



**Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan
Tajikistan
Turkmenistan**

Formerly stateless women in
Dasoguz, northern Turkmenistan,
after receiving their passports.

Central Asia



| OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS |

- In March 2011, a Ministerial Conference in Almaty, Kazakhstan examined the protection challenges posed by mixed-migration movements in the region and sought collaborative approaches to address these challenges based on current good practices. The Conference adopted the Almaty Declaration as the basis for a Regional Cooperation Framework and Action Plan.
- In Kyrgyzstan, UNHCR programmes strengthened the rights of people of concern and their access to services and the rule of law. The Office also promoted reconciliation between communities through peacebuilding projects.
- Turkmenistan became a new member of UNHCR's Executive Committee. At the ministerial meeting held in Geneva in December 2011, Turkmenistan formally acceded to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. The Turkmen Government granted citizenship to more than 3,300 stateless persons in 2011.
- UNHCR advocated for ratification of the Statelessness Conventions and the development of country strategies. In December 2011, a regional round table with the theme, *Joint Actions to Address Statelessness*, gathered together 60 participants from Central Asia, including high-level representatives of governments, the media, academia and NGOs. The meeting drew up recommendations on how to address statelessness in the region.
- UNHCR worked closely with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, and the Collective Security Treaty Organization to ensure that refugee protection was integrated into national and regional legal instruments.
- UNHCR cooperated with the Tajikistan-based Border Management Staff College of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe to train high-level officials involved in border management from Central Asia, neighbouring countries and elsewhere.

| Working environment |

The political, social and economic situation in Central Asia remained fragile, with Kazakhstan witnessing several violent terrorist attacks in 2011. UNHCR's main government counterpart in the country changed from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In March, Kazakhstan conducted early presidential elections that saw the incumbent re-elected.

Kyrgyzstan held presidential elections in October 2011 that were won by a former prime minister. A total of 172,000 persons still remained affected by the inter-ethnic violence that affected the country in June 2010.

In Turkmenistan, the Government announced that presidential polls would be conducted in early 2012. For the first time, opposition candidates were allowed to run against the incumbent.



Achievements and impact

In 2011, UNHCR developed a Strategic Vision for 2011–2013, focusing on the protection of asylum-seekers, refugees, IDPs and stateless people. It also emphasized the need to search for durable solutions and the building of emergency response capacity.

UNHCR worked to develop fair and efficient refugee status determination (RSD) systems in Central Asia. The Office developed an intensive RSD capacity-building programme for State officials and NGO lawyers, which included a distance learning course, workshop and a study tour.

In Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, UNHCR engaged with the respective authorities to discuss refugee protection issues, including revision of national refugee laws. Joint registration and verification exercises were conducted in both countries with government counterparts.

Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan achieved significant progress in reducing statelessness. In Kyrgyzstan, the National Action Plan to Prevent and Reduce Statelessness was reviewed with the support of UNHCR, and the Government expressed interest in acceding to the two Statelessness Conventions. Turkmenistan implemented a Joint Action Plan on the Reduction and Prevention of Statelessness, identifying more than 13,000 undocumented individuals.

A strategy on comprehensive durable solutions for refugees in Central Asia, based on UNHCR's urban refugee policy, is being developed for the region and will be implemented in 2012.

Lessons learned during the emergency operations in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in 2010, contributed to efforts aimed at enhancing regional emergency preparedness and

response capacity. UNHCR focused on strengthening the capacity of government entities, NGOs and UN staff. The Office also participated in discussions related to the Central Asia Risk Reduction Assessment, emphasizing that natural disasters and climate change were among the major drivers of displacement within and across borders in Central Asia.

UNHCR continued to deliver assistance to the most vulnerable refugees throughout the region. Refugees who faced immediate protection risks were submitted for resettlement. Age, gender and diversity considerations were incorporated into the work plans of all operations. In light of the findings from participatory assessments, UNHCR strengthened efforts to address the situation of women and children, as well as to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Resettlement remained the only appropriate durable solution for many refugees in Central Asian countries.

Constraints

The concerns of governments related to cross-border and transnational threats, and national security continued to take precedence over national and international asylum obligations, which left a number of asylum-seekers without access to State procedures, or with their refugee claims unduly rejected. There were also a few cases of *refoulement*.

The restructuring of governmental departments responsible for refugee matters in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan made it necessary for UNHCR to strengthen its RSD capacity.

Prospects for local integration were not available for most refugees in Central Asia. Opportunities for gainful employment and self-reliance were scarce, and naturalization remained difficult.

| Operations |

UNHCR's operations in the Central Asian countries have some similarities in terms of the profiles of refugee populations and operating environments. Afghans make up the largest refugee group in the region. The country with the largest number of new arrivals in 2011 was Tajikistan, where the authorities received more than 700 applications, most of them from Afghan asylum-seekers.

In **Kazakhstan**, UNHCR worked to improve RSD procedures and assisted with the revision of national refugee legislation. Local integration remained one of the most challenging issues in the country. A self-reliance study provided information on the conditions of refugees and stateless people in the country and offered solutions to address the situation. In May 2011, a concept note on the reduction and prevention of statelessness was prepared for the Government, promoting the objective of registering all undocumented persons in the country and finding solutions with regard to their legal status. Significant improvements were made in developing appropriate procedures for RSD. A UNHCR mission was undertaken to Belarus in order to study the RSD system in that country, which could serve as an example for strengthening the capacity of national RSD bodies in Central Asia.

In **Kyrgyzstan**, UNHCR carried out more than 130 small-scale, community-based projects to improve livelihoods, infrastructure and self-reliance and to promote reconciliation and peacebuilding. UNHCR also organized multi-ethnic celebrations that brought some 6,530 people together in a positive manner. Furthermore, UNHCR advocated for the Government to protect some 200 Afghan refugees who had been denied access to RSD procedures.

In **Tajikistan**, the Government showed readiness to review the State resolution that prohibited refugees and asylum-seekers who arrived after the year 2000 from residing in the capital, Dushanbe, and other major cities in the country. A joint UNHCR-Government re-registration and profiling exercise documented some 3,900 refugees and asylum-seekers.

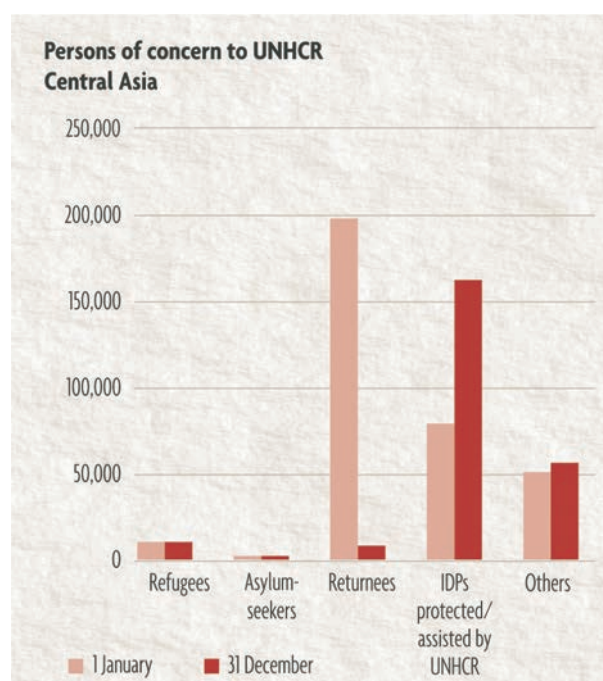
In **Turkmenistan**, UNHCR worked with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, to organize a ministerial conference

on refugees in the Muslim world, as called for in a decision taken by the OIC 10th Islamic Conference in 2003. It was agreed that this ministerial meeting would take place in Ashgabat (Turkmenistan) in May 2012.

UNHCR does not have a presence in **Uzbekistan**. Persons of concern in the country are assisted by the Refugee Support Unit at UNDP in Tashkent. Resettlement continued to be the most viable durable solution for people of concern in Uzbekistan, with nearly 70 resettled in 2011.

| Financial information |

The budget for Central Asia was larger than in previous years, partly due to the introduction of the comprehensive needs assessment and the continuation of the supplementary programme to respond to the IDP situation in Kyrgyzstan. Some 56 per cent of the needs were met by contributions earmarked for Central Asia. These funds allowed UNHCR to intensify activities to address statelessness in Turkmenistan and implement the urban refugee policy in Tajikistan.



Budget and expenditure in Central Asia | USD

Country		PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	PILLAR 3 Reintegration projects	PILLAR 4 IDP projects	Total
Kazakhstan Regional Office¹	Budget	4,834,197	1,493,119	0	682,291	7,009,607
	Expenditure	2,884,201	722,293	0	161,688	3,768,182
Kyrgyzstan	Budget	2,220,465	967,745	0	10,050,673	13,238,883
	Expenditure	2,215,104	930,168	0	4,360,179	7,505,451
Turkmenistan	Budget	319,680	723,608	0	0	1,043,288
	Expenditure	191,353	700,703	0	0	892,056
Tajikistan	Budget	1,696,957	175,041	0	0	1,871,998
	Expenditure	974,948	88,384	0	0	1,063,332
Total budget		9,071,299	3,359,513	0	10,732,964	23,163,776
Total expenditure		6,265,606	2,441,548	0	4,521,867	13,229,021

¹Includes the Office of the Regional Coordinator which provides support to countries in the subregion.

Voluntary contributions to Central Asia | USD

Earmarking / Donor	PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 4 IDP projects	All pillars	Total
CENTRAL ASIA SUBREGION				
Private donors in the Republic of Korea			702	702
Russian Federation			250,000	250,000
United States of America			3,799,000	3,799,000
Central Asia subtotal	0	0	4,049,702	4,049,702
KAZAKHSTAN REGIONAL OFFICE				
Japan	500,000			500,000
Kazakhstan Regional Office subtotal	500,000	0	0	500,000
KYRGYZSTAN				
Charities Aid Foundation			342	342
European Union		484,447		484,447
Japan		1,242,195		1,242,195
UN Peacebuilding Fund		676,107		676,107
United States of America		900,000		900,000
<i>Deutsche Stiftung für UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe</i>		133,333		133,333
Kyrgyzstan subtotal	0	3,436,082	342	3,436,424
TAJIKISTAN				
Japan	500,000			500,000
Tajikistan subtotal	500,000	0	0	500,000
Total	1,000,000	3,436,082	4,050,044	8,486,126