



Photo: UNHCR/ Eiyor Nemat

## UNHCR Representation to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan

UNHCR and UNDP are partnering on a climate action and sustainability project that engages Afghan citizens in Uzbekistan, and vulnerable people from host communities, in afforestation activities through cash-for-work

### Key figures as of 01 January 2023

**13,815\***



#### Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

in Kazakhstan (1,150), the Kyrgyz Republic (946), Turkmenistan (13) and Uzbekistan (6)\*.

**37,740**



#### known Stateless people

in Kazakhstan (7,706), the Kyrgyz Republic (203), Turkmenistan (2,442) and Uzbekistan (27,389).

\* In November 2021, the Government of Uzbekistan reported via mass media that 13,020 Afghan citizens had arrived in the country on short-term visas, of whom around 2,000 had valid visas as of mid- 2022. Given the ongoing situation in Afghanistan, UNHCR considers that they may be in a refugee-like situation.

**In 2023, UNHCR requires \$6.4 million to protect refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people across Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.**



**Funded**  
**17%**

**Unfunded**  
**83%**

As of 28 February 2023

## SUB-REGIONAL

- Ahead of the [Global Refugee Forum 2023](#), UNHCR is supporting UN Country Teams across the four countries to define context-specific commitments – under the chapeau of the **UN Common Pledge 2.0** – that promote and support inclusion of refugees and stateless people in national plans, budgets and service delivery systems.

### Protecting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

- In cooperation with Internews Central Asia, on 2 December 2022 UNHCR conducted a webinar for 15 journalists from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan about **the role of media** in addressing refugee issues through accurate reporting.
- On 5 December 2022 UNHCR delivered a session on global **cooperation mechanisms to find sustainable solutions to refugee situations** in the “International Migration Strategies and Initiatives: Best Practices” webinar of the Almaty Process. The presentation included regional and national partnerships in Central Asia with governments, UN agencies and other international organizations, civil sector and academia.
- On 15 December 2022, residents of Afghanistan’s Paktika Province received 2,000 household kits, including [mattresses and clothing, donated by Kazakhstan](#) to UNHCR to provide humanitarian assistance to families affected by the June 2022 earthquake. Kazakhstan sent the relief items through the UNHCR Regional Humanitarian Logistics Hub in Termez with support from the Government of Uzbekistan.

### Ending Statelessness

- States, UNHCR and partners are accelerating efforts to implement pledges and achieve the goals of the 10-year global **#IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness** by 2024 – including accession to the Statelessness Conventions.

## KAZAKHSTAN

### State Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol

### Protecting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

- In early 2022, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection published the **2023-2027 Migration Policy Concept of Kazakhstan** for public comment – developed with technical support and expertise from UNHCR. The policy serves as an operational document with clear action plans for each government authority to implement within a specific timeframe. UNHCR proposals to ensure refugees and asylum-seekers can access medical care, employment, education and social assistance on par

- On 4 November 2022, the 8th anniversary of the #IBelong campaign, UNHCR launched its third [Regional Youth Competition on Statelessness](#), inviting youth in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to submit written, visual or audio-visual works that explore the issue of statelessness. Submissions were judged by UNHCR and partner staff, with winners announced on 10 December, Human Rights Day. The initiative sought to help youth (18 to 24 years old) understand the gravity of the situation and engage them in exploring solutions to end statelessness.



Photo: UNHCR/ Snukurgeldi Myradov

The third Regional Youth Competition on Statelessness engaged youth in exploring solutions to end statelessness.

The #IBelong campaign directly links to target 9 of Sustainable Development Goal 16: to provide legal identity for all, including birth registration, by 2030.



with citizens and permanently residing foreigners were successfully included.

- On 14 December 2022, UNHCR and its partner Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law delivered training **on referral mechanisms** to 11 participants from Border Guards Services, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, local executive bodies, and the Department of the Penitentiary system in Kostanay city, on the border with the Russian Federation. Following the training, joint recommendations were set regarding



establishing referral mechanisms on handling asylum cases.

- On 22 December 2022, UNHCR and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population conducted a [roundtable discussion on refugee protection and integration in Kazakhstan](#), bringing together representatives of Government and Parliament, civil society, UN, and refugees themselves to consider the most common challenges faced and possible solutions. The event aimed to develop joint recommendations to support Kazakhstan in fulfilling its obligations under the Refugee Convention and align national legislation related to refugee issues with international standards.
- At the end of 2022, Kazakhstan refouled **two asylum-seekers** to their country of origin, in violation of national and international law. These were the first cases of refoulement from Kazakhstan in more than five years. Supported by UNHCR, the Ombudsperson of Kazakhstan subsequently sent recommendations to the Ministry of Justice on amendments to legislation to ensure integration of the principle of non-refoulement in national legislation and that foreign citizens will not be deported to States where they face torture or persecution.
- In 2022, UNHCR provided **multi-purpose cash grants** to 161 very vulnerable asylum-seeking or refugee families (reaching 313 individuals) to support them to cover basic needs.
- In January 2023, UNHCR and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection signed their second **annual joint workplan** which outlines the list of planned activities to enhance the legal framework on refugee protection, and align national legislation with the 2023-2027 Migration Policy Concept of Kazakhstan.
- With the endorsement of the Border Guards Service of Kazakhstan, from January 2023, posters with **information about national asylum procedures** and contacts of responsible State authorities, UNHCR and partners, will be displayed in the arrival terminals at Astana, Almaty, Shymkent and Atyrau airports.



Information about national asylum procedures in the arrival hall of Nursultan Nazarbayev International Airport in Astana.

- On 17 January 2023, UNHCR and recipients of the **DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative)** scholarship programme in Kazakhstan met for the students to share their academic experiences, as well as future plans. To support them with their studies, UNHCR handed over laptops to each of the 13 students.
- In January 2023, UNHCR **donated IT equipment** (including printers, desktop computers and laptops) to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection – responsible for asylum issues. The equipment has been distributed to the Departments of Coordination of Employment and Social Programmes in 12 regions of Kazakhstan for their use to register and process asylum applications.
- On 3 February 2023, UNHCR provided a third set of recommendations to the Order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs “*On approval of the Rules for issuing permits to foreigners and stateless persons for temporary and permanent residence in the Republic of Kazakhstan*”. UNHCR’s interventions promoted a favourable protection environment for refugees and facilitation of their naturalization. Following recommendations submitted by UNHCR in 2022, the latest version of the Order waived the requirement for refugees to provide a certificate of ‘no criminal record’ from their country of origin.



## Ending Statelessness

- In line with its High-Level Segment on Statelessness pledge, in 2019 Kazakhstan amended the Code on Marriage and Family to ensure that all children born in medical institutions in the country are registered at birth, regardless of the legal status of their parents. To implement these amendments, in 2020 the Ministry of Justice amended the Civil Registration Rules. The by-laws detailing the provisions of the Code regarding the issuance of a medical birth certificate, however, were not amended accordingly.
- As a result of UNHCR advocacy, in November 2022 the relevant changes were made to the Order of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan “*On approval of forms of accounting documentation in the field of healthcare, as well as instructions for filling them out*” that ensures medical institutions across the country allow **issuance of birth certificates** with a ‘remark’ that the mother’s identity is recorded based on her own statements.
- On 15 December 2022, UNHCR partner “Sana Sezim” held **consultations on statelessness** in Shymkent city, with participation of local authorities, providing legal support to 20 stateless people and increasing awareness about their rights.

- On 22 February 2023, UNHCR gave two guest lectures, for 30 students of the Law Enforcement Academy under the Prosecutor General's Office in Astana, with the aim of familiarizing the future prosecutors with international standards in statelessness protection and the rights of stateless people in Kazakhstan.
- From 22 to 24 February 2023, UNHCR partner "Sana Sezim", jointly with the Migration Service office of the Turkestan Region Police Department, conducted **mobile consultations** in five districts of Turkestan region, providing essential information to 89 people with undetermined nationality, expired documents, and in need of help to obtain identity documentation.



Photo: Sana Sezim

Through mobile consultations, people with undetermined nationality in Turkestan received help to obtain identity documents.

## THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

### State Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol

- On 2 February 2023, UNHCR trained partners in Osh, Batken and Bishkek – including protection monitors and lawyers – responding to the internal displacement emergency on the **Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse**, and **UNHCR Code of Conduct**.

### Protecting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

- On 2 December 2022 UNHCR and partner Adilet held a workshop for law enforcement authorities, border guards, national security personnel, and representatives from the Ministry of Interior Affairs, Ministry of Labour and Prosecutor's Office, addressing the process of extradition under the national legal framework and international standards. UNHCR presented and **shared its observations to the draft Expulsion Process**, initiated by the Government, promoting alignment with the Kyrgyz Republic's and international obligations and standards.
- Following UNHCR's advocacy efforts, the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers "*On Approval of the Procedure for Expulsion of Foreign Citizens from the Kyrgyz Republic*", approved on 7 December 2022, **excluded stateless persons, refugees and asylum-seekers from its scope**.
- On 8 and 9 December 2022, UNHCR **monitored reception conditions and information available for people seeking asylum** at border crossing points in Kyrgyzstan – including the land border with Uzbekistan and Osh airport. Briefing sessions on refugee and asylum-seeker rights and referral mechanisms were held for border guards in three sites, as well as a workshop for the heads of the border check points on refugee protection and asylum in line with national legislation and international standards.

- Following successful collaboration for World Refugee Day 2022, on 24 December 2022, UNHCR trained 14 members of the **Kyrgyzstan refugee youth group** on communication, presentation and digital skills. The group developed a plan of activities that they would like to implement to support their communities.

- In 2022, UNHCR provided **multi-purpose cash grants** to 78 vulnerable refugee or asylum-seeking families (reaching 302 individuals) to support them to cover basic needs. Twenty-four families were also provided with education grants, supporting 34 girls and 27 boys with school-related expenses.

- UNHCR **submitted comments to six draft laws which impact the rights of refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people** – Law on Citizenship; Law on Refugees; Law on Medical Insurance; Law on Acts of Civil Status; Law on External Migration; and Law on Amendments to the legislative acts of the Kyrgyz Republic in the field of migration – promoting alignment with international standards.

– The Kyrgyz Republic adopted UNHCR proposals that allow refugee certificates to be presented as a legal document for registration of a birth, and align the definition of stateless persons with that in the 1954 UN Statelessness Convention. However, UNHCR recommendations related to refusal or termination of citizenship only when another State's nationality is guaranteed, and loss of nationality only on the basis of a court decision, in line with the 1961 UN Statelessness Convention were not adopted.

## Responding to Emergencies

- A surge in violence in the south of the Kyrgyz Republic along the border with Tajikistan in September 2022, internally displaced 142,071 people from Batken and Osh provinces, and damaged or destroyed homes, schools, hospitals, and infrastructure throughout Batken province. Together with the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the UN launched an [interagency Emergency Response Plan](#) to help 77,800 people.
  - As lead of the **Protection Sector**, UNHCR and partners are providing protection monitoring and counselling, legal assistance, and support with restoration of civil and property documents.
  - To better understand the key protection risks and concerns of the displaced community, and systematically track trends to provide an evidence base for advocacy at local, national and international levels, UNHCR created and deployed protection monitoring tools for use by partners.
  - In collaboration with partners, UNHCR developed a referral pathway with information on services available – from food and cash assistance to transportation and mental health support. This referral pathway is helping affected communities to access the services they need, as well as supporting partners across different sectors to refer protection cases.
  - As of February 2023, UNHCR and its partners had provided legal advice to 1,125+ people to support restoration of documents, and distributed coal as winterization support for 4,370 people, as well as providing items such as kettles, heaters and stoves.
  - As part of the **Shelter/NFI Sector**, UNHCR and its implementing partner Kyrgyzstan Red Crescent Society (KRCS) procured and distributed essential relief items like kitchen sets, blankets, bedsheets and jerrycans. These basic items help to support the dignity, health and self-reliance of affected people, and reduce further protection risks.
  - UNHCR supported winterization of living, cooking, and water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in two improvised collective accommodation centres so that families can live warmly, safely and suitably until their homes are rebuilt.
  - For families who prefer to stay on their property while their homes are being rebuilt, UNHCR and KRCS installed 16 temporary housing units ('UNHCR Refugee Housing Units') which have been specially customised to withstand the harsh winter.
  - With the [People of Japan contributing \\$500,000 to UNHCR's response](#), between 18 and 20 of January 2023, the Ambassador of Japan to the Kyrgyz Republic, together with the UNHCR Representative for Central Asia and the WFP Country Director, visited key project sites in Batken, including a collective accommodation facility, winterized with the support of UNHCR, and the offices of partners which are providing legal assistance to restore civil documentation.



The escalation of violence on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border in 2022 displaced more than 142,000 people.

With support from the People of Japan, UNHCR provided families like Borlubayev's with temporary housing units so they had a warm and safe home while their houses were being rebuilt.

Photo: UNHCR



## TURKMENISTAN

State Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol  
State Party to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions

### Ending Statelessness

- The World Bank and UNHCR Joint **Data Center on Forced Displacement** project – “Support for data collection on statelessness through national population censuses in Central Asia” – created and disseminated information materials to encourage people without a nationality in Turkmenistan to participate in the upcoming census, which took place 17 to 27 December 2022.



### Protecting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

- In 2022, UNHCR provided **multi-purpose cash grants** to four vulnerable refugee families (reaching four individuals) in Turkmenistan to support them to cover basic needs.

### Responding to Emergencies

- Turkmenistan is part of the **2022 Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP)** which, under the overall leadership of UNHCR, supports host governments to meet the needs of Afghans of varying statuses, as well as host communities. RRP partners in Turkmenistan are UNFPA and UNICEF. Preparations are underway for RRP 2023.

## UZBEKISTAN

### Protecting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

- In 2022, 603 Afghan households (1,543 individuals) in Uzbekistan approached UNHCR via its emergency **hotline**. UNHCR provided general counselling, including information on how to request political asylum, mindful of the challenges. Of those who approached UNHCR, most reported issues relating to economic hardship, and lack of access to legal employment, medical services and rights, as well as problems with renewing their visa to stay in Uzbekistan.
- Uzbekistan is not yet a State party to the Refugee Convention, and does not have a national asylum system. Building on the 2022 roundtable event on interim arrangements, UNHCR together with UN and other **partners continued to advocate with the Government** of Uzbekistan for easy practical steps which would enable Afghan citizens in Uzbekistan and unable to return to legalise their stay and access essential services.

UNHCR is providing vocational training — such as sewing and hairdressing — to help improve the skills of Afghan citizens and vulnerable members of the host community in Uzbekistan.



Photo: UNHCR/ Elyor Nemat

- On 6-7 December in Samarkand, UNHCR contributed innovative approaches to teaching refugee law to the **Global Forum on Human Rights Education**. At the end of the forum, participants – including representatives of governmental authorities, educational institutions, civil society and international organizations – presented and adopted an Action plan to promote human rights education in Central Asia, which includes rights of refugees and stateless persons.
- By the end of 2022, 146 people (113 Afghan and 12 Uzbek women; 12 Afghan and nine Uzbek men) had completed vocational training courses on hairdressing, manicure, sewing or confectionary, conducted through the UNHCR pilot project with NGO Barqaror Hayot to **improve the skills of Afghan citizens and members of host communities** in Surkhandarya region, bordering Afghanistan. Six Afghan and four Uzbek women who completed the training were provided with equipment (such as sewing machines, manicuring and hairdressing sets) to support them to establish their own income-generating activities.
- Through Barqaror Hayot, on 20 and 21 December 2022, UNHCR **distributed vouchers** to the families of 140 children (56 girls, 84 boys) for them to redeem for winter clothing at a specified store in Termez. By end of 2022, 40 girls (25 Afghan, 15 Uzbek) and 46 boys (41 Afghan, five Uzbek) had completed three-month language courses in Uzbek, Russian or English.
- To ensure humanitarian and development nexus, UNHCR and UNDP are partnering on a climate **action and sustainability project** that engages Afghan citizens in Uzbekistan and vulnerable people from host communities in afforestation activities through cash-for-work. Implemented in Surkhandarya region, the project enhances the resilience of local communities while addressing the damaging impact of dust storms on the population and the economy. As of the end of 2022, 413 Afghan citizens (113 women, 300 men) and 194 members of the host community (62 women, 132 men) had been engaged in afforestation activities. Part of the National Afforestation initiative – Yashil Makon – which aims to plant 200 million trees each year, the project will continue until the end of March 2023.
- On 9 February 2023, UNHCR met with 30 women from Afghanistan, and seven women and four men from the host community, who are participating in Barqaror Hayot vocational training courses in Termez. All participants expressed appreciation for the courses offered, both as potential for start-up business projects as well as for social interaction outside of the home.

- In 2022, UNHCR provided **multi-purpose cash grants** to four vulnerable mandate refugee families (reaching five individuals) to support them to cover basic needs.

## Responding to Emergencies

- By the end of 2022, UNHCR had processed 445 trucks and four airlifts of essential relief items through its **Regional Humanitarian Logistics Hub** in Termez, supporting emergency responses in Afghanistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Ukraine.
- On 8 February 2023, UNHCR, with the support of the Government of Uzbekistan, sent **12 trucks with over 48,000 blankets from its Regional Humanitarian Logistics Hub** in Termez, to Afghanistan. The blankets will replenish UNHCR's stocks, prepositioned to respond to urgent needs identified during household assessments.



48,000 blankets were sent from the UNHCR Regional Humanitarian Logistics Hub to families in Afghanistan.

- On 23 February 2023, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP met with the **Special Representative of the President of Uzbekistan for Afghanistan, Ismatulla Irgashev**, discussing opportunities for strengthening cooperation and expanding functionality of the International Multifunctional Transport and Logistics Hub in Termez.
- As a country neighbouring Afghanistan, Uzbekistan is part of the **2022 Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP)**. RRP partners in Uzbekistan are UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF. Preparations are underway for RRP 2023.

## WORKING WITH PARTNERS

- As a member of all four UN Country Teams and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, UNHCR engages with governments, UN and development partners, international financial institutions and others across Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to ensure refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people are not left behind in States' achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



## Thank you for the support

UNHCR is grateful for contributions directly to the UNHCR Representation to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, as well as donors of unearmarked and flexible funding, including:



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VISIT THE UNHCR  
CENTRAL ASIA WEBSITE



UNHCR maintains email and phone 'hotlines' across the four countries for anyone in need of information or consultation on refugee and asylum issues. People forced to flee can find key contacts and updated information about asylum procedures in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on [help.unhcr.org/centralasia](https://help.unhcr.org/centralasia), in English and Russian languages.