

Thailand



Main objectives

- Ensure admission, documentation and reception of asylum-seekers and refugees.
- Ensure the physical safety and respect for the basic rights of refugees in camps and in urban centres in accordance with international standards.
- Prepare refugees from Myanmar for durable solutions.
- Expand the strategic use of resettlement as a protection tool and as a durable solution.
- Complete a re-registration exercise which will improve information on camp populations for the purpose of identifying durable solutions.
- Enhance partnerships with donors, governments, UN and intergovernmental agencies and NGOs.

Planning figures

Population	Jan 2005	Dec 2005
Myanmar (refugees)	140,500	127,500
Myanmar (asylum-seekers)	500	300
Other refugees	400	400
Other asylum-seekers	350	200
Others of concern	5	5
Total	141,755	128,405

Total requirements: USD 6,761,354

Working environment

Recent developments

The Royal Thai Government recently agreed to reconvene meetings of the Provincial Admission Boards (PABs, suspended in June 2001) responsible for determining the status of asylum-seekers from Myanmar. At the time of writing, UNHCR and the Royal Thai Government were finalizing the Boards' procedures, and the criteria they will apply. In the past, only persons "fleeing fighting" were admitted to camps in Thailand, but now the criteria have been amended to include persons fleeing "political persecution". Hundreds of applications are expected to be submitted due to the backlog from the suspension.

Notwithstanding its former opposition to large-scale resettlement of refugees from neighbouring countries – for fear of generating a "pull factor" – the Government has now agreed in principle to significant levels of resettlement for certain groups, as a solution to protracted refugee status. This will entail an arduous selection mechanism and greatly increased processing capacity.

Despite difficulties and evident constraints, the process of political reconciliation in Myanmar has raised cautious hopes among the refugees wishing to return to Myanmar. In light of these developments, UNHCR has begun a process of strategic discussions with other stakeholders, notably refugees, the Royal Thai Government, donors and NGOs. The conclusions of these discussions are designed to serve as an operational



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Karen refugee leaders from Myanmar having discussions with UNHCR protection officers during a protection monitoring mission.
UNHCR / K. Singhaseni

planning tool, should conditions become conducive to repatriation. Meanwhile, UNHCR has introduced the Profile Global Registration System (ProGres), which is expected to improve record-keeping and thereby facilitate better delivery of protection and assistance to refugees in Thailand. It will directly support durable solutions by identifying refugees' places of intended return and vulnerabilities as well as their skills' profile. UNHCR will then be able to utilize refugees' existing skills to facilitate their reintegration or help identify which skills need to be introduced or developed prior to return. Mine-risk education remains a priority and UNHCR is actively engaged in the process of identifying partners in this regard.

Significant progress has been achieved in ensuring that redress under Thai law is available to victims of SGBV and other serious crimes perpetrated against refugees in and around the camps. The Government, UNHCR, NGOs and refugees are in the process of drafting a protocol with regard to SGBV in camps in order to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders. In addition, UNHCR has held a series of workshops on the administration of justice to improve refugees' access to courts as well as to improve the mechanisms of traditional justice available in the camps.

Constraints

Myanmar refugees in the nine camps along the Thai/Myanmar border continue to enjoy temporary asylum but are referred to by the Government as 'displaced persons fleeing fighting'. UNHCR considers these persons to be refugees, along with other persons of concern living in urban centres. Although these different perspectives have at times been a challenge, UNHCR and the Government have been able to come to a practical understanding and collaborate effectively.

Strategy

Protection and solutions

While UNHCR will continue to seek durable solutions for Myanmar refugees, it is not envisioned

that significant numbers will repatriate in 2005 unless conditions improve substantially. UNHCR will strengthen efforts to facilitate the admission of new arrivals from Myanmar at border camps through the revival of the PABs. The issue of resettlement from the camps will be raised with the Government in 2005, with a focus on vulnerable individuals, through the group resettlement methodology. Data from the re-registration exercise will be of vital importance in the planning of group resettlement. The Government's 2003 decision to transfer all Myanmar asylum-seekers and refugees in urban areas to the camps will be delayed until December 2004. Meanwhile, as an alternative solution, the Government has agreed to the resettlement of urban Myanmar refugees. Any residual caseload is to be relocated to the camps in 2005. Pending the implementation of a viable admissions process at the border, the Office will continue to conduct refugee status determination (RSD) on an exceptional basis for certain asylum-seekers in urban areas.

As part of its efforts to ensure respect for fundamental refugee rights, UNHCR has established a comprehensive programme to address SGBV and will continue its implementation in 2005. The programme covers prevention and awareness-raising activities, including an intensive series of workshops targeting both men and women, as well as coordinated response mechanisms, such as an incident reporting system, legal representation and advocacy for victims. UNHCR will also continue to work with the Thai authorities to ensure that serious criminal offences in the camps are dealt with under the Thai criminal justice system. The Office will enhance efforts to monitor separated children and ensure that their protection needs are addressed and appropriate services provided, while seeking to reunite them with their families. As part of this effort, UNHCR will also seek to address the protection needs of former child soldiers. In coordination with UNICEF, a joint programme is also being developed to address problems related to child soldiers.

For the non-Myanmar urban refugees and asylum-seekers, who originate from some 28 different countries, UNHCR will continue to conduct RSD and ensure adequate protection and assistance pending durable solutions. The Office will issue

refugee certificates to recognized refugees, as well as protection documents for asylum-seekers, and will intervene with the authorities in the event of arrest, detention, or threat of deportation.

In 2005, UNHCR will continue activities to promote adherence to international protection standards. The Office will work with key counterparts in government, civil society, academic and refugee communities to enhance awareness of UNHCR's mandate, international standards and refugee law. As part of its promotion strategy, UNHCR will focus on national institutions and NGOs, to foster their involvement in asylum issues and build the capacity of national networks.

Assistance

Traditionally, the bulk of assistance to refugees in camps along the Thai-Myanmar border has been provided by NGOs directly funded by donors as well as some UNHCR's implementing partners. UNHCR generally assumes a subsidiary role, identifying and addressing overall gaps in provision. International protection to refugees and asylum-seekers remains UNHCR's primary responsibility, and is provided in close coordination with NGOs. The division of labour has proven effective in terms of delineating immediate responsibilities and in building long-term partnerships.

The Royal Thai Government and UNHCR have agreed on the importance of carrying out a major re-registration exercise in all nine camps which should start at the end of 2004 for two camps and continue in 2005 for the remaining seven camps. In collaboration with the Ministry of Interior, the respective district offices will undertake a registration of all registered and unregistered camp residents and issue appropriate refugee registration cards, regularly updating camp population data. As in the past, UNHCR will oversee and assist with registration and updates in the camps. The Office will also make sure that stakeholders adhere to international principles and standards of voluntary repatriation.

A local NGO will continue to implement activities on environmental improvement. In addition,

UNEP, under a collaborative project, will provide technical expertise to implement environmental projects in refugee camps. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the UNV Programme will continue to deploy professionals with technical expertise in community service and protection, to develop the expertise of all partners.

UNHCR will provide adequate protection and ensure minimum living standards in terms of accommodation, food, medical treatment, counselling services, education and essential services to urban refugees who have no legal status in Thailand and cannot sustain themselves through employment until durable solutions are identified.

Desired impact

UNHCR's programme in Thailand will continue to provide the camp population as well as those residing in urban centres with adequate protection and basic assistance. Community systems already in place should strengthen the protection of women and children against SGBV and other forms of violence, including the recruitment of child soldiers. While the political situation in Myanmar remains unchanged, UNHCR will continue to prepare for voluntary return. As and when conditions in Myanmar become conducive to return, UNHCR will endeavour to ensure repatriation is voluntary, safe, gradual, and sustainable.

Organization and implementation

Management structure

The Regional Office in Bangkok will be supported by field offices in Kanchanaburi, Mae Hong Son and Mae Sot in 2005. The operation in Thailand will be implemented by 76 staff (13 international and 50 national staff, four JPOs, five UNVs, and four consultants and deployees). The Bangkok Office also covers activities in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam.

Coordination

The Office participates in various inter-agency meetings and thematic working groups, which are organized by the Government, NGOs, the UN Resident Coordinator, the UN Country Team and the Security Management Team.

Offices
Bangkok Kanchanaburi Mae Hong Son Mae Sot
Partners
Government agencies Ministry of the Interior Operations Centre for Displaced Persons
NGOs Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees Handicap International International Rescue Committee Norwegian Refugee Council <i>Shanti</i> Volunteer Association ZOA Refugee Care
Others UNDP UNEP UNICEF

Budget (USD)	
Activities and services	Annual Programme
Protection, monitoring and coordination	1,856,225
Community services	462,600
Domestic needs	475,800
Education	562,000
Forestry	156,200
Health	108,500
Legal assistance	1,179,200
Operational support (to agencies)	344,800
Sanitation	55,000
Shelter/other infrastructure	131,100
Transport/logistics	24,800
Total operations	5,356,225
Programme support	1,405,129
Total	6,761,354