

SPCP Thailand

February 2008

Overview

The SPCP-Thailand, which is now entering its second year, has to date, received over US 2 million to support projects developed as part of the SPCP-T process. These address many of the persistent protection gaps facing refugees in Thailand and are bringing needed improvements to their lives.

The developments noted below have been achieved through close cooperation with NGO and international partners and refugees and with the firm funding support of key donors. The latter include, most notably, the Europe Commission, the Australian and United States governments and *Australia for UNHCR*. In addition, many projects developed as part of the SPCP-T have also been prioritised as part of the High Commissioner's Special Projects Fund. Moreover, all form part of the 'Comprehensive Plan Addressing the Needs of Displaced Persons', developed by UNHCR and a consortium of NGOs (CCSDPT). This Plan is a living document, with an update anticipated mid 2008.

Achievements

Security from violence and exploitation

SPCP-T projects are helping to provide a safer environment for women and children. Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) is one of the most persistent protection problems in refugee camps on the Thai-Myanmar border, and several SPCP interventions are directly targeting gaps in SGBV prevention and response mechanisms.

A major focus of these interventions has been providing community-based organisations with the knowledge and

resources to take the lead in preventing and responding to SGBV. Regular meetings and training sessions have contributed to strengthened SGBV Committees and case management by local stakeholders. Other projects have supported safe houses for SGBV survivors and income generating opportunities to provide them with alternate means of support. In addition, substance addiction treatment programmes have expanded to address one of the causes of the high incidence of domestic violence experienced in the camps.



Expanding opportunities for self-reliance

The SPCP-T sponsored the development of a livelihood strategy with key technical support provided by the International Labour Organisation. One of the projects developed as part of this strategy is ground-breaking in so far as it is targeting predominantly female refugees and Thai locals, equipping them with a means to support themselves and provide needed benefits to their communities. The participants receive agricultural skills training and access to land to put their skills to use. Their produce is then sold, including within the camp, providing them with a source of income and increasing the availability of fresh food in the camp.

With funding from *Australia for UNHCR*, a new group of 120 participants will be recruited in mid-2008: two thirds will be refugees, at least 50% of whom will be SGBV survivors, recovering addicts and their families. UNHCR and ILO will also be collaborating on the submission of additional income generating activities in Mae Ra Ma Luang camp to the UN Trust Fund for Human Security. Meanwhile, work continues with NGOs to develop further livelihoods projects in line with a UNHCR-ILO livelihood strategy.



Livelihood initiatives are also receiving a boost from the interest of corporate sponsors. Manpower and NIKE are currently working together on a joint proposal for Thai government approval for textile skills training for refugees and job placement in local industries. In addition, Microsoft is currently working with ZOA Refugee Care for the training of refugees to be computer instructors in their communities.

Additional training programmes are underway to address the shortages of refugee health and education workers, occasioned by the resettlement of former refugee workers in these sectors.

Camp administration and access to justice

Two interlinked initiatives aiming to improve camp administration and access to justice are being initiated in the camps as part of the Comprehensive Plan. The first is the establishment of Legal Assistance Centres (LACs) in three camps through International Rescue Committee (IRC). The LACs aim to strengthen the rule of law, enable greater refugee access to the Thai justice system and improve traditional justice mechanisms. The second initiative provides support to the Ministry of Justice to improve the administration of justice in the camps. Through this initiative, a restorative juvenile justice system based on a family and community group conferencing method is being piloted in the camps.

Way forward

Many projects developed as part of the SPCP-T in 2007 are being mainstreamed into UNHCR Thailand's regular programmatic activities in 2008. There are many others, however, that await additional funds for implementation. Priority areas include projects to address key protection needs of **urban refugees** particularly those who are at risk of arrest and indefinite detention. In addition, funding is required to enhance **camp security**, as well as bolstering **camp management** and providing necessary **psycho-social support** services to SGBV survivors and other refugees in need. As well, support for the effective implementation of measures to prevent and respond to **SGBV** is ongoing. Finally, continued interest and advocacy for an expansion of **self reliance** opportunities remains pressing.

More information on the Strengthening Protection Capacity Project, including the SPCP-Thailand initiative, can be found at www.unhcr.org/spcp