

# Thailand

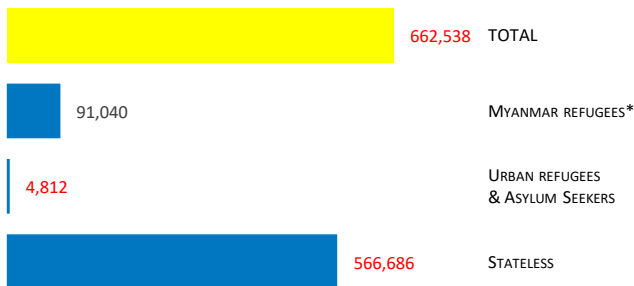
30 SEPTEMBER 2022

In Thailand, populations of concern include **91,040** Myanmar refugees, **4,812** urban asylum-seekers and refugees, and **566,686** persons registered by the Royal Thai Government (RTG) as stateless.

Myanmar refugees reside in **nine temporary shelters on the Thai-Myanmar border**, while urban asylum-seekers, refugees, and stateless persons reside in **different areas of the country**

UNHCR works with the RTG, international agencies, NGOs and donors to address the **protection, assistance, and durable solutions needs** of these groups.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN



\* Verification Exercise conducted from Jan-Apr 2015 and subsequent data changes to-date. Under reverification

## FUNDING (AS OF 30 SEPTEMBER 2022)

**USD 24.8 M**

requested for the Thailand Operation

**Unfunded**  
**60%**  
14.9 Million



**Funded**  
**40%**  
9.9 Million

## UNHCR PRESENCE

### Staff:

139 National Staff

18 International Staff

### Offices:

1 Multi-Country Office in  
Bangkok

2 Field Offices - in Mae Hong  
Son and Mae Sot



An elderly refugee women (right) with her caregiver (left) from Mae La camp participate to activities during the Humanity and Inclusion's workshop on Mental Health and Psychological Support in Mae La refugee camp on 26 July 2022 ©UNHCR/Morgane Roussel-Hemery

# Population Overview

## MYANMAR CAMP-BASED REFUGEES

- The group of refugees residing in the nine temporary shelters on the Thai-Myanmar border are of **mainly Karen, Karenni, and Burmese ethnicity**, some of whom have lived in Thailand since the mid-1980s after fleeing conflict between ethnic armed groups and the Myanmar military. Under the applicable legal framework, they are **not permitted to access national institutions** (e.g., health and education) nor to move outside the camps, including for the purpose of accessing livelihood opportunities. Therefore, they rely on non-governmental humanitarian services for their basic needs. UNHCR's interventions focus primarily on **protection and solutions**, whereas material assistance is provided by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).
- Registration of refugees along the Thai-Myanmar border is led by **the Royal Thai Government Provincial Admission Board (RTG-PAB)**, with UNHCR support. Since 2008, registration is only open to exceptional serious protection and/or medical cases. UNHCR leads the identification of such cases in close consultation with the MOI.

## URBAN ASYLUM-SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

- UNHCR continues its full complement of **protection and assistance activities** the urban refugees and asylum-seekers from over 51 countries residing mainly in Bangkok and surrounding urban areas. Currently there is **no national legal framework** for the specific protection of "urban" refugees and asylum-seekers in Thailand. Nor has Thailand acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol. As such, UNHCR issued documentation/identification in the form of a Refugee or Asylum-Seeker Card is not officially recognized by the RTG and therefore **provides no official protection** for them. The asylum-seekers and refugees are considered "illegal" in the country and are at risk of being detained on immigration grounds if they entered into the country illegally or have overstayed their visas.
- As they have no right to access employment, many urban asylum-seekers and refugees depend **on humanitarian or other forms of support**, including from UNHCR, to sustain themselves. Under the RTG's **progressive "education for all" policy**, the asylum-seeker and refugee children can go to school, although many face challenges due to language barriers and costs associated with schooling.
- Following the Thai Cabinet's approval in December 2019 to establish the **National Screening Mechanism** to distinguish people who need international protection from economic migrants, UNHCR welcomed the establishment of the **Screening Committee in 2020**, the **Sub-Committee on Criteria, Procedures, and Condition in 2021** and the **Sub-Committee on Screening and on Appeals in 2022**. It is anticipated that the RTG Cabinet will sign and issue the Criteria for the NSM in October. Once operationalized, it is hoped that the National Screening Mechanism will increase the protection space for those who need it.

## STATELESS PERSONS

- According to the latest official RTG statistics, there are 566,686 stateless persons registered as of 30 June 2022, although some unofficial estimates are higher. Approximately **81% of the registered stateless population reside in provinces near border areas**. While statelessness in Thailand has a range of causes, many affected communities migrated to Thailand hundreds of years ago. They are mostly members of ethnic minorities living in mountainous regions, including indigenous groups who had not been registered and did not hold any identity documents. These communities face various

challenges, including language barriers to accessing civil registration and nationality procedures, difficulties associated with living in remote areas, and a lack of understanding of the importance of civil registration in preventing statelessness.

- Significant reforms to Thailand's nationality and civil registration laws (e.g., 2008, 2016, 2019) have provided a route to restoring nationality to those who had been deprived of it or could not acquire it, and **a progressive nationality strategy was adopted in 2005 to address statelessness**. Consequently, over 57,000 registered stateless persons have acquired Thai nationality since 2015. Whilst some progress has been made, stateless people in Thailand continue to face challenges accessing some of their basic rights, including freedom of movement – many stateless individuals face restrictions travelling beyond their registered provincial areas - and healthcare, including gaps in access to national health insurance.

## 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, asylum-seekers, stateless persons, , while advocating for their inclusion in national systems. On the Thai-Myanmar border, UNHCR works with **the Committee for the Coordination of Services for Displaced Persons (CCSDPT)**, a consortium of NGOs that coordinates the provision of food, shelter, health, education, water/sanitation, and livelihoods.
- **Strategic alliances** with key international and national NGOs, civil society and faith-based organizations, private sector partners, and academia help address a range of issues, including alternatives to detention, improved access to domestic legal and social services, and alternative forms of temporary protection pending solutions.
- **Partners:** Ministry of Interior (MOI), Adventist Development and Relief Agency Thailand (ADRA), Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees (COERR), Humanity and Inclusion (HI), International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UN Volunteers (UNV).

## Main Activities

### EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- The volatile situation in Myanmar following the 01 February 2021 coup resulted in increased armed conflict and subsequent population displacement within and across borders, including Thailand. UNHCR continues to engage with the Royal Thai Government (RTG) on its availability to complement RTG-led response and preparedness efforts in close coordination with other relevant partners. In July 2022, UNHCR and partners updated the Refugee Preparedness and Response Plan (joint inter-agency plan), which provides a strategic response framework until December 2022 among 18 partners. The inter-agency preparedness and response are underpinned by multi-sector coordination mechanisms established at the national level and in the provinces to support the RTG in responding to the humanitarian needs of newly arrived refugees. This coordination mechanism, separate from the coordination mechanism for the existing nine camps, is structured around the following sectors:

Education, Food, Health, Non-food items (NFIs),; Protection, Shelter, and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH).

- During the reporting period, UNHCR distributed **350 sleeping mats and 263 blankets to Myanmar nationals who sought safety in the Temporary Safety Areas in Tak Province**. These were distributed in collaboration with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Community Support Organizations (CSOs). UNHCR and Partners have not been granted direct access, and the authorities conducted the distribution. Humanitarian agencies monitor the distribution and delivery of assistance via reports and photos shared by the CBOs and CSOs.



## PROTECTION

- In the refugee camps at the Thai-Myanmar border, in line with amendments to the Civil Registration Act (2008), UNHCR supports the RTG in ensuring every child has the right to birth registration. Additionally, UNHCR works in collaboration with Partners to identify refugees with serious protection and medical cases to be registered by the RTG through the Fast-Track Provincial Admission Board (FT-PAB) process. Moreover, UNHCR facilitates **camp refugees' access to the Thai justice system** for serious criminal cases. UNHCR coordinates with Thai law enforcement authorities in pursuing these responsibilities.
- UNHCR, in partnership with the Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees (COERR), **conducts case management and focuses on the protection of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) and those with serious protection concerns, including sexual and physical abuse**. COERR provided training and capacity-building to camp-based volunteers between July and September on the Child Protection Referral System (CPRS) and other relevant topics, such as early marriage. In Mae Sot, UNHCR and COERR co-facilitated a workshop on the Child Protection Referral System (CPRS) to strengthen the relationship with Child Protection partners working outside of the camps.
- In 2022, UNHCR staff received a Training of Trainer (ToT) on Engaging Men in Accountable Practices (EMAP). During the reporting period, UNHCR started the roll-out of the EMAP in several refugee camps along the Thai-Myanmar border by training camp-based staff who will undertake the role of EMAP facilitators. The subsequent phases of the EMAP project are planned for late 2022 and early 2023. EMAP is a programme that fosters transformational change by addressing the norms and beliefs that promote violence and confronts inequitable gender norms of masculinity and femininity. Activities include all genders, with targeted programming to involve men and boys.
- UNHCR continues to provide multipurpose cash grants (cash-based intervention ((CBI)) to refugees with specific needs in urban areas. Between July and September, the UNHCR CBI panel allocated **702 cash grants, covering 1,140 individuals**. As COVID-19 restriction measures are being eased in Thailand, UNHCR observed that some refugees were able to access some livelihood opportunities, reducing their reliance in assistance from UNHCR and other actors. As a result, the rate of screening out and rejection of applications for CBI support increased from 15% in July to 29% in September (the highest since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020).
- UNHCR supported displaced population with protection issues through remote counselling and referrals for needed services. Between July and September, UNHCR provided protection counselling support to **193 persons**. Furthermore, the UNHCR Reception has resumed partial activity since 5 July 2022.
- In response to concerns raised by refugees and asylum seekers about having their image shared on social media of UNHCR's implementing partners, UNHCR conducted a presentation and information-

sharing session for 17 NGOs staff from six different organizations on protection-oriented communication. This addressed protection-sensitive photographing, consideration when interviewing and photographing particularly vulnerable individuals, including children, and publishing articles and other media products about refugees and asylum-seekers.

- Due to the resurgence of COVID-19 in late December 2021, many Immigration Detention Centers (IDCs) continue to suspend in-person visits in 2022. Thus, UNHCR conducted only some in-person counselling and monitoring at the IDCs that allowed this access, while in other IDCs, UNHCR continues its activities through **remote arrangements**. UNHCR distributed Core Relief Items, material assistance, and multi-purpose cash to Rohingya POCs and Urban Refugees in IDCs. Besides, UNHCR pursued its advocacy for non-refoulement and access to alternatives to detention (ATD), including in the case of children and mothers, under Thailand’s Memorandum of Understanding on ATD.
- On 29 August 2022, UNHCR collaborated with PlanToys, a toys manufacturer, to host over 50 children, the majority of whom were out-of-school children, in a play day activity. PlanToys opened its play area exclusively to refugee and asylum-seeker children, with a range of toys and play spaces to explore and enjoy. During the activity, the UNHCR Protection team conducted focus group discussions with parents and children to learn more about issues preventing them from accessing formal education. This will be incorporated into a study on out-of-school children.


**EDUCATION**

- In urban areas, **546 POC children aged 6-17 were enrolled in primary education**, and **94 POC children aged 6-17 were enrolled in secondary education** as of 30 September. In addition, **29 POC children** attended Thai language classes provided in partnership with COERR to equip them with skills to access public schools under Thailand’s progressive “Education for All” policy. Also, UNHCR

supported the continuity of Thai formal education for children over 17 years old: one at the primary and 25 at the secondary level.

- Considering the success of the Thai Intensive program for children, in February 2022, UNHCR expanded its 3-month Thai intensive learning program to adult refugees and asylum seekers above 18 years old living in urban areas. The program ran twice in 2022, from March to April (over 93% completion rate) and then from June to September (100% completion rate). Between July and September, UNHCR recorded 21 new registrations into the program.



## HEALTH

- **In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic**, UNHCR endeavored to engage all POC communities in awareness-raising efforts to the extent possible through integrating COVID-19 risk communication messages into its ongoing outreach activities and exploring ways to step these up if needed. The UNHCR ensured that materials and messages shared were culturally appropriate manner and in relevant languages. UNHCR also supported efforts to promote vaccination efforts in the refugee camps. UNHCR, with the support of partners, distributed facemasks to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. In urban areas, **90 masks were distributed to 30 urban refugee students** by Bangkok Refugee Center between July and August. 527 masks were further distributed to 264 refugees and asylum seekers participating in the participatory assessments taking place between 1-15 September. In refugee camps, **123 cloth masks were provided to 41 students** in the Umpium refugee camp, and 1,600 cloth masks were distributed to the refugee community in Ban Don Yang camp.
- In the refugee camps in Tak Province, UNHCR in partnership with Humanity and Inclusion (HI) conducted **Mental Health and Psychological support activities for Persons with disabilities**. The objective was to raise awareness and strengthen community support – allowing camp residents to have a better understanding of mental health and be empowered by strategies to cope. Between July and September, nine workshops were conducted, targeting 102 participants. The Participants in these workshops were selected based on a mental health assessment conducted by the Humanity & Inclusion team.
- In urban areas, UNHCR supported inpatient care - focusing on life-threatening conditions and children under 5 - and financially assisted **82 refugees** from July to September. In addition, **28 refugees** benefited from remote psychosocial support conducted by UNHCR's psychologist.



## ACCESS TO ENERGY

- In the refugee camps, UNHCR is engaging in efforts in line with the Global Strategy on Sustainable Energy by installing solar energy at UNHCR workstations. Furthermore, UNHCR is advocating with the RTG to install solar lights in communal spaces to enhance the safety and protection of refugees, especially in camps that are not connected to the national electricity grid.



On 26 July, the Humanity and Inclusion (HI) camp based staff in Mae La Refugee camp conducted home visit to an elderly woman refugee who suffers from bone deformity which hampers her capacity to participate to activities outside her shelter. The HI team provides tailored counselling and teach personal strategies to alleviate stress and anxiety such as breathing technics.  
©UNHCR/Morgane Roussel-Hemery



### DURABLE SOLUTIONS

- Despite setbacks caused by COVID-19, UNHCR in partnership with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) **submitted 1,457 nationality and permanent residency applications for stateless persons** between July-September 2022.
- During the same period, resettlement submissions were made for **167 refugees** in the whole country, while **246 refugees** departed on resettlement.

## External / Donors 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 to date during 2022:** Canada | European Union | Denmark | Germany | Japan | Norway | Private donors Japan | Sweden | United States of America | United Kingdom
- Un-earmarked, broadly earmarked, and direct contributions were also received through private donations from Thailand. UNHCR has raised funds from the private sector since 2008 for POCs both in Thailand and globally.

### CONTACTS

**Morgane Roussel-Hemery**, Associate External Relation Officer

[rousselh@unhcr.org](mailto:rousselh@unhcr.org), Tel: +66 81 140 4353

### LINKS

[UNHCR Thailand - Twitter](#) – [Facebook](#)

[Situation Thailand - Myanmar Cross Border Portal](#)