



Central Asia

Recent developments

Further progress has been made in establishing national asylum systems and providing refugee protection throughout Central Asia. Tajik refugees in Kyrgyzstan are now being given Kyrgyz citizenship and the process should be completed in 2005.

After extensive lobbying by UNHCR, a registration of all *prima facie* refugees started in Turkmenistan in October 2004 in close cooperation with the Government. This is a crucial first step towards the eventual granting of nationality to those who fulfil the criteria for citizenship under the country's nationality law, and the identification of the most appropriate durable solutions for those who do not.

UNHCR has cooperated closely with the Uzbek State Border Committee within the framework of the EU-led Border Management in Central Asia

Kazakhstan

Kyrgyzstan

Tajikistan

Turkmenistan

Uzbekistan



(BOMCA) pilot project, designed to raise border guards' awareness of human rights, particularly the right of asylum.

A large group of Afghans has been accepted for resettlement from Kyrgyzstan to Canada under a new arrangement whereby a single government agrees to process resettlement candidates from one country "en masse". About two-thirds of the Afghan refugees living in the country are to be resettled to Canada under this programme.

Strategic objectives

UNHCR's Central Asian strategy focuses closely on finding solutions and strengthening national refugee protection regimes. It is also clearly directed towards a streamlining of UNHCR's own presence and functions.

In this regard, the Office has recently started to carry out a thorough Protection Gaps Analysis in Central Asia - an important step towards the formulation of a multi-year strategy for future involvement in the region. Having identified the

protection requirements, the next step will be to identify (and if necessary provide technical advice to) institutions that can meet those needs on a long-term basis.

As the focus on durable solutions increases, the emphasis on direct assistance is reduced. Nonetheless, UNHCR will continue to pay special attention to the needs of women and children, notably in terms of establishing and maintaining mechanisms to prevent and respond to SGBV and the provision of essential health care (particularly reproductive health care), vocational classes and some income-generating activities.

Operations

UNHCR's priority in **Kazakhstan** will be to strengthen national asylum policy and mechanisms and to provide legal protection and training for government officials in partnership with a nationwide network of lawyers established in 2004. The Office will support voluntary repatriation for Tajiks and Afghans. It will also pursue group resettlement possibilities for long-staying



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Tajikistan: Repatriation of Afghan refugees crossing the river Pyanj. *UNHCR*

Afghan refugees as well as local integration opportunities. It will advocate the creation of an environment that provides minimum standards of protection for other persons of concern.

As part of the region-wide move to encourage local integration, the Office will support efforts by the **Kyrgyz** authorities to open the naturalization process to the remaining Afghan refugees. At the



assemble a solid team of judges with a good grounding in refugee law issues.

UNHCR will continue to consult with the Government of **Tajikistan** regarding moves to bring the Law on Refugees and related legislation into line with international standards. Following a marked slow-down in voluntary repatriation from Tajikistan, and a large-scale accelerated resettlement programme due to run until mid-2005, UNHCR will shift the emphasis to local integration. It will, meanwhile, continue to support the reintegration of Tajik returnees.

In **Turkmenistan**, UNHCR will continue to register refugees and persons of concern in order to identify appropriate solutions – including naturalization. However, registration procedures will eventually be handed over to competent government structures. UNHCR will continue its existing programme of capacity building for staff of government offices and NGOs to increase technical expertise on asylum and refugee issues.

Of the five Central Asian republics, only **Uzbekistan** has yet to accede to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. A key focus of UNHCR's work in Uzbekistan is thus to provide international protection to those who need it, whilst seeking to convince the Government of the benefits of establishing an effective national refugee protection regime and, ultimately, acceding to the Convention.

same time, it will promote Kyrgyzstan's accession to the 1954 and 1961 Conventions on Statelessness and provide legal expertise for the draft citizenship law. UNHCR will continue its efforts to

Budget (USD)	
Country	Annual Programme
Kazakhstan	1,441,222
Kyrgyzstan	1,230,424
Tajikistan	1,430,196
Turkmenistan	949,123
Uzbekistan	1,169,483
Total	6,220,448