UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

OPERATIONAL UPDATE
July - September 2025

UNHCR Representation to Central Asia

Photo: UNHCR/ Elyor Nemat

In support of the national 'Yashil Makon' (Green Nation) initiative in Uzbekistan, UNHCR contributes to climate action through an afforestation and livelihoods programme engaging Afghan citizens and host community members to plant trees in Surkhandarya region.

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
32%	68%

As of 31 July 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 September, 11 of the 21 pledges have already been completed.

- On 17–18 September, UNHCR partners and NGOs from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan joined **the 2025 UNHCR Regional Consultations with NGOs in Asia and the Pacific,** organized by UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific together with the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA). Overall, there were 17 registered participants from Central Asia, with fifteen attending on day 1 and thirteen on day 2. Key focus areas included the Route -Based Approach and Localization. The Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law (KIBHR) was part of the Advisory Group, which played an important role in shaping the programme and agenda of consultations.

- On 4 August, **RSD Distance Learning Programme kicked off in Central Asia.** UNHCR has launched the online phase of the 2025 Refugee Status Determination Learning Programme, a 12-week training initiative aimed at strengthening the quality of RSD procedures and building technical capacity across Central Asia. The programme brings together refugee case workers, judges, national RSD Commission members, and NGO staff from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan who provide legal aid to asylum seekers. After the online phase, it will conclude with a 4-day in-person residential workshop.

- On 3 August, the UN Secretary-General attended signing of Host Country Agreement for the United Nations Regional Centre for the Sustainable Development Goals for Central Asia and Afghanistan. The agreement was signed by the Deputy Prime Minister–Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan

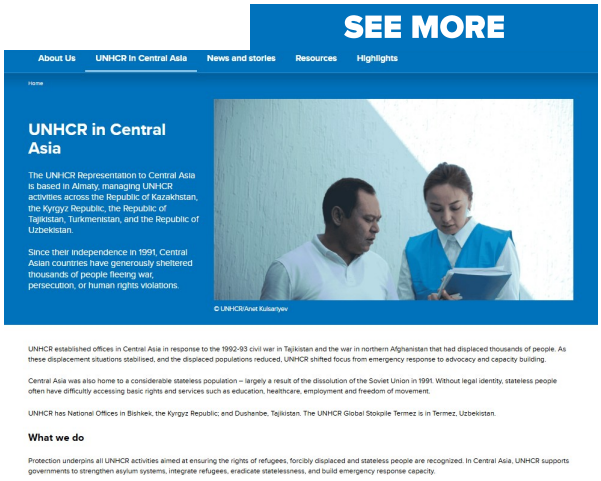
and the UN Under-Secretary-General for DESA, in the presence of the President of Kazakhstan and the UN Secretary-General. The event was also attended by the UN Country Team in Kazakhstan. **UNHCR joined the townhall meeting with Secretary-General António Guterres, organized by the Resident Coordinator's Office**, where agencies had the opportunity to engage directly with the SG. During the discussion, the Secretary-General reflected on the UN80, emphasized the importance of multilateralism, and acknowledged the funding constraints currently affecting the UN system – with particular mention of the challenges faced by UNHCR in Central Asia. These constraints had a direct impact on the presence in the region, including the closure of National Office Kazakhstan.

- **On 5–8 August, UNHCR was represented at the Youth Forum and International Dialogue held alongside the Third UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) in Avaza, Turkmenistan.** A UN Volunteer from Kazakhstan, currently serving with UNHCR, was selected to represent both UNHCR and the UN Country Team in Kazakhstan at the event. The Forum concluded with the presentation of a Youth Declaration to the President of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly, H.E. Philemon Yang, and other high-level officials, including the Deputy Minister of Education of Turkmenistan and the UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS. The Declaration included a dedicated call to address the specific challenges faced by refugees and displaced youth in LLDCs, particularly in accessing education, healthcare, and employment opportunities.

- In 2025, the British Council in partnership with the UNCHR, provided **12 free IELTS vouchers to support refugees pursuing higher education opportunities** in Kazakhstan. Following the closure of the UNHCR National Office Kazakhstan in Astana, the vouchers were redistributed to students in other countries, with the final allocation as follows: Kazakhstan (8), Kyrgyz Republic (2), and Tajikistan (2). To date, 10 students have successfully completed the exam, enhancing their academic readiness and access to higher education opportunities.

- As part of overall efforts to advocate for access to territory and non-refoulment, UNHCR shared the translated **Updated Guidance Note on Afghanistan (Update II)** in Russian with government counterparts across Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

- In August, UNHCR Central Asia transitioned to a new **website platform**, and is now accessible at the link: **https://www.unhcr.org/central-asia.**



KAZAKHSTAN

State Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol

- On September 17-18, UNHCR's Senior Livelihood and Economic Inclusion Officer, Ms. Damla Buyuktaskin, had series of meetings in Kazakhstan to discuss **economic inclusion of refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people**.
  - On 17 September, in Astana, she met with Kazutoshi Chatani, Senior Employment Specialist at the ILO Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia; Erzhan Irgebayev from the Office of Academic Recognition at the National Center for Higher Education Development; Asset Mukhanbetov, Director of the TVET Department at the Ministry of Education; and Asset Shonov, Chairman of the Migration Committee at the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population. Discussion focused on ways to expand access to employment, vocational training, and entrepreneurship opportunities for forcibly displaced populations, with the aim of strengthening self-reliance, reducing dependency on humanitarian assistance, and supporting meaningful contributions to local communities and the national economy.
  - On 18 September, in Almaty, Ms. Damla met with 15 refugees and asylum-seekers, including current DAFI scholarship students and graduates. The meeting provided an opportunity to hear directly from forcibly displaced people about the challenges they face in accessing employment, vocational training, and other livelihood opportunities. Participants shared personal experiences and highlighted barriers such as limited recognition of qualifications, temporary refugee status, and difficulties navigating the local labor market.
- On 9 September, UNHCR engaged with Kazakhstan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to **strengthen cooperation on refugee protection and**

statelessness. Acting UNHCR Representative to Central Asia, Dumitru Lipcanu, met with Ambassador-at-Large Zhanibek Abdrashev, head of the MFA's Representative Office in Almaty, to discuss enhancing collaboration in both bilateral and multilateral formats.

- 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 30 August, UNHCR, in partnership with the **Kazakhstan Football Federation, organized a football tournament for refugees** in Shymkent**.** The "Games of Peace" event in Shymkent brought together 36 refugees and members of the host community, fostering teamwork and inclusion through sport. As a follow-up, training courses for refugee football players and referees are planned in the coming months to further support participation and economic integration.

- On 1 September, UNHCR supported continuing DAFI scholarship students in Kazakhstan with academic skills development. **Nine of the ten continuing DAFI students in Kazakhstan participated in a "Back to School" session**, which included training on SMART goal-setting and study techniques delivered by a volunteer speaker, a top-performing New York University graduate.

- **Red Crescent Society launched Russian language course for refugees and asylum-seekers.** The Red Crescent Society, a UNHCR partner, has launched offline Russian language courses for five refugees and two asylum-seekers. The three-month course, held twice a week, aims to enhance participants' language skills and support their inclusion into the host community.

- On 18 September, **at the request of the Norwegian NGO FFKF, Professional Forum for Municipal Refugee Work, UNHCR delivered a presentation for members of the organization** during their study trip to Kazakhstan. The presentation focused on asylum procedures in Central Asia, with particular attention to Kazakhstan. It covered the legal framework on asylum, the current situation of refugees and asylum-seekers, recent developments, and advocacy efforts with the Government of Kazakhstan in fulfilling its international obligations and finding durable solutions for forcibly displaced and stateless people, as well as UNHCR's engagement with government authorities, civil society, and academia in the country. As part of the study trip, FFKF members also met with UNHCR's partner, the "Kazakhstan's International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law," to learn about its experience in providing legal support to refugees and asylum-seekers in Kazakhstan and advocating for the protection of their rights.

Nine continuing DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) students participated in a "Back to School" session on academic skills, including SMART goal-setting and study techniques, at UN Plaza in Almaty. (Photo: UNHCR/Aiya Siyaz)

More than 90 refugees, asylum-seekers and host community members participated in football tournaments in Shymkent and Almaty, organized by the Kazakhstan Football Federation with UNHCR and the Red Crescent Society, supported by the UEFA Refugee Grant. (Photo: KFF/Altynbekov Bakdaulet)

- On 22 September, UNHCR and the Kazakhstan Football Federation organized a football tournament in Almaty to promote inclusion and social cohesion for refugees. **The third "Games of Peace" tournament in Almaty – and the fourth held in Kazakhstan under the UEFA refugee grant programme** – brought together 55 refugees and asylum-seekers alongside members of the host community, fostering teamwork and interaction through sport. As a next step, training courses for refugee football players and referees are planned to further support participation and inclusion.

- So far in 2025, UNHCR has provided **cash assistance** to 324 very vulnerable refugee and asylum-seeker families (reaching 385 individuals) to help them cover basic needs, including 81 disbursements for medical assistance.

Ending Statelessness

- **Kazakhstan adopted a legal amendment improving access to birth registration for children at risk of statelessness.** An update to Article 187 of the Code on Marriage and Family now allows birth registration for children born outside medical facilities to mothers without identity documents. Under the new provision, a birth certificate issued by a maternity organization may serve as the basis for registration, provided the mother seeks medical care within five days after delivery and her identity is recorded based on her verbal statement. The amendment reflects sustained engagement by UNHCR and national stakeholders and builds on Kazakhstan's 2019 Global Refugee Forum pledge to improve access to birth registration regardless of parents' legal status, strengthening alignment with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

- UNHCR partner, Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law, together with the Russian Consulate, conducted **a joint outreach in Atyrau to assist stateless people**. As a result, three individuals from the local Adaptation Center were exempted from passport fees by the Consulate, following joint advocacy efforts.

- Kazakhstan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed foreign diplomatic missions and consular offices, including UNHCR, that in line with Article 26 of the Law On Identity Documents and information from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, **a new security element will be added to national passports and stateless person certificates**. From mid-July 2025, page 2 of identity documents will feature a high-definition holographic element to strengthen protection against forgery.

THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

State Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol

- On 25 June, UNHCR met with Kyrgyz Republic's Border Guard Service to advance support for asylum-seekers and strengthen cooperation. UNHCR shared updates on its operational priorities, funding constraints, and ongoing restructuring in Central Asia, including in the Kyrgyz Republic. As part of its 2024 workplan, UNHCR provided technical designs and cost estimates for **converting a former duty-free building at the Chaldybar border crossing into a reception area for asylum-seekers and a training classroom**, noting that reconstruction is currently unfunded. The discussion also covered coordinated border monitoring at key crossings, including Manas Airport, Ak-Jol, and Osh, with proposals to extend coverage to Kadamjay and Dostuk.

- On 25 June, UNHCR contributed to **planning the 100th anniversary of** the Kyrgyz Republic**'s Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Migration** (MLSSM). UNHCR participated in a round table convened by the Minister of Labour, which brought together former ministers and UN agencies, including ILO, IOM, and WFP. Discussions focused on organizing anniversary activities and mobilizing resources for the centennial celebration scheduled for late 2025. While ILO and IOM proposed measures to elevate the Ministry's institutional profile, UNHCR recommended establishing dialogue platforms as part of the centennial events to allow refugees to share their experiences and provide feedback on the Ministry's services.

Legal Clinic "Adilet" held 2-day seminar for government officials on international and national legislation related to asylum and nationality. Photo: UNHCR/LC Adilet

- On 26 June, UNHCR took part in a round **table "The Role and Place of the National Center of the Kyrgyz Republic for the Prevention of Torture in the System of Torture Prevention in the Kyrgyz Republic,"** organized by the National Center for the Prevention of Torture (NCPT) to mark International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. The event gathered state bodies, international organizations, and experts. NCPT Director Bakytbek Kasymkulov presented the 2024 Annual Report. Participants discussed the recent decision by the Jogorku Kenesh to transfer NCPT's powers to the Ombudsman's Office, which received mixed reactions. UNHCR expressed appreciation for NCPT's efforts, particularly in promoting non-refoulement and developing tools to support vulnerable asylum-seekers in detention.

- On 29 June, UNHCR took part in a **meeting on the issuance of travel documents for refugees and stateless people** in the Kyrgyz Republic. Participants discussed technical, financial, and regulatory aspects, including the production costs. The Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Migration will convene a working group to finalize clear and efficient procedures, avoiding delays and negative feedback that occurred during previous public consultations. UNHCR will request a sample of the travel document to update partners and support the process.

- On 27 June, UNHCR participated in a UN Gender Thematic Group (GTG) meeting to discuss **preparations for 16 Days of Activism, Beijing+30, and the 2025 UN General Assembly**. UNHCR shared that its partner will organize sessions on gender-based violence prevention for refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people. Participants also exchanged agency updates, including shrinking operational budget and ongoing restructuring and downsizing of UNHCR in Central Asia, including in the Kyrgyz Republic.

- On 25 July, UNHCR took part in the first meeting convened by the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Migration to review the **draft Action Plan for 2026–2030 under the national Migration Policy Concept for 2021–2030**. Further consultations are planned in the coming months.

- On 22 August, Legal Clinic "Adilet," a UNHCR partner, conducted a **workshop on international refugee protection, citizenship, and statelessness** in Osh. The workshop gathered 13 staff members of the Service for Counteracting Extremism and Illegal Migration under the Ministry of Interior. The session covered 4 topics: international and national refugee law; rights and obligations of asylum-seekers and refugees; Refugee Status Determination Procedures; and national legislation on the prevention of statelessness and citizenship. The participants particularly noted the relevance of the prevention of

statelessness in the southern regions.

- On 22 August, UNHCR met with Nursultan Kubanov, First Deputy Minister of Digital Development and Innovative Technology to discuss the cooperation. UNHCR shared an overview of **joint efforts in addressing statelessness and the progress on 2019 Global Refugee Forum pledges**. The parties also discussed the upcoming workshop on learning from the experiences of Georgia and Moldova in acceding to the statelessness conventions.

- On 5 September, UNHCR participated in the **BOMCA Phase 10 Final Conference**, where the results of the BOMCA-10 program (2021–2025) were presented. The conference also provided general information about the upcoming Phase 11 (BOMCA-11). Phase 10 focused on enhancing border management, trade facilitation, and cross-border cooperation, as well as improving living conditions for populations in the border areas of Central Asia. The program involved all five Central Asian countries. The next phase, BOMCA-11, will be led by ICMPD. UNHCR has identified the Training-of-Trainers (ToT) distance learning component as a potential entry point for cooperation and inclusion.

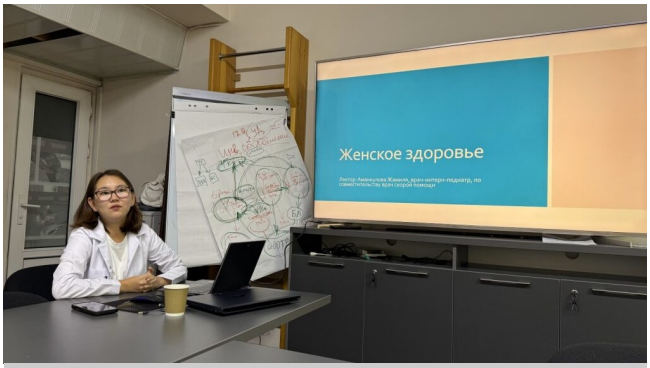
- On 9 September, UNHCR attended **the National Workshop on Advancing the National Development Program 2030** and the Voluntary National Review (VNR) of 2025 achievements. First session focused on the Voluntary National Review 2025 of SDG achievements and development partners' contributions to the National Development Program 2030 Action Plan. While the second session addressed the Voluntary National Review 2025 of SDG achievements and the role of stakeholders in supporting the National Development Program 2030 and its Action Plan. UNHCR has identified potential areas where forcibly displaced and stateless people could be included.

- 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

- On 30 June, **UNHCR met with the Supreme Court of the Kyrgyz Republic to discuss key issues related to the protection of asylum-seekers and refugees**. The discussion focused on judicial review of negative asylum decisions, the importance of using up-to-date country of origin information, and the need for individual approaches to vulnerable applicants, including women, girls, and children born in Kyrgyz Republic to mandate refugees. UNHCR expressed concern over the high number of asylum rejections and encouraged courts to consider its Position on Returns to Afghanistan. Supreme Court representatives acknowledged the complexity of refugee matters and reaffirmed the judiciary's commitment to legality and objectivity. Both sides agreed to continue dialogue and cooperation to strengthen access to fair asylum procedures.

- A former refugee in the Kyrgyz Republic and active member of the 15% by 2030 roadmap, participated at the "**15by30: Global Pledge on Refugee Higher Education and Self-Reliance**" Conference held in Istanbul, Türkiye advocating for refugee access to higher education.



UNCHR's partner, Legal Clinic "Adilet" held an information session on women's health for 15 refugee and asylum-seeker women, with a medical professional providing guidance on key aspects of women's health . Photo: UNHCR/LC Adilet

- UNHCR participated in the first meeting of an inter-agency working group organized by the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Migration to support the **implementation of Kyrgyz Republic's 2021 Global Refugee Forum (GRF) pledge on issuing machine-readable Convention Travel Documents** (CTDs) for refugees. The group aims to develop a bylaw and establish business procedures for the issuance of CTDs. Participating institutions include the Border Guards Service, Civil Aviation Agency, State Institute "Kyzmat" (responsible for receiving applications and issuing CTDs), State Enterprise "Uchkun" (passport printing), and the Consular Department. UNHCR was invited to the kick-off meeting, where it provided background on the GRF pledge, emphasized the importance of accelerating its implementation, and shared the UNHCR–ICAO guide on travel documents.

- On 11 July, UNHCR supported a mandate refugee in the Kyrgyz Republic to access life-saving nasal surgery after five years without treatment. The individual lacked a valid passport required for public health insurance, but UNHCR's intervention enabled the Fund for Compulsory Medical Insurance to issue coverage based on the mandate refugee certificate. In coordination with its legal partner, UNHCR

facilitated medical records retrieval, diagnostic tests, and financial assistance applications. The surgery was successfully performed, and the individual is now recovering. This case highlights ongoing barriers for mandate refugees and sets a precedent for **expanding access to healthcare in line with the Kyrgyz Republic's commitments under the Global Compact on Refugees**.

- On 28 July, UNHCR met with Chyngyz Mamat uulu, Deputy Minister of Labour, Social Security and Migration of the Kyrgyz Republic, to discuss **strengthening case management for Refugee Status Determination Procedures**. Currently, the Ministry uses manual tools such as Excel tables and log books. In March 2024, UNHCR supported maintenance of a previously handed-over software for the case management to the Ministry's network. Due to staff turnover and the installation of new equipment, the database was locked out. To accelerate its operationalization, the system was reinstalled. The integration of the system will enhance case management of asylum procedures and support the processing of Convention Travel Documents for refugees.

- On 1 August, UNHCR partner supported a skills-building and community engagement activity for women asylum-seekers in Bishkek. Legal Clinic "Adilet" organized a **masterclass on embroidery for 15 women asylum-seekers**, providing a space to learn a new skill while fostering friendship and social cohesion.

- Between 10-23 September, UNHCR engaged with the State Working Group on **Convention Travel Documents (CTDs)** to support the development and finalization of travel documents **for refugees and stateless persons** in Kyrgyzstan.
  - On 10 September, UNHCR participated in a meeting of the Working Group, attended by OJSC "Uchkun" (Printing Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing) and the state institution Kyzmat under the Presidential Administration, to review the CTD specimen. Around the same period, the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Migration released a draft bylaw on CTDs for public consultation, open for comments until 25 September; UNHCR prepareed its observations for submission as part of this review process.
  - On 23 September, UNHCR took part in a follow-up Working Group meeting where the technical requirements and design of the CTD were approved. OJSC "Uchkun" will prepare the final specimen for review at the next meeting, after which work will proceed on developing the database, concluding necessary agreements, and legalizing the approved CTD for refugees and stateless persons.

- On 5 September, Legal Clinic "Adilet" organized a seminar for heads of medical institutions and Compulsory Medical Insurance Fund representatives to improve **access to public healthcare for refugees and asylum-seekers**. The event focused on sharing best practices and discussing practical measures to enhance healthcare service delivery for refugee and asylum-seeker populations.

- On 15 September, Legal Clinic "Adilet" organized an **information session on women's health for refugee and asylum-seeker women** in Bishkek. The session brought together 15 women and a medical professional, who provided guidance on key aspects of women's health, supporting awareness and empowerment within the community.

- So far in 2025, UNHCR provided **cash assistance** to 308 very vulnerable refugee and asylum-seeker families (reaching 77 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

- **UNHCR submitted comments on draft regulations concerning citizenship**. The feedback addressed the Presidential Decree "On Approval of the Regulation on the Procedure for Considering Citizenship Issues" (10 August 2013, No. 174), published for public discussion on the Unified Portal for Draft Normative Legal Acts. Comments were also shared with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Digital Development and Innovative Technologies, the State Institution "Kyzmat," and the Office of the Ombudsman.

- **UNHCR engaged in Kyrgyzstan's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to advocate for accession to the UN statelessness conventions.** During the fourth UPR cycle (held on 1–2 May), Kyrgyz Republic received 299 recommendations from UN Member States, 71 of which were designated "taken note of" due to various considerations. Among the recommendations was the proposal for Kyrgyz Republic to accede to the two UN Statelessness conventions. UNHCR submitted written arguments in support of moving this recommendation to the "supported" section. National consultations on Kyrgyz Republic's position, organized by the Ministry of Justice and the UN Human Rights Office for Central Asia, brought together over 40 representatives from government, civil society, and UN agencies to discuss recommendations and follow-up actions. UNHCR will continue bilateral engagement with the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Digital Development and Innovative Technologies, which oversees citizenship policy.

UNHCR organized a two-day workshop on accession to the UN Statelessness Conventions, with experts from Georgia and Moldova sharing lessons on legal reform and inter-agency cooperation. (Photo: UNHCR/Alisher Aliev)

- As of mid-2025, Kyrgyz Republic's "Kyzmat" state institution identified 2,159 individuals without identity documents, including 120 holding outdated USSR passports. Of these, 2,089 have been confirmed as citizens and issued national passports, while citizenship applications were submitted for 58 stateless people. "Kyzmat", responsible for population registration and documentation, continues strengthening service delivery and addressing emerging cases of statelessness. Although the Kyrgyz Republic resolved all known cases of statelessness in 2019 – the first country globally to do so – new cases continue to be identified and resolved.
- On 23 August, UNHCR partner Legal Clinic "Adilet" conducted **a capacity-building workshop** for staff of the newly established Kyzmat state institution in Osh. The workshop brought together 62 participants – exceeding the originally planned 55 due to strong interest – and covered seven key areas, including international standards, birth registration, confirmation of citizenship, establishment of birth through the courts, and inconsistencies in document issuance.
- On 11–12 September, UNHCR held **a workshop in Issyk-Kul on international experience in acceding to the UN Statelessness Conventions**. The two-day workshop, focused on the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, invited experts from Georgia and Moldova who shared lessons from their countries, including legal reforms and inter-agency cooperation, and discussed with Kyrgyz counterparts possible steps toward accession. In her online remarks, the UN Resident Coordinator in the Kyrgyz Republic, Antje Grawe, emphasized that accession would "consolidate progress achieved and prevent the recurrence of statelessness," while also aligning with the Kyrgyz Republic's National Development Program until 2030. The workshop brought together representatives of the Border Service, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior, Ombudsman Institute, State Committee for National Security, state institution Kyzmat, Ministry of Digital Development and Innovative Technologies, and other partners.

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 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). RCST presented its ongoing projects, highlighting assistance provided to refugees and host communities over the past two years. The presentation also shared key findings from a recent assessment among Tajik migrants. Participants exchanged experiences, discussed current challenges, and explored opportunities to enhance migration and refugee protection efforts in Tajikistan.

- On 4 July, UNHCR participated in a **UN Gender Thematic Group (GTG) meeting to support the development of Tajikistan's Country Gender Equality Profile** (CGEP). During the meeting, the national consultants selected to carry out the CGEP were introduced, and a preliminary workplan and timeline were presented for discussion. Participants agreed to hold regular follow-up meetings throughout the assessment period to ensure effective coordination and strengthen collaboration between GTG members and the national consultants.

- On 8 July, UNHCR participated in the UN PSEA Task Force meeting to **advance the development of Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse** (PSEA) materials for communities and UN personnel. The meeting focused on finalizing the design of community materials and posters for UN staff. The Task Force recommended a unified approach, advising all UN agencies to adopt standardized messaging and visuals to ensure coherence and consistency.

- On 4–5 September, UNHCR participated in a UNCT-led workshop **to review the current UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF 2023–2026)** and prepare for the next cycle (2027–2030). The workshop also marked the launch of the United Nations Country Analysis (UNCA), a key milestone in the UNSDCF design process. UNHCR contributed to discussions on systems thinking and strategic foresight, emphasizing the need to address root causes of exclusion and human rights violations. Sessions also finalized the management response to the UNSDCF evaluation and identified major global and regional trends affecting Tajikistan.

- On 1 September, UNHCR participated in the **second Gender Thematic Group meeting** to review progress on Tajikistan's Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP). During the meeting, a consultant presented preliminary findings from the ongoing CGEP exercise, highlighting key challenges in data collection. Participants discussed next steps, including plans for a validation workshop. The first draft of the report is expected by the end of September 2025.

- On 16 September, UNHCR met with World Bank representatives to coordinate the upcoming baseline survey for **the project "Supporting Livelihoods and Socio-Economic Integration of Vulnerable Groups in Tajikistan."** The project aims to support both refugees and host communities through targeted livelihood and socio-economic integration activities. The meeting focused on ensuring appropriate access to the refugee community and emphasized the importance of clear and transparent communication about the survey's objectives, with the aim of preventing any unintended raising of expectations among refugees.

Protecting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

- **Forced returns from Tajikistan continue despite protection concerns:** As of 30 September, since July, nearly 1,312 Afghan nationals have been deported, including around 1,183 refugees and asylum-seekers. Families are being removed without due process, legal assistance, or the chance to appeal. UNHCR is coordinating on both sides of the border to verify cases, provide protection interventions and humanitarian aid in Afghanistan, and support vulnerable families left behind in Tajikistan. Advocacy with the Government continues to halt forced returns and ensure fair asylum procedures in line with national and international obligations. For further information on this situation and a regional overview of Afghan returns, please visit: UNHCR Operational Data Portal

- On 31 July, UNHCR's legal partner Inson va Adolat organized an **information session** for staff of the Migration Service under the Ministry of Labor, Migration, and Employment of Tajikistan **on the legal framework for refugee and asylum-seeker employment**. The session covered both international standards and national legislation governing the legal status of refugees and asylum seekers. Participants discussed current challenges in accessing formal employment, including licensing requirements for private-sector employers.

- On 1 September, UNHCR participated in an **Expert Coordination Meeting** organized by the OSCE Border Management Staff College (BMSC) to prepare for an upcoming **training course for border and migration authorities**. The meeting reviewed the course outline, schedule, and practical arrangements, with discussions focused on linking each training module to participants' field duties – including border guards, migration authorities, drug enforcement, and customs – while supporting regional security and counter-trafficking efforts through applied, practice-oriented methodology. Experts shared their adapted presentations, training materials, and handouts. UNHCR staff delivered a half-day session during the course.

- On 11 September, UNHCR's partner Inson va Adolat in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan, organized a **roundtable on the challenges faced by refugee and asylum-seeker children in accessing primary and secondary education**. The event brought together 18 participants, including representatives from the Ministry, local education departments, and schoolteachers. Participants identified key barriers to refugee children's access to education and, together with the Ministry, proposed practical solutions and recommendations to improve educational inclusion.

- On September 15-17, UNHCR delivered **training sessions for Tajik Border Troops in Khorog, organized by the OSCE as part of the Stabilization of Tajikistan's Southern Border Region with Afghanistan project**. The sessions included presentations on international human rights law, refugee law and protection sensitive border management. UNHCR's involvement aimed to strengthen the capacity of border personnel, promoting protection-sensitive approaches and the integration of humanitarian standards into operational practices.

- On 19-23 September, UNHCR discussed refugee economic inclusion in Tajikistan with the World Bank, JICA, TIKA, OSCE, the Turkish Embassy, and AmCham to advance joint advocacy and cooperation on **refugee inclusion in education, skills development, and sustainable livelihoods**.

  – On 19 September, Ms. Damla Buyuktaskin, Senior Livelihood and Economic Inclusion Officer from the UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, visited local private sector initiatives, including the Open Joint Stock Company "Gulistoni Dushanbe," where around 80 Afghan refugees and asylum-seekers are formally employed. The Officer also visited refugee-run businesses in Vahdat, such as the Ariana Learning Center, tailoring workshops, and a hairdressing salon. Supported through UNHCR equipment and business grants, these enterprises shared their progress, challenges, and plans to expand opportunities for both refugees and host communities.

A roundtable on access to education for refugee and asylum-seeker children brought together government representatives, educators and UNHCR partners . (UNHCR/Gulzohira Qosimi)

- On 22 September, meetings with the Turkish Ambassador and AmCham reviewed ongoing projects and identified synergies to engage the Turkish business community and the local private sector in training and employment initiatives for refugees.
- On 23 September, discussions with the Ministry of Industry and New Technologies and the State Institution "Center for the Development of Craftsmanship and Modern Professional Skills" under the Ministry of Labor, Migration and Employment highlighted opportunities to expand access to vocational training, enhance livelihoods, and strengthen pathways to self-reliance and economic participation for refugees and asylum seekers in Tajikistan.

- On 23 September, UNHCR delivered **training on international refugee law and international protection to participants of the 40th Senior Staff Course at the OSCE** Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe. The course brought together 25 mid-to senior-level officials from border, customs, migration, and related agencies across Central Asia, the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, and the South Caucasus. UNHCR's session built on the positive feedback from past courses and was noted for being practical and useful, highlighting the strong partnership with OSCE BMSC in helping border officials better respond to the needs of refugees and asylum-seekers.
- So far in 2025, UNHCR has provided **multi-purpose cash grants** to 115 vulnerable households - 613 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. 325 students of primary and secondary schools were supported with education cash assistance.

Ending Statelessness

- On 27 August, a special edition of the #SecondWind program aired on Asia-Plus radio with the participation of "Right and Prosperity," UNHCR's legal partner on statelessness in Tajikistan. The NGO's director discussed the causes, consequences, and solutions to statelessness in Tajikistan and globally, with particular attention to vulnerable groups facing challenges in acquiring citizenship. The program also highlighted birth registration as a crucial step in recognizing a child's rights, including the right to citizenship in Tajikistan. In addition, recent **legislative changes simplifying citizenship procedures and measures to protect the rights of stateless persons** were discussed. The broadcast also highlighted progress achieved over the 10 years of UNHCR's #IBelong campaign and outlined future steps toward addressing statelessness worldwide.

TURKMENISTAN

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

- UN Secretary-General António Guterres arrived in Turkmenistan to attend the Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), held in the Avaza National Tourist Zone from 5 to 8 August. As part of the LLDC3 conference, a **Youth Forum and International Dialogue for young professionals** was held, where a UNV from Kazakhstan, currently serving with UNHCR, was selected to represent both UNHCR and the UN country team in Kazakhstan. The forum concluded with the presentation of the Youth Declaration to the President of the 79th session of the General Assembly H.E. Philemon Yang and other high-level officials, including the Deputy Minister of Education of Turkmenistan and the UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS. The declaration included a dedicated call to address the specific challenges faced by refugees and displaced youth in LLDCs, particularly regarding access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities.

UZBEKISTAN

Responding to Emergencies

- On 15–16 September, UNHCR dispatched 12,000 kitchen sets from its Global Stockpile Termez, in Uzbekistan, to Jalalabad, Kandahar, and Herat in Afghanistan through the World Food Programme (WFP) to support both earthquake-affected communities and returnees. Following a 6.0 magnitude shallow earthquake on 1 September that struck the eastern provinces of Kunar and Nangarhar, 6,000 kitchen sets were redirected to assist the affected population, while the remaining 6,000 sets were provided for returnees.

A total of 12,000 kitchen sets were dispatched from the UNHCR Global Stockpile in Termez, Uzbekistan, including 6,000 sets for communities affected by the 6.0-magnitude earthquake and 6,000 sets for returning families. (UNHCR/Ilkhomjon Rakhmonov)

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.

From medicine to design and IT, refugee youth are studying at universities in Kazakhstan thanks to the DAFI Programme (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative), and working toward a future where they can apply their skills and contribute to the sustainable development of the country generously hosting them. (Photo: UNHCR/ Aiya Siyaz)

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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VISIT THE UNHCR CENTRAL ASIA WEBSITE

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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Donate: donate.unhcr.org

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.