

Thailand



Working environment

The context

Thailand is not a party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees but has traditionally maintained a generous asylum policy, hosting some 1.2 million refugees over the past three decades. The status of refugees from Myanmar in the camps is regulated by *ad hoc* administrative arrangements, while refugees outside the camps fall under provisions of the Immigration

Law and are considered illegal migrants. Admission to the camps is managed by Provincial Admission Boards (PABs), which now work along criteria similar to the refugee definition found in the 1951 Convention.

Most refugees have been living within the confines of the camps for long periods, some for up to 20 years. They have no right to employment and, if caught outside the camps, are liable to arrest and deportation. Such prolonged confinement has created a host of social, psychological and protection problems for the refugees, with negative effects on their mental health and coping

Planning figures

Type of population	Origin	Jan 2007		Dec 2007	
		Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR
Refugees	Myanmar	130,000	130,000	140,000	140,000
	Various	600	600	600	600
Asylum-seekers	Myanmar	15,000	-	5,000	-
	Various	500	-	500	-
Others of concerns	Various	150	-	150	-
Total		146,250	130,600	146,250	140,600



UNHCR has set up technical schools in camps to help some of the 140,000 refugees from Myanmar. Refugees learn practical skills such as clay charcoal stove making. *UNHCR / J. Redfern*

mechanisms. At the same time, conditions in the country of origin are not conducive to repatriation, and the number of refugees has continued to rise as more people flee ongoing fighting in eastern Myanmar. In May, some 15,000 people were displaced by fresh offensives, including some 3,000 who fled across the border to Thailand.

The Thai authorities are aware of the negative consequences of prolonged encampment, and are making a transition to durable solutions. This new approach, which NGOs and UNHCR had been advocating, has been praised by the international community. The constructive dialogue among stakeholders has resulted in a number of key developments. A major resettlement programme involving ten countries was introduced in 2005, and UNHCR completed registration of all the refugees in the country in the same year. The PABs provided some 27,000 refugees with documents, effectively regularizing their status. As the authorities have increasingly permitted more educational opportunities in the camps, in 2006 an agreement was reached to establish legal aid centres for refugees. This will improve protection in the camps.

More recently, following the High Commissioner's visit to Thailand in August 2006, progress was made

towards the issuance of identity cards to all refugees, the inclusion of refugees in the Thai HIV/AIDS programme and the setting up of pilot income-generating projects in the camps.

UNHCR continues to undertake refugee status determination for asylum-seekers originating from countries other than Myanmar. Although the numbers are not comparable to those of refugees from Myanmar, the illegal status of recognized refugees poses serious challenges to their rights and to the search for durable solutions. The risk of arrest and detention and the ban on employment remain key protection concerns.

The needs

Participatory planning with NGOs — an ongoing process throughout the year — resulted in a comprehensive plan which details assistance and protection gaps in the camps, and identifies ways to address them.

A key concern identified by refugees is violence, with women and children particularly at risk. Furthermore, there are problems with camp infrastructure and planning, which have never been the responsibility of any one agency. Geo-technical assessments in 2005

warned of landslides and soil erosion if preventive measures were not taken immediately. Water supply, sanitation and solid waste management are other areas in need of urgent improvement. Joint assessments have revealed a need for training and equipment to support camp management structures.

Though refugee food baskets meet nutritional requirements, they provide a monotonous diet. With little or no income, refugees cannot buy supplementary items. Camps are increasingly overcrowded, with little space for expansion, especially of recreational and education facilities. Refugees have become dependent on outside assistance for items such as cooking fuel, stoves, clothing, blankets, mosquito nets and sleeping mats. Gaps identified as priorities in this area are soap, water containers and lighting. The provision of health, education and vocational training requires careful planning and review.

Total requirements: USD 9,785,736 million

Main objectives

UNHCR's operation in Thailand will be designed to:

- Improve protection in the camps.
- Promote and assist the development of the State-run asylum system.

- Mitigate the consequences of prolonged encampment on refugees and improve prospects for self-reliance.
- Broaden the strategic use of resettlement as part of a comprehensive solution to the protracted refugee situation in the camps.
- Strengthen partnerships and participatory planning with NGOs and other stakeholders.
- Improve protection and the search for durable solutions for refugees from countries other than Myanmar.

Strategy and activities

Refugees from Myanmar

UNHCR will collaborate closely with the Government and will help build the capacity of the PABs to process applications in a timely and efficient manner.

UNHCR will expand group resettlement programmes, which have focused on only two camps so far, and will improve the current system of identification of refugees for referral. The Office will ensure that NGOs and community-based organizations are provided a clear understanding of the resettlement process. UNHCR will also encourage NGOs involved in identifying refugees for resettlement to do so in a fair and efficient manner.

Building on indications of a more flexible national policy on refugees, UNHCR's advocacy efforts will focus on promoting refugee rights and self-reliance. The Office will also

Key targets for 2007

- Reception arrangements are in place for refugee status determination in field locations, to be carried out by a trained and capable pool of government professionals through the PABs.
- At least 65,000 refugees have access to private and confidential legal counselling through the legal aid centres in camps; standard operating procedures to deal with sexual and gender-based violence are developed and applied in each field location.
- All refugees have equal and fair access to resettlement opportunities; the target number of cases referred for resettlement is 10,000, of which at least 100 urban refugees are resettled in third countries.
- All refugees benefit from, and are able to maintain, a clean environment; at least 100 refugees are trained to repair and maintain roads in the camps; 900 refugees are trained in environmental protection, and some 9,000 trees are planted to prevent soil erosion.
- All refugees have access to health care and are included in Thailand's national HIV/AIDS programme.
- All unaccompanied minors are registered and monitored.
- At least 5 per cent of refugees in the camps are enrolled in vocational training programmes and acquire employable skills.
- An average of 400 urban refugees and 20 in detention centres receive a monthly subsistence allowance to meet their basic needs; up to 600 refugees have access to counselling, social and psychological services and emergency accommodation.
- All refugee women and girls receive sanitary napkins.

advocate that refugees should be allowed to leave the camps and work. In this context, UNHCR will propose that camp passes be issued so that refugees are not subject to arrest and deportation if found outside the camps. The Office will also work with government agencies to improve overall protection and, in particular, administration of justice and the protection of children. It will also work to prevent sexual and gender-based violence. These efforts will be sustained through the Strengthening Protection Capacity Project, aimed at developing, funding and implementing projects to fill protection gaps.

Humanitarian assistance in the camps is primarily provided by NGOs with their own funding. Nevertheless, while UNHCR will focus on protection, advocacy and the search for durable solutions, it will also play a greater role where it sees gaps that need to be filled.

Urban refugees

UNHCR will continue to review the situation of urban refugees to find appropriate solutions on a case-by-case basis. These can include alternative approaches to protection.

Constraints

The military coup of 19 September 2006 has led to a change of government. It is too early to tell if this change will have any impact on asylum issues.

Organization and implementation

UNHCR presence

Number of offices	4
Total staff	97
International	21
National	62
UNVs	6
JPOs	4
Deployees	4

Coordination

UNHCR will coordinate its protection and assistance programme closely with the Government, NGOs and donors. The Office is an active participant in the monthly meetings of the Committee for Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons, a body that coordinates NGOs involved in protection and humanitarian assistance. UNHCR also participates in various inter-agency working groups, which are organized by the Government, the UN Resident Coordinator, the UN Country Team and the Security Management Team.

Partners

Implementing partners

Government: Ministry of Education, Operations Centre for Displaced Persons/Ministry of the Interior.

NGOs: *Aide Médicale Internationale*, Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees, Handicap International, International Rescue Committee, *Shanti* Volunteer Association, WEAVE, ZOA Refugee Care.

Others: UNDP, UNOPS.

Operational partners

Government: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Welfare, National Security Council.

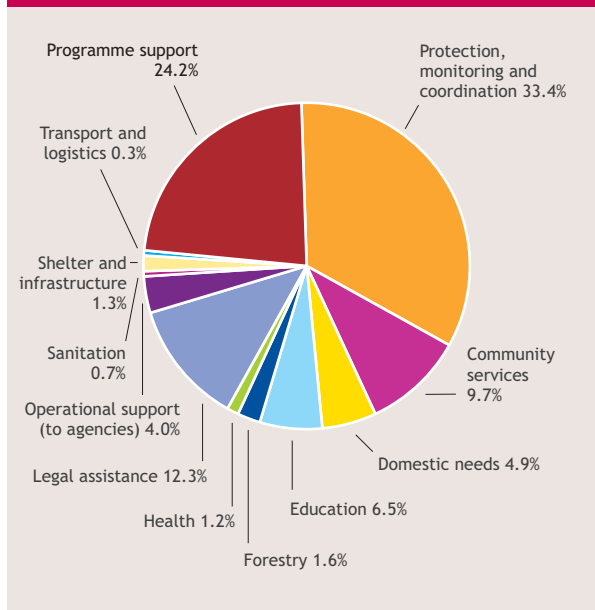
NGOs: American Refugee Committee, ICS Asia, Jesuit Refugee Service, *Malteser* International, Taipei Overseas Peace Service, Thai-Burmese Border Consortium.

Others: ILO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNOHCHR, WHO, WFP.

Budget (USD)

Activities and services	Annual Programme Budget	
	2006	2007
Protection, monitoring and coordination	2,561,490	2,612,332
Community services	740,000	816,100
Domestic needs	375,000	308,500
Education	500,000	866,900
Forestry	120,000	210,000
Health	90,000	198,200
Legal assistance	940,000	1,618,100
Operational support (to agencies)	310,000	543,700
Sanitation	50,000	163,540
Shelter and infrastructure	100,000	140,000
Transport and logistics	25,000	98,500
Total operations	5,811,490	7,575,872
Programme support	1,854,455	2,209,864
Total	7,665,945	9,785,736

2006 Annual Programme Budget by sector



2007 Annual Programme Budget by sector

