

SPCP Thailand

June 2008

Overview

The Strengthening Protection Capacity Project - Thailand (SPCP-T) is now in its second year. It has attracted over US \$2 million to support activities to remedy many persistent protection gaps facing refugees in Thailand and has brought needed improvements to their lives. Many of the initially funded efforts have been mainstreamed into UNHCR.

SPCP-Thailand is very much an ongoing collaborative effort. Together with partners UNHCR annually evaluates where regular programmes and budgets fall short of meeting the needs of refugees and do not provide sufficient support for improving state and community protection capacities.

This year the SPCP process underpinned a larger Global Needs Assessment (GNA) initiative the results of which will be presented to the Standing Committee in June 2008. The GNA aims to arrive at a comprehensive and realistic picture of unmet protection and solution needs for populations of concern to UNHCR to strengthen priority setting, support advocacy efforts, and expand resource base.

GNA employs the SPCP methodology in identifying gaps and developing targeted projects to address them. In Thailand, consultation sessions between UNHCR and its Operational and Implementing Partners were organized using Thailand's SPCP gap matrix and project package as a basis for discussions and identifications of met and unmet needs.

Widening gaps and shifting priorities

This year's updating exercise revealed widening gaps in meeting basic needs largely as a result of skyrocketing food costs, soaring fuel prices, and weakening of the US dollar. The consequent greatly diminished purchasing power of funds received and anticipated from donors is greatly exacerbating existing gaps in the provision of basic material support.

Refugees in the camps in Thailand are almost totally dependant on food assistance given their

confinement in the camps and the absence of legal employment opportunities. There is a concern that food rations could in future be insufficient to meet dietary needs, rates of malnutrition are expected to rise as are associated health problems and more refugees are prompted to seek employment outside the camps. This is a high risk activity, exposing refugees to a range of threats to their security: arrest, detention, refoulement, extortion, exploitation, non remuneration, sexual abuse, enslavement and trafficking.

As well, the resettlement of many trained and qualified refugees has left a chronic shortage of skilled teachers and health care providers. Replacing these educated and skilled refugees is not easy as institutional memory is lost and capacity building takes time.



The shortage of qualified teachers, coupled with school structures in need of repair, the absence of a common curriculum and a shortage of school supplies is leading to a decline in the quality of education and risks escalating social problems which education has to date helped to keep at bay. Health services are similarly understaffed and are unable to meet the needs of refugees with mental and/or psychological problems and unless the shortage of services is addressed, the risks of misdiagnosis are expected to rise, along with the spread of communicable diseases.

Unmet needs therefore are most pressing in the areas of food security and the provision of essential health and education services.



Addressing Unmet Needs

Revised Project Package

The aggregated amount required to meet unmet needs in all sectors in Thailand for the camp-based and urban refugees and stateless populations is US 15.06 million. A portfolio of required interventions, expanding on the initial SPCP project package, has been developed as part of the SPCP/GNA exercise and awaits further funding support.

In the meantime, UNHCR and partners are continuing to implement the following activities funded through the SPCP-T process.



Security from violence and exploitation

SPCP-T projects continue to strengthen the prevention and response mechanism for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in the camps providing a safer environment for women and children. Camp-based SGBV Committees have been provided with the knowledge and resources so that they can take the lead in preventing and responding to SGBV. Currently the SGBV Committees together with other community-based organizations, NGOs, and UNHCR, are reviewing SGBV Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), delivering awareness-raising/education sessions, and managing cases. Drug and alcohol addiction treatments have also been expanded and are being delivered in many camps to address the problem of domestic violence caused by drug and alcohol abuses.

Expanding opportunities for self-reliance

Based on the UNHCR-ILO Livelihoods Report sponsored by SPCP-T, an agricultural project outside of Mae La camp was launched in 2007

with an aim to increase self-reliance for refugees. The project has now entered the second year where vegetable produce has started to generate some income for refugee participants. In the second half of 2008 the participants will start focusing more on business strategy for selling their produce. In the meantime, with additional funding from *Australia for UNHCR*, a new group of 120 participants will be recruited. The majority of this new group will be SGBV survivors and recovered drug and alcohol addicts and their families. This income generating activity will serve not only as a way to increase their self-reliance but also as a rehabilitation mechanism for these specific camp residents with special needs.

The UNHCR-ILO Livelihoods Report has also been shared with other UN agencies who are more specialized in longer term livelihood development. For example, the report has been shared with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) who will be implementing a project to enhance livelihood opportunities and promote social cohesion targeting camp-based refugees, migrants, and other displaced persons in Mae Hong Son province. The Livelihoods Report will continue to be used as a baseline data and strategy paper when planning for and pursuing livelihoods activities for refugees in the future.



Way forward

The key priority at the present time is to address the widening gaps in meeting basic needs and providing essential services. Strengthening camp management, SGBV prevention and response mechanisms, enhanced livelihood opportunities and access to justice also remain

top protection gaps in need of additional support.

The portfolio of needed interventions and the costs of each can be found on the SPCP website www.unhcr.org/spcp along with more information on the SPCP-T.

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