

# Azerbaijan

July 1, 2019

Since 1992, UNHCR has been supporting the Government of Azerbaijan to find durable solutions for refugees, displaced and stateless people in the country.

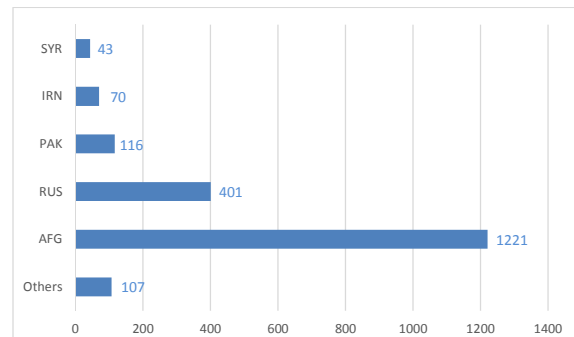
The majority of refugees do not have a clear legal status and are to a large extent depending on UNHCR for protection and assistance.

The inclusion of complementary protection into national legislation would enable a considerably larger number of refugees to secure a legal status and have access to rights.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

Refugees (Source: UNHCR Database, 1 July 2019)	- 1,096
Asylum seekers (Source: UNHCR Database, 1 July 2019)	- 862
Internally displaced persons (Source: Government, 1 January 2019)	- 620,422
Stateless people (Source: Government, 2009 Census)	-3,585

## REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN



## UNHCR PRESENCE

### Staff:

- 12 National Staff
- 4 International Staff
- 3 Affiliated workforce – national UNOPS
- 2 Interns

### Offices:

Country Office in Baku  
Winter Park Plaza, 4<sup>th</sup> floor,  
210, M.Aliyev Street.

Refugee Women and Youth  
Centre (RWYC) in Baku  
41, S.Mammadova Street.

## Azerbaijan: Operational map



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

## Working with Partners

- UNHCR works closely with the UN and other international agencies, and several central government structures, including the Cabinet of Ministers Office, the State Committee for Affairs of Refugees and IDPs, the State Migration Service, and the State Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs. UNHCR is part of the UN Country Team and participates actively in the implementation of the UN Assistance Partnership Framework (UNAPF) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UNHCR is represented in the Supervisory Board of the Social Development Fund for IDPs (SFDI) which is a semi-state agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan implementing large-scale IDP housing and development projects with funds allocated from various national and international entities. UNHCR community-based activities for refugees, including those carried-out in the Refugee Women and Youth Centre, are supported by charitable/philanthropic organisations.

## Main Activities

### Protection

- UNHCR advocates with all relevant authorities and stakeholders to ensure compliance of refugee legislation with international standards, including the adoption of complementary forms of protection and universal access to refugee status determination procedures. UNHCR monitors access to asylum procedures and works to strengthen the quality of the Government's asylum process, providing guidance on implementing international protection standards and by undertaking regular capacity development activities.
- In view of the very low refugee status recognition rates by the governmental bodies observed over the last years, UNHCR conducts a parallel Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process. If the applicant is considered to be in need of international protection, UNHCR recognizes him/her under its mandate, and provides legal counselling and representation. Refugees recognized under UNHCR's mandate but not by the Government are tolerated and generally protected from *refoulement* but do not enjoy formal legal status. While they enjoy access to free primary and secondary education and primary health care, they do not have the legal right to employment and many are supported by UNHCR to meet their basic needs.
- According to governmental estimates there are still some 620,000 IDPs in the country. During the 1990s, along with emergency relief assistance, UNHCR implemented large-scale shelter, education, healthcare, water supply and sanitation programmes targeting mainly IDPs in partnership with other UN agencies. As the country experienced economic growth from the mid-2000s and the Government significantly increased investment in addressing the needs of IDPs, UNHCR gradually reduced its direct relief assistance to IDPs and reoriented its operations towards legal counselling, monitoring and advocacy for durable solutions. During 2018, a total of 3,500 IDPs received legal assistance and counselling on issues such as personal documentation, social benefits and property rights. UNHCR also conducts capacity-building activities to prevent domestic and gender-based violence among IDPs.
- UNHCR advocates with the Government of Azerbaijan to fully implement the Statelessness Conventions and to improve the existing national legislation related to citizenship. The office also provides individual assistance to stateless persons eligible to obtain documentation. As part of the UNHCR Global Campaign to End Statelessness, SMS launched a nationality determination campaign in 2016 to identify undocumented persons and provide them with an opportunity to access citizenship documentation. Since joining the UNHCR Global Statelessness Campaign in 2015, SMS identified 676 stateless persons which were naturalized by the Citizenship Commission by the end of 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2018. The identification campaign by SMS continued in 2018 and is still going on in all regions of the country.
- UNHCR supports the enhancement of national child protection systems through capacity building and direct support to unaccompanied minors and separated children including through access to guardianship and other services guided by the principle of the best interest of the child.

## Education

- UNHCR's education programme monitors and facilitates access of children from refugee and asylum seeker families to primary and secondary education provided by the Government. UNHCR distributes cash to refugee and asylum seeker families in order to enable them to buy school uniforms for their children at the beginning of each academic year. In cooperation with the Azerbaijani Red Crescent Society, UNHCR arranges regular language courses at the Refugee Women and Youth Centre for refugee and asylum seeker children in order to enable them to be enrolled in public schools and attend classes. As a result of an agreement reached between UNHCR and the Azerbaijani Ministry of Education, refugee children also have access to public pre-school facilities. UNHCR provides support to tertiary education of talented young refugees, through the DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Initiative) Scholarship Program, funded by the German Federal Government.

## Health

- UNHCR interventions in the provision of primary health care are limited to monitoring of public health facilities to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers have access to services similar as locals have. The results of the monitoring activities in 2018 showed that newly arrived asylum seekers face a language barrier, need special attention and support to pass registration and be able, to express their complaints and receive necessary treatment. Pregnant women also need additional support from UNHCR to receive free access to gynaecological consultations. Provision of essential drugs is handled through a contracted pharmacy.
- UNHCR provides free secondary health care services to registered refugees and asylum seekers through contracted service providers. The scope of services includes access to secondary care, psychological services, provision of drugs, voluntary HIV testing and awareness-raising on health issues. Persons of concern suffering from oncological diseases can access a general check-up through the specialized national healthcare facility, as well as provision of medication through an oncologist from local state polyclinic.

## Cash Based Interventions (CBIs)

- UNHCR's CBI programme in Azerbaijan ensures that basic needs of vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers are met by having access to sufficient food, housing and utilities. Taking into consideration that the vast majority of refugees enjoy limited livelihood opportunities mainly due to lack of right to legal employment, refugee and asylum seeker households receive Multi-Purpose Cash Grants from UNHCR on the basis of socio-economic vulnerability which are identified through regularly conducted household surveys. UNHCR is advocating with the Government to provide for the right to work for all refugees in the country at the legislative and practical administrative level. UNHCR Azerbaijan intends to revise the targeting criteria for the CBIs once its advocacy has proven to be successful.

## Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance

- UNHCR maintains communication with persons of concern in order to improve their knowledge on their rights and duties and on available services and to ensure that they have access to the information necessary to make informed decisions affecting their future.
- Refugees benefit from social services at the Refugee Women and Youth Centre (RWYC) where refugee youth and women have the opportunity to socialize, and broaden their skills through language/educational activities. Children also benefit from sports, cultural and other recreational activities facilitated by the RWYC.
- UNHCR is pursuing available livelihood opportunities aimed at assisting Government recognized refugee families in becoming self-sufficient. In order to allow refugees to achieve self-sufficiency and full access to social, economic and cultural rights UNHCR advocates for mainstreaming them in national and local development programmes. Currently, access to legal, decent employment remains restricted for the majority of refugees.

## Durable Solutions

- Together with the Government and partners, UNHCR works towards the integration of refugees in Azerbaijan by advocating access to legal employment and self-employment. The recommendations for a Roadmap to Refugee Integration Policy in Azerbaijan were presented during a workshop to members of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Socioeconomic Integration of Refugees. UNHCR will work with the Working Group to implement the recommendations of the Roadmap and to help to build the capacity of the local authorities by proposing an integration model. UNHCR has also developed a socio-economic strategy for refugee integration in Azerbaijan which aims at building human capital and resilience among refugees, particularly youth, through fostering livelihood opportunities and skills training in partnership with development agencies. UNHCR also advocates for durable solutions for IDPs, including the right to return on a voluntary basis.

## External / Donor Relations

- UNHCR seeks to use strategic communication to support persons of concern and to create a more receptive host environment. This is done through raising awareness of UNHCR's protection and solutions mandate in various media, including social media, and by means of public information products and community outreach.
- Through communication with persons of concern, their knowledge of their rights and duties and of available services is enhanced, thereby ensuring they have access to the information necessary to make informed decisions affecting their future.
- UNHCR organizes briefings to provide updates on developments in the situation of asylum seekers, refugees, stateless persons and IDPs, as well as developments in UNHCR's strategic directions and operations.
- UNHCR relies almost entirely on voluntary contributions from governments, UN and pooled funding mechanisms, international financial institutions and the private sector. It works all year round to raise funds for its programmes and addresses new emergencies as they occur.
- The overall budget of USD 3.75 million is distributed among the different programmes with 3.1 million (82.5%) allocated to refugees and asylum-seekers, USD 590,000 (15.7%) for IDPs and USD 84,000 (2.2%) for stateless people.

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation with unearmarked and (softly) earmarked funds and expresses its special thanks to the governments of the **United States of America, European Union, Sweden, Germany, United Kingdom, Norway, Netherlands, Denmark, France, Switzerland, Italy, Finland** and private donors of **Australia, Germany, Italy, Republic of Korea, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden and Japan**.

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## LINKS

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