



Migration Profile

TAJIKISTAN

A. Executive summary

The Republic of Tajikistan is located in the heart of Central Asia and is bordered by Kyrgyzstan to the north, by China to the east, by Afghanistan to the south and by Uzbekistan to the west and north-west. Its land area covers 143,100 km² and is divided into four provinces, one of which is autonomous. Formerly part of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan gained independence in 1991.

According to 2019 World Bank data, the country had a population of 9,321,018, and a very low rate of urbanisation. The economy is predominantly rural with one of the lowest levels of GDP per capita among the Central Asian republics: US\$874 (2019). Although during the past decade Tajikistan has made significant progress in reducing poverty and growing its economy, with the poverty rate falling from 83% in 2000 to 27.4% in 2018, it remains one of the poorest countries in Central Asia and one of the world's most dependent on remittances. According to the World Bank, remittances account for around half of the country's GDP.

Since gaining independence in 1991, Tajikistan has become an active participant in the region's migration processes, being mainly a country of origin for a large number of workers emigrating in search of work. Despite this significant outflow of migrants, the population of Tajikistan, unlike the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), is growing steadily. Every year, between 150,000 and 180,000 people enter the labour market, a figure that exceeds the number of jobs available on the Tajik market. As a result, external migration is the most pursued option. The principal destination of Tajik emigrants is Russia, chosen by more than 90%. Tajikistan shares a long history of interaction with Russia, including regular air links, visa-free travel, a significant Tajik diaspora community and many Russian-speaking migrants. Most direct migration to Russia is seasonal, with Tajiks travelling there for work in spring and returning home in summer. Domestically, labour migration from the mountainous regions is the highest, comprising between 17% and 30% of the working population.

According to the 2020 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) report, the number of internally displaced persons within Tajikistan (as of 1 June 2019) amounted to 4,800 people as a result of natural disasters such as heavy flooding and landslides in Rudaky and Fayzobod provinces. An estimated 2,100 people were still classified as displaced at the end of 2019.

Finally, Tajikistan is highly vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters, which pose additional challenges for the country generally and for agriculture, Tajikistan's main economic sector, in particular – it is always vulnerable to nature, weather and soil conditions.

B. Country Profile

I. Basic Information

The Republic of Tajikistan is located in the heart of Central Asia and is bordered by Kyrgyzstan to the north, China to the east, Afghanistan to the south and Uzbekistan to the west and north-west. It has a surface area of 143,100 km² and is divided into four provinces, one of which is autonomous. With its very low rate of urbanisation, the main cities include the capital Dushanbe (863,000 inhabitants), followed by the city of Chujand (184,000 inhabitants). Once part of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan became independent in 1991. According to World Bank data, in 2019 the country had a population of 9,321,018. The economy is predominantly rural and has one of the lowest levels of per capita GDP among the Central Asian republics: US\$874 (2019). Tajikistan has made significant progress in reducing poverty and growing its economy over the last decade, with the poverty rate falling from 83% in 2000 to 27.4% in 2018. Nevertheless, Tajikistan remains one of the poorest countries in Central Asia and one of the world's most dependent on remittances. According to the World Bank, remittances account for around half of the country's GDP. The country is a member of the UN, the OSCE, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the World Trade Organisation. This presidential republic is a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and has two UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the proto-urban Sarazm archaeological zone and the Pamir National Park.

Historically, the Tajik population has strong cultural ties with the people of Iran, as their two languages are closely related and mutually intelligible. The official language of Tajikistan is Tajik, which is written in Cyrillic characters and belongs to the Persian language group. It is in fact essentially the same language as that spoken in Iran (Farsi) and Afghanistan (Dari). Russian is also widely spoken in the country.

Tajikistan has a continental climate with low rainfall and is predominantly mountainous, with the southern Tian Shan, Zeravshan and Gissar ranges defining the central-eastern part of the country, and the ice-covered peaks of the Pamir mountain system occupying the south-eastern part. The main rivers are the Syr Darya, Amu Darya and Pyanj. The entire region of South-Central Asia, including Tajikistan, is an active seismic zone, and strong earthquakes are frequent. Tajikistan is also subject to climate change and natural disasters, which pose additional challenges for the country whose geographical characteristics and complicated socio-economic situation make it the most vulnerable country to climate change in Central Asia and Eastern Europe. Ethnically, the country's population is mixed: more than 75% of the population is Tajik, a percentage that has increased with emigration of non-Tajiks during the long civil war of 1992-1997, while 15% are Uzbeks and about 1% Russians. A predominantly Muslim country (97%), the remainder of the population includes about 230,000 Orthodox Christians and just over 300 Catholics.

II. Internal and International Migration

Since gaining independence in 1991, Tajikistan has been actively involved in migration processes in the region. Among the reasons that led to the growth of migration from the country were its

political and economic instability, a five-year civil war from 1992 to 1997 and the loss of employment opportunities. The initial stages of migration from Tajikistan were characterised by increased emigration of the Russian-speaking population. In 1995, almost half the Russian-speaking population in Tajikistan (42%) left the country for Germany, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Israel. To date, due to the lack of job opportunities which is the main factor affecting emigration from the country, almost half of the workforce (about 1 million people) work abroad, mainly in Russia, supporting their families through remittances. Despite the significant outward migration, Tajikistan's population, unlike the other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), is steadily growing. Every year, between 150,000 and 180,000 people enter the labour market. This number exceeds the number of jobs available on the Tajik market and is the reason why external migration remains the main solution. Due to its demographic profile, with 57% of the population being under the age of 24, and a growing supply of labour market entrants, every third family in the country has at least one member working outside Tajikistan.

The main destination for Tajikistan's migrants is Russia (over 90%), the country with which it shares a long history of interaction, including regular air links, visa-free travel, a significant Tajik diaspora community and many Russian-speaking migrants. Most direct migration to Russia is seasonal, with Tajiks travelling there for work in spring and returning home in summer. Labour migration from the mountainous regions is the highest in the country, comprising between 17% to 30% of the working population. Tajikistan has the lowest wages among CIS countries, with an average monthly salary almost 11 times lower than that in Russia, which is why Russia's labour market is so attractive to migrant workers from Tajikistan.

Migration to Kazakhstan accounts for about approximately 4% of total migration (estimated at between 50,000 to 80,000 persons). In addition to the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan, migration flows from Tajikistan to Ukraine (20,000 persons), Belarus (10,000 persons), as well as China, the United Arab Emirates, Afghanistan and the United States. In their destination countries, Tajik migrant workers are mainly employed in construction (75%), commerce (10%), industry (6%), agriculture (7%), public services and education (approximately 5%). In turn, Tajikistan has become a destination country for migrants from China, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan. Tajikistan is thus a country of both origin and destination, where the exit of labour prevails over the inflow.

A large proportion of the migrant workers working in Tajikistan are Chinese nationals, resulting from an Intergovernmental Agreement between China and Tajikistan, which allows Chinese companies to set up various projects on Tajik soil using their own labour force. In 2011, the annual quota for attracting labour was 5,000 jobs for foreign nationals. Over the years, this quota has increased. In 2012, the Migration Service issued 5,221 work permits to foreign citizens, of which 421 were issued on the basis of bilateral agreements between the Republic of Tajikistan and foreign states. Most of these permits (2,962) were for Chinese citizens (54%), followed by 868 for citizens of Afghanistan (18%), 267 for citizens of Iran (5.5%), 244 for citizens of Turkey (5%), 204 for citizens of Uzbekistan, 134 for citizens of Pakistan, 73 for citizens of India, 66 for citizens of Kyrgyzstan, 51 for citizens of Russia and 34 for citizens of the United States. Foreign nationals in Tajikistan are mainly engaged in the construction of hydroelectric plants, infrastructure projects, entrepreneurship, trade and services.

Most Tajik migrants (73%) work outside Tajikistan seasonally, typically from February-March to October-November. The monthly labour migration rate after the March-April peak gradually

declines. According to an FAO report, agriculture, one of the country's main economic sectors, is vulnerable to climate change because of its strong dependence on glacial water from the country's mountain ranges. As a result, small Tajik communities of farming families are often unable to make a living from farming alone, making seasonal as well as long-term migration widespread. Migrants constitute up to 10% or 12% of Tajikistan's total population and, in particular, around 20%-25% of the male population aged between 18 and 40. Labour migration from mountainous regions is the highest in the country, comprising between 17% and 30% of the working population. According to data from the Migration Data Portal in 2019, the total number of international migrants in Tajikistan amounted to 274,100 people. Although men make up the greatest number of migrants, in recent years the number of women leaving the country to work abroad has gone up from 11% to 16%.

III. Emigration and skilled migration

Tajikistan is a country of origin for a large number of migrant workers seeking work abroad. In fact, the remittances sent home by Tajik migrant workers constitute a substantial portion of the country's GDP. At the same time, the unemployment rate is very high, especially in the rural areas. Migration thus plays a significant role in the economic and social stability of many Tajik families. Moreover, the official figures do not reflect the full picture. Most citizens do not turn to state agencies in their search for employment. Every year, some 40% of the country's working-age population emigrates, seeking work abroad. According to the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment of Tajikistan, in 2019 over 530,800 citizens left to seek employment abroad, with Russia and Kazakhstan as the main destinations. There are between 400,000-1,000,000 Tajik migrant workers in Russia alone, 55% of whom are young, aged between 18 and 30. The actual number of migrant workers could be much higher, with 45% working illegally and therefore not captured in official statistics. Emigration from Tajikistan amounted to 598,000 people in 2019, while between 2015 and 2018, there was a 27% increase in the number of women migrants.

As reported by the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment of Tajikistan, the first half of 2020 saw a sharp decline as a reported 129,800 Tajiks emigrated to Russia for work: this is 170,400 fewer than in the same period of 2019, and a decrease of 57%. This reduction is due to the closure of Russia's borders from March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As Russia is the main destination for Tajik migration, an agreement (*'Labour and protection of the rights of citizens of the Republic of Tajikistan in the Russian Federation and citizens of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Tajikistan'*) was signed in 2004, in addition to cooperation programmes for the exchange of labour between the two countries. On the basis of these agreements, migrants with a certain level of qualifications required by the Russian labour market such as technical and digital skills, benefit from contractual and insurance arrangements, protection of rights and favourable living and working conditions. In December 2020, Russia also ratified an agreement regarding the organisation of recruitment of Tajik citizens as migrant seasonal workers. The agreement provides for the recruitment of Tajik workers willing to work in Russia and organised by Tajikistan. This includes their categorisation based on the positions required by Russian employers, selection of candidates with the necessary qualifications, training including Russian language instruction, and assistance for their return to Tajikistan. Under this agreement, employers must actively participate in the recruitment of migrant workers, providing them with safe working conditions and ensuring regular payment of wages. Tajikistan has also concluded labour migration agreements with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Belarus.

IV. Forced Migration (internally displaced, asylum seekers and refugees)

During the civil war of 1992-1997, one out of every seven inhabitants in Tajikistan became a refugee or an internally displaced person. In addition, between 1991 and 1997, some 284,600 people emigrated to other countries. According to the 2020 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) report, as of June 2019, the number of internally displaced persons in Tajikistan was 4,800, mostly due to natural disasters such as heavy flooding and landslides in Rudaky and Fayzobod provinces. There were an estimated 2,100 people still classified as IDPs at the end of 2019.

Tajikistan is a party to several international conventions on the environment and climate change and is highly vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters, which pose additional challenges for the country. Agriculture is the main economic sector in Tajikistan as well as the most vulnerable to climate change due to its direct dependence on weather, nature and land conditions. At the beginning of 2000, there were about 20,000 refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries in Tajikistan. Tajikistan hosts the largest number of refugees and asylum seekers in Central Asia, mainly from neighbouring Afghanistan. Indeed, the cultural and linguistic affinity of the two countries has contributed to their integration. According to official statistics, of the approximately 2,700 registered refugees in Tajikistan in 2018, 90% came from Afghanistan.

There are currently two programmes in the country that target refugees: one is aimed at integration into the local community and the other at assistance for voluntary return. According to UNHCR Tajikistan, about 100 Afghan refugees return to Afghanistan each year. Although there are many refugees who hope to be resettled in more developed countries, there are currently no resettlement programmes in Tajikistan. For many Afghan refugees, Tajikistan is a transit country on the way to third countries. According to UNHCR data for 2019, the total number of refugees in Tajikistan amounted to 3,791 people, including 1,413 asylum seekers. On the other hand, the number of persons who were admitted to the asylum procedure amounted to 3,235, of whom 1,927 were granted refugee status. As of June 2020, the number of refugees increased to 5,208 persons, while the number of asylum seekers decreased to 628. The UNHCR reports that the country has taken significant steps to develop its asylum system, ensuring access to its territory and asylum procedures for refugees. Refugees in Tajikistan enjoy a wide range of socio-economic rights, with access to legal aid, health care, education and employment. Refugee children's access to secondary and higher education is not restricted. Under the Refugee Act, government-conferred refugee status is granted for a maximum of three years. Renewal is then subject to refugee registration every year. Since 2009, the Citizenship and Refugee Affairs Department of the Passport Registration Service at the Ministry of Interior has been responsible for refugees.

In 2015, the country implemented a legislative reform aimed at resolving the problem of statelessness. According to UNHCR, Tajikistan enacted a special law on amnesty for stateless persons and foreign nationals in order to regularise their status in December 2019. This will allow citizens of the former USSR living illegally in Tajikistan to regularise their status by obtaining a residence permit which will open up the possibility for naturalisation in the long term. The law, which came into force in January 2020, will cover some 20,000 citizens of the former Soviet Union who entered Tajikistan before the end of 2016. These include foreign nationals and stateless persons without legal status who can now regularise their status and be exempt from paying administrative fines for non-compliance with the established residency regime. More than 40,000

people have already been granted citizenship under this legislation. The law on stateless persons is time restricted and remains in place until 2023. In the period from 2014-2019, the number of stateless children amounted to 20,233 and of these, 16,753 were granted citizenship. The number of stateless persons between 2014 and 2019 amounted to 6,017, but there is no official data reporting the number of persons who were granted citizenship.

The main countries where Tajik citizens apply for asylum within the European Union include Germany (approximately 66%) and Poland (approximately 28%). The highest number of asylum applications submitted by Tajiks was recorded in 2016 with 3,210 requests. This was linked on the one hand to the increase in terrorist crimes in Tajikistan from 192 to 260 in the period between 2015 and 2017, and on the other hand the attempt by Tajik citizens working in Russia to take advantage of Germany's "open door" policy at the time. In the meantime, Poland became the first EU border crossing point for Tajik citizens travelling to Germany.

V. Victims of Human Trafficking

Tajikistan was the first Central Asian country to pass a law on combating human trafficking in 2004. A decade later in 2014, a new law on combating trafficking in persons and assisting victims of trafficking was introduced, with subsequent amendments in 2019 that introduced harsher penalties for crimes in this category. The 2014 law established the country's regulatory and organisational framework in the fight against human trafficking, with measures to protect and provide assistance for the rehabilitation of victims, while regulating relationships with public authorities in the field of combating human trafficking in Tajikistan. Most victims are trafficked to Russia, Turkey, Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf countries. Generally, women and girls are trafficked into entertainment-based establishments and forced into prostitution. Legislation in Tajikistan provides for severe penalties for traffickers. Victims of trafficking are mostly women and children. In particular, of the 46 victims identified in 2018, there were 36 women and 10 children. With the support of IOM, special centres were opened in the cities of Dushanbe and Khujand to assist victims of trafficking. In 2016, an anti-trafficking centre was also opened in Dushanbe with the support of the US Embassy in the Republic of Tajikistan.

According to the US State Department's Trafficking in Persons 2020 report, Tajikistan does not fully meet the minimum standards required for the fight against human trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so, particularly during 2020. These efforts include significantly tougher prosecution of traffickers, increased assistance to victims through special shelters, and the adoption of a law to grant residence to 20,000 vulnerable stateless persons and to prevent child labour in cotton harvesting. Large migration flows expose Tajik men, women and children to the risk of trafficking. Traffickers exploit Tajik men and women in agriculture and construction in Russia, the United Arab Emirates, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Afghanistan and other neighbouring countries in Central Asia. Children and adults are often subjected to forced labour in agriculture, especially during cotton harvesting and dried fruit production within Tajikistan.

Efforts to protect victims have also increased. In 2019, some 53 victims were identified, and international organisations assisted 24 victims of transnational trafficking, of whom 21 were Tajik nationals and 3 were Vietnamese. According to data from IOM in Dushanbe, the number of victims of human trafficking increased during the period 2005-2016, with 679 Tajik citizens becoming victims of trafficking, including 347 women and girls aged 14-47 and 108 children used

for sexual exploitation. As reported by the IOM, on average 63 Tajik citizens become victims of trafficking every year.

VI. National Legal Framework

Article 24 of the Republic of Tajikistan's Constitution enshrines the rights of citizens to free movement, choice of residence and the freedom to leave and re-enter the country. In 1994, Tajikistan was the first Central Asian country to ratify the Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 New York Protocol. Since that year, work has begun on the establishment and development of an asylum system in the country. Most of the refugees are Afghans, about 90% of whom are ethnic Tajiks, who fled as a result of the wars that have plagued Afghanistan. Other refugees in the country include Uighurs and Iraqis.

The general framework of migration legislation in Tajikistan is as follows:

- Constitution (1994)
- Migration Law (1999, and last amended in 2010)
- Refugee Law (1994, and last amended in 2014)
- Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (2004)
- Act on Combating Trafficking in Persons and Assisting Victims of Trafficking (2014, last amended in 2019)
- Regulations on the procedures for internal migration in the Republic of Tajikistan (2008)
- Regulations on the procedures for Implementing Immigration Control (2008)
- Regulations on the registration of migration of citizens of the Republic of Tajikistan abroad and their return to Tajikistan
- Agreement between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Russian Federation on procedures regarding the residence of citizens of the Republic of Tajikistan on the territory of the Russian Federation.

The Refugee Law defines the grounds and procedures for the recognition of refugee status in Tajikistan, and establishes economic, social and legal guarantees for the protection of the rights and legitimate interests of refugees and determines their legal status. The decision on the determination of refugee status is made by the Permanent Commission for Determination of Refugee Status at the Ministry of the Interior. This body is composed of representatives from the Executive Office of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, the Ministries of Internal Affairs, Health and Social Protection, Labour, Migration and Public Employment, Foreign Affairs and the State Committee for National Security.

According to the 1994 Refugee Law (amended in 2002, 2010, 2012 and 2014), persons who entered the territory of the Republic of Tajikistan illegally but declared their intention to be recognised as refugees are exempt from the application of penalties for illegal entry or illegal stay in the country. The legislation also indicates the grounds on which the deadline for submitting an application for refugee status in Tajikistan may be ignored.

At the same time, the Migration Law of 1999 regulates arrangements pertaining to the migration of its population, defining the legal, economic and social bases of migration processes, as well as the creation of the necessary living conditions in a new place of residence for individuals and families returning to their homeland. According to this law, the procedure for internal migration and environmental migrants is determined by the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan. The law also regulates: a) the procedures for the attraction of foreign labour and for the employment of the Tajik population abroad, b) the entry and exit of migrant workers in Tajikistan, c) the rights and obligations of migrant workers, and d) the rights and obligations of persons who have applied for recognition as migrants.

In 2001, Tajikistan ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, adopted by the United Nations in 1990. The country then signed the Agreement on Co-operation in the Field of Labour Migration and Social Protection of Migrant Workers in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), as well as Co-operation in Combating Illegal Migration. Since 2000, Tajikistan has also implemented a series of measures concerning the regulation of labour migration. These measures are mainly aimed at improving the existing legal framework, strengthening the migration monitoring system and developing vocational training courses for migrant workers. Nevertheless, the labour market in the country is still marked by a continuous increase in informal work.

VII. Main Actors

The State

Given the importance of migration issues, the first step in the formation of migration policy was the establishment in 1993 of the Department for Migration Affairs at the Ministry of Labour and Employment of the Republic of Tajikistan. By the Presidential Decree of 2011, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan established a specialised body, the Migration Service, to deal with migration policy.

In 1998, the concept of the State Migration Policy of the Republic of Tajikistan was approved, which is based on protecting the rights and interests of migrants, regulating migration processes and strengthening ties between Tajik citizens and their compatriots abroad. In addition, a strategy for external labour migration and a national strategy on migration regulation were adopted, according to which the main efforts are aimed at streamlining labour migration processes, maximising the benefits of organised migration and improving social and legal support for migrants at home and abroad.

In the Sughd region, a project to build houses for migrants and environmentally displaced persons has been initiated. According to the Committee for Emergency Situations of the Republic of Tajikistan, there are 381 hazardous areas nationwide that are prone to natural disaster. The Committee adds that one third of this number are so-called landslide areas, where about 11,000 families live. As part of its response, about 1,400 families are expected to be relocated to safer areas by the end of 2020.

The Catholic Church

The establishment of the Holy See's mission *sui iuris* in 1997 was a key moment for the Catholic Church in Tajikistan. The mission is entrusted to the religious of the Institute of the Incarnate

Word. The Catholic Church in the country is organised in three parishes: the parish of St. Joseph in the capital Dushanbe, the parish of St. Roch in Qurghonteppa in the south, and the parish of St. Therese of the Child Jesus in Chujand in the north. The Order of St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta (Missionaries of Charity) is present in the area; its material and spiritual assistance to the most needy and the socially vulnerable ranges from soup kitchens to medical assistance and help in catechising children. The Apostolic Nunciature of Tajikistan was established by Pope John Paul II in 1996.

Caritas Tajikistan plays an active role on the ground. In 2019, for example, together with European organizations helping to voluntarily repatriate migrants such as the Micado Migration and Refugee Council of Netherland, Caritas Tajikistan launched a project for the reintegration of repatriated migrants returning from European countries from 2015 to 2020. Since January 2020, the European Return and Reintegration Network (ERRIN) and European Reintegration Support Organizations Network (ERSO) have also joined with the support of the partner Caritas Internationalis Belgium. The goal of this project is to provide social assistance to repatriated migrants, Tajikistan citizens who have requested assistance for voluntary return home from European countries, in the form of job opportunities, as an aid to reintegration into their communities of origin. In 2019, Caritas Tajikistan carried out social activities with 9 repatriated migrants from Germany and the Netherlands. During the entire period of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of migrants requesting voluntary return has increased significantly. In 2020, Caritas Tajikistan also launched a WASH programme, promoted in line with the spirit of the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, to improve drinking water supply systems for the rural population in the south of the country. The project is implemented through the local Caritas, and in addition to providing drinking water to needy areas, it aims to protect Creation by promoting recycling and offering training courses on environmental issues. The first three projects were carried out in the Jomi district, while the fourth, which is currently underway, covers the Qubodiyon district bordering Afghanistan.

Tajikistan is one of the countries that is most vulnerable to climate change. Caritas Switzerland's programme in Tajikistan focuses on improving agricultural livelihoods in the country's mountainous regions and reducing vulnerability to natural disasters. Since 1996, Caritas Switzerland has carried out its programme in response to the challenges faced by rural communities, supporting the local population in creating employment and agricultural entrepreneurship for both men and women. For those who choose not to migrate in search of employment opportunities abroad, agriculture is the main source of income and livelihood for the predominantly rural population of Tajikistan.

International Organisations

Both IOM and UNHCR are active on the ground. IOM began working in Tajikistan in 1993, during the civil war. Operations during those years of conflict focused mainly on humanitarian assistance to those most affected by it, helping both refugees with voluntary repatriation and resettlement and internally displaced persons in their reintegration. The IOM supported some 700,000 displaced persons in this context and Tajikistan subsequently became a member of the international organisation in 1994. In 2014, through the joint initiative of the Tajik authorities and UNHCR, the citizenship of some 25,000 people was verified. They were subsequently registered and placed in three pilot programmes in Tajikistan. In addition, UNHCR provides training for refugees and other vulnerable groups.

Due to restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, IOM supported the voluntary return of hundreds of Tajik migrants who were stranded at the border between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. These were mainly migrant workers and their families, women, children and students. Since the beginning of the pandemic, IOM has facilitated the voluntary return of more than 2,000 Tajik migrants from Kazakhstan.

Other organisations

With the help of the European Union and UNICEF, the Protecting Children Affected by Migration Project, aimed at protecting children affected by migration in the countries of South East, South and Central Asia, including Tajikistan, was launched in December 2017. The project's objective is to assist at least 2,500 Tajik children, including those who migrate and those who have been left at home by their parents or guardians. The contribution of the European Union and UNICEF to Tajikistan helps to strengthen national child protection systems by targeting and assisting vulnerable children affected by migration. It also helps to ensure children and their families' access to social and legal assistance, as well as psychosocial support, counselling, birth registration and parental support.

Since 2012, there has been a Council composed of the heads of various diplomatic representative offices, representatives of all diasporas, as well as from international organisations and NGOs working in the country. The Council assists in the development and implementation of an effective state migration policy for the protection of the rights and interests of migrant workers abroad, analysing the migration situation and making decisions promoting mutual cooperation.

Since 2006, the NGO 'Femida' has been operating in Tajikistan, providing assistance to victims of trafficking, particularly those who have been exploited at work. Around 200 victims of trafficking have received assistance in the shelter organised by this NGO, opened with the support of IOM. With the help of the Ministry of Health, the shelter provides reintegration services, medical and legal assistance and training in a range of specialisations.

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