for intersectoral committees and civil society organizations. In addition, special support will be devoted to supporting the collection and analysis of key administrative data for the establishment of a reporting information system on the situation of children. The programme will provide support to national efforts to implement a new National Plan of Action for Children 2024-2030 based on the programme budget for children initiated as part of the project to modernize budgetary procedures. The technical capacities of key actors (from the social affairs sector, justice and civil society) on child protection issues will be strengthened, to increase the culture of reporting, improve the quality of services and increase the participation of children, youth and families.
- 2 Social and justice workers at the central and local level have the capacity, tools and procedures to effectively manage the prevention, referral and coordinated care of children and adolescents at risk.** UNICEF contributes to strengthening the child helpline and enhances social and legal services in areas to be identified by the Government. To improve the delivery of child protection services, UNICEF supports training for child protection actors which includes UNICEF providing technical assistance for the development of action plans and strategies for child protection services, such as alternative care, local case management and care for children with disabilities. Technical support is provided to social assistance personnel, strengthening their capacity, and developing appropriate socio-educational tools and techniques to monitor children and young people for better social and professional integration.
- 3 Children and adolescents, families and civil society have strengthened capacities to act as development actors and to promote citizenship and positive educational practices.** UNICEF adopts a life cycle approach and brings together the contributions of different sectors that relate to the health, development, protection and participation of adolescent girls and boys with cross-cutting programmes of communication, advocacy and communication for social behavior change. UNICEF promotes community engagement and the creating of spaces for adolescents and children to participate and promote change in areas that concern them; and recognizes them as agents of change. A communication for development strategy identifies the drivers of violent practices and addresses the general acceptance and normalization by parents, children, and society of violent discipline. Interventions around child rearing, gender roles and acceptability of violence will promote positive norms and values and reduce the impact of harmful practices on children. The programme generates quality evidence on child abuse to develop evidence-based tools and strategies.

“ Thanks to the adoption of the Child Protection Law in 2015, we now have a specific legal framework for child protection that has allowed us to make significant progress for children, explains Nora Myriam Ouiddir, who has been working in Algeria for eight years and is currently Head of Child Protection for UNICEF Algeria.

“I use my multidisciplinary experience as a child and youth educator and manager to coordinate sustainable programmes with our government and civil society partners in the areas of child rights, child justice, psychosocial support, child participation and inclusion of children with disabilities. The strength of the partnership I have built with different actors in the protection field is driven by a common desire to advance the child rights agenda and a protective environment for children. ”

Nora Myriam Ouiddir, Chief of Child Protection



MAIN PARTNERS

Government partners:

- The Ministry of National Solidarity, the Family and the Women's Affairs (MSNFCE).
- The National Body for the Protection and Promotion of Children.
- The Directorate General of National Security (DGSN).
- The Ministry of Justice (MJ).
- The Ministry of Vocational Education and Training (MEFP).
- The National Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CNESE).

United Nations partners:

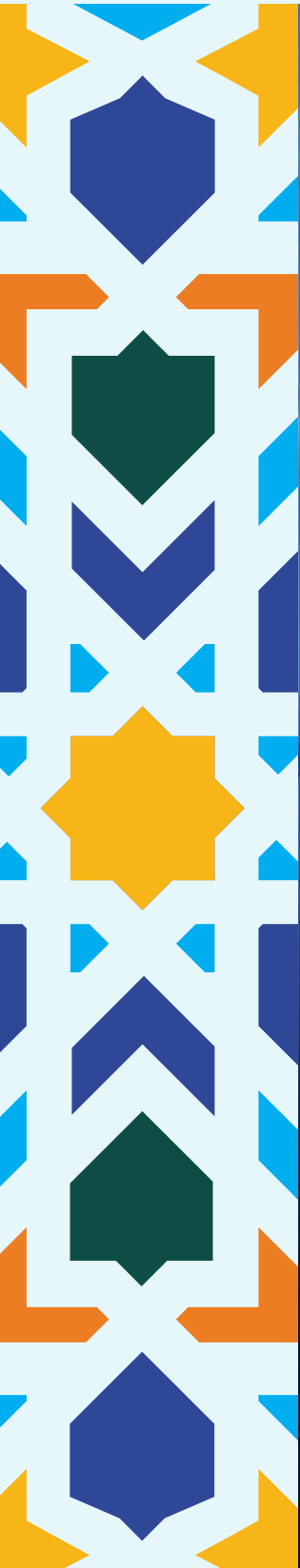
- The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).
- The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Civil society partners:

- The Algerian Federation of Disabled Persons (FAPH).
- National Foundation for Health Promotion and Research Development (FOREM).



MEET TWO YOUTH AMBASSADORS FOR UNICEF ALGERIA



unicef 
for every child



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When Maissa Belaroussi, 14, enters the room, she commands attention. She appears confident and determined, and her face lights up with a warm smile. Maissa is one of Algeria's most famous child actresses. Yet when she talks it is not about her successful acting career at such a young age, but about her passion for child rights and protecting the environment.

"I feel strongly that children need to be kept safe, should be protected from conflict, have the right to education and to play." She is also passionate about climate change and admires Greta Thunberg, the Swedish environmental activist, "I want to be like her," she says. Maissa also admires her father who has taught her about the importance of conservation and climate change. *"My father has an environment association, and he organizes his community to plant trees. I join them. We planted 500 trees with him in one day,"* she says.

By her side is Bakedi Redhouane Abderahmane, 13, who appears shy at first until he talks about child rights. He has a quiet confidence and modesty. He too feels strongly about the right to education but he adds, *"All rights are important. There isn't one child right that is more important than the other."* Bakedi loves school and wants to be a doctor in the future. His other passion is writing and has already written a book that was inspired by his grandfather's experience during the struggle for Algeria's independence. *"My grandfather told me his story,"* he says. *"The book took me a month to write."*

The children's passion for child rights made them stand out among around 1,000 other young Algeria youth who last year submitted three-minute videos on child rights for a UNICEF competition. Eleven youth were selected by a panel of judges, which included UNICEF child protection and communication staff members, to be youth child rights ambassadors for UNICEF.

Both Maissa and Bakedi said they were honoured and surprised to be selected. They both said they wanted to raise awareness among their peers and mobilize support for children particularly children with disabilities, child Sahrawi refugees, orphans, adolescents who have dropped out of school and those living in hard-to-reach areas. Both Maissa and Bakedi, who are fluent in Arabic, French and English, have a massive following on social media. Maissa has over 84,000 followers on Instagram.

Last year, they both participated in UNICEF-supported child rights workshops where they learnt more about child rights as well as more effective ways of communication, including creating compelling content for social media and public speaking. *"I want to make sure all children's voices are heard in Algeria and the world,"* says Maissa. Bakedi agrees.

SOCIAL POLICY

Every child, including adolescents, has access to inclusive social protection and lives free from poverty



SOCIAL POLICY AT A GLANCE



Monetary poverty stands at

5.5%¹⁴

Social transfers budget allocated in 2024 is about

19% of the total general budget¹⁵

Current and investment budget allocation to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health is about

10% and 6%¹⁶ of the total general budget respectively

ONS (2011) for poverty and Ministry of Finance (2024) for budget.



PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

Ever since Algeria's independence in 1962, social equity has been at the heart of economic and social development. The Government's 2021-2024 action plan prioritizes strengthening human capital, improving citizens' living conditions and developing efficient and equitable social policies. These three areas impact directly children's well-being. Algeria is ranked in the category of high human development countries and the monetary poverty dropped significantly from 22.6 per cent in 1990 to 5.5 per cent in 2011.¹⁷

Despite the fall in the price of oil in 2014 (one of Algeria's main exports), the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the global economic crisis of 2020, Algeria has pushed ahead with social sector spending and social protection policies to protect the population, including children, from the fall out of the global economic crisis.

The Government implemented a budget reform and adopted in 2023 the first Finance Law using a programme-based budgeting approach. The public finance reform also coincided with a more favorable macroeconomic situation in the country, with the crude oil price at the highest level since 2014.

To mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and the global economic crisis, in 2022, the Government allocated 613 billion Algerian dinars (about US\$ 4.6 billion) to price subsidies for basic foods, an increase of 93 per cent compared with 2021. In 2023, the budget allocated to the ministries of Education and Health (current and investment) represented 9 per cent and 5 per cent respectively (calculations from the Finance law 2023). In 2023, the Government increased pensions and salaries as well as the unemployment allowance to support the purchase power of low-income categories.

¹⁴ National Office of Statistics, 2011

¹⁵ Déclaration de politique générale, Premier Ministère, Algérie, Octobre 2023

¹⁶ Algeria Finance Law 2024, Official Gazette

¹⁷ Algeria Voluntary National Report, 2019



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“ During a field mission with national institutions working on social protection, I saw the amazing work the solidarity and proximity cells are doing in the field, assessing vulnerable household's situations and their needs and helping them to receive social assistance support. (Solidarity and proximity cells are under the authority of the Ministry of National Solidarity, Family and Women condition). I remember meeting a young, widowed mother of three children who had no income. The mother said she had struggled to raise her children alone but with government assistance, she managed, and her children all have had a good education. She receives monthly solidarity allowance and benefits from the social housing national programme. ”

Amal Alahoum, Chief Social Policy, UNICEF Algeria.

Notably, Algeria is one of the few countries in the world where child and youth multidimensional poverty measurement is institutionalized and is measured by the National Equity Cell, a body of government ministries, civil society members and researchers, led by the National Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CNESE). The CNESE is a think tank and a consultative institution that advises the Government on economic, social and environmental issues. CNESE leads research and data analysis and produces reports and thematic notes on specific areas related to children and youth.

At global level, UNICEF aims that all children, especially the most vulnerable, have social protection coverage so that they can manage to meet their basic needs, including during times of economic or climatic crisis. UNICEF also aims to reduce multi-dimensional poverty, particularly in areas that have high rates of multi-dimensional poverty.

The UNICEF-supported Social Policy programme in Algeria is aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This includes (i) halving child poverty (SDG 1, target 1.2); (ii) achieving universal coverage for children in social protection by 2030 (SDG 1, target 1.3).

It also contributes to United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. (i) By 2027, the population, including people living in vulnerable conditions, benefits from transparent, accountable and effective institutions that guarantee their effective participation and representation, the rule of law, as well as the promotion of inclusiveness and non-discrimination values (outcome 2, UNSDCF)*; and (ii) by 2027, the population, including people living in vulnerable conditions, has access to high-quality, resilient health services, including prevention, a high-quality education and training system, and an effective social protection system (outcome 3, UNSDCF).

The UNICEF Social Policy programme (2027–2023) aims that by 2027, children and adolescents, girls and boys, especially the vulnerable, benefit from equitable social protection programmes which reduce poverty and economic and natural risks affecting their wellbeing. It consists of two outputs. The first output is related to child poverty and social protection and states that by 2027, national institutions are strengthened with tools, protocols and capacities to generate rigorous data and analysis on child and adolescent poverty and social protection to enable the development of an effective, well-targeted and shock-responsive social protection programmes. The second output is related to public finance and local governance and states that by 2027, central and local actors are equipped with tools for analysing public spending and budgets and reviewing budget allocations to reduce disparities and poverty among children and adolescents in targeted areas.

Key areas of focus for UNICEF support:

The social policy programme interventions rely mostly on evidence generation, institutional capacity development and policy dialogue strategies in the areas of child poverty, child-sensitive social protection, public finance and local governance. These strategies are relevant in the context of middle-income and high-human development countries.

1 Child poverty and social protection: Institutionalized measurement of multidimensional child and youth poverty is a key focus area and enabler to strengthen the equity focus of public policies towards children in multiple sectors. Based on the MICS household survey data, the National Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CNESE) leads a research project in collaboration with the national equity cell, to measure and analyse multidimensional child and youth poverty. The cell is composed of line ministries, including the Ministry of Finance, national human rights institutions, civil society and researchers. Several knowledge products are prepared to serve as foundations for operational thematic notes to support translating data and analysis into advocacy priorities and decisions at policy-making level. Social protection assessment and analysis are carried out simultaneously in partnership with the CNESE and the ministries in charge of social protection to strengthen the child-sensitiveness of social protection in line with the government priority around more efficient and equitable social policies. Evidence generated on social protection is used to consolidate advocacy towards resilience and gradual adoption of universal social protection for children, especially for the youngest children and children with disabilities. Good practices in similar context countries and scientific research available on the benefit of universal social protection schemes for children are showcased to support advocacy.

2 Public finance and local governance : Allocating sufficient budgets and ensuring effective spending for children is key to improving their well-being. This involves a multisectoral approach to strengthen the child-focus and child-lens of public finance management, especially, in the context of the budget reform implemented by the Government.

* United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

UNICEF supported a capacity development and technical assistance project led by the CNESE and the National body for Child Rights Promotion and Protection (ONPPE) on programme-based budgeting in the framework of the new National Plan of Action for Children.

UNICEF will provide technical assistance to the ministries of Health, Education, and National Solidarity to strengthen their capacities and to generate evidence on public finance relevant issues. The objective is to equip sectoral ministries with tools and methodologies that support evidence-based budgetary submissions on important and priority areas for children.

UNICEF partnership with the ministry of Finance will contribute to the Ministry's transparency initiative by the design and the dissemination of a child-sensitive citizen's budget. Countries' experiences sharing will be organized and evidence will be generated about the feasibility of introducing a child dimension into the general subsidies reform led by the ministry of Finance. A national child-focused expenditures measurement methodology and report will be produced to inform child budget monitoring and analysis.

UNICEF, ILO, UNDP, UNESCWA and other UN agencies support the Ministry of Finance through a joint project on 'strengthening the national social protection system'. The project builds upon several interventions that include, among others, the development of national and local capacities, evidence generation, sustainable financing, and equitable access to social protection.

In the area of local governance, UNICEF will contribute to developing local capacities on child rights-based budget formulation and planning to inform budget allocations for children at local level.



MAIN PARTNERS

Government partners:

- The Ministry of Finance (MF)
- The National Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CNESE).
- The Ministry of National Solidarity, the Family and the Women's Affairs (MSNFCE).

United Nations partners:

- The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).
- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- The International Labour Organization (ILO)
- The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA)

Other partners:

- International Financial Institutions (IFIs)

HUMANITARIAN ACTION FOR SAHRAWI REFUGEE CHILDREN



SAHRAWI REFUGEES IN ALGERIA AT A GLANCE



173,600

Sahrawi refugees of whom **65,968** are children¹⁸

88%

of the population is either vulnerable to food insecurity or food insecure

1 out of 10

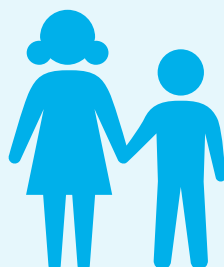
children between **6 and 59 months** suffers from acute malnutrition

More than **50%** of women of reproductive age and **50%** of children between **6 and 59 months old** are anaemic



3 out of 10

children are stunted or chronically malnourished¹⁹



All primary-school-age children attend primary education but

3 out of 10

children do not complete primary education²⁰

An estimated

1 out of 5

children between **5 and 17 years** living in the camps are out of school²¹

Only **50%**

of children who complete primary education achieve learning proficiency as defined by local standards²²

The Algeria Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), sixth edition, 2019.

“*In the wake of the global crises, it is becoming increasingly challenging to meet the current needs of Sahrawi children,” says UNICEF Chief of Zone office - Tindouf, Boussad Belkhef. “We need to urgently increase our support to the refugees, particularly the most vulnerable children who are facing challenges to access basic services including food, water, health and education.*”

Humanitarian assistance for the Sahrawi child refugees is a priority for the country programme of cooperation.

¹⁸ Saharawi Refugee Response Plan, 2024

¹⁹ Nutrition Survey, Saharawi Refugee Camps, Tindouf, Algeria February 2022

²⁰ Education situation analysis, 2020

²¹ Out of school study, 2020

²² Learning data shared by Saharawi education authorities



PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

Since 1975 Algeria has sheltered tens of thousands of Sahrawi refugees who have fled their homes in Western Sahara during one of the world's longest-standing refugee crises.²³ Today, an estimated 173,600²⁴ refugees live in five camps in Tindouf in the southwest of Algeria, near the Algeria-Mauritania border.

The refugees are dependent on humanitarian assistance for their survival and their lives have become more even precarious following the COVID-19 pandemic, the global rise in fuel and food prices, and increasing water scarcity and food shortages as well as extreme weather, including sandstorms and floods, which with climate change, is likely to worsen.

In March 2022, a nutrition survey showed an alarming malnutrition trend compared to previous years. Acute malnutrition among children between 6 and 59 months old increased from 7.6 per cent in 2019 to 10.7 per cent in 2022. Some 54.2 per cent of children aged between 6 and 59 months old were anemic and 28.8 per cent of them were suffering from stunted growth²⁵ which has irreversible negative effects on a range of children's development outcomes, including learning. The survey also showed that only one in three children receive the minimum diverse diet they need to grow and develop healthily. The situation has probably become even more critical as humanitarian assistance has been reduced.

Sahrawi health workers, including midwives and community health workers, are playing an important role in improving maternal and child health. Midwives have had their skills upgraded, which have included internships in the capital, Algiers. Community health workers have also benefitted from training, particularly in young child health and referrals, and play a vital role in monitoring pregnant women, newborns and young children's health, including immunization and preventing malnutrition.

In 2023, 40,050 children aged 3-16 years were enrolled in 89 schools and care centres in the Sahrawi refugee camps. This included more than 5,000 children under the age of 5 in pre-primary education and 320 children with disabilities in special education centres. A further 7,000 adolescents are enrolled as boarders in secondary and tertiary schools outside the camps, totally taken care of by the Government of Algeria. Global school enrolments indicate an almost perfect gender parity although slight disparities are observed in pre-primary in favour of boys and in primary and lower secondary in favour of girls. Over 75 per cent of the nearly 20,000 children enrolled in primary schools passed to the next academic level in 2022 but only 50 per cent of those who were tested at the end of primary education in 2022 met the locally-established threshold for minimum learning competencies. The education sector in the camps is community-based and is entirely operated by refugees. Teachers and others education personnel number 1,800 of whom 82 per cent are women.

In 2021, the Education Coordination Group, led by UNICEF and co-led by UNHCR, adopted a five-year education strategy, following extensive consultations with Sahrawi education authorities at all levels. This strategy has since guided interventions in the education sector.

²³ Office for national statistics (ONS), 2024

²⁴ Sahrawi refugee response plan (SRRP)

²⁵ Nutrition Survey, Saharawi Refugee Camps, Tindouf, Algeria February 2022

Notable results include increased funding for incentive payments by 40 per cent for teachers and other education personnel following UNICEF's leadership on resource mobilization and its strategic partnership with the European Commission for Humanitarian Aid & Civil Protection (ECHO), the Spanish Agency for International Development (AECID) and the Italian Agency

for Development Cooperation (AICS). Teacher retention improved and candidates with better qualifications than before applied for vacant teaching positions. Also, new constructions and rehabilitation have enhanced the quality of the children's learning environment and better funding for the provision of basic learning materials has improved the quality and quantity of items distributed.

A system is in place to cater to the education of children with disabilities with nine special education centres designated for them although conditions and teaching in these centres need to be improved.

Overall, much more needs to be done to support the Sahrawi refugees. There is a need to expand access to schooling and to improve learning as too many children fail to reach their educational potential and many children, especially young children, adolescents and those with disabilities, are missing out altogether on education. More needs to be done to improve the healthcare and nutrition of the population, particularly infants during the first 1,000 days of life.

The appeal of the Sahrawi Refugee Response Plan for 2026 and 2027: US\$ 177 million.



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UNICEF'S SUPPORT

The main areas of support are: (i) ensuring quality maternal and child health services and full immunization coverage; (ii) increasing efforts to prevent malnutrition amongst young children; and (iii) improving access to inclusive and quality education.

Key priorities for UNICEF's humanitarian response:

- 1 Improving maternal and child health services** – The focus is on technical assistance for maternal and child health care and strengthening primary health care and outreach, including working with community health workers. UNICEF supports the training of healthcare workers on neonatal and maternal care through an internship programme in the capital, Algiers, and also community health activities, including house-to-house visits. In addition, UNICEF supports a capacity-building programme in oxygen and cold chain management, procures all the vaccines for immunization in the camps as well as the cold chain equipment.
- 2 Preventing and responding to malnutrition** – UNICEF supports malnutrition prevention programmes with a focus on a child's first 1,000 days of life, children under the age of 5 and pregnant and lactating women. This includes promoting exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and improving infant and young child feeding. For older children, UNICEF is supporting school health programmes, particularly preventing obesity and chronic diseases through the promotion of healthy diets and physically active lifestyles.
- 3 Ensuring inclusive access to safe and quality education** – The focus is on access to safe and inclusive learning environments for Sahrawi children and youth, improving the quality of learning at all levels (preschool, primary and secondary), and strengthening the education system through improved planning and decision-making. As the lead agency in the Education Coordination Group, UNICEF provides leadership and technical expertise to ensure a predictable, relevant and effective education response.

UNICEF supports a functional Educational Management and Information System (EMIS) for quality needs assessments and response.

UNICEF procures and distributes basic school supplies to cover the needs of all schoolchildren and supports needs-based training of teachers and other pedagogical staff with a focus on didactics of mathematics and language and improving teachers' communication skills for trauma-affected children.

UNICEF also supports inclusive education and social behaviour change among school communities to improve hygiene and safety in schools and the mental health and psychosocial skills of school children. It implements an accelerated education pilot programme for out-of-school children and collaborates with UNHCR, and other partners to support sport activities run by trained coaches to improve health and mental wellbeing of school-age refugees with a focus on encouraging girls to participate as they are traditionally not given the opportunity to participate in sports activities.

4 Building an inclusive environment to ensure inclusive humanitarian action – Local authorities (health, social affairs and education) work together under a memorandum of understanding on sharing roles in childcare, learning disabilities and preventing the onset of preventable disabilities during the child’s early childhood. Quarterly intersectoral community meetings are organized to monitor the progress of the action.

5 Supporting disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness and response. UNICEF works with partners to improve the resilience of livelihoods in the face of challenges, such as climate change and environmental sustainability.



MAIN PARTNERS

Institutional partners:

- The Government of Algeria
- Algerian Red Crescent
- Local authorities

United Nations partners:

- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- World Food Programme (WFP),
- World Health Organization (WHO)

Civil society partners:

- Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM)
- The International Committee for the Development of Peoples (CISP)
- Triangle Génération Humanitaire (TGH)
- Association des Femmes pour l’Action et le Développement (AFAD)

Donors:

- Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID)
- European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)
- Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS)
- Algerian International Cooperation Agency for Solidarity and Development (AICA)



A TEACHER BRINGS SMILES ON SAHRAWI REFUGEE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES.

Zainab, 24, teaches Khadidja, a 6-year-old girl with autism, how to wash her face which lights up with a big smile. Khadidja is a refugee in the Awserd camp in Tindouf and attends a centre for children with disabilities which was rehabilitated in 2020 by UNICEF and its partner, TGH.

"In this centre, we provide the basic services that we give all children in the camp as well as additional support that children with autism require. "We develop their competencies so they have the opportunity to enjoy all rights including education and health so that they can integrate into society. This work makes me happy proud, and it is a huge responsibility," says Zainab. However, Zainab points out that there are many challenges, such as a lack of equipment and materials as well as the need to develop the skills and competencies of staff".



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For every child

Whoever she is.

Wherever he lives.

Every child deserves a childhood.

A future.

A fair chance.

That's why UNICEF is there.

For each and every child.

Working day in and day out.

In more than 190 countries and territories.

Reaching the hardest to reach.

The furthest from help.

The most excluded.

It's why we stay to the end.

And never give up.



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