

Central Asia

Recent Developments

Following the terrorist attacks on 11 September in the United States and its aftermath, the current focus in Central Asia is on contingency planning for possible new influxes from Afghanistan into neighbouring countries, particularly Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Emergency supplies and staff are being deployed to those countries and the offices in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, although not directly bordering Afghanistan, are also closely following events. UNHCR is observing the effects of recent developments both on programmes and on the perception of refugees within the sub-region. The emergency operation is coordinated by the Regional Co-ordinator, based in Islamabad. At the time of going to print, planning for possible 2002 activities in Central Asia related to the Afghan crisis has not yet been finalised, owing to the rapidly changing situation. These activities will be presented in an addendum to this Appeal which will be published once the Supplementary Programme for the Afghan crisis and other recent new needs are approved.

Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan
Tajikistan
Turkmenistan
Uzbekistan



Strategic Objectives

UNHCR will continue to promote the effective implementation of refugee legislation and procedures in the sub-region during 2002. Although all the Central Asian states except Uzbekistan are signatories to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, actual implementation of refugee legislation is at different stages. The general security climate within the sub-region is not always favourable to refugee interests, and during the past year, has led to some governments seeking to introduce measures which undermine achievements to date. The recent events in and around Afghanistan have exacerbated this tendency.

As part of the search for durable solutions, the successful local integration of refugees in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan will be assisted further, particularly through the acquisition of citizenship, with the objective of securing the completion of the process by the end of 2002. As durable solutions for the Chechen and Afghan refugees remain elusive at present, care and maintenance assistance will continue to be provided to the most vulnerable groups, with particular attention being paid to the needs of women and children. Resettlement opportunities for some of these refugees will also be pursued.

Operations

In **Kazakhstan**, activities related to the building of governmental capacity for dealing with refugee-related issues will continue through the delivery of workshops and seminars, and training of government officials, lawyers, law students and relevant NGOs. The number of Chechens in the country is now estimated at over 12,000. As the prospects of voluntary repatriation are fairly dim at present, material assistance will continue, mostly in the form of medical and domestic support. Assistance, including resettlement, will also be provided to the urban Afghan and Uighur refugees. It is anticipated that voluntary repatriation of Tajiks will number 1,000 in 2002.

A planning figure for the repatriation of Tajik refugees from **Kyrgyzstan** is set at 1,000 individuals, based on the assumption that those refugees who wish to remain in the country will be able to obtain citizenship by the end of 2002. The Office continues to give a high priority to speedy local integration for 10,000 Tajiks of Kyrgyz ethnic origin who have opted for this solution. Assistance will be provided to the relevant government departments involved in the citizenship process, as well as to partner NGOs and NGO Support Centres. The local integration project, which began in 2000, will conclude at the end of

2002. The activities under this project will focus on the enhancement of self-sufficiency, including the development of income-generation capacity, access to education for refugee children who have missed several years of school and vocational training for young adults. This project also provides for rehabilitation of local infrastructure, both to increase access to basic services and to reduce the burden on local communities who are integrating refugees as new citizens. At the same time, UNHCR will increase its efforts to encourage development agencies to include Tajik refugees in their programmes. Legal assistance will be made available to refugees through local NGOs and through professional legal aid clinics. Care and maintenance assistance will be provided for over 800 Afghan refugees and over 300 Chechens while efforts to resettle them are pursued. The Office will continue to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Government in refugee and asylum law and practice. It was anticipated that the Refugee Law would be passed by the Parliament during the autumn 2001 session.

Some 2,500 Tajiks are expected to return to **Tajikistan** during 2002. As in previous years, returnees will receive a repatriation cash grant, either at point of origin or upon arrival, in addition to transport assistance. The reintegration component of the programme is due to be phased out in June 2002, in accordance with Action 2 decisions. UNHCR continues to encourage development agencies to cover returnee-affected areas in their programmes. Concern about the general protection situation in Tajikistan has been aroused following the issuing of Government Decrees restricting the movement of Afghan refugees, as well as a proposed revision of existing refugee law which would be detrimental to the status of refugees in general. Negotiation with the Government on these issues is ongoing, with the objective of returning to the formerly satisfactory protection regime in the country. Assistance will be provided to vulnerable Afghan refugees, including skills training and income-generating projects especially targeted for vulnerable women. Legal support for refugees will be provided by qualified lawyers on contract to UNHCR.

In **Turkmenistan**, it is envisaged that the local integration programme for some 12,500 Tajik refugees of Turkmen ethnicity will be concluded at the end of 2002. Activities will include income generation, mainly in the agricultural sector, education and health. Specific attention will continue to be paid to the needs of women and children, especially in terms of reproductive healthcare and the education of girls. Voluntary repatria-

Turkmenistan: Women selling handmade carpets. *UNHCR/A. Harper.*



tion will remain an option for Tajik refugees, and some 500 are expected to return in 2002. Assistance will also be provided to the most vulnerable among the urban refugee population, presently numbering 2,200, most of whom are Afghans. Resettlement opportunities will be pursued where feasible. The office in Ashgabat will continue to carry out refugee status determination, while the national Refugee Office is expected to be established by early 2002. Further training activities under the capacity-building programme will be delivered for the government bodies and NGOs dealing with refugee matters.

UNHCR continues to carry out refugee status determination in **Uzbekistan**. Recognised refugees (presently numbering 1,350) will be provided with material assistance through local implementing partners, in the areas of healthcare, education and income generation. These activities focus on the needs of the most vulnerable among refugee women and children, especially single women and female heads of household.

BUDGET (USD)	
Country	Annual Programme
Kazakhstan	1,459,309
Kyrgyzstan	1,226,010
Tajikistan	1,955,816
Turkmenistan	1,100,263
Uzbekistan	1,055,701
Total	6,797,099



Resettlement for Afghan refugees will continue to be promoted during the year. The Office will maintain its efforts to change the Government's perception of refugee-related matters in order to create an environment conducive to better co-operation on refugee and asylum issues. This will be pursued through regular meetings with government officials, training sessions and public information activities. In this regard, regular contacts will also be maintained with the key embassies and international organisations. Local NGOs will be supported through publications, seminars and workshops.