

Thailand MCO

Multi-year Strategy 2022 – 2026



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1.1 Executive Summary

UNHCR's Thailand multi-country office covers Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Laos), Thailand, and Viet Nam. Each has distinct legal frameworks, socioeconomic conditions, and governmental approaches to forcibly displaced and stateless people. Among these four nations, only Cambodia has signed the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees while none have acceded to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

Looking ahead to 2025 and beyond, UNHCR envisions a future where all refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Viet Nam have greater access to international protection, basic rights, and durable solutions. To achieve this, UNHCR will focus on expanding the protection available to these groups through advocacy, capacity-building and direct protection interventions.

Conflict in Myanmar is expected to continue in 2025. In view of this, UNHCR will continue its collaboration with national and local inter-sector working groups to advocate for safe access to territory, non-refoulement, and humanitarian support for those fleeing violence and persecution in Myanmar.

In Thailand, UNHCR will deepen partnerships to strengthen protection and solutions for the protracted refugee population in the nine, Government-managed temporary shelters on the Thailand-Myanmar border. UNHCR will work with partners to strengthen child protection systems and address gender-based violence, while also ensuring refugees' access to the Thai justice system. A focus for 2025 will be maintaining the large-scale resettlement programme initiated in 2023 for those living in temporary shelters, alongside efforts to advocate for refugees' inclusion into Thai institutions.

In the fight against statelessness, UNHCR will continue to support governments across Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Viet Nam to prevent and reduce statelessness. Building on Thailand's cabinet resolution of 29 October 2024, to accelerate citizenship pathways for some 480,000 stateless individuals, UNHCR will enhance its collaboration with national authorities and local partners in Thailand, focusing on tailored capacity-building initiatives and civil registration.

More broadly, UNHCR will maintain its strong partnerships with UN agencies to support the implementation of the UN Sustainable Cooperation Frameworks in Cambodia, Laos,

Thailand, and Viet Nam. These frameworks are aligned with UN Member States' commitment to leave no one behind and includes provisions for both stateless people and, in the case of Thailand and Cambodia, refugees as well.

1.2 Situation Analysis

The resurgence of conflict in Myanmar triggered by the 2021 February coup has led to new waves of displacement within Myanmar and to neighbouring countries, including Thailand. The Royal Thai Government manages new arrivals and places them in temporary safety areas, in line with established government procedures, with plans for their return to Myanmar once fighting subsides. UNHCR, along with other humanitarian organizations, has established national and provincial structures to coordinate the humanitarian response and deliver relief assistance when requested by authorities. However, despite ongoing advocacy, UNHCR's access to those who crossed into Thailand remains limited.

As of October 2024, 81,000 refugees, primarily from Karen, Karenni, and other ethnic groups from Myanmar were residing in nine temporary shelters along the Thailand-Myanmar border. Some have lived in Thailand since the mid-1980s after fleeing persecution or conflict between ethnic armed groups and the Myanmar military. Camp residents are not officially permitted to work or to access public services or live outside the temporary shelters, making them reliant on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs.

UNHCR's work in the temporary shelters focuses on supporting refugees in finding solutions to their protracted situation through a large-scale group resettlement programme that began in 2023 and will continue for the coming years for verified refugees who express interest. In collaboration with partners, UNHCR is focused on strengthening child protection, streamlining efforts to address gender-based violence and improving access for forcibly displaced to the Thai justice system. Longstanding advocacy for inclusion, such as access to employment opportunities and public services beyond the camps will continue for those refugees who remain and while the resettlement process is rolled out over the coming years.

In Thailand's urban areas, 3,467 refugees and 2,311 asylum-seekers are registered with UNHCR as of end October 2024. Without legal status granted by Thai authorities, they face the risk of arrest and detention and are unable to work or access essential services. UNHCR carries out refugee status determination under its mandate and works to find durable solutions for the most vulnerable refugees. In parallel, the Royal Thai Government has developed the National Screening Mechanism designed to distinguish people needing international protection. Launched in September 2023, UNHCR works closely with the Royal Thai Government to strengthen the policy and procedures of this

mechanism, particularly in establishing the legal status of those recognized as “protected persons” and their access to basic rights and services.

The protection environment remains precarious for Rohingya arrivals in Thailand. Although they have access to the victim of trafficking procedure under the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, decision-making under the mechanism is inconsistent. Rohingya are detained in immigration detention centres and while mothers and children can be transferred to closed shelters under a memorandum of understanding on the determination of measures and approaches alternatives to detention of children, the process has significant gaps in its implementation.

Thailand also hosts one of the world’s largest stateless populations, with 586,548 registered stateless people as of October 2024. The country continues to demonstrate political commitment to addressing statelessness through its support of the #IBelong campaign to end statelessness and the Global Alliance to End Statelessness, as well as pledges made at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum. On 30 October 2024, the Thai cabinet approved a historic resolution to accelerate efforts toward ending statelessness, aligning with the national pledge to recognize and protect stateless individuals. This decision expedites processing of applications for some 480,000 with more than 140,000 to be eligible for nationality and another 380,000 to be eligible for permanent residence with the right to apply for nationality in five years.

Thailand’s civil registration and nationality laws have provided a pathway for over 100,000 stateless people with a route to acquiring nationality since 2008. However, the processing of applications remains slow, and stateless people in Thailand continue to face challenges accessing their basic rights such as freedom of movement and healthcare. The newly approved cabinet resolution should rectify this weakness.

In Cambodia, the only country covered by the Thailand multi-country office to have signed the 1951 Convention, the framework for refugee protection exists but needs strengthening. As of October 2024, there are 28 refugees and five asylum-seekers of various nationalities registered with Cambodia’s Refugee Department. However, access to the asylum system remains limited. In line with national law, UNHCR will continue to advocate for refugees’ fundamental rights to be upheld, including their access to employment and adequate standards of living and housing, as well as their right to purchase property, obtain driver’s licenses, access banking services, and enjoy freedom of movement.

In July 2023, Cambodia passed a law on civil registration, vital statistics, and identification, which has provided a comprehensive legal framework in these areas although its implementation is still being developed. Cambodia lacks official statistics on statelessness, but the Immigration Department estimates that 75,000 ethnic Vietnamese have had their legal documentation revoked, leaving them stateless and

without access to employment or social protection, with little information available to assess their community participation and self-reliance.

In Laos and Viet Nam, frameworks for identifying international protection needs are absent and neither country has signed the 1951 Convention nor its 1967 Protocol. In recent years, only a few people have raised international protection needs in either country.

Viet Nam, which reported that 26,811 people would fall under UNHCR's statelessness mandate at the end of 2022, faces similar challenges due to gaps in its nationality law, such as the single nationality principle and the provision to renounce nationality without adequate safeguards, as well as limited access to civil registration. Currently, stateless people do not have the right to work and have limited access to social protection. Despite this, Viet Nam under the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration pledged to undertake various activities that help address statelessness, including ratification of the statelessness conventions.

1.3 Vision and Strategic Orientation

UNHCR envisions a future where all forcibly displaced and stateless people in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Viet Nam have improved access to protection, safety, basic rights, and durable solutions. In 2025, UNHCR will focus on expanding access to territories for those seeking international protection while advocating for governments to uphold the principle of non-refoulement through stronger legal frameworks and promoting a greater understanding of the rights of forcibly displaced and stateless people.

Along the Thailand-Myanmar border, UNHCR will advocate for greater access to international protection, solutions, and standardized humanitarian assistance for all new arrivals from Myanmar. In the nine temporary shelters, resettlement activities will open up solutions for thousands of refugees in 2025 and the years to come. UNHCR will continue to implement protection activities including securing birth and civil registration for those who require it, promoting access to justice and healthcare, and providing protection from gender-based violence as well as child protection services and formal education. In tandem, UNHCR will continue to advocate for their right to work. Regular communication with refugee leaders and communities through protection counselling through hotlines and in person will ensure their voices are reflected in policies and advocacy efforts.

UNHCR's strategic priorities in Thailand's urban areas include:

- Supporting the Royal Thai Government to implement the national screening mechanism fairly and effectively while advocating for access to basic services and the right to work

- Improving refugees and asylum-seekers' access to education
- Promoting safe alternatives to detention
- Building partnerships to provide a safety net for refugees and asylum-seekers who need support
- Prioritizing resettlement for refugees who are at heightened risk and lack access to local solutions
- Stepping up dialogue with the Royal Thai Government on Rohingya arrivals, focusing on access to asylum and exploring how the national referral mechanism can support victims of trafficking, as well as identifying durable solutions for them

In Cambodia, UNHCR will offer technical and capacity-building support to strengthen the national asylum system and will advocate for greater access to rights for forcibly displaced people.

To better identify, prevent and reduce statelessness, UNHCR will support authorities in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Viet Nam to implement improved law and policy frameworks, including those related to civil registration and vital statistics, legal identity, and nationality procedures. More specifically, UNHCR will focus on:

- Improving access to rights and services for stateless people, including to healthcare, education, social protection mechanisms and livelihoods
- Raising awareness of the issues affecting stateless people, including among government officials and the public
- Supporting civil society engagement with the governments to help identify and resolve statelessness

A key priority in both Thailand and Viet Nam will be supporting government efforts to meaningfully reduce their stateless populations, most notably through access to legal status, including nationality procedures.

1.4 Fair Access and Representation

UNHCR's work along the Thailand-Myanmar border is informed by its age, gender, and diversity (AGD) policy, and community-based protection principles. This multi-pronged approach ensures that the diverse perspectives of refugees residing in temporary shelters are systematically captured and used to shape UNHCR programming. Central to this is the joint registration with the Royal Thai Government, which regularly updates individualized data, including AGD breakdowns, to ensure that the needs of various groups, including for those with varying registration statuses, are accurately reflected. Registration is complemented by numerous outreach efforts with refugee communities, including protection counselling, focus group discussions, and home visits for people with specific needs, as well as hotlines or helplines, direct emails, and complaint boxes to convey concerns, suggestions, or request information and for UNHCR to ensure that appropriate action is taken. In urban areas, UNHCR mainstreams its AGD approach by:

- Accelerating registration and refugee status determination for vulnerable people
- Conducting vulnerability assessments to identify recipients of cash assistance
- Advocating for alternatives to detention for different vulnerable groups
- Enhancing communication with communities through focus group discussions and other established channels.

UNHCR is also supporting the Royal Thai Government to develop an AGD-sensitive protection framework in conjunction with its national screening mechanism.

2. Impact Statements

Impact statement

Statelessness is identified, prevented and reduced through the effective implementation of improved law and policy frameworks, including those related to civil registration and vital statistics, legal identity and nationality procedures

Impact area: Attaining favourable protection environments

Outcome statements

Law and policy strengthened, and Administrative institutions and practice developed/strengthened.

Outcome area: Protection policy and law

Stateless people have access to civil registration and civil status documentation.

Outcome area: Access to territory, registration and documentation

Impact statement

Refugees and asylum-seekers have access to territory, are protected from refoulement, can seek asylum and enjoy their full range of rights through strengthened national protection frameworks

Impact area: Attaining favourable protection environments

Outcome statements

Refugees and asylum seekers have access to the territory and are profiled and registered.

Outcome area: Access to territory, registration and documentation

Asylum seekers have access to quality status determination procedures.

Outcome area: Refugee status determination

Law and policy strengthened, and Administrative institutions and practice developed/strengthened.

Outcome area: Protection policy and law

Refugees and asylum seekers have access to legal assistance and legal remedies.

Outcome area: Safety and access to justice

Impact statement

Refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, and stateless people enjoy improved access to basic rights and essential services through strengthened laws and policies, enhanced understanding and capacity among service providers, and increased recognition of their status as rights holders

Impact area: Realizing rights in safe environments

Outcome statements

Risk of gender-based violence is reduced and the quality of response improved, and the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse is mainstreamed in all areas.

Outcome area: Gender-based violence

The protection of children has been strengthened through effective structures and response services.

Outcome area: Child protection

All refugees can sufficiently cover their basic needs.

Outcome area: Well-being and basic needs

The population has sufficient access to clean energy.

Outcome area: Sustainable housing and settlements

The health status of the refugees has improved.

Outcome area: Healthy lives

Logistics and supply have been optimized to serve operational needs.

Outcome area: Operational support and supply chain

Impact statement

Refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people can become self-reliant and benefit from access to inclusive and equitable quality education, meaningful livelihood opportunities and increased community empowerment and engagement in a safe and discrimination-free environment, including on gender-related grounds

Impact area: Empowering communities and achieving gender equality

Outcome statements

Community mobilization has been strengthened and expanded.

*Outcome area: Community engagement and women's empowerment
Displaced and stateless people have optimal access to inclusive and equitable education and learning opportunities within the national education system.*

*Outcome area: Education
Stateless people are self-reliant through access to means of livelihoods.*

Outcome area: Self-reliance, economic inclusion and livelihoods

Impact statement

Refugees have improved access to a range of durable solutions, including local integration, third-country solutions, and facilitated voluntary return and can acquire nationality, while stateless people have enhanced pathways to acquire nationality and achieve legal recognition

Impact area: Securing solutions

Outcome statements

The potential for voluntary return has been realized.

*Outcome area: Voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration
The potential for resettlement and complementary pathways has been realized.*

*Outcome area: Resettlement and complementary pathways
The potential for integration has been realized.*

Outcome area: Local integration and other local solutions

3. Thailand Multi-Country Office 2025 Indicators and Targets

Country	Results Level	Result Area	Indicator	Population Type	Baseline	Target 2025
Thailand	Impact	IA1: Protect	1.2 Proportion of people who are able to move freely within the country of habitual residence	Stateless Persons	0%	Not applicable
Thailand	Impact	IA2: Respond	2.3 Proportion of people with access to health services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100%	Not applicable
Thailand	Impact	IA3:	3.1 Proportion of people who	Refugees	0%	Not

d		Empower	have the right to decent work	and Asylum-seekers		applicable
Thailand	Impact	IA3: Empower	3.1 Proportion of people who have the right to decent work	Stateless Persons	100%	Not applicable
Thailand	Impact	IA3: Empower	3.2a Proportion of children and young people enrolled in primary education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	64%	Not applicable
Thailand	Impact	IA3: Empower	3.2a Proportion of children and young people enrolled in primary education	Stateless Persons	87%	Not applicable
Thailand	Impact	IA3: Empower	3.2b Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	88%	Not applicable
Thailand	Impact	IA3: Empower	3.2b Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education	Stateless Persons	20%	Not applicable
Thailand	Impact	IA4: Solve	4.1 Number of refugees who voluntarily return in safety and dignity to their country of origin	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	8	Not applicable
Thailand	Impact	IA4: Solve	4.2a Number of people who departed on resettlement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,717	Not applicable
Thailand	Impact	IA4: Solve	4.2b Number of people who departed through complementary pathways	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	963	Not applicable
Thailand	Impact	IA4: Solve	4.3a Number of stateless people for whom nationality is granted or confirmed	Stateless Persons	7,708	Not applicable
Thailand	Impact	IA4: Solve	4.3b Number of refugees for whom residency status is granted or confirmed	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	Not applicable
Thailand	Outcome	OA1: Access/Doc	1.1 Proportion of refugees and asylum seekers registered on an individual basis	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100%	100%

Thailand	Outcome	OA1: Access/Doc	1.2 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100%	100%
Thailand	Outcome	OA1: Access/Doc	1.3 Proportion of people with legally recognized identity documents or credentials	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100%	100%
Thailand	Outcome	OA2: Status	2.1 Average processing time (in days) from registration to first instance asylum decision	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	298	140
Thailand	Outcome	OA2: Status	2.2 Proportion of people undergoing asylum procedures who have access to legal representation	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100%	100%
Thailand	Outcome	OA2: Status	2.3 Proportion of people undergoing asylum procedures who have access to an effective appeal mechanism after first instance rejection of their claim	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100%	100%
Thailand	Outcome	OA3: Policy/Law	3.1 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol	None	Not yet aligned: ≤69 points	Not yet aligned: ≤69 points
Thailand	Outcome	OA3: Policy/Law	3.2 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness	None	Not yet aligned: ≤69 points	Progressing towards alignment: 70-89 points
Thailand	Outcome	OA4: GBV	4.1 Proportion of people who know where to access available GBV services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	93%	82%
Thailand	Outcome	OA5: Children	5.1 Proportion of children at heightened risk who are supported by a Best Interests Procedure	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	27%	57%
Thailand	Outcome	OA5: Children	5.2 Proportion of children who participate in community-based child protection programmes	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	74%	91%

Thailand	Outcome	OA5: Children	5.3 Proportion of unaccompanied and separated children who are in an alternative care arrangement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100%	100%
Thailand	Outcome	OA7: Community	7.1 Extent participation of displaced and stateless people across programme phases is supported.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Extensive: ≥70 points	Extensive: ≥70 points
Thailand	Outcome	OA7: Community	7.3 Proportion of women participating in leadership/management structures	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	28%	34%
Thailand	Outcome	OA8: Well-being	8.1 Proportion of people that receive cash transfers and/or non-food items	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	58%	54%
Thailand	Outcome	OA10: Health	10.1 Proportion of children aged 9 months to five years who have received measles vaccination	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100%	100%
Thailand	Outcome	OA11: Education	11.1 Proportion of young people enrolled in tertiary and higher education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	To be confirmed	4%
Thailand	Outcome	OA11: Education	11.2 Proportion of children and young people enrolled in the national education system	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	49%	73%
Thailand	Outcome	OA13: Livelihood	13.1. Proportion of people with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0%	3%
Thailand	Outcome	OA15: Resettle	15.1 Number of refugees submitted by UNHCR for resettlement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	5,165	To be confirmed