



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

Country Operations Plan 2007

TAJIKISTAN

Executive Committee Summary

Country Operation Plan 2007 : TAJIKISTAN

Part I: OVERVIEW

1. Protection and socio-economic operational environment

Durable solutions, local integration for long staying Afghan refugees in the country and Tajik returnees, and the building of a proper asylum regime continue to be among the primary objectives for 2007. Long staying Afghan refugees have been in the country for many years speak the language and have attained a certain level of integration; some more than others. Most are Tajiks from Afghanistan, thus also familiar with local customs and traditions. Following the completion of resettlement programs with Canada and the United States, it is clear that the only solution for the remaining group, estimated at some 1,500, is local integration. To implement such a project, an integration package aimed at lessening the burden on Tajikistan will be developed in 2006. It will seek to achieve the transition from emergency to development and, therefore, the participation of specialized agencies such as UNDP and ILO will be sought from the start. Even though the number of refugees concerned is limited, it will still be necessary to deploy important diplomatic efforts to convince the Government, and in this endeavor the diplomatic/political support of donor countries will be essential.

In 2007 efforts will continue to be deployed to help national institutions develop their capacity to deal with asylum seekers and refugees in accordance with internationally recognized standards. This capacity development concerns institutions and individual government officials and takes the form of assistance in terms of equipment, training, etc. Training has been taking place for many years and it has yielded positive results. Nevertheless, institutions are still at a stage in their developments that training is not sustainable and still requires UNHCR participation.

UNHCR will also continue to participate in the European Union's BOMCA initiative as it has done since the inception of the project. UNHCR's participation has included training of border guards and customs officials to impress on the importance of looking at migration in a comprehensive manner that includes refugees and asylum seekers, and in conferences stressing the importance of the need to find the right balance between security and humanitarian concerns, as both are attainable and one does not exclude the other.

Given the situation in the region it remains important to maintain country specific and regional contingency plans to deal with a man made situation that may give rise to asylum seekers. In Tajikistan, UNHCR is participating in the national structure designed to deal with natural disasters, an inter-agency and inter-institutional structure that has been tested several times. UNHCR brings to it advise and expertise and has been promoting the idea of also using that structure in case of a man-made situation that gives rise to the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees.

Presidential elections will take place in November 2006. This will be an important test in terms of the Tajikistan's road to democracy and the sustainability of peace and stability in the country. One of the main security concerns remains problems arising from Tajikistan being used as a transit country for drugs originating in Afghanistan.

The situation in the region is far from stable and it is most important to continue monitoring it very closely, as refugee movements cannot be ruled out. In this sense, having maintained a stock of non-food items for 5,000 persons in Kurgan Tube is extremely positive. It already proved its worth in 2005 when non-food items were rushed to Kyrgyzstan to meet the initial needs of some 500 Uzbek asylum seekers who arrived in that country. A recent audit mission recommended that it be maintained, and the same conclusion was reached during a regional meeting of representatives and Headquarters in Almaty in October 2005.

2. Operational goals and potential for durable solutions

The overall strategic goal for Tajikistan in 2007 will be to continue the implementation of a durable solutions strategy with the focus on sustaining protection achievements already realized and reintegrating the remaining refugee caseload in the country through a more development and community-oriented approach. Given the political, social and economic developments in the region, contingency planning and preparedness becomes a main priority. The main objectives in 2007 programme for UNHCR Tajikistan are as follows:

- Carry out the local integration of the remaining long staying Afghan refugees in the country with the full participation of development agencies such as UNDP and ILO, NGOs and the full diplomatic/political support of donors.
- Continue to engage the Government to develop a proper working asylum regime respectful of the provisions of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, with full respect of the principle of non-refoulement, providing appropriate documents to asylum seekers and refugees, carrying out refugee status determination in accordance with accepted standards, and amend the implementing legislation and resolutions to bring them to inter internationally recognized standards.
- Vigorously promote the mainstreaming of gender and age in all UNHCR programmes and activities. Specific female issues to include for 2007: Women in peace building, addressing violence against women and small-scale livelihood support within families. Micro-credit facilities give priority to the needs of widows/women-headed families and families with large number of children. UNHCR will continue to promote the empowerment of women and strengthen awareness of gender equity within the community. Returnee women will continue to be encouraged to take an active part in the management of returnee affairs. For returnees with special needs, including elderly people, a referral network established in 2004, will continue in 2007, to ensure that special provisions meet their needs, both material and/or physical protection.
- Closely collaborate with partners, to implement a variety of prevention and response activities as outlined under its Plan of Action on SGBV. These activities will include awareness raising in refugee/returnee communities on SGBV, remedial action to be taken through legal mechanisms and sensitisation of local service providers and authorities to the special circumstances and rights of refugees/returnees.
- Actively participate in promoting awareness of HIV-AIDS.
- Continue to develop close relations with the donor community in Dushanbe and carry out information meetings twice a year in order to keep them abreast of developments in UNHCR's work in the country.
- Foster partnerships with other UN agencies, NGOs, donors, etc., to achieve the objectives outlined above.
- Constantly update the country-specific contingency plan in accordance with developments in the region in order to be ready to provide protection and assistance to any refugees who may arrive in the country as a result of the instability in the region.

Part II: COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS AND PARTNERSHIP

1. Outcomes of joint planning and management of identified gaps

UNHCR continues analysing the protection situation in the country and developments in the region and their impact on Tajikistan. In 2004, the Central Asian Protection Gaps Analysis (CAPGI) was launched, which proposed a profound analysis of gaps in international protection. This analysis led to the drafting of a regional project proposal; funding for it is sought from the EU/TACIS. Nevertheless, UNHCR will explore possibilities of involving other actors mainly at the implementation stage.

Responding to the needs identified during the discussions with the Government and NGOs, a coherent multi-actor capacity building strategy was developed that comprises training activities and assistance to the Government of Tajikistan and NGOs, as well as direct assistance to refugees, asylum-seekers and returnees. Moreover, actions taken under the suggested projects will also contribute to the harmonization of migration and asylum management within the Central Asia and the CIS.

One of the areas that need to be addressed is that of legislation. Neither are the refugee law and related resolutions in conformity with international standards; nor are they consistent with other legal acts. Moreover, the procedures for refugee status determination need improvement. To assist the Government in establishing a fair and efficient asylum system in Tajikistan, support will be provided through continuous dialogue in the forms of expertise as well as technical assistance to strengthen the institutional capacity of the relevant asylum structures. This will also include consultancies by international experts and study tours abroad to exchange experience and good practices with other countries.

The current lack of a reception center for asylum-seekers, which is foreseen in Article 2 of the Tajik refugee law, is another gap that UNHCR will address to meet the requirements for adequate reception facilities. UNHCR will ensure that the facilities as well as the reception procedures and treatment of asylum-seekers meet applicable standards through advocacy and monitoring. While this project will focus on urgent one-off investments (mainly rehabilitation and refurbishing of the building provided by the authorities) beyond the immediate financial abilities of UNHCR and the Government of Tajikistan, the authorities shall assume the responsibility for operation and maintenance of this center beyond project duration.

UNHCR will continue the search for durable solutions in line with the Framework for Durable Solutions. In Tajikistan UNHCR implements voluntary repatriation, as well as accelerated resettlement procedures in co-operation with resettlement countries pursuant to the Convention Plus Initiative and the Agenda for Protection. Local integration is yet to become a realistic durable solution and UNHCR Tajikistan will focus on attaining this solution in 2007. While many refugees have reached a significant degree of socio-economic integration, legal integration through the granting of citizenship remains so far a theoretical concept only. UNHCR will promote full local integration including naturalization and at the same time provide further support to help refugees become self-reliant through micro-credit schemes and vocational skills training.

National NGOs play an important role in assisting persons of concern to UNHCR and their participation in the development of a sustainable asylum system should be enhanced. The NGO capacities will be further strengthened in the field of international refugee protection through training activities for their staff. Moreover, with the aim to consolidate the efforts of UNHCR and the civil society, a network of legal clinics will be established in the country, possibly with their connection to similar networks in the region. This initiative will be implemented on the existing basis of NGO Support Centers in Dushanbe, Khatlon Province, Gorno-Badakhshan, Kulyab District, and Sugd Province.

Migration remains one of the most important issues on the Government's agenda and in order to ensure an adequate response to the needs of asylum-seekers and refugees in broader migration movements, a proper balance between human rights concerns and security concerns in the region has to be found. The recent transfer of control over the Tajik-Afghan border from the Russian Border Forces to the Tajik Border Forces raises concerns in the international community and results in a need to develop the related legislation and administrative infrastructure. Taking into account the migration-asylum nexus, UNHCR is involved in border management issues so as to promote a human rights approach with a view on refugee protection. One of the mechanisms for improving border management in the region is the Border Management in Central Asia (BOMCA) program, funded by the EU and implemented by the UNDP. Through this avenue, but also outside this program, UNHCR will intensify its ongoing training activities for the Tajik Border Forces.

While statelessness does not appear to be a wide-spread problem in Tajikistan, UNHCR will promote accession to the international statelessness instruments. Given that the deadline for exchanging Soviet passports for Tajik passports has elapsed, this issue shall be addressed on a regional level. It is noteworthy that to UNHCR's knowledge Tajik returnees have not faced any problems in obtaining Tajik documents.

2. Comprehensive needs and contributions

a) Contributions by the host government, refugee and/or local communities

n/a

b) Financial contributions of partners

Needs-based budget for the country operation	Total (all figures in US \$)	702,935
of which, estimated	UNHCR	517,500
	WFP (where applicable)	
	Operational partners	
	Implementing partners	27,835
	Unmet needs	157,600