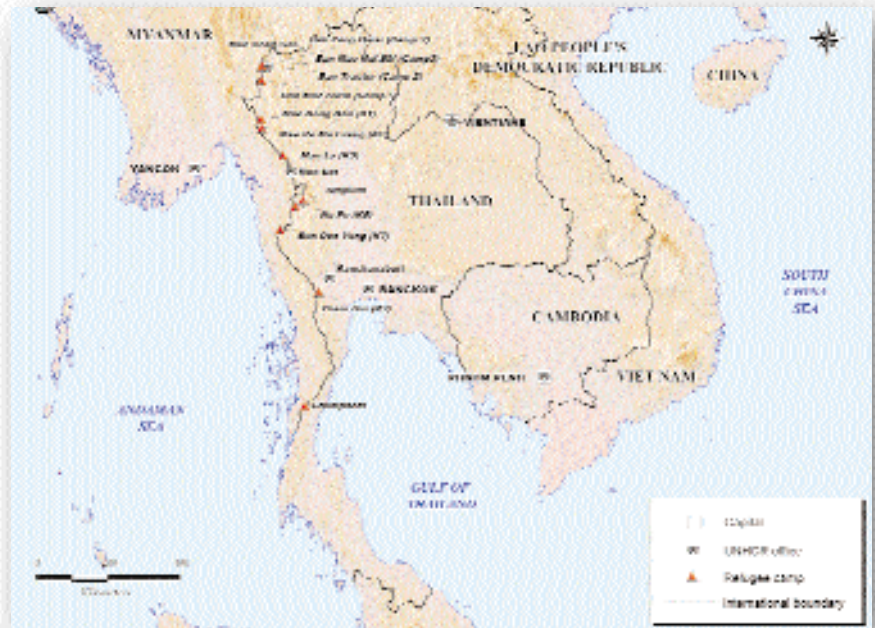


Thailand

in short

Main Objectives

- Ensure that the fundamentals of international protection, particularly the principles of asylum and *non-refoulement*, are respected and effectively implemented.
- Ensure that refugee populations in the Thai-Myanmar border area are safe from armed incursions, that their protection and assistance needs are adequately met, and that the civilian character of refugee camps is maintained.
- Promptly identify and protect individual asylum-seekers and promote the development of national refugee legislation and status determination procedures consistent with international standards.



WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Recent Developments

The year 2000 was marked by the negative impact of hostage-taking incidents by Myanmar insurgents in Bangkok and Ratchaburi in late 1999 and early 2000 respectively. These two incidents hardened the Thai public's attitude towards Myanmar migrants and refugees. As a result, the Thai authorities requested UNHCR to resettle Myanmar refugees living in Bangkok and at the Maneeloy Burmese Student Centre in Ratchaburi to third countries, and to close the Centre.

Following discussions with UNHCR, the Thai Government agreed in April 2000 to harmonise its policy on Myanmar refugees, so as to reduce discrepancies in treatment between asylum-seekers in urban centres and border areas, and between Burman refugees and those belonging to other ethnic minori-

PLANNING FIGURES

Population	Jan. 2001	Dec. 2001
Refugees at the Thai-Myanmar border (camps)	102,000	102,000
Refugees in Maneeloy Burmese Students Centre	1,400	700
Refugees in Bangkok	340	350
Total	103,740	103,050

TOTAL REQUIREMENTS • USD 5,440,249

ties. Under this agreement, all Myanmar asylum-seekers will be considered by the Provincial Admission Boards at the border and will be given refuge in the camps, if they meet the admission criteria. Consequently, UNHCR's practice of conducting refugee status determination for Myanmar asylum-seekers in Bangkok will be discontinued. Under the new policy, Myanmar asylum-seekers in Bangkok will be granted safe passage to border areas, where they will be placed in reception centres while awaiting determination of their status. The first movement of the asylum-seekers to the border areas was originally to have taken place in August 2000, but implementation



of the new policy has been delayed. For asylum-seekers from other countries, UNHCR will continue to conduct refugee status determination in Bangkok.

Constraints

Thailand has not acceded to the international refugee instruments. The Thai Government gives Myanmar refugees temporary sanctuary in 11 camps spread along the 2,400-kilometre border. Refugees found outside the camps are subject to deportation as illegal immigrants under Thai immigration law. Several refugee camps are located close to the border and remain at risk of cross-border incursions. The difficulty of access to some locations during the rainy season hampers UNHCR's monitoring function.

The hostage-taking incidents led to a deterioration of UNHCR's working environment. In order to increase public awareness of refugee issues UNHCR therefore expanded its information campaigns targeting civilian constituencies and the public at large. UNHCR also frequently liaised with civil and military authorities at all levels.

STRATEGY

Protection and Solutions

To protect new arrivals, UNHCR will continue to encourage the Government to implement the broader refugee admission criteria agreed upon with UNHCR in 1998, whereby those fleeing fighting in Myanmar, or the consequences of fighting, would be given access to asylum and to camps. UNHCR will

continue to promote the establishment of transparent and uniform procedures by the Provincial Admission Boards where it could play a more clearly defined role as an active observer.

The Thai Ministry of Interior and UNHCR jointly registered the entire camp population in 1999. The information is updated regularly. This has enabled UNHCR to better analyse population needs and to intervene on behalf of refugees in a more effective manner. No cross-border attacks have taken place since the establishment of UNHCR's presence in the border areas in 1998. UNHCR will continue to promote the civilian and strictly humanitarian nature of the refugee camps.

Since voluntary repatriation is the preferred durable solution for the majority

of the refugees, UNHCR will continue to gather information on the situation in Myanmar, to better assess when conditions become appropriate for repatriation. In collaboration with its office in Yangon, UNHCR will continue to explore ways of obtaining access to the areas of return, and to gain first-hand information about the current situation. In case of spontaneous return, UNHCR in Thailand will monitor the voluntary nature of return and ensure that the refugees are informed of the situation in Myanmar before they repatriate.

UNHCR will continue to conduct refugee status determination for non-Myanmar asylum-seekers in Bangkok and advocate on their behalf in case of detention or threat of deportation. UNHCR will continue to promote adherence to international refugee protection standards in Thailand and the sub-region. Regular monitoring and advocacy missions will take place to the other countries covered by the Bangkok office (Cambodia and Viet Nam, where UNHCR phased out reintegration assistance at the end of 2000 and the end of 1998 respectively).

Assistance

As traditional assistance activities in the camps are well covered by existing NGO and government programmes, UNHCR will focus on ensuring that the special needs of the most vulnerable refugees, such as female-headed households, the disabled, unaccompanied minors and the elderly are met. UNHCR will improve road access to camps and provide community services to the vulnerable population. Where local villages are affected by the presence of the camps, UNHCR will take environmental precautions to avoid river pollution.

Until durable solutions have been found for all the refugees at the Maneelay Burmese Student Centre in Ratchaburi, UNHCR will continue to provide them with essential daily assistance in the form of food, accommodation, health care, education and social-counselling. Urban refugees from other countries will receive monthly allowances to cover their basic needs.

Desired Impact

Through UNHCR's more active participation as an observer on the Provincial Admission Boards, transparent and uniform admissions criteria will be established for Myanmar asylum-seekers. UNHCR's field presence at the border area will help maintain the civilian character of the camps. The general public's negative attitudes towards the Myanmar asylum-seekers will be counteracted by a public information campaign. Resettlement of the refugees at the Maneelay Student Centre will accelerate.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management

Three field offices in Kanchanaburi, Mae Hong Son and Mae Sot report to the office in Bangkok. In 2001, the operation in Thailand will be implemented by 64 staff (16 international staff, including four JPOs, and 48 national staff). The office in Thailand also covers operations in Cambodia and Viet Nam.



BUDGET (USD)	
Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	1,664,030
Community Services	66,428
Crop Production	3,169
Domestic Needs/Household Support	616,273
Education	224,931
Food	255,798
Forestry	104,851
Health/Nutrition	273,105
Legal Assistance	525,263
Operational Support (to Agencies)	216,349
Sanitation	41,360
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	140,700
Transport/Logistics	46,460
Water (non-agricultural)	2,113
Total Operations	4,180,830
Programme Support	1,259,419
Total	5,440,249

OFFICES

Bangkok
Kanchanaburi
Mae Hong Son
Mae Sot

Co-ordination

The Office actively participates in various inter-agency forums in Bangkok. Since 2000, UNHCR has chaired a co-ordination meeting with a group of NGOs whose work is linked to protection. This group meets on a bi-monthly basis in Bangkok and similarly at the Thai-Myanmar border. Moreover, the Office participates in monthly meetings organised by the Committee for Co-ordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand, a forum for NGOs which co-ordinates their efforts and presents their interests to the Government, international organisations and local embassies.

PARTNERS

Government Agencies
Operation Centre for Displaced Persons, Ministry of Interior
NGOs
Burmese Border Consortium
Catholic Office for Emergency Relief for Refugees
Foundation in Support of Refugee Assistance Programmes
Handicap International
International Rescue Committee
Shanti Volunteer Association