

# Annual Results Report

**2024**

**Kazakhstan MCO**

## Acknowledgements

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### **Note:**

The baseline values presented in this document reflect previous year's progress when available. If such data is not available, strategy baseline values are used instead.

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# Section 1: Context and Overview

## 1.1 Changes to the Operational Context

Central Asia is situated at the crossroads of continents – with the Russian Federation to the north, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran to the south and China to the east. Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan share borders with Afghanistan, and most refugees in Central Asia are from Afghanistan.

Central Asian governments differed in their approach to the situation in Afghanistan. With some cultural and religious links to Central Asian countries, Afghan citizens had previously entered the region for tourism, work or education purposes, facing relatively few obstacles to social integration. From August 2021, all Central Asian countries essentially closed their borders to Afghan citizens with only holders of valid education, business or diplomatic visas permitted to enter.

The governments of all Central Asian countries continued to view the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers through a national security lens, preventing attainment of a full, favourable protection environment, and forcibly displaced people from accessing due rights and services. UNHCR engaged with the UN country team and governments to follow up on previous Universal Periodic Review recommendations and prepare for 2025 UN Human Rights Council reviews.

In 2024, Central Asian governments increasingly engaged with the de facto authorities in Afghanistan while still adhering to United Nations decisions and resolutions. Kazakhstan was the first in the region to remove the Taliban from its registry of terrorist organizations at the end of 2023, followed by the Kyrgyz Republic in September 2024. Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have accepted de facto authorities' diplomatic envoys to their countries. In 2024, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan agreed with the de facto authorities to establish transport corridors. Nonetheless, the de facto authorities' ongoing construction of the Qosh Tepa Canal in Afghanistan on the Amu Darya river, which would significantly reduce Turkmenistan's and Uzbekistan's access to essential irrigation water, has intensified water security threats in a sub-region already severely affected by climate change.

Sanctions on the Russian Federation since the start of the war against Ukraine triggered a significant drop in Central Asian currencies against the United States' dollar. Inflation rates of up to 20% impacted all Central Asian countries, increasing the price of food and other essential items, and limiting the purchasing power of vulnerable groups. The rising cost of living has led to higher expenses for partnership agreements with UNHCR implementing partners, as well as increased costs for direct implementation.

Ongoing political, socioeconomic and security developments in the region – including the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, war in Ukraine and increased security measures jeopardizing asylum-seekers' access to protection – risk affecting UNHCR's intended results across Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan

## 1.2. Progress Against the Desired Impact

### 1. Impact Area: Attaining Favorable Protection Environments

**By 2025, all UNHCR beneficiaries are able to actively participate in the social and economic life of host countries**

**By 2025, refugees and asylum-seekers enjoy unhindered access to the territory of the country, efficient status determination procedures and can exercise their fundamental rights**

**By 2025, statelessness is eradicated in the Kyrgyz Republic and Turkmenistan and significantly reduced in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan**

Indicator			
Country	Population Type	Baseline	Actual (2024)
1.1 Proportion of people seeking international protection who are able to access asylum procedures			
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	65.31%	100.00%
Kyrgyzstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Turkmenistan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0.00%	0.00%
Uzbekistan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0.00%	0.00%
1.2 Proportion of people who are able to move freely within the country of habitual residence			
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	97.61%	98.30%
Kyrgyzstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Turkmenistan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Uzbekistan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	0.06%

Refugees and asylum-seekers had some limited access to territory, fair and efficient recognition, and fundamental rights in 2024. Some refugees accessed these rights through advocacy, including with UN country teams, government donors, and civil society stakeholders.

In 2024, Kazakhstan recognized 76 asylum-seekers as refugees and rejected 136. Authorities revoked the refugee status of three families who had lived peacefully in Kazakhstan for over a decade, based on the perceived fundamental change in circumstances in the country of origin which had been the basis for the initial recognition as refugees. UNHCR-supported appeal saw their refugee status restored. Courts also overturned negative asylum decisions for an Afghan family and two Ukrainian asylum-seekers who were later granted refugee status.

The Kyrgyz Republic recognised 21 asylum-seekers as refugees while rejecting 137, including 109 from Afghanistan. Despite UN interventions, two asylum-seekers were refouled and another two denied access to asylum procedures from detention. UNHCR recommendations aimed at securing access to asylum procedures for people in detention, and strengthening non-refoulement safeguards, awaited implementation.

UNHCR supported the National Centre of the Kyrgyz Republic for the Prevention of Torture to visit Ministry of Justice detention facilities, monitoring access to asylum procedures and fundamental rights while in detention. These visits assessed a method for analyzing extradition requests, later promoted for adoption by law-enforcement authorities and the judiciary.

Entry to Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan required valid visas. No new asylum-seekers have been registered there since 2005, and UNHCR could not verify refoulement or access to asylum, including for detained people needing international protection.

In Uzbekistan, UNHCR strengthened authorities' understanding of legal frameworks protecting forcibly displaced people, while advocating for access to territory and national asylum procedures. In December 2024, two Afghan nationals were deported – one of whom was detained for over a year for irregular border crossing.

All four countries displayed political will and public support to reduce statelessness, helping more than 4,000 people acquire or confirm a nationality, including by improving laws and regulations preventing childhood statelessness and conducting awareness campaigns to identify those at risk. In 2024, statelessness in the sub-region fell by 10%.

In Kazakhstan, 739 stateless people were granted citizenship, 52 gained the citizenship of another country, and 642 were assisted with documentation by UNHCR partners.

The Kyrgyz Republic revised three laws, introducing safeguards against statelessness in citizenship renunciation, ensuring all children born in the country are registered at birth, and authorizing the Government to establish a statelessness determination procedure. The Kyrgyz Republic granted citizenship to 275 stateless people.

As the 2019-2024 National Action Plan to End Statelessness and the global #IBelong Campaign ended, Turkmenistan became the second country in the world to resolve all known statelessness cases.

Uzbekistan reduced its stateless population by 6% to under 20,000.

Refugee identity cards were added to a list of official documents residents can use to apply for individual identification numbers in Kazakhstan. These are essential to access Kazakh commercial and government services. The numbers will be issued with all new refugee identity cards. The Government includes provisions for disability recognition and refugee children's access to social services.

Afghan citizens in Uzbekistan increasingly reported rejected visa extension requests and feeling compelled by authorities to return to Afghanistan. UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM submitted a joint letter to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Internal Affairs requesting facilitated legal avenues for forcibly displaced people to stay. At year-end, the Government had not responded.

## 4. Impact Area: Securing Solutions

**By 2025, all beneficiaries to UNHCR benefit from wide range of solution, including access to civil registration documentation and naturalization**

Indicator			
Country	Population Type	Baseline	Actual (2024)
<b>4.1 Number of refugees who voluntarily return in safety and dignity to their country of origin</b>			
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	4
Kyrgyzstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	0
Turkmenistan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	0
Uzbekistan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	0
<b>4.2a Number of people who departed on resettlement</b>			
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	0
Turkmenistan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	0
Uzbekistan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	0
<b>4.2b Number of people who departed through complementary pathways</b>			
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	7
Kyrgyzstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	3	10

Turkmenistan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	0
Uzbekistan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1	1
<b>4.3a Number of stateless people for whom nationality is granted or confirmed</b>			
Kazakhstan	Stateless Persons	2,240	1,348
Kyrgyzstan	Stateless Persons	277	59
Turkmenistan	Stateless Persons	1,261	2,597
Uzbekistan	Stateless Persons	4,993	1,320
<b>4.3b Number of refugees for whom residency status is granted or confirmed</b>			
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	13
Kyrgyzstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	21	21
Turkmenistan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	3	4
Uzbekistan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	5	5

In pursuit of the goals of the global #IBelong campaign, all four countries continued statelessness reduction and prevention efforts, including through ensuring universal birth registration and improving statelessness determination procedures (SDPs).

Jointly with the Government of Turkmenistan, UNHCR co-convened the Ending Statelessness in Central Asia Ministerial Conference, gathering government officials, international organizations and civil society representatives from across Central Asia to discuss progress and the remaining challenges in eradicating statelessness. As a result, participating States adopted the Ashgabat Declaration to End Statelessness, reaffirming their commitment to ensuring universal birth registration, strengthening nationality laws, and enhancing cooperation on SDPs. The declaration sets a framework for continued regional collaboration, with UNHCR providing technical and legal support to ensure effective implementation.

UNHCR advocates for long-lasting solutions that empower refugees, particularly mandate refugees, to rebuild their lives.

It supported Kazakhstan to establish legislative safeguards to reduce statelessness, providing technical expertise and recommendations to improve laws and the effectiveness of SDPs. UNHCR and partners provided legal assistance to people with undetermined nationality, supporting them to acquire or confirm citizenship of Kazakhstan, or be recognized as stateless.

UNHCR and the Migration Service Committee signed a 2024 Joint Action Plan to improve SDPs in Kazakhstan and, with partners, conducted a second nationwide campaign on the identification and reduction of statelessness. It led to 728 people with undetermined nationality or at risk of statelessness being identified, with 642 assisted to obtain documentation. A workshop in December 2024 enabled migration authorities to review the campaign's outcomes and exchange experiences of implementing existing SDPs.

UNHCR shared examples of international best practices with the Ministry of Justice to support expanding registration grounds for children born outside medical institutions. Proposals for legislative amendments were subsequently submitted to the Presidential Administration for consideration, as part of the country's progress in implementing 2019 High-Level Segment on Statelessness pledges.

Through its partner, UNHCR provided consultations and referrals for 31 stateless people in the Kyrgyz Republic, and those with undetermined nationality – three of whom acquired citizenship while three were granted statelessness status.

Marking the completion of its 2019-2024 National Action Plan to End Statelessness, and the global #IBelong Campaign, Turkmenistan granted citizenship to its remaining 1,146 stateless people, becoming only the second country in the world to resolve all known cases of statelessness. This was highlighted during the Ashgabat Conference on Ending Statelessness, where government officials, international organizations, and civil society representatives from across Central Asia gathered to discuss progress and remaining challenges in eradicating statelessness.

Turkmenistan legalized the status of one mandate refugee by providing a residency permit. UNHCR, through NGO partners and contractors, identified people who were undocumented or at risk of statelessness, providing them with counselling and referrals to migration authorities for documentation and naturalization processes.

In Uzbekistan, all five mandate refugees continued living legally in the country with residency permits granted to them in 2023. They must reside in the country legally for five years to qualify for permanent residency.

## Other Core Impact Indicators

Country	Population Type	Baseline	Actual(2024)
<b>2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities</b>			
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	96.95%	100.00%
Kazakhstan	Stateless Persons	100.00%	100.00%
Kyrgyzstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Kyrgyzstan	Stateless Persons	100.00%	100.00%
Turkmenistan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Uzbekistan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Uzbekistan	Stateless Persons	100.00%	100.00%
<b>2.3 Proportion of people with access to health services</b>			
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	34.66%	48.14%
Kazakhstan	Stateless Persons	93.02%	94.08%
Kyrgyzstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	92.25%	94.27%
Kyrgyzstan	Stateless Persons	100.00%	100.00%
Turkmenistan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Uzbekistan	Stateless Persons	100.00%	100.00%
<b>3.1 Proportion of people who have the right to decent work</b>			
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	97.61%	25.64%
Kazakhstan	Stateless Persons	93.02%	94.08%
Kyrgyzstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	9.53%	7.67%
Kyrgyzstan	Stateless Persons	100.00%	100.00%
Turkmenistan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	23.08%	0.15%
Uzbekistan	Stateless Persons	100.00%	100.00%
<b>3.2a Proportion of children and young people enrolled in primary education</b>			
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Kyrgyzstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Turkmenistan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0.00%	0.00%
Uzbekistan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers		0.00%
<b>3.2b Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education</b>			
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Kyrgyzstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%



Turkmenistan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0.00%	0.00%
<b>3.3 Proportion of people feeling safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark</b>			
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	98.30%
Kazakhstan	Stateless Persons	100.00%	100.00%
Kyrgyzstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Kyrgyzstan	Stateless Persons	100.00%	100.00%
Turkmenistan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
Uzbekistan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	0.06%
Uzbekistan	Stateless Persons	100.00%	100.00%

## 1.3 Challenges to Achieving Impacts

The asylum space continued to shrink across the sub-region as national security and political considerations undermined fair and efficient refugee recognition and protection. Trade and economic interests also influenced the political agenda, including decision-making on asylum claims and extradition requests from neighbouring countries. Two instances of refoulement from the Kyrgyz Republic and low refugee recognition rates highlighted the influence of geopolitical considerations and State priorities on asylum issues.

The sub-region received people fleeing from Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Most new arrivals did not seek asylum, preferring to maintain other more preferential statuses, where possible. These people were effectively in a refugee-like situation, which deteriorates once alternative options fail to prevent refoulement.

All land and air borders were closed to Afghan citizens without business, education or diplomatic visas, preventing refugees from seeking asylum in Central Asia.

The frequent turnover of Government personnel hindered UNHCR's operational efficiency, as new personnel required briefings and training. This led to slower and lower quality decision making as they familiarized themselves with their new roles. A failure to allocate adequate State budgets to asylum offices and procedures, including interpretation, compounded these weaknesses.

Despite UNHCR advocacy efforts, there was little progress in the precarious legal status of mandate refugees in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic or Turkmenistan, with their appeals to presidential administrations for citizenship not yet met. Despite having lived in the countries for many years – some even decades – and being culturally integrated, without legal status they could not access most socioeconomic rights and services, including access to local integration through naturalization.

Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Turkmenistan had laws on refugees, national asylum systems, and national refugee status determination procedures. Refugee recognition rates were on the decline though there were slight improvements in Kazakhstan in 2023 and 2024. There were no asylum applications in Turkmenistan.

Refugees in Kazakhstan faced difficulties extending their residence status, which is an annual legal requirement. As commercial ties with the de facto authorities in Afghanistan strengthened, the number of rejected asylum claims and residence permits of Afghan citizens in Kazakhstan increased. Similarly, increasingly restricted migration regulations in Europe affected the Government's attitude towards displaced people.

Afghan nationals, including refugees and asylum-seekers, made all transactions in cash as they had been unable to access financial services in Kazakhstan since 2021. This hindered their ability to secure official employment, as most employers transfer salaries electronically and will not pay in cash.

Kazakhstan national legislation did not provide accelerated naturalization for stateless people or fully prevent new cases of statelessness, including child statelessness. In 2024, rules for determining the legal status of people without proof of Kazakhstani or other citizenship were amended. While some rights expanded, people had to prove the absence of foreign citizenship, which risked delaying the status determination process and leaving applicants undocumented indefinitely.

Uzbekistan did not accede to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. It was the only country in Central Asia without refugee legislation and procedures. This prevented people accessing protection, and social and legal rights. Despite UNHCR and partners advocating for interim avenues for the legalization of forcibly displaced people until national asylum legislation is established, there were no positive developments.

## 1.4 Collaboration and Partnerships

As an active UN country team member and an integral part of UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF) in each country, UNHCR engaged with the Governments, United Nations, international financial institutions, diplomatic partners and others to ensure forcibly displaced and stateless people were not left behind in States' achievement of the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs).

UNHCR constructively engaged with responsible government entities, including but not limited to ministries, presidential administrations, prosecutor generals' offices, border guards' services, the judiciary, ombudspersons' offices and various committees, including those focused on migration, social policy, security and human rights.

Government, academia, NGO consortia and the UN in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan had previously made 34 pledges to the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees. In 2024, UNHCR supported States to implement those pledges, including through a regional consultative meeting in Almaty, which was attended in person by 25 representatives from the Governments of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Turkmenistan, as well as Tajikistan. By year-end, nine pledges were completed and work on 23 was ongoing.

In the spirit of the main SDGs principle, leave no one behind, and in support of the Global Compact on Refugees, UN country teams in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan were integrating collective commitments to the UN Common Pledge 2.0 into country-level UN plans, including the UNSDCF, and supporting Government plans.

While Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan were no longer part of the 2023 Afghanistan regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP), UNHCR continued to lead inter-agency coordination groups at technical and heads of agency levels in Uzbekistan to ensure an efficient response and identify strategic solutions to address the situation of Afghan nationals needing international protection. Supporting the UN country team's implementation of their commitment to the UN Common Pledge 2.0, in 2024, the technical level group was reshaped to focus on forced displacement and statelessness.

In Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic, UNHCR signed letters of understanding with UNICEF, contextualizing cooperation within the UNHCR-UNICEF Global Strategic Framework and expanding joint efforts in protecting and improving the lives of forcibly displaced and stateless children and women.

Strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus, UNHCR consulted with development agencies, international financial institutions and the private sector to identify areas for cooperation and the inclusion of

forcibly displaced and stateless people in their projects. UNHCR continued working closely with the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe projects.

With private sector support, and in collaboration with UN partners and the Government of Uzbekistan, UNHCR conducted climate action programmes to transform its Global Stockpile Termez into a fully solarized facility, and to support income generation for forcibly displaced Afghan citizens and vulnerable host community members through cash-for-work programmes.

Targeted messages for key partners advocated for the rights of forcibly displaced and stateless people.

Collaboration with universities and the private sector enhanced educational and other learning opportunities for refugees and promoted their legal awareness as potential future policymakers and practitioners.

In Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic, UNHCR contributed to UN country team submissions for the UN Human Rights Council as part of the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review for both countries, advocating for the rights of forcibly displaced and stateless people.

# Section 2: Results

## 2.1. Outcomes and Achievements

### 1. Outcome Area: Access to Territory, Reg. and Documentation

Access to civil registration and identity documentation is improved for stateless persons and all children born in the country are registered with a civil authority.

Refugees and asylum seekers benefit from efficient and functional referral mechanisms

#### Core Outcome Indicators

Indicator				
Country	Population Type	Baseline	Target (2024)	Actual (2024)
1.1 Proportion of refugees and asylum seekers registered on an individual basis				
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	87.88%	90.00%	98.30%
1.3 Proportion of people with legally recognized identity documents or credentials				
Kazakhstan	Stateless Persons	88.45%	96.00%	94.08%

### Progress Against the Desired Outcome

To support the Government of Kazakhstan’s pledge to establish border referral procedures and ensure unhindered access to territory and asylum procedures, UNHCR and partners evaluated admission procedures and reception facilities for asylum-seekers at two of its land borders and two of its international airports. More than 50 border guards were trained on asylum-seekers’ rights and international principles of protection regarding access to territory and asylum.

In the Kyrgyz Republic, 16 UNHCR border monitoring visits to 13 checkpoints monitored admission practices and provided refresher sessions on asylum procedures to 260 personnel, including 28 heads of border checkpoints. With no new asylum applications registered by the Government of Turkmenistan in 15 years, UNHCR could not monitor its referral mechanisms.

UNHCR outlined standards for the identification and referral of people needing international protection to an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe border services workshop in Uzbekistan. With no national asylum system, UNHCR highlighted the country’s non-refoulement obligations, in line with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which it had ratified.

UNHCR and the Migration Service Committee of Kazakhstan signed a 2024 Joint Action Plan, encompassing efforts to improve statelessness determination procedures (SDPs) and conduct a nation-wide statelessness identification and documentation campaign. UNHCR and the Migration Service Committee conducted a joint workshop to review the outcomes of the nationwide identification campaign, and exchange experiences in implementing existing SDPs. The workshop was attended by 44 participants, including the Committee’s Chair and representatives, its regional departments, UNHCR and NGOs.

To support the justice system in protecting children’s rights, especially those vulnerable to statelessness, UNHCR delivered an online training session for juvenile court judges, organized by the Academy of Justice under the Supreme Court. UNHCR’s partners shared practical insights on establishing birth registration for

undocumented people through judicial channels.

During a three-month pilot phase of the Kyrgyz Republic’s automated inter-ministerial data exchange, 876 undocumented children received birth certificates and were referred to social workers for follow-up support. At the 2023 GRF, the Kyrgyz Republic pledged to support the automation of information exchange between relevant ministries to ensure all children are effectively registered and documented at birth. The Ministries of Digital Development, Health, and Labour, Social Security and Migration subsequently signed an action plan that established business processes and data exchange modalities between the parties, including the integration of the several automated information systems. During the three-month pilot phase, 876 undocumented children were identified, duly issued birth certificates, and referred to social workers for further follow-up.

UNHCR workshops strengthened Turkmen national institutions’ capacity to address statelessness and asylum. Training for 20 State Migration Service employees and partners covered international legal framework, status determination procedures and the rights of stateless people and refugees. A seminar for the Ombudsperson’s Office strengthened its capacity to support forcibly displaced and stateless people in detention facilities and at borders.

As part of the 2024 joint workplan with the Government of Turkmenistan, UNHCR trained district-level and Supreme Court judges on asylum and statelessness. Universal birth registration was achieved in Turkmenistan, complemented by mechanisms for late registration to address cases previously unnoticed by authorities.

UNHCR seminars were held for Uzbekistan’s authorities on access to civil registration and identity documentation for stateless people, as well as the protection of forcibly displaced people. Tailored sessions reached 20 staff from the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Oliy Majlis (Supreme Assembly); 15 from the Center for Advanced Training of Lawyers under the Ministry of Justice; 20 judges; and 20 regional Ministry of Interior staff with a further in-depth session provided for 25 Ministry of Internal Affairs officials and 25 lawyers and NGO staff offering free legal aid. Activities were implemented with the National Human Rights Centre of Uzbekistan.

UNHCR and the National Human Rights Centre of Uzbekistan convened the Central Asian Conference on Ensuring Birth Registration to Prevent Statelessness, attended by more than 40 Government representatives from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, as well as international organizations and local authorities. Discussions focused on six key areas, including universal birth registration systems, integration of civil registration with social services, leveraging technology for efficient registration, and best practices in protecting the rights of stateless children.

Supported by UNHCR, the Central Asian Network on Statelessness held its eighth annual meeting, in Tashkent, where regional stakeholders focused on addressing statelessness. Key discussions included developing a regional Statelessness Index and reviewing progress made under the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness

## 2. Outcome Area: Status Determination

**Asylum seekers have access to fair and efficient RSD procedures**

### Core Outcome Indicators

Indicator				
Country	Population Type	Baseline	Target (2024)	Actual (2024)
<b>2.3 Proportion of people undergoing asylum procedures who have access to an effective appeal mechanism after first instance rejection of their claim</b>				
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

## Core Output Indicators

Indicator		
Country	Population Type	Actual (2024)
<b>02.1.1 UNHCR has provided capacity development support to strengthen the national status determination system(s), in accordance with international standards</b>		
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Yes

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Access to asylum procedures, and fair and efficient refugee recognition, did not tangibly improve in 2024. UNHCR facilitated the refugee status determination (RSD) distance learning programme, which included a 12-week online phase followed by a four-day residential workshop. Held annually, the programme aims to enhance the quality of RSD procedures region wide. The course was redesigned in 2024, incorporating thematic webinars and focusing on practical case studies relevant to the region's asylum caseload. 38 participants from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan attended the online phase, including asylum staff; members of national RSD commissions; judges; and staff from the Ombudsperson Office, General Prosecutor's Office and NGOs, 33 of whom also attended the workshop to reinforce and exercise theoretical knowledge gained.

With UNHCR support, two government officials from Kazakhstan and one representative from academia in Uzbekistan enrolled in the online course on international refugee law offered by the International Institute of Humanitarian Law (Sanremo).

In Kazakhstan, UNHCR and partners held workshops to build the expertise of government officials, judges and other legal professionals, and strengthen the unified application of national law on refugees and relevant by-laws, international standards and the 1951 Convention. Training sessions reached 20 judges from first instance and appellate courts; 43 employees of local executive bodies, together with the Committee on Migration of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population; and more than 400 lawyers and legal consultants joined a hybrid session co-hosted by the Ministry of Justice.

UNHCR and OHCHR intervened in cases of hindered access to asylum procedures and two reported cases of refoulement in the Kyrgyz Republic. The high rejection rate, including Afghan refugees, indicated that national RSD procedures were not applied fairly. UNHCR conducted 23 refresher sessions on asylum and refugee protection, including extradition and international standards, as well as the State's obligations, for 546 law enforcement officers; border guard personnel; staff of the Ombudsman's Office; refugee unit staff of the Ministry of Labour, Social Development and Migration; judges and prosecutors; and legal academia. UNHCR's partner also conducted eight activities for 162 government officials, strengthening their awareness of asylum and statelessness issues.

UNHCR training for 20 employees of the State Migration Service of Turkmenistan and partners in Ashgabat, focused on the international legal framework, RSD procedures and the rights of asylum-seekers and refugees under international law.

Uzbekistan has not yet ratified the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol and still lacks a national asylum system. Consequently, people requiring international protection do not have access to registration, RSD procedures or other forms of protection. At the 2018 and 2023 sessions of the Universal Periodic Review in the Human Rights Council, Uzbekistan supported recommendations to ratify the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol and establish a national asylum system. At the 2018 review, Uzbekistan also supported recommendations to ratify the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961

Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. In 2024, UNHCR contributed to a workshop organized by the National Human Rights Centre of Uzbekistan and OHCHR to develop a national action plan for implementing recommendations. Meanwhile, UNHCR delivered a lecture to more than 30 students from the University of World Economy and Diplomacy on the principles of international refugee protection, including international legal instruments for refugee protection and RSD procedures.

### 3. Outcome Area: Protection Policy and Law

**National legal and procedural frameworks are harmonized, and refugees have access to rights accorded by the 1951 Convention.**

**Safeguards against statelessness are included in the national legal frameworks and protection of stateless persons is ensured through statelessness determination procedures in line with international standards.**

#### Core Outcome Indicators

Indicator				
Country	Population Type	Baseline	Target (2024)	Actual (2024)
<b>3.1 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol</b>				
Kazakhstan	None	Unknown	Progressing toward alignment	Progressing toward alignment
<b>3.2 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness</b>				
Kazakhstan	None	Unknown	Progressing toward alignment	Progressing toward alignment

#### Core Output Indicators

Indicator		
Country	Population Type	Actual (2024)
<b>03.1.1 UNHCR has engaged in legislative and judicial processes to strengthen laws and policies for the protection of refugees, IDPs, returnees and stateless people and/or the reduction and prevention of statelessness</b>		
Kazakhstan	Stateless Persons	Yes

### Progress Against the Desired Outcome

UNHCR maintained joint workplans with Government counterparts in the four countries, outlining shared activities required to protect and promote the rights of forcibly displaced and stateless people, and to harmonize national legal and procedural frameworks with the 1951 Convention and international standards.

Following UNHCR advocacy, the Government of Kazakhstan included refugee identity cards as an approved document people can use to obtain an individual identification number – essential for accessing Government and social services. The numbers will be issued with all new refugee identity cards. The Government includes provisions for disability recognition and refugee children’s access to social services.

Aligned with its 2019 Global Refugee Forum pledges, and with UNHCR support, the Kyrgyz Republic improved legislation to grant recognized refugees equal access to healthcare and health insurance. It also defined refugee travel documents, with regulations forthcoming. In close cooperation with the Ombudsperson’s Office, UNHCR contributed to recommendations on asylum-seekers’ rights in its 2023 annual report (issued in 2024). Free legal aid for administrative justice became fully available in 2024.

UNHCR also supported the development of a comprehensive methodology for the Kyrgyz Republic to



analyze extradition requests and prevent refoulement of people requiring international protection. The methodology serves as a guiding framework for cases at risk of deportation or expulsion.

In Turkmenistan, mandate refugees maintained access to some rights, including healthcare and social protection, but challenges persisted, including the requirement for 'propiska' registration and the need for people to renounce their original nationality before naturalization. To enhance national human rights institutions' awareness of refugees' rights, UNHCR organized an information session for the Ombudsperson's Office. By year-end, four of the 12 remaining mandate refugees held valid residence permits and solutions for the naturalization of all mandate refugees had been agreed, with a plan for full implementation by the end of 2025.

Uzbekistan was considering acceding to the 1951 Convention. To support this, UNHCR shared information on protection principles, the right to seek asylum, and protection against refoulement for the Ombudsperson and its regional branches, staff of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, judges, the Lawyers' Training Center under the Justice Ministry, and NGOs. It also shared its technical expertise with the National Human Rights Centre for the drafting of the refugee law.

Statelessness determination procedures in Kazakhstan were aligned with most international standards. UNHCR shared recommended amendments with the Government to establish safeguards against statelessness and provided technical expertise to enhance its procedures.

UNHCR supported the drafting of the statelessness determination procedures in the Kyrgyz Republic, which are now pending approval, and the Government introduced safeguards in its nationality law to ensure that children born in the country but otherwise stateless would be granted citizenship. UNHCR provided 23 recommendations to five laws and bylaws to better harmonize national legislation with international standards of refugee protection and statelessness prevention.

Legislation in Turkmenistan incorporated most safeguards against statelessness; however, some provisions regarding children born outside the country and renunciation of current citizenship before applying for Turkmen nationality remain unaddressed. Statelessness determination procedures were in place and aligned with most standards.

Uzbekistan requires foreigners to renounce their existing citizenship before acquiring stateless status. People must also reside in the country for five years before they can apply for naturalization, contributing to an unnecessary increase in statelessness cases.

## 8. Outcome Area: Well-Being and Basic Needs

**Basic needs of refugees and asylum seekers are met through monetary support**

### Core Outcome Indicators

Indicator				
Country	Population Type	Baseline	Target (2024)	Actual (2024)
<b>8.1 Proportion of people that receive cash transfers and/or non-food items</b>				
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	37.43%	82.00%	28.64%

### Core Output Indicators

Indicator		
Country	Population Type	Actual (2024)
<b>08.1.1 Number of people who received cash assistance</b>		
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	185



## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

The cost of food, clothing, medicines, rent and utilities continued to rise in 2024, greatly diminishing the purchasing power of refugees and asylum-seekers. As asylum-seekers and refugees remained ineligible for social protection, UNHCR used cash assistance to help the most vulnerable meet basic needs.

UNHCR provided multi-purpose cash assistance to 185 asylum-seekers and refugees in Kazakhstan and supported 182 vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers to access urgent health services beyond the State-provided minimum.

In the Kyrgyz Republic, UNHCR distributed multi-purpose cash assistance to 282 asylum-seekers and refugees to cover their basic and emergency needs. Education grants were provided to 27 families, while 57 refugee and asylum-seeking children received school supplies. UNHCR assisted 17 people to obtain medical insurance, enabling them to access health services on par with citizens.

UNHCR updated its cash assistance standard operating procedures, increasing the amount of financial assistance aligned with the State-calculated minimum expenditure basket, and introducing direct transfers to beneficiaries' bank accounts through a financial service provider. The process of reviewing assistance eligibility was also updated to include household assessment results, providing the review committee with broader data on applicants' vulnerability.

One mandate refugee in Uzbekistan received multipurpose cash assistance.

## 13. Outcome Area: Self Reliance, Economic Inclusion and Livelihoods

**Refugees' resilience increased through income generating opportunities.**

### Core Outcome Indicators

Indicator				
Country	Population Type	Baseline	Target (2024)	Actual (2024)
13.2. Proportion of people who self-report positive changes in their income compared to the previous year				
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	51.55%		7.99%

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

During the 2024-2025 academic year, 17 young refugees (five men, 12 women) were studying at tertiary level through the DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) scholarship programme. UNHCR organized a series of activities for DAFI students and refugee youth, including training sessions focused on healthy habits, gender equality, HIV/AIDS prevention, bullying prevention and leadership skills. A summer camp was held with partners for teenage refugees, providing workshops on entrepreneurial skills, digital marketing, personal branding, presentation skills and financial literacy.

Aligned with its 2023 Global Refugee Forum pledges, the Government of Kazakhstan implemented a refugee quota for its higher education scholarships, providing 10 in 2024.

UNHCR's social assistance partner organized sewing courses for five female refugees, providing each with a sewing machine to enable them to continue their work and earn an income.

In the Kyrgyz Republic, UNHCR supported 30 refugees and asylum-seekers to seek sustainable livelihoods through vocational training and language courses.

Through the DAFI refugee scholarship programme, nine refugee students are pursuing higher education. One mandate refugee was included in the UN Youth Advisory Board, empowering them to advocate for the rights of their community.

UNHCR supported and engaged the 15-member Refugee Youth Group, including through a Debate Club, Youth Advisory Board, and UN events such as World Refugee Day, UN Day, and 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence. The Group aims to support refugees' social integration and foster resilient young people who contribute to the sustainable development of their host communities.

In Uzbekistan, with private sector donor support, UNHCR extended a joint project with UNDP focused on enhancing the resilience of communities to extreme weather events and environmental risks, with a focus on the sand and dust storms in Surkhandarya. Aligned with national afforestation efforts, the project supported income generation for forcibly displaced Afghan citizens and vulnerable host community members, engaging them in tree-planting activities through cash-for-work while mitigating the damaging impact of dust storms in regions bordering Afghanistan.

## 16. Outcome Area: Integration and other Local Solutions

**UNHCR beneficiaries are provided avenues for naturalization and regularization of their status and documentation and are included in the public welfare, social, health, and education services alongside with nationals**

### Core Outcome Indicators

Indicator				
Country	Population Type	Baseline	Target (2024)	Actual (2024)
16.2 Proportion of people covered by national social protection systems				
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	60.73%	81.00%	15.94%

### Core Output Indicators

Indicator		
Country	Population Type	Actual (2024)
16.2.1 Number of people supported by UNHCR to acquire nationality, permanent residency status or to access naturalization procedures		
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	13

## Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Most of the sub-region's governments continued to abstain from solving protracted refugee situations. With all avenues for integration under national legislation exhausted, in 2022, UNHCR had supported mandate refugees to submit petitions to Presidential Administrations in each country for an extraordinary offer of citizenship – 18 in Kazakhstan, 120 in the Kyrgyz Republic, 10 in Turkmenistan and six in Uzbekistan.

In 2024, one mandate refugee was granted residency in Turkmenistan, meaning four of 12 can legally

stay there. Solutions for the naturalization of all mandate refugees were explored and agreed, with a plan for full implementation by the end of 2025.

Uzbekistan regularized the stay of all five mandate refugees, but authorities in Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic did not progress in regularizing the stay of the remaining mandate refugees. Without legal status, mandate refugees could not access socioeconomic rights or services, including lawful employment, healthcare, or social protection. UNHCR continued to follow up on this.

Following UNHCR advocacy in Kazakhstan, refugee ID cards were added to the list of official documents residents could use to apply for individual identification numbers. These numbers are essential to accessing commercial and Government services in Kazakhstan. Going forward, these individual identification numbers will be issued with all new refugees. The Government of Kazakhstan included provisions for disability recognition and access to social services for refugee children. New rules for population documentation in Kazakhstan now integrate refugees and asylum-seekers into the national registration system.

UNHCR partners in the Kyrgyz Republic interviewed, counselled and conducted legal assessments with asylum-seekers, assisting in the submission of asylum applications. Following UNHCR advocacy, the Kyrgyz Republic adopted a new regulation granting refugees and asylum-seekers access to healthcare on par with citizens.

### Other Core Output Indicators

Country	Population Type	Actual (2024)
<b>06.1.1 Number of people who received legal assistance</b>		
Kazakhstan	Stateless Persons	642
<b>07.1.1 Number of people consulted through Participatory Assessments</b>		
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	120
<b>07.2.1 Number of people who used UNHCR- supported feedback &amp; response mechanisms to voice their needs/ concerns/feedback</b>		
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	62
<b>07.3.1 Number of people who received protection services</b>		
Kazakhstan	Stateless Persons	728
<b>10.1.1 Number of individual consultations in UNHCR supported health care services</b>		
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	182
<b>14.1.1 Number of people who received counselling and/or information on voluntary repatriation</b>		
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0
<b>15.1.1 Country issues machine-readable travel documents</b>		
Kazakhstan	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	No

## 2.2. Age, Gender and Diversity

Data collected by UNHCR and its partners in the sub-region's four countries is disaggregated by age, sex, and diversity, including specific needs. This data is used to design programmes and inform strategic

priorities; however, it is not always available from authorities. Turkmenistan, for example, did not provide disaggregated data on its stateless population.

UNHCR maintained email and phone ‘hotlines’ across the four countries for anyone requiring information or consultation on refugee and asylum issues. People forced to flee could find key contacts and updated information about asylum procedures in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in English, Russian and Dari on [www.help.unhcr.org/centralasia](http://www.help.unhcr.org/centralasia).

To collect further information on specific protection needs and adjust programming accordingly, UNHCR conducted participatory assessments with refugees and stateless people in the Kyrgyz Republic – focusing on livelihoods and refugee status determination procedures in 2024. To foster open and constructive discussions, focus groups were divided by gender, age, asylum status and country of origin. These discussions were complemented by sessions led by psychologists from the Red Crescent Society to support participants’ mental health and wellbeing and help create a safe space to share experiences.

With the revision of standard operating procedures for cash assistance in the Kyrgyz Republic, UNHCR conducted home-assessment visits using an inclusive questionnaire that allowed data collection not only on age and gender but also on disability and accessibility, to better address expressed and observed needs.

UNHCR visited the homes of mandate refugees in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to better understand their situation and livelihood needs, as well as employment opportunities available to those who obtained residency. In Turkmenistan, these dialogues provided insights into issues related to “propiska,” naturalization and improvements following the granting of residency. In Uzbekistan, visits highlighted existing challenges in accessing formal employment after obtaining residency status.

Refugee and stateless people were integrated into national development programmes to improve their social and economic status. Active UNHCR participation in structures and teams was an important reminder that refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people will not be left behind in the sustainable development of Kazakhstan, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, national strategies and plans, working groups (Human Rights, Gender, and Youth), promoted that refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people will not be left behind in the sustainable development of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

## Section 3: Resources

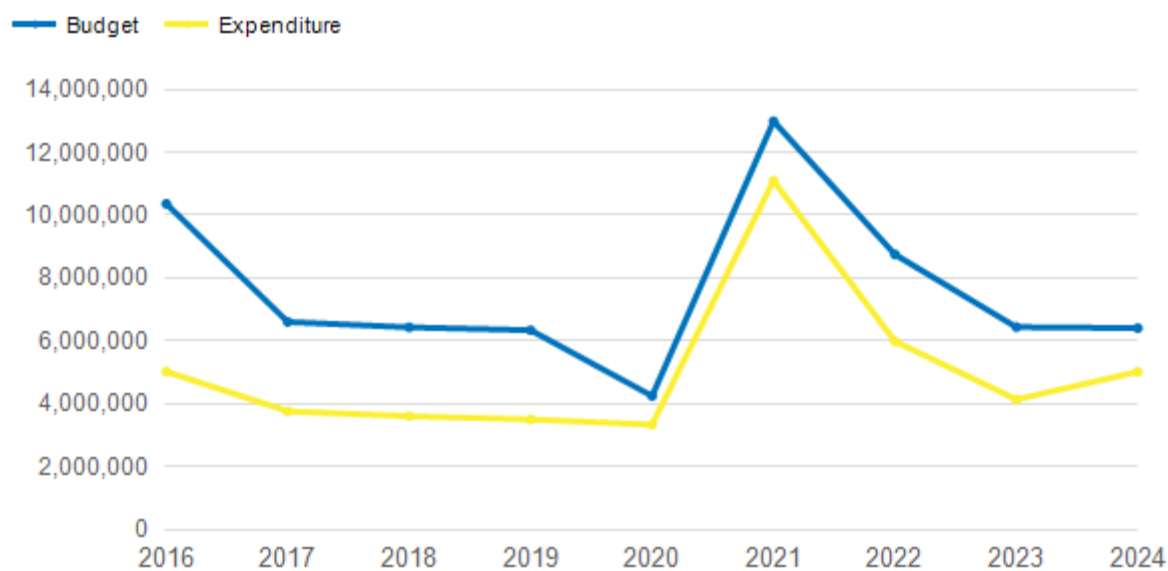
### 3.1 Financial Data

(Financial figures in USD)

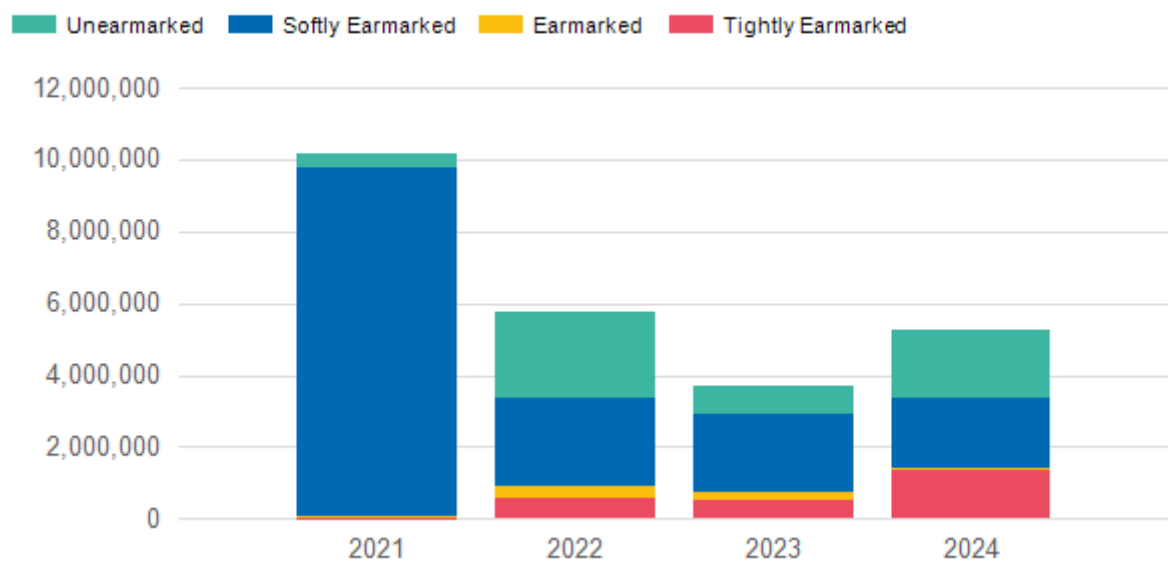
Impact Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
IA1: Protect	4,152,856	3,894,407	93.78%	3,894,407	100.00%
IA4: Solve	2,256,834	1,127,088	49.94%	1,127,088	100.00%
All Impact Areas		176,122			
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,409,690</b>	<b>5,197,617</b>	<b>81.09%</b>	<b>5,021,495</b>	<b>96.61%</b>

Outcome Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
OA1: Access/Doc	1,991,640	1,053,424	52.89%	1,053,424	100.00%
OA2: Status	760,132	606,982	79.85%	606,982	100.00%
OA3: Policy/Law	1,466,132	1,556,617	106.17%	1,556,617	100.00%
OA8: Well-being	1,086,551	624,462	57.47%	617,948	98.96%
OA13: Livelihood	275,728	740,573	268.59%	740,573	100.00%
OA16: Integrate	829,506	445,951	53.76%	445,951	100.00%
All Outcome Areas		169,608			
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,409,690</b>	<b>5,197,617</b>	<b>81.09%</b>	<b>5,021,495</b>	<b>96.61%</b>

Budget and Expenditure Trend



Contributions Trend by Type



### 3.2. Resources Overview

UNHCR’s programme focused on access to quality national asylum and durable solutions for refugees and reducing statelessness, with a cross-cutting focus on partnerships.

At the end of 2024, UNHCR operations in the four countries were 60% funded. Funds were mostly utilized for activities to ensure life-saving cash support to vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees, access to asylum, improve status determination procedures, provide legal counselling services, and advocate for the harmonization of local frameworks with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

Funding limitations meant activities such as psychological and social support, durable solutions, and statelessness eradication could not be implemented. Unmet needs also included cross-border emergency preparedness simulations and the revision of cash assistance.

In response to the increased vulnerability of asylum-seekers and refugees in the sub-region and new budget limitations, UNHCR increased its resource mobilization efforts. Unearmarked and softly earmarked funding enabled UNHCR to support governments' inclusive policies and advocate for protection space for refugees and asylum-seekers. Through a more robust approach to private donors, funding for a project focused on strengthening resilience in Uzbekistan was secured for 2024.

## Section 4: Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

### 4.1 Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

The strategic direction of investment in strengthening partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders, including the UN and other development actors, proved pivotal in defending protection space and fostering inclusion. This was also evident for prevention of refoulement and promoting durable solutions, including alternative pathways. Engaging development actors more closely strengthened UNHCR's efforts to advocate for the protection of forcibly displaced and stateless people in Central Asia.

Close collaboration with forcibly displaced and stateless people, the United Nations, governments, development organizations, civil society, academia, donors, and other partners facilitated strategic resource allocation and agile re-prioritization according to needs.

Building on the success of pilot initiatives on climate action and education in recent years, UNHCR explored and pursued activities that bridged the humanitarian-development nexus, where funding allowed. Non-transactional engagements with international financial institutions should be continued, where the caseload permits.

Challenges faced by host governments, including shifting priorities, low budget allocations and human capacity, will require considerable investment. It is hoped that partnerships with experienced local NGOs can remain UNHCR's dominant implementation arrangement, where shrinking civil society space allows.

UNHCR should maintain some investment in national emergency preparedness and response, adhering to minimum humanitarian and protection standards, to manage expectations and mitigate negative effects in case of disaster





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