

COUNTRY OPERATION PLAN

COUNTRY: TAJIKISTAN

PLANNING YEAR: 2002

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Political context:**

Tajikistan has moved from political uncertainty to relative stability with the civil war ended and the peace agreement signed in 1997. Elections were held in the country in February 2000 and a multi-party parliament convened on 27 March 2000. The efforts for consolidating peace and initiating a process of economic development continues as state priorities. The country is still facing a number of internal security issues arising from the non-integration of former opposition fighters and ambitious political and military elements seeking a larger share of power. Poverty and unemployment are endemic.

The relationship with neighbouring Uzbekistan has been affected by the return of IMU leader Juma Namangoni to Tajikistan from Afghanistan from time to time. The Tajik Government was accused of providing its territory to the armed fundamentalists who enjoyed support of the opposition, now integrated within the Government. This seriously threatened the fragile peace between the central government and the opposition which subsequently eased up when the opposition persuaded Namangoni to leave Tajikistan.

The Government of Uzbekistan has allegedly provided sanctuary to some anti-Government elements from Tajik army with Uzbek ethnicity. This has resulted in difficulties in the relationship between the two countries. The air service between Tashkent and Dushanbe which resumed after several years was abruptly stopped and a visa regime introduced.

The dependence on humanitarian assistance is still large, especially due to the continuing drought for the last two years, and natural disasters. The humanitarian assistance alone, however, is not sufficient to address all the needs. The country also needs to pursue parallel developmental strategy to fight issues of economic sustainability and poverty alleviation as already initiated under advice of IMF and World Bank. The flow of international assistance to Tajikistan, which is rather meagre, is important for sustained growth, political and economic stability.

- **Security Situation:**

Afghan Border:

The border with Afghanistan in the south has all along been a matter of concern for Tajikistan. The continued fighting in that country poses a serious threat to the stability and security of the region in general and to Tajikistan in particular.

The recent fighting has displaced some 10,000 Afghans from Northern Afghanistan who now live on the flood plains of the Pyanj river between the borders of Afghanistan and Tajikistan exposed to attacks from the Talibans and flooding during spring. The prospect of a far bigger influx of Afghan remains possible.

The threat of religious fundamentalism and drug trafficking from across the border are also serious concerns of the Tajik authorities. Drug traffickers in Afghanistan use Tajikistan as a route for smuggling narcotics to Europe through Russia. The European countries as well as the neighbouring Central Asian states have mounted pressure on Tajikistan to effectively

control smuggling of narcotics through its territory. Organized crime in the country, although controlled to a greater extent, remains significant.

- **Protection Issues:**

The general protection climate has deteriorated during 2000 and 2001, with the Government issuing decrees restricting access to asylum procedure and rights of residence within the country to refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as seeking to amend the existing Refugee Law.

UNHCR suspended its assistance operations to Afghans on the islands at the Afghan border, pending compliance with certain conditions. The situation of this group is monitored regularly and assistance is provided through other sources.

In early 2001, the Government of Uzbekistan deported a group of 55 Tajiks of Uzbek ethnicity, who had migrated to Uzbekistan between 1996 and 2000 for mainly economic reasons. The situation of this group was resolved and LO Dushanbe monitors the situation of those who returned to Tajikistan, following up to promote the acquisition of Tajik citizenship.

- **UNHCR's Role:**

UNHCR will continue to play its role of providing protection and assistance to the refugees and returnees through advocacy and negotiation with the Government to ensure a better protection climate. In doing so, UNHCR will enlist the support of UN and international agencies such as OSCE, IFRC and ICRC. Other durable solutions such as voluntary repatriation, resettlement and local integration of Afghan refugees will be pursued.

Individual voluntary repatriation of the residual cases of Tajik refugees in the Central Asian countries will be pursued by providing transportation assistance and reintegration activities as a durable solution. The reintegration programme, which has been gradually phasing down, will close in mid-2002. UNHCR is actively engaged in encouraging development agencies to increase their activities in returnee-affected areas.

Restitution of right of returnees will be ensured by existing monitoring mechanism in the area of return and liaison will be kept with the UN Agencies and international organizations. UNHCR's technical assistance will be offered to the authorities in dealing with individual cases to ensure protection of rights.

The relevant Government institutions will be assisted in creating appropriate legal framework, harmonize existing laws and enacting additional laws for the protection of refugees and returnees.

Awareness creation through sustained public information and capacity building of Government and NGOs will be pursued.

Given the situation on the southern border of Tajikistan, emergency preparedness will be maintained to effectively respond to events as swiftly as possible. Contingency planning for possible emergencies will be pursued, together with Government and other UN agencies.

- **Overview of each beneficiary population:**

Afghan Refugees:

There are over 12,000 Afghan refugees residing in various cities and towns of Tajikistan. According to the figures provided by State Migration Service at the end of year 2000, some

8,109 had applied for Refugee Status Determination of which 4,675 were accepted, 608 rejected, 270 pending, 2,012 closed since they did not show-up for RSD interview. Another 544 cases either died or left the country. UNHCR will continue to provide vulnerable Afghan refugees with protection and material assistance for reimbursement of medical care, education, income generation activities and monetary support. Active negotiations will be pursued with the Government on the Decrees and Refugee Law mentioned earlier.

Tajik Returnees:

There remain residual cases in Central Asian countries, who will continue to be assisted to return should they apply for it voluntarily. UNHCR offices in the region will facilitate transportation, and UNHCR Dushanbe will make payment of cash grant upon return for initial support and will implement reintegration and income generation activities for the returnees for quick reintegration in the society. Capable implementing partners will continue to implement income generating activities which will eventually be handed over to UN agencies by the middle of 2002.

Policy Issues:

The following policy issues will receive highest priority in the UNHCR activities:

- (a) Protect Afghan refugees and provide limited assistance
- (b) Engage in constructive dialogue with the Government to improve the protection climate for refugees and asylum seekers
- (c) Pursue durable solutions through voluntary repatriation, resettlement and local integration. Coordinate with OSCE, IFRC, and IOM on protection issues
- (d) Implement income generation and reintegration activities to create sustainability for returnees lives and self-sufficiency
- (e) Monitor protection/restitution of rights of returnees
- (f) Strengthen linkages with UN and other agencies
- (g) Hand-over of integration activities by the middle of 2002
- (h) Pursue capacity building of Government, local partners/NGOs
- (i) Monitor and respond to emergency situations

• Linkages to other countries within a defined "situation"

The situation in Afghanistan always carries a risk of influx of Afghan refugees in Tajikistan and other neighbouring countries. This will require UNHCR to intervene immediately.

Protection and legal assistance practice for Afghan refugees in Tajikistan and the rest of the Central Asian countries needs to be harmonized to ensure better asylum policy in place.

The voluntary nature of the return of the residual caseload of Tajiks will continue to be monitored in Central Asian countries by UNHCR.

The recent deportation of Tajik citizens from Uzbekistan and the element of statelessness require careful monitoring and intervention with the authorities at appropriate level.

• Presence of other UN agencies and international organizations:

UNHCR has been working closely with UN agencies and other international organizations in Tajikistan in promoting the protection of refugees and assistance activities for returnees to facilitate linkages and integration within the overall country development profile.

UNHCR is a member of the UN country team and the UN Senior Management Team (SMT) and coordinates on issues of mutual concern with the sister UN organizations. UNHCR also has established excellent working relationship with OSCE, IFRC and IOM on the issues of rights of refugees and returnees.

Regarding integration, UNHCR has implementing arrangements with WFP, FAO, UNOPS and also work in close contact with UNICEF, and UNDP in the frame of UNHCR's global agreement with these organizations.

SELECTED PROGRAMME GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- Name of Beneficiary Population: Afghan Refugees in Tajikistan - Main Goal(s): Ensure protection of recognised refugees and asylum-seekers	
Principal Objectives	Related Outputs
- Protect rights of Afghan refugees - Harmonize the country laws with international laws concerning refugees, returnees and asylum seekers - Monitor protection standards - Provide education facilities to Afghan minors - Provide assistance to vulnerables, elderly, unaccompanied minors - Promote self-reliance among women - Build capacity of Government/ local NGOs	- Asylum has been granted, right of movement, and right of residence has been ensured. - Documentation for asylum seekers/ refugees has been ensured - Negotiation on local integration initiated - Resettlement to third countries for limited number of Afghan refugees has been explored - Standard laws have been enacted - Procedure has been streamlined in dealing with statelessness - Similar treatment has been given to asylum seekers/refugees in the region. - Interventions have been made in cases of breaches by authorities - Education provided to all Afghan minors in need of it - Medical reimbursement and monetary assistance has been provided to all vulnerable cases - Skill-development and income generation opportunities have been provided - Awareness on the rights and privileges of refugees/asylum seekers has been created

Name of Beneficiary Population: Tajik Returnees	
Main Goal(s): Facilitate Repatriation and Reintegration of Tajik Returnees	
Principal Objectives	Related Outputs
- Continue reintegration and income generation projects for returnees (to mid-2002) - Provide linkages with other organizations working in returnee areas. - Hand-over of integration activities to UN development mandated agencies - Monitor protection and rights of returnees	- Population returning has been sustained - Skill development and income generating opportunities have been created - Smooth assimilation into host communities has taken place - Better targetting ensured and duplication of assistance avoided - Systematic phase-out of UNHCR involvement in integration activities achieved by mid-2002. - Right of citizenship, employment, access to state services, property, education for returnees have been ensured. - No discrimination against minority groups and vulnerables.