

# Thailand

30 June 2023

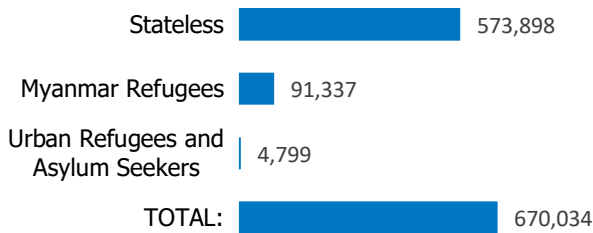
Thailand hosts **91,337 Myanmar refugees** in nine temporary shelters on the Thai-Myanmar border while **4,799 urban refugees and asylum-seekers** reside in other areas.

In addition, the Royal Thai Government (RTG) registered **over half a million stateless people**, mostly living in highland border areas.

UNHCR works with the RTG, international agencies, NGOs and donors to address the **protection assistance and durable solutions needs** of these groups.

## FORCIBLY DISPLACED AND STATELESS PEOPLE

### Figures

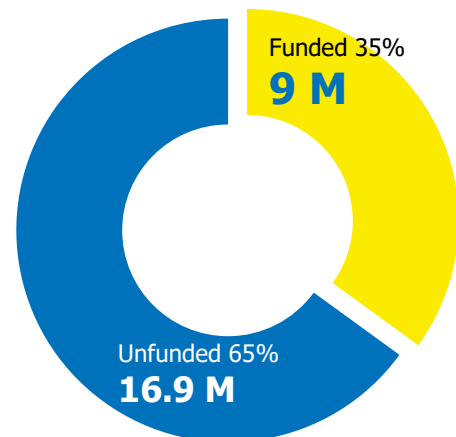


\* Verification Exercise conducted from Jan-Apr 2015 and subsequent data changes to-date. Under reverification

## FUNDING (AS OF 30 JUNE)

# USD 25.9 M

requested for the Thailand Operation



## UNHCR PRESENCE

### Staff:

- 155 National Staff
- 19 International Staff

### Offices:

- 01 Multi-Country Office in Bangkok
- 02 Field Office in Mae Sot
- 03 Field Office in Mae Hong Son



# Population Overview

## MYANMAR CAMP-BASED REFUGEES

- Refugees residing in the nine temporary shelters on the Thai-Myanmar border are of **mainly Karen, Karenni, and Burmese ethnicity**, some of whom have lived in Thailand since the mid-1980s after fleeing armed conflict between ethnic armed groups and the Myanmar military. Under the national legal framework, they are generally **not permitted to access national institutions** (e.g., health and education) nor to move outside the camps, including for the purpose of accessing livelihood opportunities. Therefore, they rely on non-governmental humanitarian services for their basic needs. UNHCR's interventions focus primarily on **protection and solutions**, whereas other sectoral areas are covered by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).
- Registration of refugees along the Thai-Myanmar border is led by **the Royal Thai Government Provincial Admission Board (RTG-PAB)**. Since 2008, registration is only open to exceptional serious protection and/or medical cases. UNHCR identifies and refers such cases to the RTG-PAB in close consultation with the MOI.

## URBAN ASYLUM-SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

- UNHCR continues its full complement of **protection and assistance activities** in relation to urban refugees and asylum-seekers from 36 countries, residing mainly in Bangkok and surrounding urban areas. Currently, there is **no national legal framework** for the protection of "urban" refugees and asylum-seekers in Thailand nor has Thailand acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol. UNHCR-issued documentation/identification in the form of a Refugee or Asylum-Seeker Card is not officially recognized by the RTG. Asylum-seekers and refugees continue to be at risk of being detained on immigration grounds for illegal entry or overstaying visas as they are considered "illegal" in the country without a national legal framework for protection.
- As they have no right to access employment, many urban asylum-seekers and refugees depend **on humanitarian or other forms of support**, including from UNHCR, to sustain themselves. Under the RTG's **progressive "education for all" policy**, asylum-seeker, and refugee children can, in principle, enrol in public schools, although many face challenges due to language barriers and costs associated with schooling.
- Following the Thai Cabinet's approval in December 2019 to establish the **National Screening Mechanism** to distinguish people who need international protection from economic migrants, UNHCR welcomed the establishment of the Screening Committee in 2020, the Sub-Committee on Draft Criteria, Procedures, and Conditions in 2021 and the Sub-Committees on Screening and Appeals in 2022. On 27 March 2023, the Criteria for determining status as a protected person in Thailand were published in the Royal Gazette, and the procedure will take effect as of September 2023. The broader set of procedural standards and policies required to implement the NSM remain under development by the RTG with UNHCR technical support and advocacy. Once operationalized, it is hoped that the NSM will increase the protection space for those who need it.

## STATELESS PERSONS

- In 2023, there are over half a million people registered as Stateless with the RTG. Approximately **81% of the registered stateless population reside in provinces near border areas**. While statelessness in Thailand has a range of causes, many affected communities migrated to Thailand hundreds of years ago. They are mostly members of ethnic minorities living in mountainous regions, including indigenous groups who had not been registered and did not hold any identity documents. These communities face various challenges, including language barriers to accessing civil registration and nationality procedures, difficulties associated with living in remote areas, and a lack of understanding of the importance of civil registration in preventing statelessness.
- Significant reforms to Thailand's nationality and civil registration laws (e.g., 2008, 2016, 2019) have provided a route to restoring nationality to those who had been deprived of it or could not acquire it, and **a progressive nationality strategy was adopted in 2005 to address statelessness**. Consequently, 66,594 registered stateless persons have acquired Thai nationality since 2015. Whilst some progress has been made, stateless people in Thailand continue to face challenges accessing some of their basic rights, including freedom of movement – many stateless individuals face restrictions travelling beyond their registered provincial areas - and healthcare, including gaps in access to national health insurance.

## Working with Partners

- UNHCR works in **close partnership** with the Royal Thai Government (RTG), UN agencies, humanitarian organizations, and civil society to improve protection and solutions for refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless persons, while advocating for their inclusion in national systems. On the Thai-Myanmar border, UNHCR works with **the Committee for the Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT)**, a consortium of NGOs that provide food, shelter, health, education, water/sanitation, and livelihoods to refugees in the nine border camps.
- **Strategic alliances** with key international and national NGOs, civil society and faith-based organizations, private sector partners, and academia help address a range of issues, including alternatives to detention, improved access to domestic legal and social services, and alternative forms of temporary protection pending solutions.

- **Partners:** Ministry of Interior (MOI), Thailand, Ministry of Justice, Viet Nam, Adventist Development and Relief Agency Thailand (ADRA), Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees (COERR), Humanity and Inclusion (HI), International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UN Volunteers (UNV).



On 31 May, UNHCR celebrated the World Refugee Day with key partners in Bangkok. The event launched the 12<sup>th</sup> Refugee Film Festival and a Tuk Tuk campaign carrying the message “Hope away from Home” throughout Bangkok for the whole month of June. ©UNHCR/ Ton Jirakrit Meeanant

# Main Activities

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- The volatile situation in Myanmar following the 01 February 2021 coup resulted in increased armed conflict and subsequent population displacement within and across borders, including Thailand. UNHCR continues to engage with the Royal Thai Government (RTG) on its availability to complement RTG-led response and preparedness efforts in close coordination with other relevant partners. From February 2021 until 30 June 2023, the RTG recorded that more than **40,000 Myanmar individuals sought safety temporarily in Thailand during several movements**. According to the authorities, these groups reportedly returned to Myanmar once the fighting subsided. As of 5 July, the RTG reports that 4,892 refugees are still sheltered in four Temporary Safety Areas in Mae Hong Son Province. UNHCR and partners have, through the authorities, provided material assistance to the new arrivals in the form of food, drinking water, medical care, shelter, and relief supplies.



## PROTECTION



A camp-based staff working for COERR on child protection (on the right) in Ban Mai Nai Soi refugee camp is conducting a home visit with a young orphan. ©UNHCR/ Rachaphon Riansiri – 16 May 2023

- In the refugee camps at the Thai-Myanmar border, in line with amendments to the Civil Registration Act (2008), UNHCR supports the RTG in ensuring every child has access to birth registration. Additionally, UNHCR collaborates with Partners to identify refugees with severe protection and medical cases to be registered by the RTG through the Fast-Track Provincial Admission Board (FT-PAB) process. Moreover, UNHCR provided legal services to 248 individuals and facilitated 11 individuals with access to the Thai justice system.
- UNHCR, in partnership with the COERR Foundation, conducts case management and focuses on the protection of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC). In addition, UNHCR Field Offices conducted Best Interest Procedures (BIP) assessments for 37 refugee children across all refugee camps for protection or durable solutions.
- On 29 May, UNHCR Thailand, jointly with the Ministry of Interior, **started the verification of refugees living in the nine camps along the border**. Between 29 May and 30 June, the teams completed the verification in the Ban Don Yang camp and started in Tham Hin (THI) camps. In July, the verification exercise will continue in the THI camp and start in the Tak province camps.
- Between April and June, UNHCR conducted its project **Engaging Men in Accountable Practices (EMAP) project**. Throughout the project implementation in the refugee camps, the discussion allowed some 175 men to reflect on their behavior and identify the causation of

conflict with female family members. As a result, men talked more openly about the intricacies of gender relationships and enquired about strategies to improve them. In urban areas, the project reached 60 men from 4 urban refugee communities. Over three months, the male participants began building trust, opening up, discussing, and challenging their cultural norms and ideas.

- In urban areas, UNHCR continues to provide **multipurpose cash grants (MPCG)** to refugees with specific needs. Between April-June, the UNHCR Cash Based Interventions (CBI) panel allocated MPCGs to 80 households covering 229 individuals.
- UNHCR supported the displaced population with protection issues through in-person counselling and referrals for needed services. Between April and June, UNHCR provided protection counselling for 212 refugees and asylum-seekers living in urban areas. In the nine refugee camps, UNHCR counselled 526 camp refugees. Furthermore, UNHCR Reception for urban refugees continues conducting in-person activities by appointment, including card renewal, RSD interviews and notification of decisions, and ad hoc counselling. Registrations continue mostly remotely.
- UNHCR conducted in-person counselling and protection monitoring at five different Immigration Detention Centres (IDC) and four different MSDHS shelters and Welfare Protection Center for Victims of Human Trafficking. UNHCR distributed Core Relief Items, material assistance, and multi-purpose cash to 330 Rohingya individuals and 25 urban refugees in IDCs. Besides, **UNHCR pursued its advocacy for non-refoulement and access to alternatives to detention (ATD)**, including in the case of children and mothers, under Thailand's Memorandum of Understanding on ATD.



#### EDUCATION

- In urban areas, 509 refugee and asylum-seeker children aged 6-17 were enrolled in primary education, and 119 children aged 6-17 were enrolled in secondary education as of 30 June.
- In addition, 49 children attended Thai language classes provided in partnership with COERR to equip them with skills to access public schools under Thailand's "Education for All" policy. In May, the programme curriculum was revamped and is now called **Intensive Preparatory Programme (IPP)**. The duration has been extended from 6 to 8 months and new topics have been included such as science and computer skills.
- UNHCR continues to provide a 3-month Thai intensive learning program to adult refugees and asylum seekers 18-45 years old living in urban areas. The program continues to be a success and 34 individuals registered between April and June. In addition, UNHCR also supported the access of 10 refugees over 17 years old to the secondary level.
- During the reporting period, **UNHCR supported the admission of seven refugees into two universities in Bangkok**, including through advocacy with the universities and provision of attestation letters confirming refugee status. UNHCR is in advanced talks with DAFI to ensure funding for the students who plan to begin their studies in August.

**HEALTH.**

- In urban areas, UNHCR supported inpatient care - focusing on life-threatening conditions and children under 5 years old. Between April and June, 60 refugees benefited from this support (through 69 referrals). In addition, 20 refugees benefited from first-time in-person psychosocial support conducted by UNHCR's psychologist, and 180 refugees received psychosocial support from COERR Psychosocial unit.

**ACCESS TO ENERGY**

- In the refugee camps, UNHCR is engaging in efforts in line with **the Global Strategy on Sustainable Energy** by installing solar energy in the Temporary shelters. In May, UNHCR installed four solar lights in the bathing facilities to mitigate the risk of GBV in the Ban Mai Nai Soi refugee camp. Furthermore, UNHCR installed 100 solar streetlights in Umpium, Nu Po, and Mae La camps in communal spaces to enhance the safety and protection of refugees.

**DURABLE SOLUTIONS**

- Between April-June, resettlement submissions were made for 289 refugees in the whole country, while 533 refugees departed on resettlement.
- During the same reporting period, UNHCR in partnership with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) submitted 1,001 nationality and permanent residency applications on behalf of stateless persons between April and June 2023.

[External / Donors Relations](#)

**Special thanks to major donors of un-earmarked and broadly earmarked funds as well as to donors who have contributed directly to the operation to date during 2023: Canada |** European Union | Denmark | France | Germany | Japan | Netherlands | Norway | Sweden | United States of America

**Un-earmarked, broadly earmarked, and direct contributions were also received through private donations from Thailand.** UNHCR has raised funds from the private sector since 2008 to support forcibly displaced and stateless people both in Thailand and globally.

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**LINKS**

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