

CENTRAL ASIA

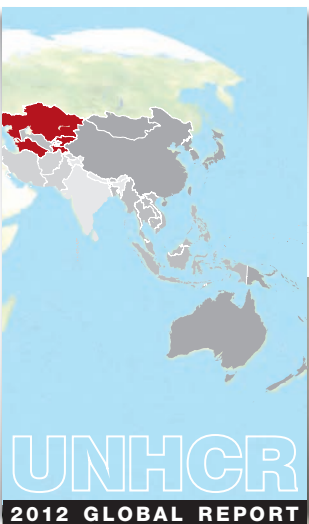
A sewing workshop at Bishkek
refugee reception centre (Kyrgyzstan)

Kazakhstan

Kyrgyzstan

Tajikistan

Turkmenistan



UNHCR / A. ABDRAKHMANOVA



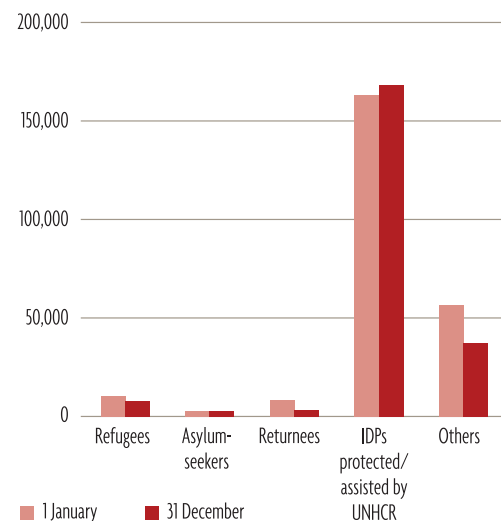
| Overview |



Highlights

- The Central Asian States agreed at a meeting in Almaty, Kazakhstan in September 2012 to endorse a regional cooperation framework and action plan for the Almaty Process at the Second Ministerial Conference on Refugee Protection and International Migration in mid-2013, to be co-hosted by the Government of Kazakhstan, UNHCR and IOM. The Almaty Process aims to help States uphold protection safeguards while managing migration.
- UNHCR worked closely with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia and the Collective Security Treaty Organization to ensure that refugee protection and UNHCR policies were promoted and integrated into national and regional laws.
- With the cooperation of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe, UNHCR trained senior officials from Central Asian States and neighbouring countries in protection-sensitive border management. UNHCR's training modules have now become an integral part of the Border Management Staff College curriculum.
- In Kazakhstan, UNHCR contributed extensively to the preparation of the Kazakhstan Human Rights Commission's report, *On the Situation of Oralmans (persons without citizenship) and Refugees*, which was endorsed by the Government.

People of concern to UNHCR in 2012
Central Asia



- In Kyrgyzstan, UNHCR continued its efforts to maintain asylum space and protect refugees and asylum-seekers, with a special focus on State refugee status determination (RSD) structures, reception centres, capacity building among government stakeholders and advocacy with decision-makers. Implementation of protection and assistance activities for sustainable reintegration of returnees continued. Confidence-building measures were undertaken at community levels and with the authorities, advocating for equal application of

the rule of law, access to documentation, and community-mobilization through peace-building projects. Kyrgyzstan has been selected as a pilot country, subsequent to the Secretary-General's Policy Committee Decision on Durable Solutions for ending displacement in the aftermath of conflict.

- The Government of Tajikistan showed readiness to review State Resolution 325, which restricts the freedom of movement of refugees and asylum-seekers who arrived after the year 2000 and are not currently allowed to reside in the capital, Dushanbe, or other major cities.
- The Government of Turkmenistan acceded to the 1961 Convention relating to the Reduction of Statelessness in August 2012, and UNHCR helped the authorities to verify the

nationality status of registered people of concern. UNHCR also advocated for Turkmenistan to bring its nationality legislation into line with the statelessness conventions. Lastly, UNHCR offered technical expertise on the revision of the Citizenship Law and the development of a statelessness determination procedure.

- An International Ministerial Conference on Refugees in the Muslim World was organized jointly by the Government of Turkmenistan, the OIC and UNHCR in May 2012. The ensuing Ashgabat Declaration was adopted with a number of recommendations for OIC Members States' consideration and implementation..

| Report on 2012 results |

Working environment

In Kazakhstan, concerns about the large number of asylum-seekers and individuals travelling in mixed-migration flows arriving in the country, as well as fears related to drug and human smuggling, extremism and terrorism caused the Government of Kazakhstan to be cautious in its approach to asylum issues and refugee rights.

In Kyrgyzstan, the protection environment in Kyrgyzstan has been affected by the rapid turnover of those appointed by the Government to deal with asylum issues. In addition, political considerations and national-security concerns affect RSD decisions and the granting of refugee status. Given competing priorities for the Government, the refugee recognition rate has been low.

In view of the existing political and social environment in south Kyrgyzstan and in neighbouring States, emergency preparedness and border monitoring remained priorities for the operations.

In Tajikistan, high unemployment and the lack of infrastructure and livelihood opportunities reduced prospects for the successful local integration of the approximately 4,400 asylum-seekers and refugees in the country. Despite Tajikistan's extremely limited ability to provide protection and assistance, about 75 people a month, mainly from Afghanistan, continued to apply for asylum.

In Turkmenistan, UNHCR has been enjoying a very high level of cooperation with Turkmenistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and State Migration Service. Still, there are many challenges in working in the country, including bureaucracy in decision making and the lack of an established civil society network to provide additional protection for persons of concern. Other UN agencies and international/regional development organizations, which are dependent on the Government's annual agreement to conduct their activities, have limited flexibility to cooperate in activities that are not included in their own operations.

Achievements and impact

Kazakhstan

- UNHCR participated in Parliamentary discussions on a draft law on identity documents and offered comments on how the legal status of refugees and asylum-seekers could be strengthened. These efforts resulted in an agreement to amend the labour code, eliminating the legal barriers preventing refugees from engaging in gainful employment.
- As a result of extensive negotiations with the Ministry of Health, refugees and asylum-seekers are now covered by national health care programmes, which provide life-saving surgery free of charge.
- With the permission of the local Government authorities and the full involvement of local communities, community technology access centres were opened for refugees and asylum-seekers for academic and training purposes.

Kyrgyzstan

- In March 2012, Parliament passed amendments to the Law on Refugees which were drafted with the participation of UNHCR. The amendments introduced a non-discrimination clause into the Law's preamble as well as provisions on *sur place* refugees and *non-refoulement*. Furthermore, in August amendments to the country's criminal code made it possible for a person due for extradition to appeal the decision in court.
- UNHCR promoted equal access to State RSD procedures for all people of concern. Access to public schools and state health institutions has been available for all refugees and asylum-seekers, and social assistance was provided to the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers.
- Sanitary materials were provided to all asylum-seeker/refugee girls and women in need. Self-reliance and employment were promoted among refugees and returning IDPs.

- In December 2012, UNHCR and the State Registration Service jointly organized the Third High-Level Steering Meeting on the Prevention and Reduction of Statelessness in Kyrgyzstan. Earlier in March 2012, the country's citizenship law had been amended to exempt persons of Kyrgyz ethnicity with or without foreign citizenship, former citizens of Kyrgyzstan returning to the country, and foreign and stateless people married to Kyrgyz citizens from paying state fees for obtaining the citizenship.
- Activities aimed at the prevention and reduction of statelessness progressed well, with the granting of citizenship to nearly 17,000 persons holding passports issued by the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and issuance of birth certificates to nearly 1,000 undocumented children. UNHCR also carried out a survey to identify individuals without citizenship and people at risk of statelessness.

Tajikistan

- Cooperation with the Office of the Ombudsman facilitated the positive resolution of sensitive cases. UNHCR also established contact with the country's Judicial Academy to play a role in the development of the asylum system. An agreement between UNHCR and First Microcredit Bank allowed refugees, for the first time, to open bank accounts and have access to microcredit.
- UNHCR submitted comments on the existing Refugee Law to a working group convened by the Ministry of the Interior. The comments were largely well received.

Turkmenistan

- A total of 8,300 persons of undetermined nationality were registered in a nationwide registration exercise jointly conducted by the Government and UNHCR in 2011. The NGO *Keik Okara* helped some 5,100 people to submit their applications for citizenship and permanent residence in 2012, with others to be assisted in 2013. The Government of Turkmenistan has shared its positive reviews of the statelessness registration exercise with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. At the end of 2012, a total of 23 refugee families out of 46 remained without durable solutions. UNHCR continued to advocate for the full implementation of the Refugee Law and the provision of socio-economic benefits to mandate refugees. The Ashgabat Declaration is perceived as a platform to mobilize action by OIC Members States to support to refugee situations in the subregion and beyond.

Constraints

Discrepancies in official statistics on statelessness in Kazakhstan provided by different Governmental and non-governmental agencies hindered UNHCR's targeted activity planning under its stateless programme.

In Kyrgyzstan, inequity in access to the State's RSD system, restrictions on work permits for asylum-seekers and mandated beneficiaries, and lengthy citizenship application procedures for

Convention refugees remained the main protection issues for refugees and asylum-seekers. Mandate refugees and asylum-seekers who were not able to access to state registration relied exclusively on UNHCR and its partners for legal, medical and social services.

The social and economic conditions in Tajikistan restricted the Government's ability to contribute any financial resources to assist refugees, despite the continuing flow of new arrivals.

In Turkmenistan, no asylum-seeker has been registered with the State Migration Service (SMS) after UNHCR handed over RSD responsibilities in 2009. The frequent rotation of SMS officials compels UNHCR to offer repeated training in RSD.

Lengthy procedures and the fees required by embassies for attestations and by SMS for the issuance of citizenship papers posed challenges for individuals seeking to change their stateless status. The human resource constraints at SMS are largely responsible for the backlog of citizenship applications by UNHCR mandate refugees.

Operations

In **Kazakhstan**, the focus remained on strengthening cooperation with relevant Government entities to build their capacity to address issues related to refugees, asylum-seekers and statelessness. The search for a durable solution through local integration continued, with resettlement and voluntary repatriation also used where appropriate.

In **Kyrgyzstan**, 29 refugees were naturalized, 10 people of concern received assistance to repatriate voluntarily, and 30 families (some 130 people) departed for resettlement.

Some 17,000 individuals received Kyrgyz citizenship and nearly 1,000 undocumented children were issued birth certificates. UNHCR supported 83 small community-based projects to improve infrastructure, livelihoods and self-reliance to support reconciliation and peace building. UNHCR also assisted 2,000 people in restoring and obtaining individual documents. Housing, land and property rights were protected through the registration of 1,650 houses that were rehabilitated or reconstructed after the June 2010 conflict.

In **Tajikistan**, the focus remained on strengthening the asylum system following the transfer of responsibilities to the Ministry of the Interior. UNHCR helped build capacity among its Government counterparts; offered protection and assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees; and searched for durable solutions, especially through local integration and resolving issues of statelessness.

In **Turkmenistan**, the focus of the operation has been on activities to support durable solutions for mandate refugees and stateless people; build the capacity of the national authorities in RSD; and emergency preparedness for a potential mass refugee influx.

Financial information

UNHCR's overall financial requirements amounted to some USD 23 million in 2012. The budget for Central Asia was smaller than in 2011, with the discontinuation of the supplementary budget for the Kyrgyzstan Situation. In Kyrgyzstan, the refugee programmes and IDP projects were partially funded with around 46 per cent of needs met in 2012.

Funding was available to cover expenditures totalling some USD 10.9 million across operations in Central Asia. These funds

allowed UNHCR to implement some of the planned activities to address statelessness in Turkmenistan and the urban refugee policy in Tajikistan, but only partially.

In Kazakhstan, a lack of financial resources led to cuts of 25 per cent in the budget for self-reliance activities in the second half of the year. Medical assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers was also affected by funding limitations, and sufficient technical support could not be given to implementing partners.

Budget and expenditure in Central Asia | USD

Operation		PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	PILLAR 4 IDP projects	Total
Kazakhstan Regional Office	Budget	7,370,465	1,363,773	567,780	9,302,018
	Expenditure	2,937,735	713,705	227,578	3,879,018
Kyrgyzstan	Budget	2,803,000	365,895	6,937,406	10,106,301
	Expenditure	1,319,174	365,241	3,300,494	4,984,909
Tajikistan	Budget	1,782,672	98,518	0	1,881,190
	Expenditure	1,136,031	96,301	0	1,232,332
Turkmenistan	Budget	550,567	1,044,217	0	1,594,784
	Expenditure	300,732	487,098	0	787,830
Total budget		12,506,704	2,872,403	7,505,186	22,884,293
Total expenditure		5,693,672	1,662,345	3,528,072	10,884,089

Voluntary contributions to Central Asia | USD

Earmarking / Donor	PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	PILLAR 4 IDP projects	All pillars	Total
CENTRAL ASIA SUBREGION					
Private donors in the Republic of Korea	26			294	320
Russian Federation				450,000	450,000
United States of America				3,200,000	3,200,000
Central Asia subtotal	26	0	0	3,650,294	3,650,320
KAZAKHSTAN REGIONAL OFFICE					
Kazakhstan	169,236				169,236
Kazakhstan Regional Office subtotal	169,236	0	0	0	169,236
KYRGYSTAN					
Brazil				50,000	50,000
Fast Retailing Co., Ltd. (UNIQLO)				134,010	134,010
Kyrgyzstan	67,014				67,014
United Nations Delivering as One		176,845			176,845
United Nations Peacebuilding Fund			1,028,084		1,028,084
United States of America		50,000			50,000
Kyrgystan subtotal	67,014	226,845	1,028,084	184,010	1,505,953
TURKMENISTAN					
Turkmenistan	81,792				81,792
Turkmenistan subtotal	81,792	0	0	0	81,792
Total	318,068	226,845	1,028,084	3,834,304	5,407,301

Note: Includes indirect support costs that are recovered from contributions to Pillars 3 and 4, supplementary budgets and the "New or additional activities – mandate-related" (NAM) Reserve.