

# Central Asia

**Kazakhstan**

**Kyrgyzstan**

**Tajikistan**

**Turkmenistan**

**Uzbekistan**

Afghan refugees playing at the Refugee Reception Centre in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan).



## | Working environment |

Central Asia is a complex region, still in transition towards achieving political and socio-economic stability. All Central Asian States, with the exception of Uzbekistan, have acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention and adopted national refugee laws. However, the implementation of national laws in these countries needs further alignment with internationally accepted norms.

While the socio-political environment in Central Asia is not expected to change dramatically, UNHCR does not exclude the possibility of mixed migratory influxes from Afghanistan into the region. The threat of terrorism is a major national security concern in Central Asia and the importance and necessity of broader regional cooperation has been well recognized by Governments.

In follow-up to the Regional Conference on Refugee Protection and International Migration in Central Asia and the adoption of the Almaty Declaration in March 2011, a first meeting of National Coordinators from Central Asia took place in Almaty in September 2012, which led to the adoption of a regional cooperation framework and regional action plan.





Furthermore, participants agreed on the establishment of the Secretariat of the Almaty Process in the city of Almaty and tasked UNHCR, IOM and the Government of Kazakhstan to organize the second Ministerial Conference on Refugee Protection and International Migration in 2013.

In August 2012, Turkmenistan acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and became the first country in Central Asia to accede to both statelessness conventions. Turkmenistan also successfully hosted the International Ministerial Conference of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Refugees in the Muslim World in Ashgabat in May. The conference, in Ashgabat, was jointly organized by the OIC, the Government of Turkmenistan and UNHCR. Turkmenistan adopted a new refugee law in August 2012, which generally meets international standards.

In Kyrgyzstan, the restructuring of Government led to a handover of responsibility for refugee affairs to the newly-created Ministry of Youth, Labour and Employment in March 2012. In February 2012, amendments to the national refugee law were adopted with inputs provided by UNHCR, bringing the law further in line with international standards.

Two years after the June 2010 conflict in South Kyrgyzstan and subsequent return of some 400,000 people who were displaced internally and externally, UNHCR, in partnership with other relevant agencies, is continuing to assist the Government of Kyrgyzstan towards the sustainable reintegration of those who were affected by the conflict.

As of 2010, the Government of Kazakhstan has assumed full responsibility for refugee status determination (RSD), but UNHCR continues to closely cooperate with the Government through an established inter-ministerial Working Group on Asylum. This includes helping to strengthen the capacity of officials dealing with asylum. Kazakhstan hosts some 600 refugees and asylum-seekers, and approximately registered 7,300 stateless persons.

The Republic of Tajikistan continues to host the largest population of refugees and asylum-seekers (some 4,000, mainly Afghans) in Central Asia. In 2012, UNHCR and the local authorities completed a comprehensive verification and profiling exercise of the refugee population in the country. UNHCR is working with the local authorities on a revision of the National Refugee Law and the Citizenship Law.

## | Strategy |

UNHCR's main objectives in Central Asia are the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers, reduction and prevention of statelessness, preparedness and optimal response capacity to deal with emergencies, and the preservation of asylum space within mixed migratory flows. The organization will also seek to ensure that refugee status determination is conducted according to international standards, while pursuing durable solutions and self-reliance initiatives for refugees.

Central Asia could face large-scale forced displacement due to natural disasters as well as man-made crises. UNHCR seeks collaborative approaches to cope with such eventualities in the region through joint planning and coordination.

UNHCR will continue to work closely with States in Central Asia to address issues related to statelessness and advocate with the authorities for accession to the statelessness conventions. Given the geopolitical realities in the area and porous borders between States, managing mixed migratory flows remains a challenge.

UNHCR and IOM continue to provide support to States in the region in continuation of the Almaty process, with a second Ministerial Conference planned in Kazakhstan in 2013.

## | Constraints |

Provisions for legal and social protection in refugee laws in the Central Asia subregion are not always fully consistent with international standards. Furthermore, the preoccupation by States concerning

cross-border/transnational threats and national security, may affect asylum policies and the protection of refugees in the region.

UNHCR may experience difficulties in achieving its objectives if the political environment is affected by emerging uncertainties, both internal and external. Progress in political reforms and development are prerequisites for a favourable protection environment and sustainable reintegration of persons of concern to UNHCR.

## Operations

In **Kazakhstan**, UNHCR will continue to work with the Government to ensure the procedural integrity of the State asylum system. UNHCR is also liaising with the Government and lawmakers on the revision of asylum-related legislation that is not in conformity with international standards, including access to social services and naturalization. UNHCR will also continue its advocacy for accession to the statelessness conventions while devising a joint action plan to protect stateless persons.

In view of the evolving security situation in Afghanistan, **Tajikistan** could attract new waves of asylum-seekers. UNHCR will give priority to improving emergency preparedness through joint planning with relevant actors.

The recently completed countrywide verification exercise of urban refugees in Tajikistan has contributed to better understanding of the profile and needs of the population of concern. This will help UNHCR to design and implement programmes to assure protection and durable solutions for refugees in Tajikistan.

**Turkmenistan** is at the forefront of addressing statelessness in the Central Asian region. In December 2011 at the Intergovernmental commemorative event in Geneva, Switzerland, Turkmenistan deposited its instrument of accession to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. In addition, in August 2012, Turkmenistan acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, becoming the 46th State Party to this Convention. Turkmenistan is thus the first country in Central Asia to accede to both statelessness conventions. UNHCR will continue to assist the Government of Turkmenistan in bringing its nationality legislation into line with the statelessness conventions, in particular by assisting with the revision of the citizenship law and developing a statelessness status determination procedure.

With the adoption of new refugee legislation, special efforts will be made to secure access to asylum procedures and protection against *refoulement* for all people of concern.

In 2013, UNHCR will continue working in **Kyrgyzstan** for the sustainable reintegration of those

who were displaced following the June 2010 outbreak of inter-ethnic violence. It will also look into the possibility of responsible and measured disengagement from assisting internally displaced persons (IDPs) by 2015. UNHCR will intensify its activities in the areas of sustainable reintegration, early warning and emergency preparedness. Kyrgyzstan has been selected as a pilot country for the Secretary-General's decision on Durable Solutions. This will provide an additional platform for the Office to further advocate for sustainable reintegration of conflict-affected populations and possible funding support from donors.

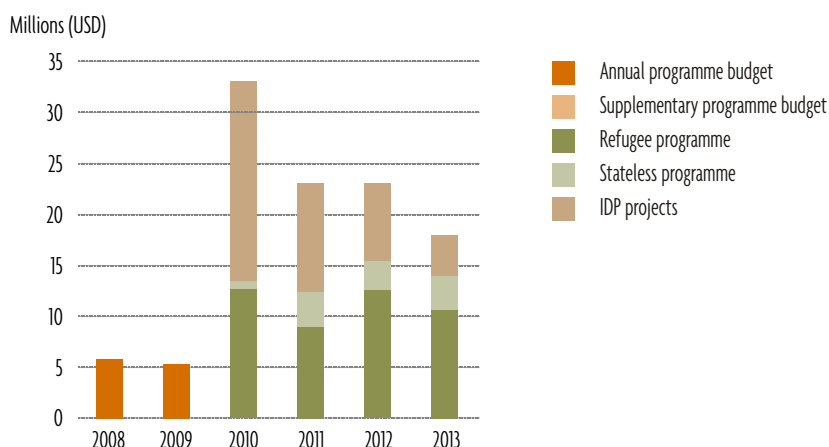
## Financial information

The budget for Central Asia was increased in 2008 with the establishment of the UNHCR Regional Office in Almaty, Kazakhstan. When ethnic violence in June 2010 led to mass displacement in southern Kyrgyzstan, UNHCR reopened and strengthened its field offices in Osh and Jalalabad, and this was reflected in generous donor support for efforts in response to the crisis.

Emergency interventions continued through the first half of 2011 and thereafter in aid of reconciliation and peace-building. In 2012, UNHCR has begun to prepare for a gradual withdrawal from IDP operations in southern Kyrgyzstan, in the hope that its work towards reconciliation and peace-building will be continued by other stakeholders.

The 2013 budget amounts to USD 18.1 million, a decrease from USD 23 million in 2012. More than half of the 2013 requirements are under the refugee programme, but the budget also includes requirements under the stateless programme and IDP projects, showing the range of needs in the Central Asia region.

### UNHCR's budget in Central Asia 2008 – 2013



### UNHCR's budget in Central Asia (USD)

OPERATION	2012 REVISED BUDGET (as of 30 June 2012)	2013			TOTAL
		REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1	STATELESS PROGRAMME PILLAR 2	IDP PROJECTS PILLAR 4	
Kazakhstan Regional Office <sup>1</sup>	9,302,017	5,261,284	1,861,892	499,339	7,622,514
Kyrgyzstan	10,251,302	3,135,329	815,368	3,546,100	7,496,797
Tajikistan	1,881,190	1,813,179	129,169	0	1,942,348
Turkmenistan	1,594,784	487,072	554,017	0	1,041,089
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,029,293</b>	<b>10,696,863</b>	<b>3,360,446</b>	<b>4,045,439</b>	<b>18,102,748</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes the Office of the Regional Representative which provides support to countries in the subregion.