

# Myanmar Situation

9 FEBRUARY 2022

The volatile situation in Myanmar following the 01 February 2021 coup has **resulted in increased armed conflict and subsequent population displacement** both within the country and across borders, including into Thailand.

In December 2021 and January 2022, escalation of violence in Kayin and Kayah States **forced more than 9,700 individuals** to seek refuge in Thailand, according to the Royal Thai Government (RTG).

Refugees were sheltered **in temporary safety areas (TSA)** which were placed under the overall jurisdiction of the Royal Thai Army in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) established by the RTG in March 2021.

## KEY INDICATORS

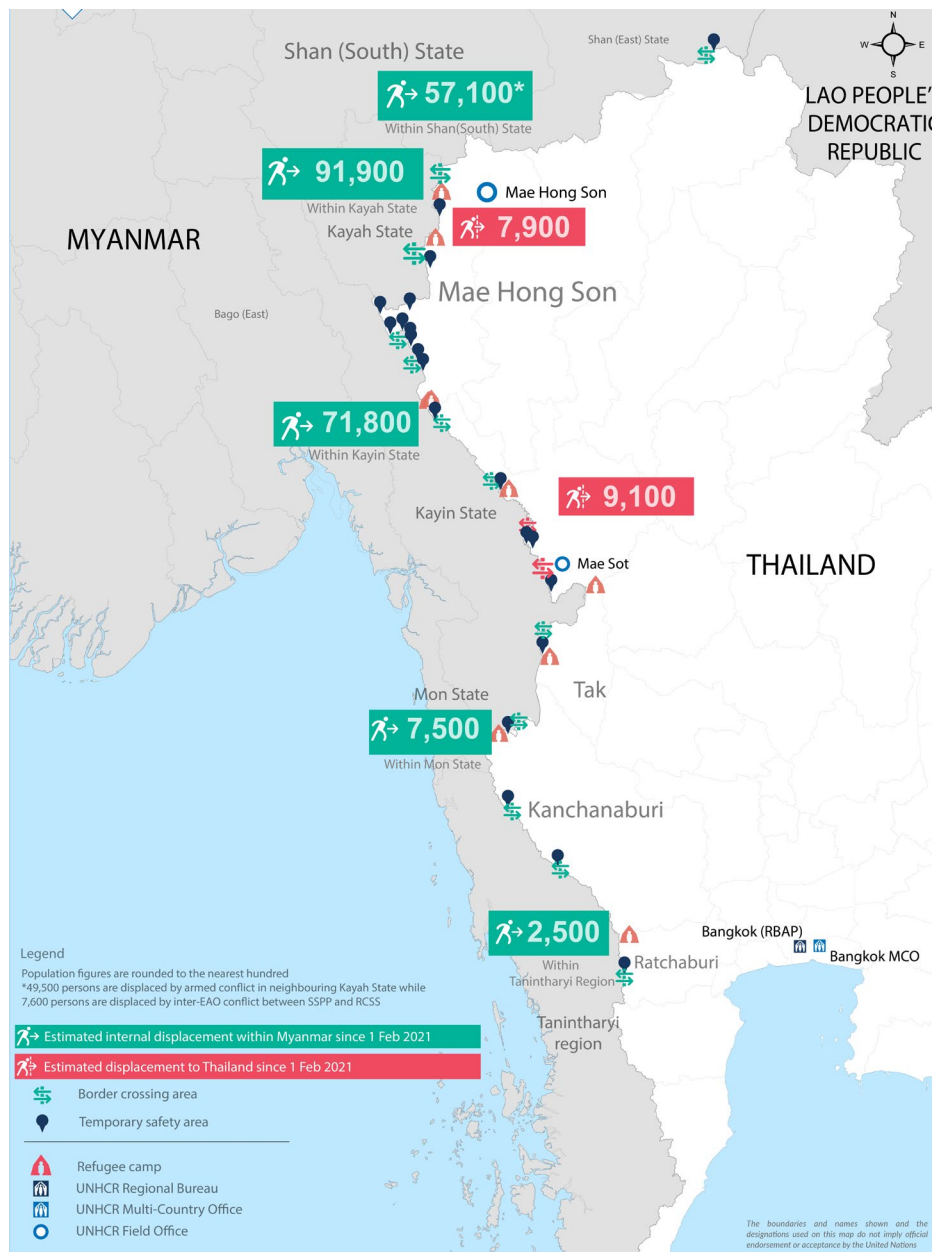
**17,000\***

Myanmar Refugees are estimated to have crossed into Thailand since 1 February 2021, according to the Royal Thai Government (RTG).

As of 08 February, according to RTG, **all individuals from Myanmar who had fled the upsurge in violence in Kayin and Kayah States since 16 December have returned to Myanmar.** Despite continuing advocacy and demarches, throughout the period, neither UNHCR nor the NGOs were granted access to the temporary safety areas (TSA).

**15,549,302 \$US**

Overall Financial Requirements for the January – June 2022 Refugee Preparedness and Response Plan for **18 partners.**



### SITUATION OVERVIEW ON THE THAI-MYANMAR BORDER

The situation in Myanmar remains highly uncertain and tense. Tensions in Shan State are higher between the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) and United Wa State Army (UWSA) following the RCSS congress on 13-17 January. Movement of RCSS' military troops were observed between 19-21 January in Pai and Pang Ma Pha District of Mae Hong Son (MHS) Province. The security situation in Kayah State is worsening as fighting continues unabated. According to a humanitarian group, at least 23 civilians were killed in Tatmadaw raids since early January in Loikaw Township, Kayah State. Villagers and IDPs in surrounding townships are reportedly facing severe food shortages. Due to transport restrictions, about 1,000 people remain in Loikaw with only enough food for a week. In Kayin State, Mae Wah Khee village and Lay Kay Kaw are reportedly now cut off. The Tatmadaw are fully present at these two places, and the houses and properties of IDPs have been looted and damaged. Fighting is moving further south from Lay Kay Kaw with Tatmadaw still pursuing People's Defence Forces (PDF) members. In the Tanintharyi region, conflict and skirmishes between the Tatmadaw and PDF continue.

As of 7 February, the number of people displaced continues its upward trajectory with **438,800** displaced, up from 367,400 on 3 January. During the first week of February, in the South-East, the number of IDPs decreased slightly from 232,500 last week to 224,000 this week. Several factors account for this. In Kayin State, 9,505 IDPs returned from the Thai-Myanmar border to their places of origin in Myawaddy Township following the Tatmadaw withdrawal. Temporary returns of Kayah IDPs from collective sites in Shan State (South) are taking place towards areas in Loikaw that have seen less conflict. IDPs are moving back and forth to assess the possibility of a sustainable return.

### JANUARY – JUNE 2022 REFUGEE PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLAN

The joint inter-agency plan is based on a planning figure of up to **4,000 refugees per month seeking refuge in Thailand over the first six months of 2022**. It gathers **18 partners** and presents an overall financial requirement of **15,549,302 USD**. The strategic objectives remain the same as in 2021: (1) Access to territory is ensured for persons in need of international protection in a COVID-19- sensitive manner; (2) Essential humanitarian needs are urgently provided for; and (3) Specific protection needs of the most vulnerable individuals are addressed. This year, **prevention of refoulement, including from temporary safety areas, and dignified stay in reception areas have been highlighted as the main priorities**. Refugees should be able to access the humanitarian assistance they need in a timely and effective manner. Humanitarian agencies stand ready to work with the RTG, to complement the provision of assistance and protection services by national agencies and ensure that needs are met in line with international standards.

### UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES

Based on the lessons learnt during the last influx in December and January 2022, sectors have re-assessed priorities and the nature of interventions to improve the response in the case of future new refugee arrivals. Therefore, **UNHCR and Partners have pro-actively engaged with different organs of the Thai authorities to promote practical ways to increase the protection space for refugees**. For example, in January 2022, COERR, IRC, SCI, UNHCR and UNICEF, held constructive dialogues with the Department of Children and Youth (DCY) to discuss concerns about the welfare of children in Temporary Safety Areas and promote concrete actions to ensure a minimum safety net for child protection. In addition, partners in Tak province met with military authorities to advocate for minimum standards and access in case of influx.

Given that INGOs and UN Agencies have not been able to directly access refugees during the recent influxes, **sectors will prioritize local partners' capacity building**. Local Civil Society Organisation (CSOs) are strategic partners who can deliver assistance and some protection services thanks to their informal access to refugees in reception areas. In this sense, the protection sector has developed several tools to enhance protection mainstreaming. First, the sector produced a protection

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checklist based on the 2021 Guidance Note on Assistance in Temporary Safety Areas. The objective of the checklist is to present, in a simple manner, the key guiding protection principles to consider when implementing activities in Temporary Safety Areas. Second, the sector has elaborated Protection Flashcards that present key protection principles and advocacy messages to be used during trainings with CSO partners. This tool will serve as an aide-memoire and simple presentation of protection principles to ensure continuous consideration of the protection standards in the response.

The **Rapid-Need Assessment (RNA) Tool** has been useful to collect some data during the recent influx, thanks to the support of local CBOs that had access to the sites. Given the persistent access constraints for international actors with needs assessment expertise, a reflection has been initiated at the inter-sector level to ensure that local partners are better equipped and supported in gathering relevant humanitarian information in a quickly evolving environment. Based on lessons learnt from the most recent influx, the **NFI sector is designing a life-saving package** – packages that can be dispatched immediately and distributed at the community-level in case of new arrivals. However, if refugees stay in Thailand for longer periods of time, the sector will shift to distribution at the household level.

**Thank you to all our donors who have generously contributed to fund the 2021 Appeal:**

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