



# CENTRAL ASIA

2023 IFRC network multi-country plan

Funding Requirement **CHF 18.9M**

Appeal number **MAA70004**

## In support of the Central Asian Red Crescent National Societies



**394**

National Society branches



**1,242**

National Society staff



**69,177**

National Society volunteers

## People to be reached



**1.4M**

Climate and environment



**84,500**

Disasters and crises



**1.6M**

Health and wellbeing



**300**

Migration and displacement



**55,000**

Values, power and inclusion

## IFRC network multiyear focus

### Longer term needs

- climate change adaptation
  - recurring disasters
  - population movement

### Capacity development

- disaster preparedness and response
  - cash readiness
- organizational development and sustainability

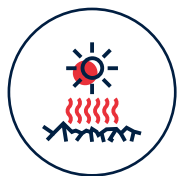
## Population

<u>Kazakhstan</u>	<b>19M</b>
<u>Kyrgyzstan</u>	<b>6.7M</b>
<u>Tajikistan</u>	<b>9.8M</b>
<u>Turkmenistan</u>	<b>6.2M</b>
<u>Uzbekistan</u>	<b>35M</b>

## Hazards



Climate change



Heat waves



Floods



Landslides



Earthquakes



Population movement

## Funding requirements

**Total 18.9M** CHF

Through the IFRC

**10.1M** CHF

Through Participating National Societies

**3.6M** CHF

Host National Societies

**5.2M** CHF

### IFRC Breakdown

#### Longer term needs

- 1.1M** CHF  
Climate and environment
- 2.8M** CHF  
Disasters and crises
- 2.5M** CHF  
Health and wellbeing
- 382,000** CHF  
Migration and displacement
- 578,000** CHF  
Values, power and inclusion
- 2.7M** CHF  
Enabling local actors

## Participating National Societies

British Red Cross\*

The Canadian Red Cross Society\*

Finnish Red Cross

German Red Cross

Italian Red Cross\*

Japanese Red Cross Society\*

Red Cross Society of China

Red Cross of Monaco\*

Spanish Red Cross

Swedish Red Cross\*

Swiss Red Cross\*

Red Crescent Society of the United Arab Emirates



# NATIONAL SOCIETY PROFILES

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**The Red Crescent Society of Kazakhstan** was founded in 1937 and is the country's largest humanitarian non-profit volunteer organization. It has 70 staff, 4,000 volunteers, and 18 branches across the country. The National Society reaches more than 100,000 people annually via its humanitarian efforts and assists an additional 10,000 people through emergency response measures and early recovery programme implementation. It has a memorandum of understanding with the Government's Ministry of Internal Affairs and the National Guard. It is also a member of the Interagency State Commission on Disaster Preparedness and Elimination, and cooperates with the Centre for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction. It partners with local emergency departments, medical institutions, law enforcement services and city administrations in disaster response and disaster preparedness. The National Society's strategic plan for 2021–2025 sets out three strategic targets:

- Readiness and response to crises, and assistance in rapid recovery
- Promotion of safe, healthy lifestyles, opportunities for community development, and respect for human dignity
- Social mobilization of inclusive local communities

Funding requirement for 2023: CHF 3.5 million

**The Red Crescent Society of Kyrgyzstan** is the leading local humanitarian organization in Kyrgyzstan and was established in 1926. The National Society has 273 staff, 3,048 volunteers, and 46 district branches in all regions of the Kyrgyz Republic. Its auxiliary role is regulated in the National Law on the Red Crescent of Kyrgyzstan adopted in 2018. It cooperates with the Government's Ministry of Emergency Situations, Ministry of Labour and Social Development, Ministry of Health and the State Agency for Youth Affairs. The National Society continually promotes and supports its network of volunteers who provide daily social services across the county, and respond to disasters and crisis, including disease outbreaks. According to its strategic development plan 2022–2026, the National Society's four strategic aims are to:

- Contribute to disaster risk reduction by strengthening the capacity of communities to prepare, respond and recover from emergencies, and by providing timely and effective assistance to affected populations

- Contribute to a decrease in morbidity and mortality of the population by promoting a healthy lifestyle, preventing infectious and non-infectious diseases, as well as social behaviour change activities
- Contribute to improving the quality of social life of vulnerable sectors of the population by developing an inclusive society, providing a set of necessary services aimed at meeting the social needs of key groups and influencing the social behaviour of people
- Ensure sustainable and comprehensive development of the National Society through constant and comprehensive capacity building of the organization, development of wide-range partnerships and a diversified system of resource mobilization

Funding requirement for 2023: CHF 4.9 million

**The Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan** was founded in 1927, making it the longest-standing humanitarian organization in the country. The Law of the Republic of Tajikistan "On the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan" was adopted in 2010 and regulates the National Society's auxiliary role. It has a memorandum of understanding with the National Committee of Emergency Situations in disaster response and other calamities, and it has strong connections with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and other key national state agencies. The National Society has 68 branches, 149 staff and a wide network of 12,000 volunteers across the country. It played a key role in accessing people in remote areas during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to its strategic development plan for 2021–2025, its priorities include risk reduction and disaster response, and health and social care.

Funding requirement for 2023: CHF 3.2 million

**The Red Crescent Society of Turkmenistan** was established in 1926 and is the only recognized independent public organization in Turkmenistan to carry out humanitarian activities across the country. It has 51 branches, 172 staff and 5,000 volunteers. In 2012, the law "On the National Red Crescent Society of Turkmenistan" was adopted, regulating its auxiliary role and, in 2020, the Turkmenistan law "On international humanitarian assistance in case of emergency" was adopted.

The National Society strategic plan 2021–2025 sets out four strategic goals which are to:

- Strengthen its capacity to provide high-quality humanitarian assistance to people in need
- Improve its readiness and that of local communities to prepare for and respond to disasters, protecting people's lives and strengthening their vitality
- Strengthen its capacity to prevent diseases and provide social support
- Promote a culture of peace and humanity by ensuring that all people are involved in the country's harmonious life

Funding requirement for 2023: CHF 7.1 million

**The Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan** was established in 1925 and is the longest-standing humanitarian organization in the country. It has 595 staff, 42,000

volunteers and 210 branches across the country. As auxiliary to public authorities in the humanitarian, medical and social field, it relies on the activities laid out in the President's Decree "On the Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan" (1992), the State Law on the Protection of the Red Cross Red Crescent Emblem (2004), and the State Law on Humanitarian Activities. As per its strategic development plan for 2021–2025, the National Society's three strategic goals are to:

- Ensure effective disaster preparedness, response and recovery in the communities
- Promote healthy lifestyle leading to safe, dignified life in communities
- Mobilize communities, ensuring inclusiveness and peace in communities

Funding requirement for 2023: CHF 3.2 million

## IFRC NETWORK ACTION IN 2023

### Regional overview

	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
Climate ND-GAIN index rank	115	134	73		
Human Development Index rank	51	120	125	111	106
Population below poverty line	5.3%	25.3%	26.3%		14.1%

### Economic

Central Asia is home to some of the poorest economies in the world. Tajikistan is the least developed in the region, and in Kyrgyzstan, 25.3 per cent of the population live below the national poverty line. Various regional challenges have slowed development and led to a decline in socio-economic well-being.

Central Asia is a mountainous non-coastal region highly dependent on imports, with few areas of land useable for farming. Therefore, the closure of state borders because of the crisis in Ukraine and sanctions on Russia hit the region hard. The Russia-Ukraine conflict has also led to a steep decline in remittances flowing to Central Asia, causing extreme poverty among families of migrants and their communities. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, two of the most remittance-dependent countries in the world, are the most severely affected.

Humanitarian needs in the region continue to be driven by rising food prices, socio-economic risks from the crisis in Ukraine, impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, disease outbreaks, and recurrent natural hazards such as mudflows, floods, landslides, earthquakes, avalanches, heat and cold waves. Localized conflicts over land and water resources in the fertile Ferghana Valley (located on the territories of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) also play a part. In Kyrgyzstan, the cost of some products has risen by up to 50 per cent, and in the first four months of 2022, inflation was 7.1 per cent. Between 2016 and 2019, poor families spent more than 60 per cent of their income on food, leaving little room for other outgoings and hindering their ability to move out of poverty.

## Demographic

Central Asia is rich in demographic diversity, with various ethnic communities and languages. However, a decline in fertility and an ageing population have increased the proportion of elderly people living in the region. There is a need for adequate and safe elderly care facilities, practices, and health care systems – and this has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Social

Gender equality is an ongoing issue in Central Asia. LGBTQ and minority communities are significantly marginalized and vulnerable in some areas.

## Political

Central Asian countries face various internal political challenges, including political instability. Between the countries, border issues lead to recurring tensions and armed clashes, such as recent clashes at the Kyrgyz-Tajik border.

The international political landscape also impacts Central Asian countries. The Ukraine crisis dominates the political landscape and remains a major concern, while the change in power in Afghanistan in 2021, combined with food shortages, have threatened stability across the entire region. Borders between Tajikistan and Afghanistan have been officially closed, but there remains a threat of population influx when they reopen.

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## Strategic priorities

### Climate and environment

Central Asia remains highly vulnerable to climate change. More than 90 per cent of Kyrgyzstan's and Tajikistan's territory is mountainous, and roughly half of all settlements are located 3,000 metres above sea level. Extreme weather patterns, such as heatwaves, cold waves and temperature rises, can cause floods and mudslides in mountainous areas. The number of avalanches and amount of snowfall across the region have almost doubled in the last decade. Water-related disasters such as landslides, mudslides and flooding are also significant threats.

One of the effects of climate change is glacial melting, which is relied upon as a source of fresh water in mountainous regions. As the glaciers shrink, floods occur with greater intensity in some areas and cause water scarcity in others. These climatic changes lead to other environmental issues like deterioration of soil quality, loss of arable land, changes in water supply systems, accelerated soil erosion and depressed agricultural productivity.

The Aral Sea, split between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, has become an ecological disaster. It has shrunk to less than half its former size since the early 1960s, due to excessive irrigation, causing areas previously habitable for wildlife or suitable as arable land to become deserts. It is also associated with several health problems, including respiratory and parasitic diseases. Efforts to address the crisis have focused on preventing further shrinkage of the Aral Sea, mainly because the damage is so severe that it is practically irreversible.

Combined with population growth and increasing water demand, climate change effects are having an impact socially. Conflicts related to fresh-water access, decreased access to household heating, increased pollution, heat waves, and increased overall demands on local electrical and power grids and hydropower dams, are becoming more common. Central Asia is also affected by urban pollution, particularly in Kazakhstan's eastern cities where there are harmful emissions from lead and zinc smelters, a uranium-processing mill, and other industries. Activist groups in Kazakhstan have been lobbying for tighter emission controls. Kazakhstan is rife with soil pollution from the overuse of pesticides in agriculture.

As the likelihood of natural hazards increases, so does the vulnerability of the most exposed communities. This is further compounded by the socio-economic impacts of disasters on livelihoods, agricultural productivity and water availability.

### Main areas of support

All five Central Asian National Societies are part of the IFRC Global Climate Resilience Programme, which aims to foster an unprecedented scale-up in locally led climate-smart disaster risk reduction and adaptation efforts to prevent and reduce climate-related disaster impacts, and build community-level climate resilience. The programme aims to support 500 million people in 100 of the most climate-vulnerable countries, focusing on the least supported and marginalized communities. This holistic, multi-year programmatic approach consists of four operational pillars: (1) scaling up climate-smart

disaster risk reduction, anticipatory action and preparedness; (2) reducing the public health impacts of climate change; (3) addressing climate displacement; (4) enabling climate-resilient livelihoods and ecosystem services.

In line with the above, in 2023 the IFRC network will support all five National Societies in integrating climate change adaptation and mitigation in disaster preparedness and risk reduction activities.

The Central Asian National Societies will in particular further develop forecast-based financing, with a focus on heat and cold waves. This will guide the timely and effective implementation of early actions when abnormal weather conditions have a high probability of adversely affecting people, especially vulnerable groups such as children, those living with disabilities, and the elderly.

National Societies will also work to reinforce early warning systems at community level for a range of hazards, and increase public awareness on climate risks, in particular for heat waves.

## Disasters and crises

Central Asia is uniquely positioned as both extremely climate-vulnerable and disaster-prone. The region is at high risk of earthquakes. In Kazakhstan, the average annual damage from earthquakes is estimated at US\$57.6 million. The entire territory of Kyrgyzstan is seismic, and it has nearly 3,000 earthquakes every year. In Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, there is cause for concern over the seismic safety of buildings and infrastructure in highly populated urban areas.

In Uzbekistan, the danger is concentrated in the Tashkent and Bukhara regions, which are home to more than half the country's population. Tashkent ranks first among nine cities in Central Asia and the Caucasus for earthquake hazard and exposure to seismic risk. More than 20 per cent of its population live in buildings with high seismic vulnerability. Another major earthquake in Uzbekistan could have impacts on the scale of 30 per cent of GDP.

Ferghana Valley, at the intersection of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, is becoming the most populated area in Central Asia. The region is susceptible to frequent tensions and border clashes. Repeated tensions since the collapse of the Soviet Union have left many areas disputed, leading to conflicts between residents. There have been multiple escalations in armed clashes between security forces in the last two years, each of which has caused civilian injuries and led to evacuations. Such clashes further complicate access to critical water sources, affect livelihoods, and threaten stability.

Food security remains an issue throughout the region, largely due to growing inflation, price fluctuations in the global market for food and fuel, and the disruption of logistic routes. The region has a low capacity for absorbing shocks, with decreasing levels of resilience and preparedness, all of which amplifies the long-term impact of disasters on people.

Legal frameworks on disaster risk management tend to be insufficient. For example, the disaster law framework in Kyrgyzstan is mainly focused on disaster response rather than preparedness. The Law on Civil Defense and the Law on International Emergency Assistance provide the overall framework for disaster risk management and international disaster assistance. There is no clear legal and policy framework guiding climate change or the integration of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

## Main areas of support

The IFRC network's overarching regional objective is to continue its commitment to being the primary responder in a crisis or disaster, while improving response mechanisms such as cash and voucher assistance preparedness.

The IFRC and network partners will support each National Society individually in the following illustrative areas:

### Kazakhstan:

- Conducting risk assessments and developing risk profiles in pilot communities
- Conducting risk informed awareness raising campaigns in target communities
- Further implementing small-scale structural and nature-based solutions disaster risk reduction projects
- Integrating cash-based programming in new projects and emergency response
- Training and engaging young volunteers in preparedness and response activities
- Enhancing the response capacity of the National Society through provision of shelter and non-food items
- Strengthening the capacity of the National Society and government partners on disaster law and legislative advocacy



## Kyrgyzstan:

- Strengthening the capacity of communities to prepare for, respond and recover from emergencies, and by providing timely and effective assistance to affected populations
- Strengthening the capacity of the organization, staff members and the role of volunteers in the areas of disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery
- Developing a system of cash and voucher assistance as a universal tool of humanitarian support
- Working with the Disaster/Emergency Response Coordination Team and Civil Protection Commission
- Promoting and revising legislative initiatives

## Tajikistan:

- Strengthening the capacity of communities to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies
- Providing timely and effective assistance to affected populations
- Strengthening disaster preparedness including through establishing emergency operation centres
- Replenishing existing emergency stocks
- Upscaling cash and voucher assistance

## Turkmenistan:

- Increasing public awareness in disaster risk areas and conducting prevention projects
- Implementing school-based disaster risk reduction activities, targeting school teachers and students
- Reviewing school disaster evacuation plans and signs
- Supporting the Government in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into the education curriculum, partnering with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Emergency Situations and UN agencies
- Exploring feasibility of cash and voucher assistance
- Strengthening warehouses and emergency stocks
- Improving the skills of disaster relief professionals and volunteers in the field of logistics, sanitation and housing security
- Participation in the coordination of services during emergencies and man-made disasters
- Building the capacity of the National Society and government partners on disaster law and legislative advocacy

## Uzbekistan:

- Replenishing the central warehouse with emergency supplies of non-food items
- Providing all regional organizations with computers and communication tools for monitoring in case of emergencies
- Setting up Young Rescuers teams in schools
- Conducting seminars, trainings, competitions and tests among both schoolchildren and teachers on first aid, emergency response and climate change

## Health and wellbeing

Implementation systems for state-provided free health care in Central Asia are varied and coverage gaps persist, leaving some people unprotected by the mandatory health insurance benefits package. As a result, many poorer households have been forced into private spending on health care, worsening their financial burdens.

Ongoing health challenges in Tajikistan include high maternal and child mortality rates, non-communicable diseases, a growing tuberculosis epidemic, outbreaks of infectious diseases, and poor access to adequate water, sanitation and hygiene services. The health situation is exacerbated in times of disasters, which are increasing in their intensity and frequency.

Among the five countries in the region, Tajikistan is the most heavily affected by inadequate water and sanitation services. Only 55 per cent of the population have access to safely managed water and 81 per cent of the population can access basic drinking water services. 12 per cent of the population are reliant on surface water for their daily water needs. It is estimated that 26 per cent of deaths are related to diarrhoea caused by unsafe drinking water, poor sanitation and inadequate personal hygiene.

Access to safe water and adequate sanitation is also a challenge in Kyrgyzstan. In rural areas, around 40 per cent of people are not provided with clean drinking water, and a large proportion of rural settlements have outdated or no water supply and sewage systems. Related health challenges in Kyrgyzstan include communicable and non-communicable diseases such as multidrug-resistant tuberculosis and HIV.

Kazakhstan is in the world's top 30 countries with the highest burden of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis. The HIV epidemic also continues to grow in the country. Non-communicable diseases are estimated to account for 87 per cent of all deaths in Kazakhstan, and 16 per cent of all deaths were the result of obesity. It is

estimated that 11 per cent of the population live without access to safe drinking water, which leads to deaths from diarrhoea caused by unsafe drinking water, sanitation and inadequate personal hygiene. In 2022, Kazakhstan plans to provide all its cities and villages with clean drinking water within five years. However, since more than 50 per cent of the country's total water flow is generated outside its borders, some parts of the country are prone to freshwater shortages. Sustained periods of high heat can affect regional water supplies and raise the risk of water-borne diseases.

In Uzbekistan, non-communicable diseases are responsible for approximately 85 per cent of all deaths, and cardiovascular diseases are the main cause of premature mortality. Uzbekistan is also in the world's top 30 countries with the highest burden of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis. Deaths from diarrhoea caused by unsafe drinking water, sanitation and inadequate personal hygiene are common, as 41 per cent of people live without access to safe drinking water.

### Main areas of support

The IFRC network's overarching regional objective is to strengthen facilities, raise awareness, improve capacity and training, provide direct services, anticipate and alleviate the health needs of vulnerable populations, and promote stronger physical, mental and psychosocial health outcomes.

The National Societies in the region continue to respond to recurring threats related to COVID-19 and its variants. The National Societies focus on rolling out COVID-19 vaccination and reviving delayed and missed routine vaccinations, closing persistent gaps in maternal, child and neonatal health which have widened during the pandemic, and supporting the recovery of very vulnerable people including those in elderly care facilities.

The IFRC and network partners will support each National Society individually in the following illustrative areas:

#### Kazakhstan:

- Expanding the National Society's home care programme and obtaining additional equipment and tools, such as wheelchairs and walking aids
- Expanding the new initiative on road safety education for school children with the Global Road Safety Partnership
- Promoting a healthy lifestyle and prevention of non-communicable diseases

- Conducting a country assessment of climate change impacts on health and livelihoods with the IFRC Climate Centre and Kazakhstan's Meteorological Institute
- Enhancing the National Society's capacities in community-based health and first aid, and mental health and psychosocial support
- Promoting COVID-19 vaccines and blood donations
- Initiating new tuberculosis and HIV care and support activities
- Strengthening preparedness and response capacities in emergency health and epidemics and pandemics

#### Kyrgyzstan:

- Promoting healthy lifestyles
- Preventing communicable and non-communicable diseases
- Behaviour change interventions
- Providing primary health care to vulnerable groups
- Regular training on health, first aid and psychosocial support

#### Tajikistan:

- Improving access to medical and social services
- Health promotion for communities
- Building capacity and service provision for mental health, psychosocial support and basic health needs
- Expanding work on routine immunization and promoting the COVID-19 vaccine
- Case detection and care for multi-drug resistant tuberculosis
- Polyclinic care through the joint clinic with the Iranian Red Crescent
- Blood donation information campaigns
- Preventative health measures
- Ensuring access of the population and school students to clean drinking water and sanitation measures (girls hygiene) through a water sanitation and hygiene project

#### Turkmenistan:

- Promoting the auxiliary role of the National Society in health service delivery at the community level
- Raising public knowledge of first aid through educational institutions



- Preparing communities for emergencies and training them to prevent or minimize possible hazards
- Raising awareness of infectious and non-communicable diseases in cities and villages
- Launching new initiatives on road safety with the Global Road Safety Partnership
- Sharing experience and peer learning through active participation in the European HIV and Tuberculosis Network

### **Uzbekistan:**

- Hosting seminars for employees and volunteers on first aid and home care
- Providing psychosocial assistance
- Promoting healthy lifestyles and hygiene for prevention of infectious and non-communicable diseases
- Strengthening the technical base for the nurses of the National Society's Mehr-Shavkat service and equip it with first aid kits
- Providing the National Society's 3,500 wards with special cell phones with enlarged screen and large buttons, and other material and basic items

## **Migration and displacement**

Many people in Central Asia work abroad and send remittances to their home countries, and the income received from these **migrant workers** is heavily relied upon in the region. The biggest challenges for migrant workers are exposure to diseases, lack of access to medical services, human trafficking and other protection risks, vulnerable families left behind, and systemic lack of reintegration upon return. The growing number of 'social orphans' in the region is a cause for concern. These are children whose parents are dependent on labour migration for their income. They are often left with relatives or put into children's homes, making them vulnerable or exposed to violence or abuse. More than 11,000 children live in Kyrgyzstan's 117 children's homes, and only six per cent of them have no living parents.

The main factors driving emigration from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are high unemployment, especially among young people, and an underdeveloped social security system. An estimated 800,000 to 1,000,000 Tajik citizens, representing up to 20% of the labour force, have migrated out of the country.

The priority destination country for migrant workers from Central Asia has traditionally been the Russian Federation. However, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine led to a sudden decline in labour migration,

causing significant unemployment and reduced remittances. The conflict also led to an influx of Russian citizens into Kyrgyzstan, with an estimated 50,000 arriving in the first quarter of 2022.

More than 3.5 million working migrants live in Kazakhstan, representing 20 per cent of the population. These figures include both the repatriation of "oralmans" (ethnic Kazakh repatriates), migration for personal reasons or as part of a university exchange, as well as labour migration flows, both regulated and unregulated. Migrant workers from Central Asian states sought work there due to its economic growth, high standard of living, visa-free regime and geographical proximity. Kazakhstan experienced a sharp increase in labour migration before the COVID-19 pandemic and many migrant workers remain without regular status. This compounds service provision challenges and exacerbates multi-dimensional poverty issues. It also creates barriers to quality education and makes migrant workers vulnerable to human trafficking, sexual slavery, infectious diseases, integration challenges, and lack of access to health and social services.

In Turkmenistan, Turkey is the most popular destination for migrant workers. This is due to the linguistic affinity and visa-free entry agreement between these two countries. Turkey receives an average of 20,000 to 25,000 Turkmenistan workers annually, many of whom are forced to search for work elsewhere because of a prolonged economic crisis in the country. The total number of emigrants from Turkmenistan was 195,000 people in 2019.

There are also high rates of **rural to urban migration** across the region, as people from poorer areas search for work and better living conditions. In Kyrgyzstan, especially around Bishkek, there are large new settlements composed of mainly internal migrants. The scale of internal migration in Kazakhstan is also growing. Without proper regulations and socialization of internal working migrants, marginalization is inevitable.

Tensions in the border areas in Central Asia present political and safety concerns for communities and are a cause of **internal displacement**. Only half of the 1,000-kilometre Kyrgyz-Tajik border territory has been marked, which leads to conflicts between the two armies. Unresolved issues related to the distribution of water and land and illegal border crossings also lead to frequent unrest.

The change in leadership in neighbouring Afghanistan has led to **refugees** crossing the border into Tajikistan. As of January 2022, about 7,510 people from Afghanistan had taken refuge in Tajikistan, according

to UNHCR figures. If conditions worsen in Afghanistan, these numbers are likely to increase. Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are also exposed to the population influx from Afghanistan. Kazakhstan has been hosting refugees from Afghanistan, Syria and other countries for many years.

### Main areas of support

The IFRC launched a [regional Emergency Appeal](#) in mid-August 2021 to support National Societies in the region bordering Afghanistan, including Tajikistan. The National Societies initiated preparedness and readiness actions and, where relevant, response activities to support the population movement. Based on the National Societies' mandates and roles in their countries, the IFRC network developed contingency plans and established coordination mechanisms with national authorities. The Emergency Appeal ended in December 2022, but the interventions it supported are expected to continue under this plan as per needs.

The IFRC network's overarching regional objective is to improve migrants of all categories access to basic needs, health services and shelter, including supporting returnees. It comprises humanitarian diplomacy, community engagement, needs assessments, and training.

The IFRC and network partners will support each National Society individually in the following illustrative areas:

#### Kazakhstan:

- Sharing knowledge on legal rights and improving access to basic services for labour migrants, including through translation of information material in relevant languages and the establishment of information points
- Mental health and psychosocial support of labour migrants and training of volunteers on the same
- Preparing and actively engaging in responding to potential refugee crises

#### Kyrgyzstan:

- Building capacity in restoring family links
- Psychosocial support of migrant communities
- Targeted interventions tailored for vulnerable communities such as 'social orphans' and labour migrants
- Knowledge sharing for programme improvement

#### Tajikistan:

- Improving access to assistance, protection and information for migrants, including restoring family links
- Psychosocial support of migrant communities
- Five information and educational training centres for labour migrants in Dushanbe, Kulob, Badakhshon, Sughd and Bokhtar, plus a mobile clinic
- Preparing for an Afghan refugee influx

### Values, power and inclusion

The ongoing socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict continue to affect vulnerable groups, like migrant workers. Economic crises, loss of livelihoods, work uncertainty and fear for the future expose people to severe pressures to fulfil their needs. This has created conditions for negative survival mechanisms that lead to forms of exploitation and abuse. Women, girls and vulnerable groups are at an increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence due to shifts in social safety nets, limited access to information, and disruption of specialized services. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing gender inequalities and worsened mental health issues. Its long-term effects vary depending on sex, gender, age, disability, legal status and ethnicity. From July to December 2020, an average of 51 per cent of people living with disabilities in Uzbekistan evaluated their mental health as "fair" or "poor." This peaked at 61 per cent in August 2020.

Violence against women is widespread and takes many forms, including domestic violence, bride kidnapping, trafficking, early marriages, polygamy and physical abuse. Since 1991, Kazakhstan has aimed to provide legislative support to women. It was the first Central Asian country to establish a national entity to promote gender equality. Nevertheless, persistent gender imbalances remain, particularly in wages and access to employment and career opportunities.

In the rural areas of Tajikistan, nearly 75 per cent of the people live below the poverty line, and women suffer disproportionately, with highest risk of poverty for households run by women. Throughout Tajikistan, women face discrimination and inequality in social, economic and political life. Their representation in Tajikistan politics and decision-making remains below international standards. Gender-based domestic violence is prevalent in Tajikistan and is perpetuated by a culture of silence. Although 20 per cent of married women have experienced emotional, physical or sexual violence by their husbands, only one in five victims files a report.

Another vulnerable group is 'social orphans' (see previous section). Of Kazakhstan's five million children, approximately 26,000 are considered orphans without parental care. Kazakhstan has acted on the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to curb the growth of the number of orphanages, and children are only placed in them as an extreme and temporary measure.

Due to the widely held belief that people living with disabilities are unable to live independently, many are confined to their homes. There is also a severe lack of proper medical care. Around 25 per cent of children and adults living with disabilities in Uzbekistan do not receive the health services they require, compared with 10 per cent without disabilities. People living with disabilities are almost three times more likely to lack access to prescribed medication due to financial restraints, lack of knowledge on how to access it, and other factors. There are around 700,000 people living with disabilities in Kazakhstan, making up 3.6 per cent of the population. Around 98,300 of these are children. The number of people living with disabilities is rising due to an increasing burden of chronic diseases and an ageing population. However, around 80 per cent of the country's facilities are inaccessible for people living with disabilities, and 20 per cent are only partially accessible.

### Main areas of support

The IFRC network's overarching regional objective is to support the National Societies with policies, procedures, training and workshops tied to protection, gender and inclusion, and improving the identification of, and responsiveness to, the diversified needs of target communities. This will include establishing sub-regional coordination with protection, gender and inclusion focal points of Central Asia National Societies to discuss and share best practices and lessons learnt on related topics.

The IFRC and network partners will support each National Society individually in the following illustrative areas:

#### Kazakhstan:

- Enhancing the National Society's capacity for an organization-wide inclusive programming approach that considers risks, vulnerabilities, capacities, gendered roles and protection issues
- Reviewing pandemic response disaggregated data to design non-discriminatory preventive measures
- Strengthening emergency preparedness and response by grounding protection analysis, taking into account gendered roles, risks, vulnerabilities and capacities

- Ensuring that staff and volunteers are familiar with minimum standards for protection, gender and inclusion
- Ensuring that programmes and services are accessible for people living with disabilities
- Assisting single female-headed households through cash and voucher assistance and income generation activities
- Providing support to families in difficult situations in order to maintain children in their families

#### Kyrgyzstan:

- Developing comprehensive modules to work with vulnerable groups
- Providing training for community leaders and members on developing an inclusive society
- Providing comprehensive psychosocial support to vulnerable people
- Providing income-generating sewing courses for women
- Developing standards for inclusive provision of social and humanitarian assistance

#### Turkmenistan:

- Enhancing capacities in community engagement and accountability through training
- Setting up community feedback systems and participatory approaches for all operations
- Strengthening emergency preparedness and response by grounding protection analysis, taking into account gendered roles, risks, vulnerabilities and capacities
- Providing training for ministries, state agencies and local authorities on how to create favourable conditions for people living with disabilities, and the elderly
- Ensuring that staff and volunteers are familiar with minimum standards for protection, gender and inclusion
- Ensuring programmes and services are accessible for people living with disabilities
- Providing support to orphans, including by purchasing stationery and building playgrounds
- Supplying wheelchairs, food and clothes to vulnerable groups



## Enabling local actors

All five National Societies are committed to strengthening their capacities, with support from the IFRC. They have each carried out self-assessments as part of the Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) process in 2011–2012. The OCAC self-assessment is intended to capture the strengths and weaknesses of National Societies as a whole in relation to a wide range of organizational capacities.

The IFRC provides a sounding board for the National Societies to discuss the issues that are most important in their regions, and it offers solutions. The National Society in Kyrgyzstan has highlighted specific issues that require support. These include developing a single holistic National Society development plan, resource mobilization, and communications and public relations at headquarters and branches. Organizational systems and processes, such as human resources, planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting, and community engagement and accountability, will also be a key priority.

The National Society in Tajikistan also identifies National Society development as a key focus area. It strives to further develop its organizational structure by strengthening the capacities of branches, staff and volunteers, and it is currently finalizing a National Society development plan. The National Society will introduce new and

innovative approaches to ensure access to humanitarian services for all vulnerable population groups. It aims to expand its partnerships, engage communities and integrate its approaches, with a focus on self-sufficiency and development.

The National Societies of both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are committed to the Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) process and are in the phases of orientation (Uzbekistan) and work plan (Tajikistan). It is a continuous and flexible process that enables National Societies to assess, measure and analyze the strengths and gaps of their preparedness and response mechanisms, then take action to improve. The National Society in Uzbekistan will continue to focus on expanding its programmatic breadth and reach, alongside strengthening capacities under the strategic priorities.

In Kazakhstan, the National Society is open to change, further learning, implementation of innovative ideas and adaptation to the changing reality. It aims to deepen and widen its capacity to save lives and support people, increasing their resilience individually and in communities. The National Society will continue to improve the knowledge and technical expertise of employees and volunteers through regular training, deploying resources and building new partnerships, and developing new



approaches in the humanitarian field. It will also focus on developing the local branches closest to affected populations and institutionalizing its special new legal status in national legislation.

The main priorities for the National Society in Turkmenistan are capacity building and peer support for managers in programming areas such as preparedness for response, disaster risk reduction, and health and social services. It will also focus on volunteer mobilization and digital transformation.

### Main areas of support

- Developing a Digital Humanitarian Diplomacy Hub in Almaty, Kazakhstan, to increase awareness of the IFRC network as a key actor of humanitarian diplomacy in Central Asia

- Supporting digital transformation of the National Societies
- Streamlining planning and reporting to ensure more strategic partnerships
- Integrating and using evidence-based findings, lessons learned and post-distribution monitoring
- Strengthening the National Societies auxiliary role
- Providing leadership support and development
- Supporting income diversification at the national level
- Developing financial sustainability and systems, strengthening integrity
- Supporting branch and volunteering development, and youth engagement

## THE IFRC NETWORK

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### The IFRC

**The IFRC's** Central Asia Delegation is based in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. It also has a presence in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. It supports the National Societies to collaborate, through formal and informal exchange platforms, exchange visits, and online and in-person meetings. By working together and with the IFRC, the National Societies in Central Asia stay up to date, relevant and influential in their approach to addressing humanitarian trends and challenges.

The IFRC supports the National Societies on disaster management and preparedness, disaster risk reduction, health, community engagement and accountability, cash and voucher assistance, disaster law, humanitarian diplomacy and positioning with authorities, branch and volunteer development, leadership support and development, financial sustainability and systems development. The IFRC also supports accountability as a cross-cutting theme.

In recent years, IFRC supported the National Societies of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan through a number of Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) operations in relation to floods, extreme winter, cold waves and heat waves, droughts, disease outbreaks, border conflict and earthquakes. In each of the three countries, DREF operations launched between September and October 2022 will cross over to the beginning of 2023. The National Society of Tajikistan also received support through the IFRC [regional Emergency](#)

[Appeal](#) on population movement from Afghanistan from August 2021 to December 2022. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the IFRC, through its global Appeal, has supported the National Societies for their COVID-19 response.

### IFRC membership coordination

The IFRC coordination involves working with member National Societies to assess the humanitarian context, humanitarian situations and needs; agreeing common priorities; co-developing common strategies to address issues such as obtaining greater humanitarian access, acceptance and space; mobilizing funding and other resources; clarifying consistent public messaging; and monitoring progress. This also means ensuring that strategies and programmes in support of people in need incorporate clarity of humanitarian action, development assistance, and the auxiliary role efforts to reinforce the role of National Societies in their respective countries.

**The National Society in Kyrgyzstan** is part of the IFRC network New Way of Working initiative, piloted in 14 countries as a new model of membership coordination. The initiative places a country's National Society at the centre with the IFRC network surrounding it to optimize the power of working as one. It involves sharing resources, knowledge and common standards for greater impact. Particular attention is given to collective

planning, and partner National Societies participate in a multi-year country plan to ensure that the resources and expertise of the network are used in a complementary and efficient way.

**The Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan National Societies** are involved in a global Pilot Programmatic Partnership between the IFRC and the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), with implementation support from the **German Red Cross** as lead EUNS, the **Italian Red Cross** and the **Finnish Red Cross**. The partnership implements activities in disaster risk management, epidemic and pandemic preparedness and response, humanitarian assistance and protection for people on

the move, cash and voucher assistance, risk communication, and community engagement and accountability.

The partnership meets the realities of extended crises with longer-term predictable funding, facilitating actions and processes with greater impact. It leverages the IFRC's global network and unique access to people and communities, and it helps to fulfil the ambitions of the European Union as the biggest donor for international aid in the world.

In addition to peer-to-peer collaboration between the Central Asian National Societies, participating National Societies provide support as follows:

Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Kazakhstan	Uzbekistan	Turkmenistan
German Red Cross	Finnish Red Cross	Italian Red Cross	German Red Cross	Kyrgyzstan
Italian Red Cross	German Red Cross	Spanish Red Cross	Italian Red Cross	Red Crescent
Swiss Red Cross	Italian Red Cross	Swiss Red Cross	<b>Remotely:</b>	
Turkish Red Crescent	<b>Remotely:</b>	United Arab Emirates	Red Cross Society of China	
<b>Remotely:</b>	Red Cross Society of China	Red Crescent		
Qatar Red Crescent		<b>Remotely:</b>		
Saudi Arabian Red Crescent		Red Cross Society of China		
Spanish Red Cross				
United Arab Emirates				
Red Crescent				

**The Red Cross Society of China** is a recognized and strategic partner of the National Society in Tajikistan and has been providing support in the form of IT equipment, emergency stocks and fleet over several years. The organizations are involved in a joint ongoing project to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities through community-based disaster risk reduction and capacity building. The project aims to increase the resilience of the most disaster-prone communities in southern Tajikistan through active engagement in comprehensive disaster risk reduction measures. Support from the Red Cross Society of China enables the National Society in Tajikistan to build capacities and scale up services to save lives, protect livelihoods and strengthen recovery from crises in disaster prone areas.

In 2020, the Red Cross Society of China supported the National Society in Kazakhstan to resume providing homecare services for elderly people in need of assistance and people with special needs. Pilot areas included the regions of Karaganda, Kostanay and Kokshetau, and

the two major cities of Nur-Sultan and Almaty. It has also regularly supported the National Society in Kazakhstan with voluntary blood donation activities since 2014.

**The Finnish Red Cross** has partnered with the National Society in Tajikistan for nearly 20 years. Their work is focused on health, water, sanitation and hygiene, and disaster management. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Finland, the European Union and the Finnish Red Cross have funded this work. In recent years, the partnership has expanded to areas such as disability inclusion and anticipatory action, with enhanced forecasting capacities of the national meteorological service.

The German Red Cross has a regional office in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and a country office in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. It has a history of long-term cooperation with all five National Societies in Central Asia, and has implemented multiple regional and cross-border community-based disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, and development projects with them. Since 2013, the German Red Cross



has been undertaking a cross-border social structures development programme engaging the three bordering countries of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. It aims to support the National Societies in their structural and institutional development, paying particular attention to field branches and capacity building.

In the last five years, the German Red Cross is focusing on assisting the National Societies with innovative programming such as cash and voucher assistance and forecast-based action for heat and cold waves. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the German Red Cross provided substantial assistance for the National Societies to conduct emergency response operations, which included food and non-food items assistance to vulnerable people, and cash and voucher assistance to the most affected families and households. It encourages the National Societies to pay attention to the issues of gender equality, and the protection of rights and lives of people with disabilities, especially women and girls, who are in the most vulnerable positions.

**The Italian Red Cross** has been engaging with National Societies in the region through projects and activities for more than 10 years and has had its own permanent office in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan since 2018. In Kyrgyzstan, it has supported the National Society in the development of its legal framework, in promoting women empowerment in the country through economic and social inclusion, and in enhancing its disaster preparedness and response capacities.

The Italian Red Cross supports the activities of the National Society in Tajikistan at a technical and financial level. It has supported the Tajikistan National Society in developing its volunteer mobilization capacities through youth engagement and development, and in enhancing migrants' access to health and social services while improving cooperation among migrant countries of origin, transit and destination.

Since 2021, the Italian Red Cross has been supporting the National Society in Kazakhstan in the development of its legal framework, and with disaster management projects to increase the resilience and reduce the vulnerability of communities in Taskalinskiy, a district of West-Kazakhstan Oblast. It has expressed an interest in support of working migrants' reintegration and plans to continue strengthening collaboration through financial and technical support. It is also interested in supporting the National Society in Uzbekistan with resource mobilization, and strategic and capacity development.

**The Spanish Red Cross** has been supporting the volunteering model of National Societies in Central Asia. It is also supporting the Kyrgyz Red Crescent with community-based disaster risk management in Bishkek, Talas and Osh provinces. It has been involved in the Kazakhstan National Society's youth and volunteer development since 2020, with the aim of strengthening capacity in volunteer management. This project involves updating volunteer management framing documents, developing a system for motivating and retaining volunteers, and improving the centralized volunteer database, with the aim of improving the range and quality of services that the Kazakhstan National Society provides.

**The Swiss Red Cross** has been collaborating with the Kyrgyzstan National Society since June 2014, driven by a common goal of sustainable implementation of programmes in support of the most vulnerable people in Kyrgyzstan. The current partnership projects, with a total budget of CHF3.3 million, are aligned with the National Society's strategic priorities in social care, public health, disaster risk reduction and organizational development. The multi-year partnership framework agreement in place, signed in October, covers the areas of fundraising, volunteer management and institutional preparedness for effective emergency response. In Kazakhstan, the Swiss Red Cross has a bilateral agreement with the National Society to develop cash and volunteer assistance, resource mobilization and capacity building.

**The Turkish Red Crescent Society** established its delegation for Central Asia in 2019. Based in Bishkek, its aim is to extend its level of partnership with National Societies in the region. It cooperates with the Kyrgyzstan National Society to improve its preparedness in the fields of disaster management and social development, in line with the National Society strategic plan.

**The Red Crescent Society of the United Arab Emirates** supports the National Society in Kyrgyzstan in providing financial assistance to orphans, children from low-income families and multi-child female headed households. The National Society in Kazakhstan also provides financial assistance to the same groups. The first co-project between the Red Crescent of the United Arab Emirates and the National Society in Kazakhstan was launched in 2002 and assisted 50 children. Support from the Red Crescent of the United Arab Emirates has increased since then, and the project assisted more than 3,000 children in 2022.

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## Movement coordination

The IFRC, the National Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) work closely together throughout Central Asia. This is carried out in line with the Strengthening Movement Coordination and Cooperation (SMCC) principles, and the newly adopted Seville Agreement 2.0. The National Society in Kyrgyzstan organizes monthly coordination meetings to update International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement partners about ongoing activities, highlights and upcoming priorities, and Movement partners also share information about their ongoing activities and priorities. The National Society in Kyrgyzstan also proactively provides Movement partners with regular situation reports during emergencies.

The ICRC supports the National Societies in Central Asia on restoring family links, international humanitarian law, mental health and psychosocial support, and emergency preparedness response programming. It informs governmental authorities on international humanitarian law and its integration into legislation, academic curricula and the practices of military and security forces.

In Kyrgyzstan, the ICRC helps victims of violence, visits detainees, promotes international humanitarian law, provides supplies to health facilities, and works with the authorities on the issue of missing persons. In Kazakhstan, the ICRC and the National Society work closely on restoring family links services, which were reactivated after civil unrest in January 2022.

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## Coordination with other actors

Throughout Central Asia, the IFRC and the Central Asian National Societies coordinate with other humanitarian organizations working in disaster management. The National Societies also cooperate and coordinate with local authorities, other development actors, embassies and donor agencies, while fostering the growth of networks and the exchange of information.

### Illustrations

**Kazakhstan:** The National Society collaborates with a variety of institutional external partners and the private sector. For many years, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been supporting a National Society project for refugees and asylum seekers from Afghanistan and elsewhere, while the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has been supporting the National Society's COVID-19 response. The National Society also partners with businesses such as PepsiCo, Nestlé, Kimberly-Clark, Mars, Coca-Cola, Colgate-Palmolive, Procter & Gamble, Beiersdorf, Wolt and inDriver.

**Kyrgyzstan:** The National Society has partnerships with external partners, including USAID, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), to improve the effective implementation of related programmes.

**Tajikistan:** The National Society cooperates with other humanitarian organizations in disaster management, and has especially strong ties with the UNICEF country office and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) country office. It cooperates and coordinates with other international actors such as IOM, Mercy Corp and the OSCE, embassies, and donor agencies in Tajikistan.

**Turkmenistan:** The National Society cooperates with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNICEF on disaster mitigation and preparedness and climate change adaptation, as well as building the capacities of volunteers in natural hazards. The Green School Project is a collaboration between the National Society, the Ministry of Education and UNICEF, and is aimed at changing school policy standards to make them more environmentally friendly. The project is funded by UNICEF, and its partners plan to scale up activities from two regions to the whole country. The National Society is also collaborating on activities to prevent the Aral Sea drying up, and to mitigate the effects of salinization spreading in coastal areas. This involves training school teachers and students, installing water pumps, and planting climate-resistant trees. Last year, 30 million such trees were planted by the National Society, together with the Ministry of Water Management, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Ecology.

**Uzbekistan:** The National Society is the only non-governmental organization in the State System of Prevention and Action in Case of Emergencies, which leads and coordinates national and local authorities alongside all other organizations in disaster response. It has an ongoing partnership with the Ministry of Health, providing social care to vulnerable households, including people living with disabilities, the elderly, and families living below the poverty line. For COVID-19, the National Society coordinates with the Ministry

of Health, World Health Organization (WHO) and the Risk Communication and Community Engagement sub-group. It has supported WHO in translating COVID-19 information, education, training and other materials into the Uzbek and Karakalpak languages. The National Society has delivered several thousand information materials related to self-protection and proper use of personal protective equipment and conducted workshop sessions.

#### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- [IFRC Global Plan and Country Plans](#)
- [Subscribe for updates](#)
- [Donor response](#) on IFRC website
- [Live Disaster Response Emergency Fund \(DREF\) data](#)
- Operational information: [IFRC GO platform](#)
- National Society data: [IFRC Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System](#)



**The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)** is the world's largest humanitarian network, with **192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** and around **14 million volunteers**. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

## Contact Information

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### **Seval Guzelkilinc**

IFRC Head of Country Cluster  
Delegation Central Asia, Bishkek

**T** +996 700 558 803

[seval.guzelkilinc@ifrc.org](mailto:seval.guzelkilinc@ifrc.org)

### **Andrej Naricyn**

Head of Strategic  
Engagement & Partnerships  
IFRC Regional Office for  
Europe, Budapest

**T** +36 70 430 6528

[andrej.naricyn@ifrc.org](mailto:andrej.naricyn@ifrc.org)

### **Red Cross Society of Kazakhstan**

**W** [www.redcrescent.kz](http://www.redcrescent.kz)

### **Red Crescent Society of Kyrgyzstan**

**W** [www.redcrescent.kg](http://www.redcrescent.kg)

### **Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan**

**W** [www.redcrescent.tj](http://www.redcrescent.tj)

### **Red Crescent Society of Turkmenistan**

**W** [www.tgymj.gov.tm](http://www.tgymj.gov.tm)

### **Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan**

**W** [www.redcrescent.uz](http://www.redcrescent.uz)

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