

# Myanmar

## Working environment

### The context

The political and socio-economic environment within which UNHCR operates in Myanmar is affected by constraints that cannot easily be overcome in the short or medium term. Public services in key areas such as education and health are largely inadequate. Furthermore, even if there is substantial political change and sanctions are removed or relaxed, it is expected to take years to improve public services and develop strong civil-society organizations for the benefit of the population at large.

It is expected that Myanmar will not witness any major political changes and the working environment will continue to be constrained, though UNHCR will be able to work both in Northern Rakhine State and in the south-east.

The recent non-violent demonstrations did not have an impact on UNHCR's operations in the short term. However, the longer-term consequences are difficult to predict as they largely depend on the next moves by the parties concerned.



### The needs

#### Returnee and stateless people in Northern Rakhine State

Since 2006, UNHCR has been working to ameliorate conditions for the stateless population in Northern Rakhine State (NRS). The population of concern is estimated at 728,000 people, including more than 230,000 returnees from refugee camps in Bangladesh.

Participatory assessments in Northern Rakhine State show that returnees and stateless people are seriously affected by far-reaching restrictions on their movement, the movement of goods, and various forms of discrimination. The lack of proper legal status has a negative impact on the daily lives of stateless people, while the poor infrastructure and paucity of educational facilities combined with a lack of knowledge of the Myanmar language further hinder their integration.

Acute malnutrition is prevalent in the area. There is a need for basic health and nutrition education, including preventive care for the most common diseases. Improvements in health services remain a priority for UNHCR in 2008 and 2009.

In addition to the difficulties faced by the stateless population in general, women and adolescent girls face even greater restrictions as a result of the traditional norms within their communities. This has a negative impact on their access to livelihoods.

#### Communities affected by displacement in south-east Myanmar

UNHCR's operational area in south-eastern Myanmar is vast, comprising about 4,500 villages. The sheer size of the area, the lack of reliable and accurate statistics, and the limited number of humanitarian and development



UNHCR/C. Schwetz

Returnees at a language training programme in Mee Gyaung Zay VT, Buthidaung Township.

agencies working in this part of Myanmar make a challenging environment. The Office has faced difficulties in conducting comprehensive needs assessments, as access to areas and communities affected by displacement is further complicated by both logistical and political factors. Basic infrastructure in south-eastern Myanmar has been affected by decades of conflict and neglect. Many villages are isolated from essential services, further increasing their vulnerability.

### Total requirements

2008: USD 6,175,264

2009: USD 6,463,400

### Main objectives

- Promote the rights and well-being of stateless people in Northern Rakhine State by improving their legal status and treatment.
- Promote the integration of stateless people into the Myanmar society, and improve their livelihoods.
- Facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees from Bangladesh and assist returnees with their reintegration in Northern Rakhine State.
- Enable women and girls in NRS to participate in decisions affecting them in the family, and to participate in community life on an equal footing with men.
- Mitigate the vulnerability of people and communities affected by displacement in south-eastern Myanmar and identify and address humanitarian needs in affected communities.

### Key targets for 2008 and 2009

- Completion of the distribution of Temporary Registration Certificates (TRC) and establishment of an effective mechanism to provide continued assistance on individual documentation to the stateless population in Northern Rakhine State.
- Improved basic rights for stateless people and adequate support given to serious protection cases.
- UNHCR and its partners are able to access the population of concern within Northern Rakhine State and deliver assistance.
- Voluntary repatriation from Bangladesh is facilitated.
- Health services in Northern Rakhine State are strengthened and the population has better knowledge of general and reproductive health.
- Women and adolescent girls are able to obtain meaningful information, participate in skills-development and self-reliance activities.
- Assistance is given to extremely vulnerable individuals.
- The number of stateless people who can communicate in the Myanmar language is increased.
- The number of children attending and completing state primary school in Northern Rakhine State is increased.
- Villages in south-eastern Myanmar affected by displacement are less isolated and less vulnerable.
- Access to safe water in south-eastern Myanmar is improved; displaced people in relocation sites and ceasefire areas live in better accommodation.
- Primary schools in south-eastern Myanmar have proper buildings, furniture and children-friendly space.
- Better primary health care in south-eastern Myanmar: village-level health facilities are furnished, have proper building and sanitation facilities, and have better-qualified health staff.

## Strategy and activities

The authorities in Myanmar are not familiar with the legal and procedural standards that UNHCR promotes for the protection of stateless people in Northern Rakhine State and communities affected by displacement in south-eastern Myanmar. Therefore, the Office will adopt a two-track approach to familiarize authorities both at central and local levels with its legal and procedural standards, and combine protection interventions with humanitarian assistance and community mobilization in several key sectors.

The challenge in Northern Rakhine State is to improve the legal status of stateless people pending a resolution of the longer-term citizenship question. Registration of births and issuance of personal documents are indispensable first steps towards proper legal status. Monitoring and intervention at the local level are expected to reduce abusive and discriminatory practices that hurt stateless people such as the requirement for marriage permission.

While not addressing the deeper structural problems, humanitarian assistance can alleviate the exclusion and poverty of the population. The assistance provided by UNHCR and its partners will compensate for the paucity of public infrastructure. The Office will support gender equality through educational programmes and community-based interventions.

In southern Myanmar, UNHCR will continue village-level projects which emphasize community mobilization. Quick-impact projects will restore basic services and help secure UNHCR's access to the area and its population including those affected by displacement. The Office will share data and field assessments with other agencies in order to promote common standards and consistent response.

## Constraints

Although the Letter of Understanding with the Government for the operation in south-eastern Myanmar

was renewed in 2007 for two years, direct access to displaced populations will remain a challenge. The situation is compounded by the vastness of the area. Within this constrained environment, the capacity of UNHCR and its partners will be limited.

## Organization and implementation

### UNHCR presence

	2008	2009
Number of offices	3	3
Total staff	82	82
International	10	10
National	58	58
UNVs	13	13
JPOs	1	1

### Coordination

In Northern Rakhine State, UNHCR is recognized by all stakeholders as the logical coordinator of a multi-sector assistance programme, within which UN agencies and NGOs provide essential services. The inter-agency approach has always been a pillar of the operation in Northern Rakhine State. The Joint Action Plan between UNHCR and WFP in Myanmar will be updated and extended.

In south-east Myanmar, UNHCR is developing working relations with local authorities, gaining the trust of target communities and establishing partnerships with the humanitarian NGOs active in the region. The Office chairs the Population Movement Working Group of the UN Country Team, which is, alongside UNHCR's quarterly meetings in Yangon, the main platform for regular and structured inter-agency cooperation in the south-east and on internal displacement in general. On the ground, UNHCR will share offices with UNICEF in Mawlamyine, thereby making cooperation easier.

## Planning figures

Type of population	Origin	Jan 2008		Dec 2008 - Jan 2008		Dec 2009	
		Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR
Returnees (refugees)		500	500	500	500	500	500
IDPs		78,000	20,000	78,500	30,000	100,000	40,000
Stateless People		669,500	200,000	728,000	200,000	728,000	200,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>748,000</b>	<b>220,500</b>	<b>807,000</b>	<b>230,500</b>	<b>828,500</b>	<b>240,500</b>

## Partners

### Implementing partners

**Government:** Ministry of Immigration and Population, Immigration and National Registration Department.

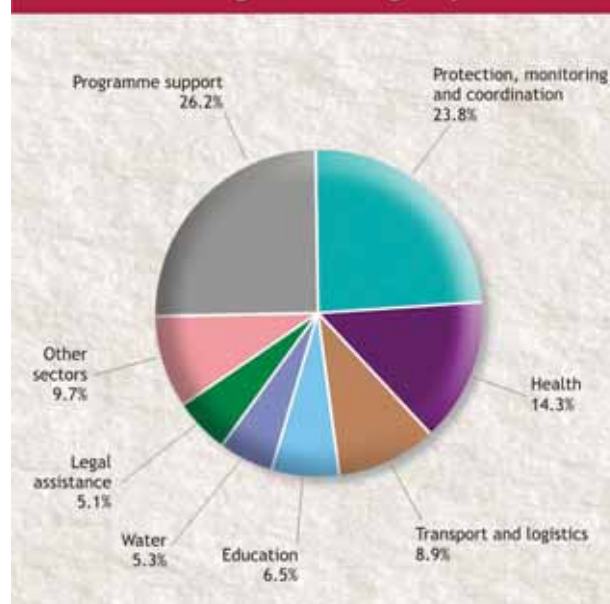
**NGOs:** *Action contre la Faim*, *Aide Médicale Internationale*, Bridge Asia Japan, Community and Family Services International, *Malteser Hilfsdienst*, *Médecins sans Frontières Holland*, Myanmar Red Cross Society.

**Others:** United Nations Volunteers.

### Operational partners

**Government:** Ministry of Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs.

## 2008-2009 Biennial Programme Budget by sector



## Budget (USD)

Activities and services	Annual Programme Budget		
	2007	2008	2009
Protection, monitoring and coordination	1,126,552	1,465,390	1,545,509
Community services	197,676	277,532	300,419
Domestic needs	32,944	41,410	41,410
Education	299,212	411,353	415,317
Health	75,000	901,693	911,693
Legal assistance	303,600	303,090	346,343
Operational support (to agencies)	228,120	223,948	241,445
Sanitation	0	10,000	10,000
Shelter and other infrastructure	0	40,000	43,000
Transport and logistics	516,648	558,274	568,373
Water	270,000	332,700	342,000
<b>Total operations</b>	<b>3,049,752</b>	<b>4,565,390</b>	<b>4,765,509</b>
Programme support	1,255,194	1,609,873	1,697,891
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,304,946</b>	<b>6,175,264</b>	<b>6,463,400</b>