

# Mae Hong Son Field Office

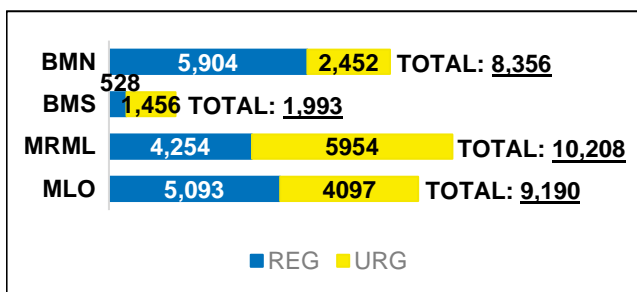
31 December 2019

The Mae Hong Son Field Office operates in **four temporary shelters**: Ban Mai Nai Soi (BMN), Ban Mae Surin (BMS), Mae Ra Ma Luang (MRML) Mae La Oon (MLO)

A total of **29,747 Myanmar refugees** reside in these four temporary shelters, with the majority comprising members of the Karen ethnic minority group in South East Myanmar.

UNHCR works with the Royal Thai Government (RTG), international agencies, NGOs and donors to address the **protection and durable solutions needs** of this group

## POPULATION OF CONCERN – VERIFIED REFUGEES



\* Registered (REG) refugees comprise individuals registered during the last official group registration process conducted by RTG and UNHCR in 2005 under the authority of the Ministry of Interior (MOI). Verified (VER) refugees comprise Registered (REG) and Unregistered refugees (URG) verified in a joint exercise by UNHCR and the Ministry of Interior (MOI) in 2015.

## UNHCR PRESENCE

15 National Staff

3 International Staff



A group of refugees participate in a World Refugee Day commemoration event in Mae La Oon Temporary Shelter, Mae Hong Son Province, June 2019. © UNHCR/Chao Wu

## Temporary Shelters

- **Ban Mai Nai Soi (BMN)** Temporary Shelter is located in Muang District, Mae Hong Son Province. It is the result of the consolidation of Ban Tractor and Ban Kwai temporary shelters in 1996.
- **Ban Mae Surin (BMS)** is located in Khun Yuam District, Mae Hong Son Province. It was established in 1992.
- **Mae Ra Ma Luang (MRM)** Temporary Shelter is located in Sob Moei District, Mae Hong Son Province. It opened in February 1995 to host an influx of ethnic Karen refugees.
- **Mae La Oon (MLO)** Temporary Shelter is located in Sob Moei District, Mae Hong Son Province. It was officially established in March 2004, following a relocation exercise from other sites commencing in 2003.

## Working with Partners

UNHCR works in close partnership with the Royal Thai Government (RTG), UN agencies, humanitarian organizations and civil society to improve protection and solutions for refugees on the Thai-Myanmar border. UNHCR currently has agreements with four partners for its operations on the border:

- **Catholic Relief for Emergency Relief and Refugees (COERR)** provides protection for separated and unaccompanied refugee children and for children at risk and also works to strengthen community-based child protection capacities.
- **Humanity and Inclusion (HI)** provides Facilitated Voluntary Repatriation pre-departure mine risk refresher sessions in the Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRC). HI also provides services for disabled persons in MLO and MRM and works on inclusion of persons with disabilities.
- **International Organisation for Migration (IOM)** supports the facilitation of voluntary and dignified return, by maintaining the VRC and organizing transport. IOM also organizes and supports pre-departure medical screenings and provision of UNHCR cash grants and in-kind support.
- **Ministry of Interior (MOI)** provides operational support to local authorities on registration and status determination for Fast-Track PAB.

## Protection Activities

- The **registration of refugees** along the Thai-Myanmar border is led by the RTG PAB with UNHCR support. Since 2008, registration is only open to exceptional serious cases. Identification of such cases is led by UNHCR in close consultation with the MOI.
- In line with amendments to the Civil Registration Act (2008) UNHCR has supported the RTG in addressing a large backlog of children in BMN, BMS, MLO and MRM who had previously not had their births registered. This backlog was cleared in 2018. UNHCR continues to advocate that an inclusive approach is taken to ensure every child has their right to birth registration upheld. During January-December 2019, **9,841 birth certificates** were issued in BMN, BMS, MLO and MRM temporary shelters.
- UNHCR provides support to refugees to **access the Thai justice system**. UNHCR also coordinates with Thai law enforcement and prison authorities in pursuing these responsibilities. Minor disputes, such as family or civil issues and minor crimes, are managed through alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in accordance with the Mediation and Dispute Resolution Guidelines (MDRG).
- **Child Protection concerns** are addressed in partnership with COERR with a focus on the protection of verified unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) as well as those with serious protection concerns including sexual and physical abuse.
- UNHCR conducts the assessment and determination of the best interest of children with regard to protection concerns, custody disputes or durable solution-related issues. A multi-agency **Best Interest Determination (BID) panel** meets regularly to discuss recommendations made for each case.
- UNHCR works closely with the Karenni and Karen Women's Organisation, IRC-WPE and directly supports and the Community Peace Teams including through capacity building activities, direct legal support and other protection interventions.

## Multi-Solutions Approach

### Unlocking of Solutions

- UNHCR is working closely with the Thai and Myanmar governments, the refugee community and other stakeholders to unlock a multi-solutions approach to find a dignified, sustainable and comprehensive **end to the situation of protracted encampment** on the Thai-Myanmar border. This may include the pursuit of access to formal and legal labour opportunities in Thailand under certain conditions.
- UNHCR undertakes **outreach including on access to civil documentation** and facilitates dialogue with the refugee community to empower them to make decisions concerning their future.

### Facilitated Voluntary Repatriation

- UNHCR **facilitates voluntary repatriation for refugees** who approach the agency directly, stating that they want to take part in the voluntary return process. Before the return takes place, UNHCR and partners in Myanmar carry out assessments in the areas of return to assess available facilities and prevailing conditions. Factual and impartial information is then shared with all refugees who have registered to return and have the option of changing their minds at any time.
- **Outreach and information-sharing** are a pivotal part of preparation for return movements to support refugees to make informed and voluntary decisions regarding their repatriation.
- Since 2016, the UNHCR Mae Hong Son field office has facilitated the voluntary repatriation of **111 refugees** from BMN Temporary Shelter and 11 refugees from MLO Temporary Shelter to Myanmar.

### Resettlement

- There are **159 individuals / 7 cases** in BMN, BMS, MLO and MRM temporary shelters who have been submitted for resettlement in 2019 and are pending departure.
- UNHCR **works in collaboration** with the Resettlement Support Center (RSC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and third countries' embassies on the resettlement process.
- **33 refugees with serious protection needs** including lifesaving medical care were submitted during January-December 2019 from BMN and MRM temporary shelters.

## External/Donor Relations

- Special thanks to major donors of un-earmarked and broadly earmarked funds as well as to donors who have contributed directly to the operation in 2019:

**France | Denmark | Ireland | Italy | Japan | Germany | Netherlands | Norway | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom | United States of America |**

- Un-earmarked, broadly earmarked and direct contributions were also received through private donations from Australia, Bahamas, China, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, Thailand and the United States of America.

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