

THAILAND



IN SHORT

Main Objectives

- Ensure that the fundamentals of international protection, particularly the principles of asylum and *non-refoulement*, are respected and effectively implemented.
- Ensure that refugee populations in the Thai-Myanmar border area are safe from armed incursions, that their protection and humanitarian needs are adequately met, and that the civilian character of refugee camps is maintained.
- Promptly identify and protect individual asylum-seekers and promote the development of national refugee legislation and status determination procedures consistent with international standards.



Planning Figures		
Population	Jan. 2000	Dec. 2000
Refugees at the Thai-Myanmar Border (camps)	102,000	105,000
Refugees at Maneelay (in Ratchaburi)	1,500	2,000
Refugees in Bangkok	3,300	5,000
Total	106,800	112,000
Total Requirements USD 5,987,452		

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WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Recent Developments

In June 1998, the Thai Government formally requested an expanded UNHCR role in monitoring the situation of ethnic Karen and Karenni refugees who after fleeing ethnic conflicts and restrictive human rights practices in Myanmar had been accommodated in camps along the Thai-Myanmar border. UNHCR welcomed this request and established three field offices in the border areas of Mae Hong Son, Mae Sot and Kanchanaburi in order to focus on protection monitoring. Since then, several thousand new arrivals have been admitted to the camps. The registration of the entire camp population was carried out between March and May 1999 and admission procedures have been established, involving several regional commissions composed of local civilian and military authorities, as well as UNHCR in an observer capacity. The relocation to a safer site further inland of the population of Huay Kalok and Mawker camps, which had been subject to cross-border attacks, began in August 1999 by the Government with technical assistance from UNHCR.

Constraints

In a number of camps situated close to the border the risk of cross-border incursions compromises the safety of the refugees. The problems of access to some of the more remote refugee camps during the rainy season hamper UNHCR's monitoring functions.

STRATEGY

Protection and Solutions

In 2000, UNHCR's primary goal in Thailand will continue to be protection. Its staff will closely monitor the protection and safety of refugees on the Thai-Myanmar border as well as the civilian nature of the camps. New refugees will be helped to gain admission to the camps, admission procedures will be strengthened and uniform criteria established. The existing registration database will be updated regularly in consultation with the Government. UNHCR will continue to promote the admission to the Maneeloy Burmese Centre of individual refugees from Myanmar who cannot, for protection reasons, reside in the border camps. Refugees with compelling reasons will be helped to find resettlement in third countries.

The longer-term objective of UNHCR's involvement is to prepare for the voluntary repatriation of refugees when the following conditions are met: the causes of flight must be removed; repatriation must be safe and voluntary; and UNHCR must have unrestricted access to both sides of the border so that the agency can confirm the voluntary nature of repatriation, the well-being of the returnees and facilitate the provision of reintegration assistance.

For individual asylum-seekers and refugees in urban centres, UNHCR will continue to engage in refugee status determination, in the absence of national refugee legislation and procedures to determine the claims of asylum-seekers. For refugees recognised under its mandate, UNHCR will provide protection and limited material support, such as monthly allowances to cover basic living expenses. The Office will also continue to identify appropriate lasting solutions such as voluntary repatriation or resettlement to a third country.

UNHCR will organise seminars on refugee law, and training activities for government bodies, academic institutions and other concerned interlocutors, as well as awareness campaigns. Such activities will serve to promote accession to international refugee instruments and the enactment of national refugee legislation and refugee status determination procedures in Thailand.

Assistance

To complement assistance provided by the Government and NGOs in the border areas, UNHCR will provide limited material support in specific areas such as prevention and rehabilitation of environmental degradation through the distribution of alternative cooking fuel and site reforestation following camp relocation. Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) targeting water, health and forestry will provide community-based assistance to local villages affected by the presence of refugee camps.

Residents of the Maneeloy Centre will receive assistance to meet their needs for food, water, health and accommodation. Support will also be extended to prevention and rehabilitation programmes for drug addiction or HIV.

Special arrangements will be made for vulnerable individuals in camps and in the Maneeloy Centre, whose special needs might not have been identified under existing NGO programmes.



Particular attention will be paid to the needs of women and children. UNHCR will continue to put its technical site planning expertise at the disposal of the Government's camp relocation initiatives.

Desired Impact

This essentially protection-oriented programme is aimed at securing asylum and improving the well-being and safety of refugees until a lasting solution is achieved.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management Structure

The Regional Office in Thailand also covers UNHCR interests in Cambodia and Vietnam. The three field offices of Mae Hong Son, Mae Sot and Kanchanaburi report to the Regional Office in Bangkok. In 2000, there will be 64 UNHCR staff in Thailand, including 12 international staff, three Junior Professional Officers and 49 national staff.

Coordination

The Regional Office actively coordinates with a large number of local and international NGOs who have been operating for more than a decade providing multi-sectoral assistance on the Thai-Myanmar border. This avoids duplication of effort and ensures every refugee's basic needs are met. The Thai Government is responsible for the management and security of camps. UNHCR conducts most of its protection activities in close consultation with the local civilian and military authorities.

Offices

Bangkok
Kanchanaburi
Mae Hong Son
Mae Sot

Partners

Government Agencies

Operation Centre for Displaced Persons,
Ministry of Interior

NGOs*

Burmese Border Consortium
Catholic Office for Emergency Relief
for Refugees
Foundation in Support of Refugee Assistance
International Rescue Committee

* Other implementing partners
may be identified in 2000

Budget (USD)

Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	1,848,456
Community Services	107,052
Domestic Needs/ Household Support	859,895
Education	119,390
Food	374,682
Forestry	107,052
Health/Nutrition	190,007
Legal Assistance	378,723
Operational Support (to Agencies)	366,363
Sanitation	32,383
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	294,393
Transport/Logistics	66,908
Water (non-agricultural)	107,052
Total Operations	4,852,356
Programme Support	1,135,096
Total	5,987,452

