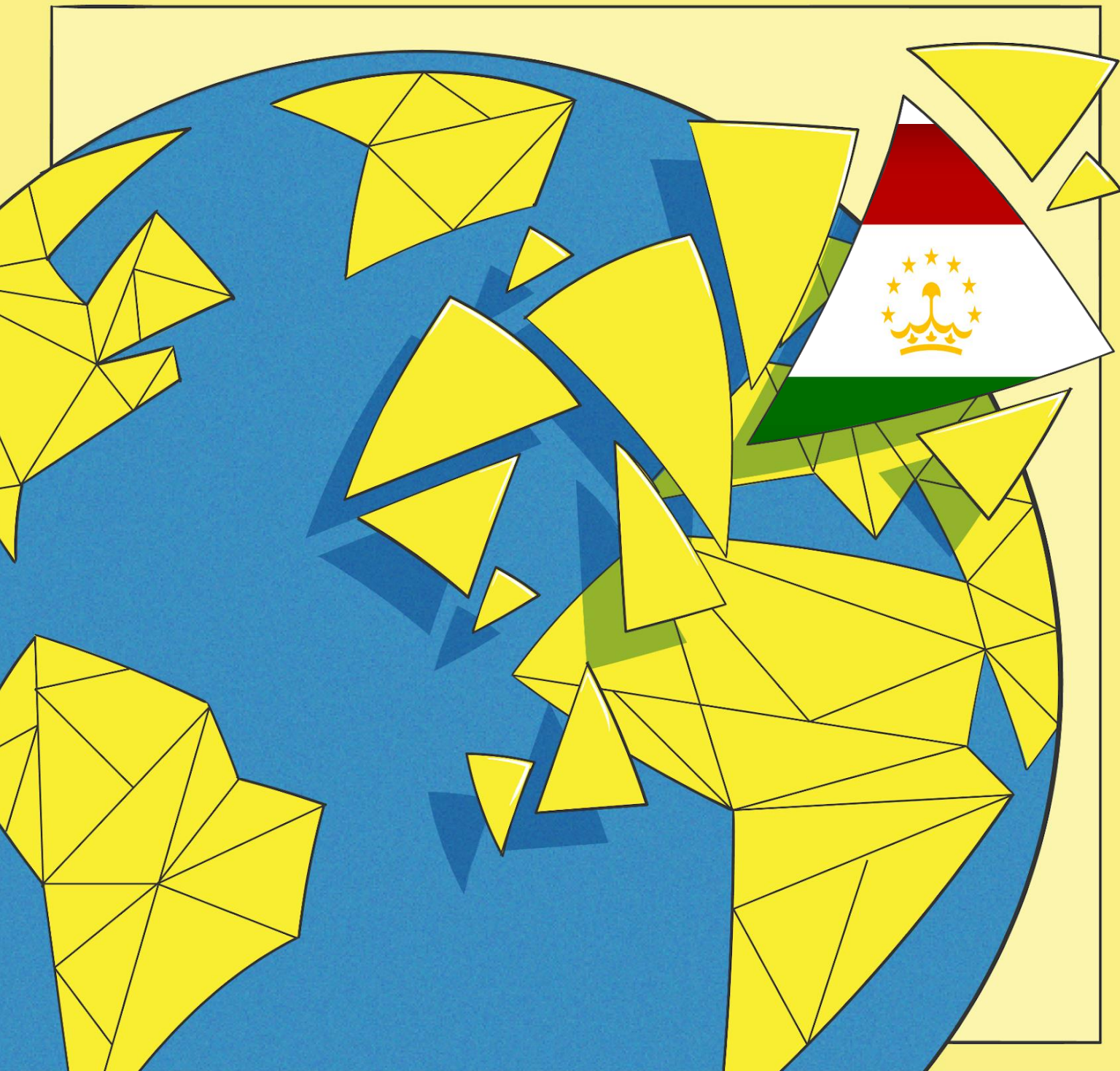


# Country Strategy Evaluation: **Tajikistan 2020-2022**



## UNHCR Evaluation Office

UNHCR's Evaluation Policy confirms UNHCR's commitment to support accountability, learning and continual improvement through the systematic examination and analysis of organizational policies, strategies, and programmes. Evaluations are guided by the principles of impartiality, credibility and utility, and are undertaken to enhance the organization's performance in addressing the protection, assistance and solution needs of refugees, stateless people and other persons of concern.

### **Evaluation Office**

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Case Postale 2500

1211 Genève 2

Switzerland

[unhcr.org/evaluation](https://unhcr.org/evaluation)

Published by UNHCR

Evaluation Office Copyright © 2024 UNHCR

This document is issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for general distribution. All rights are reserved. Reproduction is authorized, except for commercial purposes, provided UNHCR is acknowledged.

Unless expressly stated otherwise, the findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this Evaluation Report are those of the evaluation team, and do not necessarily represent the views of UNHCR, the United Nations or its Member States. The depiction and use of boundaries, geographic names and related data shown on maps and included in lists, tables, and documents in this evaluation report are not warranted to be error free, nor do they necessarily imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNHCR or the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The evaluation team would like to thank the UNHCR team in Tajikistan, refugees and asylum seekers, host communities, national institutions and partners, and the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) members for their availability and contributions to the evaluation process.

The evaluation team would like to express its gratitude in particular to Behnam Moharrek, Program Officer, and Muhammadkhuja Davlyatov, Assistant Communication Officer, for their support to the evaluation process.

Evaluation information at a glance		
<b>Title of the evaluation:</b>		Tajikistan Country Strategy Evaluation
<b>Timeframe covered:</b>		2020-2022
<b>Completion Year:</b>		2024
<b>Type of evaluation:</b>		Country Strategy Evaluation
<b>Country:</b>		Tajikistan
<b>Region:</b>		Asia Pacific
<b>Evaluation manager / contact in UNHCR:</b>		Marcel Van Maastrigt
<b>Evaluation (Avicena/HealthGen):</b>	<b>Team</b>	Zehra Kacapor-Dzihic, Team Leader Jasna Zarkovic, Senior Evaluation expert Agneta Tucker, Junior Consultant Michelle Ferreira Brito, Junior Consultant Brian Gorlick, Protection Advisor Maria Rosa Martin Benito, Project Manager Dr Robina Shaheen, Quality assurance

Commissioned by Country Office Tajikistan

Evaluation Quality Assurance provided by UNHCR Evaluation Office

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgement.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Executive summary.....	vii
1. Introduction and Background .....	1
2. Context and UNHCR's Operation.....	2
3. Purpose, scope, and method of the evaluation .....	2
4. Key findings .....	11
5. Good Practices and lessons learned.....	50
6. Conclusions .....	53
7. Recommendations .....	57
8. Annexes.....	64

## List of Tables

Table 1: Evaluation criteria and key evaluation questions .....	3
Table 2: Category and number of respondents consulted over the field phase .....	5
Table 3: Planned number of survey respondents and total number that responded .....	6
Table 4: Overview of limitations and mitigation measures .....	8
Table 5: Number of legal consultations provided over the period 2020-2022 .....	24
Table 6: UNHCR basic needs and essential services achievement (2020-2022) .....	28

## List of Figures

Figure 1: UNHCR Regional Planned Response, January-December 2023. The total number of estimated and targeted Afghan refugees and host communities in neighbouring countries to Afghanistan.....	2
Figure 2: Cumulative total forced displacement and statelessness in Tajikistan, by type, of people UNHCR serves (2018-2022).....	4
Figure 3: Afghanistan-Tajikistan Border Areas and locations where most Afghan refugees are located .....	4
Figure 4: UNHCR Tajikistan actual (WOL) budget (USD), operational vs administrative and staffing budget, 2020-2022 .....	9

Figure 5: UNHCR Tajikistan OP budget (USD), planned budget vs actual budget, 2020-2022 .....	9
Figure 6: UNHCR Tajikistan operational budget (OPS) and expenditure by pillar (population planning group) 2020-2022 .....	10
Figure 7: Theory of Change .....	13
Figure 8: UNHCR Perceptions of vertical coordination and communication between different offices, and the accessibility and responsiveness of MCO and RBAP (UNHCR respondents only) .....	17
Figure 9: UNHCR Tajikistan OPS budget and expenditure by pillar, 2018-2022.....	45
Figure 10: Percentage of OL budget (USD) allocated by the Right Group and Outcome Area .....	45

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>ABOD</b>	Administrative Budget	<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank	<b>PPA</b>	Project Partnership Agreement
<b>AGD</b>	Age, Gender, Diversity	<b>PPG</b>	Population Planning Group
<b>AKAH</b>	The Aga Khan Agency for Habitat	<b>PRS</b>	Passport Registration Service
<b>ALNAP</b>	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance	<b>RB</b>	Regional Bureau
<b>CBI</b>	Cash Based Interventions	<b>RBAP</b>	Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific
<b>CO</b>	Country Office	<b>RCM</b>	Refugee Coordination Model
<b>CoESCD</b>	Committee of Emergency situations and Civil Defence	<b>RCST</b>	Red Crescent Society in Tajikistan
<b>COMPASS</b>	UNHCR's new results-based management platform	<b>RCVC</b>	Refugee Children and Vulnerable Citizens
<b>CRRF</b>	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework	<b>RRP</b>	Interagency Refugee Preparedness and Response Plan
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organization	<b>RSD</b>	Refugee Status Determination
<b>CSE</b>	Country Strategy Evaluation	<b>SIMEX</b>	Simulation Exercise
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee	<b>SQ</b>	Sub-question
<b>DCC</b>	Donor Coordination Council	<b>TAC</b>	Temporary Accommodation Centre
<b>DCWR</b>	Department on Citizenship and Work with Refugees	<b>ToC</b>	Theory of Change
<b>EQ</b>	Evaluation Questions	<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>ERG</b>	Evaluation Reference Group	<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>FGDs</b>	Focus Group Discussions	<b>UNDAF</b>	UN Development Assistance Framework
<b>FOCUS</b>	UNHCR's main operational reporting	<b>UNEG</b>	UN Evaluation Group
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence	<b>UNHCR</b>	UN High Commission for Refugees
<b>GCR</b>	Global Compact on Refugees	<b>UNICEF</b>	UN Children's Fund
<b>IFI</b>	International Financial Institutions	<b>UN-SWAP</b>	UN System-Wide Action Plan for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women
<b>MCO</b>	Multi-Country Office	<b>USD</b>	United States Dollar
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organizations	<b>USSR</b>	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
<b>OL</b>	Operating Level	<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>OP</b>	Operations Plan	<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>OPS</b>	Operational Budget	<b>WOL</b>	Working Operating Level



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## PURPOSE, SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

UNHCR's Evaluation Office commissioned this evaluation of the Country Strategy in Tajikistan. The evaluation served both accountability and learning purposes. Its objectives were to: i) assess the strategic and operational relevance, effectiveness, coherence and efficiency of UNHCR Tajikistan's Country Office (CO), and ii) help shed light on operational constraints and sustainability challenges faced by small operations. The scope of the evaluation included all UNHCR's interventions implemented during the period 2020-2022.

## APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was guided by four key main questions, and 12 sub-questions, organized at three levels – strategic, programmatic, and operational – and guided by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.

Data was collected both remotely and face-to-face during an in-country mission. Mixed methods were used to collect qualitative and quantitative data from primary and secondary sources. Quality assurance was based on UNHCR's evaluation guidelines, UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) standards, and good practices from ALNAP and OECD/DAC. It was conducted internally by the evaluation team and externally by UNHCR. The evaluation followed guidelines for integrating gender equality and human rights principles according to the UNEG manual (2011).

Limitations to the evaluation included analysing the three-year period based on UNHCR's annual planning and the introduction of the new planning and monitoring system in 2022. Other challenges experienced included limited engagement with government, donors, and development partners during data collection. Mitigation measures to address these limitations were agreed upon with UNHCR throughout the process and included expanding the scope of other stakeholders to be interviewed; additional portfolio and document analysis; and surveys.

## KEY FINDINGS

**EQ1. How strategically has UNHCR been positioned within the country given the needs of the persons UNHCR serves and the national and regional context, particularly with respect to the Afghanistan situation?**

From 2020 to 2022, UNHCR's strategy in Tajikistan focused on protection of people it serves, notably asylum seekers, refugees, and stateless individuals. This strategy included advocacy, capacity building, protection, solution-seeking, and fostering partnerships, reflecting UNHCR's core mission. While aligned with its global framework, the implementation of these strategies, especially in advocacy and capacity building, faced limitations. The evaluation highlighted a discrepancy between strategic intentions of UNHCR as stipulated in programming documents and their execution, affected by financial constraints, a fragmented approach with little internal

synergies, and a lack of proactive strategies. Despite these challenges, UNHCR fostered inter-agency collaborations, aligning with UNDAF guidelines. However, its role was often viewed by partners as that of a donor than a partner, with criticisms over partnership dynamics and information sharing. UNHCR's engagement with the private sector was positive and supportive to Afghan refugees, showcasing effective practices in refugee inclusion.

## EQ2. What have been the key results in the areas of assistance, protection, and solutions?

From 2020 to 2022, the number of people the UNHCR CO served varied considerably. In 2022, Tajikistan hosted around 11,000 refugees and asylum seekers; double the number compared to 2020.<sup>1</sup> This increase in the number of refugees and asylum-seekers occurred in 2021 with the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan. At the same time, there were around 5,000 refugees in 2022, which increased by around 1,400 since 2020.<sup>2</sup>

Within this period, UNHCR's strategy in Tajikistan aimed at an integrated approach to protect the rights of the people UNHCR serves (i.e., asylum seekers, refugees, and stateless people) through diverse initiatives encompassing advocacy, capacity building, protection, solutions, and partnerships. This strategy saw mixed results, with significant challenges in implementation.

**Capacity strengthening:** Between 2020 and 2023, UNHCR focused on enhancing the capacity of border guards and other governmental bodies, with a focus on child protection and asylum procedures in Tajikistan through partnerships with implementing partners, other UN agencies, and partners. Such efforts brought some advancements in approaches used. UNHCR's biometric verification system was well-received by implementing partners who use it for their activities, yet its nationwide implementation did not take place due to the fact that the government uses its own system for refugee/asylum seekers registration.

**Attaining Favourable Protection Environments:** UNHCR's institutional support to the government has made progress in the preparedness and response capacity of key government institutions in anticipation of the mass arrival of refugees and a potential natural disaster in the country (by simulation exercise – SIMEX), as well as improving conditions for the reception of asylum seekers in the Temporary Accommodation Centre (TAC). In addition, UNHCR's efforts contributed to drafting the Law on refugees, and amendment of the Administrative Code. To respond to statelessness issues, UNHCR achieved positive results by supporting the implementation of the Amnesty Law. UNHCR and its implementing partner, *Inson va Adolat*, made strides in the provision of legal support to people seeking asylum. There were 9,367 legal consultations for asylum seekers and refugees in support of their registration.

Nevertheless, difficulties persist in making progress on other major protection-related issues. UNHCR's advocacy efforts were inconsistent and not fully tailored to Tajikistan's context. They were too limited and insufficient to influence the closed border policy or to promote more consistent identification of asylum seekers at the border or during their residence in the country, while responding to the government needs and security concerns. The suspension, since 2014, of UNHCR's observer status in the Refugee Status Determination Commission significantly hampered its ability to monitor and verify procedures. However, the visit from the

---

1 UNHCR Refugee population statistics database and RBM COMPASS - Results Data Portal (Power BI) and Orion Analytics Centre

2 *Ibid*.



UNHCR High Commissioner in March 2022, and its agreement with the government, catalysed renewed Refugee Status Determination (RSD) activities and led to numerous refugee status recognitions, demonstrating a potential for progress.

**Realising Basic Rights in Safe Environments:** UNHCR's interventions to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers can fully exercise their rights to access basic services, including the right to health and education, were often one-off and ad-hoc. UNHCR's cash assistance was useful for addressing short-term needs, but limited, which prevented more substantial support to people that UNHCR serves.

Refugees can access public health care facilities in Tajikistan, but the high cost of prescribed medications and of non-complimentary medical treatment are issues for asylum seekers and refugees, especially for those with chronic diseases and in need of medical assistance. UNHCR's approach in this area was inconsistent, lacking a cohesive strategy due to insufficient funding and the absence of explicit criteria and transparency in determining eligible recipients for support.

In terms of access to education, UNHCR has contributed to the enhancement of educational spaces through small-scale projects in host communities, and facilitated the processing of documents for school enrolment that resulted in enrolling 3,199 children in primary education and 428 in secondary education. UNHCR's support to education needs is inconsistent, as it does not provide sustained, long-term assistance to children, and lacks a comprehensive strategy to address the diverse educational challenges faced by refugee populations. Many refugee children faced barriers such as financial requirements and the need to learn Cyrillic script, impacting enrolment rates. Housing was another critical issue, as UNHCR struggled to offer more comprehensive housing assistance. Moreover, the cash assistance provided was inadequate for ensuring stable rent coverage, leaving many displaced individuals in precarious living conditions.

**Empowering Communities and Inclusion:** UNHCR's collaboration with the private sector led to notable achievements in enhancing livelihood opportunities for forcibly displaced persons. Through partnerships with hotels and textile companies, 1,015 individuals received vocational training, 555 undertook apprenticeship programs, and 658 were provided with entrepreneurship training, with some receiving grants or toolkits for starting businesses. Highlights include successful hotel partnerships and refugee participation in Fashion Week, showcasing talent and creating further business opportunities for refugee women.

Despite these successes, challenges remain, particularly in bringing more innovative approaches and aligning training programs with the refugees' skills, education, and needs. These challenges were highlighted, by stakeholders interviewed, as preventing the support efforts to fully meet the diverse backgrounds and aspirations of the refugee population.

**Securing solutions:** UNHCR's efforts in providing durable solutions faced limitations due to constraints in naturalization and resettlement options. Local integration initiatives, facility renovations, and social cohesion efforts were positive steps, but many refugees still aspired to resettle. In reducing statelessness, UNHCR spearheaded the implementation of the Amnesty Law, by providing technical support to the Ministry of Interior's Passport Registration Service (PRS), including updating software to facilitate the registration and follow-up of cases that fall under the Amnesty Law, and providing legal support. Following the successful implementation of the Amnesty Law, 58,951 stateless individuals or those with unclear nationality were registered, with 54,402 of them having their nationality confirmed by February 2023. Stateless

people with confirmed nationality or birth certificate benefited from the rights attached to that status, mostly access to education for their children, and access to the social protection system.

**Cross-cutting issues:** UNHCR's efforts in Tajikistan focus on Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD), paying particular attention to gender dynamics and challenges faced by women, despite the lack of consistent tracking of gender-disaggregated data. The organization has been a strong advocate for and supporter of the empowerment and involvement of women, the elderly, and people with disabilities. However, the integration of Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability into their programs has been uneven. While there has been noticeable progress in supporting national institutions, the adoption of a comprehensive approach to the Humanitarian, Development, and Peace Nexus has yet to be fully realised. UNHCR's work in Tajikistan remained primarily humanitarian, with limited evolution towards integrating development and peace. Internal challenges included resource constraints, communication barriers, and frequent staff turnover. Externally, the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical instability, and economic crises exacerbated the vulnerabilities of refugees and asylum seekers.

[EQ3. In light of Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific \(RBAP\) prioritization decisions in resource allocations across operations, to what extent is UNHCR Tajikistan's structure, staffing and resource allocation adequate and fit to meet the objectives set out in its strategy?](#)

Over the period 2020-2021, UNHCR Tajikistan had a multipronged approach to resource mobilization, which enabled the office to address, to some extent, the rising needs of people with whom and for whom UNHCR works. UNHCR CO continued leveraging inter-agency partnerships, investing efforts to mainstream people with and for whom UNHCR works into existing partner programmes, though joint programming practices are still weak. UNHCR CO also managed to mobilize resources in the form of earmarked funds from five donors (USD 4.4 million or 31% of total operating level (OL) budget), among which the European Union stands as the largest donor. Engagement with some International Financial Institutions (IFI) and the private sector were good approach to diversify resource mobilization.

Most resources were mobilized in 2021 to respond to the increased number of Afghan refugees in Tajikistan in anticipation of a mass influx. However, high gaps between the planned (operations plan – OP) and available (OL) budgets from 2020 to 2022 led to prioritization challenges in supporting refugees and stateless persons (the available budget was around 41% of the planned budget in 2021 and 2022). The distribution of operational budget was uneven: 89% went to the protection pillar, leaving other pillars underfunded. This financial constraint hindered support for crucial areas such as access to documentation and to essential services, despite them being recognised as the primary needs of people that UNHCR serves.

Anticipating the Afghan refugee influx, the CO expanded its workforce from 14 employees in 2019 to 24 in 2022, with around 30% of them being affiliate staff, through fast-track positions. Despite this increase, which focused on programme staff, the CO's staffing structure was not fully equipped to help achieve the desired results and address unforeseen challenges. This is mainly due to imbalances between programming and operational roles, which led to strains, particularly in finance, administration, and key areas like IT and protection. Operational posts remained overburdened by having to take on multiple roles which affected the delivery of activities.

In terms of partnerships, 22% of the program budget was allocated to implementing partners. While UNHCR maintained stable partnerships during this period, issues with partnership quality and mutual trust remained.

UNHCR's monitoring followed standard practices but were found to be incomplete from the perspective of: 1) the availability of data, and specifically disaggregated data, on UNHCR's contributions; 2) inconsistent assessment of asylum seekers' and refugees' protection needs; 3) the mainstreaming of the Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) approach and UNHCR's Cash Based Intervention (CBI) controls; and 4) the monitoring of implementing partners. The introduction of the COMPASS system and related requirements brought positive changes in terms of reporting results at outcome level.

EQ4. How can UNHCR build on results achieved to date, current challenges, and opportunities, to further leverage its strategic position and influence within the country and region to advance collective efforts towards protection and solutions for the people UNHCR serves, and the communities that host them?

The evaluation highlighted that UNHCR's activities in Tajikistan are missing a detailed sustainability strategy, with planning documents describing various initiatives but not specifying methods to sustain results. UNHCR has advanced in aiding people it serves, yet its actions have been primarily reactive, addressing immediate needs without a plan for enduring sustainability. Although UNHCR has helped enhance legislative mechanisms to counter statelessness, sustainable livelihoods and basic services remain a challenge due to their intermittent and short-term nature, lacking a strategic approach for lasting impact. Collaborations with the private sector and vocational training have shown success but are constrained in reach. Present strategies often lead to an excess of certain skills without a comprehensive support framework, further limited by Tajikistan's wider socio-economic challenges.

## CONCLUSIONS

### **Strategic level - UNHCR'S FRAMEWORK FOR PROTECTION, EMPOWERMENT AND SOLUTIONS**

**C1.** UNHCR has been actively supporting displaced and stateless individuals in Tajikistan within a complex and dynamic regional geopolitical context. However, there is a disconnect between its planned activities and on-ground execution, with issues in how its programmes are positioned, integrated, and implemented. There have been mismatches with meeting beneficiary needs, suggesting that more focused and agile strategies are required. UNHCR's country strategy in Tajikistan has led to partial successes, necessitating a strategic framework overhaul for better integration and long-term impact.

### **Operational level - RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS FOR PROTECTION AND DURABLE SOLUTIONS**

**C2.** Capacity building initiatives were a step in the right direction but lacked cohesive, long-term strategy, impacting their effectiveness as well as their contributions to UNHCR's humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

**C3.** Protection actions demonstrated reactive approaches, which were not always attuned to the needs of people UNHCR serves or to Tajikistan's socio-political complexities. Noteworthy advances in reducing statelessness and providing temporary asylum are currently outpaced by broader systemic challenges and the acute needs of people UNHCR serves, highlighting the urgency for a more proactive adaptable and encompassing response mechanism.

## **RESPONDING TO THE NEED FOR EMPOWERMENT AND SELF-RELIANCE**

**C4.** While the provision of immediate humanitarian relief is still warranted, there is a pressing need to transition from this to fostering sustainable socio-economic development, which promises more enduring outcomes in essential services like healthcare, education, and housing.

**C5.** While existing socio-economic efforts brought some immediate results, they fall short in establishing deep-rooted empowerment, pointing to a need for strategies that promote resilience and self-reliance among the displaced populations. This demands recalibration of the empowerment and livelihood initiatives to suit the realities of the local job market, with an emphasis on innovative and varied vocational training to expand employment possibilities.

**C6.** While strategic focus areas like inclusivity and gender equality are commendable, execution falls behind due to inadequate data management and a lack of climate and environmental considerations in programming, which must be addressed to ensure these elements are woven effectively into the fabric of UNHCR's work in Tajikistan.

## **Organizational Level - RESOURCES AND EFFICIENCY**

**C7.** The efficiency of UNHCR's operations in Tajikistan during 2020-2021 was hindered by several factors, including limited resources, communication challenges, excessive workloads of operational staff, frequent repositioning within UNHCR's structure, and trust issues with implementing partners. Despite improvements from adopting COMPASS for better monitoring, the monitoring and reporting system still requires further investment. These operational difficulties were compounded by strained relations with partners and external factors including the COVID-19 pandemic, border disputes, and financial instability.

# **RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **Strategic Recommendation (SR)**

**SR 1** (linked to C1): Revamp UNHCR's strategic positioning on protection and solutions issues, by fostering closer collaboration and advocacy with the Tajikistan government and other national and international stakeholders to promote rights, protection and durable solutions for people UNHCR serves.

## **Operational Recommendation (OPR)**

**OPR 2** (linked to C2): Strengthen Capacity Building and Strategic Engagement by realigning UNHCR's strategic approach in Tajikistan to ensure that capacity-strengthening initiatives are in line with regional approaches and are continuous, cohesive, and effective, avoiding fragmentation and focusing on sustainable outcomes.

**OPR 3** (linked to C3): Strengthen UNHCR's operational and advocacy frameworks in Tajikistan to proactively address, mediate, and resolve challenges faced by forcibly displaced persons.

**OPR 4** (linked to C4 and C5): UNHCR should develop its livelihoods strategy for Tajikistan, transitioning from immediate, short-term relief to comprehensive, long-term empowerment and self-reliance strategies that align with the local socio-economic context, in partnership with development actors who have more capacity and resources to achieve results.

**OPR 5** (linked to C6): Integrate considerations of Age, Gender, Diversity, Climate Resilience, and Environmental Sustainability into UNHCR's Monitoring & Evaluation framework in Tajikistan. This will enable informed, data-driven, comprehensive and sustainable support tailored to the country's unique challenges.

#### **Organizational recommendation**

**OR 6** (linked to C7): Optimize efficiency of the Country Office through the enhancement of cooperation with implementing partners.

**OR 7** (linked to C7): Optimize efficiency of Country Office resources through rethinking of its strategy, diversification of resources and recalibration of staffing and communication structures.

# 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

UNHCR's work from 2021 to 2023 encompasses support for eradicating statelessness, strengthening asylum systems, and providing durable solutions for people UNHCR serves. These efforts include capacity building with governments and local authorities, alongside emergency preparedness, humanitarian assistance, and empowerment and livelihoods.

This Country Strategy Evaluation (CSE) for Tajikistan is commissioned by the UNHCR Evaluation Office with the purpose of evaluating the UNHCR Country Strategy (2020-2024). This report presents the key findings, conclusions and recommendations to inform the Tajikistan country operations.

This evaluation was conducted from June to November 2023. It was carried out largely as designed at the inception phase, and without significant departures from the Terms of Reference (ToR, see Annex 1). The inception phase, conducted from June to July 2023, involved background research and initial remote interviews (which took place in July); framework and methodology design; preparation of an inception report; and engagement of the Country Office's (CO) Senior Management Team in a joint reflection session to discuss the draft reconstructed Theory of Change (ToC) of UNHCR's country operations. The evaluation team conducted initial interviews remotely with key stakeholders from UNHCR and development partners. The inception report included the key elements of the evaluation design, methodology and evaluation matrix, which was elaborated based on the key evaluation questions as stated in the ToR and the reconstructed ToC. The in-person data collection took place from 27<sup>th</sup> August to 8<sup>th</sup> September 2023. Within the field mission, the evaluation team visited the capital, Dushanbe, and three sampled communities, engaging with key informants through interviews, focus groups, and surveys. The analysis, synthesis, learning, and reporting phase took place over the period from September - December 2023.

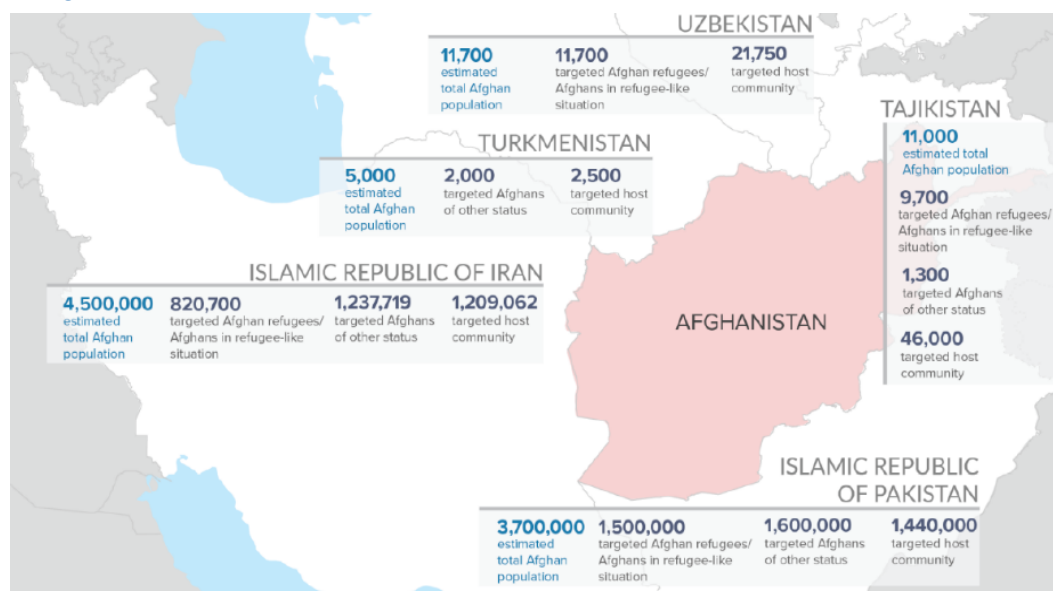


## 2. CONTEXT AND UNHCR'S OPERATION

### 2.1 Regional Overview

The countries of Central Asia,<sup>3</sup> Iran and Pakistan have been severely affected by one of the largest global displacement crises, primarily caused by 40 years of conflict, natural disasters, chronic poverty, and food insecurity in Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup> The situation further deteriorated following the Taliban takeover in August 2021. Currently, the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan remains dire, with human rights, especially those of women and girls, increasingly at risk.<sup>5</sup> This is exacerbated by targeted acts of violence, economic collapse, acute food insecurity, and natural disasters.<sup>6</sup> Figure 1 below presents an overview of the influx of Afghan refugees to various countries in the region.

*Figure 1: UNHCR Regional Planned Response, January-December 2023. The total number of estimated and targeted Afghan refugees and host communities in neighbouring countries to Afghanistan*



Source: UNHCR (2023), *Terms of Reference: Tajikistan Country Strategy Evaluation*, p. 3

### 2.2 Tajikistan's Operational Context

Tajikistan has a population of over 10 million people<sup>7</sup> and was ranked 122 out of 191 countries in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Index in 2022.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR, Regional Refugee Response Plan for Afghanistan Situation 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/99583>, accessed on 30 June 2022

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Human Rights Watch, Tajikistan, Tajik Refugees in Northern Afghanistan, Obstacles to Repatriation, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/Tajik.htm>, accessed on 30 June 2022

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.stat.tj/en>

<sup>8</sup> UNDP Human Development Index

Despite making progress in reducing poverty and growing its economy over the past decade, Tajikistan's socio-economic situation was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the Ukrainian crisis in 2022,<sup>9</sup> with significant impact on business and livelihood opportunities, leading to increased food and energy prices for both refugees and the local population.<sup>10</sup> The Government faced a shortfall in revenue to fulfil its 2022 budget commitments, especially in the social sectors. International Financial Institutions expect some limited growth in 2023, which may ease the socio-economic situation, but anticipate that overall conditions will remain difficult.<sup>11</sup>

Tajikistan experienced a civil war in the early 1990s, leading to more than 800,000 displaced persons and refugees, with tens of thousands of Tajik refugees fleeing to Afghanistan.<sup>12</sup> During the Taliban's rise to power in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, the number of Afghan refugees in Tajikistan increased significantly. By early 2010, more than 2,000 Afghan refugees were resettled in Canada under a special program by UNHCR.<sup>13</sup> Several thousand others moved to countries such as Uzbekistan, Germany, and Ukraine.<sup>14</sup>

With the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan in 2021, the refugee influx to Tajikistan increased. As per the latest estimates from 2022, as shown in Figure 2 below, Tajikistan now hosts an estimated 11,000 refugees and asylum-seekers.<sup>15</sup> The majority of refugees and asylum-seekers are Afghans who arrived in 2021. This number comprises 8,232 refugees, 203 people in refugee-like situations, 1,097 asylum seekers, mainly from Afghanistan, as well as some 5,391 stateless people (see Figure 2).<sup>16</sup> According to the UNHCR Regional Response Plan for Afghanistan (2023), nearly 30% of the refugee population are women, 32% are men, and the rest (38%) are children<sup>17</sup>. The majority are of Tajik ethnicity, followed by Hazaras and Pashtuns. Despite cultural, religious, and linguistic similarities with Tajikistan, many Afghan refugees consider Tajikistan a transit country and seek to migrate to Europe, Canada, and other Western nations.<sup>18</sup>

---

9 UNHCR, Terms of Reference, Country Strategy Evaluation, Tajikistan 2020-2022, Paragraph 16.

10 Cabar. Asia; Tajikistan: Afghan Refugees' Life During the Pandemic, [https://longreads.cabar.asia/afg\\_refugee#:~:text=According%20to%20media%2C%20the%20number,came%20to%20power%20in%20Afghanistan](https://longreads.cabar.asia/afg_refugee#:~:text=According%20to%20media%2C%20the%20number,came%20to%20power%20in%20Afghanistan), accessed on 30 June 2022

11 See Annex 6. Data collection tools

12 Human Rights Watch (2022); Tajikistan, Tajik Refugees in Northern Afghanistan, Obstacles to Repatriation, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/Tajik.htm>, accessed on 30 June 2022

13 Cabar. Asia; Tajikistan: Afghan Refugees' Life During the Pandemic, [https://longreads.cabar.asia/afg\\_refugee#:~:text=According%20to%20media%2C%20the%20number,came%20to%20power%20in%20Afghanistan](https://longreads.cabar.asia/afg_refugee#:~:text=According%20to%20media%2C%20the%20number,came%20to%20power%20in%20Afghanistan), accessed on 30 June 2022

14 UNEG (2008); Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system

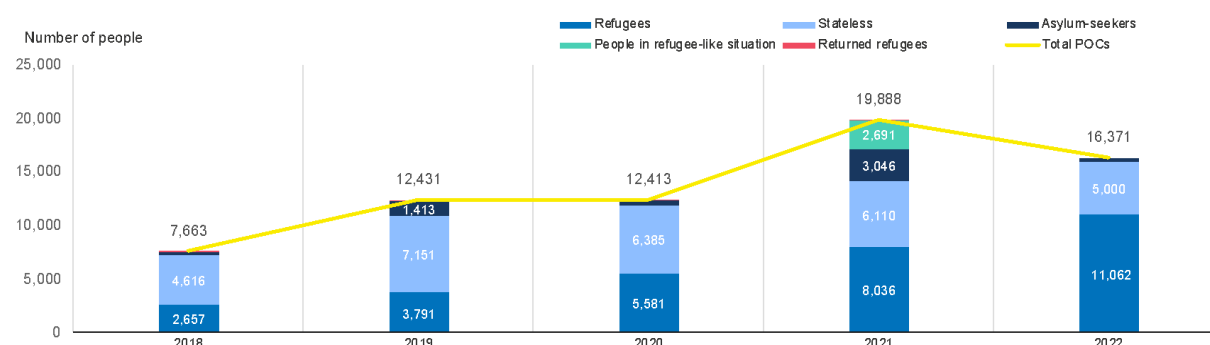
15 UNHCR (2023), Regional Refugee Response Plan for Afghanistan Situation 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/99583>, accessed on 30 June 2022

16 UNHCR Refugee population statistics database and RBM COMPASS - Results Data Portal (Power BI) and Orion Analytics Centre

17 UNHCR (2022); Regional Refugee Response Plan for Afghanistan Situation 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/9958>, accessed 30 June 2022

18 UNHCR (2022); Regional Refugee Response Plan for Afghanistan Situation 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/99583>, accessed on 30 June 2022

Figure 2: Cumulative total forced displacement and statelessness in Tajikistan, by type, of people UNHCR serves (2018-2022)



Source: UNHCR Refugee population statistics database and RBM COMPASS - Results Data Portal (Power BI) and Orion Analytics Centre

Figure 3 shows Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan and the formal border points for refugees in yellow, along with the geographic location of refugees (represented by the blue circles). Refugees are predominantly located outside of Dushanbe to the South and the East. Access to territory through land borders for asylum-seekers from Afghanistan is reportedly limited due to national security concerns regarding potential infiltration of radical elements.<sup>19</sup>

Figure 3: Afghanistan-Tajikistan Border Areas and locations where most Afghan refugees are located



Source: UNHCR (2023); UNHCR Factsheet

Asylum-seekers and refugees enjoy access to social services and employment opportunities but may face challenges in accessing formal asylum procedures, sometimes leading to deportations to Afghanistan. The situation with Afghan refugees in Tajikistan in 2023 is

19 UNHCR, Strategy Report, Multi-Year, 2022-2024

influenced by these concerns, which have been reinforced by the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021.

## 2.3 Policy Environment in Tajikistan

Tajikistan is party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol, providing refugees with access to social services and employment opportunities on equal footing with Tajik nationals.<sup>20</sup> However, there are limitations when it comes to residence for refugees, as per Resolution 325, which designates specific areas outside large cities (Dushanbe and Khujand) for refugee settlements.<sup>21</sup> Another of UNHCR's limitations relates to official statistical reporting on asylum seekers and refugees in Tajikistan, which is ad-hoc and incomplete. The Department on Citizenship and Work with Refugees (DCWR) has reported mostly on the number of applications rather than the number of people, with no gender and age segregation.<sup>22</sup>

Tajikistan is not yet party to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, nor the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. It has made progress in reducing statelessness and harmonising its nationality-related legislation with international standards by joining the Global #IBelong campaign in 2014.<sup>23</sup> Since joining the campaign, more than 57,000 stateless people or those with undetermined nationality have been identified and registered in Tajikistan.<sup>24</sup> The adoption of the Amnesty Law in December 2019 was one of the key acts to resolve the most complex situations of statelessness.<sup>25</sup> The Tajikistan government has a strong commitment to end statelessness in the country and supports all the relevant programmes; hence there is a room for further UNHCR support for the remaining stateless people with identity documents and consequent full access to state services.

Previous unrest along Tajikistan's border with Kyrgyzstan posed additional challenges, although official figures and requests for support from UNHCR to the Tajik government are yet to be received.<sup>26</sup>

## 2.4 UNHCR intervention in Tajikistan (object of the evaluation)

The subject of this evaluation is UNHCR Tajikistan's Country Operation (CO) and its portfolio of work undertaken from 2020 to 2022. This work has been informed by the Annual Operational Plans (2020 and 2021), the Regional Strategy for Central Asia (2019-2021),<sup>27</sup> Multi-year Strategy (2022-24) and Strategic Directions 2017-2021<sup>28</sup> and 2022-2026.<sup>29</sup> The

---

20 UNHCR, Regional Refugee Response Plan for Afghanistan Situation 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/99583>, accessed on 30 June 2022

21 UNHCR, Regional Refugee Response Plan for Afghanistan Situation 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/99583>, accessed on 30 June 2022

22 UNHCR, Operational Plan for Tajikistan 2021.

23 *Ibid.*

24 *Ibid.*

25 UNHCR, Regional Refugee Response Plan, 2023

26 UNHCR, Terms of Reference, Country Strategy Evaluation, Tajikistan 2020-2022, Paragraph 23.

27 [https://www.unhcr.org/centralasia/wp-content/uploads/sites/75/2019/09/Regional-Strategy\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/centralasia/wp-content/uploads/sites/75/2019/09/Regional-Strategy_compressed.pdf)

28 <https://www.unhcr.org/fr-fr/en/media/unhcrs-strategic-directions-2017-2021>

29 <https://reporting.unhcr.org/unhcr-strategic-directions-2022-2026>

Strategic Directions represent UNHCR's commitment to provide protection and solutions for the people that it serves (forcibly displaced and stateless persons). During the period 2020-2022, UNHCR Tajikistan's activities were focused on three areas:

- Advocating for and supporting the strengthening of the country's asylum system and provision of solutions for refugees;
- Providing capacity building to the Government and local authorities, regularly engaging in emergency preparedness activities and response; and
- Providing support to the eradication and prevention of statelessness in Tajikistan.

This period (2020-2022) also included the introduction of the new strategic planning and operations management process. This implied transition from operational plans to multi-year strategy planning aims to ensure results-based management and alignment with the global strategic framework. The new simplified Global Results Framework was developed to translate 'UNHCR's mandate in programmatic terms by defining a select number of corporate impact and outcome areas with a smaller set of respective indicators.'<sup>30</sup>

In 2021, a new approach for planning, implementation, budgeting, monitoring, and reporting, named COMPASS, was introduced to ensure clear linkages between the Strategic Directions, Global Results Framework (aligned to Strategic Directions and Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) Objectives), and UNHCR plans.<sup>31</sup> The aim of this was to align UNHCR CO's work with the Global Results Framework and the Global Strategic Directions. This resulted in UNHCR Tajikistan's work being focused on four main impact areas:

- 1. Attaining Favourable Protection Environments.** The expected impact is that: 'Refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless people enjoy unhindered access to territory with zero cases of refoulment, asylum procedures, effective status determination and right to appeal negative decisions.'<sup>32</sup>

To achieve this impact, UNHCR intended to enable asylum seekers at the border to have access to territory and benefit from functional referral mechanisms and improved reception facilities. In addition, UNHCR worked to ensure that asylum-seekers can enjoy fair and efficient Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures with the possibility of appealing negative decisions, as well as to enable asylum-seekers and refugees to enjoy fair adjudication with regards to their appeals. UNHCR also cooperated with the Government on reform and harmonization of the national legislative and procedural frameworks to enable stateless people to have access to documentation (birth certification) and consequent full access to social services including health and education.

- 2. Realising Basic Rights in Safe Environments.** The expected impact is that: 'Refugees and asylum seekers can fully exercise their rights for basic services, including the right to health and education'.<sup>33</sup>

---

30 UNHCR, UNHCR's new multi-year strategic planning and operations management system

31 UNHCR (2022), UNHCR Strategic Directions 2022-2026, available at <https://reporting.unhcr.org/unhcr-strategic-directions-2022-2026>

32 UNHCR (2022) Multi-year Strategy 2022-2024, Internal Document for Country/MCO Operations

33 *Ibid.*

To achieve this impact, the UNHCR CO focused on enabling refugees and asylum seekers in vulnerable situations to be included in and benefit from the state social protection system and have access to cash assistance provided by international organizations or the State.

3. **Empowering Communities and Achieving Gender Equality.** The expected impact is that: 'Refugees and asylum seekers can achieve meaningful socio-economic integration through enhanced livelihood opportunities and self-reliance programmes'.<sup>34</sup> This was intended to be achieved through the UNHCR CO ensuring that refugees and asylum seekers have access to an increased number of livelihood opportunities, along with unhindered access to work rights.
4. **Securing solutions.** The expected impact is that: 'Refugees, asylum seekers and stateless people are provided avenues for naturalization, regularization of their legal stay and status, and are able to fully exercise their right to voluntary repatriation'.<sup>35</sup>

To achieve this impact, the UNHCR CO focused on ensuring that 'refugees and asylum seekers realize their right to return in an informed and dignified way' and 'asylum seekers and stateless people are provided avenues for naturalization (for stateless people) and regularization of their status and documentation (mandate refugees)'.<sup>32</sup> (See Impact areas and outcomes covered by the Global Results Framework and by the Tajikistan CO in Annex Table 2, along with full details of UNHCR CO's planned results at outcome and output levels in Annex 5. Intervention Logic).

### Overview of UNHCR's operational approaches

In order to deliver against the planned results in the impact area **Attaining Favourable Protection Environments**, UNHCR has provided technical assistance to the Tajik authorities, based on a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and developed joint work plans, to ensure access to territory and asylum procedures through the implementation of referral mechanisms and safeguards. For example, in December 2018, UNHCR and Ministries of Internal Affairs signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to make the Temporary Accommodation Centre (TAC) functional. Since then, UNHCR has been providing technical and financial support through its social assistance partner (the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat – AKAH) to operationalize the Temporary Accommodation Centre (TAC) (discussed further below).<sup>36</sup> Capacity building for emergency preparedness was organized in the form of a simulation exercise. Joint work plans were also developed with national authorities (e.g., the Ombudsman Office, Department of Citizenship and Work with Refugees (DCWR), the National Legislative Centre of the Executive Apparatus of the President) to ensure protection of refugee and asylum issues. UNHCR provided legal advice to Tajikistan parliamentarians on developing the new Refugee Law and advocated harmonising asylum legislation with different legal acts and codes. Over the period 2020-2022, UNHCR advocated for UNHCR's return as an observer to the state RSD Commission which was suspended in 2014. Return of an observer status would enable UNHCR to monitor and potentially contribute to better quality RSD procedures. UNHCR also provided legal advice to asylum seekers and refugees to support their registration.

---

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*



When it comes to the impact area **Realising Basic Rights in Safe Environments**, direct support to people with and for whom UNHCR works (forcibly displaced) has been provided through implementing partners using cash-based interventions (CBIs), in-kind assistance, and facilitating access to healthcare and educational services. In addition, host communities have been supported through peaceful coexistence initiatives and small-scale projects to improve social services. In the impact area **Empowering Communities and Achieving Gender Equality**, UNHCR provided vocational skills training, apprenticeship programmes, business grants, and toolkits through engaging with line ministries, the private sector and donors, on refugees' employment and livelihood opportunities, in cooperation with implementing partners. As regards the area **Securing solutions**, UNHCR provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Interior related to identification and reduction of statelessness, and provided legal support to stateless individuals.

Concerning cross cutting approaches, the UNHCR CO has applied a Community-Based Protection (CBP) and Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) approach in its operations to adjust its response to the needs of people with and for whom UNHCR works (discussed further below in finding 17). As regards responsiveness to change and fragile context, UNHCR adapted its approach in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, by supporting prevention, treatment, and socio-economic recovery plans and measures of the government and the UN through technical assistance. In addition, it assisted forcibly displaced persons to access healthcare and livelihoods.<sup>37</sup> UNHCR was also responsive to the Afghanistan situation in 2021, which required prioritization of activities with focus on emergency preparedness and response. For this, it secured additional funding to recruit more staff and respond to the emergency through CBIs to forcibly displaced persons.<sup>38</sup>

UNHCR put effort into **building partnerships and coordination** with development actors across all impact areas. In line with the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees, UNHCR coordinates the Inter-Agency Working Group on Emergency Preparedness and Contingency Planning for Refugee Issues.<sup>39</sup> The Refugee Coordination Model (RCM) was activated in May 2021 to ensure preparedness for a possible refugee influx from Afghanistan. Under the RCM there were seven Sectorial Working Groups, each led by one agency (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene - WASH, Health, Food Security, Shelter/Non-Food Items (NFIs), Protection, Livelihoods/Resilience and Logistics). UNHCR co-chaired this Inter-Agency Coordination Platform together with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, involving humanitarian and development partners, international financial institutions and the donor community.

As regards prevention of statelessness, UNHCR worked with UNDP and the Ministry of Justice on a project focused on reform of the Civil Registry system in Tajikistan. UNHCR has a partnership with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the area of birth registration to jointly address childhood statelessness. The CO has also developed networks with private sector companies<sup>40</sup> to increase livelihood opportunities for people with and for whom UNHCR works. UNHCR also collaborated within the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and Donor

---

37 UNHCR (2021), Tajikistan Fact Sheet

38 UNHCR (2021), 2021 Operations Plan Tajikistan

39 *Ibid*

40 For example, Serena Hotel, Hyatt Hotel, Auchan Hypermarket, Coca Cola

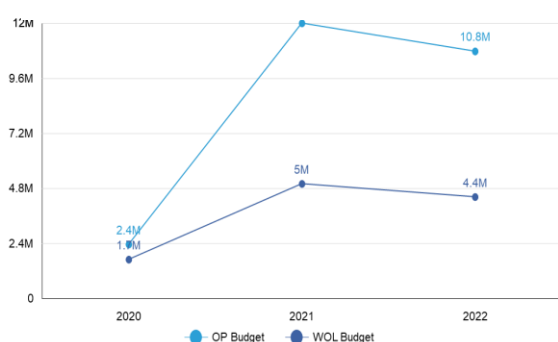
Coordination Council for inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless persons within the national development plan, and efforts to progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>41</sup> UNHCR partners with the World Bank to strengthen the data and evidence base on forced displacement.

In order to achieve the planned results in all impact areas, UNHCR has worked through five implementing partners (IPs). These IPs have provided social and legal assistance to forcibly displaced and stateless persons (Refugee Children and Vulnerable Citizens – RCVC – and ‘Inson va Adolat’ (Human Being and Justice)), and for stateless prevention and reduction activities (Rights and Prosperity and Chashma). In addition, the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan (RCST) implemented activities related to regular border monitoring visits covering seven border-crossing points. A Project Partnership Agreement (PPA) on emergency preparedness support is signed with one international Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) (AKAH).

## 2.5 Overview of Budget Distribution 2020 - 2022

The total Operations Plan (OP) budget,<sup>42</sup> which is a planned budget, increased from USD 2.4 million in 2020 to USD 12.02 million in 2021, and decreased by 10% in 2022. However, there was a decreasing proportion of the planned budget being allocated to the actual budget (the Working Operating Level – WOL)<sup>43</sup> over the period 2020-2022. In 2020, the actual budget was 72% of the planned budget, equivalent to USD 1.7 million out of USD 2.4 million. In 2022, the amount of actual budget received accounted for only 41% of the planned budget (4.4 million) (See Annex 4. for additional data).

*Figure 5: UNHCR Tajikistan OP budget (USD), planned budget vs actual budget, 2020-2022*



*Figure 4: UNHCR Tajikistan actual (WOL) budget (USD), operational vs administrative and staffing budget, 2020-2022*



Source: UNHCR CO Tajikistan financial data for the period 2020-2022

41 UNHCR (2022), 2022 Thematic Narratives Annual Results Report - Other narratives

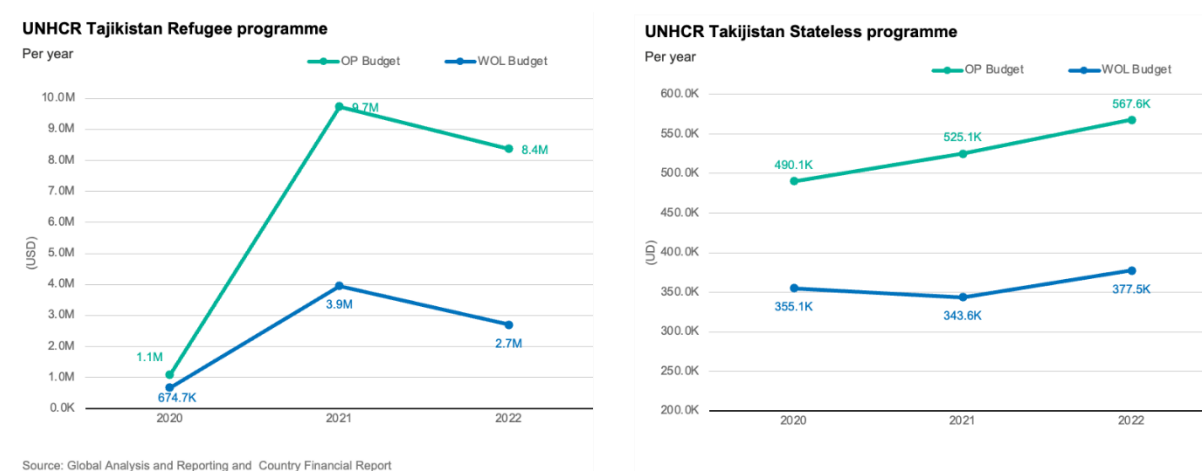
42 Operations Plan (OP) refers to the comprehensive assessed budgetary needs of the operations based on identified needs and acts as ‘Planned Budget’. Source: UNHCR Budgetary Definitions, Last updated: 06 October 2022.

43 Working Operating Level (WOL) budget refers to the prioritized budget approved by the High Commissioner. Usually, the OP budget is higher than the OL due to inadequate funding. Source: UNHCR Budgetary Definitions, Last updated: 06 October 2022.

The CO's budget encompasses the operational budget,<sup>44</sup> administrative budget (ABOD),<sup>45</sup> and staffing budget.<sup>46</sup> Analysis of the share of operational budget vs administrative and staffing budget shows that the share of operational costs in a total actual budget increased in 2021 and decreased in 2022, while the share of administrative and staffing costs in the total actual budget decreased in 2021, but later increased in 2022 (See Figure 5).

In terms of the budget allocation per population planning group (PPG), the primary emphasis for the CO was on refugee support, which received an average allocation of 89% of the total OL budget. In 2021, in response to the Afghanistan situation and the need for emergency preparedness and response, the CO allocated 92% of the budget (USD 3.2 million) to the refugee program, with the remaining funds allocated to the stateless program.<sup>47</sup>

*Figure 6: UNHCR Tajikistan operational budget (OPS) and expenditure by pillar (population planning group) 2020-2022*



Around 31% of the total OL budget is donor financed/earmarked over the period 2020-2022. Funding by donors to the Tajikistan CO significantly increased in this period, to a total of USD 4.4 million. The European Union stands as the largest donor, contributing 41% of all funds (USD 1.8 million), followed by the United Kingdom with 29% of total contributions (USD 1.3 million). Additionally, 53% of funding contributions were not earmarked for specific rights groups or objectives. This flexibility enables UNHCR to allocate resources to areas of greatest need.<sup>48</sup>

UNHCR Tajikistan, in comparison to other UNHCR country offices, is relatively small, especially in terms of regular staff. On average, the office has maintained a regular staff count of five to seven employees, and the majority of the workforce is composed of affiliate staff

44 OPS is UNHCR's operational budget, which is divided into four pillars (Pillar 1 - Global Refugee Programme, Pillar 2 - Global Stateless Programme, Pillar 3 - Global Reintegration Projects and Pillar 4 - Global Internally Displaced Persons)). During 2020-2022, UNHCR's operational budget covered the Pillar 1 - Global Refugee Programme and Pillar 2 - Global Stateless Programme. Source: UNHCR Budgetary Definitions, Last updated: 06 October 2022.

45 ABOD covers non-staff (i.e., non-internal staff) and office-related costs such as mission travel costs (DSA), stationery, temporary staffing, consultants, mission travel, seminars, etc. Source: UNHCR Budgetary Definitions, Last updated: 06 October 2022.

46 Staff costs cover only UNHCR staff excluding affiliate workforce such as consultants/contractors, interns, and volunteers. Non-UNHCR internal staff are budgeted under ABOD. Source: UNHCR Budgetary Definitions, Last updated: 06 October 2022.

47 UNHCR CO Tajikistan financial data for the period 2020-2022

48 UNHCR CO / Tajikistan Funding Sources. From 2020 to 2022.

employed through various arrangements such as consultants, contractors, or temporary appointments. The total workforce increased from 14 employees in 2019 to 24 employees in 2022 and then declined to 20 in 2023. Most employees have been engaged in international protection and solutions (see Workforce in Annex 4).

Over the period 2020-2022, the UNHCR Tajikistan CO faced a number of challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic which affected the socio-economic situation of already vulnerable people with and for whom UNHCR works and affected their access to healthcare services, education, and livelihood opportunities. The worsening security situation in Afghanistan and the Taliban take-over in August 2021 put additional pressure on UNHCR's work in Tajikistan, as the refugee influx increased. UNHCR could not conduct regular border monitoring activities due to security limitations on access to the border and the absence of an MOU with Tajikistan's Border Troops. The start of the Ukraine war in February 2022 further affected the socioeconomic situation of people with and for whom UNHCR works due to increasing food and energy prices. The gaps between OP and WOL budgets negatively affected UNHCR CO's capacity to respond to the needs.<sup>49</sup>

## 2.6 Theory of Change

Based on the review of the documents and the preliminary interviews the evaluation team reconstructed the Theory of Change (ToC) (see Intervention logic diagram in Figure 7 below).

The reconstructed ToC was used by the evaluation team as a framework to better understand UNHCR's work and pathways to change. It has been used to confirm the evaluation questions and indicators. The ToC demonstrates the linkages across the four main impact areas (named long-term outcomes in the ToC) over the period 2020-2022. It shows how the challenges related to access to territory, registration and documentation, status determination and legal aspects are addressed by UNHCR and pathways to change resulting from the programs. In addition, it considers issues concerning the inclusion, empowerment, and durable solutions for forcibly displaced and stateless persons. The overarching theory of change can be described as follows:

- *If* UNHCR invests in building a favourable protection environment, *then* it will provide for the existence and application of a favourable protection environment and fair processes. These results will *then* contribute to ensuring unhindered access for forcibly displaced and stateless persons to territory with zero cases of refoulement; established asylum procedures, effective status determination and right to appeal negative decisions.
- Further, *if* UNHCR supports the realization of basic rights in safe environments, *then* it will contribute to a functioning, accessible and equitable state social protection system that can *then* enable access to forcibly displaced and stateless persons, including the health services and education for children.
- *If* UNHCR invests in empowering communities and achieving gender equality, *then* forcibly displaced persons and host communities will benefit from gender responsive and inclusive employment, training and livelihood opportunities. These results will *then* contribute to the ability of forcibly displaced persons to achieve meaningful socio-

---

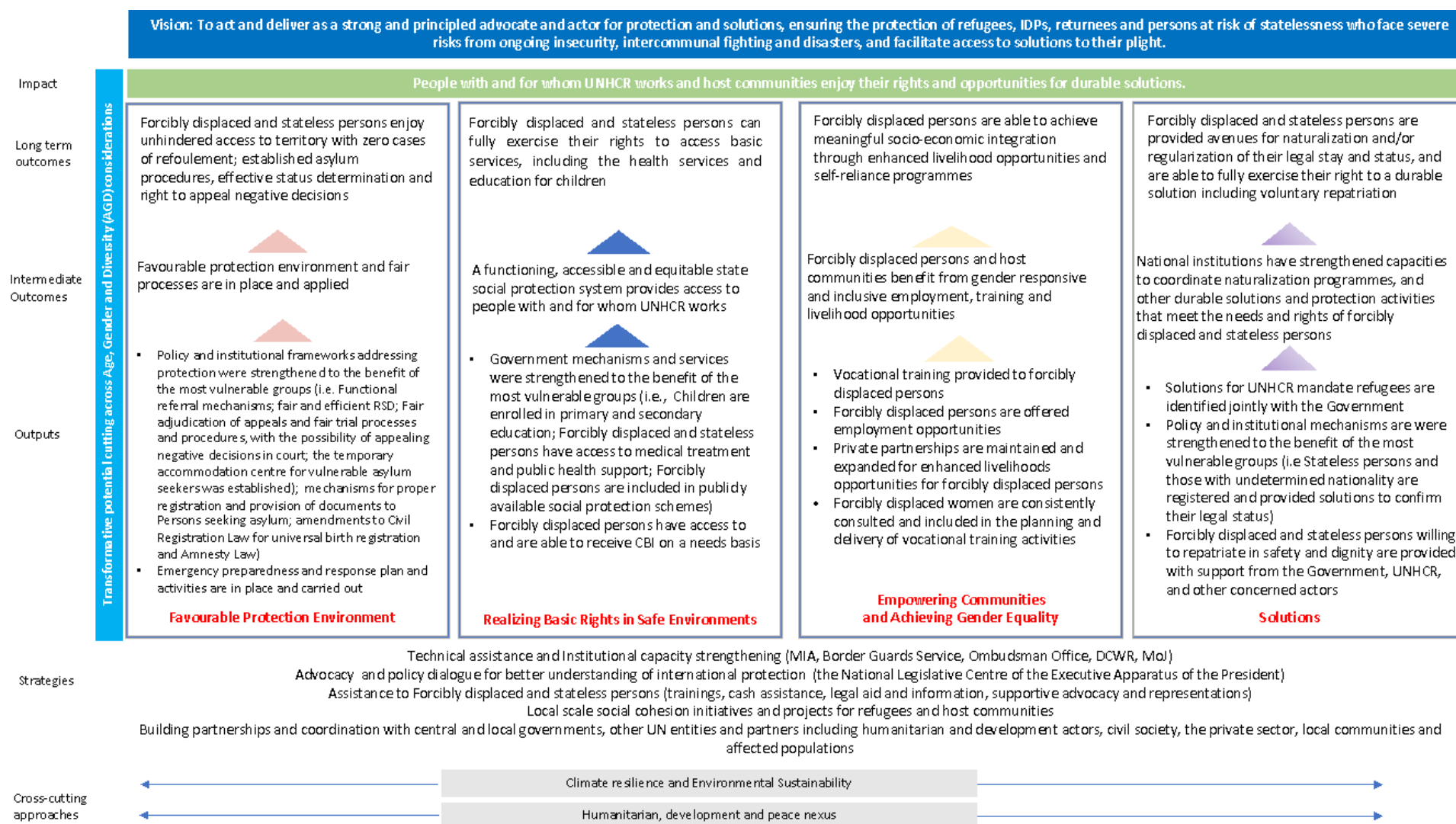
<sup>49</sup> Initial interviews with UNHCR Tajikistan CO staff, review of UNHCR CO UNHCR CO Tajikistan financial data for the period 2020-2022 and annual reports 2020-2022.

economic integration through enhanced livelihood opportunities and self-reliance programmes.

- And finally, *if* UNHCR invests in finding solutions for challenges that *people with and for whom UNHCR works by supporting the government to strengthen its capacities, then* national institutions will strengthen their capacities to coordinate naturalization programmes, and other durable solutions and protection activities that meet the needs and rights of forcibly displaced and stateless persons. These results will *then* contribute to opening avenues for naturalization and/or regularization of legal stay and status for forcibly displaced and stateless persons, along with their ability to fully exercise their right to a durable solution including voluntary repatriation.

These contributions will then bring transformative change towards greater access to rights and opportunities for durable solutions for people with and for whom UNHCR works and host communities.

Figure 7: Theory of Change





#### Key assumptions from Inputs and Activities to Outputs

- UNHCR's host and refugee communities presence and role are visible, understood and respected by the government and general public
- Financial and human resources are available; and ability to deliver support in a timely manner and credible quantities
- Availability of local capacity, and recognition of implementing partners by national and local stakeholders
- Mutual interest in partnership building between the government, UNHCR, partners and donors
- Government actively engaged in and supportive of UNHCR's mandated activities
- Other UN entities operating in the country are supportive
- Development partners willing to participate in joint activities

#### Key assumptions from Outputs to Outcomes

- Commitment of government partners to translate acquired knowledge and capacity into accessible and sustainable services that meet the needs of forcibly displaced and stateless persons
- Forcibly displaced and stateless persons and host communities are willing and able to use acquired knowledge to trigger change in their behaviours and approaches
- Political stability in the country and in the region
- Preparedness procedures are in place to address refugee influx

#### Key assumptions from Outcomes to Impact

- Government demonstrates political commitment to adopt and implement necessary legal and institutional frameworks to support refugees and stateless persons
- Levels of political stability that do not deteriorate
- Minimum level of national disasters or other major societal disruptions

## 3. PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND METHOD OF THE EVALUATION

### 3.1. Purpose and scope

The evaluation had the dual purpose of accountability and learning, and assessed the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the country strategy. The evaluation is summative – assessing UNHCR's performance – as well as formative in nature, and will inform UNHCR Tajikistan's next multi-year strategy cycle planned to start in 2025. It will help UNHCR to reflect on its future strategic positioning in Tajikistan and its presence in the region, particularly vis-à-vis the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, as well as shedding light on some of the operational constraints and sustainability challenges faced by small operations in general. This is with a view to extract lessons that can inform UNHCR's strategic positioning and multi-year planning in other similar contexts.

The evaluation scope was the entirety of the CO portfolio over the period 2020-2022. The geographical scope was all areas where UNHCR had interventions in Tajikistan.

The evaluation users include both internal and external stakeholders. Primary users are UNHCR Tajikistan's Country Representative and staff, Bureau Director for Asia and the Pacific, and key regional staff. The secondary users consist of in-country partners, including the Government of Tajikistan, sister United Nations (UN) entities operational in Tajikistan, development actors, donors and civil society organizations (CSOs), and the UNHCR headquarters Senior Executive Team and relevant divisions.

### 3.2. Objectives

The evaluation objectives were to:

- Strengthen the future design of the Tajikistan operational strategy by assessing the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, challenges, opportunities and contribution to regional and national objectives.<sup>50</sup>
- Provide evidence of how and why UNHCR interventions did or did not improve the conditions of the people the organization serves in Tajikistan.<sup>51</sup>
- Determine the extent to which UNHCR's own capacity, structures and processes are aligned and fit-for-purpose to implement the Country Strategy.<sup>52</sup>
- Distil lessons and formulate recommendations to improve UNHCR Tajikistan's actions over the next planning period, as well as any lessons that can be of wider relevance for other UNHCR operations in similar contexts.

---

<sup>50</sup> ToR, p. 7

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

### 3.3. Evaluation criteria and questions

The evaluation addresses **four key questions** and **12 sub-questions**. It assesses the Country Strategy against the criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. During the inception phase, a revision and resequencing of evaluation questions that were included in the ToR was made to ensure better flow and structured analysis. For instance, original sub-questions 1.1 and 1.2 were merged and indicators have been added into the evaluation matrix; and sub-question 1.3 was expanded to allow for assessment of internal and external coherence. Within effectiveness, a question on capacity building strategy was moved from sustainability (EQ4) to the effectiveness section (2.1 To what extent has UNHCR elaborated and implemented a capacity development strategy be vis-à-vis the Government and relevant national actors with a view to building a sustainable and effective government-run protection, assistance, solution mechanisms?). Additionally, a sub-question on AGD and other cross-cutting issues was added to ensure appropriate assessment of integration of AGD and cross-cutting issues (2.3 To what extent did UNHCR contribute to achievement of cross-cutting aims (humanitarian principles, protection, empowerment and inclusion, with focus on AGD; environmental sustainability and climate adaptation and Humanitarian, development and peace nexus?). No change to EQ3 was made. Under EQ4, the sub-questions have been elaborated to focus on recommendations (formative), as follows: sub-question 4.1 focused on strategic positioning which was covered under EQ1.2; sub-question 4.2 was slightly revised to provide an assessment of UNHCR's approaches to inform recommendations going forward; sub-questions 4.3 was slightly revised to provide an assessment of UNHCR's approaches to inform recommendations going forward. It was then moved to effectiveness EQ2 (Sub-question 2.1) as explained above.

The key questions and sub-questions were further elaborated in the Evaluation matrix, based on the reconstructed ToC. The Evaluation matrix included the questions, indicators, data sources, and data collection and analysis methods. The Evaluation matrix represented the overarching framework for this evaluation (see Table 1 below and Annex 2. Evaluation Matrix).

*Table 1: Evaluation criteria and key evaluation questions*

MAIN EVALUATION QUESTIONS	EVALUATION CRITERIA
Q1. How strategically has UNHCR been positioned within the country given the needs of persons UNHCR serves and the national and regional context, particularly with respect to the Afghanistan situation?	Relevance, Coherence
Q2. What have been the key results in the areas of assistance, protection, and solutions?	Effectiveness
Q3. In light of Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBAP) prioritization decisions in resource allocations across operations, to what extent is UNHCR Tajikistan's structure, staffing and resource allocation adequate and fit to meet the objectives set out in its strategy?	Efficiency
Q4: How can UNHCR build on results achieved to date, current challenges, and opportunities, to further leverage its strategic position	Sustainability

and influence within the country and region to advance collective efforts towards protection and solutions for the people UNHCR serves, and the communities that host them?

### 3.4. Methodology

The evaluation adopted a non-experimental, mixed methods, theory-based approach to understand both what worked to achieve the planned outcomes of UNHCR Tajikistan's Country Strategy, and how, in order to promote internal learning. The overall evaluation approach was therefore participatory and utilization-focused in order to inform strategic and operational decisions.

### 3.5. Data collection methods

The evaluation was conducted using a hybrid format, combining face-to-face and remote data collection. Mixed methods were used, drawing upon both primary and secondary sources as well as quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, including document review, analysis of secondary data, key informant (semi-structured) interviews, online surveys, focus group discussions, direct observations, and validation workshops.

The sampling of key informants for focus group discussions and surveys utilised purposive sampling, selecting participants based on information from implementing partners before the field mission. The purposive sampling resulted in the selection of Vahdat and Rudeki, due to the size and homogeneity of the displaced communities; while Shartuz was selected for consultations with stateless individuals. Taking into account the fact that stateless persons were more dispersed in local communities, the evaluation team mapped activities of UNHCR and the NGO Chashma in Shartuz, leading to the selection of four rayons for the survey: Khuroson, Balhi, Shahrituz, and Kubodion, which were considered representative for the study. This approach specifically aimed to provide an opportunity to participate in surveys for those at heightened risk who may not comfortably share their views in focus group discussions, such as women, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities.

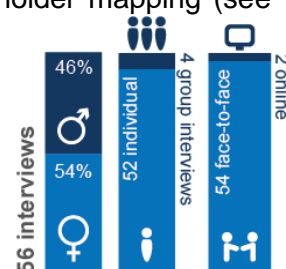
An overview of key data collection methods is presented below.

- a) A desk review was conducted using the full suite of 15 key documents that were made available by UNHCR, external agencies, and through a wider literature search.<sup>53</sup> This allowed for the best use of UNHCR's narrative and results reporting, and an analysis of relevant documents; the most important of which were the CO's annual reports for 2020, 2021, and the 2022 annual results report.
- b) Secondary quantitative data was analysed to assess UNHCR's effectiveness and efficiency, and to extract information related to the country operation and its strategy. This analysis involved using data obtained from UNHCR's Global Focus and COMPASS results-based management platforms. This involved reviewing and analysing financial data, indicator-level achievements, and information related to implementing partners.

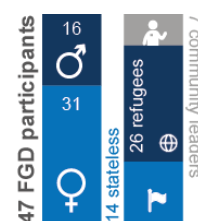
---

<sup>53</sup> See Annex 15. Bibliography

c) Semi-structured interviews<sup>54</sup> were conducted with 56 key informants, exceeding the planned 38 key informants identified during initial stakeholder mapping (see Annex 8: Table 7, List of stakeholders). Of those interviewed during the data collection phase, 54% were women<sup>55</sup> (see Table 14 in Annex 13: overview of key informants). Ten interviews were not conducted due to no response or cancellation. The majority of the interviews were with individuals; however, four were group interviews conducted in the interest of time available to the evaluation team. The majority of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, with only two taking place online. The category and number of interviews conducted are given in Table 2 below.



d) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) served to collect the perceptions of people served by UNHCR about the role of UNHCR and its partners in the areas of protection, humanitarian assistance, access to basic social services, livelihoods, inclusion and local integration. They were conducted with a total of 47 people, who participated in a total of 7 FGDs, out of which there were 14 stateless persons, 26 refugees and 7 community leaders or service providers. A total of 31 women and 16 men participated in FGDs.



e) Direct observations made during the field mission, in particular a visit to a youth centre in Vahdat and an elementary school in Rudaki, which benefited from UNHCR renovating their facilities.

Table 2: Category and number of respondents consulted over the field phase

Category of respondents	Subcategory	Number of KIs
UNHCR	Country Office	10
External stakeholders	Government of Tajikistan	3
	Local Authorities	4
	UN Resident Coordinator's Office	1
	Donors	3
	Implementing Partners (IPs)	23
	United Nations Agencies	8
	Other multilateral agencies	3
	Private Companies	1
	Local community leaders/service provider related to statelessness	7

<sup>54</sup> See Annex 6. Data collection tools

<sup>55</sup> See Annex 13. Overview of key informants

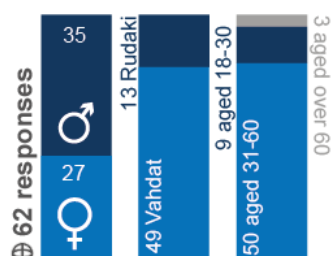
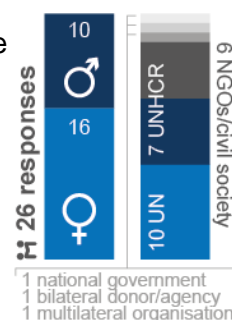
People that UNHCR serves	Stateless persons	14
	Refugees	26
Total		103

- f) Three distinct surveys<sup>56</sup> were conducted with: 1) partners; 2) stateless people; and 3) refugees. The surveys were available in English, Russian and Tajik languages to ensure that the widest range of respondents could complete them.

Table 3: Planned number of survey respondents and total number that responded

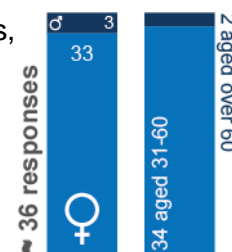
Number of respondents	Partner Survey	Refugee Survey	Stateless Persons
Planned	Up to 50	Up to 30 per region	Up to 30 per region
Responded	26	62	36

There were a total of 26 responses to the **partner survey**, with fewer male respondents (10 respondents) than female (16 respondents). Most of the respondents work for United Nations entities (10 respondents), Non-Governmental Organizations/Civil Society (6 respondents), national government institutions (1 respondent), bilateral donors/agencies (1 respondent), and non-UN multilateral organizations (1 respondent). The same survey was also distributed among UNHCR's own staff, out of which 7 staff responded.



The **refugees survey** had a total of 62 participants, with a fairly even split between male (35) and female (27). The majority of respondents were from Vahdat (49) and the rest were in Rudaki (13). The majority were aged between 31-60 (50 respondents), followed by 18-30 (9 respondents) and over 60 (3 respondents).

The **stateless persons** survey had 36 responses, with significantly more female respondents (33) than male (3). A large majority of respondents were aged between 31-60 (34), with only a small number aged 60+ (2).



- g) Discussion and validation workshops, the main aim of which were to share and validate the preliminary findings and conclusions and to develop recommendations together, reinforced a participatory and co-creation approach. The first workshop was held with UNHCR (Tajikistan team and the Regional Bureau (RB)) on 20 November 2023, then with the partners on 22 November 2023.

<sup>56</sup> See Annex 6. Data collection tools



### 3.6. Data analysis and validation

Data collected from multiple sources, including document reviews, interviews, FGDs, site observations, and surveys, was systematically entered into an evidence matrix. This matrix reflected key indicators and questions as presented in the evaluation matrix to ensure a full overview of evidence per evaluation question and indicators.

Data from the survey was analysed to produce descriptive statistics, whilst thematic narrative analysis and qualitative iterative analysis were used for qualitative data. Disaggregated analysis of data (per gender, age, type of group UNHCR serves) was produced where possible, with a focus on using a gender and equity perspective. This approach adhered to the protocols specified by United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), UNHCR, and the guidelines within the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) framework.

Analysis of secondary quantitative data assessed progress against indicators, implementing partners' budget, donors' financial contributions, and the staffing structure and the changes over the period assessed. Furthermore, a performance analysis was conducted using a dataset developed from UNHCR results data to assess the effectiveness of the CSE.<sup>57</sup> The data analysis consisted of descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentages, rates, and averages.

All findings were triangulated both internally within the evaluation team and across data sources. Triangulation based on the multidisciplinary nature of the team ensured a balanced and consistent interpretation of the data for each evaluation question. Data and findings were grouped and reviewed by evaluation question and regularly triangulated by type of data (primary and secondary), method of data collection, source of information, or type of informant (government, civil society, UN agency, donors, refugees, etc.).

In line with the participatory approach, the evaluation team held a debriefing session with the CO team while in-country, and then hybrid workshops (a mix of in-person and online presence) were held in November 2023 to check facts and further validate the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Key stakeholders had the opportunity to comment on the draft report, with the final report being submitted in January 2024.

### 3.7. Participation and monitoring mechanisms

The participation of the people with and for whom UNHCR works was ensured through: (i) FGDs during visits to Rudaki, Vahdat and Shahrituz, (ii) interaction with their representatives and associations during semi-structured interviews, (iii) the feedback and discussion workshop on the recommendations held on 20-22 November 2023. Most of the partners for the period under evaluation were interviewed during the inception and field visit phases, during which time they also had an opportunity to participate in a specific workshop where findings and preliminary conclusions were presented, and recommendations discussed.

---

<sup>57</sup> For the quantitative data analyses, prior to commencing the analysis, a comprehensive data validation process was carried out in collaboration with CO and UNHCR evaluation managers to ensure the accuracy of the data.

### 3.8. Governance

The evaluation team consisted of six specialists, including the team leader and Avicena's evaluation director. Responsibilities were distributed based on individuals' technical and methodological expertise and understanding of the Tajikistan context, ensuring that there was a collaborative environment, knowledge exchange and synergies within the team.

An evaluation management group was established within UNHCR, comprising UNHCR's evaluation manager and two staff members from the CO. The group held weekly meetings with the evaluation team leader and evaluation director throughout the evaluation, with the aim of monitoring the evaluation process and planning the various stages, as well as addressing any emerging issues.

### 3.9. Quality control

Evaluation quality control was based on UNHCR's Evaluation Quality Assurance Guide, UNEG, Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) norms and standards. Quality control was carried out throughout the evaluation process at two levels: (i) internally, by the evaluation team through a process of peer review and joint reflection, and by the Evaluation Director, while the team leader ensured the quality of the data collection process; (ii) externally, by UNHCR services, in particular by the CO team and Evaluation Office.

### 3.10. Limitations encountered

An overview of the main limitations and mitigation measures is presented in Table 4 below:

*Table 4: Overview of limitations and mitigation measures*

Limitations	Description	Mitigation measures
The lack of availability of key government representatives to meet with the evaluation team.	The evaluation team was not able to meet with key UNHCR government counterparts (i.e., Border Guards, the Border Guards Department, Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice, Office of the Prime Minister, etc.). The lack of availability and access to such stakeholders remained a significant limitation of this evaluation.	The evaluation team closely liaised with UNHCR to send an invitation letter to each identified key stakeholder. However, despite these efforts the evaluation team did not manage to meet most of the planned government officials.
The lack of availability of donor representatives to meet with the evaluation team	Most the donors were unavailable or declined to engage in the evaluation for various reasons (mostly	The evaluation team liaised with UNHCR to share contacts of key donors and send invitation letters. Despite these efforts, the evaluation

Limitations	Description	Mitigation measures
	conflicting schedules, or noting that they were not informed about UNHCR's activities, or declining without noting reasons. Some donors never replied to multiple invites to interviews).	team could not interview most donors.
Small sample size of online partnership survey (26), with only one survey respondent from the government.	The lack of participation of government counterparts made it difficult to collect their views on partnership with UNHCR over the evaluation period of 2020-2022.	The survey link was sent to the list of contacts provided by UNHCR, and a follow up with reminders was also sent to the list of contacts.
Varying degree of quality of UNHCR's data beyond activity-output level	There was a significant lack of higher level (outcome) data. Combined with the outstanding lack of access to government and donor stakeholders, it limited the triangulation potential across most EQs.	This limitation was mitigated by obtaining information from other sources such as interviews, FGDs, surveys and site observations.
Modest inputs from the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG)	The inception report was not presented at the ERG meeting as the ERG was not established by August 2023. The ERG meeting in November 2023 also did not result in a wider presence of designated ERG members, beyond implementing partners.	Some prospective members of the ERG met (online) with the evaluation team during the inception phase, as well as during the field visit.
Concerns related to reaching to people UNHCR works with	A potential risk for the evaluation was raised concerning the difficulty in reaching and engaging with the people UNHCR works with.	The evaluation team mitigated this risk by working closely with UNHCR's Implementing Partners, RCVC and Chashma, who invited people for FGDs and provided the list of potential survey participants. This resulted in the team successfully reaching out to the desired number of key informants from these groups.
Inconsistencies in the monitoring data system	UNHCR's monitoring system does not focus sufficiently on data related to transformative change, and there is little disaggregation of data on AGD in the monitoring data system.	To mitigate this limitation, the evaluation team proactively liaised with UNHCR CO team, and collected and analysed data from various additional sources.

Limitations	Description	Mitigation measures
	Additionally, there was a lack of consistency in monitoring indicators, and changes in the data format in 2022 (from FOCUS to COMPASS) posed challenges in analysing trends over time.	

### 3.11. Ethical issues

The evaluation team abided by the 2016 UNEG norms and standards, the UNEG Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct<sup>58</sup> and the principles of ‘do no harm’. The evaluation team ensured that a gender lens was integrated by ensuring adequate representation in the evaluation process and assessment of results. The humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence were ensured during the development of findings and recommendations. The evaluation team assured informed consent and confidentiality and prevention of re-traumatization of individuals and communities, by ensuring that the purpose of the evaluation and confidentiality measures were explained at the beginning of each interview or group discussion. Interviewers asked key informants for their consent to participate, ensuring voluntary participation from each stakeholder. The evaluation team respected the right of individuals not to engage or to stop the interview, face-to-face survey, or focus group discussion at any point. Respondents were informed about the evaluation's purpose, the assurance of voluntary participation, and the confidentiality of all responses at the start of each interaction. No minors were involved in the evaluation.

---

<sup>58</sup> UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system (2008).

## 4. KEY FINDINGS

EQ1. How strategically has UNHCR been positioned within the country given the needs of the persons UNHCR serves and the national and regional context, particularly with respect to the Afghanistan situation?

### **Summary of key findings:**

UNHCR has made concerted efforts to align its operations with multiple strategic frameworks, including the Regional Strategy for Central Asia (2019-2021), the Multi-year Strategy (2022-2024), and Strategic Directions for 2017-2021 and 2022-2026. These strategies collectively aim to bolster the country's asylum system, enhance capacity building of government institutions and local authorities, improve access to basic services and livelihood opportunities for people UNHCR serves and eradicate statelessness. Despite the strategic alignment, challenges have emerged in translating these commitments into effective operational strategies that address the immediate needs and priorities in Tajikistan.

Specifically, the translation of capacity-building commitments into tangible actions has been limited by under-ambitious plans which led to fragmented and limited interventions (See more under EQ2). Some advocacy initiatives, like the simulation exercises, have provided meaningful advocacy and capacity-building opportunities, but there has been a lack of timely and appropriate advocacy or legal support in critical areas such as housing and repatriation, as criticised by UNHCR's partners and stakeholders. Stakeholders have pointed out the need for a more proactive and vocal stance from UNHCR in advocating for refugee rights and addressing statelessness, particularly among vulnerable groups such as women and children.

UNHCR's efforts to support the drafting of a new refugee law, enhance socio-economic integration, and advocate for the adoption of the UN Statelessness Conventions highlight the organization's commitment to addressing the complex challenges in Tajikistan. However, the actual impact of these efforts has been constrained by limited outreach, insufficient resource allocation, and sporadic capacity-strengthening activities.

The evaluation revealed UNHCR's flexibility and adaptability in responding to emerging needs, such as those arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and the unstable situation in Afghanistan by reallocating resources and undertaking new initiatives. However, feedback from stakeholders suggests a need for more proactive assessment of needs and exploration of alternative support avenues to ensure a more effective and impactful engagement in Tajikistan.

There was limited internal coherence, attributed to a compartmentalized approach and a lack of cross-portfolio synergies and effective communication both horizontally and vertically within UNHCR. Surveys and interviews revealed mixed perceptions of coordination processes, with significant gaps in both horizontal coordination among different units and

vertical coordination between the Country Office and Regional and HQ levels. Challenges related to internal organizational changes and budgetary constraints were also found.

UNHCR showed progress in aligning its efforts with government initiatives, particularly through its partnership with Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defence (CoESCD). However, modifications in UNHCR's vertical structures and budget limitations have impacted strategic alignment with government priorities and affected partnerships with implementing partners and the private sector. Nonetheless, UNHCR has successfully engaged with the broader UN system and private sector to enhance refugee inclusion, demonstrating its commitment to aligning with national strategies and fostering partnerships for refugee support.

### SQ1.1 How well aligned and relevant is the existing UNHCR strategy and country operation plan to UNHCR's Strategic Directions and regional priorities, current and/or evolving context and needs of the population UNHCR serves, and changes in the wider regional and geopolitical context?

Finding 1: UNHCR's strategy and operations in Tajikistan generally align with its global directives and national priorities, and the needs of the population it serves, concentrating on asylum, capacity enhancement, livelihoods and the eradication/prevention of statelessness. The implementation of strategic commitments has not sufficiently met specific needs at the regional and national levels, nor the needs of the people UNHCR serves.

UNHCR's work in Tajikistan was guided by multiple strategies, i.e., the Regional Strategy for Central Asia (2019-2021), the Multi-year Strategy (2022-24) and Strategic Directions 2017-2021 and 2022-2026. Review of these overarching strategies and UNHCR's work in Tajikistan shows alignment with UNHCR's corporate commitments to provide protection and solutions for the people that it serves. UNHCR focused its activities in three key areas:<sup>59</sup>

1. Advocating for and supporting the strengthening of the country's asylum system and provision of solutions for refugees;
2. Providing capacity building to the Government and local authorities, and regularly engaging in emergency preparedness activities and response; and
3. Providing support to the eradication and prevention of statelessness in Tajikistan.

Over the period 2020-2022, the new UNHCR strategic planning and operations management process was introduced, which envisaged transition from operational plans to multi-year strategy planning in order to ensure results-based management and alignment with the global strategic framework.<sup>60</sup>

While the Country Office (CO) has aligned its general approach with UNHCR's Global Results Framework,<sup>61</sup> the translation of specific commitments, like **capacity building**, into tangible actions in Tajikistan was found to be limited. This is evident from the review of the CO's

---

59 UNHCR planning documents

60 UNHCR, UNHCR's new multi-year strategic planning and operations management system

61 [https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/UNHCR%20Results%20Areas\\_A4.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/UNHCR%20Results%20Areas_A4.pdf)



planning and reporting documents that show a rather under-ambitious capacity building plan to start with and limited output level results in the capacity building area related to building effective government-run protection, assistance, and solution mechanisms, as discussed further in EQ2, SQ2.1 below).

The relevance of UNHCR's **advocacy** initiatives exhibited varied levels of quality. Activities such as the simulation exercise in Dushanbe and Jaloliddini Balkhi area<sup>62</sup> – which aimed to test the preparedness and response capacity of key government and humanitarian actors in the case of mass arrival of refugees – were found to bring meaningful and timely advocacy along with relevant capacity building opportunity.<sup>63</sup> Yet, UNHCR did not provide appropriate or timely legal support in certain situations (notably related to housing or repatriation) which was considered by most stakeholders to be a serious shortcoming.<sup>64</sup>

Evidence from key stakeholders indicates that UNHCR's advocacy activities were limited both by 1) the limited outreach potential of the Country Office due to limited partnership with the government, and 2) UNHCR Tajikistan's lack of initiative in cases where it could have acted more prominently and promptly.<sup>65</sup> Interviewed stakeholders<sup>66</sup> cited multiple situations in which UNHCR could have acted or advocated more vocally, notably during evictions of refugees or in cases of deportations. UNHCR's lack of initiative, or being unable to take a more vocal stance, was not viewed favourably by most external stakeholders that were interviewed. UNHCR designed its activities to bolster the **national asylum system and enhance emergency preparedness** by initiating and executing a National Referral Mechanism for Asylum Seekers.<sup>67</sup> This strategy, along with maintaining a collaborative inter-agency emergency response framework and promoting the quality of asylum via continuous capacity-building, was tailored to address the current refugee influx and proactively prepare for a possible increased flow of refugees from Afghanistan.

However, the evaluation found that the operationalization of UNHCR's efforts in this domain was limited to some sporadic capacity-strengthening activities (e.g., training with border guards and members of the RSD Commission), with under-ambitious targets in comparison to the needs in Tajikistan (see indicator overview in Annex 4. Additional data for EQ3). One stated reason<sup>68</sup> for this was the fact that UNHCR has not returned to its former observer status in the RSD Commission, which impacted its ability to engage with the authorities and related advocacy.

UNHCR's support to the drafting of a new refugee law was considered by interviewed stakeholders<sup>69</sup> as highly relevant in regard to provision of legal advice and organising study visits (e.g., to Georgia) to observe best practices in its asylum procedure mode,<sup>70</sup> although

---

62 See more details on p. 28 of this report and also on <https://www.unhcr.org/centralasia/en/21221-preparedness-simulation-exercise-for-a-mixed-refugee-and-natural-disaster-displaced-scenarios.html>

63 As confirmed by all interviewed stakeholders that participated in the simulation exercise in Dushanbe and Jaloliddini Balkhi area.

64 Some representatives of UN agencies, most implementing partners and all consulted refugees

65 Most representatives of UN agencies, some other development actors, most implementing partners and all consulted refugees

66 Some representatives of UN agencies, a few UNHCR staff, most implementing partners and all consulted refugees

67 UNHCR planning documents

68 Document review, some UNHCR CO staff, some implementing partners

69 All representatives of UNHCR CO, some UN agencies, some implementing partners and a few consulted national authorities

70 UNHCR (2022). 2022 Annual Results Framework

some of them mentioned that the volume of support was much less than what the government needed,<sup>71</sup> and then what UNHCR initially promised when this legislation was drafted. For example, UNHCR promised to support a three-day workshop to support the working group on drafting this new law. However, due to the lack of allocated resources for this activity, UNHCR was able to organize only a one-day workshop.<sup>72</sup>

UNHCR also invested in **socio-economic integration**, with efforts focusing on facilitating access to livelihood opportunities and access to education and health services. The support extends to those opting to voluntarily repatriate, and to the support to the people UNHCR serves, to access social services (particularly education) and healthcare activities, in alignment with the revised UNDAF document.

UNHCR's emphasis on **eradicating statelessness**, especially after the 2019 Amnesty Law, underscores the organization's relevance in the Tajikistan context. In line with the Law, UNHCR's commitment to mitigating statelessness encompasses a comprehensive range of initiatives, including support to the statelessness identification and reduction activities across 36 districts<sup>73</sup> as envisaged in their 2021 Operational plan. However, the evaluation could not confirm that UNHCR actually managed to cover all 36 districts,<sup>74</sup> which was considered a shortcoming by development partners and key stakeholders belonging to the people whom UNHCR serves from the point of view of being responsive to the needs of stateless persons. The evaluation confirmed the relevance of UNHCR advocacy for Tajikistan to make progress towards the adoption of the UN Statelessness Conventions, emphasizing the paramount importance of structural and legislative adaptations needed to ensure measures are in place that prevent occurrence of statelessness.

Interviews with all people UNHCR works with in regard to statelessness showed that there has been a high degree of need for the provision of legal and financial support for statelessness – particularly to women and children living amongst poorer families – but that addressing this has not been fulfilled to the extent required. For example, only approximately 8% (USD 105.8K) of the total CBI budget was allocated to the statelessness programme. Most consulted stateless people noticed that budget limitations affected the possible wider coverage of stateless people who needed legal and financial support to solve stateless cases.

**As a humanitarian agency with an annual planning system that allows activities to be adapted throughout the year, UNHCR is flexible and has capacity to adapt to a changing context.** For instance, additional funding was allocated after 2021 for socio-economic and health assistance after the third wave of COVID. Funding was re-prioritized to respond to the emerging pressing needs of the people UNHCR serves. This indicates UNHCR's responsiveness and flexibility to serve needs of the population it serves and the changing geopolitical context. The commitment to addressing the most critical needs of the populations UNHCR serves during the pandemic, and to the increased number of refugees in 2021, is clearly reflected in the budget allocation across programmatic areas. In 2020 and 2021, Basic Needs and Essential Services (OA8) received the highest total resource allocation, amounting to USD 429 million and USD 2.4 million, respectively.

---

71 A few representatives of national authorities, a few UNHCR CO staff, a few UN Agencies, some implementing partners

72 A few representatives of national authorities, a few UNHCR CO staff, a few UN Agencies.

73 UNHCR (2021). Operational Plan 2021

74 *Ibid.*

**UNHCR demonstrated adaptability and responsiveness to the emerging needs of the people it serves and to heightened security concerns in Tajikistan, by undertaking several initiatives to offer additional support and a protective space.** For example, as the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic intensified, UNHCR recognized the immediate need for increased budgetary support to its partners. This was primarily directed towards healthcare and socio-economic assistance in light of escalating demands in healthcare and economic sustenance. A subsequent mid-year review yielded additional funds, fine-tuning the response to cater to the people under UNHCR's care.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, these extra resources enabled the roll-out of vital livelihood projects, which were pivotal in facilitating employment, entrepreneurial opportunities, and youth vocational training.

Initiatives fostering peaceful coexistence also emerged as pertinent, enhancing harmonious relations between refugees and their host communities. In 2021, strategic reprioritization by UNHCR led to cash assistance being provided to 673 vulnerable refugee and asylum seekers households, addressing heightened humanitarian needs.<sup>76</sup> However, while significant for those who benefited, this only covered approximately 15% of Tajikistan's total refugee and asylum seekers population in need by 2021.

This backdrop prompted UNHCR to reorient its priorities, making its advocacy and capacity-building more focused on addressing the immediate needs of vulnerable refugee families. This shift was necessitated by the third wave of the pandemic and the unstable Afghan situation in 2021, which resulted in an influx of displaced individuals to Tajikistan. Despite these efforts, some stakeholder feedback<sup>77</sup> suggests that UNHCR could have been more proactive in assessing needs and devising corresponding solutions. For example, they pointed out UNHCR's apparent inaction in rights advocacy for refugees and its hesitance in exploring alternative support avenues. Consequently, some stakeholders<sup>78</sup> perceive UNHCR's engagement in Tajikistan as having become limited and less attuned to the evolving protection, socio-economic, and related challenges.

### **SQ1.2 How well positioned is UNHCR's role with respect to the Afghanistan situation?**

**Finding 2: The strategic positioning of UNHCR in Tajikistan faces constraints, primarily due to limited engagement with governmental bodies and limited UNHCR's proactivity in addressing the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. This situation hampers the organization's ability to fully realize its objectives and adequately protect and assist these vulnerable groups.**

UNHCR in Tajikistan has faced challenges in strategically positioning itself as an effective advocate for the rights of the populations it serves, primarily due to limited engagement with government entities and the lack of proactive measures in catering to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. Furthermore, the UNHCR's strategic positioning faced challenges in 2023 due to recurrent modifications in the country office's alignment within the broader organizational framework (see finding 3 below and SQ2.4 for details). These shifts in

---

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> UNHCR (2021), 2021 Operations Plan Tajikistan, some consulted refugees

<sup>77</sup> Some representatives of UN agencies, a few development actors, a few national authorities, some implementing partners, all consulted refugees

<sup>78</sup> Some representatives of UN agencies, most implementing partners and consulted refugees

representation in Tajikistan were met with disapproval by the government (see finding 3 for details and SQ 2.4).

One of the reasons for UNHCR's weak strategic positioning relates to the challenging regulatory landscape in Tajikistan, due to security concerns, which has limited UNHCR's ability to advocate for and support refugees, particularly those from Afghanistan. In addition, despite maintaining a structured work plan with relevant government departments (i.e., the Department of Citizenship and Work with Refugees of the Passport Registration Service (PRS) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs), endeavouring to strengthen protection for refugees and asylum seekers, the execution of planned has been inconsistent. This aspect, coupled with UNHCR's less proactive stance, has led to limiting UNHCR's protection role, and ultimately the organization's impact.<sup>79</sup> This was considered a missed opportunity by most interviewed external stakeholders.<sup>80</sup>

### **SQ1.3 To what extent were UNHCR's multi-year strategy and country operation plan internally coherent and also coherent with the work of other partners (e.g., Government, humanitarian and development actors, civil society)? (internal and external coherence)**

#### **Internal coherence**

**Finding 3: UNHCR's multi-year strategy and country operation plan in Tajikistan showed limited internal coherence due to a siloed approach and insufficient cross-portfolio synergies, as well as limitations in terms of horizontal and vertical coordination within the organization.**

UNHCR's multi-year strategy and country operation plan in Tajikistan demonstrated limited internal alignment, primarily due to a compartmentalized execution strategy and lack of robust interactions across different portfolios.<sup>81</sup> While the compact nature of the CO might seem conducive to closer internal collaborations, tangible cross-portfolio synergies were markedly absent. Survey responses from UNHCR CO highlighted varied perceptions regarding horizontal coordination within the Office: 29% of UNHCR Tajikistan staff agreed that there is a good level of horizontal coordination and communication between different units of UNHCR, 43% somewhat agreed, and 28% either somewhat disagreed or completely disagreed.<sup>82</sup> This perceived disparity in horizontal coordination was also evident in documents reviewed, some stakeholder interviews with UNHCR CO, and the evaluation team's observations. As an example, *'There are some miscommunications on regulations and protocols internally. The protection department has not always been informed of agreements and communication between the Representative and national authorities. In addition, there is a lack of communication between the program and protection departments.'*<sup>83</sup> Per UNHCR CO team feedback, relevant staff were not consulted on the key decisions taken during period of time by the management.<sup>84</sup>

---

79 Some representatives of UN agencies, a few development actors, most implementing partners and consulted refugees.

80 Some representatives of UN agencies, most implementing partners and consulted refugees.

81 Document review and some stakeholder interviews

82 It refers to exchange of information and collaboration across departments in UNHCR CO.

83 Some consulted UNHCR staff

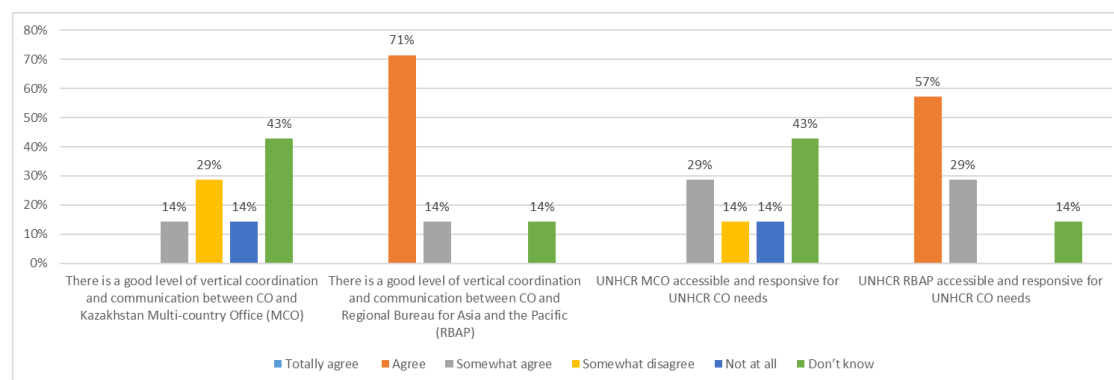
84 Feedback received from UNHCR CO during the commenting stage for this report

On vertical coordination,<sup>85</sup> the evaluation found a noticeable gap in the synergy between the CO and the Multi-country Office (MCO) in Kazakhstan,<sup>86</sup> evident in Figure 7. Of those participating in the survey, few respondents agreed with the statement that there is good vertical coordination and communication between CO and MCO, with only 14% selecting somewhat agree. A further 29% somewhat disagreed with the statement, while another 14% completely disagreed with the statement, selecting 'not at all'. According to the feedback from some key informants,<sup>87</sup> the MCO presented some communication and operational challenges for UNHCR Tajikistan, as all communication for roundtable and capacity-building events went through the MCO, bypassing the UNHCR CO. Besides, historically, the MCO acted as an additional layer between UNHCR and decision-makers, imposing tighter deadlines for report reviews and increasing workload for the CO, despite the discrepancy between MCO's growing staff compared to the shrinking UNHCR CO team.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, since the CO was previously part of the MCO, it lacks dedicated social media platforms, hindering direct engagement with the region's large refugee and asylum seeker population, and other stakeholders.<sup>89</sup>

However, views on collaboration at the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific were more positive, with 71% agreeing that there is good level of vertical coordination and communication between CO and RBAP.

As depicted in Figure 8, 57% of the respondents agreed with the statement that RBAP was accessible and met their needs, yet no respondents agreed with the statement regarding MCO as accessible and responsive for CO needs.

*Figure 8: UNHCR Perceptions of vertical coordination and communication between different offices, and the accessibility and responsiveness of MCO and RBAP (UNHCR respondents only)*



Source: Online survey conducted by the evaluation team

## External coherence

**Finding 4: UNHCR demonstrated progress in aligning with government initiatives, especially through its partnership with The Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defence**

85 It refers to exchange of information and collaboration between UNHCR CO and Multi-country Office based in Kazakhstan, and UNHCR CO and Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific.

86 UNHCR country operation in Tajikistan was under the Kazakhstan Multi-country Office until March 2022, when it was moved to be Country Office covered by the RBAP.

87 Most consulted UNHCR CO staff

88 Most consulted UNHCR CO staff

89 Review of UNHCR's media/online presence and some consulted UNHCR CO staff



(CoESCD), but internal organizational changes and budgetary constraints posed challenges to its strategic alignment with government priorities. UNHCR's active collaboration with the broader UN system and private sector initiatives, aimed at refugee inclusion, is commendable. However, its partnership dynamics, especially balancing its dual role of funding implementation activities and as a strategic partner, show areas for further refinement.

UNHCR invested in enhancing the coherence of its interventions with ongoing government measures in Tajikistan. A good example that demonstrates external coherence is the partnership with the government entity, the Committee for Emergency Situations and Civil Defence (CoESCD)<sup>90</sup> which included UNHCR support for preparation of a simulation exercise and capacity-building activities. According to the document review<sup>91</sup> and all stakeholder interviews with participants of this exercise,<sup>92</sup> this was an important exercise which helped create more coherent approaches to emergency preparedness efforts. The evaluation found that this type of support was also very relevant for the needs of the CoESCD in preparation for the possible influx of refugees or natural disasters and was also a positive example of joint and coherent effort with other partners (UNICEF, AKAH).

One obstacle to achieving greater coherence with the government and wider strategic positioning of UNHCR was related to the ongoing modifications in UNHCR's vertical corporate structures since 2023 (as elaborated in EQ2 and 3, and SQ2.4) and the positioning of the CO within these. Most CO staff and some other stakeholders<sup>93</sup> reported that the process of the office's transition from Representation to National Office and the reporting line going from Bureau to MCO (which is an internal UNHCR decision) was communicated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through official meetings by the Representative with the Deputy Minister and two different meetings between the CO and the Head of International Organizations Unit of MFA, as well as the official correspondence from Bureau to MFA Tajikistan. However, in the past, the government of Tajikistan has expressed a desire for increased attention and engagement from UNHCR, and the recent reduction in the status of the CO is perceived by government<sup>94</sup> as contradictory to these expressed needs from the government. Furthermore, the analysis of budget portfolio of the CO and interviews with UNHCR CO staff revealed that the cooperation between UNHCR and the government faced additional challenges due to budget constraints, hindering UNHCR's ability to meet some of the government's capacity-building demands or to align further its initiatives with those of the government. The constrained budget has thus posed an obstacle to achieving a seamless collaboration and addressing the expectations of the government effectively.

UNHCR undertook formal partnership agreements with six implementing partners over the evaluation period.<sup>95</sup> Such agreements have been found to help align approaches and enhance coherence between UNHCR's and partners' approaches. While many positive results were achieved through these partnerships, most implementing partners revealed in stakeholder interviews that some challenges affected these partnerships and their coherence, which was

---

90 No interviews were possible with government stakeholders.

91 Operation Plan (2020-2021) and 2022 Annual results Framework

92 Some representatives of UN agencies, some other development actors, some implementing partners

93 Some stakeholder feedback (UNHCR staff, UN agencies)

94 Some stakeholder feedback (government, UNHCR staff, implementing partners)

95 i.e., International NGO (Aga Khan Agency For Habitat); Local NGOs (Refugee Children & Vulnerable Citizens, Tajikistan, International Public Organization 'Rights & Prosperity', Public Organization Chashma, Public Organization Human Being And Justice, Cs Lawyers Association Of Pamir, Red Crescent Society Of Tajikistan)



corroborated by the UNHCR CO team. This included the experience of implementing partners that “*UNHCR acts more like donor than a partner*”,<sup>96</sup> as well as a lack of regular and consistent information sharing.

Coordination with the UN system has been carried out within the framework of the UNCT and its UNDAF, which was extended until 2022 due to the COVID pandemic. UNHCR actively engaged in contributions to outcomes 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 (access to rights, socio-economic inclusion and emergency preparedness), ensuring linkages were established with the SDGs and the global pledge to leave no one behind, including vulnerable groups like refugees and stateless people. The ongoing situation in Afghanistan also served as a catalyst of inter-agency partnerships, whereby UNHCR, in collaboration with various UN agencies and international organizations, worked to bolster its preparedness and response mechanisms as part of an Inter-Agency Contingency Plan.<sup>97</sup>

UNHCR increased its interactions with the private sector on a number of issues including social inclusion and integration of Afghan refugees. For instance, the cooperation between textile companies (e.g., Nohid, Vahdat Textile) and UNHCR has facilitated support to Afghan refugees, enabling Afghan designers to showcase their products at a fashion show and providing refugees with job opportunities within the company. Furthermore, UNHCR partnered with hotels such as Hilton, Serena and Hyatt to provide four-month internships to refugees, which led to job placements for those that gained the requisite skills.

## EQ2. What have been the key results in the areas of assistance, protection, and solutions?

This section has been structured to reflect the chain of results as depicted in the reconstructed ToC of UNHCR's country strategy in Tajikistan (refer to Figure 6).

**Summary of key findings:** The evaluation noted effective results in addressing statelessness and integration of AGD in its interventions in Tajikistan from 2020 to 2022. However, the evaluation revealed UNHCR's protection efforts fell short of creating a favourable protection environment, while livelihood interventions failed to produce lasting change. These effectiveness weaknesses occurred due to a lack of proactive advocacy and protection approaches as well as a lack of strategic follow-up in capacity-building and partnerships. In addition, integration of environment and climate change consideration was not evidenced. Overall, the delivery of results was hindered by strategic, resource, and operational challenges, compounded by external factors like the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical instability (e.g., in Afghanistan).

UNHCR's efforts, over the period 2020-2022, have to an extent contributed to achieving enabling favourable protection environments. UNHCR made progress in the following areas of protection: provision of legal support to people seeking asylum; support to drafting the Law on refugees and amendment of the Administrative Code; and improving conditions for the

---

96 Stakeholder feedback (most implementing partners)

97 The Inter-Agency Working Group on Emergency Preparedness and Contingency Planning for Refugee Issues (EPCP) was created in October 2018. UNHCR undertakes coordination and secretarial duties for this group. At the time of writing EPCP's members consist of UNHCR, CoESCD, World Food Programme (WFP), AKAH, UNICEF, IOM, OCHA, ICRC, WHO and RCST. UNHCR (2020). Operation Plan 2020.

reception of asylum seekers in the TAC. As regards the statelessness pillar, UNHCR's major achievement was support to the implementation of the Amnesty Law. However, UNHCR's efforts to enable refugees and asylum seekers to enjoy unhindered access to Tajikistan's territory did not bring results.

**SQ2.1. To what extent has UNHCR elaborated and implemented a capacity development strategy vis-à-vis the Government and relevant national actors with a view to building a sustainable and effective government-run protection, assistance, and solution mechanisms?**

Finding 5: From 2020 to 2023, UNHCR invested efforts in strengthening capacity building of national authorities, relying on the capacities of implementing partners and by joining efforts with other UN agencies and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). To ensure provision of capacity-building for Tajikistan's border guards and other government entities, UNHCR collaborated with partners like the OSCE and UNICEF, and emphasized topics such as child protection and asylum procedures. While these initiatives, including the biometric verification system, were viewed positively by some stakeholders, its national implementation requires additional investments to build a sustainable and effective government-run protection, assistance and solution mechanisms.

UNHCR's capacity-building efforts<sup>98</sup> targeted various government entities, most notably the Border Guards, in collaboration with other partners, such as OSCE Border Management Staff College and also the Tajik Police Academy. According to the review of UNHCR's reports, such collaborative knowledge sharing and organisational development trainings catered to the needs of PRS, the Customs Service, the Migration Service, and Border Guards. For example, UNHCR conducted its capacity-building activities with Border Guards through collaboration with UNICEF and OSCE on topics such as access to territory, referrals, and child protection. In 2020 there was no training. Subsequently, in 2021, UNHCR trained 141 border guards and government officials (out of 10 planned activities), while in 2022, 17 trainings (out of 12 planned) were conducted for border guards and government officials.<sup>99</sup> UNHCR also facilitated a RSD Distance Learning Program in 2021 to increase knowledge on status determination procedures among government officials, and trainings with the Police, in which eight officials were trained.<sup>100</sup> The evaluation could not find evidence on participants' feedback on the trainings and their effectiveness due to a lack of pre-post testing and due to the fact that the evaluation team was unable to solicit primary evidence from attendees.

Over the period 2020-2022, UNHCR, together with its implementing partner 'Inson va Adolat,' provided capacity building support to the judiciary for adjudication of asylum appeal cases. This included round table discussions<sup>101</sup> (see Annex 3. Additional data on EQ2) and development of legal materials such as "Guidelines for judges on the practice of administrative

---

98 Operation Plan (2020-2021) and 2022 Annual Results Framework

99 *Ibid.*

100 *Ibid.*

101 [https://www.facebook.com/unhcr.ca/photos/a.378379468888929/4154062251320613/?type=3&eid=ARBqVHAwAAOU6WoEhljfx9LIAGGY9Hb-hExKyA82ms94NHqBVTsuEsnlfUmxsMcBPMmFjFivNREG9pvP&locale=he\\_IL&paipv=0&eav=AfZp-Sibv6yq-L1Z\\_N66DbR2l5av44bB27\\_GYvBCxchaGumaf-2tciZ0j5ej4Glc9M&\\_rdr](https://www.facebook.com/unhcr.ca/photos/a.378379468888929/4154062251320613/?type=3&eid=ARBqVHAwAAOU6WoEhljfx9LIAGGY9Hb-hExKyA82ms94NHqBVTsuEsnlfUmxsMcBPMmFjFivNREG9pvP&locale=he_IL&paipv=0&eav=AfZp-Sibv6yq-L1Z_N66DbR2l5av44bB27_GYvBCxchaGumaf-2tciZ0j5ej4Glc9M&_rdr)

cases concerning foreign citizens, stateless persons, asylum seekers and refugees”.<sup>102</sup> The evaluation could not establish the effectiveness of these initiatives due to a lack of documentary data, and to the fact that the evaluation team was unable to solicit primary evidence from attendees.

In May 2023, UNHCR organized a three-day simulation exercise (SIMEX) in collaboration with the Committee of Emergency situations and Civil Defence under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan (CoESCD) and other partners as part of capacity building for emergency preparedness (see Annex 3. Additional data on EQ2). The main objective of the SIMEX was to test the preparedness and response capacity of key government and humanitarian actors in anticipation of the mass arrival of refugees and a potential natural disaster in the country. Most external stakeholders interviewed perceived that the 2023 SIMEX was well organized, resulting in recommendations to the government regarding improvement in coordination to be able to respond to a mass influx of asylum seekers. However, a lack of local government actors participating in the SIMEX (which included authorities, social service providers and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)) was seen as a missed opportunity by most external stakeholders interviewed.

UNHCR's trainings were complemented by the provision of equipment and technical support aimed at strengthening government capacity (Border Guards and Ministry of Internal Affairs) to be able to respond to matters concerning persons seeking asylum. The provided support aimed to enhance protection-sensitive border management and streamline asylum information/data management. The effectiveness of these efforts could not be evidenced due to lack of documentary data, and to the fact that the evaluation team was unable to solicit primary evidence from recipients of this assistance.

UNHCR also supported the biometric verification and registration of refugees and asylum seekers in Tajikistan. This support was envisaged as a strategic step to augment protection, assistance, and potential solutions for these vulnerable groups. Although the biometric verification system was developed, it is only used by implementing partners and not by the government, which is a shortcoming. According to some interviewed stakeholders knowledgeable of this particular support,<sup>103</sup> the system was not adopted by the government because the country has its own system. Currently, UNHCR's biometric verification system is used for identification of persons benefiting from support (e.g., CBI).

## **SQ2.2. To what extent has UNHCR Tajikistan maximized its effectiveness in the areas of protection, assistance and solutions within the given operational protection space, and especially with regard to interventions related to access to services (health, education), support to basic needs and livelihoods/ self-reliance?**

### **Achieving favourable protection environments**

UNHCR's country strategy outlined a number of interventions to support the strengthening of **referral mechanisms for forcibly displaced persons** in Tajikistan. A review of planned and

---

<sup>102</sup> Operation Plan (2020-2021) and 2022 Annual Results Framework,  
[https://www.facebook.com/unhcr.ca/photos/a.378379468888929/4154062251320613/?type=3&eid=ARBqVHAwAAOU6WoEhljfx9LIAGGY9Hb-hExKyA82ms94NHqBVTsuEsnlfUmxsMcBPMmFjFivNREG9pvP&locale=he\\_IL&paipv=0&eav=AfZp-Sibv6yq-L1Z\\_N66DbR2l5av44bB27\\_GYvBCxchaGumaf-2tciZ0j5ej4GlcI9M&\\_rdr](https://www.facebook.com/unhcr.ca/photos/a.378379468888929/4154062251320613/?type=3&eid=ARBqVHAwAAOU6WoEhljfx9LIAGGY9Hb-hExKyA82ms94NHqBVTsuEsnlfUmxsMcBPMmFjFivNREG9pvP&locale=he_IL&paipv=0&eav=AfZp-Sibv6yq-L1Z_N66DbR2l5av44bB27_GYvBCxchaGumaf-2tciZ0j5ej4GlcI9M&_rdr)

<sup>103</sup> Some Representatives of UN agencies, a few implementing partners

implemented activities<sup>104</sup> showed that **UNHCR's efforts to strengthen the asylum system and solutions for refugees produced mixed results.** The bulk of UNHCR's planned activities included advocacy for strengthening of referral mechanisms. UNHCR advocacy efforts in Tajikistan were too limited and insufficient<sup>105</sup> to influence the closed border policy or to promote more consistent identification of asylum-seekers at the border or during their residence in the country, while responding to the government needs and security concerns. The reasons cited<sup>106</sup> for this include weak UNHCR'S strategic positioning with the government which prevented the achievement of advocacy results.<sup>107</sup>

UNHCR contributions to the strengthening of national referral mechanisms for asylum seekers in Tajikistan were stymied by UNHCR's limited access to the border areas where asylum seekers arrive. UNHCR attempted to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Border Guard authorities on the operationalization and implementation of the National Referral Mechanism for Asylum Seekers and to utilize the Almaty Process platform,<sup>108</sup> though such document is still not signed. According to the documents reviewed<sup>109</sup> UNHCR implemented only six out of 20 planned monitoring visits in the period 2020-2022.

**Finding 6:** UNHCR's advocacy initiatives, which aimed to ensure access to territory and prevent deportations in Tajikistan, have yielded only modest results. A significant result is the policy shift in June 2023, which was a result of effective cooperation between the government and 'Inson va Adolat. The change in legislation eliminated deportation as a punitive measure for residency violations and presents a critical advancement in refugee protection in Tajikistan.

UNHCR's advocacy efforts related to the issue of access to the territory were underpinned by the visit of the Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (December 2021), and the visit to Tajikistan of the High Commissioner (held in March 2022), and some progress was achieved with regard to allowing access to territory and halting deportations as a result of the agreement with the government.<sup>110</sup> There were incidents of deportations, and in September 2022 110 individuals were deported.<sup>111</sup> Since then, no mass deportation have occurred, but concerns about revoking refugee status and deportation remain high in 2023 among people UNHCR serves, UN agencies, development organizations, and partners. Many refugees pointed out their unfamiliarity with Tajik regulations, which made them vulnerable to unintentional legal breaches and the looming threat of deportation. To this end most stakeholders expressed the opinion that UNHCR should have been more proactive in addressing the possible deportation of Afghan individuals seeking protection in Tajikistan. The perceived deficit in UNHCR's proactive and protective strategies was seen by the individuals they serve as a significant gap, leading to unfavourable outcomes for the refugees.

---

104 As corroborated also by stakeholder consultations.

105 Operation Plan (2020-2021) and 2022 Annual Results Framework

106 As some interviewed stakeholders reported

107 As some interviewed stakeholders reported.

108 <https://www.unhcr.org/centralasia/en/about-almaty-process>, [https://www.unhcr.org/centralasia/wp-content/uploads/sites/75/2019/09/20161129-Almaty-Process-Regional-Guidelines-Identification-of-R-and-AS-in-CA\\_eng.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/centralasia/wp-content/uploads/sites/75/2019/09/20161129-Almaty-Process-Regional-Guidelines-Identification-of-R-and-AS-in-CA_eng.pdf)

109 Operation Plan (2020-2021) and 2022 Annual Results Framework

110 In 2021, 8 out of 3 planned advocacy interventions made to promote respect of the principles of non-refoulement, in 2020 5 out of 5 planned were conducted.

111 UNHCR (2022), Annual Results Report 2022 Tajikistan

An example of good joint cooperation between the government, UNHCR and the ‘Inson va Adolat’, is the pivotal reform that was introduced in June 2023. The government amended part 3 of Article 499 of the Administrative Code, eliminating deportation as a punitive measure.<sup>112</sup> As a result of this reform, while refugees and asylum seekers may face penalties for residence rule violations in Tajikistan, they can no longer be forcibly deported. This legislative change is particularly significant given the limitations regarding refugee residencies, particularly in the capital, Dushanbe. While refugees primarily reside near the capital, urban sprawl might inadvertently place them within Dushanbe's limits, risking unintentional residency rule breaches. With the revised law, this no longer means a risk of deportation.<sup>113</sup>

The evaluation notes two persisting challenges related to UNHCR's contributions to the implementation of fair and efficient Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures:

- In 2014, UNHCR's observer status in the RSD Commission was suspended and is yet to be reinstated. As a consequence of this suspension, UNHCR encounters limitations in effectively monitoring of the RSD procedures and data related to asylum seekers.<sup>114</sup>
- Furthermore, the asylum seekers and refugees database that UNHCR has provided in 2014 is not utilized by the Department on Citizenship and Work with Refugees (DCWR);<sup>115</sup> the current government's system relies on data extracted from Asylum Seeker Certificates and refugee ID cards. These sources typically list only adult family members without specifying the total count of dependents.<sup>116</sup> Consequently, Tajikistan lacks comprehensive and detailed refugee statistics, particularly those disaggregated by gender or age.

**Finding 7:** The analysis indicates that despite UNHCR's advocacy efforts to enhance government RSD procedures, significant progress in addressing the suspension of the asylum process remain limited. The visit from the High Commissioner in March 2022 and its agreement with the government catalysed renewed RSD activities and led to numerous refugee status recognitions, demonstrating a potential for progress. UNHCR's support to the registration of persons seeking asylum was effective.

Despite exceeding its advocacy initiative targets (executing 39 initiatives against the 20 originally planned from 2020-2021, thus achieving 195% of the set goal),<sup>117</sup> UNHCR has not succeeded in putting RSD and its status and role on the government's agenda during the evaluation period.<sup>118</sup> These initiatives primarily centred on addressing government RSD procedures. Key advocacy methods employed by UNHCR included issuing press releases and engaging in bilateral discussions with the authorities. These discussions often revolved around suspension of the registration of asylum applications, issuance of asylum documents,

112 [https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=30414710](https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=30414710)

113 According to findings of FGD with refugees, consulted UNHCR staff, and implementing partners.

114 The number of positive decisions on applications for international protection as a proportion of the total number of decisions issued for each stage of the procedure (i.e. first instance and final on appeal) in the reference period under review.

115 The document review and a few stakeholder interviews confirmed that relevant equipment and database for refugee statistics developed by UNHCR as part of regional project was donated to DCWR.

116 According to the document review, a few UNHCR CO staff, a few implementing partners, and a few development organisations.

117 UNHR Operation Plan (2020-2021)

118 According to some interviews with non-governmental actors



and suspension of the RSD Commission's activities from August 2021 to March 2022. Notably, some interviewed stakeholders deemed that Commission's operations are a significant factor to ensuring that refugees can legally prolong their residence in Tajikistan and avoiding the potential risk of deportation.

The cooperation and agreement between the High Commissioner for Refugees and the government in March 2022 resulted in the permanent opening of the asylum process, and a further 2,077<sup>119</sup> recognitions of refugee status by the end of 2022.<sup>120</sup> The asylum procedure was previously suspended in the period August 2021 to March 2022, therefore those refugees who were in the process of obtaining Refugee Cards in July 2021 also received them after eight months.<sup>121</sup> This was a period of uncertainty for those refugees who – as they resided in Tajikistan with unclear legal status and could have been deported.<sup>122</sup> From that perspective, the enhanced cooperation and partnership with the government and the High Commissioner for Refugees was considered valuable.

**UNHCR's support to the registration of persons seeking asylum exceeded the planned targets, most notably in 2021 and 2022.** Between 2020 and 2022, UNHCR, together with its implementing partner 'Inson va Adolat' succeeded to provide 9,367 legal consultations for asylum seekers and refugees, out of which almost half (49%) was provided in 2021 when the highest number of arrivals was recorded. In addition, over 70 legal representations were provided over this period (e.g., as court representation for administrative violations of Resolution 325 in individual cases, refer to Table 8). A review of data shown in Table 5 highlights an issue with the target settings (elaborated under EQ3).

*Table 5: Number of legal consultations provided over the period 2020-2022*

Year	Target	Achievement	Percentage
2022	3,500	2,706	77%
2021	800	4,627	578%
2020	900	2,034	226%

*Source: The evaluation team compilation based on annual UNHCR reports over the period 2020-2022*

The results of the survey among refugees indicated a high level of satisfaction with legal and counselling support provided by the NGO 'Inson va Adolat'.<sup>123</sup> The results of the survey show that 52% of respondents who received UNHCR and 'Inson va Adolat' support in obtaining refugee cards were satisfied, 33% were somewhat satisfied, and 7% rated the support as

119 UNHCR (2022), Annual Results Report 2022 Tajikistan, page 5.

120 Corroborated by some stakeholder interviews.

121 As emphasized by some interviewed persons UNHCR works with.

122 As emphasized by focus group discussions with persons UNHCR works with, some interviewed UNHCR staff and some implementing partners.

123 FGDs with refugees and results of survey conducted with refugees.



excellent. UNHCR and 'Inson va Adolat' support was deemed by refugees to be crucial for forcibly displaced persons to meet preliminary requirements (i.e., registration with the local authorities, undertaking a medical examination, and providing proof of residence as prescribed by the Government Resolution 325<sup>124</sup>), as well as to submit applications for asylum seeker certificates and refugee ID cards.<sup>125</sup>

**Finding 8:** UNHCR's advocacy efforts and cooperation with government of Tajikistan from 2020-2022 have led to significant progress in aligning refugee and statelessness laws with international standards, though challenges remain. The draft Law on Refugees, which introduces forms of complementary protection, is a notable achievement, though its not yet adopted. The Amnesty Law of 2019 similarly marked significant progress in addressing statelessness, and full implementation of this legislation requires additional efforts.

UNHCR's technical assistance and expert support provided to the parliament, and the institutional dialogue between UNHCR and the parliament contributed to the drafting of the new Law on Refugees and its alignment with international standards (see SQ2.1 for more details). The main contribution of UNHCR's assistance is evident in the introduction of several unique features into the system for refugee protection, including recognition of complementary forms of protection (e.g., temporary refugee permission) that were included in the draft Law on Refugees.<sup>126</sup>

At the time of finalizing this evaluation, the draft Law was awaiting government review. Should it be adopted, it will equip Tajikistan to address large refugee influxes through the grant of group-based status. Several interviewed stakeholders were optimistic about the law's potential consideration of the government's national security concerns. While UNHCR's collaboration with the parliament was seen positively, stakeholders believed a broader consultative approach with government entities would have been beneficial.<sup>127</sup> This is particularly important as the government representatives were not deeply included during the actual drafting process of the law.

Over the period 2020-2022, **UNHCR advocated with the government on the harmonization of the national Refugee Law and measures prescribed in Article 335 of the Criminal Code**<sup>128</sup> for cases of asylum arrivals in Tajikistan. Article 355 provides that the right of asylum is only granted in case of political asylum, while the Refugee Law goes further to secure the non-penalization of asylum seekers in case of illegal entry. The evaluation team understands this remains an outstanding issue.

Since 2014, UNHCR has been advocating for the Amnesty Law and has worked with the Executive Apparatus of the President's Office to identify cases of stateless people. This effort resulted in the adoption of the Amnesty Law in December 2019, which legalizes stateless persons and foreign nationals residing in the country. The Government had a strong commitment to end statelessness and achieved some significant results.

---

124 The Government of the Republic of Tajikistan (2000) Resolution #325 of July 26, 2000, <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/415a68a54.pdf>

125 According to results of focus groups discussions with people that UNHCR serves, some interviewed UNHCR staff and its implementing partners, as well as some UN agencies.

126 Most interviewed stakeholders, such as UNHCR, UN Agencies, parliament, and implementing partners.

127 UN Agencies, implementing partners, UNHCR, national authorities representatives

128 Criminal Code of the Republic of Tajikistan, <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/taj197648.pdf>

As the implementation of this law was hindered by COVID-19, UNHCR and its implementing partners have advocated for its extension since it expired in December 2022.<sup>129</sup> During the time the law was in force, significant achievements have been accomplished, with 58,951 stateless persons and persons with undetermined nationality being registered, out of which 54,402 persons have had their nationality confirmed as of February 2023<sup>130</sup> (see the section on Durable solutions). Most interviewed stakeholders noted that the renewal of the law would support solving even more cases.

Over the period 2020-2022, UNHCR, jointly with UNDP and UNICEF, has been advocating for changes in the Civil Registration Law to ensure universal birth registration for every child born in Tajikistan including children whose parents lack legal status and do not possess required documentation. UNHCR has been in communication with the Ministry of Justice to create a joint working group on these legislative changes and practices, but progress has been slowed down due to the pandemic and other external factors.<sup>131</sup>

**Finding 9:** UNHCR's support to the establishment of the Temporary Accommodation Center (TAC) contributed to the overall improvement of conditions for the reception and accommodation of vulnerable asylum seekers.

With resources mobilized through the Refugee Coordination Model (see Finding 10), UNHCR contributed to the construction of the TAC for asylum seekers in Jaloliddin Balkhi district, in the Khatlon region, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and in coordination with other actors (e.g., UNICEF, World Health Organization – WHO). These UNHCR efforts included identifying the location and construction of the facility.

UNICEF and UNHCR handed over the TAC to the CoESCD in September 2022. The Center can temporarily accommodate up to 500 people. However, most interviewed UNHCR staff, other UN agencies and development partners reported that the TAC had not been used for this purpose as there was no additional mass influx of refugees due to the border closure. Interviewed UN stakeholders reported that the government's plan to use the TAC for other emergency response activities (e.g., natural disasters), was considered a viable option.<sup>132</sup> There were some concerns<sup>133</sup> that TAC construction might not be meeting certain environmental and accommodation standards, as low-cost, non-insulated materials were used which were considered as inappropriate for Tajikistan's weather conditions.

**Finding 10:** In response to the 2021 asylum seeker surge from Afghanistan, UNHCR adjusted its Tajikistan strategy, successfully mobilizing 1.2 million EUR. However, despite efforts, the Refugee Coordination Model faced challenges due to collaboration gaps among humanitarian actors.

---

129 The Amnesty Law was implemented from January 2020 to December 2022.

130 UNHCR (2023) UNHCR Tajikistan factsheet, February 2023

131 According to feedback from some UNHCR staff, document review.

132 According to some UN agencies and development partners

133 According to some UN agencies and development partners

Increased arrivals of asylum seekers from Afghanistan in 2021 led UNHCR to declare a L2 emergency<sup>134</sup> for Tajikistan, in light of which UNHCR updated the Inter-Agency Contingency Plan to respond to the possible risk of a further refugee influx from Afghanistan. The plan projected receiving an additional 50,000 refugees. UNHCR also established an inter-agency sector working group. As per the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM),<sup>135</sup> it led the platform for coordination (i.e., coordination forums) between the Government and development and humanitarian actors.<sup>136</sup>

UNHCR further led resource mobilization which resulted in the Embassy of Japan providing 700,000 EUR and the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid 500,000 EUR to the emergency response.<sup>137</sup> However, as there has been no influx of refugees, the purchased non-food items were consequently provided to schools and CoESCD while other activities were replanned (e.g., UNHCR initiated cash distribution to refugees who were identified through biometric verification).

RCM was considered by most of the interviewed stakeholders<sup>138</sup> to be a well organised coordination mechanism, albeit with some challenges related to lack of collaboration and, to an extent, competition among development and humanitarian actors, due to the small number of refugees living in the country.

In addition, UNHCR supported the adaptation of contingency plans in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as providing essential hygiene items during pandemic. These efforts were well received.<sup>139</sup>

### **Access to basic rights**

**Finding 11:** UNHCR demonstrated progress in reaching its targets related to the provision of Basic Needs and Essential Services for refugees and asylum seekers in Tajikistan. Nonetheless, despite achievements, the targets appear modest in scope, catering to only a small fraction of the total population UNHCR serves in the country.

Analysis of UNHCR Tajikistan CO's indicators presented in its operation plans and result reports shows that UNHCR made significant progress in achieving its targets of providing basic needs and essential services. It is important to note, however, that some of the targets that have been set and achieved are relatively small in scale when considering the total number of people that UNHCR was expected to serve in Tajikistan.<sup>140</sup>

---

134 There are three UNHCR Emergency Levels, see <https://emergency.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/Comparative%20table%20of%20UNHCR%20Emergency%20Levels.pdf>. 2021 was marked by Kyrgyz Tajik border conflicts emerging in May and withdrawal of US military troops from Afghanistan triggering an increase in numbers of new arrivals to Tajikistan since January and further exacerbation of the security situation in Afghanistan as the Taliban claimed control over almost 80% of the territory. As a result, the High Commissioner announced a Level 2 emergency by mid-July for Tajikistan as well (Operation Plan 2021).

135 <https://emergency.unhcr.org/coordination-and-communication/refugee-coordination-model/refugee-coordination-model-rcm>

136 Document review and most interviews with UNHCR staff, UN agencies and donors.

137 <https://www.unhcr.org/centralasia/en/15833-20-tons-of-humanitarian-cargo-arrives-in-tajikistan-as-part-of-refugee-emergency-preparedness-action.html>

138 Most of interviewed UN agencies, development partners and donors.

139 By most interviewed stakeholders

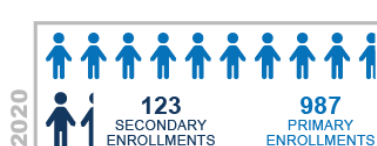
140 The total number of people that UNHCR served in 2020 was 12,413; in 2021, 19,888; and in 2022, 16,371. UNHCR Tajikistan data.

Table 6: UNHCR basic needs and essential services achievement (2020-2022)<sup>141</sup>

<b>Cash assistance Grant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2,685 refugee households benefited from cash grant support (e.g., for multipurpose, to meet their education needs, one-time blanket cash, for reimbursement of medical bills and other health-related expenses, to meet urgent basic needs, or for emergency assistance).</li> <li>4,768 individuals' sectorial cash grant was provided.</li> </ul>
<b>In-kind assistance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1,325 refugees and 1,260 stateless people received food packages.</li> <li>1,864 refugees also received donated UNIQLO clothes.</li> </ul>
<b>Health care support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNHCR facilitated access to national/government primary healthcare facilities.</li> <li>3,314 people received support on health issues (e.g. free medical consultations, referred to specialized medical care, purchase of medicines).</li> </ul>
<b>Education support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3,199 refugee children were enrolled in primary education.</li> <li>428 refugee children were enrolled in secondary education.</li> <li>472 refugee children have been supported with the procurement of textbooks.</li> </ul>
<b>Shelter support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3,879 emergency shelters were provided as part of the TAC.</li> </ul>

Under the **Emergency Response Goal**, UNHCR achieved 100% of its **2020** target in Basic Needs and Essential Services by providing food packages to 1,325 refugee households (5,100 persons), sectorial cash grants to 414 people, and facilitating access to national/government primary healthcare facilities. In **2021**, the CO achieved 81% of its target in Basic Needs and Essential Services, ensuring that 403 refugee households had access to essential domestic items through cash grants or vouchers (multi-purpose) to meet their basic needs and prevent the use of negative coping mechanisms during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>142</sup>

Also, UNHCR achieved 73% of the 2021 target under the **Capacity Building Goal** for Refugees and asylum by 3,879 emergency shelters<sup>143</sup> as part of the TAC. However, core relief items such as the procurement of pillows and stoves were not delivered, which, in case of a mass influx of refugees, might be needed.



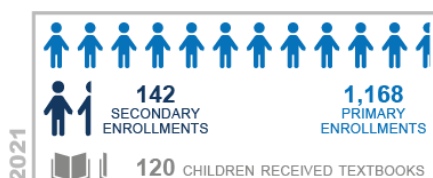
#### **Protection and Mixed Solutions Goal for Refugees and asylum seekers:**

UNHCR overachieved its target for 2020 (113%) and 2021 (325%). In **2020**, with support from UNHCR and implementing partners, 987 children were enrolled in primary education and 123 in secondary education. In this way, they ensured that approximately 65% of refugee children attended primary and secondary education in **2020**. To strengthen services for persons with specific needs, UNHCR delivered 386 cash grants (80 households) and extended specific support to 362 people with disabilities and health issues, thereby strengthening services for individuals with specific needs. Also, 845 people in need received free medical consultations, and 780 have been referred to specialized medical care. 1,864 refugees also received donated UNIQLO clothes in 2020.

<sup>141</sup> According to UNHCR data

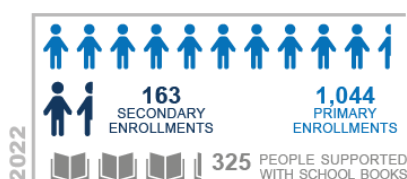
<sup>142</sup> UNHCR (2021), 2021 Operations Plan

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*



In **2021**, the CO achieved 325% of its target in the Basic Needs and Essential Services program by enrolling 1,168 children in primary education and 142 in upper secondary education (45% of school-aged refugee children). As part of educational assistance, UNHCR provided CBI to 425 refugee

households with 693 children to meet their education needs, while 120 refugee children have been supported with the procurement of textbooks. Also, 852 individuals (170 households) received multipurpose cash grants, and an additional 327 people with disabilities also benefited from these cash grants. UNHCR data showed that 957 people have been referred to specialized medical care, while 370 have been supported with the purchase of medicines for disabilities and chronic diseases and other medical expenses.



For **2022**, UNHCR achieved almost 100% of its target related to **well-being**, as the CO ensured enrolment of 1,044 refugee children in primary education and 163 children in secondary education. A one-time blanket cash assistance was distributed to 9,979 individuals (2,090 households) as a response to

worsening living conditions in 2022.<sup>144</sup> In addition, 3,011 vulnerable individuals/households also received CBI, which included cash for reimbursement of medical bills and other health-related expenses (532 individuals), emergency assistance (26 individuals), cash to meet urgent basic needs (1,911 individuals), livelihoods grants (190 individuals), and schoolbook support (352 individuals).

Regarding **Basic Needs and Essential Services for stateless people**, there was a high level of achievement (100% in 2020, 81% in 2021, and 102% in 2022; see Performance Analysis in Annex 4). UNHCR allocated some funds to support the stateless population, which has been affected by the worsening of the socio-economic situation in the country. UNHCR distributed food packages to the most vulnerable persons at risk of statelessness (460 in 2020, 800 in 2021) and provided cash for the most vulnerable individuals (1,016) in 2022 to cover administrative fees related to acquiring documentation.<sup>145</sup>

**Finding 12:** While UNHCR's cash assistance was important to address short-term needs, these efforts were insufficient to reach transformative results towards strengthening living conditions and addressing the economic consequences of forced displacement. This was due to the fact that UNHCR's support and assistance was mostly one-off and limited, which prevented more substantial support to recipients.

For instance, most FGD participants from Vahdat and Rudeki shared that they received one-time support such as food packages, hygiene kits, and cash assistance (e.g., 750 TJS per person). Some of them reported that *'We got some money from UNHCR but it was not sufficient even to cover a month's rent'; 'In the last two years we have received once a food package around 70kg and that was general support for all, and last year hygiene kits were distributed to around 400 people. RCVC and UNHR are helping us but the help does not have impact on our daily life, it is a one-month support'*.

<sup>144</sup> UNHCR (2022), 2022 Annual Results Report

<sup>145</sup> Based on UNHCR monitoring data and reports



Survey results also showed that over 90% of respondents received some form of cash assistance from UNHCR, and 60% of respondents confirmed that they are relatively satisfied and grateful for with this type of support (see Annex 7. Survey Results).

The cash assistance was reported by various stakeholders as insufficient for solving even short-term housing needs. Most refugees have been living in rented apartments and houses in Vahdat and Rudaki regions. Refugees' main concerns include high rental prices – up to around 1000 TJS – which could not be covered by the one-time cash assistance. Housing remains a huge challenge as emphasised by 89% of survey respondents who raised this as an issue.

**Finding 13:** UNHCR's support to refugees in Tajikistan regarding health services has been inconsistent and is perceived by refugees to lack transparency in selection. The organization has not adequately addressed the pressing psychosocial needs of the refugee community, especially among women and youth.

As regards **access to health services**, while refugees can access public health care facilities in Tajikistan, the cost of prescribed medications poses a significant challenge, especially for those with chronic diseases and those requiring non-complimentary medical interventions. Survey results show that the main challenges for refugees' access to health care are high costs for medicines and treatment (68% of respondents), a lack of access to free health services (45%), and a lack of funds to pay for medical services (37%) (see Annex 7. Survey Results).<sup>146</sup>

Other concerns pointed out by FGD participants related to the limitations of the public health care and lack of specific treatments. UNHCR supported some refugees to access health services, though these were ad-hoc and on an individual basis, and were considered by refugees to be based on unclear selection criteria. The refugees' main dissatisfaction with UNHCR's support for access to health services related to the withdrawal of previously provided support (e.g., coverage of the costs for medicines) and once again the lack of clear criteria and transparency in the selection of individuals/households who could receive the financial grants from UNHCR.

Most refugees who participated in the FGDs cited their awareness of RCVC's home monitoring visits to identify levels of vulnerability and protection needs, which led to some re-prioritization of support in light of UNHCR funding cuts in 2022 and 2023. One FGD participant reported that *'Until March 2023, I have received 700 TJS every three months from RCVC for the purchase of medicines, but this year I did not receive it. I have diabetes and I need support with medicines, not with money.'*

In addition, the document review<sup>147</sup> and stakeholder interviews<sup>148</sup> confirmed that there has not been enough psychosocial support for refugees and asylum seekers, which was especially raised as an issue for women and youth who faced depression and anxiety due to difficult living conditions.

---

<sup>146</sup> The high cost of medicines and treatment is the main challenge for refugees to access health services, as confirmed by 67.7% of refugees who participated in the survey.

<sup>147</sup> Operation Plan (2020-2021) and 2022 Annual Results Framework

<sup>148</sup> Some representatives of UN Agencies, most consulted refugees and confirmed by UNHCR CO team and document review.



With regard to social protection measures, UNHCR advocated for the inclusion of refugees in the national scheme of social allowance, but no progress was evident to the evaluation team thus far. UNHCR's advocacy work also related to the inclusion of all forced displaced persons in the vaccination campaign against Covid 19 by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection.<sup>149</sup>

**Finding 14:** UNHCR's efforts resulted in enrolling 3,199 children in primary education and 428 in secondary education, which is a positive contribution. Nevertheless, many refugee children face barriers, including the requirement for students to use Cyrillic script, which added to financial constraints have resulted in declining enrolment rates. UNHCR has contributed to the enhancement of educational spaces and facilitated the processing of documents for school enrolment, but support to education needs is inconsistent, and engagement in broader educational assistance is limited.

In line with principles of universal access to education in Tajikistan, refugees and asylum seekers have access to state-run/public schools where teaching is done in Tajik/Farsi. UNHCR, with the support of implementing partners, has supported the enrolment of 3,199 children in primary education and 428 in secondary education over 2020- 2022, by helping refugees to submit documents for school enrolment and facilitating this process. However, in order to be placed in a class grade corresponding to the curriculum in the country of origin, children have to complete Cyrillic classes, which is a challenge for Afghans, resulting in an approximately 70% enrolment rate in 2020, and 45% in 2021.<sup>150</sup>

According to the document review and data gathered through FGDs with refugees and survey results,<sup>151</sup> the principal reasons for being out of school have been lack of knowledge of Cyrillic, financial constraints, preference to an enrolment of children in Afghan Somoniyon school,<sup>152</sup> and pending departure to Canada for some refugees. For instance, half of the survey respondents (31 of 62) confirmed that their children do not attend school, and the issues with accessing education that were most mentioned, were the lack of funding for transportation costs and purchasing school uniforms, and employment of their children. As cited by one respondent, *'We have four schoolchildren in our house, two of them go to school, the other two don't go to school because they don't have school uniforms and textbooks.'*

Survey respondents and most FGD participants also raised the issue of UNHCR's limited engagement with education support. Around 19% of survey respondents received support from UNHCR/RCVC (provision of school uniforms), and only a few mentioned textbooks. Most refugees participating in FGDs raised their dissatisfaction with the inconsistency of the education support overall. For instance, a refugee confirmed that in 2022 all her three children received school uniforms from RCVC, but in 2023 only one of them had a uniform.

A positive example of education support relates to UNHCR's/NGO Human Being and Justice's help to refugees with documents for school enrolment.<sup>153</sup> In parallel, UNHCR has made efforts

---

149 UNHCR 2022 Annual Result Report mentioned that by end of 2022 4,670 refugees received their first dose while 4,666 refugees were fully vaccinated and 2,054 received a third booster dose.

150 UNHCR 2020 and 2021 Operations Plans

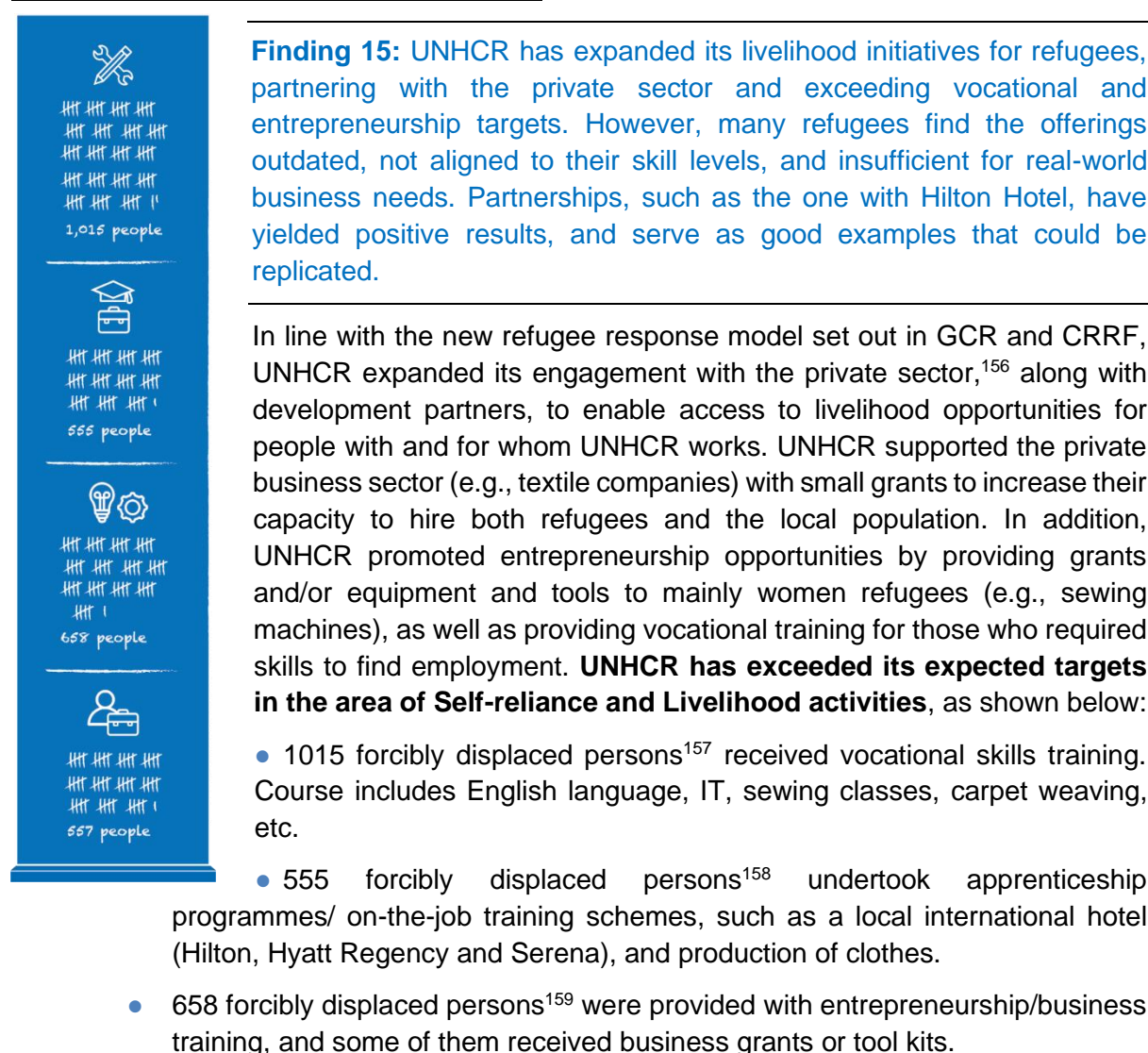
151 See Annex 7. Survey Results

152 Afghan Somoniyon School is school in Tajikistan that uses curriculum from Afghanistan and teaches in the Dari language. <https://reliefweb.int/report/tajikistan/us-embassy-partners-spirit-america-preserve-afghan-somoniyon-school-dushanbe>

153 Desk review and stakeholder interviews

to support small-scale projects in host communities to improve educational spaces. This included renovation of a school hall in Rudaki, and premises in the youth centre in Vahdat (the corridors, sports equipment, event hall, and yard; see Annex 3. Additional data on EQ2). Such support was considered critical for socialization and inclusion of the people UNHCR serves,<sup>154</sup> offering a variety of services. For instance, the renovated youth centre in Vahdat offers cooking classes, English, painting, etc., which has contributed to social integration of refugee children.<sup>155</sup>

## **Empowering communities and inclusion**



<sup>154</sup> Some stakeholder interviews and site observations

<sup>155</sup> Some interviews with stakeholders from Vahdat and site observation

<sup>156</sup> According to UNHCR annual result report, in 2022 UNHCR had 6 Letter of Understandings (LoUs) with the private sector.

<sup>157</sup> According to UNHCR annual result reports, 112 persons had vocational training in 2020, 334 persons in 2021, and 569 in 2022.

<sup>158</sup> According to UNHCR annual result reports, 136 persons were enrolled in apprenticeship / on-the-job training schemes in 2020, 141 in 2021, and 278 in 2022.

<sup>159</sup> According to UNHCR annual result reports, 50 persons were provided with entrepreneurship / business training, 251 in 2021, and 357 in 2022.

- 557 forcibly displaced persons<sup>160</sup> were registered in job placement services.

Despite UNHCR's investment in these activities, progress towards self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods of forcibly displaced persons is constrained by the country context. Unfavourable economic conditions in the period 2020-2022, together with constraints imposed by the global pandemic, affected employment opportunities for refugees as well as the local population (also discussed under SQ2.4). Concerning self-employment, the most relevant challenge included limitations in terms of the use of financial services for forcibly displaced persons such as the inability to open a bank account, as well as many refugees engaged in entrepreneurial activities required additional support from UNHCR in regard to tax rules and regulations. UNHCR has been working with the national tax authorities to resolve these issues in the recent period.

**Some UNHCR livelihood activities are not in line with the level of education of some forcibly displaced persons.** Most consulted refugees cited an 'old-fashioned' approach to vocational training that is focused on traditional jobs like tailoring, bread baking, hairdressing, etc. There are issues of mismatch of forcibly displaced persons' skills, which may be far more advanced than the basic skills being provided<sup>161</sup> (described above). Many refugees residing in Tajikistan have completed higher education or are skilled workers with considerable experience. This was strongly emphasised by various consulted stakeholders from different stakeholder groups.<sup>162</sup> Offering basic trainings or traditional gender-stereotypical skills was considered by most refugees as outdated and not needed. Providing everybody the same skill-sets or package of options was not considered economically beneficial as supply (of people with these skills) far exceeded demand for such services.<sup>163</sup> Also, the vocational education courses did not match employers' demand for these skills, particularly those with higher levels of education. Examples provided by consulted stakeholders included men who previously worked in professional jobs but currently work in low-skilled areas of employment, including construction sites.<sup>164</sup> Meanwhile, many women with high levels of education can only participate in sewing or other low-skilled job training, which they report that they neither need nor want.

In some cases,<sup>165</sup> Afghan women who received sewing machines have sold them or just do not use them due to a lack of skills, interest, or limited potential for earnings. As noted by one Afghan refugee woman, *'Some of us are educated in high technology, but they push us back to basic skills (how to make bread, haircutting, sewing, etc.). It is like going back to the stone age.'*

**UNHCR's efforts<sup>166</sup> to provide livelihoods opportunities are very small-scale in relation to the high levels of demand.** UNHCR and RCVC mostly implemented one-time

---

160 According to UNHCR annual result reports, 95 persons were registered in job placement services in 2020, 131 in 2021 and 331 in 2022.

161 Secondary sources and consultation with stakeholders

162 Representatives of some UN agencies, implementing partners and consulted refugees

163 Some stakeholder interviews

164 FGDs pointed to a high rate of recorded accidents in the construction field. 'Daily, we hear that someone's son/husband died in a construction place. We live in fear that tomorrow it can be our son/husband. Because there are no jobs, everyone is forced to work in some way.'

165 As reported by some UNHCR's partners

166 Most consulted stakeholder

interventions regarding employment and self-employment opportunities. The lack of follow-up or follow-on was found to be a shortcoming of the approach adopted.

For example, stakeholders stated that UNHCR/RCVC provided basic three-month courses in English language and IT skills, which was cited by consulted refugees as insufficient for gaining language skills that could ensure better job opportunities. In addition, there was no UNHCR effort to support market access, so given that Afghan refugees in Tajikistan mainly reside in small towns with small markets, only a few of those who participated in sewing courses actually work in sewing workshops.<sup>167</sup>

An exception is the initiative of UNHCR and the Ministry of Industry and New Technologies related to the participation of Afghan dressmakers in the 2023 Fashion Week show in Dushanbe. A total of 12 people (11 Afghan women refugees and 1 man) had an opportunity to work with 4 prominent designers to prepare a collection for the fashion week show. Such measures helped Afghan women to regain self-confidence.<sup>168</sup> One of the participating women stated that *'Afghan women are very talented but never have a chance to promote their work internationally. As a refugee, we were lost in Tajikistan and felt depressed. For the first time, we felt that we were part of the community at the Fashion Week. It was beyond our expectations.'* Consulted women refugees confirmed that they benefited from networking; however, they still struggle to establish their own business due to a lack of tools and funding, much of which is beyond UNHCR's control.

There were successful initiatives to provide livelihoods support as evident from the partnership with the Ministry of Industry and New Technologies and private entities (e.g., Hilton Hotel in Dushanbe) for inclusion of refugees in the workplace (e.g., apprenticeship at a local international hotel, production of clothing). For example, the four-month apprenticeship programme with Hilton Hotel was considered successful as approximately 70-80 the refugees went through the programme and many were ultimately employed by the hotel, while approximately 20 refugees were employed by the textile companies in Vahdat. Another positive example is the scholarship programme by UNHCR that allowed some Afghan students to study in Tajik universities, where they have a chance to obtain a formal education and not just vocational training.

Many refugees reported that their needs are often not met as UNHCR support was insufficient. For example, the UNHCR/RCVC provision of small grants for start-ups in an equal amount of about 200 USD per person was assessed by refugees as relevant but not fully effective. An Afghan refugee who works as a car mechanic confirmed that the amount of 200 USD was not sufficient to purchase the required tools for opening his car repair shop, with the real cost at approximately 1,000 USD.

### **Securing durable solutions**

**Finding 16:** Between 2020-2022, UNHCR prioritized local integration of forcibly displaced persons in Tajikistan, but challenges to full integration persist, including restrictions on acquiring Tajik nationality as well as socio-economic challenges. Many refugees continue to prefer resettlement to third countries. UNHCR's collaboration with the Tajik government led to the implementation of the Amnesty Law, which addressed statelessness by facilitating

---

<sup>167</sup> Reported by most Afghan refugees

<sup>168</sup> Reported by interviewed Afghan women that participated in the 2023 Fashion Week show.

registration and providing legal support. However, despite these initiatives, a significant number of individuals remain stateless, indicating the need for sustained intervention.

UNHCR put effort into local integration for forcibly displaced persons, supporting voluntary return only in specific cases due to Afghanistan's volatile situation over the period covered by this evaluation. UNHCR facilitated voluntary return for 41 individuals<sup>169</sup> upon their request, in line with the standard operating procedures on voluntary return.

However, evidence suggests that people that UNHCR serves showed high levels of interest in resettlement to third countries, mainly due to socio-economic difficulties and security threats back in their home country (Afghanistan).<sup>170</sup> Survey results indicate that 86% of refugee respondents mentioned resettlement to a third country as their hope over the next three years. Limited employment opportunities in their field of expertise and educational opportunities for their children were commonly cited by the consulted refugees as the main reason for desiring relocation, although they expressed gratitude to the Tajik government for allowing them to stay and the local population for being welcoming.

To promote better local community-refugee relations and peaceful co-existence, the CO organised various social activities (e.g., World Refugee Day, 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence), and renovation of the hospital, preschools, schools, and youth centres. Afghan refugees who are formally recognised by the government and who reside in Tajikistan receive national identity documentation and have access to public health and education services, but they lack access to some financial services (opening a bank account), and some social payments (i.e., disability-related pensions)<sup>171</sup> and there are limitations in regard to obtaining of a Tajik nationality as the further element of local integration.

In efforts to contribute to **durable solutions for stateless persons**, UNHCR, in collaboration with its partners Right and Prosperity, and Chashma, provided technical support to the Ministry of Interior's PRS, including updating software to facilitate the registration and follow-up of cases which fall under the country's Amnesty Law, and to improve the quality of data collection, as well as training in statelessness identification and resolving such cases.<sup>172</sup> This partnership was instrumental in the introduction and execution of the Amnesty Law from January 7, 2020, to December 25, 2022. As a result, the registration process for stateless individuals has seen significant improvements, thanks to the concerted efforts of the government of Tajikistan, UNHCR and NGOs. These partners collaborated closely with local authorities and village leaders to promote the legal services available to stateless individuals.

Following the successful implementation of the Amnesty Law, 58,951 stateless individuals or those with unclear nationality were registered, with 54,402 of them having their nationality confirmed by February 2023.<sup>173</sup> Additionally, UNHCR provided assistance to 14,065

---

169 Based on UNHCR data, 21 persons voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan in 2020, 5 in 2021, and 15 persons in 2022, document review.

170 Based on findings from survey with refugees, FGDs with refugees, consulted UNHCR staff, implementing partners and some UN agencies.

171 In 2022 CO provided registration and documentation to 334 persons seeking asylum, providing them with essential legal protections and access to services, however initially it was expected to reach 1,000 people.

172 FGD with local service providers and authorities, interviews with UNHCR staff, implementing partners, UN agencies.

173 UNHCR (2023) UNHCR Tajikistan factsheet, February 2023, [https://www.unhcr.org/centralasia/wp-content/uploads/sites/75/2023/06/Fact-Sheet-Tajikistan-February-2023\\_final.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/centralasia/wp-content/uploads/sites/75/2023/06/Fact-Sheet-Tajikistan-February-2023_final.pdf)



individuals that had uncertain nationality resulting in the confirmation of their status.<sup>174</sup> Specialized support was extended to individuals holding passports from the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), those without identification, and particularly vulnerable individuals with USSR birth certificates. UNHCR's efforts to ensure proper acquisition and confirmation of nationality for those affected were important, particularly for the fact that statelessness in Tajikistan was, to a large extent, a by-product of the dissolution of the former USSR; migration related to civil war; mixed marriages; and gaps in nationality legislation and policy or administrative obstacles preventing the acquisition or confirmation of nationality.<sup>175</sup>

The implementing partners also resolved 36 intricate legal cases, such as unregistered adult birth verifications, and facilitated access to birth certificates,<sup>176</sup> an initiative stakeholders deemed exceptionally effective.<sup>177</sup>

UNHCR succeeded in expanding its efforts for identification and reduction of statelessness in new districts of Sughd that neighbour Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and managed to get authorization for the expansion to Rasht and the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) of Tajikistan (a total of 36 districts out of 60). Addressing the issue in these regions was vital, especially as newer groups of stateless individuals in Tajikistan comprised women from neighbouring countries who, after marrying locally, lacked proper documentation.<sup>178 179</sup> Latest data from 2021 show that Tajikistan had 6,385 stateless individuals or those at risk (3,327 females and 1,216 males), and this number is likely to rise as the identification process progresses in 2021.<sup>180</sup>

---

174 Document review

175 UNHCR (2021); Submission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

For the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Compilation Report Universal Periodic Review: *3rd Cycle, 39th Session: TAJIKISTAN*

176 According to Right and Prosperity monitoring data, 35 complex cases were resolved in the period 2020-2022.

177 FGDs with stateless persons, FGD with local authorities, interviews with implementing partners.

178 Stakeholder interviews and focus group discussions with people UNHCR serves

179 Stakeholder interviews and focus group discussions with people UNHCR serves

180 UNHCR (2021); Submission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

For the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Compilation Report Universal Periodic Review: *3rd Cycle, 39th Session: TAJIKISTAN*



**SQ2.3. To what extent did UNHCR contribute to achievement of cross-cutting aims (humanitarian principles, protection, empowerment and inclusion, with focus on AGD; environmental sustainability and climate adaptation and Humanitarian, development and peace nexus)?**

**Finding 17:** UNHCR's initiatives in Tajikistan emphasize Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD), with a special attention to gender dynamics and issues confronting women, though UNHCR does not consistently track gender disaggregated data. They have consistently championed women, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities, promoting their empowerment and participation. Yet, the incorporation of Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability has not been consistent. Although progress has been evident in supporting national institutions, a holistic approach to the Humanitarian, Development, and Peace Nexus is not yet embedded.

**AGD, Humanitarian and Protection Principles**

The analysis of AGD posed the following challenges: the CO does not carry out registration; UNHCR does not have observer status in the RSD Commission; and the government data lacks disaggregation by gender and age<sup>181</sup> (see Finding 6), meaning that the only disaggregated data available is for 47 mandate refugee households/196 individuals recognized by UNHCR before 2017,<sup>182</sup> when UNHCR stopped carrying out mandate RSD. However, the Office ensured that its implementing partners' data management is disaggregated by age and sex whenever possible. UNHCR's focus on AGD in Tajikistan was developed in light of gender and equity issues experienced both by local populations (stateless people or 'at risk' of statelessness) and by refugees/asylum seekers. Tajikistan has a trend of men migrating out of the country for work-related purposes, leaving women that are stateless or at risk of statelessness in a vulnerable position and facing difficulties accessing services to fulfil their rights.<sup>183</sup> Many women who became heads of households due to these challenges lacked proper documentation. Rural customs prevented these stateless women from seeking help from PRSs, causing further hindrances in obtaining proper documents. In more complex cases, such as expired foreign passports (e.g., Uzbek citizenships) or those holding old Soviet passports, providing assistance was also challenging.<sup>184</sup>

UNHCR has actively supported women through various refugee related initiatives. The document review<sup>185</sup> revealed that gender was one of the criteria for eligibility in the distribution of basic necessities such as food packages. Refugee women were targeted within initiatives for empowerment and promoting self-reliance within communities. For instance, UNHCR supports refugee women to help them achieve financial independence. This is partially achieved in the activities conducted in 2021 where UNHCR supported 131 refugees/asylum seekers (88 males and 43 females) for job placements, 141 refugees/asylum seekers (34

---

181 Statistics on refugees counts only adult family members without specifying the total count of dependents. Source: some UNHCR staff, a few development organizations and some implementing partners.

182 UNHCR phased out mandate RSD as of 1 April 2017, issuing 'Protection Letters' to persons who would normally qualify for mandate refugee procedures. Since then no new asylum application was resisted by the CO. UNHCR (2018), Operation Plan Tajikistan 2018.

183 Most stakeholder interviews with UNHCR staff, implementing partners and focus groups discussion with people UNHCR serves.

184 Some stakeholder interviews with UNHCR staff, implementing partners and focus groups discussion with people UNHCR serves.

185 Operation Plan (2020-2021) and 2022 Annual Results Framework

males and 107 females) for apprenticeship schemes, and 334 refugees/asylum seekers for vocational training courses (data are not disaggregated by gender). However, assessing the impact of these activities on women from the monitoring data system is challenging due to the fact that UNHCR does not consistently track gender disaggregated data.

UNHCR's response to statelessness, in view of the enactment of the Amnesty Law, had a focus on women and provided legal and other types of assistance (e.g., cash assistance for travel costs and document fees). UNHCR's efforts<sup>186</sup> were relatively effective in promoting the rights of women and the elderly who were another significant group affected by lack of documentation. However, due to financial constraints of UNHCR and its implementing partner Chasma, stateless people living in distant villages were left behind in terms of legal support.

Over 70%<sup>187</sup> of the stateless population in Tajikistan is comprised of women and girls. During a home visit in 2021, Ariana Refugees Committee had been requested to pay special attention to family dynamics to prevent and respond to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) cases through sharing updates via existing communication channels.

For people with disabilities, UNHCR and its implementing partners work effectively to ensure that refugees with disabilities are supported by prioritizing cash support. In 2020, a total of 362 people with disabilities received some health services in response to their needs, and also received cash support. In 2021, this support extended to 327 individuals with disabilities. Data collected through UNHCR's profiling exercise, carried out in late 2019,<sup>188</sup> revealed that about 15% of people that UNHCR serves have specific medical needs, including chronic illnesses, diabetes, coronary problems, and mental or physical disabilities that require long-term medical attention.<sup>189</sup>

UNHCR has been actively engaging with the relevant authorities to advocate for the inclusion of refugees with disabilities into the Tajikistan's National Scheme of Social Allowance, but at the time of evaluation it had not yet happened. Additionally, UNHCR, through its partners, provided free medical consultations and secured referrals to state-run medical facilities. Regular home visits were also carried out by UNHCR implementation partners, liaising with local health clinics and hospitals. Reimbursement of laboratory test costs and prescribed medications, and psycho-social support, was also provided.

In 2021, the Refugee Children and Vulnerable Citizen (RCVC) monitors carried out a total of 395 home visits to assess vulnerability levels and identify other protection needs among refugees. As a result, 1,180 refugees and 957 individuals were referred to specialized medical care to address their specific healthcare needs. An additional 370 individuals received support for the purchase of medicines and coverage of other medical expenses. However, not all individuals with chronic diseases were covered by UNHCR's support due to lack of funds.<sup>190</sup>

People with disabilities have been included in various programmes and activities implemented by UNHCR. For example, in 2021 the COVID-19 CBIs supported 400 households, totalling 1,969 individuals who met UNHCR eligibility criteria, which explicitly included persons with

---

186 Document review and most stakeholder consultations

187 Document reviews

188 <https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/pdfsummaries/GR2019-Tajikistan-eng.pdf>

189 The exercise involved 705 households/3797 persons (1882 men and 1915 women); children made up 37% of the population. The interviewing process took place from May to October 2019. (Source: UNHCR (2020). Report: Profiling of Convention Refugees in Tajikistan)

190 Confirmed by most interviewed stakeholders, FGDs findings, and survey results.

disabilities. Additionally in 2020, the CO identified a total of 610 children among people it serves who were not attending school, mostly due to severe mental or physical disabilities, financial constraints, or arrivals in the middle and/or end of the academic year.<sup>191</sup> The evaluation found no information regarding stateless people with disabilities.

### **Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability**

UNHCR made only minimal efforts to integrate Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability considerations in their activities. One example where UNHCR had a visible need for integration of climate resilience and environmental sustainability relates to the construction of temporary accommodation facilities under the TAC initiative in cooperation with other partners. UNHCR invested in efforts to set up water pumping and drainage, electricity lines, an electricity transformer and power generators, as well as other construction work on the instalment of a temporary shelter. However, the review of documentation<sup>192</sup> relating to the construction of these facilities did not provide details on how UNHCR and its partners assessed the environmental impacts or integrated environmental assessments. The TAC was handed over to CoESCD for use in case of refugee emergencies or natural disasters. According to some interviewed stakeholders,<sup>193</sup> the centre can be used for housing people affected by potential future natural disasters, along with people that UNHCR serves. As discussed in Finding 10, some stakeholders shared their concerns in regard to the TAC construction quality vis-à-vis Tajikistan's climatic extremes, specifically related to use of materials, issues with air conditioning and insulation. A review of UNHCR's planning and reporting documents, and interviews with UNHCR CO also suggests that UNHCR did not apply a consistent and organised assessment of its environmental footprint or considerations in other interventions.

### **Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus**

UNHCR's work in Tajikistan is still largely humanitarian support-focused, rather than using the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus approach. UNHCR's planning documents provide a framework to shift towards more capacity strengthening<sup>194</sup> of national institutions (as discussed under 2.1), but as evidenced by this evaluation, such efforts were erratic and one-off events, without follow up. Due to these reasons, as well as to weak strategic positioning, UNHCR has not been able to break down the humanitarian and development silos and contribute more substantially in the HDPN space, including strengthening of national systems.<sup>195</sup>

---

191 Document reviews

192 Operation Plan (2020-2021) and 2022 Annual Results Framework

193 Representatives of UN Agencies, development partners and donors

194 Review of strategic documentation

195 The review of UNHCR's planning and reporting documents, some UNHCR CO, some representatives of UN agencies, development partners and donors

**SQ2.4. Under which conditions has UNHCR achieved these results, and what factors have affected the achievement/non-achievement of results (contextual, operational etc.)?**

**Internal factors affecting the delivery and achievement of results**

**Finding 18:** UNHCR's operations were affected by internal factors - including limited resources, communication issues, high staff turnover, and the absence of integrated programmatic strategies, some of which are detailed in other sections of this report. The shifting placement of the CO within UNHCR's regional corporate framework added to this complexity.

**UNHCR's operations in Tajikistan faced challenges due to frequent structural changes, impacting their strategic positioning with the government.** A primary concern among the UNHCR CO team was the shifting of the Tajikistan Country Office between the Kazakhstan MCO and the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, with ongoing discussions about reverting to the Kazakhstan MCO. According to feedback from some UNHCR staff, such transition potentially jeopardises operational stability, especially if it results in the elimination of the Country Representative position in Tajikistan.

Most stakeholder feedback<sup>196</sup> indicates that some of the government's reservations about UNHCR – and subsequently its weakened strategic positioning – stem from these organizational shifts. These reservations could escalate if the Country Representative role is abolished, as emphasised by some UNHCR staff. Relations with the government are notably weak, a sentiment echoed by all stakeholders, including UNHCR. Many believe the CO has not sufficiently fostered this relationship and the only partial realization of UNHCR's commitments, such as capacity-building support for the government, further affected UNHCR's credibility as a reliable partner of government in Tajikistan.<sup>197</sup>

As highlighted in EQ3, the CO faced substantial resource mobilization hurdles, resulting in staff reductions.<sup>198</sup> Coupled with the above-mentioned shifts in the office's placement within corporate hierarchy, this created a sense of uncertainty among staff, impacting their morale and drive<sup>199</sup> (see EQ3 and Annex 4).

**The evaluation highlighted substantial internal and external communication gaps.** Internally, disparities were evident both horizontally within UNHCR and vertically between the UNHCR Tajikistan Office and MCO, leading to varied approaches, compartmentalised operations, and a lack of unified vision (see EQ3). UNHCR does not have a coherent and organized communications strategy, which presents a considerable obstacle to UNHCR's external communication efforts. Related to that, the absence of a dedicated website or strong social media presence hampered UNHCR's advocacy efforts and outreach to the local community.<sup>200</sup> As a result, consulted refugees and representatives of host communities indicated a limited understanding of the scope of UNHCR's assistance and its past initiatives in protection, solutions, or livelihood support.

---

196 UNHCR CO, representatives of UN agencies, development partners and donors

197 Most of interviewed UNHCR CO staff, UN agencies, development partners and donors

198 Document review and some stakeholder interviews

199 Most stakeholder interviews with UNHCR, implementing partners and donors

200 Some consulted UNHCR staff, UN agencies, donors.

While UNHCR's coordination and collaboration with UN entities and other development partners have contributed to results in some areas as detailed in EQ2, stakeholders<sup>201</sup> highlighted substantial challenges in managing refugee responses, maintaining consistent engagement, and facilitating data-sharing. UNHCR has actively engaged in partnerships with the private sector, as exemplified by various livelihood initiatives, which has been a factor in achieving results (see EQ2).

### **External factors affecting the delivery of results**

A number of external factors that affected UNHCR's work in Tajikistan include the following.

**The COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges for the CO and affected its field presence, direct outreach, and ability to provide legal services. COVID-19 intensified the vulnerabilities of forcibly displaced and stateless persons**, causing loss of livelihoods and access to essential services, thus increasing their dependency on humanitarian aid. COVID-19 hindered the implementation of the statelessness program and the Amnesty Law. However, UNHCR was agile and adapted its activities, as well as its modes of delivery; for example, delivering activities online and leveraging the presence of its implementing partners in the intervention areas.

**Regional geopolitical context has been a significant factor affecting UNHCR's work in Tajikistan.** Instability in Afghanistan posed threats of a potential refugee influx, and Tajikistan's concern that there might be influx of radical elements from Afghanistan resulting in border restrictions also created challenges for UNHCR to fully promote its mandated activities and protection principles.

**Access to some socio-economic services for persons UNHCR serves and issues with adequate legal safeguards and social support have been reported as significant challenges.**<sup>202</sup> The repercussions of international financial and security developments, characterized by a decline in remittances from Russia and other countries, and the precarious circumstances in Afghanistan, were raised as important challenges in Tajikistan, and affected the extent to which UNHCR's livelihood and other support could maximize results. For refugees and asylum seekers, the limited employment possibilities have presented the single most important challenge and affected their ability fulfil their basic needs. The lack of financial means affected their access to education, work and health, creating significant obstacles for empowerment and integration (see Section SQ2.2; subsection on Access to rights and Empowering communities and inclusion).

---

<sup>201</sup> Some representatives of UN agencies, development partners and donors

<sup>202</sup> representative of UN agencies, development partners and donors; consulted refugees, UNHCR

**EQ3. In light of RBAP prioritization decisions in resource allocations across operations, to what extent is UNHCR Tajikistan's structure, staffing and resource allocation adequate and fit-to meet the objectives set out in its strategy?**

**Summary of key findings:** UNHCR Tajikistan's structure, staffing and resource allocation were only to some extent adequate and fit to meet the objectives set out in its strategy. Initially, most resources were mobilized in 2021 to respond to the increased number of Afghan refugees in Tajikistan in anticipation of a mass influx. This led to an increased workforce within the CO, mostly through fast-track positions. Nevertheless, certain key personnel, especially in administration and finance, remained inundated with work, affecting their ability to respond to the high workload. Challenges in communication, along with discrepancies between projected (OP) and actual (OL) budgets, necessitated strategic prioritization, which further affected operational efficiency. While monitoring practices generally adhered to UNHCR standards, there were notable data collection and reporting gaps. The adoption of the COMPASS system as a new results-based tool, however, has been instrumental in enhancing outcome-level reporting and mitigating some of these challenges.

**SQ3.1. Have UNHCR's capacity and resources in Tajikistan enabled the organization to effectively address needs and achieve the desired results?**

**Finding 19:** UNHCR employed a diversified resource mobilization strategy, tapping into inter-agency partnerships, donors, International Financial Institutions (IFI), and the private sector, notably benefiting from the Interagency Refugee Preparedness and Response Plan (RRP). Significant contributions came from the European Union and the UK, with over half the funds offering flexible allocation and use of funds (unearmarked). However, limited communication and visibility meant many donors remained unaware of UNHCR's extensive activities, affecting potential fundraising opportunities.

Over the period of 2020-2021, the CO continued leveraging inter-agency partnerships, investing efforts to mainstream people with and for whom UNHCR works into existing partner programmes.<sup>203</sup> The UNHCR CO collaborated with JICA and World Bank in livelihood interventions and community-based projects and was also involved in the UNSDCF. However the evaluation revealed still weak joint programming practices or ambitions by the CO, which was considered by other UN agencies to be a missed opportunity.<sup>204</sup>

A positive example in this regard is that UNHCR, together with other eight UN agencies, developed the RRP, leading to the mobilization of 17% of requested funding for the country

---

203 E.g., Providing inputs for the National Development Strategy, UNDAF, the Development Coordination Council (DCC), etc.

204 KII with a few UN agencies.



(USD 4.2 million in 2021),<sup>205</sup> 13% of the requested funding (or USD 5.3 million) in 2022,<sup>206</sup> in support of various infrastructure projects, in-kind food assistance, and vocational training, etc.

UNHCR CO also managed to mobilize resources in the form of earmarked funds from five donors.<sup>207</sup> Data analysis shows that the total funding mobilized was USD 4.4 million, from only USD 58 thousand in 2020, towards USD 2.4 million in 2021, and USD 1.9 million in 2022. Overall, 53% of those funds were not directed toward specific rights groups and objectives, which allowed the CO the flexibility to allocate resources where they were most needed.

Over the period of 2020-2021, the CO could rely on five institutional donors (countries) that contributed to the operation. The European Union stands as the largest donor, contributing 41% of all funds (USD 1.8 million), followed by the government of the United Kingdom with 29% of the total contribution (USD 1.3 million).<sup>208</sup> Those donors' earmarked funds were only 31% of its total Operating Level (OL) budget of the CO, which was 67% of OL funding gap.<sup>209</sup>

UNHCR engaged with IFIs such as the World Bank<sup>210</sup> and the Asian Development Bank (ADB)<sup>211</sup> to boost the capacities of host communities for service provision. However, this support did not materialize in light of limited influx of refugees.<sup>212</sup> UNHCR's partnership with the private sector (e.g., apprenticeship programmes) represented small-scale funding compared to overall needs for strengthening livelihood opportunities for forcibly displaced persons in light of worsening socio-economic conditions and unemployment in the country.

Consultations with available donors and development partners revealed that they were not well informed on UNHCR activities beyond the activities in which they engaged directly. All external stakeholders noted a lack of a consistent communication strategy or outreach (e.g., through newsletters, social or other traditional media presence, etc.), affecting the extent to which UNHCR was visible in the country and thus able to raise funds.<sup>213</sup>

**Finding 20:** The CO's staffing structure was not fully equipped to help achieve the desired results and address unforeseen challenges. Anticipating the Afghan refugee influx, the CO expanded its workforce, yet imbalances between programming and operational roles led to strains, particularly in finance, administration, and key areas like IT and protection. The office location and concerns with accessibility issues for the people that UNHCR serves also posed limitations.

---

205 UNHCR (2021), Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan 2021 Final report, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/afghanistan-situation-2021-regional-refugee-response-plan-final-report>

206 UNHCR (2022) Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan 2022 Final report, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/100507>

207 According to UNHCR definition this refers to contributions for a specific country without any further limitations. Also includes contributions for the response to an emergency situation within a specified country. <https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/Flexible%20Funding%20Report%202020.pdf>

208 Other donors are Israel, Japan, and United States of America. Financial analysis conducted by the evaluation team. See Annex 4. Additional data for EQ3.

209 Source: UNHCR, Tajikistan funding sources, 2020-2022.

210 World Bank considered provision of 80 million USD grant to the Government of Tajikistan under the IDA 19 The Window for Host Communities and Refugees (WHR).

211 ADB committed to enhancing the capacities of existing services in a neighbouring community in Balkhi to absorb the increased demands on social services in the event of refugee influx.

212 Source: Some KII with IFIs, UN agencies, other parties.

213 Source: A few KII with UNHCR, donor, development partners.

In anticipation of the mass influx of refugees from Afghanistan, the CO workforce grew from 14 employees in 2019 to 24 in 2022, with around 30% of them being affiliate staff, through fast-track positions.<sup>214</sup> In terms of gender parity, the percentage of female employees was on average 35% over the years and 65% male (see Annex 4. Additional data for EQ3 for more info on the workforce).

The increase in workforce over the years was in line with the response required to the refugee influx, with four fast-track positions provided by December 2021.<sup>215</sup> However, even with these new positions, UNHCR had less staff than required, and there was imbalance in the proportion of programming and operational staff. The number of programme staff increased while operational staff remained the same, increasing the burden of work for some teams, notably finance and administration.<sup>216</sup> There were not enough staff to cover certain designated positions, such as programme control, IT, and protection.<sup>217</sup> This staffing situation had not changed at the time of this evaluation. Stakeholder interviews with UNHCR CO and the document review<sup>218</sup> revealed that a shortage of technical staff led to gaps in cash-based assistance management.

The CO's staffing constitutes 19% of the overall budget, which amount to USD 2 million. In 2020, the budget for staff was USD 518K. However, it decreased to USD 497K in 2021, which was the second year of the pandemic, despite an increased demand, indicating a reduction in the workforce. In contrast, the staffing budget increased to USD 1 million in 2022. Among the different staff categories, 'International Protection & Solutions' had the highest number of employees throughout the years, averaging 7.4 staff per year. This is also reflected in the average unit cost when compared to national staff throughout the period, where international staff consistently had a higher average cost compared to national staff throughout the period. The second-highest staff category was 'Administration and Finance'.

The CO location was an issue raised during stakeholder interviews with UNHCR CO and some of other UN agencies, and the adequacy of UNHCR's existing office space in the UN Joint House managed by UNDP. While the facilities were generally considered as acceptable for all parties, concerns were raised by interviewed UNHCR and UN stakeholders that the location specifics created accessibility issues for the people UNHCR serves.

**Finding 21:** In 2021 and 2022, the CO received only 40% of the planned budget (OP). The distribution of operational budget was uneven: 89% went to the protection pillar, leaving other pillars underfunded. This financial constraint hindered support for crucial areas such as access to documentation and to essential services, despite them being recognised as the primary needs of people that UNHCR serves.

There was a significant difference between the Operations Plan (OP) budget, based on assessed needs, and Working Operating Level (WOL) budget. For 2021 and 2022 WOL was

---

214 Source: UNHCR data the period 2019-2023, See Annex 4. Additional data for EQ3, data on workforce.

215 Source: KII with UNHCR staff and 2022 Audit report.

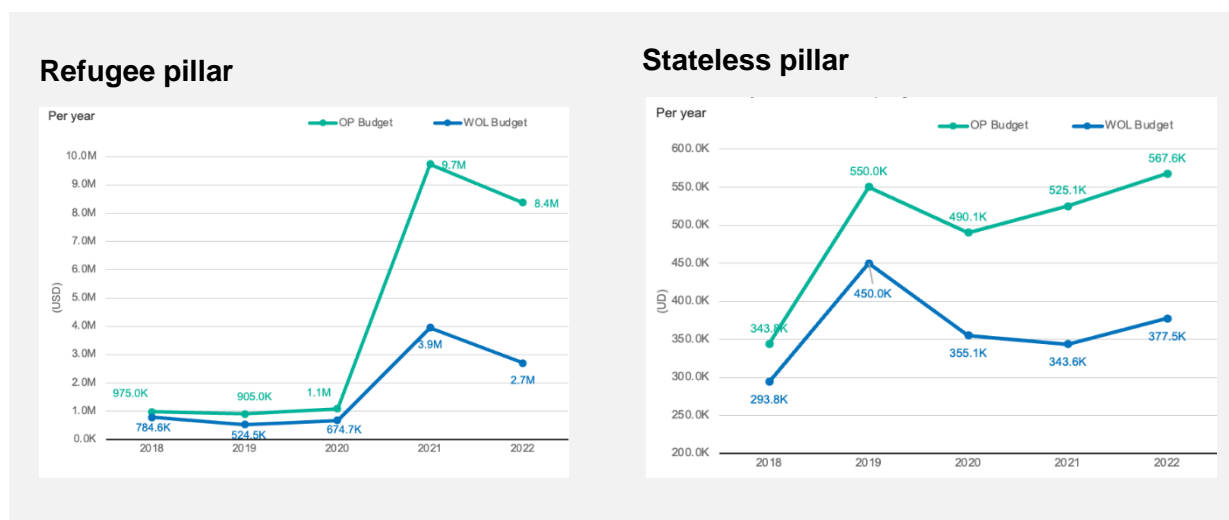
216 Financial and administrative staff cannot use their annual leave fully as no staff can backstop them.

217 According to interviews with UNHCR staff, since 2022 there were 2 positions of protection officer and in 2023 there is only one international protection officer.

218 OIOS (2022), Audit of operations in China, Japan, Kyrgyzstan (National Office), Republic of Korea and Tajikistan for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

around 40% of the planned (OP) budget.<sup>219</sup> There was greater difference between OP and WOL budget for the refugee pillar (around 30% in 2022) than for the stateless pillar (around 66% in 2022) (refer to Figure 9). This led to UNHCR reducing and re-prioritising the support it provided, hence not being able to address all the identified needs of the people for whom and with whom UNHCR works (see Annex 4. Additional data for EQ3).

*Figure 9: UNHCR Tajikistan OPS budget and expenditure by pillar, 2018-2022*



Source: Country Financial Report (2018-2022). UNHCR access only.

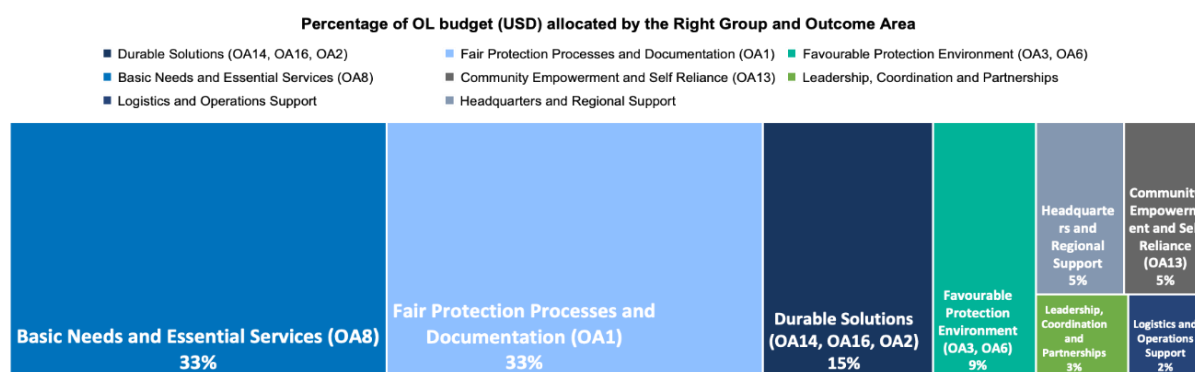
Most funding was allocated to the refugee pillar (89%), which was in line with the increased need for addressing refugee protection needs in 2021 and 2022. Remaining 11% was allocated to the stateless pillar (see Figure 10). However, an increased allocation of funding to the stateless pillar would have significantly contributed to further reducing statelessness through covering the high cost of travel for stateless persons living in villages, and legally advising more stateless people, keeping in view that the full implementation of the Amnesty Law took place over the period 2020-2022. In addition, as per most interviewed stakeholders,<sup>220</sup> insufficient funding for covering transportation costs of stateless people during the process of the acquiring nationality and/or birth certification reduced the number of stateless people that could be supported in distant villages.<sup>221</sup>

*Figure 10: Percentage of OL budget (USD) allocated by the Right Group and Outcome Area*

<sup>219</sup> See Annex 4. Additional data for EQ3

<sup>220</sup> Implementing partners, consulted stateless persons and local authorities

<sup>221</sup> Most KII with implementing partner, FGDs with stateless persons and local authorities.



Source: Country Financial Report (2020-2022). UNHCR access only. 2022 values correspond only to the OPS budget.

Funding per outcome area shows that Fair Protection Processes and Documentation (OA1) and Basic Needs and Essential Services (OA8) received the largest share of the prioritized budgets in the period 2020-2022 (each area received 33% of all resources, see Figure 10).<sup>222</sup> This is justified given that a range of critical activities was carried out to enhance protection and documentation processes, improve reception conditions, and enhance the overall well-being and resilience of the people UNHCR serves.

**Finding 22:** In terms of partnerships, 22% of the program budget was allocated to implementing partners, but a certain decline in quality of communication between UNHCR and its partners was noted.

As for implementation partnerships, about 22% (USD 1.8 million) of the programme budget was allocated to IP. Over the period UNHCR had seven partners (6 national NGOs and 1 international NGO) with a total of 22 PPAs. Most of the IPs' budgets were directed to Community Empowerment and Self Reliance (36%), followed by Basic Needs and Essential Services (24%) and Durable Solutions (21%).

The evaluation revealed some weaknesses in implementation of partnerships. UNHCR did not take into account recurring issues (e.g. personnel costs, accounting systems, and reporting on assistance to beneficiaries) in partnership agreements during the partner selection process.<sup>223</sup> There was a practice of multi-functional on-site team checks, but more monitoring, control, and reporting activities were needed.<sup>224</sup> The evaluation revealed that the communication with implementing partners deteriorated over the reference period due to a reported lack of trust on both sides,<sup>225</sup> lack of timely information from UNHCR on changing policies or procedures,<sup>226</sup> and wider limited communication,<sup>227</sup> as confirmed by implementing partners themselves (see EQ1).

<sup>222</sup> See Annex 4. Additional data for EQ3

<sup>223</sup> OIOS (2022), Audit of operations in China, Japan, Kyrgyzstan (National Office), Republic of Korea and Tajikistan for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees noticed that this refers to personnel costs, procurement, accounting systems, recording and reporting on assistance to beneficiaries.

<sup>224</sup> Source: KII interviews with most of UNHCR staff confirmed some observed challenges with some implementing partners.

<sup>225</sup> Source: Most KII interviews with most of UNHCR staff and with implementing partners

<sup>226</sup> Source: Most KII interviews with implementing partners

<sup>227</sup> Source: Most KII interviews with implementing partners

A clear indication of this deteriorating trust was a decision by UNHCR CO to do a direct distribution of cash-based assistance aid to 9,975 refugees. While this activity was completed, stakeholder interviews revealed that it was very strenuous exercise for UNHCR, particularly in light of their finance and administration staff shortage. Besides, the data collected through document review and stakeholder interviews also provided evidence that implementation partners are mostly capable of achieving the targeted results, especially in reducing statelessness and direct outreach to the forcibly displaced population.

**Finding 23:** UNHCR's monitoring mechanisms encountered challenges and were not optimally utilized for decision-making. Performance analysis further identified discrepancies between budget and indicator achievements, with a need to regularly adjust targets and address overachievements due to initial unambitious planning. The introduction of COMPASS for outcome-level reporting in 2022, marked a shift in the right direction, but outstanding issues persist with regards to utility of real-time data for decision-making.

Although UNHCR made significant progress across various key indicators for both PPGs achieving its intended results, no evidence was found on the use of indicators to support CO decisions and strategies. One of the primary limitations of UNHCR's data collection and analysis mechanisms for refugees is the absence of reliable DCWR registration data. Although UNHCR's implementing partners conducted regular monitoring visits regarding the distribution of cash for health and educational needs, there is no consistent overview of how decision-making on assistance and which criteria to use was done.

There are no consistent assessments that could provide a good understanding of asylum seekers' and refugees' protection needs following the required mainstreaming approach for their age, gender and diversity (also discussed under SQ2.3).<sup>228</sup> UNHCR conducted a profiling of refugees (2020), a participatory assessment (2021), and CBI post-distribution monitoring (2021, 2022), but these practices did not follow the required approach on AGD.<sup>229</sup> UNHCR did conduct formal participatory assessment in 2023, but as results are still not available, the evaluation could not assess to what extent it will inform 2024 programming.

This situation impacted planning as found in the document review and stakeholder interviews with UNHCR CO. OIOS 2022 Audit report identified several shortcomings in UNHCR's CBI controls, such as: gaps and lack of consolidated information on the number of people who received cash assistance with disaggregated data; inconsistent constitution of the Joint Assistance Committee to select beneficiaries of CBI; the fact that the CBI standard operating procedures did not include all CBI modalities; etc. UNHCR put effort into revising the CBI standard operating procedures in 2023, and the process is currently underway. In addition, the 2022 Audit report confirmed that UNHCR's operational risk register was not comprehensive as it did not include all risk-related issues.

The introduction of COMPASS meant that the 2022 annual reports were focused more on outcome-level reporting, compared to output-based reporting, for the 2021 and 2020 annual reports. Despite the fact that the differences in reporting make it hard to conduct an analysis that enables comparison or to see progress at the outcome level, this change was considered

---

228 Source: OIOS (2022), Audit of operations in China, Japan, Kyrgyzstan (National Office), Republic of Korea and Tajikistan for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, KII

229 Source: OIOS (2022), Audit of operations in China, Japan, Kyrgyzstan (National Office), Republic of Korea and Tajikistan for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, KII

as positive by UNHCR CO stakeholders. However, multiannual planning has not been covered by multiannual budgeting, which is found to be a shortcoming to ensure adequate planning. In addition, the new monitoring system (COMPASS) seems to be inadequate in providing real-time information to decision-makers to inform planning.

Performance analysis<sup>230</sup> conducted by the evaluation team showed that the monitoring system does not adequately support the planning process, and there is a need for better alignment between budget and indicator targets.

For instance, in 2021 Basic Needs and Essential Services had a high indicator achievement of 325% with a budget expenditure of 108%, and the Favourable Protection Environment had an indicator achievement of 389%, with a budget expenditure of 117%. This is due to a higher number of emergency shelters provided in 2021 than planned, a higher number of border guards and government officials trained, and a higher number of children supported to enrol in schools, as a response to an increased influx of refugees in 2021.<sup>231</sup> Additionally, Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance expended 81% of its budget and achieved 56% of its target. In these cases, the analysis revealed that the initial targets were set unambitiously, which meant that the overachievements were inevitable.

## EQ4. How can UNHCR build on results achieved to date, current challenges, and opportunities, to further leverage its strategic position and influence within the country and region to advance collective efforts towards protection and solutions for the people UNHCR serves, and the communities that host them?

**Summary of key findings:** In navigating Tajikistan's stringent regulations and socio-economic challenges, UNHCR's approach to protection and durable solutions has been observed to be more reactive than proactive, which was found to be a limitation. However, amidst these constraints, UNHCR has manifested significant achievements. For instance, their advocacy efforts and partnership with the government and other partners have successfully resulted in amendments to the Administrative Code and effectively tackled statelessness issues, with some results in terms of effective apprenticeship modalities, etc. The effective strategies behind these successes, paired with strategic partnerships attuned to Tajikistan's existing needs, highlight existing best practices that could guide UNHCR's future initiatives within the country.

### SQ4.1. Has UNHCR built a sustainability strategy to ensure long-term institutional strengthening in Tajikistan?

**Finding 24:** There is an absence of a comprehensive sustainability strategy for UNHCR's interventions in Tajikistan.

---

<sup>230</sup> Ideally, this analysis should demonstrate the coherence of effort between the budget and indicators. The goal is for the Country Office (CO) to expend 100% of the budget and achieve 100% of the target for optimal performance.

<sup>231</sup> See Annex 4. Additional data for EQ3



The evaluation did not find evidence of an elaborated sustainability strategy for UNHCR's interventions in Tajikistan. UNHCR's programming documents<sup>232</sup> detail different interventions but do not elaborate on what mechanisms and measures would be put in place to sustain achieved results. UNHCR has made progress<sup>233</sup> in assisting refugees and stateless individuals in Tajikistan. But these efforts, as detailed in EQ1 and EQ2, were more reactive than proactive, which also diminished their sustainability potential, due to the fact that most of UNHCR's responses were tackling immediate needs but lacked follow up.

**Finding 25:** UNHCR's efforts in Tajikistan show durable legislative protection solutions for refugees and stateless people, but face challenges to achieve sustainable livelihood and basic services provision. Initiatives in addressing statelessness are positively transformative, yet interventions in livelihood, health, and education lack long-term impact and strategic focus. Vocational training and private sector partnerships, though effective, are limited, and budgetary constraints in Tajikistan further hinder the sustainability of these efforts.

There is, however, evidence of efforts of institutional strengthening that are conducive to sustainability. For instance, the amendment of Article 499 of the Administrative Code which was supported by UNHCR now provides legislative basis for protection of refugees from deportation on the basis of residence rule violations. Furthermore, UNHCR's initiatives in addressing statelessness in Tajikistan have brought about sustainable positive changes with transformational potential as detailed in SQ2.2 under Durable Solutions, restoring fundamental rights and creating opportunities for affected individuals, especially access to education and social protection.

However, UNHCR's efforts in providing livelihood and basic services (health, education, social protection, housing) have been sporadic and one-off interventions, without much attention to sustainability. Feedback from focus groups with refugees suggested that while the assistance was helpful, it did not have the potential for lasting improvements, especially considering the volatile job market and an underfunded social sector. Exceptions are UNHCR partnership with the private sector, such as apprenticeship programmes that have been effective, albeit limited in its scope. With only 26% of forcibly displaced persons reported as (self) employed by UNHCR,<sup>234</sup> there's a dire need for strategic interventions to ensure sustainable livelihoods. The vocational training provided by UNHCR often led to an oversupply of specific skills within communities, which further hindered sustainable employment opportunities. Lack of a comprehensive livelihood framework by UNHCR, has further created gaps in support. Additionally, Tajikistan's budgetary constraints, especially in the social sector due to the COVID-induced financial crisis, further undermine the sustainability of livelihood initiatives.

---

232 Operation Plan (2020-2021) and 2022 Annual Results Framework

233 comprehensive review of documents and feedback from most stakeholders

234 UNHCR (2023); Thematic Narrative Annual Results Report 2022

## 5. GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

### 5.1 Good practices

#### **Attaining Favourable Protection Environments**

- Through the extension and implementation of relevant laws, such as the Amnesty Law, UNHCR, in partnership with Government of Tajikistan, UN agencies, and implementing partners, created a favourable protection environment. Through this, thousands of stateless persons were reached and supported, thus enabling full access to social services, financial services, travel, etc.
- Placing importance on the harmonization of national and international legislation, and via cooperation with the Parliament of Tajikistan, UNHCR initiated the revision and drafting of the new Law on Refugees that, if adopted, should allow for more structured Refugee Status Determination.
- Recognizing the need to provide immediate support for future possible refugees arriving from Afghanistan, UNHCR, in cooperation with the Government, constructed the Temporary Accommodation Centre and conducted a simulation exercise, enhancing the capacity of Government to receive a possible influx of refugees.

#### **Realizing Basic Rights in Safe Environments**

- Through the Refugee Status Determination process, UNHCR, in cooperation with the Government of Tajikistan, enabled full access to health and education for refugees and asylum seekers.

#### **Empowering Communities and Achieving Gender Equality**

- Through cooperation with Government, partner agencies and local companies (Vahdat Textile Company, Hilton Hotel), UNHCR contributed to enhanced livelihood opportunities for refugees, both women and men, by enabling socio-economic integration, provision of vocational training, and securing jobs that are relevant to the needs and qualification of refugees.

#### **Securing Solutions**

- By supporting the local Youth Centre in Vahdat with the renovation of premises and provision of sports equipment, UNHCR contributed to the safe and friendly environment of Afghan children, and the social integration of refugees and host community.
- Recognizing the vulnerability of refugees and stateless persons, UNHCR, through cooperation with implementing partners, provided legal support to people it serves.

### 5.2 Lessons Learned

#### **Attaining Favourable Protection Environments**

- Effective collaboration with government is crucial and needs to be nurtured so that joint work can be undertaken to harmonize local legislation with international standards in the area of protection of forcibly displaced persons.
- Introduction of an all-inclusive participatory approach through provision of capacity building to national partners at all levels, and consultations with all relevant national and international partners, can help promote partnership approaches, communicate results and promote the Humanitarian-Development nexus.
- Programming requires a long-term vision, rather than just one-off or short-term activities, reinforced by a robust monitoring and evaluation system.

### **Realizing Basic Rights in Safe Environments**

- Strengthening of systemic cooperation and leveraging the resources available to other development partners can ensure maximum positive impact on the improvement of health and education services for the people UNHCR serves.
- CBI requires targeting criteria that promote and ensure transparency during CBI distribution, and prevent bias or unequal treatment of the people that UNHCR serves.

### **Empowering Communities and Achieving Gender Equality**

- Effective communication with Government, implementing partners and people that UNHCR serves can enhance understanding of their demands and most urgent needs for improved programming and targeted support.
- Further extending partnerships, such as Government-Private Sector-UNHCR can increase coverage, thus enabling enhanced livelihood opportunities for socio-economic integration of refugees.

### **Securing Solutions**

- Adopting an inclusive approach by advocating for the extension of the Amnesty Law, strengthening partnerships, and collaboration with Government and development partners, can help provide solutions to stateless or persons at risk of statelessness in Tajikistan.

### **Effectiveness**

- The effective representation of UNHCR can strengthen relationships with the government to ensure greater government ownership of UNHCR initiatives. This is a decisive factor in the effectiveness and sustainability of UNHCR initiatives.
- The return of UNHCR's observation status in the RSD Commission can enable UNHCR to support a gathering of better quality asylum seeker and refugee statistics (RSD data). This particularly refers to better reporting on the number of persons on a monthly and annual basis, and disaggregated data by gender or age to enable UNHCR to better focus their initiatives based on analysis of AGD.

### **Efficiency**

- Better monitoring and evaluation data can enable improved evidence-based policy formulation and operational response. Collection and documentation of CBI monitoring data such as number of people, disaggregated by age, gender, vulnerable persons can ensure better CBI control and decision-making.

- Since the recent UNHCR funding policy changed, fundraising actions developed autonomously by CO could enable the reduction of a gap between the planned and actual budget of CO.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

### 6.1 Strategic level

#### **UNHCR'S FRAMEWORK FOR PROTECTION, EMPOWERMENT AND SOLUTIONS**

**Conclusion 1. UNHCR has been actively supporting displaced and stateless individuals in Tajikistan despite a complex and dynamic regional geopolitical context. However, there is a disconnect between its strategic intentions and on-ground execution, with issues in how its programs are positioned, integrated, and implemented. There have been mismatches with meeting beneficiary needs, suggesting that more focused and agile strategies are required. The UNHCR's country strategy in Tajikistan has led to partial successes, necessitating a strategic framework overhaul for better integration and long-term impact. (Related to Findings 1, 2, 3 and 4, 18, 24 and 25)**

UNHCR's initiatives in Tajikistan have been guided by a commitment to support displaced and stateless persons, evidenced by their strategies in strengthening the asylum system, addressing statelessness, and offering socio-economic support, within a complex and dynamic geopolitical landscape and restrictive national policies. The organization's efforts to support the asylum system and socioeconomic integration align with broader UN frameworks and show adaptability to the geopolitical context.

Notably, the enactment of the Amnesty Law underscores the relevance of UNHCR's efforts toward statelessness prevention. However, the lack of comprehensive coverage across all districts due to resource constraints and lack of comprehensive data is a matter of concern. The planned strategic response to the situation in Afghanistan and the engagement with the private sector exhibit potential avenues for holistic responses to the needs of people with and for whom UNHCR works.

However, despite the CO strategies' overarching alignment with UNHCR's corporate framework, the practical operationalization of some commitments, such as capacity building or advocacy, was found to be suboptimal, indicating a disparity between plans and results. UNHCR's advocacy programs, especially those concerning the legal aspects of refugees and asylum seekers, were inconsistent. While some initiatives such as the simulation exercise were relevant and effective, most of the other initiatives in support of the rights of refugees (protection, basic services, empowerment) were less so, suffering from limited outreach and engagement. Similarly, capacity-building initiatives were very limited and did not add value to UNHCR's work, failing to progress along the humanitarian-development nexus.

Internally, UNHCR's CO approaches are fragmented, with minimal cross-portfolio collaboration. UNHCR also suffers from weak strategic positioning with the government and is limited in partnerships and collaborative approaches. In addition, UNHCR does not collaborate systematically with relevant UN agencies and other development partners. This siloed approach, further hampered by the operational context and fiscal limitations, underscores the need for consistent, long-term engagement; effective advocacy; strong partnerships; and adaptive strategies tailored to the context of Tajikistan, to ensure that the people UNHCR serves do receive the holistic protection and support. Emphasis on stronger ties with the government, improved communication strategies, and better resource allocation could enhance UNHCR's impact in future endeavours.

## 6.2 Operational level

### **RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS FOR PROTECTION AND DURABLE SOLUTIONS**

**Conclusion 2. Capacity building initiatives were a step in the right direction but lacked cohesive, long-term strategy, impacting their effectiveness, but also their contributions to UNHCR's humanitarian-development-peace nexus. (Related to Finding 5, 18, 24 and 25)**

While UNHCR's intentions and strategic approach in Tajikistan were designed to include a holistic approach, the results achieved were mixed. Commendable capacity-strengthening approaches included capacity building with the Border Troops, PRS and judiciary; simulation exercises and other courses; and other technical support. However, capacity-strengthening initiatives were fragmented, lacking in long-term strategic follow-up, which weakened the effectiveness and sustainability of such efforts.

**Conclusion 3. Protection actions demonstrated reactive approaches, which were not always attuned to the needs of people UNHCR services or with Tajikistan's socio-political complexities. Noteworthy advances in reducing statelessness and providing temporary asylum are currently outpaced by broader systemic challenges and the acute needs of people UNHCR serves, highlighting the urgency for a more proactive adaptable and encompassing response mechanism. (Related to Findings 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 16, 18, 24 and 25)**

From 2020-2022, UNHCR's primary focus in Tajikistan was the local integration of forcibly displaced persons, with some cases of facilitated voluntary return. Its efforts in protection and advocacy presented inconsistencies, limiting the potential to create and maintain a favourable protection environment and to strategically align with the Tajik government's policies and operational realities. This lack of alignment has occasionally resulted in limited contributions, including unaddressed challenges concerning protection, deportations, and issues regarding Refugee Status Determination.

There were instances of notable successes, such as the substantial reduction in statelessness due to collaborative efforts; the Amnesty Law; and continuous work with partners. UNHCR's success vis-à-vis the temporary reopening of the asylum process in 2022 was commendable, although it was often overshadowed by other challenges. A notable challenge related to UNHCR's slow reaction to the need for handling of a mass deportation of Afghan refugees in September 2022. Ongoing statelessness in certain districts also remains a challenge along with other hindrances to the Amnesty Law becoming fully realized.

UNHCR's efforts to ensure protection and solutions for the people it serves have been significantly challenged by the complex socio-economic issues. Within this landscape, the Agency's actions were more reactionary than strategic, reflecting both the external factors and UNHCR's own weak strategic positioning.

### **RESPONDING TO THE NEED FOR EMPOWERMENT AND SELF-RELIANCE**

**Conclusion 4. While the provision of immediate humanitarian relief is still warranted, there is a pressing need to transition from relief operations to fostering sustainable socio-economic development, which promises more enduring outcomes in essential services like healthcare, education, and housing. (Related to Findings 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 24 and 25)**



On the socio-economic front, UNHCR's interventions in employment, health, education, and housing, though well-intentioned, often lacked depth, follow-up and consistency. As such, UNHCR's interventions addressed immediate concerns of refugees and host communities but are falling short of contributing to long-term changes for the displaced population. UNHCR's focus on predominantly humanitarian support (e.g., CBI), limits its ability to bring about broader, transformative outcomes. UNHCR's support for access to public health care facilities and financial support for medication was ad-hoc, without comprehensive approaches and clear criteria for selecting which people receive this.

**Conclusion 5. While existing socio-economic efforts brought some immediate results, they fall short in establishing deep-rooted empowerment, pointing to a need for strategies that promote resilience and self-reliance among the displaced populations. This demands recalibration of the empowerment and livelihood initiatives to suit the realities of the local job market, with an emphasis on innovative and varied vocational training to expand employment possibilities. (Related to Finding 15, 18, 24 and 25)**

The fact that UNHCR's empowerment and livelihood interventions were intermittent and one-off, meant that they could not succeed in bringing sustainable results in the context of Tajikistan's constrained job market and overburdened social sector. For instance, the narrow and traditional approach to vocational training in most cases did not open potential employment avenues any further, despite investments. The absence of UNHCR's innovative approach (beyond traditional livelihoods activities), combined with the country's ongoing economic challenges, raises pressing concerns about the long-term sustainability of UNHCR's livelihood initiatives.

**Conclusion 6. While strategic focus areas like inclusivity and gender equality are commendable, the execution falls behind due to inadequate data management and a lack of climate and environmental considerations in programming, which must be addressed to ensure these elements are woven effectively into the fabric of UNHCR's work in Tajikistan. (Related to Finding 17, 18, 24 and 25)**

UNHCR's strategic framework in Tajikistan includes a strong focus on Age, Gender, and Diversity in its interventions. However, gaps were evident in data disaggregation, comprehensive monitoring, and integrating Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability considerations, indicating a need for more holistic and sustainable support in this area.

## 6.3 Organizational level

### **RESOURCES AND EFFICIENCY**

**Conclusion 7. The efficiency of UNHCR's operations in Tajikistan has been hampered by limited resources and communication difficulties, further strained by excessive workloads and frequent organizational shifts. Despite some improvement due to the adoption of COMPASS, the monitoring practices still require investments. These issues, alongside challenging relations with partners and a turbulent operational context marked by the pandemic, border disputes, and financial instability, significantly affect its efficiency. (Related to Findings 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23)**

During 2020-2021, UNHCR Tajikistan displayed significant efforts in resource mobilization, particularly in anticipation of the Afghan refugee influx. However, challenges such as resource limitations, frequent staff changes, and communication issues have limited optimal performance. Despite an increased workforce, issues persisted with certain staff juggling multiple tasks (e.g., finance and admin), and high workloads. UNHCR's efficiency and relevance in Tajikistan have been challenged by frequent shifts in office positioning within the vertical UNHCR structures. Such issues and shifts should be avoided in complex settings like it is in Tajikistan. Efficiency was also affected by monitoring system limitations, which were to some extent overcome by the introduction of COMPASS. In addition, efficiency was challenged by concerns related to mutual trust between UNHCR and some implementing partners. UNHCR's activities in Tajikistan were also challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic, border tensions, and financial crises, which further complicated the landscape for UNHCR.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1 Strategic level

National asylum system and extension of protection		Timeframe
<b>SR1.</b> <i>linked to conclusion 1</i>	Revamp UNHCR's strategic positioning on protection and solutions issues, by fostering closer collaboration and advocacy with the Tajikistan government and other national and international stakeholders to promote rights, protection and durable solutions for persons UNHCR serves.	
<b>Priority actions</b>	1. Design and implement a robust <b>Stakeholder Communication Strategy</b> that promotes a culture of collaboration, reducing silos, and ensuring that UNHCR's programs and results are clearly communicated and understood by its partners and persons UNHCR serves, while considering local norms and traditions.	Q2 2024
	2. Refine <b>Advocacy and Awareness Raising Strategy</b> , incorporating learnings from successful initiatives like the simulation exercise or the reopening of the asylum process, to address rights of refugees and asylum seekers effectively	Q2 2024
	3. To underpin these strategic measures, <b>step up the leadership of UNHCR's public presence</b> in Tajikistan through the role of Head of Office to proactively promote UNHCR's work and results, as well as needs and rights of persons UNHCR serves.	2024
<b>Responsibility</b>	CO-UNHCR Head of Office, CO Communication officer, MCO, RB	
<b>Priority</b>	High	

## 7.2 Operational level

Responding to the needs for protection and durable solutions		Timeframe
<b>OPR2.</b> <i>Linked to Conclusion 2</i>	Strengthen Capacity Building and Strategic Engagement by realigning UNHCR's strategic approach in Tajikistan to ensure that capacity-strengthening initiatives are in line with regional approaches and are continuous, cohesive, and effective, avoiding fragmentation and focusing on sustainable outcomes	
<b>Priority actions</b>	1. Develop a more structured <b>Capacity Building Strategy</b> , emphasizing practical applicability and alignment with the humanitarian-development nexus, ensuring that initiatives add tangible value to UN engagement in Tajikistan and also respond to the priorities and needs of government institutions. The strategy should provide a framework for needs-based selection of beneficiaries of capacity building support.	Q2 2024
	2. Establish a regular and structured training regimen for selected beneficiaries of capacity building support incorporating feedback mechanisms to ensure the relevance and applicability of capacity-building efforts.	2024
	3. Develop a long-term engagement model post-training and capacity-building sessions, ensuring consistent follow-up and feedback, addressing gaps, and refining future training based on evidence of working methods and needs collected through stakeholder feedback	2024
<b>Responsibility</b>	CO-UNHCR, MCO, RB	
<b>Priority</b>	Medium	

Responding to the needs for protection and durable solutions		Timeline
<b>OPR3.</b> <i>Linked to Conclusion 3</i>	Strengthen UNHCR's operational and advocacy frameworks in Tajikistan to proactively address, mediate, and resolve challenges faced by forcibly displaced persons.  This can be achieved through the following priority actions:	
<b>Priority actions</b>	1. Build on UNHCR's corporate tools to design and implement a country specific and robust early warning system to anticipate potential	2024

	challenges, like mass deportations with consideration of relevant border infrastructure, ensuring timely mediation and safeguarding the rights of forcibly displaced persons in Tajikistan.	
	2. Ensure UNHCR senior management in Tajikistan is supported by the RB to step up protection of forcibly displaced persons and advocacy in case of deportation or other protection issues.	2024 - onwards
	3. Find appropriate durable solutions for the cases of mandate refugees. Complementary pathways coupled with Resettlement for the most vulnerable cases should be integrated in the interventions to lead to more sustainable results	2024 - onwards
<b>Responsibility</b>	CO-UNHCR Head of Office, CO, MCO and RB	
<b>Priority</b>	High	

Responding to the need for empowerment and self-reliance		Timeframe
<b>OPR4.</b> <i>Linked to conclusions 4 and 5</i>	UNHCR should develop its livelihoods strategy for Tajikistan, transitioning from immediate, short-term relief to comprehensive, long-term empowerment and self-reliance strategies that align with the local socio-economic context, in partnership with development actors who have more capacity and resources to achieve results.	
<b>Priority actions</b>	1. UNHCR should diversify its approach to vocational training, including market assessments to ensure alignment with Tajikistan's employment landscape. Building on existing and exploring new collaborative efforts with the government, development partners and private sector will help expand job placement opportunities for the right holders.	2024
	2. Explore good practices of other UNHCR COs that have successful initiatives of refugees' livelihoods and economic inclusion that can be replicated in Tajikistan.	2024 - onwards

	3. Support labour mobility by including in existing programmes awareness raising campaigns and support to the interested persons through individual and group counselling. Initiatives such as facilitation of links between the employers abroad and people UNHCR serves could also be explored.	2024 - onwards
	4. Continue close interactions and exchanges with other COs in the region and with MCO and RB to tap on relevant expertise and revise livelihood interventions considering the context.	2024 - onwards
	5. Strategically scale up basic need support in the context of funding constraints, e.g., through joint programming with UN agencies and other development partners, to ensure more significant response to refugees' needs, specifically in access to health services and education.	2024 - onwards
<b>Responsibility</b>	CO- CO-UNHCR protection team	
<b>Priority</b>	Medium	

Responding to the need for empowerment and self-reliance		Timeframe
<b>OPR5.</b> <i>Linked to conclusion 6</i>	Integrate considerations of Age, Gender, Diversity, Climate Resilience, and Environmental Sustainability into UNHCR's Monitoring & Evaluation framework in Tajikistan. This will enable informed, data driven comprehensive and sustainable support tailored to the country's unique challenges.	
<b>Priority actions</b>	1. Enhance data collection mechanisms for more in-depth disaggregation in line with AGD principles, for identification of most vulnerable groups ensuring more informed and targeted support. This should revisit the existing real-time feedback mechanism to make it more relevant to current needs in order to refine programs continuously in line with the AAP principles.	2024
	2. Develop a framework that inherently integrates Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability considerations	2024



	into all interventions, and notably in infrastructure (e.g., Environment impact assessments; feasibility studies, etc.), ensuring that the UNHCR support enables displaced populations to be equipped to cope with changing environmental challenges in their host regions.	
	3. To achieve this, identify/leverage existing and seek additional resources (financial, human) and capacities for these activities (with implementing partners and UN agencies)	2024 - onwards
<b>Responsibility</b>	CO-UNHCR protection team, MCO, RB	
<b>Priority</b>	Medium	

## 7.3 Organizational level

Resources and Efficiency		Timeline
<b>OR6.</b> <i>Linked to conclusion 7</i>	Optimize efficiency of Country office through the enhancement of cooperation with partners	
<b>Priority actions</b>	1. Ensure that partners are selected considering results of the previous monitoring reviews of UNHCR. Ensure that partners are monitored by project control team in a respectful and transparent way.	2024
	2. Provide needed continuous support to implementing partners in regard to programming, management, internal monitoring and reporting.	2024 - onwards
<b>Responsibility</b>	UNHCR CO management, MCO and RB	
<b>Priority</b>	High	

Resources and Efficiency		Timeline
<b>OR7.</b> <i>Linked to conclusion 7</i>	Optimize efficiency of Country office resources through rethinking of its strategy, diversification of resources and recalibration of staffing and communication structures.	
<b>Priority actions</b>	For diversification of <i>funding sources</i> , it is recommended to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure there is a proactive resource mobilization strategy in place, with an emphasis on diversified funding sources</li> </ol>	2024
	For recalibration of <i>staffing and communication structures</i> , it is recommended to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure that staff roles are clearly defined, specialized, and avoid too many and/or overlapping tasks per staff member</li> <li>2. Design and implement a robust internal Communication Strategy that addresses and mitigates challenges faced due to frequent structural shifts in the office and promotes synergies and coherence</li> </ol>	2024 - onwards
<b>Responsibility</b>	UNHCR CO management, MCO and RB	

<b>Priority</b>	High	
-----------------	------	--

Resources and Efficiency		Timeline
<b>OR8.</b> <i>Linked to conclusion 7</i>	Optimize efficiency of Country office resources through rethinking of its strategy, diversification of resources and recalibration of staffing and communication structures.	
<b>Priority actions</b>	For diversification of <i>funding sources</i> , it is recommended to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure there is a proactive resource mobilization strategy in place, with an emphasis on diversified funding sources</li> </ol>	2024
	For recalibration of <i>staffing and communication structures</i> , it is recommended to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure that staff roles are clearly defined, specialized, and avoid too many and/or overlapping tasks per staff member</li> <li>2. Design and implement a robust internal Communication Strategy that addresses and mitigates challenges faced due to frequent structural shifts in the office and promotes synergies and coherence</li> </ol>	2024 - onwards
	For <i>COMPAS</i> , it is recommended to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Continue advancing its monitoring mechanisms, such as integrating and expanding the utility of COMPAS, that can help periodically assesses the effectiveness of resource utilization, partnerships, and local outreach efforts. Feedback from this framework can guide resource reallocation, ensuring that UNHCR's interventions remain agile and responsive to the dynamic needs of the displaced and stateless populations it serves in Tajikistan.</li> </ol>	2024 - onwards
<b>Responsibility</b>	UNHCR CO management, MCO and RB	
<b>Priority</b>	Medium	

## 8. ANNEXES

Annex 1. Terms of reference

Annex 2. Evaluation matrix

Annex 3. Additional data on EQ2

Annex 4. Additional data for EQ3

Annex 5. Intervention logic

Annex 6. Data collection tools

Annex 7. Survey results

Annex 8. Stakeholder list

Annex 9. The UNHCR's Country Office portfolio in Tajikistan over the 2020-2022 period

Annex 10. List of persons interviewed in the inception phase

Annex 11. Consent forms

Annex 12. Field mission schedule

Annex 13. Overview of key informants

Annex 14. Evaluation team and roles and responsibilities

Annex 15. Bibliography