

Myanmar Situation

JANUARY 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

Since 16 December 2021, escalation of violence in Kayah and Kayah States **forced more than 9,700 individuals** to seek refugee in Thailand, according to Royal Thai Government (RTG) data.

Humanitarian actors will continue to **support RTG efforts** in receiving new Myanmar refugees and help ensure that they receive the protection and assistance they need.

SITUATION OVERVIEW ON THE THAI-MYANMAR BORDER

As of 17 January 2022, the Royal Thai Government confirmed that **9,735 individuals from Myanmar** had fled the upsurge in violence in Kayah and Kayah States crossing into Tak and Mae Hong Son provinces in Thailand (since 16 December). According to the RTG, **1,197 individuals from Myanmar remain on the Thai side of the border**, with 8,538 individuals having returned to Myanmar. Despite these returns, there are continuing reports of new arrivals as of 12 January.

The security situation in the south-east continues to deteriorate, with now intensified fighting in Kayah State that caused a new influx of refugees into Mae Hong Son province. On 7 January, people fled from fighting after the Karenni Army (KA - the military wing of the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP)) attacked and seized the Tatmadaw base in Nat Taung located within five kilometres from the Thai border. The Tatmadaw launched retaliatory airstrikes targeting KNPP's Nyar Mu base, located at the border close to a refugee camp in Thailand. As a result, almost a thousand civilians fled to Thailand into Mae Hong Son province. Air strikes in Loikaw, Kayah State were reported (9-12 Jan) and thousands of affected residents have fled, many by vehicle to South Shan State. In Kayah State, heavy fighting continued in Myawaddy Township, including lastly on 14 January. The latter took place within one kilometre from the Thai border. Fifteen people who were arrested during the raids of Lay Kay Kaw in mid-December, have appeared at Myawaddy township court. The 15 individuals have been charged with Section 25 of Myanmar's Counter-terrorism Law. They include teachers who had joined the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), political activists and aid workers with charity groups.

The number of people displaced inside Myanmar since 1 February **has reached a new high of 367,400** (as of 3 Jan), with over 40,000 newly displaced during the last week of December 2021, alone. In south-east Myanmar (i.e., Tanintharyi Region, Mon, Kayah, Kayah and Shan States), there are **192,300 internally displaced persons (IDPs)**.



REFUGEES ARE CURRENTLY SHELTERED IN TEMPORARY SAFETY AREAS.

According to RTG sources, **1,197 refugees remain in Mae Sot District**. All are staying in one site, the Moei Khong cowshed at Mae Kone Kane village. **In Mae Hong Son Province, all refugees have reportedly returned**. In Mae Hong Son, the refugees were sheltered in two Temporary Safety Areas (TSA): 585 Hill TSA at Ban Nam Pieng Din, Pha Bong Subdistrict and Tanakwai Route TSA which used to be the COVID19 quarantine area adjacent to the Ban Mai Nai Soi (BMN) refugee camp. Reportedly, the group that subsequently returned to Myanmar from the 585 Hill TSA, did not return to their homes but are currently displaced inside Myanmar in areas close to the Thai border. UNHCR and Partners are advocating for the transfer of the remaining populations to Holding Areas - to be identified by RTG and managed by the provincial authorities - where they could have more suitable temporary accommodation and receive improved humanitarian assistance.

UPDATE ON PARTNERS' RESPONSE TO REFUGEE INFLUX INTO THAILAND



PROTECTION

UNHCR and Partners have not been granted access to the Temporary Safety Areas (TSA), which continue to be under the Royal Thai Army jurisdiction. The assistance currently implemented by the Government with the support of local communities and community-based organizations (CBOs) may not be sustainable or sufficient for individuals with specific needs.

UNHCR, together with partners, continues to engage with the authorities to advocate for the improvement of the protection environment and the provision of adequate humanitarian assistance. A remote Rapid Needs Assessment was conducted on 29-30 December for the Mae Kone Kane TSA. Needs highlighted by key informants remain of concern, notably the location of the site close to the border and the ongoing fighting nearby; the risk of Gender Based Violence due to crowded communal shelters and lack of electricity and lighting at the site; the possibility of unaccompanied or separated children (UASC) being present at the site as well as persons with specific needs, such as the elderly, and persons with disabilities.

Non-Food Items (NFI) s and food were considered by some key informants to be insufficient due to unequal distribution at the site. Inadequate food for children under five years of

age was also an area of concern. Lack of information due to limited mobile and internet connectivity, as well as electricity for the charging of phones hindered access to information, including on the situation in areas of origin. Mental Health Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS) support was also highlighted as a need, as confirmed by the authorities.

However, without direct access, there are limited possibilities for the identification of persons with specific needs and an appropriate response by specialized agencies. In view of the lack of humanitarian access, the Protection Sector is advocating with relevant Thai government agencies to address immediate protection needs, including child protection. Almost four weeks after the first arrivals in Tak province, the stay in a TSA along the border is clearly not suitable nor sustainable for periods exceeding 1-2 weeks.



WATER AND SANITATION

In Mae Hong Son, IRC has delivered WASH supplies (latrine bowls, water containers, etc.), hygiene items support. In Mae Sot, IRC has installed water tanks and set up water filters for drinking water to secure refugees' access to clean water and prevent the spread of waterborne disease.


EDUCATION

Education and child protection partners (i.e., SCI, SVA, COERR) conducted an activity for children on Sunday 9 January at the TSA in Mae Kone Kane, Mae Sot, with permission from the authorities for this specific event.


HEALTH

The health sector provided ATKs, facemasks and alcohol gel to support the prevention of COVID19. At Mae Kone Kane, there is a medical team from the District Health Office providing care at times. Health actors now direct referrals for medical cases to Mae Sot hospital and the Mae Tao Clinic. The latter hospital also supports the supply of medicine, and three doctors have volunteered to assist local medics with consultation onsite.


FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

In Mae Hong Son, TBC supported the Ban Mai Nai Soi Refugee Camp Committee with preparing meals for refugees as refugees were not allowed to cook on site. Each day, volunteers prepared about 2,400 packs of meals. In Mae Sot, TBC initially supported the temporary safety areas with ready cooked meals. Following the consolidation by the Thai authorities of refugee populations to the Mae Kone Kane TSA, TBC transitioned to supporting the refugees with basic food items that are cooked on site by a community kitchen, and all meals since 30 December have been provided by this facility.


SHELTER

Partners have provided shelter support with “event tents”. These tents are not designed for human habitation and are only suitable for very temporary stays.

NFI
NON-FOOD ITEMS

Partners continuously review the standard NFI kits to ensure items distributed meet the needs of the population adequately. In Mae Hong Son, Partners and UNHCR delivered blankets, tarpaulins, hygiene sets, kitchen sets, candles, sleeping mats and mosquito nets through the Camp Committee and local Thai communities. In Mae Sot, Partners and UNHCR delivered mosquito nets for mothers and babies and play and learn kits for children.

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