

Annual Results Report

2025

Malaysia

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Note:

The baseline values presented in this document reflect previous year's progress when available. If such data is not available, strategy baseline values are used instead.

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- 4.1 - Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

Section 1: Context and Overview

1.1 Changes to the Operational Context

In 2025, refugees and asylum-seekers continued to seek safety and protection in Malaysia although the overall protection environment remained constrained. In the absence of a formal legal framework recognizing refugees, people remained at risk of arrest and detention, particularly those not registered with UNHCR.

Access to justice mechanisms and alternatives to detention remained limited. Refugees' access to public services was restricted and most relied on informal employment to meet basic needs, increasing their exposure to exploitation and abuse. Forcibly displaced and stateless children were unable to attend public schools, relying instead on community-based learning centres with varying levels of support. Public discourse also continued to shape perceptions of refugees, affecting social cohesion and well-being. At the same time, reduced global resettlement quotas prolonged uncertainty for those in need of durable solutions, while budgetary constraints at both global and country levels further narrowed the scope of humanitarian assistance available.

Against this backdrop, the Government of Malaysia announced its intention to initiate its own refugee registration process as part of broader efforts to establish a national asylum framework. This development marked a potentially significant evolution in the policy landscape. UNHCR intensified engagement with Government counterparts to support a transition grounded in international protection standards and aimed at minimizing protection risks.

By year-end, UNHCR had registered approximately 214,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, reflecting an 11% increase compared to 2024. The population remained predominantly from Myanmar (90%), alongside smaller groups from more than 60 other countries. The registered population consisted of men (46%), women (23%), boys (16%) and girls (15%). An estimated 9,153 stateless people – primarily of Indian Tamil origin – resided in West Malaysia, while comprehensive data for East Malaysia remained unavailable. These contextual and demographic developments shaped UNHCR's operational response. Priorities included stronger engagement with authorities on the emerging national framework, advocacy for access to territory and protection safeguards, expansion of community-based protection approaches, and targeted resource mobilization to mitigate the impact of funding shortfalls on essential services.

1.2. Progress Against the Desired Impact

1. Impact Area: Attaining Favorable Protection Environments

By 2025, asylum-seekers will have access to territory and asylum procedures, refugees will enjoy access to basic rights, and stateless people will access nationality procedures

Population Type	Indicator	
	Baseline	Actual (2025)
1.1 Proportion of people seeking international protection who are able to access asylum procedures		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	5.71%	5.22%

In 2025, UNHCR intensified engagement with the Government of Malaysia to support discussions on a national asylum framework, with the objective of promoting a more predictable and protection-sensitive system. Structured capacity-sharing initiatives on refugee status determination, registration and procedural safeguards strengthened institutional understanding of international protection standards. While modalities for a State-led system remain under development, these engagements laid important groundwork for more structured asylum governance. Advocacy efforts focused on access to territory and asylum, access to people in immigration detention, protection from refoulement and the use of alternatives to detention. Efforts to enhance access to justice were reinforced through engagement with members of the judiciary and collaboration with the Bar Council. Information sessions supported refugees' understanding of their rights and responsibilities within the national legal context, contributing to more informed engagement with domestic institutions.

During the reporting period, case processing methodologies were applied strategically to preserve system integrity and prioritize individuals at heightened risk. In 2025, 25,557 individuals were newly registered and 11,471 refugee status determination decisions were issued. These processes contributed to timely documentation, identification of specific needs and targeted referral to services. Documentation continued to play an important protective function, facilitating access to basic services and reducing vulnerability to arrest or exploitation.

Efforts to expand access to basic rights were supported through strengthened partnerships with the UN country team, civil society and private sector actors. In line with a route-based approach, UNHCR enhanced coordination with operations across the region to monitor and analyze movement trends. Collaboration with IOM advanced discussions on labour mobility pathways aimed at expanding safe and regular avenues for protection and solutions. UNHCR also worked closely with UN partners to promote more inclusive approaches to citizenship and civil documentation for stateless people.

2. Impact Area: Realizing Rights in Safe Environments

By 2025, more refugees can exercise their rights to meet basic needs and affordable healthcare, either under a national policy framework that grants refugees access to legal work and national protection systems (including healthcare) or, until such a framework is in place, through a more robust network of alternative assistance, protection services and healthcare providers

Population Type	Indicator	
	Baseline	Actual (2025)
2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	52.31%	52.31%
2.3 Proportion of people with access to health services		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	90.86%	90.86%

In 2025, the Government advanced discussions about establishing a national asylum framework and more inclusive refugee policies.

In parallel with structured capacity-sharing programmes on refugee status determination and asylum procedures, UNHCR engaged key line ministries, including the Ministries of Human Resources and Health, as well as other stakeholders, to initiate discussions on transitional measures aimed at ensuring smooth implementation and minimizing disruption to essential services.

Refugees and asylum-seekers continued to access health care services at public and private facilities. However, the application of “foreigner” rates – which were significantly higher than subsidized local rates – remained a major barrier, often deterring timely treatment and leading to more serious health conditions and higher overall costs.

Unregistered refugees faced additional obstacles, including fear of arrest and acute financial constraints. UNHCR and NGO-supported primary health care and referral services remained overstretched, further affected by funding shortfalls and disruptions in external support. The resumption of the refugee medical insurance (REMEDI) scheme in November 2024 provided a mechanism to mitigate the cost of emergency care. Funding made available for full or partial sponsorship of REMEDI premiums – particularly for vulnerable people – increased the number of refugees covered.

Two health coordination meetings were convened in four states hosting the largest refugee populations (Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Penang and Kedah), where approximately 72% of refugees reside. These meetings strengthened engagement between Government health authorities, service providers, NGOs and refugee community representatives, contributing to greater coordination and service delivery.

Refugees and asylum-seekers were also included in the Ministry of Health’s measles and rubella supplementary immunization activity, enabling children under five to access free vaccinations that would otherwise have been inaccessible due to cost and protection concerns.

Despite progress in policy dialogue, refugees continued to face significant challenges in meeting basic needs within an uncertain operating environment. Findings from the Joint Data Centre-funded World Bank–UNHCR study on refugee livelihoods and well-being indicated that 93% of refugees live below the national poverty line, with more than 53% of households experiencing severe food insecurity. Average monthly household income was approximately MYR 1,500 (approximately \$380) – below Malaysia’s minimum wage of MYR 1,700 (approximately \$431) – further constraining access to essential services.

3. Impact Area: Empowering Communities and Achieving Gender Equality

By 2025, more refugees will have opportunities for growth and self-reliance, and are protected from violence, exploitation, and abuse, through strengthened and expanded community-based feedback and support mechanisms and outreach interventions

Population Type	Indicator	
	Baseline	Actual (2025)
3.1 Proportion of people who have the right to decent work		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0.00%	0.00%
3.2a Proportion of children and young people enrolled in primary education		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	44.12%	47.38%
3.2b Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	29.14%	26.33%
3.3 Proportion of people feeling safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	40.01%	40.01%

In 2025, refugees continued to face challenges in accessing essential services amid persistent policy ambiguity surrounding their status in Malaysia. Without legal access to formal employment, many sought work in the informal sector.

Findings from the Joint Data Centre-funded World Bank–UNHCR report on refugee livelihoods and well-being indicated an unemployment rate of approximately 31% among refugees, compared to a national average of 3%. This reflects the significant underutilization of a willing workforce, largely due to the absence of a legal framework permitting refugee employment and the resulting reluctance of employers to hire informally. Progress toward a national asylum framework could help strengthen refugee self-reliance, particularly through regulated access to work.

Despite ongoing constraints, progress was made in expanding access to education. Enrolment reached 47% of refugee children and young people at primary school level (48% female, 52% male) and 26% at secondary level (49% female, 51% male), with an additional 24% accessing pre-primary education. UNHCR supported 179 informal learning centres through partnerships with NGOs, civil society and refugee-led organizations, providing basic education services, teacher training, learning materials and small operational grants. However, demand continued to outpace capacity, with approximately two in three refugee children remaining out of school.

The perception-of-safety indicator was last measured through a results monitoring survey conducted in 2023. Although initially planned for 2024, the survey was not carried out due to funding and capacity constraints, which persisted in 2025. Feedback collected through the community feedback collection tool indicated that refugees' sense of safety was closely linked to possession of UNHCR documentation. Registration and recognition provided a degree of protection from arrest and detention and facilitated access to certain services, including health care at Government facilities. In addition to regular processing functions (registration, refugee status determination and data management), two referral pathways – the Partner Referral Network and the Community Referral Network – expedited consideration of vulnerable cases. The legal protection unit also supported intervention and release efforts for detained refugees and asylum-seekers.

4. Impact Area: Securing Solutions

By 2025, refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people will have access to sustainable solutions, through voluntary repatriation, resettlement, complementary pathways, nationality procedures, and inclusion in national social protection mechanisms

Population Type	Indicator	
	Baseline	Actual (2025)
4.1 Number of refugees who voluntarily return in safety and dignity to their country of origin		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	87	199
4.2a Number of people who departed on resettlement		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	7,012	1,365
4.2b Number of people who departed through complementary pathways		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,896	1,017
4.3a Number of stateless people for whom nationality is granted or confirmed		
Stateless Persons	209	0
4.3b Number of refugees for whom residency status is granted or confirmed		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Data not available	0

In line with the Global Compact on Refugees and the regional protection and solutions strategy, UNHCR continued to use resettlement strategically to expand protection space and support progress toward more inclusive approaches to refugee protection in Malaysia, including ongoing discussions related to the development of a national asylum framework.

In 2025, 25,080 refugees in Malaysia were assessed as being in need of resettlement. However, global shifts in the resettlement landscape significantly affected available opportunities. Adjustments within the United States Refugee Admissions Programme, including a pause in submissions, led to a substantial reduction in overall submission capacity. Australia, Canada and New Zealand continued to accept cases from Malaysia, enabling the submission of 1,920 individuals with heightened protection risks, compared to 9,125 submissions in 2024.

Departures also declined, with 2,382 refugees departing through resettlement or complementary pathways in 2025, compared to 8,908 in the previous year. The reduction in departures prolonged uncertainty for many refugees and limited access to durable solutions for those with acute protection needs.

Despite these constraints, resettlement and complementary pathways remained critical protection tools, providing life-saving solutions for the most vulnerable cases and contributing to international responsibility-sharing. Complementary pathways continued to be explored as part of a broader route-based approach to protection and solutions.

Voluntary repatriation remained a limited but available solution. In 2025, 199 individuals returned to their countries of origin, compared to 87 in 2024. These returns reflected individual decisions based on personal circumstances and perceived changes in conditions in countries of origin.

Overall, while the number of durable solutions realized decreased due to external factors, continued strategic use of resettlement and complementary pathways contributed to protection outcomes for the most at-risk people and reinforced engagement with States on shared responsibility for refugee protection.

For stateless people with a potential claim to Malaysian nationality, the solution lies in acquiring nationality through Malaysian authorities. This required submitting a citizenship application to the National Registration Department although challenges often arose as administrative and documentary requirements could be complex and processing times could extend over many months or even years.

1.3 Challenges to Achieving Impacts

Progress toward improved protection outcomes for refugees and asylum-seekers in Malaysia continued to face structural and operational constraints in 2025. In the absence of a legal framework recognizing refugees, they remained without access to legal employment, formal education, affordable health care and social protection schemes. As a result, many experienced chronic poverty and heightened exposure to exploitation, discrimination and other protection risks. Limited livelihood opportunities and restricted access to services continued to constrain progress toward greater self-reliance and inclusion.

Resource limitations further affected registration and refugee status determination processing capacity, leading to extended waiting periods. A significant number of people who applied for asylum in 2025 were not registered within the same year. While UNHCR prioritized case processing in line with its strategy and available capacity, delayed documentation left asylum-seekers and refugees without valid proof of status, increasing their risk of arrest, detention and deportation.

Access constraints remained a key barrier. UNHCR did not have systematic and unhindered access to people held in immigration detention centers to assess international protection needs. Securing release for detained asylum-seekers and refugees continued to present challenges.

In the area of statelessness, 9,153 citizenship applications submitted by the NGO Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas remained pending at the Ministry of Home Affairs as of year-end. Follow-up on these cases was constrained by the organization's limited resources and restricted information-sharing, slowing progress toward durable solutions for affected people.

Despite these challenges, prospects for progress remained. Ongoing discussions with the Government on the development of a national asylum framework presented an opportunity to address structural gaps, including documentation, access to services and potential pathways to legal stay and work. Continued capacity-sharing initiatives and engagement with relevant ministries also provided entry points for strengthening protection safeguards and institutional coordination.

Enhanced collaboration under a route-based approach, alongside exploration of complementary pathways

and responsibility-sharing mechanisms, may contribute to expanding protection space. However, sustained resource mobilization and targeted prioritization remain critical to improving processing efficiency, access to protection and progress toward longer-term solutions.

1.4 Collaboration and Partnerships

Progress toward stronger protection and solutions in Malaysia in 2025 was supported by sustained engagement with national and local stakeholders.

UNHCR engaged with the Government of Malaysia in discussions related to the development of a national asylum framework, including through capacity-sharing initiatives on refugee status determination and asylum procedures. This collaboration contributed to greater awareness of international protection standards and facilitated initial dialogue on possible transitional arrangements.

Partnerships with local authorities, national NGOs, refugee-led and community-based organizations remained central to service delivery and protection monitoring. These actors played a critical role in identifying people with urgent protection needs, facilitating referrals, supporting access to health care and education, and advancing localization efforts through stronger community engagement and leadership. To address resource constraints and promote inclusion, UNHCR enhanced its collaboration with UN agencies, development actors, civil society and private sector partners. These partnerships contributed to incremental progress towards the inclusion of refugees in national systems, including access to health services, justice mechanisms and community-based protection structures, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees.

Engagement with ministries, parliamentarians, State authorities, law enforcement agencies, the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM), the Malaysian Bar and members of the diplomatic community supported advocacy for access to territory and asylum, access to people in immigration detention, and the promotion of alternatives to detention. Collaboration with the judiciary, including capacity-building initiatives for magistrates and judges, further strengthened awareness of refugee protection principles within the national legal framework.

UNHCR also convened and led a protection coordination group to promote information-sharing and alignment among partners. It also strengthened cooperation with resettlement countries, States offering complementary pathways and IOM to support access to third-country solutions and advance responsibility-sharing efforts.

Collectively, these partnerships contributed to sustaining protection space, strengthening institutional dialogue and promoting incremental progress toward more inclusive and predictable protection arrangements.

Section 2: Results

2.1. Outcomes and Achievements

1. Outcome Area: Access to Territory, Reg. and Documentation

By 2025, the quality of reception, registration, documentation and profiling for 65,000 people is better and access to territory is maintained annually

Core Outcome Indicators

Population Type	Indicator		
	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
1.1 Proportion of refugees and asylum seekers registered on an individual basis			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	76.55%	100.00%	68.16%
1.2 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	91.20%	94.00%	90.72%
1.3 Proportion of people with legally recognized identity documents or credentials			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	95.95%	96.00%	97.49%

Core Output Indicators

Population Type	Indicator	
	Actual (2025)	
01.1.1 Number of people registered on an individual basis		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	25,557	
01.2.1 Number of people supported to obtain civil status, identity or legal status documentation		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	93,287	

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

To help mitigate the risk of arrest and detention for refugees and asylum-seekers, and to support their access to essential services, UNHCR renewed and issued 93,287 documents and prioritized registration for 25,557 individuals, including those with long-pending applications and those facing heightened protection risks or vulnerabilities in Malaysia.

Partners and community-based organizations played an important role in identifying and referring vulnerable people with heightened protection risks for expedited registration. Despite budgetary and staffing constraints, registration and documentation remained core operational priorities. UNHCR undertook a review of registration processes to improve efficiency while maintaining strong safeguards and ensuring procedural integrity. The Office also introduced digital gateways self-service kiosks to streamline processes and improve service delivery.

People holding UNHCR documentation were generally protected from arrest and detention, although practices varied nationwide. UNHCR continued to engage constructively with relevant authorities to

promote access to territory and asylum procedures. Nonetheless, some newly arrived asylum-seekers were detained before they could initiate the asylum process. In this context, UNHCR sustained dialogue with stakeholders to facilitate protection-sensitive screening and to ensure people with potential international protection needs were appropriately identified and referred.

The Office also strengthened its advocacy for alternatives to detention, working with key counterparts to advance practical, protection-sensitive approaches consistent with international standards.

By year-end, an estimated 91% of refugee children under five years of age known to UNHCR were registered with civil authorities.

2. Outcome Area: Status Determination

By 2025, refugees benefit from wider access to protection and durable solutions through the strategic application of refugee status determination, while advocacy for a national asylum policy/framework continues

Core Outcome Indicators

Population Type	Indicator		
	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
2.1 Average processing time (in days) from registration to first instance asylum decision			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	189.00	270.00	267.28
2.2 Proportion of people undergoing asylum procedures who have access to legal representation			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
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	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Core Output Indicators

Population Type	Indicator	Actual (2025)
	02.1.1 UNHCR has provided capacity development support to strengthen the national status determination system(s), in accordance with international standards	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers		Yes

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2025, UNHCR applied refugee status determination strategically in Malaysia, focusing on cases where it provided clear protection or solutions outcomes. Due to budgetary constraints and reduced resources, UNHCR refined its strategy and prioritization, concentrated on cases with identified protection needs, solutions prospects or integrity safeguards. An updated refugee status determination action plan was developed, and all pending cases were reviewed through a streamlined categorization approach to improve transparency and support realistic prioritization of workloads.

Despite reduced staffing, UNHCR issued more than 11,000 decisions in 2025. A high first instance recognition rate reflected the focus on cases with clear protection needs or solutions pathways. Access to legal representation and the appeal mechanism remained available to all applicants, with related indicators maintained at 100%.

UNHCR also continued its capacity-sharing efforts with national authorities. Two groups of Government officials participated in introductory training on refugee status determination, delivered largely in Bahasa Malaysia, aimed at strengthening understanding of refugee law and refugee status determination case assessment. UNHCR remains committed to supporting the Government through technical advice, capacity-sharing initiatives, and reference to international standards and good practices.

3. Outcome Area: Protection Policy and Law

By 2025, laws and policies on refugee protection and nationality acquisition are established and strengthened

Core Outcome Indicators

Population Type	Indicator		
	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
3.1 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol			
None	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned
3.2 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness			
None	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned	Not yet aligned

Core Output Indicators

Population Type	Indicator
	Actual (2025)
03.1.1 UNHCR has engaged in legislative and judicial processes to strengthen laws and policies for the protection of refugees, IDPs, returnees and stateless people and/or the reduction and prevention of statelessness	
Stateless Persons	Yes

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In line with the national refugee policy set out under National Security Council Directive No. 23, Malaysia's Ministry of Home Affairs began preparatory measures in 2025 for a State-led refugee registration programme planned for launch in January 2026.

As part of these measures, the Ministry established a special isolation centre for refugees and asylum-seekers, where people transferred from immigration detention centres would undergo the Government's registration and refugee status determination process and receive a refugee registration document. In line with these efforts, UNHCR continued to conduct capacity-sharing sessions for Government of Malaysia officers on foundational refugee status determination principles and skills, reaching 49 officers in 2025. The majority of those who attended were from the Malaysian Immigration Department and are part of the refugee registration taskforce responsible for implementing the refugee registration document programme. Notably, the second cohort of the capacity sharing programme was attended predominantly by women immigration officers, helping to address the gender imbalance observed in earlier sessions.

UNHCR also maintained consistent engagement and follow-up with Government ministries and agencies, leading to more frequent meetings and discussions on the implementation of a national refugee policy. This included joint task force meetings co-chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNHCR, as well as inter-agency discussions on the refugee registration programme and bilateral meetings with the Ministries of Health and Human Resources.

In relation to statelessness, while constitutional amendments passed in December 2024 introduced gender equality in the transmission of nationality to children born abroad, the amendments applied prospectively. However, in March 2025, the Federal Court of Malaysia issued a consent order requiring the National Registration Department to register children born overseas to Malaysian mothers prior to the amendments as Malaysian citizens. This decision effectively addressed the non-retroactive nature of the constitutional amendments.

Research conducted by the UN country team on undocumented people in Sabah was officially published in December 2025. The study provided a broad scope and comprehensive analysis of undocumented people in the Sabah, including a UNHCR-led foundational chapter on documentation and legal identity. Moving forward, UNHCR, the Resident Coordinator's Office and SUHAKAM (the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia) will hold consultations with the Sabah State Government and Sabah-based civil society to introduce the study and begin advancing its recommendations.

4. Outcome Area: Gender-based Violence

By 2025, the risk of sexual and gender-based violence is reduced and the response to survivors is strengthened through enhanced community-based approaches and quality, survivor-centred services

Core Outcome Indicators

Indicator			
Population Type	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
4.1 Proportion of people who know where to access available GBV services			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	56.00%	60.00%	56.00%
4.2 Proportion of people who do not accept violence against women			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	97.00%	100.00%	97.00%
4.3 Proportion of survivors who are satisfied with GBV case management services			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	69.97%	80.00%	69.97%

Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2025)
04.1.1 Number of people who benefitted from specialized GBV programmes	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	3,016

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Changes in United States foreign assistance in 2025 led to significant disruptions in the gender-based violence response ecosystem in Malaysia. Several service providers, including the International Catholic Migration Commission, permanently closed their programmes and shelters, while some prevention initiatives such as Engaging Men Through Accountable Practices were significantly scaled back. In response, UNHCR invested substantial resources in advocacy, awareness-raising, rebuilding capacity and sustaining access to essential services. UNHCR delivered 14 capacity-building initiatives focused on quality gender-based violence case management and survivor support, safe information sharing, case management for child marriage, and responses to child sexual abuse, ensuring protection actors were equipped to respond to emerging service gaps.

UNHCR also prioritized safe access to national gender-based violence and protection systems by strengthening interagency cooperation – notably with the National Social Welfare Department, the One Stop Crisis Centers, UNICEF and UNFPA. Efforts included scaling up community-led and refugee women-led initiatives and improving pathways to temporary safe placement and shelter. In parallel, UNHCR contributed to the revision of the “Special guidelines for handling child sexual abuse cases”, which now include specific provisions for refugee and asylum-seeking children, improving access to justice, critical services and clarity and accountability across referrals.

With funding from the Safe from the Start programme, UNHCR signed small grant agreements with five refugee women-led organizations to deliver community-led gender-based interventions and address context-specific protection risks. Through these grants, 964 people across four states benefited from specialized programming such as women and girls safe spaces, mental health and psychosocial services, psychological first aid training and guidance on safe disclosures. In addition, women-led initiatives provided timely assistance to 361 women at risk and survivors of gender-based violence, linking them to specialized services.

The risk of sexual exploitation and abuse persisted amid under-resourced country mechanisms and limited victim assistance programmes. To ensure refugee-specific considerations remained a priority, UNHCR continued to co-chair the UN country team prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse network, advocating for stronger survivor-centered approaches and country-level responses despite shrinking resources.

5. Outcome Area: Child Protection

By 2025, children protection is enhanced through tailored individual and community-based services with increased access to national social protection

Core Outcome Indicators

Indicator			
Population Type	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
5.1 Proportion of children at heightened risk who are supported by a Best Interests Procedure			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	22.82%	50.00%	39.19%
5.2 Proportion of children who participate in community-based child protection programmes			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	24.40%	40.00%	39.19%
5.3 Proportion of unaccompanied and separated children who are in an alternative care arrangement			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	38.99%	50.00%	32.09%

Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2025)
05.1.1 Number of children and caregivers who received child protection services	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	729

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2025, UNHCR continued its efforts to strengthen the inclusion of refugee children within Malaysia’s national child protection system. The year, however, was marked by significant operational constraints. The withdrawal of United States humanitarian assistance reduced access to child protection services provided by NGOs and refugee-led organizations, while also limiting UNHCR’s ability to conduct outreach, deliver

capacity-building activities, and coordinate effectively across several regions of the country.

Despite these challenges, UNHCR and its partners reached 729 children and caregivers through targeted programmes, including positive parenting sessions, child and online safety activities, sexual and reproductive health awareness initiatives and other essential protection activities.

Reports from partners, refugee representatives and community informants indicated that refugee children continued to be smuggled, trafficked, and exposed to high risks of exploitation, abuse, and neglect. The limited availability of services constrained national actors, UNHCR, and civil society in responding effectively to those most at risk.

UNHCR continued to work closely with UNICEF, as well as key child protection and human rights organizations, to advocate that the Malaysian government implement alternatives to detention and pursue the release of nearly 1,300 children currently held in immigration facilities.

Working with UNICEF, UNHCR also supported efforts to strengthen the national child protection system through training, sustained engagement, and knowledge sharing, including guidance on local referral pathways and modalities for case conferencing and joint case management. While progress was challenging and uneven, UNHCR observed an increase in the number of refugee children at risk of harm receiving follow-up support by the national social welfare department. Stronger cooperation between relevant NGOs and refugee-led groups contributed to a more comprehensive and coordinated protection response.

UNHCR also provided child protection and safeguarding training to 23 community learning centres across four states. These sessions enabled 65 safeguarding focal points to identify risks, strengthen internal safeguarding systems, and implement action plans to address gaps and vulnerabilities within their centres. The initiative also improved links between community learning centres and key child protection actors, while enhancing awareness of national child protection laws and the roles and responsibilities of education personnel.

6. Outcome Area: Safety and Access to Justice

By 2025, the risks related to the arrest and detention of asylum-seekers and refugees, including children, are fewer with greater access to justice and legal assistance

Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2025)
06.1.1 Number of people who received legal assistance	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	106

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Refugees and asylum-seekers in Malaysia continued to face significant challenges in accessing justice and protection. They remained at risk of arrest, prosecution, detention and removal from the country. Restrictive entry policies also resulted in people, including children, being detained upon arrival.

Malaysia declared 2025 as a national 'year of enforcement', indicating increased emphasis on immigration law enforcement measures. This was accompanied by more frequent enforcement activities, which appeared to have contributed to the high number of removals recorded during the year.

UNHCR's access to immigration detention centres for registration and assessing the international protection needs remained hindered, limiting the Office's ability to intervene systematically. The sharp increase in enforcement activities, including raids, further exacerbated protection risks, and concerns raised by UNHCR regarding deportations and detention access were not fully addressed despite sustained engagement.

Despite a challenging operational environment, continued engagement with relevant stakeholders resulted in the release of 876 people from detention in 2025, underscoring efforts to secure protection outcomes in complex circumstances. UNHCR also intervened in 239 court cases on behalf of 106 individuals, providing legal representation and counselling although many more required assistance. Limited access to prison facilities continued to affect UNHCR's ability to support those charged with immigration-related offences.

Throughout the year, UNHCR maintained regular dialogue with Government and law enforcement counterparts. Consultations, technical briefings and training sessions were conducted with police and members of the judiciary to strengthen understanding of international protection principles and UNHCR's mandate. Engagement included discussions on safeguards, case referrals and potential alternatives to detention.

In parallel, the Office continued to strengthen strategic and community-based protection approaches. Collaboration with legal aid partners, civil society and refugee community networks supported referrals, legal counselling and information-sharing. These efforts contributed to incremental improvements in coordination, awareness and access to legal support, helping to mitigate protection risks within a complex and evolving enforcement context.

7. Outcome Area: Community Engagement and Women's Empowerment

By 2025, community mobilization is strengthened and expanded through the establishment of trained community volunteers and the expansion of outreach centres and mobile community outreach services. This will lead to greater participation of women and young people, reinforcing UNHCR's commitment to a multi-faceted approach to accountability to affected people

Core Outcome Indicators

Population Type	Indicator		
	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
7.1 Extent participation of displaced and stateless people across programme phases is supported.			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Extensive	Extensive	Extensive
7.2 Proportion of people who have access to safe feedback and response mechanisms			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	80.00%	90.00%	80.00%
7.3 Proportion of women participating in leadership/management structures			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	37.98%	50.00%	39.98%

Core Output Indicators

Population Type	Indicator
	Actual (2025)
07.1.1 Number of people consulted through Participatory Assessments	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	2,649
07.2.1 Number of people who used UNHCR- supported feedback & response mechanisms to voice their needs/ concerns/feedback	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,128
07.3.1 Number of people who received protection services	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	125,631

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2025, UNHCR continued to strengthen community mobilization and accountability mechanisms through structured engagement with refugee communities in Malaysia. Quarterly townhall sessions with community leaders provided a regular platform to exchange information, identify protection concerns and gather feedback. While outreach beyond the Klang Valley remained constrained due to limited resources, 2,649 individuals were reached through community-based activities, representing 47% of the previous year's coverage. An NGO partner additionally reached approximately 1,000 individuals through hotline and assistance-related services.

Community engagement activities included meetings, focus group discussions and cultural orientation sessions. Information was disseminated through multiple channels, including the Refugee Malaysia website, Telegram and established WhatsApp groups. Trained community outreach volunteers played a key role in sharing localized information, identifying emerging risks and facilitating referrals. To promote social cohesion and inclusion, cultural orientation modules were developed and piloted, with 50 community sessions conducted during the year.

The Refugee Advisory Board continued to provide input on operational and processing-related matters, contributing to improved communication and responsiveness. The community-based protection team assessed and responded to 1,128 referrals submitted by community members concerning people with specific needs, representing approximately 20% of total referrals received. Although overall referrals remained high, resource constraints affected the proportion of cases that could be processed within the year.

Referrals included urgent cases related to health, child protection and gender-based violence, as well as barriers to accessing essential services. Addressing these cases required coordination with implementing partners, community focal points and local authorities, reflecting the cross-cutting nature of community-based protection.

Operational restructuring required community-based protection staff to assume expanded responsibilities in outreach and prevention. This included delivering targeted messaging on child safeguarding, gender-based violence risk mitigation, health-seeking behaviour and sports for protection initiatives. Continuous mentoring was provided to community leaders and outreach volunteers to strengthen their capacity to identify and safely refer protection concerns in line with established standards.

Feedback, trends and concerns gathered through outreach activities were systematically recorded through the community feedback collection tool, ensuring refugee perspectives informed programme design and adjustments. Despite resource constraints, these efforts contributed to sustained community engagement, strengthened volunteer networks and continued participation of women and young people in community structures.

8. Outcome Area: Well-Being and Basic Needs

By 2025, refugees and asylum-seekers with heightened risks can access support services that provide timely assistance to meet basic and essential needs

Core Outcome Indicators

Population Type	Indicator		
	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
8.1 Proportion of people that receive cash transfers and/or non-food items			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1.09%	50.00%	0.44%
8.2 Proportion of people with primary reliance on clean (cooking) fuels and technology			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	94.38%	96.00%	94.38%

Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2025)
08.1.1 Number of people who received cash assistance	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	944

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In the absence of a national asylum system, refugees and asylum-seekers in Malaysia struggled to meet their basic needs. Demand for assistance remained high, but available support services and referral pathways diminished significantly.

UNHCR's ability to provide multi-purpose cash assistance was similarly constrained, with only 215 households (809 individuals) able to benefit from the programme. UNHCR continued coordination with IOM to promote standardized practices and avoid duplication of assistance. In addition, 134 individuals received one-off cash assistance following their release from detention, facilitated by UNHCR.

Significant funding shortfalls in 2025 further affected UNHCR's capacity to respond to the protection needs of vulnerable refugee households. The multi-purpose cash grant programme was designed to be complemented by coordinated access to other multi-sectoral services and interventions. However, the closure or reduced capacity of several essential service providers and community-based support mechanisms, further constrained the overall response, limiting the ability to address protection needs in a comprehensive.

Access to legal work could improve refugees' socioeconomic conditions in Malaysia by reducing economic vulnerability and strengthening community-based protection. While progress was made in the Government's development of a national refugee registration system, livelihood challenges are expected to persist until it is fully rolled out.

Considering these operational realities, UNHCR stepped up engagement with relevant stakeholders to identify possible avenues of support, including Zakat as well as private sector partners.

10. Outcome Area: Healthy Lives

By 2025, access to affordable comprehensive health services has improved through stronger multi-sectoral collaboration, capacity building and expanded strategic partnerships

Core Outcome Indicators

Indicator			
Population Type	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
10.1 Proportion of children aged 9 months to five years who have received measles vaccination			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	67.16%	100.00%	67.16%
10.2. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	99.30%	100.00%	99.30%

Core Output Indicators

Indicator		
Population Type		Actual (2025)
10.1.1 Number of individual consultations in UNHCR supported health care services		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers		42,216
10.2.1 Number of consultations in UNHCR supported mental health and psychosocial support services		
Refugees and Asylum-seekers		694

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2025, refugees and asylum-seekers in Malaysia faced barriers to affordable healthcare. In response, UNHCR's efforts focused on expanding equitable access to essential healthcare, addressing emerging health needs, and promoting stronger inclusion of refugees within national health systems. UNHCR worked to strengthen access to essential services while advancing more sustainable health financing options. REMEDI, the refugee medical insurance scheme, expanded enrolment to nearly 9,000 adults through a UNHCR-supported discount initiative. Collaboration with the Ministry of Health and NGO partners remained central, enabling coordinated approaches to disease surveillance, maternal and child health, and health promotion, and supporting continued refugee inclusion in national health initiatives.

Maternal and reproductive health remained a priority, with delivery care still largely unaffordable for many households. UNHCR, the Ministry of Health and partners increased access to family planning, particularly long-acting reversible contraceptives, helping to reduce maternal health risks. Immunization gaps persisted, especially for measles, leaving children vulnerable to outbreaks. UNHCR supported the national measles and rubella vaccination campaign by providing population data, coordinating with State health departments, and engaging refugee communities. At the UNHCR refugee centre, 1,870 children were vaccinated, supported by refugee doctors and refugee community volunteers.

In 2025, there was an increase in the number of refugees from Myanmar testing positive for HIV, many of whom had experienced interruptions in treatment. UNHCR strengthened collaboration with the Ministry of Health's infectious disease units and NGO partners to ensure rapid access to antiretroviral therapy and continuity of care.

Additional donor support enhanced access to secondary and tertiary health care, enabling 198 refugees to receive critical specialized treatment. UNHCR also engaged the Ministry of Health in discussions on transitional measures to support uninterrupted access to health services as the country moves toward a national asylum framework.

11. Outcome Area: Education

By 2025, education opportunities have expanded with sustained support, and efforts continue to include asylum-seeker and refugee children in the national education system

Core Outcome Indicators

Indicator			
Population Type	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
11.1 Proportion of young people enrolled in tertiary and higher education			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1.30%	3.00%	1.30%
11.2 Proportion of children and young people enrolled in the national education system			

Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0.00%	10.00%	0.00%
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Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2025)
11.1.1 Number of people who benefitted from education programming	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	14,438

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Improving forcibly displaced and stateless children's access to education remained a priority in 2025 in Malaysia. Refugee learners benefited from clearer certification pathways during the year, expanded post-secondary options and strengthened classroom support. However, structural barriers, including the absence of formal recognition of refugee status and limited access to legal work for families, continued to constrain equitable access.

Policy developments, together with sustained support to learning centres, contributed to more predictable pathways across basic and post-secondary education. Access to education showed modest improvement. In 2025, 47% of refugee children and young people accessed primary education (48% female, 52% male), while 26% were enrolled in secondary education (49% female, 51% male). UNHCR supported 179 informal learning centres through partnerships with NGOs, civil society and refugee-led organizations, helping sustain learning opportunities nationwide.

Despite these efforts, overall access to education remained limited. Only 35% (14,438) of the estimated 40,950 refugee children of school-going age had access to any form of education, meaning that two out of three children remained out of school.

At the basic education level, confirmation from the Ministry of Education's Examination Syndicate that refugee students were eligible to sit the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (or Malaysian Certificate of Education) examination marked an important step forward. While access remained subject to documentation and public school-level processes, this clarification provided greater certainty for older learners and strengthened transition prospects to further education or skills training.

Quality and continuity within alternative learning centres were reinforced through targeted support. Teacher compensation funding from Tao helped stabilize teaching capacity in selected centres, while textbook and stationery vouchers distributed under the Primary Health Care Performance Initiative reduced financial pressure on vulnerable households and supported more consistent classroom participation. Alternative learning centres and community-based organizations continued to deliver education despite financial and regulatory constraints.

Access to tertiary education for refugees was advanced through operational and administrative solutions. UNHCR's engagement with the British Council enabled refugees to register for the IELTS English language examination using UNHCR identity documentation, addressing a long-standing procedural constraint. IELTS vouchers were distributed while expanded study opportunities such as the Refugee Student Settlement Pathway Australia broadened complementary education pathways. The departure of a refugee student to the United Kingdom for higher studies illustrated the potential of these expanded options although access remained limited relative to demand.

UNHCR's contribution centered on sustained advocacy with relevant authorities, coordination across education partners, targeted resource mobilization for alternative learning centres, and facilitation of post-secondary transition pathways.

13. Outcome Area: Self Reliance, Economic Inclusion and Livelihoods

By 2025, there is a framework that includes provisions for legal work opportunities and for improved livelihoods prospects

Core Outcome Indicators

Population Type	Indicator		
	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
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	13.14%	15.00%	28.69%

Core Output Indicators

Population Type	Indicator
	Actual (2025)
13.1.1 Number of people who benefitted from livelihoods and economic inclusion interventions	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	43,000

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2025, UNHCR advanced its advocacy and partnership efforts to support refugees' access to livelihoods opportunities and economic inclusion, in line with broader objectives related to self-reliance and sustainable responses to forced displacement.

In February 2025, a partnership with an eWallet service provider provided 43,000 UNHCR-registered individuals to access digital financial accounts, enabling them to store funds and make cashless transactions. The partnership included plans to expand functionality and access for refugee users, including potential increases to transaction limits and additional services. UNHCR also facilitated access to basic savings bank accounts to 277 people by issuing registration verification letters.

Significant strides were made in advocating for legal work rights and opportunities for refugees, particularly through parliamentary engagement. To leverage the policymaking power and public influence of Malaysia's parliamentarians, UNHCR briefed select committees, organized the Parliamentary Symposium on Access to Education and Legal Work for Refugees and ran a 10-day exhibit on refugee issues in Parliament. It also engaged with working groups related to Malaysia's National Action Plans on Forced Labour and on Business and Human Rights to ensure issues facing forcibly displaced people were reflected in national policy discussions.

Findings and recommendations from the Joint Data Centre-funded joint World Bank-UNHCR report on refugee livelihoods and wellbeing outcomes played a crucial role in underpinning policy advocacy efforts. Where resource constraints limited direct funding support, UNHCR remained committed to building an enabling environment for refugees' self-reliance and for identifying sustainable solutions. UNHCR continued to work with IOM on a 'train-to-hire' pilot project aimed at enhancing labour mobility pathways for refugees, while exploring other livelihoods opportunities – including a privately-funded microfinance pilot targeting refugee women.

14. Outcome Area: Voluntary Return and Sustainable Reintegration

By 2025, refugees and asylum-seekers expressing interest to voluntarily return to their country of origin benefit from information and individual counselling

Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2025)
14.1.1 Number of people who received counselling and/or information on voluntary repatriation	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	440

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

As most refugees in Malaysia originated from countries where conditions were not conducive to return in safety and dignity, voluntary repatriation remained a solution pursued by only a limited number of people in 2025.

Throughout the year, information on voluntary repatriation procedures and available support was disseminated through the UNHCR Refugee Malaysia website and community communication channels. By year-end, 440 people had expressed an interest in returning and received up-to-date information through voluntary repatriation counselling sessions, including on conditions in their countries of origin and the assistance available upon return.

Departures more than doubled in 2025 compared to 2024, with 199 refugees choosing to return, up from 87 the previous year. These returns included people who were influenced by developments in their personal circumstances or in their countries of origin. All departures were facilitated via the issuance of voluntary repatriation forms.

15. Outcome Area: Resettlement and Complementary Pathways

By 2025, refugees identified with heightened vulnerabilities and resettlement needs are submitted for resettlement consideration in a timely manner, while others are assisted to access complementary pathways initiatives

Core Outcome Indicators

Population Type	Indicator		
	Baseline	Target (2025)	Actual (2025)
15.1 Number of refugees submitted by UNHCR for resettlement			
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	9,125	5,800	2,476

Core Output Indicators

Indicator	
Population Type	Actual (2025)
15.1.1 Country issues machine-readable travel documents	
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	No

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2025, resettlement opportunities for refugees in Malaysia decreased due to changes in global quotas. UNHCR had initially planned for 5,800 submissions based on anticipated quota availability; however, only 1,800 places were ultimately confirmed.

By year-end, UNHCR submitted 1,920 refugees for resettlement consideration, with the largest number submitted to Australia. While lower than in previous years – with 9,125 submissions in 2024, 11,597 in 2023, and 9,451 in 2022 – UNHCR worked closely with resettlement partners to maximize available places, including through the use of unallocated quotas and additional slots secured during the year.

Resettlement remained a strategic solution, particularly for refugees with heightened protection needs, while also helping to leverage protection space in Malaysia. The Government of Malaysia participated in the annual Consultation on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways, a multilateral form that brings together UNHCR, UN Member States, the private sector, academia, NGOs and refugees to advance resettlement policy and expand solutions for refugees.

Alongside resettlement, UNHCR promoted complementary pathways and increased awareness among refugees of available opportunities through various communication channels. While some programmes were paused, 1,017 individuals departed via complementary pathways in 2025, compared to 1,896 in 2024. These included humanitarian, education, labour mobility, family reunification, and community or private sponsorship pathways. Programmes facilitated by UNHCR included education pathways to Australia and the Philippines, which expanded opportunities for refugee students. In addition, a joint IOM–UNHCR train-to-hire pilot in the region was launched, with engagement from the governments of Australia and Malaysia.

Throughout 2025, UNHCR strengthened two-way communication with refugees, provided counselling on resettlement processes, and supported complementary pathway arrangements in close collaboration with resettlement countries and partners.

Other Core Output Indicators

Population Type	Actual (2025)
16.1.1. Government Social protection system is inclusive of forcibly displaced and stateless people	
Others of Concern	Not at all
Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Not at all
Stateless Persons	Not at all

2.2. Age, Gender and Diversity

In 2025, UNHCR advanced implementation of its policy on age, gender and diversity in Malaysia by strengthening inclusive programming and participation approaches.

Efforts focused on addressing barriers that limited meaningful engagement, including language diversity, literacy levels, ethnic differences and geographical dispersion. A blended approach combining in-person outreach and remote communication platforms helped ensure that information was accessible and responsive to the needs of women, men, girls, boys, older people and people with disabilities.

Regular two-way communication and the establishment of safe physical and virtual spaces enabled refugees to raise concerns and share feedback, including on sensitive protection issues. To inform age, gender and diversity analysis, UNHCR directly engaged 2,649 refugees through participatory assessments, cultural orientation sessions and outreach volunteer training. Participants represented a wide range of ages and more than 50 nationalities, including people from Myanmar (40% women and 60% men). These

consultations contributed to greater understanding of differentiated protection risks affecting women and girls, young people, older people and people with disabilities.

Structured engagement platforms were strengthened to promote diverse representation and leadership. These included the Refugee Advisory Board, the Women for Women Network, Rohingya Women Engagement initiatives, youth platforms and the outreach volunteer programme. Through these mechanisms, underrepresented groups could contribute to discussions on service delivery, protection concerns and community priorities.

To enhance evidence-based programming and accountability to affected populations, UNHCR introduced a community feedback collection tool that enabled systematic tracking and analysis of concerns raised by different groups. A centralized dashboard, accessible to senior management, facilitated trend monitoring and follow-up action, supporting more targeted and responsive interventions.

Collectively, these measures contributed to more inclusive consultation processes, stronger representation of diverse community groups and greater integration of age, gender and diversity considerations into programme planning and protection responses.

Section 3: Resources

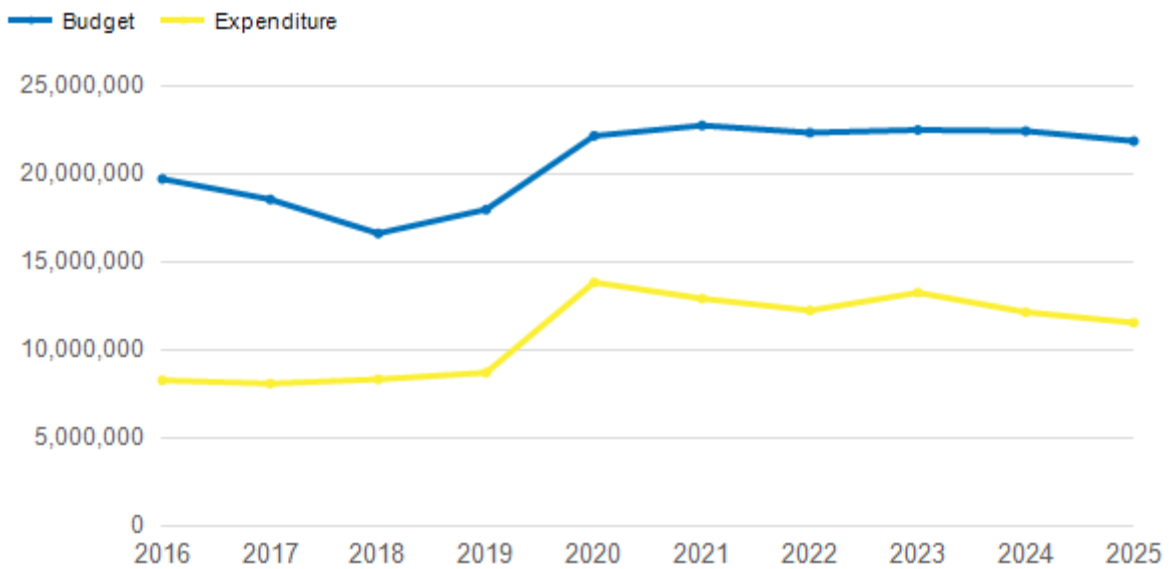
3.1 Financial Data

(Financial figures in USD)

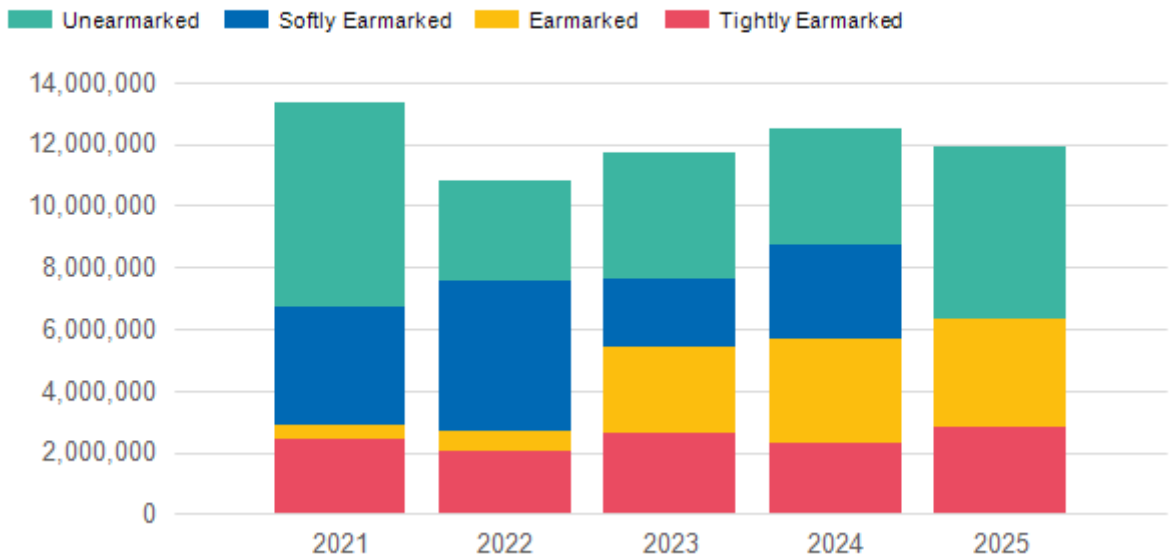
Impact Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
IA1: Protect	7,120,977	5,203,434	73.07%	5,203,434	100.00%
IA2: Respond	5,608,063	1,995,686	35.59%	1,995,686	100.00%
IA3: Empower	8,250,901	3,302,536	40.03%	3,302,536	100.00%
IA4: Solve	858,969	1,027,132	119.58%	1,027,132	100.00%
All Impact Areas		15,500			
Total	21,838,911	11,544,288	52.86%	11,528,788	99.87%

Outcome Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
OA1: Access/Doc	2,399,228	1,927,608	80.34%	1,927,608	100.00%
OA2: Status	2,897,926	1,915,368	66.09%	1,915,368	100.00%
OA3: Policy/Law	451,767	700,373	155.03%	700,373	100.00%
OA4: GBV	1,072,656	460,956	42.97%	460,956	100.00%
OA5: Children	1,071,607	295,364	27.56%	295,364	100.00%
OA6: Justice	1,372,057	660,085	48.11%	660,085	100.00%
OA7: Community	2,158,655	1,273,646	59.00%	1,273,646	100.00%
OA8: Wellbeing	1,847,093	708,445	38.35%	708,445	100.00%
OA10: Health	3,760,971	1,287,241	34.23%	1,287,241	100.00%
OA11: Education	3,598,060	1,017,717	28.29%	1,017,717	100.00%
OA13: Livelihood	349,923	254,854	72.83%	254,854	100.00%
OA14: Return	34,598	280,783	811.57%	280,783	100.00%
OA15: Resettle	824,371	746,349	90.54%	746,349	100.00%
All Outcome Areas		15,500			
Total	21,838,911	11,544,288	52.86%	11,528,788	99.87%

Budget and Expenditure Trend



Contributions Trend by Type



3.2. Resources Overview

In 2025, UNHCR Malaysia’s operational presence evolved significantly in response to a sudden and substantial contraction in the global funding environment.

Reduced donor contributions required structural adjustments, optimization of operational delivery in workforce and reprioritization of programmes. The organization shifted to a leaner, risk-informed model focused on core protection functions and preservation of critical services.

By year-end, total available funding amounted to \$9.8 million, resulting in a \$12 million shortfall – approximately 55% of identified needs. This funding gap necessitated difficult prioritization decisions and tighter targeting of limited resources. Of available funds, 13% was channeled through implementing

partners to address critical needs in health, education, livelihoods, cash assistance, gender-based violence, child protection and community-based protection. The remaining 87% was implemented directly by UNHCR, reflecting a more centralized and streamlined operational structure.

Resource prioritization was guided by corporate planning parameters issued by Headquarters and the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, alongside contextual analysis at country level. Decisions were informed by protection and operational risk assessments, the need to maintain engagement with Government counterparts, reputational considerations, anticipated impacts on refugee access to essential services, and broader political and social dynamics affecting protection space.

Preserving life-saving interventions, safeguarding access to registration and refugee status determination, and maintaining core community-based protection mechanisms were prioritized over programme expansion.

Despite fiscal constraints, UNHCR identified and pursued target resource mobilization opportunities.

Engagement with traditional donors was maintained through regular briefings and transparent communication on funding gaps and protection risks. Efforts were also made to diversify funding sources, including outreach to development actors and private sector partners, and alignment with broader United Nations and Global Compact on Refugees frameworks to position refugee inclusion within national systems as a shared responsibility.

UNHCR worked with eight national NGOs as implementing partners and supported five community-led organizations through grant agreements, reinforcing localization efforts within available means. While the overall operational footprint contracted, strategic engagement with partners and stakeholders was sustained to preserve protection gains and maintain readiness to scale up, should resources permit.

Section 4: Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

4.1 Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

Analysis of assessments and monitoring data in 2025 underscored the importance of sustained engagement with national and local stakeholders. Engagement with local authorities, community structures, civil society, private sector actors and religious groups contributed to more inclusive dialogue and incremental progress toward peaceful coexistence. Community-based protection initiatives demonstrated that structured outreach and volunteer networks are critical in strengthening information flows, referral pathways and trust between refugees and service providers.

Feedback from refugees consistently highlighted the importance of timely registration and documentation, access to clear and accessible information, and improved coordination among service providers. Further analysis reinforced the link between documentation and protection outcomes, including access to services and reduced exposure to detention risks. These findings emphasized the need for communication approaches that are consistent, targeted and responsive to the diverse priorities of different population groups, including women, young people and people with specific needs.

Persistent structural constraints remained evident. Limited resources, the absence of formal legal recognition frameworks and restricted access to essential services continued to impede progress toward greater self-reliance and inclusion. Public misperceptions about displaced communities further narrowed opportunities for policy advancement and complicated efforts to expand protection space. Operational restructuring during the year also highlighted the importance of prioritization, risk-informed planning and realistic sequencing of activities within available resources.

The operation held a meeting with all partners on 17th December 2025 in order to discuss the way forward as well as challenges, and a separate meeting within UNHCR team on 27 February as part of the Strategic Moment of Reflection, during which participants jointly reviewed the current operational landscape, including regional drivers, domestic developments and challenges, funding trends, strategic partnerships, strategic vision and theory of change, as well as priorities, areas identified for prioritization/deprioritization and their implications, as well as the key lessons learned.

These lessons directly informed UNHCR's 2026–2029 Multi-Year Strategy. The strategy places greater emphasis on advancing dialogue toward a comprehensive national asylum framework, strengthening strategic partnerships at national and subnational levels, and reinforcing accountability to affected populations through enhanced two-way communication mechanisms. It also prioritizes targeted resource mobilization, streamlined programme delivery and protection impact over expansion of activities.

Going forward, UNHCR will focus on promoting predictable and accessible registration and documentation processes, strengthening coordination with Government counterparts and civil society, and expanding support to refugee-led organizations to enhance community leadership and participation. Protection coordination mechanisms will continue to serve as platforms for alignment among partners, while collaboration on complementary pathways and third-country solutions will remain part of a coherent and route-based approach to protection.

Anchored in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and its whole-of-society approach, UNHCR Malaysia will also use the GCR as the overarching framework for its resource-mobilization strategy, broadening support beyond traditional donors by engaging institutional and private funders in line with the Malaysia Multi-Year Strategy 2026–2029; leveraging mechanisms such as the UN SDG Trust Fund and developing innovative private-sector, Islamic philanthropy and community-based fundraising models. Collectively, these measures aim to consolidate protection gains, manage risks in a constrained environment and position UNHCR to respond effectively to future developments.



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