

# SOUTH-EAST ASIA



2014 - 2015  
**GLOBAL APPEAL**

- Bangladesh
- Brunei Darussalam
- Cambodia
- Indonesia
- Lao People's Democratic Republic
- Malaysia
- Myanmar
- Philippines
- Singapore
- Thailand
- Timor-Leste
- Viet Nam



**IDPs wade through flood water** near the Hmanzi Junction makeshift site in Rakhine State, Myanmar (May 2013)

UNHCR / S. KELLY



# Overview



## Working environment

Most countries in South-East Asia do not have any legislation regulating the rights of asylum-seekers and refugees, and UNHCR conducts refugee status determination in the absence of a national asylum system. Three countries in South-East Asia have national asylum systems at varying levels of development. One country has limited processing for certain groups under an “admissions board” process. A number of States without national asylum systems generally consider refugees and asylum-seekers to be illegal migrants, who as such are susceptible to detention, expulsion, *refoulement* and other serious protection risks. Regarding statelessness, only one State in the subregion has signed the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. UNHCR advocates for States in the region to ensure an adequate protection space for refugees and stateless people, as well as for the establishment of effective legal and normative frameworks governing international protection.

In the South-East Asian context, where mixed-migration movements prevail, a number of States implement detention, border-control, and restrictive maritime and other policies to manage irregular migration and ensure national security, which at times are detrimental to international protection. Furthermore, people-smuggling and human-trafficking networks in the sub-region have flourished, along with an increase in irregular maritime movements and a loss of life at sea. The Regional Cooperation Framework being implemented by the Bali Process through the Regional Support Office, and other regional initiatives, are expected to strengthen cooperation in safeguarding refugee protection while countering irregular movements.

The inter-communal conflict that broke out in mid- and late 2012 in Myanmar’s Rakhine State, which resulted in large-scale internal displacement and the need for emergency humanitarian response inside the country, has also driven a growing number of refugees from Rakhine State to depart to or transit through various countries in the region, including by sea in unseaworthy and overcrowded boats.

# | Response |

## Strategies

- UNHCR's protection strategies in South-East Asia will focus on the establishment of protection-sensitive responses to mixed migration, registration, documentation, access to asylum, refugee status determination (RSD) and the promotion of alternatives to detention. UNHCR will also aim to protect and assist the most vulnerable urban refugees and prevent *refoulement*. Where the necessary conditions are in place, comprehensive solutions and approaches will be pursued, including local integration, voluntary repatriation, resettlement, labour options and temporary stay arrangements.
- The Office will continue to advocate for the rights of people of concern and for States' adherence to international protection standards. It will do so in cooperation with concerned governments, and with the support of regional processes and institutions and civil-society actors.
- UNHCR will also continue to work with States to promote and implement comprehensive protection-sensitive responses to irregular movements of people and mixed migration, including under the Regional Cooperation Framework endorsed by the Bali Process, as well as through other regional initiatives.

- Closer cooperation with regional institutions, as well as NGO and civil society groupings, will aim to promote government ownership of refugee protection, particularly with regard to access to protection, basic services and registration.
- UNHCR will continue to collaborate with ASEAN human rights mechanisms and other ASEAN entities on statelessness and refugee protection.

## Challenges

In South-East Asia's complex mixed-migration context, States' interests relating to both national security and the maintenance of good relations with neighbours pose challenges to international protection and access to asylum. Available protection space in the region is fragile, unpredictable and inconsistent due in part to the lack of national legal frameworks for refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people in the region. The continued use in some countries of immigration detention facilities to hold asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless people, including children and others vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, is of concern. In addition, many urban refugees and asylum-seekers are unable to earn a living or gain access to social services.

# | Implementation |

## Operations

Operations in **Malaysia**, **Myanmar** and **Thailand** are described in separate country chapters.

In **Bangladesh**, UNHCR provides protection and assistance to refugees residing in refugee camps to help address their humanitarian needs and ensure minimum standards of living are met, which helps to deter irregular onward movement. For unregistered refugees residing outside the camps, UNHCR advocates for them to be registered and provided with protection as needed. UNHCR also advocates for more self-reliance opportunities for urban refugees and seeks durable solutions for them. Advocacy for the prevention of statelessness will continue.

In **Cambodia**, UNHCR supports the Government's Refugee Office both financially and by offering technical advice. The support focuses on assisting the Refugee Office as it continues to build its capacity to decide on asylum procedures, provide legal and social support to the refugees and asylum-seekers in the country, and to enhance prospects for the local integration of refugees.

In light of the increase in the number of asylum-seekers arriving in **Indonesia**, UNHCR is building its registration and refugee status determination (RSD) capacity in the country, as well as strengthening its ability to process recognized refugees for resettlement. The work to enhance resettlement processing capacity that began in 2012 will proceed. UNHCR will

continue to collaborate with civil society to advocate for alternatives to detention for asylum-seekers. Particular attention will be paid to ensuring that refugees with specific needs will be assisted. UNHCR will continue to advocate for Indonesia to enhance its regional responsibility for refugee protection in the context of regional initiatives, such as the Bali Process and the Regional Cooperation Framework.

As one of the countries in the region that have acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, the **Philippines** is developing its capacity to manage its asylum system. In 2012, a combined refugee status and stateless determination procedure was adopted. UNHCR supports the Government in this endeavour, in addition to assisting its efforts to address statelessness.

The Philippines provides a transit centre for those refugees who are in need of temporary relocation outside of the country of asylum pending departure for resettlement. In the framework of the coordinated UN response to requests by the Government to address internal displacement in Mindanao, UNHCR co-leads the protection cluster for those displaced by internal conflict, with the Government's Department of Social Welfare and Development. Activities focus on protection monitoring, civil and birth certification and the protection of people with special needs.

In **Viet Nam**, UNHCR will continue to collaborate with and support the Government bodies working to reduce statelessness. The Office will advocate for the naturalization of stateless people or the re-granting of lost nationality. UNHCR will also promote the Government's accession to the 1954 Statelessness Convention. Advocacy for the prevention of statelessness will be conducted through ASEAN entities.

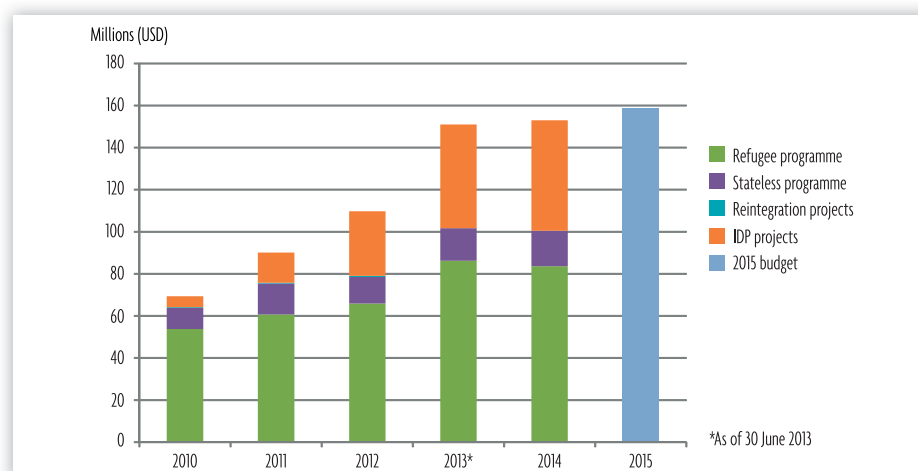
UNHCR does not have an operational presence in the **Lao People's Democratic Republic** or **Timor-Leste**. In **Singapore** the

Office's presence is limited with one staff member responsible for private-sector fundraising. The situation of refugees and asylum-seekers in these three countries is monitored and they are assisted where necessary by UNHCR's Regional Office in Bangkok. UNHCR will continue to assist the Timor-Leste Government's Asylum Office in building its capacity to decide asylum applications and to assist refugees. UNHCR will also continue to contribute to the drafting of Timor-Leste's revised immigration and asylum law.

## Financial information

Over the last several years, UNHCR's financial requirements in the South-East Asia subregion have increased sharply from USD 69.4 million in 2010 to a revised 2013 budget of USD 151 million. This increase was mainly due to the outbreak of communal violence and the resulting displacement in Myanmar's Rakhine State in mid-2012, the internal displacement situation in Kachin State, and ensuring preparedness for the possible return to Myanmar of refugees in Thailand if conditions become conducive. In 2014, the financial requirements for the region are set at USD 153 million; however, these requirements may change should any voluntary returns to Myanmar of refugees in Thailand take place.

### Budgets for South-East Asia | 2010–2015



### Budgets for South-East Asia | USD

Operation	2013 REVISED BUDGET (as of 30 June 2013)	2014				TOTAL	2015
		PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	PILLAR 2 Stateless programme	PILLAR 4 IDP projects			
Bangladesh	12,609,556	11,410,451	12,510	0	11,422,961	11,356,138	
Indonesia	8,007,336	7,950,312	155,005	0	8,105,317	8,238,418	
Malaysia	17,477,520	18,875,102	1,231,502	0	20,106,604	21,695,610	
Myanmar	68,481,570	6,051,000	12,940,291	49,073,119	68,064,410	67,772,726	
Philippines	8,427,638	697,717	727,572	3,480,770	4,906,059	4,641,297	
Thailand	28,044,521	32,090,244	710,059	0	32,800,303	37,233,459	
Thailand Regional Office	7,564,224	6,584,919	577,849	0	7,162,768	7,817,007	
Viet Nam	400,500	0	437,203	0	437,203	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>151,012,866</b>	<b>83,659,745</b>	<b>16,791,991</b>	<b>52,553,888</b>	<b>153,005,624</b>	<b>158,754,655</b>	