

CENTRAL ASIA

Kazakhstan

Kyrgyzstan

Tajikistan

Turkmenistan

Uzbekistan



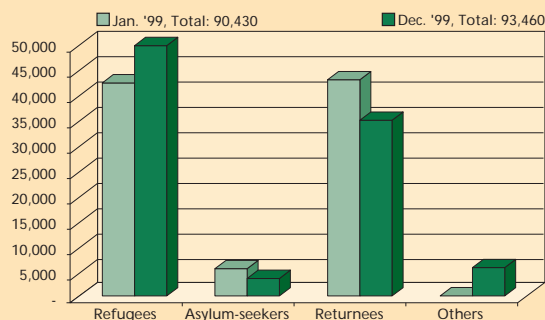
MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Presidential elections were held in Tajikistan and negotiations with opposition parties on parliamentary elections in early 2000 appeared to bear fruit. Presidential and parliamentary elections were also held in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. But the President-elect in Uzbekistan was the target of bomb attacks, putting security forces on high alert across the region.

During the latter part of 1999 an internal conflict in southern Kyrgyzstan provoked the movement of around 5,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs). An armed group (widely referred to as Muslim extremists wishing to establish an Islamic state in the Ferghana valley and overthrow the Government in Uzbekistan) crossed into Kyrgyzstan, held some foreigners and Kyrgyz nationals hostage and demanded free passage back to Uzbekistan. Fighting ensued for a two-month period until Kyrgyz Government troops regained control of the area. Although this conflict was resolved and the IDPs were able to return to their villages, the volatility of the Ferghana Valley can affect the stability of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and must continue to be monitored closely.

The on-going fighting in neighbouring Afghanistan was another source of concern for the Central Asian states, which perceived this as posing a threat to their national security, as well as encouraging fundamentalist political movements in their countries. UNHCR's offices closely monitored the Afghan situation to anticipate possible population movements and gauge the impact on neighbouring countries in Central Asia.

Persons of Concern to UNHCR



CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

Security issues, both within the Central Asian states and as a result of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Chechnya, raised major concerns and posed challenges in this region. These concerns not only had an impact on the implementation of UNHCR's protection and assistance activities and raised the risk of unexpected population movements, but also contributed to a perception that the presence of refugees was the cause of internal problems. This, in turn, fostered a less positive attitude towards refugees and made the establishment of protection regimes and the development of asylum systems more difficult to achieve.

The voluntary repatriation of Tajiks, for example, was negatively affected by the blockage of movements of returnees from Turkmenistan to Tajikistan in the transit through Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan closed some of its borders at various times due to increased concern about the security situation in the country, the ongoing fighting in Afghanistan and clashes in Kyrgyzstan.

The governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan have ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. Although these four countries continued to show interest in developing refugee legislation, work remains to be done in improving the quality of asylum. UNHCR is actively engaged in dialogue with the Uzbekistan government on the need to guarantee asylum and respect the principle of *non-refoulement*.



PROGRESS TOWARDS SOLUTIONS

Regional co-ordination meetings were held between the five UNHCR country offices during the year, to discuss policy issues of mutual concern, including emergency preparedness in the region. Additionally, UNHCR was involved in co-ordination with other actors in the area, including OSCE, OCHA, the Asian Development Bank, and the World Bank. Aside from the Tajik repatriation/reintegration programme, the main thrust of UNHCR's activities in Central Asia was the promotion of refugee law and enactment of related legislation, as well as strengthening governments' abilities to implement refugee-related legislation effectively.

In recognition of the fact that some Tajiks may not wish to repatriate, negotiations were begun with the Governments of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan on a project for the local settlement of some 10,140 and 14,000 Tajiks respectively. The project was approved by all parties concerned and is expected to begin in 2000 (for a planned duration of two years).

OPERATIONS

Most of UNHCR's activities in the region were implemented under General Programmes –one Special Programme was conducted: Repatriation and Reintegration of Tajiks. Please see that chapter for further details.

It is estimated that there are some 14,800 refugees in **Kazakhstan**, out of which UNHCR provided assistance to 1,339 persons. The majority of them are from Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Chechnya and other countries (such as Uighurs from China). UNHCR undertook activities in seven sectors and priority was given to vulnerable persons such as women and children. Material assistance benefited 1,339 refugees and medical care was provided to 1,000 vulnerable refugees. Four containers of humanitarian aid were delivered to Kazakh returnees in the south. UNHCR supported the procurement of supplies to maintain training activities in tailoring and sewing training activities for Afghan refugee women. Travel expenses for transportation of refugees and their belongings in the country or for resettlement were covered. Funds were also allocated for the procurement of office equipment for the regional offices of an implementing partner. The Office covered expenses on refugee law promotional activities and conducted public information activities.

Kyrgyzstan hosts 10,849 recognised and registered refugees, mainly Tajiks (10,140) and Afghans (708). More than 90 per cent of the Tajiks are of Kyrgyz ethnicity and live in rural areas, while most of the Afghans are highly skilled and live in urban centres. UNHCR focused on the repatriation of Tajik refugees, local integration of Afghans and Tajiks, the provision of legal assistance to persons of concern, as well as support to IDPs fleeing the Batken region. The Office covered the transportation of the refugees and their belongings to facilitate their movements. Allowances were given to vulnerable refugees (women, the elderly or families with many children) on a case-by-case basis. Three mobile medical centres regularly visited regions with a high concentration of refugees (Chui, Osh, Batken and Bishkek), benefiting 12,797 refugees and local people. Some infrastructure (water-supply systems and community buildings) was upgraded. A total of 590 greenhouses in communities housing a high concentration of refugees were constructed or repaired. More than 500 refugee families received seeds, tools and free consultations of an agronomist. Small income-generation projects were encouraged through the procurement of tools and equipment for some refugee families. The Office also helped draft a national refugee law. Training was organised on international protection, refugee status determination and other subjects for government officials, parliamentarians, lawyers, journalists and NGO personnel. UNHCR supported capacity-building for judges aimed at disseminating refugee law and establishing more efficient procedures for status determination. Brochures were published and information spots focusing on voluntary repatriation and integration were aired.

In **Tajikistan**, UNHCR's activities addressed the needs of the Tajik returnees as well as those of refugees and asylum-seekers (mainly from Afghanistan). A total of 4,700 Tajiks were repatriated under UNHCR's auspices and 68 refugees and asylum-seekers were given humanitarian assistance. Returnees were assisted with transport by road, rail or air and received a cash grant, domestic items and a four-month food package. The reintegration component consisted of projects in seven sectors (please see separate chapter). UNHCR continued to train judges, lawyers, migration and police staff, and supported the publication of technical and legal materials to promote knowledge of refugee issues.

Refugees and asylum-seekers in **Turkmenistan** included mainly 17,000 Tajiks and 2,000 Afghans. UNHCR monitored the voluntary repatriation of 36 Afghan

refugees to Afghanistan and 2,300 Tajik refugees to Tajikistan. In addition, the Office undertook local integration of 1,000 Afghans settling in the provinces of Lebap and Mary and of some 14,000 Tajik refugees of Turkmen ethnicity. Assistance was also provided to recognised refugees from other countries. The transportation of repatriating Afghans and Azerbaijanis of Armenian ethnicity and their belongings was covered. Some relief items (i.e. blankets) were distributed to vulnerable refugees. Financial and medical assistance was provided on a case-by-case basis to the most vulnerable refugees. UNHCR supported the access of refugees to language courses and purchased an excavator for the digging of wells in an Afghan settlement. Activities aimed at disseminating refugee law and principles included: seminars and conferences to raise awareness of and interest in refugee issues among civil servants, international officers and NGO staff; and publication and translation of recently enacted refugee legislation as well as printing of legal materials.

In **Uzbekistan**, an estimated 30,000 Tajiks refugees and 8,000 Afghans live in the country, out of which about 1,300 were registered with UNHCR. A total of 27 persons (mainly Afghan orphans) were resettled. Seventy-nine vulnerable refugee families received material assistance on a case-by-case basis. As asylum-seekers and refugees did not have the right to free health care, UNHCR supported a medical unit and facilitated the access of refugees to local hospitals, in case of emergency and need for special treatment. The Office informed refugees on procedures related to the granting of refugee status, education, accommodation and medical services. Fees for the education of 119 refugee children were covered and 60 refugee children had access to non-formal educational classes. Ten pre-school age children successfully completed non-formal classes and were preparing to enter regular schools. Sewing courses were organised and attended by 60 refugee women heads of household, who later were able to sell clothes and earn an income. UNHCR provided legal assistance for refugees and asylum-seekers in case of harassment or detention, helped draft a law on migration and sponsored seminars and conferences to enhance the awareness of government officials, lawyers and NGOs of refugee issues. Administrative costs related to the monitoring of programmes were also covered.

FUNDING

In anticipation of an eventual funding shortfall, UNHCR revised its budget downwards during the year. With this adjustment revised, the overall programme was almost fully funded by the end of the year.

Voluntary Contributions - Earmarked (USD)

Donor	Earmarking*	General Programmes		Special Programmes	
		Income	Contribution	Income	Contribution
CANADA	Rep./Reint.Tajik Ref.	0	0	200,000	200,000
JAPAN					
	Kazakhstan	60,000	60,000	0	0
	Kyrgyzstan	120,000	120,000	0	0
	Tajikistan	90,000	90,000	0	0
	Turkmenistan	50,000	50,000	0	0
	Uzbekistan	130,000	130,000	0	0
	Rep./Reint.Tajik Ref.	0	0	370,000	370,000
SWEDEN	Rep./Reint.Tajik Ref.	0	0	284,242	284,242
SWITZERLAND	Rep./Reint.Tajik Ref.	0	0	324,675	324,675
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	Rep./Reint.Tajik Ref.	0	0	1,250,000	1,250,000
	Kazakhstan	5,000	5,000	0	0
	Tajikistan	18,000	18,000	0	0
	Uzbekistan	19,000	19,000	0	0
DEUTSCHE STIFTUNG (GFR)	Turkmenistan	12,357	12,358	0	0
DR. A. MANNAN (CAN)	Rep./Reint.Tajik Ref.	0	0	14,846	14,846
TOTAL **		504,357	504,358	2,443,763	2,443,763

* For more information on the various earmarkings, please refer to the Donor Profiles.

** Total funds available for obligation in the region also included unearmarked voluntary contributions, lightly earmarked contributions, opening balances and adjustments.

Budget and Expenditure (USD)

Country	Working Budget*		Expenditure*	
	General Programmes	Special Programmes	General Programmes	Special Programmes
Kazakhstan	600,116	99,549	640,035	85,000
Kyrgyzstan	1,165,283	250,152	1,341,491	250,152
Tajikistan	1,498,604	2,588,528	1,085,310	2,575,822
Turkmenistan	524,527	162,296	588,343	147,562
Uzbekistan	1,344,323	0	1,437,583	0
TOTAL	5,132,853	3,100,525	5,092,762	3,058,536

* Figures do not include costs at Headquarters.