

Annual Results Report

2023

Tajikistan

Acknowledgements

UNHCR would like to thank all the stakeholders that contributed data and evidence to this report and reviewed their progress against the joint results of the strategy, including forcibly displaced and stateless people, host communities and host governments, United Nations agencies, and international and national non-governmental organizations, civil society and private sector. Their contributions enable us to create positive changes in the lives of the people we serve.

Contact us

www.unhcr.org

Downloaded date: 29/05/2024

Table of Contents

Section 1: Context and Overview

- 1.1 - Changes to the Operational Context
- 1.2 - Progress Against the Desired Impact
- 1.3 - Challenges to Achieving Impacts
- 1.4 - Collaboration and Partnerships

Section 2: Results

- 2.1 - Outcomes and Achievements
- 2.2 - Age, Gender and Diversity

Section 3: Resources

- 3.1 - Financial Data
- 3.2 - Resources Overview

Section 4: Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

- 3.2 – Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

Section 1: Context and Overview

1.1 Changes to the Operational Context

Tajikistan continued to be impacted by the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation in 2023. Against this dynamic background, intense negotiations between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan over disputed border territories persisted. While there were no significant clashes between the countries, a few small-scale local incidents were reported. The relationship between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and Tajikistan remained frozen although some improvements were noted, particularly the opening of border markets.

The protection and asylum space for forcibly displaced and stateless people in the country continued to shrink with the Government maintaining a strict border policy on security grounds. The number of new arrivals significantly increased, from 87 in 2022 to 1,054 in 2023. Some Afghans arrived from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan as part of secondary movements aimed at avoiding deportation to Afghanistan. Deportations of people in need of international protection, including asylum-seekers and refugees with valid documents continued and 15 people were refouled in 2023. Nevertheless, forcibly displaced and stateless people sought to secure livelihoods and paths to long-term solutions.

A delay in receiving authorization from the Executive Apparatus of the President to work in selected districts further slowed efforts to advocate the rights of stateless people and prevent and end statelessness and some of UNHCR's related targets were not achieved as a result. Nevertheless, forcibly displaced and stateless people sought to secure livelihoods and paths to long-term solutions.

UNHCR continued to engage with the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM) and organized a simulation exercise aimed at strengthening authorities' capacity to manage and protect refugees in the event of a future influx.

Signed national action plans focused on the Universal Periodic Review's recommendations, the implementation of a National Human Rights Strategy, and a review of the refugee law created opportunities for UNHCR to strengthen engagement with the Government of Tajikistan.

1.2. Progress Against the Desired Impact

1. Impact Area: Attaining Favorable Protection Environments

Refugees, asylum seekers and stateless people enjoy unhindered access to territory with zero cases of refoulement, asylum procedures, effective status determination and right to appeal negative decisions

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Actual (2023)
1.1 Proportion of people seeking international protection who are able to access asylum procedures	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	96.08%	100.00%
1.2 Proportion of people who are able to move freely within the country of habitual residence	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	0.00%
1.2 Proportion of people who are able to move freely within the country of habitual residence	Stateless Persons	100.00%	100.00%

In 2023, the Government of Tajikistan maintained a strict border policy. The possession of valid travel documents and visas, along with registration in the areas prescribed by Resolutions # 325 of 2000 (which was updated in 2004), were pre-requisites for the submission of asylum applications.

In 2023, UNHCR and partners registered 1,054 new arrivals who received assistance to lodge asylum applications. According to the Government, 651 people were granted refugee status during the reporting period. The recognition rate stood at 100%, indicating an improvement from 2022. UNHCR continued to advocate for Government Resolutions 325 and 328 to be lifted or modified to enable freedom of movement and the right for asylum-seekers and refugees to choose a place of residence.

In 2023, 15 asylum-seekers and refugees were refouled to their home countries without prior access to procedural safeguards and recourse to the courts. UNHCR raised protection concerns with the authorities across various levels and platforms. To ensure unimpeded access to territory and asylum procedures and that forcibly displaced people were not penalized for illegal border crossings, UNHCR collaborated with the Border Guards Service and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Border Management Staff College to train border guard personnel on how to facilitate access to territory and implement referral mechanisms to ensure asylum-seekers were appropriately registered and provided with the necessary documentation.

Advocacy on reinstating UNHCR's observer status on the State Refugee Status Determination (RSD) Commission continued. In tandem, high-quality RSD training continued to be delivered to State practitioners.

Meanwhile, UNHCR, UNICEF and UNDP jointly advocated for universal birth registration and the prevention of childhood statelessness through amendments to a law proposed to guarantee universal birth registration and certification, irrespective of the availability of parental documents.

2. Impact Area: Realizing Rights in Safe Environments

Refugees and asylum seekers can fully exercise their rights for basic services, including the right to health and education and are able to achieve meaningful socio-economic integration through enhanced livelihood opportunities and self-reliance programmes

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Actual (2023)
2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities	Stateless Persons	100.00%	100.00%
2.3 Proportion of people with access to health services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%

Forcibly displaced people residing in Tajikistan possess basic rights and access to essential services such as health, education and employment. As they are not included in the national social protection system, there is no official data on how many people live below the national poverty line in Tajikistan. Government data on the poverty line does not reflect the reality of many. As such, the internationally-recognized poverty rate of \$2.15 per person per day set by the World Bank is taken as a reference. Based on available internal information on the socioeconomic situation of forcibly displaced and stateless people UNHCR works with, none were living below the national poverty line.

Forcibly displaced people reside in urban settlements in Tajikistan. UNHCR Tajikistan's Results Monitoring Survey findings demonstrate that most (79%) live in rented apartments and the rest (21%) in houses. In these buildings, conditions are safe and secure, and there is access to basic amenities such as clean drinking water and sanitation facilities and electricity.

Findings of the 2023 Participatory Assessment confirmed all forcibly displaced people have access to health care services on par with citizens. However, given the economic challenges and growing demand, not everyone can afford medical expenses. To respond to these needs, UNHCR provided free medical consultations to 844 people (334 men and 510 women), referred 379 people (213 men and 166 women) to medical facilities, facilitated 90 home visits and arranged the disability allowance and reimbursement of medical expenses for 400 people (175 men and 225 women).

In coordination with other actors, 1,568 forcibly displaced families were screened for tuberculosis and 150 people diagnosed with the illness were referred to the Republican TB Control Center in Dushanbe for further treatment.

4. Impact Area: Securing Solutions

Refugees, asylum seekers and stateless people are provided avenues for naturalization, regularization of their legal stay and status and are able to fully exercise their right to voluntary repatriation

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Actual (2023)
4.1 Number of refugees who voluntarily return in safety and dignity to their country of origin	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	29
4.2a Number of people who departed on resettlement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	2
4.2b Number of people who departed through complementary pathways	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,000	2,697
4.3a Number of stateless people for whom nationality is granted or confirmed	Stateless Persons	9,761	3,390

Given the political and security situation in Afghanistan, UNHCR did not promote repatriation for Afghan refugees. However, the Office assisted those who wanted to voluntarily return to their country of origin. The number of returns remained relatively low in 2023 as only 29 refugees were assisted to return to Afghanistan voluntarily.

Naturalization for refugees in Tajikistan remained aspirational, with de-facto not an option. There were no

resettlement activities in the country, except for a few urgent cases requiring immediate protection. UNHCR processed five urgent cases pertaining to 24 people, with 10 leaving the country for another State. Meanwhile, forcibly displaced and stateless people continued to benefit from complementary pathways, without UNHCR engagement. According to IOM, 2,592 (U.S.A., Canada,) refugees departed through private sponsorship schemes and 105 headed for resettlement in third countries through other complementary pathways, bringing the 2023 resettlement total to 2,697 people.

UNHCR launched a partnership with Talent Beyond the Boundaries as a complementary pathway for skilled workers. The platform matches refugees with companies in need of their skills and focuses on labour mobility as a complementary pathway. The launch was accompanied by a large awareness raising and information campaign.

The statelessness identification and reduction project implemented in Tajikistan between 2014 and 2023 led to around 90% of people who applied for statelessness determination being granted a resident permit and having their nationality confirmed. UNHCR partners identified and registered 1,832 people and 3,806 were assisted with solutions. Most of the newly identified stateless people were women and girls (around 76%), and a third were children. To ensure the sustainability of UNHCR's engagement in statelessness reduction, the Office provided expert technical support to boost the capacity of Government and local authorities to deal with and resolve any future cases.

Other Core Impact Indicators

Country	Indicator	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Actual (2023)
Tajikistan	3.1 Proportion of people who have the right to decent work	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	98.52%	98.26%
Tajikistan	3.1 Proportion of people who have the right to decent work	Stateless Persons	0.00%	0.00%
Tajikistan	3.2a Proportion of children and young people enrolled in primary education	Stateless Persons	0.00%	0.00%
Tajikistan	3.2a Proportion of children and young people enrolled in primary education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	49.01%	59.15%
Tajikistan	3.2b Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	35.21%	30.22%
Tajikistan	3.2b Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education	Stateless Persons	0.00%	0.00%
Tajikistan	3.3 Proportion of people feeling safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	94.00%
Tajikistan	3.3 Proportion of people feeling safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark	Stateless Persons	100.00%	100.00%

1.3 Challenges to Achieving Impacts

The Government of Tajikistan maintained a strict border policy with Afghanistan for security reasons although entry was granted to Tajik visa holders in 2023. Legal entry was a pre-requisite for access to State refugee status determination (RSD) procedures and this required strengthening to meet minimum procedural and quality standards. However, UNHCR was excluded from the RSD Commission despite advocacy to return its observer status. As a result, UNHCR could not assess the RSD process and the interview quality to ensure decisions were fair.

The refoulement of 15 asylum-seekers and refugees was enforced without procedural safeguards, a court order or due diligence in deportations. The judiciary lacks independence and upholds negative Commission

decisions without assessing the case on its merits. The situation of 148 mandate asylum-seekers and refugees remained precarious, leaving them in legal limbo with no prospects of socio-economic integration.

Funding shortfalls impeded UNHCR's efforts to facilitate the socioeconomic integration of 51 newly-arrived asylum-seekers who only received basic food and core relief items (CRIs).

Resolutions 325 and 328, which prohibit refugees and asylum-seekers living in certain areas, impeded the full realization of rights, including freedom of movement and choice of living location in 2023. Limited movement also reduced peoples' opportunity to engage in livelihood opportunities and access financial institutions.

Significantly delayed authorization from the Executive Apparatus of the President to work on statelessness in the selected districts negatively impacted the project's implementation. Legislative gaps make it difficult to apply safeguards on universal birth registration to prevent future cases of statelessness.

Although the 2023 Global Refugee Forum held in 2023 presented an opportunity to secure more support from other countries and donors, the Government did not attend.

1.4 Collaboration and Partnerships

In 2023, UNHCR worked with the UN country team and Donor Coordination Council to ensure forcibly displaced people were included in the national development plan and projects were aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The Office continued partnerships with the private sector for its apprenticeship programme and job placements for refugees and asylum-seekers, including the Hyatt Hotel, Serena Hotel, Hilton Hotel, Coca Cola and Auchan. Strategic cooperation to promote the inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless people and present opportunities for them to secure livelihoods was established with the Ministry of Industry, New Technologies, the Innovation and Industry Development Fund, and Japan International Cooperation Agency.

UNHCR's partnership with the Tajik Parliament to assist in revising the Refugee Law continued in 2023 with recommendations sent to the Government of Tajikistan. A new task force will be established in 2024 to ease progression.

The Office remained engaged with OSCE, OSCE's Border Management Staff College, UNICEF, and Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan while training border guards. It also facilitated a three-day simulation exercise with more than 50 entities, including the Government, UN agencies, donors, embassies, and more.

Moreover, UNHCR continued to cooperate with the Executive Apparatus of the President and the Ministry of Internal Affairs on statelessness issues, focusing on implementing the country's Amnesty Law and the Government's 2019 Global Refugee Forum pledges. The Office continued to chair the Protection Working Group under the RCM and regularly held meetings in 2023. It also concluded a data-sharing agreement with IOM aimed at cross checking people lists to avoid duplication and promote the use of PRIMES tools. In the event of a refugee influx, the Asian Development Bank committed to enhancing services at the temporary refugee accommodation in Jaloliddin Balkhi District. UNHCR guided the World Bank in formulating a \$2.8 million project that sought to upscale livelihood opportunities for refugees and host communities and improve the quality of social infrastructure in Vahdat to promote social cohesion. UNHCR also guided KfW Development Bank in selecting targeting areas for a €7.66 million project that seeks to enhance health infrastructure.

The arrival of 51 Afghan men who crossed the border illegally tested existing coordination arrangements. Three field visits and rapid needs assessments were conducted with RCM members and mid- and long-terms recommendations for humanitarian interventions were developed. Humanitarian community provided these individuals with food assistance and non-food items (clothing, hygiene kits etc.)

Section 2: Results

2.1. Outcomes and Achievements

1. Outcome Area: Access to Territory, Reg. and Documentation

Asylum seekers at the border have access to territory, benefit from functional referral mechanisms and improved reception facilities

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
1.1 Proportion of refugees and asylum seekers registered on an individual basis	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	80.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

The Government of Tajikistan continued to implement a strict border policy with valid travel documents and visas remaining prerequisites for submitting asylum applications.

A steady flow of new arrivals from Afghanistan continued in 2023. Tajik visas were not issued in Afghanistan and were obtained abroad, mostly from the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan. A UNHCR legal partner assisted in lodging asylum applications for 1,054 new arrivals and 136 in-situ applicants. Of the 1,190 newly-registered asylum-seekers, 882 received documents (464 refugee and 418 asylum-seeker cards), while another 308 people awaited theirs.

UNHCR continued to engage with parliamentarians and supported a review of the National Law on Refugees. In accordance with established procedure, a draft was submitted to line ministries and State services through the Executive Apparatus of the President. The draft was then returned to parliament with some recommendations, which would need to be addressed in 2024.

While the official memorandum of understanding with border guards was not signed, UNHCR used every opportunity to monitor the situation at the Afghan-Tajik border and conducted four border monitoring missions in 2023.

A temporary accommodation centre for vulnerable asylum-seekers in Hissar accommodated 51 Afghan nationals who spontaneously arrived in Tajikistan in June 2023. The facility was used despite the absence of a clear referral mechanisms at the border and a lack of staffing allocated by the Ministry of Interior. In close cooperation with the Government, UNHCR spearheaded a rapid needs assessment with other RCM members. Following this, food and CRIs were distributed to those in need.

In collaboration with the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense of Tajikistan, UNHCR organized an inter-agency refugee emergency preparedness field simulation exercise. This exercise was designed to enhance national preparedness and capacity to effectively respond to natural disasters and refugee influxes as well as test inter-agency coordination to support the Government as it delivered assistance.

UNHCR bolstered the capacity of Government officials in 2023 and organized 15 training sessions on international refugee protection, access to territory, international humanitarian law, and protection-sensitive border management. The training was conducted jointly with OSCE and OSCE BMSC and the Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA), with nine of 15 training sessions delivered to mid- to senior-level border personnel.

Stateless people and those at risk of statelessness did not encounter challenges related to freedom of movement in Tajikistan in 2023.

2. Outcome Area: Status Determination

Asylum-seekers can enjoy fair and efficient RSD procedures with the possibility of appealing negative decisions in court

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
2.2 Proportion of people undergoing asylum procedures who have access to legal representation	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

The security situation in Tajikistan became precarious and unpredictable since the 2021 Taliban takeover in Afghanistan. The country shares a border with Afghanistan and continues to maintain a strict border policy. In 2023, access to territory was subject to a Tajik visa, which could only be obtained outside Afghanistan. During the reporting period, UNHCR's legal partner provided more than 2,553 legal consultations and helped lodge 1,190 asylum applications by new arrivals and newly-registered asylum-seekers. Through this, 8,483 forcibly displaced people were reached by year-end.

In addition, UNHCR was aware of at least five RSD Commission hearings during which the Government reported 651 people had been granted refugee status. UNHCR and its partner also conducted five advocacy interventions aimed at reinstating UNHCR's observer status within the Commission. The Office also held four training sessions intended to bolster the capacity of State officials, RSD practitioners, and members of the Commission on Refugee Status Determination.

Despite the change in Tajik-Afghan relations following the Taliban takeover, a group of 51 Afghan nationals who crossed the border illegally in June 2023 without identification were granted access to UNHCR and partners for registration and were supported in lodging asylum applications. The group was later released from the temporary accommodation centre without notification and their whereabouts were unknown at year-end.

UNHCR's legal partner provided 22 representations for asylum-seekers and refugees designed to prevent deportations and document seizure by staff at the State Committee for National Security. There were no negative decisions by the RSD Commission in 2023 so the recognition rate stood at 100%. This could be attributed to UNHCR and its legal partner's sustained advocacy on ensuring access to quality RSD.

3. Outcome Area: Protection Policy and Law

National legislative and procedural frameworks are reformed/harmonized to enable stateless people to have access to documentation (birth certification) and non-discriminatory education and are not penalised for illegal entry

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
3.2 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness	None	Unknown	Progressing towards alignment:	Not yet aligned: ≤69 points

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In early 2023, the Parliament Taskforce established to support efforts to strengthen the asylum system through a refugee law review officially submitted a draft of the law for Government review. Later, in mid-2023, UNHCR and the Taskforce organized a joint meeting involving all relevant ministries in a discussion of the submitted draft with the aim of creating general understanding. In late 2023, the draft was returned to Parliament for further consideration. Recommendations were made to align it with existing legal practices and experience from foreign countries before resubmitting the draft via the established procedure. During a

follow-up meeting with the Parliament Taskforce, it was agreed that a formal working group would be created along with a clear action plan to review the law to be shared with UNHCR for further support.

Government Resolutions 325 and 328 prohibit refugees and asylum-seekers from residing in certain areas of the country. As a result, they are unable to fully realize their rights thereby affecting their choice of place of residence and access to livelihoods.

To achieve universal birth registration as part of Tajikistan's civil registration system reform, UNHCR continued to advocate with UNICEF and UNDP regarding the registration of all children born in Tajikistan. UNHCR suggested establishing a formal working group under the Ministry of Justice aimed at finalizing the civil registration system reform and ensuring universal birth registration. The Office worked with UNICEF and UNDP to advocate for changes and amendments to the Civil Registration Law that would remove barriers preventing people with undetermined nationality from registering their children at birth. UNHCR conducted five advocacy interventions with Tajikistan authorities, providing technical observations and recommendations aimed at enhancing universal birth registration through amendments proposed to the Civil Registration Law.

Adoption of the National Action Plan to implement recommendations from the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review and the Action Plan for the National Human Rights Strategy provided additional avenues to strengthen cooperation with the Government and ensured tangible results by the end of the implementation period could be achieved.

6. Outcome Area: Safety and Access to Justice

Asylum-seekers and refugees can enjoy fair adjudication with regards to their appeals and fair trial processes

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

UNHCR continued to build on previous efforts by advocating for the application of international human rights law and relevant international refugee law by the country's judiciary, while adjudicating asylum-related cases, appeals and sentencing. The promotion of international human rights law and international refugee law also featured in regular training sessions for judges conducted by staff of the Supreme Court's Judicial Training Centre. UNHCR's legal partner also conducted two training sessions in the same centre on practical issues pertaining to asylum and RSD and gave briefings on the legal analysis of administrative and civil litigation cases related to RSD.

Tajikistan's Resolutions 325 and 328 prohibit refugees and asylum-seekers from residing in certain areas of the country, negatively impeding the full realization of their rights and affecting their choice of place of residence and access to livelihoods. Since 2020, refugees and asylum-seekers in Tajikistan have not been subject to deportation, as per the sanction of article 499 of the Administrative Code. Nevertheless, a violation of the rule of stay often leads to deportation executed by staff of the State Committee for National Security. To prevent these violations, UNHCR's partner conducted mass legal awareness, providing 2,553 legal consultations and assisted in the lodging of 1,190 asylum applications. In addition, the legal partner provided 22 legal representations for asylum-seekers and refugees aimed at preventing deportations and document seizure by staff at the State Committee for National Security (including mandate refugees and asylum-seekers). In 2023, UNHCR also recorded the detention and subsequent deportation of 15 refugees without due process or required court proceedings in place.

8. Outcome Area: Well-Being and Basic Needs

Refugees and asylum seekers in vulnerable situations are included and benefit from state social protection system and have access to cash assistance provided by international organizations or the State

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
8.1 Proportion of people that receive cash transfers and/or non-food items	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	62.90%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Despite gradual economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic, Tajikistan continued to face challenges such as limited fiscal resources and labour migration caused by a lack of employment opportunities. The social protection system remained fragmented, with a lack of decent income, youth unemployment, urban-rural and regional disparities, and limited efforts to address the socioeconomic exclusion of disadvantaged groups, including forcibly displaced people. While Tajikistan's social protection system has several social assistance guarantees aimed at covering a range of vulnerabilities, it remains fragmented and underfunded.

The inclusion of refugees in the national social protection system was hampered by contextual factors, including the current legislative framework as it relates to social protection, requiring harmonization with the National Refugee Law and the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. The Tajik law on social protection does not mention or offer provisions for forcibly displaced people and lacks implementing mechanisms to include them in the national social protection system. The exclusion of refugees within the system is attributed to limited expenditure on social protection, with many vulnerable nationals having no access to social protection benefits.

As part of ongoing efforts to advocate for the inclusion of asylum-seekers and refugees in the national social protection system, UNHCR has been proactively engaged in developing the National Plan of Actions for 2023-2025 to implement the National Social Protection Strategy 2040. In addition, it has ensured the inclusion of asylum-seekers and refugees in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), UN country team, and Donor Coordination Council.

According to monitoring reports and the ProGres V4 database, around 20% of refugees in Tajikistan have vulnerabilities and special medical needs, mainly chronic health problems such as disabilities, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. These refugees have access to health services but not to the State's social allowances. To address this gap, UNHCR has been providing social protection through cash assistance to a limited number of asylum-seekers and refugees to meet their basic and medical needs. The cash assistance was provided to 348 refugee households (1,781 people). Evidence collected through post-distribution monitoring suggested that cash assistance improved households' ability to cover basic needs and debts and had a positive impact on their psychological and social well-being. It also enabled women to meet some of their most pressing and basic needs and generated a sense of empowerment, independence and equality, including better participation in household decision-making. In addition, UNHCR revised the current cash assistance standard operating procedures in Tajikistan, incorporating recipients' feedback received and promoting the use of PRIMES tools.

To support asylum-seekers and refugees during the winter, UNHCR distributed thermal underwear to 5,336 asylum-seekers and refugees.

13. Outcome Area: Self Reliance, Economic Inclusion and Livelihoods

Refugees and asylum seekers have access to an increased number of livelihood opportunities, along with unhindered access to employment

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
13.2. Proportion of people who self-report positive changes in their income compared to previous year	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	57.83%	80.00%	25.38%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Efforts to amplify livelihoods and self-reliance ranged from advocacy initiatives held with private employers and the facilitation of job placements to ensuring access to skills training sessions and further apprenticeship schemes. UNHCR was engaged in monitoring the employability of working-age asylum-seekers and refugees as well as gaps in their skills and assets to ensure tailored livelihoods programming. In 2023, 997 refugees (367 women and 630 men) were employed or self-employed. Job placements were offered to 253 people (120 women and 133 men) and 161 people (36 men and 125 women) accessed apprenticeship schemes. Another 209 refugees (26 men and 183 women) attended vocational training courses.

To foster self-employment, including through startups, UNHCR provided 72 refugees (65 men and seven women) with cash assistance and 71 (11 men and 60 women) with equipment kits. Apprenticeship programmes with Serena and Hilton hotels successfully continued, with six refugees retained as a regular workforce. In partnership with the Innovation and Industry Development Fund – a Public Fund that promotes digitalization in all sectors of economy – UNHCR supported 14 refugees and Tajik youth in enhancing their professional skills and employment opportunities in the innovation and technology sector. In 2022, a cooperation agreement was signed with Nohid – a leading private company in the textile sector – to employ both refugees and vulnerable local population. This partnership helped identify refugee artisans, utilize their skills and traditions, and further connect them with employment. Nohid and UNHCR jointly set up a sewing workshop in Vakhdat – a city hosting the largest number of refugees – that offered a range of services, including formal employment with regular remuneration.

To raise awareness of the benefits of enabling refugees to become contributing members of the local economy, UNHCR and a private company called T&Z (with the support of the Ministry of Industry and New Technologies), launched an initiative offering 12 Afghan refugee designers the chance to produce a fashion collection and showcase it during the 10th season of Tajikistan Fashion Week. Under the mentorship of four established Tajik designers, refugee designers created a collection that represented a fusion of cultural heritage, traditional craftsmanship, and modernity. Tajikistan Fashion Week was an important platform to share refugees' contribution to the local and global economies and raise awareness about the Afghan refugee community in Tajikistan.

Building on previous cooperation with Japan International Cooperation Agency, the Office launched another project aimed at empowering 50 Afghan refugees by investing in their professional development, facilitating access to resources, and creating a support network for them.

14. Outcome Area: Voluntary Return and Sustainable Reintegration

Refugees and asylum seekers realize their right to return in an informed and dignified way

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Voluntary repatriation to Afghanistan continued to be facilitated on a case-by-case basis in line with updated standard operating procedures on voluntary return. Despite the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in 2021 and dynamic environment in 2022, UNHCR facilitated the voluntary return of 29 refugees from 13 households to Afghanistan at their request. The number of individuals approaching UNHCR and its partners to obtain their country-of-origin information surpassed 200 in 2023. It is possible that there were spontaneous returns that UNHCR does not have information on.

In general, those who were willing to return to Afghanistan and approached UNHCR cited socioeconomic challenges in Tajikistan as the main trigger for their return. There was some speculation that some may

have returned and moved to another asylum country or sought routes to the United States or Europe. UNHCR did not promote voluntary repatriation to Afghanistan in 2023 because the situation remained far from conducive and was characterized as volatile and unpredictable. Nevertheless, repatriation requests were facilitated for those who voluntarily made an informed decision to return home. To support the smooth and sustainable reintegration of the returnees in Afghanistan, the Office ensured relevant documents were issued in the country of asylum, informed UNHCR's counterparts in Afghanistan, and guided returnees on how to access cash and in-kind assistance in Afghanistan.

UNHCR notes that strengthening local integration prospects can impact voluntary return, potentially preventing forcibly displaced people from feeling pushed to return to uncertain conditions because of unfavourable protection and socioeconomic challenges in Tajikistan.

A thorough assessment of up-to-date country of origin information, including details on peace initiatives and social and economic developments in particular areas of origin of forcibly displaced and stateless people, was made in close coordination with UNHCR in Afghanistan. In 2023, UNHCR closely cooperated with the Main Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Border Guards in the border checkpoints to ensure the return of the families facilitated in safety and dignity.

16. Outcome Area: Integration and other Local Solutions

Asylum seekers and stateless people are provided avenues for naturalization (for stateless people) and regularization of their status and documentation (mandate refugees)

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
16.2 Proportion of people covered by national social protection systems	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	19.87%	20.00%	0.00%
16.2 Proportion of people covered by national social protection systems	Stateless Persons	Unknown	20.00%	0.00%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In complex cases of statelessness, Tajik citizenship can be obtained as a solution in an expedited manner, through legalization, obtaining a residence permit, and later applying for nationality. For Afghan refugees, naturalization remains aspirational. UNHCR is unaware of cases of Afghan refugees obtaining Tajik nationality. The challenge is due to local legislation requirements to avoid dual citizenship, however the Afghan nationality cannot be renounced and considered as innate. Afghan nationals faced insurmountable obstacles in their pursuit of Tajik citizenship, as the legislation of Afghanistan does not allow people to denounce their citizenship, which is a prerequisite to be able to apply for Tajik citizenship.

Residing in an urban and semi-urban setting with access to public services and decent employment facilitates contact with the local population and supports local integration and access to basic social services by both asylum-seekers, refugees and those at risk of statelessness. However, most refugees, particularly mandate refugees, still hope to be resettled due to the ongoing socio-economic challenges related to employment, housing and legal and administrative barriers in Tajikistan. However, since the 2021 Taliban takeover and loss of usual sources of income from Afghanistan as well as the reduction of remittances from relatives abroad, meant that even those who considered returning to Afghanistan had abandoned this intention.

The situation of mandate refugees remained precarious in terms of access to employment and being able to enjoy basic rights, leaving people in legal limbo with no integration opportunities. UNHCR advocated for reconsideration of the cases of mandate refugees with the highest authorities in Tajikistan, but had not received a response on the matters by year-end. No progress was made by authorities in revising its refugee caseload following commitments made during a 2022 visit to Tajikistan by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

People at risk of statelessness had limited access to basic services, including social protection, because they lacked the valid identification documents required. UNHCR continues to seek solutions for them. During the reporting period, the Office identified 1,832 people at risk of statelessness, while 3,806 were

provided with solutions by legalizing their stay and confirming their nationality which enabled them to obtain valid identification documents. UNHCR ran five campaigns in 2023 to raise the general awareness of statelessness reduction efforts and strengthen the response to stateless people's needs.

2.2. Age, Gender and Diversity

In 2023, UNHCR committed to ensuring that the core six mandatory actions of its policy on age, gender and diversity were fully implemented and strengthening the role of community-based protection across its programmes and work in Tajikistan.

The Office discontinued its cooperation with the Ariana association of community leaders due to a lack of legal documents and allegations of fraud and mismanagement received from forcibly displaced and stateless people. The election of community leaders was expected to take place in 2024.

UNHCR held five town hall meetings and conducted participatory assessment as well as other ad-hoc meetings in all locations where forcibly displaced people were residing. In total, 214 asylum-seekers and refugees participated in the assessments conducted using the KoboToolbox (a data collection, management, and visualization platform), artificial intelligence and Quid analysis (AI-Powered Analytics Tool).

Accessible complaint and feedback mechanisms remained an important part of UNHCR's commitment to accountability. UNHCR ran different communication channels for forcibly displaced and stateless people in Tajikistan, including 24/7 operating hotlines, home visits, messengers (WhatsApp, Telegram), email, and in-person counseling. These channels were accessible to all groups of refugees. In 2023, 1,893 people used these channels to voice their needs and concerns in Tajikistan. In total, 1,861 queries were addressed, while 32 cases were being processed at year-end.

UNHCR promoted the engagement of forcibly displaced women with livelihood and education programmes. Of the 209 people who participated in vocational training, 183 of them were women, and of the 997 people UNHCR supported into employment, 367 were women. UNHCR also emphasized enrolling children of forcibly displaced households to school. Of the 1,212 children enrolled in primary and secondary education, 870 were girls.

In Tajikistan, UNHCR's partner in supporting stateless people identified and registered 1,832 people and assisted 3,806 with solutions. Most of the newly identified group comprised women and girls (around 76%) and 33% of the stateless population were children.

Section 3: Resources

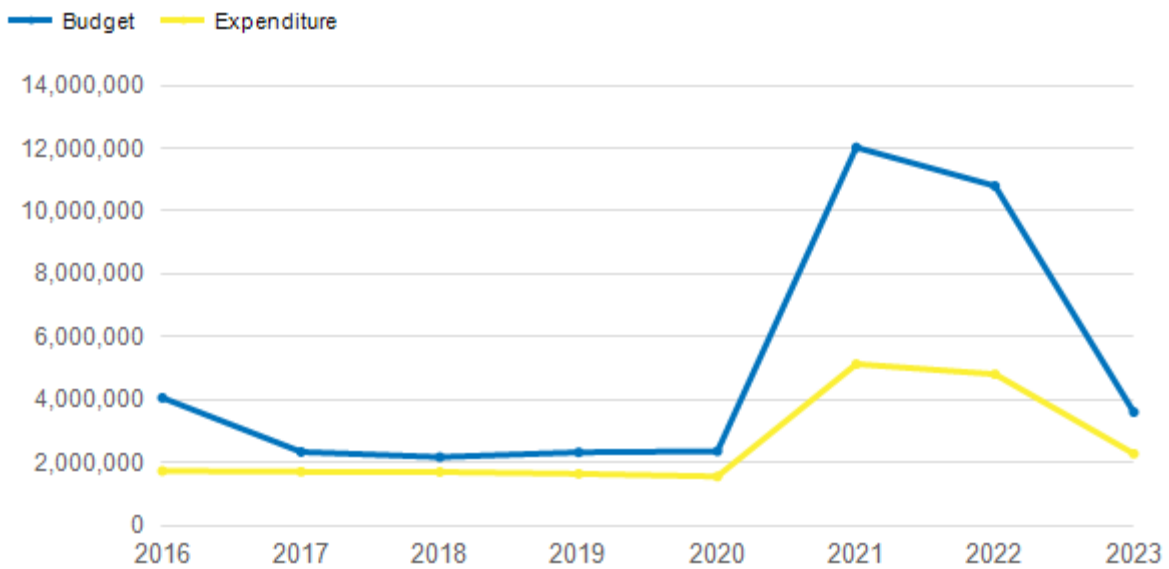
3.1 Financial Data

(Financial figures in USD)

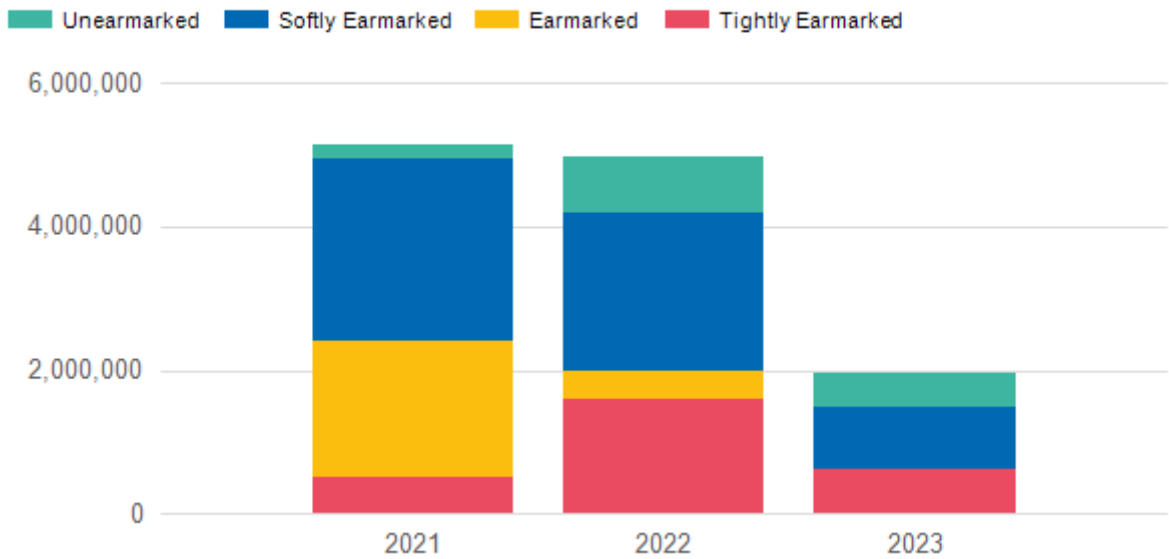
Impact Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
IA1: Protect	1,237,636	955,579	77.21%	955,579	100.00%
IA2: Assist	1,250,005	594,197	47.54%	594,197	100.00%
IA4: Solve	1,125,136	739,666	65.74%	739,666	100.00%
Total	3,612,776	2,289,442	63.37%	2,289,442	100.00%

Outcome Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
OA1: Access/Doc	810,003	521,033	64.32%	521,033	100.00%
OA2: Status	53,751	36,558	68.01%	36,558	100.00%
OA3: Policy/Law	202,630	184,386	91.00%	184,386	100.00%
OA6: Justice	171,252	213,602	124.73%	213,602	100.00%
OA8: Well-being	605,003	230,689	38.13%	230,689	100.00%
OA13: Livelihood	645,003	363,508	56.36%	363,508	100.00%
OA14: Return	108,335	93,763	86.55%	93,763	100.00%
OA16: Integrate	1,016,801	645,903	63.52%	645,903	100.00%
Total	3,612,776	2,289,442	63.37%	2,289,442	100.00%

Budget and Expenditure Trend



Contributions Trend by Type



3.2. Resources Overview

UNHCR Tajikistan continued to lobby for the inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless people in the programmes of other actors. This included providing continuous input to the UNSDCF and the National Development Strategy through participation in different forums, including the Donor Coordination Council.

UNHCR continued to successfully collaborate with the Japan International Cooperation Agency. It also supported the World Bank to include refugees and asylum-seekers in its first initiative in Tajikistan. This included a \$2.8 million project that supported livelihoods and sought to improve the infrastructure of an educational centre in Tajikistan’s most refugee-populated city, Vahdat.

The European Union’s \$1.3 million three-year investment continued to support the establishment of an

apprenticeship scheme for forcibly displaced and stateless people and the provision of training promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship. It also enabled UNHCR to advocate for interventions and capacity building to harmonize the local framework in line with 1951 Convention, improve government status determination procedures, fair adjudication, court/appeal representation and legal counseling, border monitoring, registration, cash assistance etc.

Section 4: Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

4.1 Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

Due to ongoing situation in Afghanistan, the Tajik authorities remained on high alert for security issues, which resulted in the shrinking of asylum and protection space.

Refugees residing in Tajikistan have access to education, health, and some other basic needs, as well as limited job opportunities. Greater emphasis on strengthening coordination with development and humanitarian actors within the country will be needed to ensure forcibly displaced and stateless people can access the socio-economic support and livelihood opportunities needed to meet their needs and contribute to the local economy.

UNHCR will continue to work with Governmental authorities to ensure they have the capacity they need to take responsibility for refugee-related issues in Tajikistan. It will continue to support the Government's asylum system, including the refugee law review process. It will double its efforts to implement livelihoods and self-reliance projects that encourage socio-economic integration for refugees and asylum-seekers. It will also advocate lasting solutions for Mandate refugees, contribute to ending statelessness, and strengthen the capacity of the government to respond to refugee emergencies.

Efforts will continue to strengthen UNHCR's dialogue with forcibly displaced and stateless people in Tajikistan, and the local community, to promote meaningful participation of both forcibly displaced people and host communities in decision-making processes.

Partnerships remain key to UNHCR's work supporting forcibly displaced and stateless people in Tajikistan. It will continue to maximize the scope of partnerships it enjoys, expanding the range of stakeholders it engages with.



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

www.unhcr.org