

# **COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN**

**Country: Kyrgyz Republic**

**Planning Year: 2002**

## **Part I - Executive Summary**

### **(a) Context and Beneficiary Populations/Themes**

#### ***Context***

The break-up of the former Soviet Union and the subsequent acquisition of independence in 1991 thrust the Kyrgyz Republic into a profoundly different geopolitical environment. Civil war in Tajikistan, beginning in 1992, and continued conflict in Afghanistan forced thousands of people to flee their homes in search of refuge. Many fled to the Kyrgyz Republic.

Given its lack of experience in dealing with refugee influxes, Kyrgyzstan sought external assistance and expertise. Since establishing a presence in Kyrgyzstan in 1995, UNHCR has provided care and maintenance to Tajik and Afghan refugees and has worked closely with the Kyrgyz Republic to develop a national capacity to manage refugee protection and assistance. More recently, UNHCR has focused on finding durable solutions for Tajik refugees, including repatriation to Tajikistan and local integration in Kyrgyzstan, in addition to increasing the self-sufficiency of Afghan refugees. With the arrival, beginning in 2000, of a small but steady number of Chechens into Kyrgyzstan fleeing conflict in their homeland, UNHCR also began providing assistance to Chechen asylum-seekers. UNHCR has been working to reduce the potential for conflict and to reinforce contingency planning measures in Southern Kyrgyzstan, given the complex mix of ethnicities, scarce resources, drug trafficking routes and high population density in the region. The incursion of Islamic militants into Southern Kyrgyzstan in recent years, resulting in significant IDP movements, is one indication of the instability characterising the region. Further conflict is expected in 2001, with the Kyrgyz government anticipating the displacement of approximately 10,000 persons.

The wider regional context is also a cause for concern, particularly given the contiguous borders of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in the Fergana Valley region. A number of inter-state disputes over access to water, gas and land are simmering in the region. Recent government initiatives in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan point to a more hostile environment for refugees. Rising tensions in Uzbekistan represent another potential source of refugee influx, particularly among the large ethnic-Kyrgyz population residing in Uzbek-Kyrgyz border regions. In addition, the continued conflict in Northern Afghanistan is also a source of potential refugee inflow into Kyrgyzstan via Tajikistan.

#### ***Beneficiary Populations***

Currently, there are 9,805 Tajik and 804 Afghan refugees registered with the Department of Migration Services (DMS) under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Kyrgyz government agency responsible for refugee matters. In addition, there are approximately 150 Afghans in Kyrgyzstan whose asylum claims have been rejected, many on the basis of the safe third country principle, approximately 800 Afghan asylum-seekers whose claims are pending, and 325 Chechens registered as asylum-seekers. Finally, as many as 5,000 Uighurs from China are resident in Kyrgyzstan. However, few Uighurs apply for asylum, given the almost certain assurance of rejection and the fear of refoulement based on Kyrgyzstan-China security accords. A few Uighurs have approached UNHCR on an individual basis seeking protection.

#### ***Overview of Programming***

In 2002, UNHCR will focus on activities falling within UNHCR's core mandate: the achievement of a durable solution (e.g. local integration, voluntary repatriation, resettlement) for and protection of all beneficiary populations and strengthening the refugee protection framework in Kyrgyzstan.

UNHCR expects to achieve durable solutions for all Tajik refugees in 2002, either through repatriation to Tajikistan (10%) or local integration in Kyrgyzstan (90%), including both the

acquisition of citizenship and an enhanced level of self-sufficiency. The implementation of a final year of local integration programming in 2002 will be critical, both in terms of facilitating refugees' transition to citizenship and in honouring UNHCR's commitment to the Kyrgyz government of assisting the government in facilitating the refugees' transition to citizenship in 2002. UNHCR's commitment to support this transition is a key component of UNHCR's strategy to ensure that the Kyrgyz government actually grants citizenship to these refugees wishing to remain in Kyrgyzstan. In addition, UNHCR's support in this area impacts on the attitude of the Kyrgyz government on other issues, including the application of RSD procedures and the implementation of the Refugee Law. However, local integration programming is envisioned to end by the end of 2002.

Conversely, Afghan refugees (and asylum-seekers) are likely to represent a continuing concern for UNHCR over the short to medium-term, given that no durable solution is in sight. UNHCR's activities will be solution focused – strengthening Afghan refugees' capacity to attain self-sufficiency in Kyrgyzstan, in addition to ensuring that Afghan refugee children retain abilities in their maternal language to facilitate an eventual return home. In exceptional cases, resettlement will be pursued. In addition, UNHCR will work to ensure the ability of Afghan asylum-seekers to a fair RSD process.

In 2002, UNHCR will pursue similar objectives for Chechen refugees, given the protracted nature of the Chechen conflict. Chechens will have access to programmes in the income-generation and vocational training sectors designed to increase refugees' self-sufficiency.

In the case of all refugees, UNHCR will continue to provide access to basic medical care in 2002 through three refugee clinics and additional mobile clinics. UNHCR will continue its efforts to provide effective protection of refugees and asylum-seekers. Particular attention will be paid to the detention and harassment of refugees and asylum-seekers by authorities and the access of all groups, particularly Chechens and Afghans, to RSD procedures. It is also expected that a small number of Uighurs from China, in addition to asylum-seekers from other countries such as Iran and Sri Lanka, will require UNHCR support, particularly in the area of protection. In some cases, resettlement may be required. With the expected passage of the Refugee Law, UNHCR will provide legal assistance to appeals of rejected asylum cases.

In 2002, UNHCR will place more emphasis on the strengthening of the protection framework in Kyrgyzstan, particularly with respect to the implementation of the Refugee Law, which is expected to be passed in 2001, and the strengthening of RSD procedures. DMS will merit particular attention, with the provision of both operational and technical support. UNHCR will continue working on small scale initiatives to improve the emergency preparedness capacity in Southern Kyrgyzstan and to reduce the possibility of the development of conflict in the volatile Ferghana valley region within the inter-agency framework that has been established at the UN Country Team level. Finally, in 2002 a number of public information activities will be implemented to build public support for both refugee issues in general and specific initiatives such as the local integration of Tajik refugees, the situation of Afghan and Chechen refugees/asylum-seekers and the passage and implementation of the Refugee Law.

### ***Implementing Partners***

In 2002, UNHCR will continue to work with the strong network of implementing partners it has developed in Kyrgyzstan, including both local and international NGOs. Over the past five years, the capacity of local NGOs, particularly in the legal assistance sector (Young Lawyers Association and Foundation for Support of Legal and Social Reform) has grown substantially. In addition, local NGOs with whom UNHCR is cooperating for the development of NGO Support Centres (Alga and Foundation Tolerance International) have also matured considerably over the past few years.

### ***Other Organisations***

In 2002, UNHCR will step-up its efforts to encourage other organisations to include refugees into their programming (i.e. UNDP, UNICEF, USAID, World Bank, international NGOs), particularly related to the local integration of Tajik refugees. One recent example is that USAID and the European Union are co-financing with UNHCR the operation of four NGO Support Centres, located in regions of significant refugee populations. These centres were previously 100% financed by UNHCR.

### **(b) Selected Programme Goals and Objectives**

<i>Name of Beneficiary Population: Tajik Refugees</i>	
<i>Main Goals:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voluntary repatriation of all remaining Tajik refugees wishing to return to Tajikistan</li> <li>• Local integration of those Tajik refugees who will have recently become citizens of Kyrgyzstan</li> <li>• Continued protection and welfare of Tajik refugees</li> </ul>	
<b>Principal Objectives</b>	<b>Related Outputs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refugees able to return home in 2002</li> <li>• Simplified citizenship procedure implemented</li> <li>• Self-reliance of refugee population enhanced</li> <li>• Refugees have access to basic healthcare</li> <li>• Emergency needs of refugees met</li> <li>• Rights of refugees respected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation, repatriation grants for 1,000 returnees</li> <li>• Provision of material assistance to DMS, Ministry of Interior and NGO partners</li> <li>• Implementation of local integration programme including initiatives in primary education, vocational training, income-generation, infrastructure rehabilitation, NGO Support Centres and refugee NGOs</li> <li>• Refugee health clinics</li> <li>• One-time emergency assistance grants</li> <li>• General legal assistance</li> </ul>

<i>Name of Beneficiary Population/Theme: Afghan Refugees</i>	
<i>Main Goals:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Afghan refugees develop self-sufficiency in Kyrgyzstan while they await more durable solutions (i.e. repatriation, resettlement)</li> <li>• Resettlement of most vulnerable cases</li> <li>• Continued protection and welfare</li> </ul>	
<b>Principal Objectives</b>	<b>Related Outputs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Afghan refugee children able to study in maternal language</li> <li>• Self-reliance of refugees enhanced</li> <li>• Refugees have access to basic healthcare</li> <li>• Emergency needs of refugees met</li> <li>• Rights of refugees respected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Afghan primary school</li> <li>• Micro-enterprise initiative, vocational training and literacy courses</li> <li>• Refugee health clinic in Bishkek</li> <li>• One-time emergency assistance grants</li> <li>• General legal assistance</li> </ul>

<i>Name of Beneficiary Population/Theme: Chechen Asylum-seekers</i>	
<i>Main Goals:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chechen asylum-seekers obtain refugee status</li> <li>• Chechen asylum-seekers develop self-sufficiency in Kyrgyzstan while they await more durable solutions (i.e. repatriation, resettlement)</li> <li>• Resettlement of most vulnerable cases</li> <li>• Continued protection and welfare of Chechen asylum-seekers</li> </ul>	
<b>Principal Objectives</b>	<b>Related Outputs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-reliance of asylum-seekers enhanced</li> <li>• Asylum-seekers have adequate means of subsistence for their first few months in refuge</li> <li>• Asylum-seekers have access to basic healthcare</li> <li>• Emergency needs of refugees met</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Micro-enterprise initiative</li> <li>• One-time assistance package provided to any new Chechen asylum-seekers</li> <li>• Refugee health clinic in Bishkek</li> <li>• One-time emergency assistance grants</li> </ul>

<i>Name of Theme: Protection Framework</i>	
<i>Main Goal: Strengthened protection framework for refugees and asylum-seekers</i>	
<b>Principal Objectives</b>	<b>Related Outputs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of new Refugee Law</li> <li>• Strengthening RSD procedure</li> <li>• Provision of daily protection to refugees and asylum-seekers</li> <li>• Naturalisation of refugees</li> <li>• Promotion of extra-regional resettlement as a durable solution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of legal expertise in adoption of bylaws required for implementation of law</li> <li>• Provision of legal training on the new law and RSD procedures to key agencies (e.g. DMS)</li> <li>• Operational support of DMS</li> <li>• Monitoring of RSD procedure and appeal process, intervention in some cases</li> <li>• Establishment of database for refugees and asylum-seekers</li> <li>• Provision of legal assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers through implementing partners</li> <li>• Promotion of UNHCR detention guidelines and conducting of trainings of law enforcement bodies</li> <li>• Provision of legal expertise on Citizenship Law and Refugee Law related to easing naturalisation process for refugees</li> <li>• Promotion of accession of Kyrgyzstan to 1954 and 1961 Conventions on Statelessness</li> <li>• Conducting of eligibility interviews and compilation of resettlement applications for transmission to possible countries of reception</li> </ul>

<i>Name of Theme: Emergency Preparedness/Conflict Prevention</i>	
<i>Main Goals:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforced contingency planning measures</li> <li>• Increased level of tolerance in Southern Kyrgyzstan</li> </ul>	
<b>Principal Objectives</b>	<b>Related Outputs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNHCR and Kyrgyz government better prepared for emergency situations</li> <li>• Increased availability of information in Southern Kyrgyzstan on issues related to conflict</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNHCR, UN contingency plans updated</li> <li>• Participation in various UN-government emergency preparedness coordination committees</li> <li>• Support of delivery of emergency training for NGOs, government officials</li> <li>• Support of newspaper promoting community and inter-ethnic tolerance</li> </ul>