UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

OPERATIONAL UPDATE
April - June 2025

UNHCR Representation to Central Asia

Photo: UNHCR/ Muhammadkhuja Davlyatov

72 year old Meliknor spent decades stateless and homeless after losing his old Soviet documents. With the assistance of UNHCR and its partner, Meliknor has now been confirmed as citizen of Tajikistan and can work towards a stable life with employment, free accommodation and pension provided by State.

Key figures as of 30 June 2025

24,367*

Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

in Kazakhstan (573), the Kyrgyz Republic (2,186), Tajikistan (13,591), Turkmenistan (12) and Uzbekistan (5)*.

32,403

known Stateless people

in Kazakhstan (7,383), the Kyrgyz Republic (945), Tajikistan (4,075), and Uzbekistan (20,000).

* Based on government reports in mass media, UNHCR estimates there are as many as 100,399 people in Central Asia in a refugee-like situation, including 8,000 forcibly displaced Afghan citizens in Uzbekistan.

In 2025, UNHCR requires $9.6 million to protect refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people across Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

Funded	Unfunded
30%	70%

As of 30 June 2025

SUB-REGIONAL

- With 21 **pledges submitted from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan** at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum – including from government, academia, civil society and UN Country Teams – UNHCR is actively engaging stakeholders to support implementation of their commitments to protect forcibly displaced and stateless people. As of 30 June, 11 of the 21 pledges have already been completed.

- On 20–22 May, the **Termez Dialogue on Connectivity between Central and South Asia** took place in Termez, Uzbekistan, bringing together over 200 delegates from Central and South Asia, Europe, the USA, the Middle East, the CIS, and the Asia-Pacific region to discuss regional cooperation in support of peace, stability, and development. Acting UNHCR Representative for Central Asia, participated in the event, underscoring the importance of regional collaboration in promoting peace and protecting refugees and stateless people. UNHCR highlighted Central Asia's achievements in addressing statelessness and called for strengthened asylum systems and sustained support for the reintegration of Afghan returnees. UNHCR reiterated its readiness to support governments through technical assistance, capacity-building, and partnerships that bridge humanitarian and development approaches to ensure inclusive, rights-based solutions. Ahead of the conference, participants also visited UNHCR Global Stockpile Termez on 19 May.

- On 5 June, UNHCR delivered an **online lecture on "Forced Displacement in Central Asia and Climate Change" to 14 students from Seoul National University**. The session was held at the university's request as part of its ongoing research on forced migration in the region. Over the past two years, Seoul National University has collaborated with UNHCR through a series of meetings and presentations.

- On 26 June, **UNHCR welcomed eight students from the UN PEACEKOR Sustainable Development Student Organization of South Korea for a presentation and tour** at the UN Plaza in Almaty – now recognized as the regional SDG Hub for Central Asia and Afghanistan. At the students' request, UNHCR delivered a briefing on its mandate and activities in the region, with a particular focus on support for refugees and stateless people. The visit formed part of the students' broader tour of UN agencies based at the UN Plaza.

- On 23 June, UNHCR launched the ***Ending Statelessness Together*** **publication** to highlight personal stories and regional efforts to address statelessness in the Asia-Pacific region, including Central Asia. The publication features inspiring stories of formerly stateless individuals from Central Asia and beyond, emphasizing the importance of ensuring that no one is left without a nationality. It also recognizes the vital contributions of human rights defenders working to end statelessness, including Shakhnoza Khasanova of Sana Sezim (Kazakhstan), Cholpon Jakupova of the Adilet Legal Clinic, and Azizbek Ashurov of Ferghana Valley Lawyers Without Borders (Kyrgyz Republic).

READ ALSO

READ ALSO: ***Supporting fair and efficient asylum procedures in Central Asia*** *- 33 government, NGO and legal representatives participated in the 2024 Refugee Status Determination Learning Programme, strengthening asylum procedures across the region.*

KAZAKHSTAN

State Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol

- Between 26 and 30 June, UNHCR met with key government counterparts and UN agencies in Astana to inform them about the **closure of the National Office Kazakhstan,** following a global downsizing due to funding constraints**.** The Acting UNHCR Representative for Central Asia Dumitru Lipcanu held meetings with the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Akan Rakhmetullin, the First Vice Minister of Labour and Social Protection, Mr. Askarbek Yertaev, and representatives of UN agencies including UNDP and UNICEF. Discussions focused on ongoing cooperation in refugee protection and access to social services. UNHCR emphasized the importance of continued collaboration through its remaining presence in Almaty, despite the challenging operational context.

- On 24 April, UNHCR contributed to the development of **UN Country Team (UNCT) Kazakhstan Communications Strategy for 2026–2030**. Discussions addressed the evolving national media landscape, effective communication approaches, and the increasing importance of Central Asian languages in outreach. The forthcoming strategy reflects key priorities of the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Kazakhstan, including the inclusion of refugees and stateless people among other vulnerable groups. The agenda also covered the integration of AI tools in communications, the promotion of disability-inclusive messaging, and coordinated planning for upcoming UN80 initiatives.

- On 29–30 May, as part of the United Nations Country Team in Kazakhstan, **UNHCR contributed to the joint UN booth at the Astana International Forum (AIF)**, alongside 11 other UN agencies. The Head of UNHCR National Office Kazakhstan participated in the event, which brought together global leaders, experts, and partners to discuss key issues related to development, diplomacy, and sustainability. UNHCR showcased the stories and photographs of refugee students Yasamin and Sulaiman, as well as formerly stateless person Akhat, highlighting their achievements and reinforcing the importance of inclusion and opportunities for forcibly displaced and stateless communities.

- On 3 June, UNHCR conducted an **online training session for its legal partner, the Bureau for Human Rights (BHR), aimed at improving data quality and completeness** in ProGres v4. Five BHR staff members participated in the session, which focused on using customized dashboards designed to flag missing or incomplete biographical information. The training included a live demonstration on how to access the dashboards, interpret data views, and update records directly in ProGres.

- On 11 June, UNHCR conducted **a presentation on human rights and its global protection mandate for a group of 26 future UN Peacekeepers** from Kazakhstan, Pakistan, China, and Japan. The session took place at the Kazakhstan Peace Operations Centre. The presentation highlighted key human rights principles and explored the critical role of peacekeepers in preventing and responding to human rights violations in the field. UNHCR also provided an overview of its mandate, emphasizing the protection of refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people across the region and beyond.

Coffee shops in Almaty joined World Refugee Day "coffee campaign" by sharing messages of solidarity with refugees on cup holders. Photo: UNHCR/ Aiya Siyaz

- On 24–25 June, UNHCR's legal partner, the Kazakhstan Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law (BHR), took part in **the UN Human Rights Committee's review of Kazakhstan's implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**. While the Government delegation presented achievements in judicial reform and the protection of vulnerable groups, BHR highlighted ongoing challenges related to refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people. Key issues included the need to strengthen safeguards against refoulement, improve access to asylum procedures, and introduce a mechanism for issuing travel documents to refugees. BHR also acknowledged progress in identifying stateless people but reiterated the importance of Kazakhstan's accession to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions.

- Throughout this period, UNHCR **continued bilateral discussions and regular engagement with key government counterparts** to advance protection of forcibly displaced and stateless people, including the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Protecting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

- On 10 April, UNHCR delivered **a training on "Response and Referral Mechanism During Mass Influx Situations" to 36 representatives of key government agencies and humanitarian actors** in Kazakhstan. The training focused on strengthening inter-agency coordination and referral pathways in the event of a large-scale arrival of forcibly displaced people. Participants included representatives from the Border Guard Service, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Emergency Situations, Ministry of Healthcare, and local authorities. The training also served as a platform for sharing best practices, with representatives from Moldova and Slovakia presenting their experiences in effectively managing refugee influxes.

- On 16 April , the Kazakhstan Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law, a UNHCR partner, participated in the **conference "Theoretical and Practical Aspects of International Migration in the Context of Sustainable Development Goals and the Role of Kazakhstan**." The event brought together PhD students, including DAFI scholars, as well as international candidates from Malaysia, Bangladesh, and China. The conference provided a platform to discuss current developments in forced migration, with a focus on the rights of refugees and stateless people.

- **Article 65 of the Code on Marriage and Family has been declared unconstitutional following advocacy by UNHCR and its partners**. The Constitutional Court of Kazakhstan found that the provision lacked alternative mechanisms for determining or changing a child's nationality when parents are unknown, or their nationality cannot be established. This ruling represents a significant advancement in closing legal gaps that previously left some children without a determinable nationality, impacting their legal status and rights. The Court also addressed broader circumstances affecting the legal interests of citizens, encouraging a more inclusive interpretation of nationality determination. In line with the decision, the government has been instructed to submit a draft law to the Mazhilis of Parliament within six months of the publication of the ruling.

- From 23 to 26 April in Almaty, the Kazakhstan Football Federation (KFF), in cooperation with UNHCR, conducted **specialized referee and coaching courses for 13 refugees, including two women**, supported by the UEFA Refugee Grant Programme. The training equipped participants with the essential skills to serve as football referees and coaches. Upon successful completion, all participants received official certificates, opening pathways to pursue careers in football officiating and coaching.

- On 28 April, ahead of Mental Health Awareness Month, UNHCR's partner, the Red Crescent Society,

READ ALSO

Photo: UNHCR/ Alikhan Sariyev

READ ALSO: *More Than a Game: How sport brings refugees and communities together - Ahead of the International Day of Living Together in Peace, refugees, asylum-seekers and host communities in Kazakhstan came together to compete, connect, and celebrate inclusion through football.*

conducted a **training session on psychological support for eight refugees and asylum seekers**. The session aimed to strengthen participants' understanding of mental health challenges and provide them with basic skills to offer psychological first aid within their communities.

Students from six universities in Almaty took part in a World Refugee Day simulation on refugee protection. (Photo: UNHCR/Gani Networking)

- On 12 May, ahead of the International Day of Living Together in Peace, UNHCR and the Kazakhstan Football Federation co-hosted the second **"Games of Peace" football tournament for refugees, asylum-seekers, and host community members**, under the UEFA Refugee Grant programme. The event brought together 58 participants, promoting social inclusion, community cohesion, and the well-being of forcibly displaced people through sport. Three teams received medals, with the first-place team awarded the champion's cup.

- On 13 May, UNHCR organized **two training sessions for 10 DAFI refugee students in Almaty to strengthen their professional and digital skills.** The first session focused on influence, digital marketing, and social media management (SMM), while the second covered job interview preparation and CV writing. Experts facilitated the sessions, offering practical guidance and insights to support the students' academic advancement and career development.

- On 13 June, **UNHCR met with a refugee community leader and 11 refugees and asylum-seekers in Almaty** to listen to their concerns and better understand the challenges they face. The meeting was led by Acting UNHCR Representative for Central Asia, and organized in partnership with the Red Crescent Society of Kazakhstan as part of UNHCR's regular community engagement efforts. Participants were also informed about the shrinking operational budget and ongoing restructuring of UNHCR's presence in Central Asia, including the closure of the National Office in Astana.

- On 20 June, UNHCR and GANI Networking – a youth -led association uniting students of international relations faculties from universities across Central Asia – organized **a refugee protection simulation exercise in observance of the World Refugee Day 2025. Titled "Protecting Refugee Rights in Action,"** the event brought together students from KIMEP, Turan, KazNU, Narxoz, AUES, and KazUIWR, who assumed roles of key actors in Kazakhstan's asylum process. The simulation emphasized the importance of coordination among government agencies, legal partners, and international organizations. The MFA Representation in Almaty, the "Council of Generals," and the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law joined as jury members. Deputy Head of the MFA in Almaty, Rashid Yerishev, delivered closing remarks, highlighting Kazakhstan's commitment to humanitarian efforts and international protection.

- On 20 June, to mark World Refugee Day, UNHCR's partner, the Red Crescent Society of Kazakhstan, organized a **recreational event for refugee and asylum-seeker families** in Almaty. The activity included a visit to the local zoo and amusement park, with around 70 children and their parents participating. The initiative aimed to offer refugee children a joyful day out and strengthen community bonds through shared experiences.

- So far in 2025, UNHCR has provided **cash assistance** to 81 very vulnerable refugee and asylum-seeker families (reaching 128 individuals) to help them cover basic needs, including 46 disbursements for medical assistance.

Ending Statelessness

- On 8 April, UNHCR partner Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law (BHR) signed a **memorandum of cooperation with the Migration Service in West Kazakhstan region to support statelessness reduction and prevention efforts.** The memorandum is the first in a series expected to be signed with regional migration departments in Kostanay, Pavlodar, Karaganda, Oskemen, and Almaty. It underscores the importance of equal and constructive dialogue between government authorities and civil society as a means of finding systemic solutions to key issues related to statelessness reduction and universal birth registration.

- On April 4, UNHCR partner **Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law (BHR) delivered a lecture on statelessness to 45 students** at Kostanay Regional University to raise awareness and encourage dialogue on legal and human rights protections. The session focused on the root causes of statelessness in Kazakhstan and current efforts to address and resolve it.

- Following a January meeting between UNHCR and the Chairperson of the Migration Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which focused on reviewing joint priorities for 2025 and the outcomes

of the nationwide statelessness identification campaign**, the Migration Committee, with UNHCR's support, developed and shared proposed amendments to the Statelessness Determination Procedures** with relevant government agencies. These amendments aim to strengthen the government's capacity to identify and register individuals with undetermined nationality, enhance awareness-raising efforts, and establish a clear procedure for inter-agency cooperation when people with undetermined nationality are identified or come forward, including their proper registration and follow-up.

- On June 30, UNHCR partner Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law (BHR), together with the Russian Consulate, conducted **a joint outreach in Atyrau to support stateless individuals**. The visit resulted in three individuals from the local Adaptation Center being exempted from passport issuance fees by the Consulate, following joint advocacy efforts.

READ ALSO

READ ALSO: *Breaking the chains of statelessness for her family. After spending two decades in uncertainty, Nataliyia and her 9 children were recognized as citizens of Kazakhstan.*

THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

State Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol

- On 19 May, **UNHCR and the Ombudsman Institute exchanged draft work plans**, discussed staff participation in upcoming capacity-building activities, and reviewed UNHCR's legislative proposals, including measures to address delays in asylum registration. The meeting also covered the potential accession of the Kyrgyz Republic to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions and reaffirmed both parties' commitment to sustained collaboration.
- On 18 April, **UNHCR briefed 65 students from the International University of Central Asia** on its mandate and the protection of refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people in the Kyrgyz Republic as part of a study visit to the UN House. The visit included a roundtable discussion with four UN agencies, offering students an opportunity to learn more about the UN's work in the country and engage directly with agency representatives during an open Q&A session.
- On 21 April, **UNHCR met with the Public Charitable Foundation "Oasis" to expand access to psychosocial support for refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people** . The Foundation, which works with children and women transitioning from institutional care, expressed readiness to involve forcibly displaced and stateless people in its psychosocial support programmes. The meeting also explored opportunities for legal assistance training for Oasis staff working with vulnerable populations.
- On 18 April, UNHCR participated in a **job fair at the American University of Central Asia (AUCA) to** present its mandate, ongoing activities, and achievements in the Kyrgyz Republic, generating strong interest among students in internships and current vacancies. The event also served to raise awareness about UNHCR's work and attract young professionals to the humanitarian field.

- From 16-18 April, UNHCR participated in a **national simulation exercise to help strengthen the emergency preparedness and disaster response** capacity of authorities in the Kyrgyz Republic. The Ministry of Emergencies conducted the simulation in Naryn under the theme "Actions of Authorities and Civil Defense Units in the Event of an Emergency Outbreak and Its Registration" (earthquake scenario). The exercise was coordinated by the Disaster Response Coordination Unit (DRCU), with support from the UN Resident Coordinator's Office.

- On 24 April, UNHCR took part in expert consultations on **proposed legislative amendments to promote gender equality** in the Kyrgyz Republic. The consultations on the draft Law "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts on Gender Equality" were convened by the Council on the Rights of Women, Children, and Gender Equality under the Speaker of Parliament. The event gathered government representatives, gender experts, and international organizations to review the legislative proposals and align efforts to advance gender equality in the country.

- On 29 April**,** UNHCR met with UNODC to coordinate ongoing and upcoming joint activities aimed at **improving protection-sensitive border management along the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border**. The meeting focused on the 2025–2026 joint project being implemented in collaboration with IOM and UNDP, which includes the development of a "Digital Border" mobile application, establishment of two mother-and-child rooms, installation of video surveillance systems, and strengthening the capacity of border officials. UNHCR will support the development of individual arrival referral mechanisms and deliver a tailored learning intervention as part of the 2026 capacity-building activities. UNODC will conduct assessment visits to eight border crossing points in May, followed by a coordination meeting with the Border Guards Service.

- During the 49th session of the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR), in April the **Kyrgyz Republic presented its Fourth National Report on the fulfillment of human rights obligations**. Kyrgyz Republic reaffirmed the country's commitment to advancing human rights, with particular focus on civil rights, gender equality, rule of law, and civil society development. Recommendations included:

  - Ratify the UN Statelessness Conventions (Colombia, Uruguay, and Malawi);
  - Improve the quality of refugee status determination (RSD) (Ecuador);
  - Ensure access to social protection for refugees (Ecuador).

- On 13 May, UNHCR participated in an event organized by UNFPA to highlight the role of midwives in humanitarian response and advocate for **improved healthcare access for refugees and stateless people** in the Kyrgyz Republic. The event, titled "Humanitarian Response: Midwives on the Front Lines Delivering Essential Care Amid Resource Shortages," brought together midwives from across the country, the Mandatory Health Insurance Fund (MHIF), and individuals with lived experience, including a mandate refugee and a stateless person. UNHCR emphasized the significant financial barrier posed by health insurance costs for refugees and stateless people, who must pay nearly six times more than citizens, and the legal obstacles related to documentation requirements. UNHCR continues to advocate for implementation of the Government's 2021 pledge under the Global Compact on Refugees to ensure equal healthcare access to refugees and asylum-seekers on par with citizens.

Refugees and asylum-seekers took part in a felt handicraft masterclass in Bishkek, fostering creativity and connection in observance of World Refugee Day. Photo: UNHCR

- On 22 May, UNHCR engaged with the UNICEF Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia to highlight progress in child protection and advocate for strengthened access to services for refugees and stateless people in Kyrgyz Republic. During the UN Country Team's meeting with Regional Director, UNHCR acknowledged the continued collaboration with UNICEF under the Letter of Understanding and welcomed Kyrgyz Republic's **achievement in ensuring universal birth registration for all children born in the country**.

- On 27 May, UNHCR met with the IOM Director General to reaffirm cooperation and advocate for strengthened protection safeguards within mixed migration flows in Kyrgyz Republic. During the UN Country Team meeting with IOM Director General Ms. Amy Pope, UNHCR emphasized the importance of maintaining **access to territory and fair asylum procedures** for those seeking international protection. UNHCR also expressed continued support for IOM's capacity-building initiatives involving key government stakeholders.

- From 17-19 June, UNHCR held high-level meetings

with key government counterparts in the Kyrgyz Republic to advocate for strengthened refugee protection, solutions to statelessness, and implementation of national and international commitments. Meetings were held with Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs; Labour, Social Development and Migration; and Digital Development and Innovative Technologies, as well as with the State Committee for National Security, the Deputy Ombudsman, civil society, and the donor community. UNHCR raised the shrinking operational budget and ongoing restructuring, and urged progress on **durable solutions for mandate refugees, accession to the Statelessness Conventions and the new Global Alliance to End Statelessness, improved access to asylum procedures**, issuance of travel documents, and safeguards for individuals in detention and mixed movements. Government counterparts expressed readiness to maintain dialogue and continue cooperation.

- On 23 June, UNHCR advocated for the **inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless people in national development planning** at a high-level briefing convened by the UN Country Team in the Kyrgyz Republic. The event, organized for the diplomatic corps and development partners, provided an overview of progress under the UN-Kyrgyzstan Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2023–2027), highlighting 2024 achievements and outlining 2025 priorities, including social protection, inclusive green growth, climate resilience, and governance reforms. In its statement, UNHCR underscored that forcibly displaced and stateless people should be viewed not only through a lens of vulnerability but also as contributors to the country's socio-economic development.

- On 29 June, UNHCR participated in discussions with government stakeholders to support **the issuance of travel documents for refugees and stateless people in the Kyrgyz Republic**. The meeting addressed technical, legal, and financial considerations, including concerns over high production costs due to low demand. The newly established State Institution "Kyzmat" will prepare updated Terms of Reference with technical specifications and budget estimates by 15 July. A working group led by the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Migration will finalize the regulation governing the issuance of Convention Travel Documents (CTDs). UNHCR will request a draft specimen and description of the CTDs to ensure consistency and inform relevant partners.

- Throughout this period, **UNHCR continued advocacy efforts to promote the rights of forcibly displaced and stateless people**, including regular engagement with the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, including meetings with the Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Migration; Ministry of Digital Development; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and Ministry of Justice; as well as the Ombudsman Institute, General Prosecutor's Office.

Protecting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

- **Kyrgyz Republic recognizes 18 refugees in 2025 .** With the support of UNHCR and partner Legal Clinic Adilet, as of 30 June 2025, the Kyrgyz Republic has recognized 18 refugees. Throughout 2024, the Kyrgyz Republic recognized only 21 asylum-seekers as refugees, while rejecting 137 (including 109 from Afghanistan).

- In June, UNHCR facilitated **an exceptional issuance of a Compulsory Medical Insurance (CMI) card for a mandate refugee** with diabetes, enabling access to life-saving treatment and setting a precedent for others in similar need. Despite the Kyrgyz Republic's Global Compact on Refugees pledge to ensure refugees' access to healthcare on par with citizens, mandate refugees without regularized status remain excluded from national insurance due to the lack of a personal identification number (PIN). Following UNHCR's advocacy with the Fund for Compulsory Medical Insurance and support from legal partner Legal Clinic "Adilet," authorities agreed to issue a CMI card based on the individual's UNHCR mandate refugee certificate. The case underscores the need for systemic solutions to ensure inclusive healthcare access for all forcibly displaced people.

- On 15 April, UNHCR's partner LC "Adilet" conducted **a training on the topic "Enrolling Children in School"** for 17 refugees and asylum-seekers from Afghanistan. The session provided practical guidance on the legal basis for enrolling children in schools, available types of public and private educational institutions, the electronic application process and deadlines, and extracurricular opportunities such as creative, academic, and sports clubs.

- On 23 May, UNHCR met with the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Migration to **raise concerns over delays in asylum registration**, particularly in the context of upcoming migration enforcement activities. During the meeting with the Head of the Migration Decision-Making Department, UNHCR emphasized the risks posed to asylum-seekers amid ongoing delays in registration procedures. The Ministry acknowledged the issue and noted that, following the resolution of previous challenges related to *kairylmans*, migration officers would begin processing asylum applications more actively. It was also clarified that the recent Presidential Decree on the regularization of foreign nationals and stateless people does not apply to mandate refugees. Both parties confirmed their commitment to ongoing dialogue and cooperation.

- On 26–27 May, UNHCR took part in an interagency meeting in Bishkek to contribute to the **development of the 2026–2030 Action Plan under the Migration Policy Concept** of the Kyrgyz Republic. The meeting, organized by the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Migration in cooperation with IOM and supported

by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), gathered key stakeholders under the regional "Labour Migration Programme – Central Asia." UNHCR's participation ensured that the rights and protection needs of refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people are taken into account in future migration policies.

- On 11 June, UNHCR participated in a high-level coordination meeting to help **align joint UN efforts with national development priorities** in the Kyrgyz Republic. UNHCR took part in the Joint Strategic Coordination Committee meeting, co-chaired by the Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic and the UN Resident Coordinator. During the meeting, 2025 Joint Work Plans under the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2023–2027 were officially endorsed. The discussions focused on reviewing progress made in 2024 and approving priorities for 2025 across four key areas: quality social services and decent work; inclusive, green socio-economic development; climate action and disaster risk management; and accountable, inclusive institutions for peace and human rights.

UNHCR and partners reviewed GRF pledges to strengthen support for refugees and stateless people in Kyrgyz Republic. (Photo: UNHCR/Askat Chynaly)

- On 18 June, UNHCR convened **a national round table in Bishkek to assess progress on Global Refugee Forum (GRF) pledges** and strengthen coordination with Government and partners in support of asylum-seekers, refugees, and stateless people in the Kyrgyz Republic. Held in observance of World Refugee Day, the event brought together 38 participants, including deputy ministers, heads of departments, representatives of the Parliament and the Ombudsman's Office, UN agencies, development partners, academia, and private sector actors such as commercial banks engaged in improving access to banking services for asylum-seekers. The round table aimed to review the implementation of GRF pledges, identify remaining challenges, and develop a joint roadmap for further action ahead of the High-Level Officials Meeting in Geneva in December 2025.
- On 19 June, LC "Adilet", UNHCR's partner, organized **a felt handicraft masterclass** in Bishkek, to engage with refugees and asylum-seekers and mark World Refugee Day. Acting UNHCR Representative for Central Asia, attended the event, spoke with participants, and learned about the main challenges faced by refugee and asylum-seeking communities. The masterclass, held in a warm and inclusive atmosphere, provided an opportunity for creative expression and fostered a sense of connection and support among participants. Refugees expressed their appreciation for the initiative and the attention given to their concerns.
- On 23 June, **UNHCR met with 16 mandate refugees** at the UN House in Bishkek, following their request, to discuss ongoing challenges related to their unresolved legal status. As key outcomes of the meeting, participants requested: regular meetings to receive updates on the legal status process; prioritization of resolving the legal status of children born on the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic; submission of a collective letter on the issues of mandate refugees; and the exploration of pathways to lawful employment.
- On 16-19 June, UNHCR facilitated the participation of a former refugee from the Kyrgyz Republic in the 15by30 Global Conference to promote access to higher education for refugees. The former refugee, now actively engaged in local initiatives, represented the Kyrgyz Republic at the **"15% by 2030: Global Pledge on Refugee Higher Education and Self-Reliance" Conference** held in Istanbul, Türkiye. Her participation highlighted the importance of investing in refugee education and showcased the potential of refugee youth when given access.
- So far in 2025, UNHCR provided **cash assistance** to 263 vulnerable refugee and asylum-seeker families (reaching 66 family members) to support them to cover their basic or emergency needs. In addition, 3 children were provided with financial assistance to help them purchase school supplies for the new academic year.

Ending Statelessness

- On 30 June, UNHCR submitted comments on the **draft citizenship regulation to support the inclusion of safeguards for stateless people** and those at risk of statelessness. The comments addressed the Presidential Decree "On Approval of the Regulation on the Procedure for Considering Citizenship Issues" of 10 August 2013 (No. 174), which had been posted for public consultation on the Unified Portal for Draft Normative Legal Acts. UNHCR also shared its recommendations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Digital Development and Innovative Technologies, the State Institution "Kyzmat," and the Office of the Ombudsman.

TAJIKISTAN

State Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol

- Throughout this period, UNHCR **continued regular engagement with key government counterparts** to advance protection of forcibly displaced and stateless people, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Executive Apparatus of the President, Ministry of Justice, Ombudsperson's Office, State Committee for National Security, and Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defence.

- On 17 April, **UNHCR organized a field visit to Vahdat** with the U.S. Congressional Staff Delegation to facilitate direct engagement with refugees and highlight key protection issues. The visit was part of the delegation's broader mission to Tajikistan. In Vahdat, the delegation participated in focus group discussions with refugees and gained firsthand insight into their experiences. Topics of interest included legal protection, access to services, gender-specific concerns, statelessness, and durable solutions such as resettlement.

- On 17 April, UNHCR participated in the Strategic REACT Meeting to **support national disaster preparedness and inter-agency coordination efforts** in Tajikistan. The meeting co-chaired by the Committee for Emergency Situations and Civil Defense and the UN Resident Coordinator, brought together heads of REACT partner agencies. Participants reviewed disaster trends in 2024, endorsed the Inter-Agency Contingency Plan for floods and mudflows, and adopted the 2025 REACT Workplan. The agenda also addressed advances in geo-spatial data systems, coordination of cash assistance, and implementation of the Early Warning for All (EW4All) initiative, with a shared focus on strengthening national resilience and emergency response capacity.

- On 21 April, **UNHCR conducted an on-the-job proGres training** for newly recruited staff of its legal partner Inson va Adolat to enhance data management and improve protection and assistance services. The training focused on the effective use of the Assistance module and reporting procedures, emphasizing the importance of accurate data entry for case monitoring, error reduction, and accountability. Strengthening staff capacity in using proGres is key to ensuring timely and effective support to refugees and asylum-seekers.

- On 25 April, UNHCR participated in a **Disaster Preparedness meeting** with ECHO to advocate for contingency planning. UNHCR joined other UN agencies and local NGOs in briefing ECHO representatives during their visit to Central Asia, presenting ongoing disaster preparedness efforts and emphasizing the need for a government-led contingency plan to strengthen coordinated response capacities.

- On 24 April, UNHCR participated in the **Government-UN National Joint Steering Committee meeting** to contribute to joint planning and review of progress under the UNSDCF framework in Tajikistan. The meeting, co-chaired by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and UN Resident Coordinator reviewed the 2023 UN Annual Results Report and the UNSDCF Annual Performance Review, and discussed shared priorities for 2025, reaffirming the commitment to collaborative implementation of development goals.

- On 21 April, UNHCR participated in a **refresher training on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)** to strengthen staff awareness, accountability, and understanding of reporting mechanisms. The session reinforced the UN's zero-tolerance approach to sexual misconduct and covered key topics including how to identify exploitation and abuse, appropriate channels for reporting, and ways to support survivors. It concluded with an interactive Q&A to address practical challenges and ensure consistent application of PSEA standards across agencies.

- On 13 June, UNHCR met with the University of Central Asia to explore opportunities that would **strengthen student engagement in refugee protection**. Discussions focused on potential internships for students at its legal partners, with proposed tasks with the digitization of partner records

- On 24 June, UNHCR met with the Head of the Department for Constitutional Guarantees of Citizens' Rights within the Executive Office of the President to advocate for refugee protection and discuss a proposed **peacebuilding initiative** in Tajikistan's border areas. UNHCR also raised concerns over recent refoulement cases involving refugees and emphasized the importance of legal safeguards and access to fair appeal mechanisms. Both parties expressed commitment to continued dialogue and cooperation.

- From 23 to 25 June, UNHCR held **a series of high-level meetings with key stakeholders**, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Department for Constitutional Guarantees of Citizens' Rights under the Executive Office of the President, the State Committee for National Security (SCNS), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Discussions

focused on the forced returns of Afghan refugees and the importance of adhering to legal safeguards and fair procedures, as well as opportunities for collaboration on peacebuilding, social cohesion, and livelihoods support. UNHCR also briefed partners on the ongoing restructuring and budget reductions impacting its operations in Central Asia and emphasized the importance of sustained cooperation to support affected populations.

Protecting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

- On 25 April, UNHCR, together with UNICEF, IOM and TIKA, supported the graduation of 56 vulnerable young women – including Afghan refugees and orphans – who completed vocational training under the LOOM Project. The LOOM Project (Learning, Opportunity, Optimization, and Mastery) aimed to empower participants through a **four-month technical training programme in graphic design, textile construction, and stitching, followed by two months of post-graduation support**. The graduation ceremony featured a showcase of the students' collaborative fashion collection and was attended by representatives from diplomatic missions and the textile industry, offering the graduates valuable exposure and networking opportunities. All 56 graduates, including 13 Afghan refugee women, received certificates.

- On 12 May, UNHCR met with the Agency for Supervision in the Field of Education and Science of Tajikistan to discuss **solutions for Afghan refugees facing challenges in the recognition of their educational documents**. The Agency explained that the nostrification process has been suspended since 2021 due to the absence of diplomatic relations and legal frameworks with Afghanistan's de facto authorities. To address this gap, the Agency highlighted the need for a comprehensive legislative framework and Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs), and expressed readiness to initiate necessary legal changes in cooperation with UNHCR to support Afghan refugees and asylum seekers in accessing education and employment opportunities.

- On 27 May, UNHCR and its legal partner Inson va Adolat delivered a **training session for 21 border troops personnel to strengthen their understanding of asylum-related obligations** and procedures. The training covered key topics including access to territory and asylum, the principle of *non-refoulement*, international protection standards, and Tajikistan's national legal framework on asylum, aiming to enhance the capacity of border authorities to uphold refugee rights in line with international commitments.

- On 12 June, UNHCR convened a **Protection Working Group meeting to coordinate the response** to the ongoing deportations of Afghan refugees and asylum -seekers. UNHCR briefed Mission East, IOM, OHCHR, UNFPA, and UN Women on the continuing forcible returns and the resulting increase in voluntary repatriations. IOM and UN Women shared updates on completed and upcoming projects involving Afghan nationals, including refugees.

- On 16 June, UNHCR facilitated a joint field visit with

A World Refugee Day photo exhibition at Serena Hotel in Dushanbe highlighted private sector solidarity with refugees and UNHCR's broader efforts to foster socio-economic inclusion for refugees in Tajikistan. (UNHCR/ Muhammadkhuja Davlyatov)

TIKA to the refugee-led Ariana Learning Centre and the Youth Centre to promote potential collaboration in support of refugee and local children and youth. During the visit, they discussed concrete support and potential projects involving refugees. As a result of the visit, TIKA expressed interest in renovating several classrooms at both centres to improve learning environments for refugees and local children.

- On 17 June, UNHCR visited the Panji Poyon border crossing point with Afghanistan to assess the placement of a container that will serve as a **safe and private space for women, children, and older persons crossing the border**. The visit also provided an opportunity to observe the overall situation at the border and identify any additional protection or humanitarian needs.
- From 19 to 24 June, a **photo exhibition marking World Refugee Day** was held at the Serena Hotel in Dushanbe, organized in cooperation with the hotel. The event reflected private sector solidarity with refugees in Tajikistan. Notably, UNHCR has partnered with Serena Hotel as part of its broader efforts to engage the private sector in promoting the socio-economic inclusion of refugees through skills training, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities.
- On 18 June, UNHCR's legal partner Inson va Adolat, in cooperation with the Office of the Ombudsman, organized a **roundtable to promote inter-agency dialogue on refugee protection in observance of the World Refugee Day**. The event brought together representatives from the Presidential Apparatus, General Prosecutor's Office, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Passport Registration Office. Discussions focused on the key challenges faced by refugees in Tajikistan and underscored the importance of strengthened cooperation among government institutions to enhance refugee protection.
- On 18 June, UNHCR delivered a **training session on refugee protection to female border officials from Central Asia and Europe** to strengthen regional capacity on access to asylum. The session took place at the OSCE Border Staff Management College and was attended by 27 women from 16 countries. Key topics included access to territory, referral mechanisms, and the principle of *non-refoulement*. Participants from Europe shared lessons learned from the Ukrainian emergency response, contributing to more constructive approaches to refugee protection.
- On 24 June, UNHCR held a **townhall meeting in Vahdat** to inform refugees and asylum-seekers about recent developments and available support services. The meeting gathered approximately 60 participants, including 15 men, and covered key topics such as recent deportation cases, UNHCR's actions, World Refugee Day activities, office restructuring, and educational opportunities under the DAFI and TBB programmes. UNHCR's legal partner also presented newly developed informational materials and highlighted their online availability.
- On 25 June, UNHCR held a **townhall meeting in Rudaki** to update refugees and asylum-seekers on protection issues, available opportunities, and the evolving operational context. The meeting was attended by over 30 participants, including around 12 men. UNHCR shared information on recent deportation cases and its response, follow-up activities from World Refugee Day, and the impact of budget constraints leading to restructuring and downsizing in Central Asia, including in Tajikistan.
- On 26 June, UNHCR participated in the **National Round Table on People on the Move and Refugee Rights Coordination**, organized by the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan (RCST) with support from the Italian Red Cross (ItRC). The event brought together key stakeholders to exchange experiences and identify areas for improved cooperation. RCST presented its ongoing project, highlighting assistance provided to refugees and host communities over the past two years. Participants discussed current challenges and opportunities to enhance protection and support for people on the move.
- So far in 2025, UNHCR has provided **multi-purpose cash grants** to 69 vulnerable households - 363 _ vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers to support them to cover their basic or emergency needs. A further 100 people received disability allowances and 40 individuals with the chronic diseases received medical reimbursements.

Ending Statelessness

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Read also: *A lifetime of struggle, a beacon of hope: Meliknor's Journey from statelessness to stability in Tajikistan*

TURKMENISTAN

State Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol
State Party to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions

- On 23 June, Turkmenistan participated in the Third Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific to promote regional cooperation on civil registration and the prevention of statelessness. The Turkmen delegation, led by the Deputy Chairman of the State Migration Service, highlighted national efforts to improve civil registration systems and resolve statelessness. During a side event on statelessness, co-hosted by UNHCR and Global Alliance member States – including Turkmenistan – participants presented a new publication featuring personal stories of formerly stateless individuals and contributions from civil society, with inputs from Central Asia.

UZBEKISTAN

- On 21 May, UNHCR met with forcibly displaced Afghan citizens in Termez to **hear protection concerns and discuss opportunities for support and inclusion**. During the visit, UNHCR's Acting Representative for Central Asia also met with representatives of the NGO Barqaror Hayot. Participants raised concerns about their legal status and shared challenges related to extending short-term visas due to high costs and administrative hurdles. They also expressed interest in livelihood opportunities, including vocational training, language courses, and skills development aligned with the local labour market.
- On 22 May, UNHCR had a joint meeting with representatives of the National Human Rights Centre (NHRC) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoI) of Uzbekistan in Tashkent. UNHCR informed the NHRC about the impact of reduced funding on **activities planned under the 2025 joint workplan**, to which the NHRC expressed readiness to adopt a flexible implementation approach. UNHCR also emphasized to the MoI the importance of providing up-to-date statistics on statelessness to ensure timely reflection of Uzbekistan's progress in global reporting.

IN FOCUS: Support in Action

Like other aid agencies, UNHCR is affected by severe cuts in global humanitarian funding. Without donor contributions, UNHCR and partners in Central Asia will be unable to provide vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers with cash assistance, legal counselling, and livelihoods support. Progress in aligning national legislation with international standards and strengthening the capacity of authorities, academia, and civil society to protect forcibly displaced and stateless people will be undone. If funding is not forthcoming, our 2029 vision for Central Asia will not be achieved, and efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals lost.

UNHCR is doing everything possible to continue protecting and assisting these vulnerable groups, prioritising life-saving work, postponing planned activities where possible, and freezing non-essential expenses. We are seeking additional support from donors and the private sector to sustain critical programmes around the world, and help refugees rebuild their lives.

Donate today if you can

UNHCR is grateful for contributions directly to UNHCR Central Asia, and donors of unearmarked and flexible funding, including: Australia | Belgium | Canada | Denmark | European Union | Germany | Ireland | Japan | Kingdom of the Netherlands | Norway | Republic of Korea | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | United States of America.

Nansen Award winner and Central Asian Network on Statelessness member Azizbek Ashurov, and Deputy Chairman of the State Migration Service of Turkmenistan Sahy Imamberdiyev, participated in the Bangkok launch of UNHCR's **Ending Statelessness Together** publication, highlighting regional progress on ending statelessness. (Photo: UNHCR/ Appy Norapoompipat)

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

- As a member of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan UN Country Teams and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, UNHCR engages with governments, UN and development partners, international financial institutions and others across Central Asia to ensure refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people are not left behind in States' achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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See also:

- unhcr.org/central-asia *for the latest news and stories*
- reporting.unhcr.org/kazakhstan *for 2025 strategy, budget and funding updates*
- data.unhcr.org/en/situations/central_asia *for population figures and data.*

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UNHCR maintains email and phone 'hotlines' across the four countries for anyone in need of information or consultation on refugee and asylum issues. People forced to flee can find key contacts and updated information about asylum procedures in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on help.unhcr.org/centralasia, in English, Russian and Dari.