

## Working environment

### The context

In May 2008, the Government of Myanmar conducted a referendum which resulted in the adoption of a new constitution. It also announced that general elections would be held in 2010.

Cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar on 2 and 3 May 2008, severely affecting some 2.4 million people and leaving an estimated 140,000 dead or missing. The scale of the disaster prompted a massive national and international response, coordinated by a Tripartite Core Group composed of representatives of the Government, ASEAN and the UN. An appeal was launched for USD 481.8 million to meet immediate relief and recovery needs. UNHCR participated in the emergency response by distributing shelter materials and domestic items to some 55,000 affected families.

In the wake of the cyclone, the Government eased a number of restrictions to facilitate humanitarian work in the Ayeyarwady Delta, but the overall working environment in Myanmar remains constrained, with limits placed on the humanitarian community and its scope for action. UNHCR's presence and operations are directed at prevention through assistance and protection of vulnerable populations. Despite the prevailing constraints, UNHCR has been able to maintain its operations in Northern Rakhine State, as well as carry on the implementation of projects in the southeast.

### The needs

#### Returnees and other people without citizenship in Northern Rakhine State

UNHCR has been working since 2006 to improve living conditions for people without citizenship in Northern Rakhine State. Their number, based on a village tract survey conducted in 2006, is estimated at some 730,000, including more than 230,000 returnees from refugee camps in Bangladesh.

The Government of Myanmar issued more than 35,000 Temporary Registration Certificates (TRCs) in 2007 and nearly 50,000 in 2008. While the TRC does not confer citizenship, it constitutes the only valid identity



document for people without citizenship and confirms lawful residence in Northern Rakhine State. Holders of the TRC were entitled to vote in the May referendum.

Participatory assessments conducted by UNHCR and its partners indicate that, returnees and others without citizenship are seriously affected by the restrictions on their movement and that of their goods, the lack of economic opportunities, and various forms of discrimination. Poor infrastructure and a paucity of educational facilities, combined with limited knowledge of the Myanmar language among returnees and others without citizenship, further hinder their integration.

In addition to the difficulties confronting people without citizenship in general, women and adolescent girls face even greater restrictions arising from the traditional norms within their communities. These make it more difficult for them to gain access to livelihoods and to integrate locally.



A child and his mother wait for help in Taw Ku village after the destructive cyclone.

UNHCR/S. Krisanawarn

Despite some improvements resulting from UNHCR activities, the situation of health services remains critical and basic health and nutrition education continues to be a priority.

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

UNHCR's operational area in south-east Myanmar covers some 90,000 square kilometers comprising 4,500 villages. The area's size, the complexity of the political landscape, the lack of reliable statistics and restrictions on access make it difficult to conduct comprehensive needs assessments.

Nonetheless, UNHCR has found that basic infrastructure in south-east Myanmar has been affected by decades of conflict and neglect. What services are available are hard to reach for the many isolated villages in the area. Therefore, UNHCR's main aims are to improve, construct and equip basic health, water and educational

facilities, and provide training to raise awareness among local communities.

## Main objectives

- Promote the well-being and rights of people without citizenship and thus mitigate the risk of population movements.
- Improve the legal status and treatment of people without citizenship.
- Promote the integration of people without citizenship into Myanmar society and improve their livelihoods.
- Enable women and girls in Northern Rakhine State to participate in decisions affecting them in the family and participate in community life on an equal footing with men.
- Optimize humanitarian assistance by facilitating and coordinating the activities of UN agencies and NGOs.

### Planning figures

Type of population	Origin	Jan 2009		Dec 2009	
		Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR
Returnees (refugees)		500	500	500	500
IDPs		503,000	20,000	500,000	30,000
Without citizenship		728,000	200,000	728,000	200,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,231,500</b>	<b>220,500</b>	<b>1,228,500</b>	<b>230,500</b>



- Facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees from Bangladesh and assist returnees with their reintegration.
- Identify and address the humanitarian needs of communities affected by displacement in south-east Myanmar, and reduce their vulnerability.

## Key targets

- UNHCR and its partners gain access to the population of concern within Northern Rakhine State and deliver assistance.
- Voluntary repatriation from Bangladesh is facilitated.
- Direct assistance is given to individuals with specific needs.
- Health services in Northern Rakhine State are strengthened, with a special focus on malaria and TB, and the population's reproductive health status improves.
- Women and adolescent girls participate in skills development and self-reliance activities.
- The number of people without citizenship who can speak the Myanmar language grows.
- More children without citizenship attend and complete State primary school in Northern Rakhine State.
- People without citizenship enjoy basic social and economic rights, while specific protection cases receive support.
- The distribution of TRCs continues to provide individual documentation to persons without citizenship in Northern Rakhine State.
- Access to safe water in south-east Myanmar is improved.
- Living conditions in relocation sites in the south-east improve and the number of displaced living there is reduced.
- The construction of rural health care centres improves primary health care in south-east Myanmar.
- The sustainability of infrastructure projects is ensured, and livelihood opportunities and community structures enhanced, through the training of community services volunteers in communities affected by displacement.
- The construction and equipping of schools improves primary education in the south-east.
- A database on people affected by displacement is made available to humanitarian actors, improving assistance.

## Strategy and activities

The Office will continue to adopt a two-track approach in its two areas of operations: Northern Rakhine State and the south-east. On the one hand, it will focus on

familiarizing the authorities with international legal and procedural standards; on the other, it will combine protection interventions with humanitarian assistance and community mobilization in key sectors.

UNHCR will also continue to articulate its concerns for returnees and the resident population in the Northern Rakhine State who, while recognized as legal residents of Myanmar, do not benefit from Myanmar citizenship. The Office will try to improve the legal status of this population by continuing to help the Government to provide identity documents. In parallel, monitoring and intervention at the local level are expected to reduce adverse practices.

The humanitarian assistance provided by UNHCR and its partners is compensating, at least partially, for the lack of adequate public infrastructure. The Office will continue to support gender equality through educational programmes and other community-based interventions.

In south-east Myanmar, UNHCR will continue village-level projects which emphasize community mobilization. Quick-impact schemes will restore basic services and help maintain UNHCR's access to the population in the area affected by displacement.

## Constraints

The overall environment for humanitarian action in Myanmar remains challenging, particularly with regard to access to some areas in the south-east with populations affected by displacement.

## Organization and implementation

UNHCR presence	
Number of offices	2
Total staff	90
International	11
National	60
JPOs	2
UNVs	17

## Coordination

UNHCR is recognized by all stakeholders in Northern Rakhine State as the primary coordinator of a multi-sectoral assistance programme within which UN agencies and NGOs provide essential services. The inter-agency approach has been a pillar of the operations.

In the south-east, UNHCR is developing working relations with the local authorities, gaining the trust of target communities and establishing partnerships with humanitarian NGOs. The Office chairs the population movement working group of the UN country team, which is a platform for regular and structured inter-agency cooperation. In the field, UNHCR shares an office with UNICEF in Mawlamyine.

## Partners

### Implementing partners

Government agencies: 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, International HIV/AIDS Alliance, Myanmar Red Cross Society

Others: United Nations Volunteers

### Operational partners

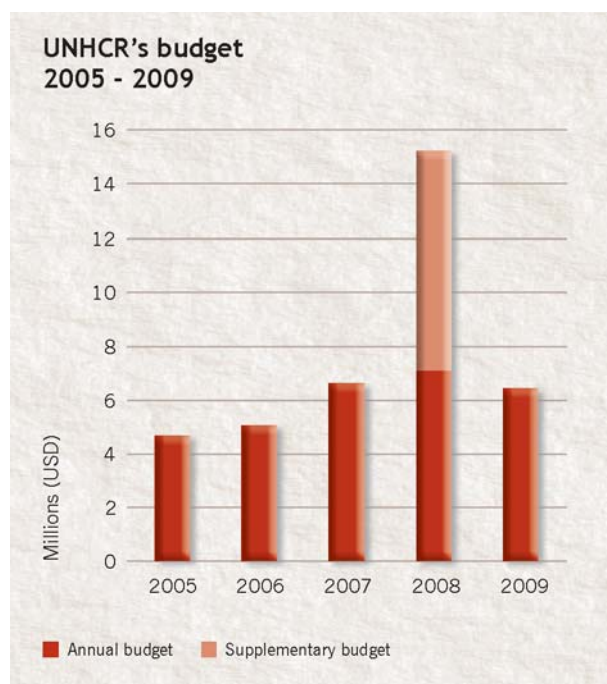
Government agencies: Ministry of Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs

NGOs: *Groupe de Recherche et d'Échanges Technologiques*

Others: FAO, UNDP, UNICEF, WFP

This geographical expansion has been combined with new activities to meet needs in the health, nutrition and livelihood sectors. The budget for UNHCR's operation in the south-east, which began in 2004, has increased regularly since then.

Resources needed for the annual programme in 2009 will remain in line with the previous year. The 2008 overall budget was increased by USD 8.7 million to cover the cost of UNHCR's response to Cyclone Nargis.



## Financial information

The budget for the Myanmar operation has risen since 2003 as a result of UNHCR's decision to expand the area of its activities in Northern Rakhine State.

Activities and services	2008			2009
	Annual budget	Supplementary budget Cyclone	Total	Annual budget
Protection, monitoring and coordination	1,465,390	602,000	2,067,390	1,712,288
Community services	277,532	0	277,532	315,000
Domestic needs	41,410	2,150,500	2,191,910	55,000
Education	411,353	0	411,353	430,000
Food	0	123,356	123,356	0
Health	901,693	0	901,693	770,000
Legal assistance	303,090	0	303,090	465,000
Operational support (to agencies)	223,948	12,319	236,267	285,000
Sanitation	10,000	0	10,000	0
Shelter and infrastructure	40,000	2,459,478	2,499,478	100,000
Transport and logistics	558,274	2,762,216	3,320,490	470,000
Water	332,700	0	332,700	340,000
<b>Total operations</b>	<b>4,565,390</b>	<b>8,109,869</b>	<b>12,675,259</b>	<b>4,942,288</b>
Programme support	1,609,873	0	1,609,873	1,458,266
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,175,264</b>	<b>8,109,869</b>	<b>14,285,133</b>	<b>6,400,554</b>

Note: Supplementary programme budgets exclude 7 per cent support costs that are recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.