South-East Myanmar

Representation in Myanmar | **Fact Sheet | July 2023**

Overview

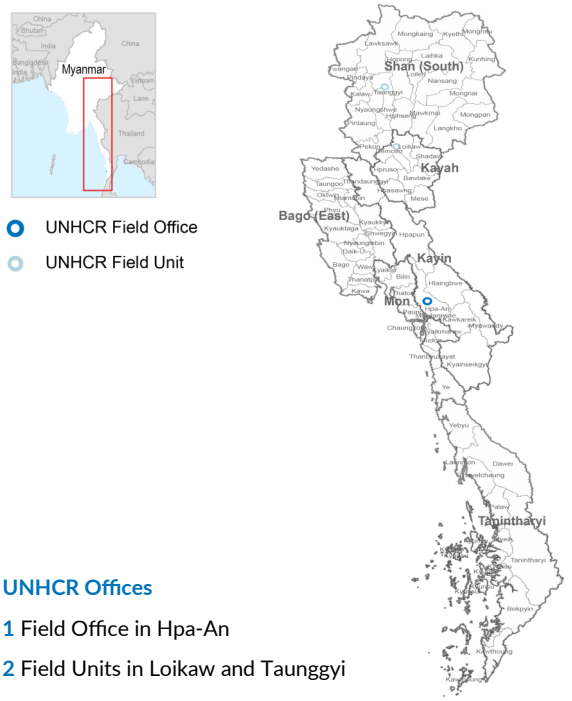
UNHCR's operation in South-East Myanmar, which covers Bago Region (East), Kayah State, Kayin State, Mon State, Shan State (South) and Tanintharyi Region, was established in 2004 primarily to support the return and reintegration of displaced populations, as well as refugees.

The region, long the centre of armed conflict, had seen positive developments up till the late 2010s. This includes the signing of the 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), which paved the way for small-scale returns of internally displaced people (IDPs) as well as Myanmar refugees from Thailand to take place.

The events of 1 February 2021 and subsequent resumption and intensification of conflict have negatively impacted sustainable return and reintegration efforts, while presenting new protection challenges. A resurgence of violence has resulted in over 754,000 people forced to flee across the South-East, of which 471,000 remain displaced.

In view of the deteriorating humanitarian situation, UNHCR has scaled up its operations in the South-East to meet increased emergency response, protection monitoring, capacity building and humanitarian coordination needs.

With a presence in Hpa-An, Kayin State, Loikaw, Kayah State and Taunggyi, Shan State (South), UNHCR works with partners to protect and assist forcibly displaced people, engage with affected communities and understand their concerns, deliver critical humanitarian assistance, track displacement dynamics, support social cohesion and facilitate humanitarian engagement and advocacy with stakeholders.



UNHCR Offices

1 Field Office in Hpa-An

2 Field Units in Loikaw and Taunggyi

IDPs in Kayah	IDPs in Shan (South)*
98,400	62,500
IDPs in Kayin	**IDPs in Bago (East)**
111,200	98,100
IDPs in Mon	**IDPs in Tanintharyi**
94,600	66,400

**All townships except Kyethi, Laihka and Mongkaing.*
All figures are as of 3 July 2023.

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Main Activities

Protection

UNHCR advocates for the rights of IDPs and refugee returnees so that they are respected in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law.

To this end, UNHCR regularly carries out protection monitoring and assessments to identify gaps. Once identified, UNHCR works with partners through various coordination mechanisms at sub-national and state/region levels along with other inter-agency fora to mobilize resources and address needs.

To facilitate effective interventions, UNHCR frequently conducts trainings and workshops for partners to strengthen national capacities on various themes.

UNHCR also works with partners to advocate for actions that aim to reduce risks faced by displaced populations and returnees. These include safety and security, civil documentation, housing, land and property rights and access to basic services and livelihoods.

Reintegration Support

Returnees and local communities are at the centre of sustainable reintegration. For IDPs and refugee returnees, UNHCR provides support to help them rebuild their lives.

Awareness-raising activities are organized to help individuals better understand their rights. UNHCR also facilitates access to civil documentation to prevent any risk of statelessness.

To promote longer-term solutions, UNHCR works with partners to implement community-based protection projects which provide life skills trainings and build community infrastructure. Such projects benefit both host communities and displaced populations, facilitating access to basic services such as education, healthcare, water and sanitation while also promoting peaceful coexistence.

Emergency Relief

UNHCR aims to provide displaced people with safe, dignified and appropriate living conditions. We work with partners on the ground to distribute shelter materials such as roofing sheets along with core relief items (CRIs) comprising mosquito nets, kitchen sets, jerry cans, clothing items, soap bars, sleeping mats, blankets and solar lights. UNHCR also pre-positions these items at warehouses in anticipation of increased needs among IDPs and host communities should violence and armed conflict intensify. In addition, emergency cash assistance is provided to vulnerable families identified by UNHCR and partners, including people with disabilities, older persons at risk and those with serious medical conditions.

Voluntary Refugee Returns

Between 2016 and 2020, UNHCR worked with Myanmar and Thailand to support the voluntary repatriation of refugees from Thailand to Myanmar under the Facilitated Voluntary Return (FVR) process. Four movements comprising of 1,039 persons from 270 households took place between 2016 and 2019. FVR movements have been suspended since 2020 due to COVID-19 and the prevailing security situation in Myanmar. UNHCR continues to monitor developments on the ground as well as the welfare of the returnees.

Coordination

To ensure everyone receives the assistance they need in and in the longer term, rebuild lives in safety, dignity and peace, UNHCR works with UN agencies, NGOs and CSOs in coordinating responses. A new humanitarian coordination structure will be progressively rolled out in 2023 by UNOCHA. By playing an active role in coordination, UNHCR facilitates localized, inclusive and collaborative responses that capitalizes on the capabilities and expertise of partners. This helps to prevent overlap and leads to more effective outcomes.

Presently, UNHCR co-chairs the South-East Nexus Working Group with UNDP to promote synergies between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work. In terms of humanitarian responses, UNHCR leads the combined South-East Shelter/Non-Food Items (NFI)/Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) cluster, as well as the Protection Cluster.

At the regional level, UNHCR leads inter-agency coordination (IAC) in Kayin and Kayah States while UNDP leads IAC in Mon State. IAC allows local NGOs and CSOs to play a role in the coordination system. In addition, UNHCR leads a protection network called the South-East Protection Working Group (SEPWG) in Bago (East), Kayin, Mon and Tanintharyi. The SEPWG is a forum comprised of NGOs and CSOs focusing on protection issues.

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UNHCR's work is entirely humanitarian and non-political, guided by the principles of humanity, impartiality and independence.