

# Thailand

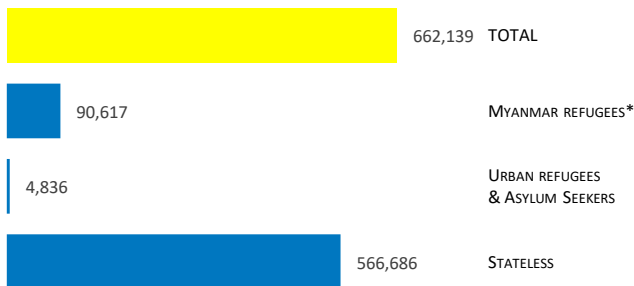
31 DECEMBER 2022

In Thailand, populations of concern include **90,617** Myanmar refugees, **4,836** urban asylum-seekers and refugees, and **566,686** persons registered by the Royal Thai Government (RTG) as stateless.

Myanmar refugees reside in **nine temporary shelters on the Thai-Myanmar border**, while urban asylum-seekers, refugees, and stateless persons reside in **different areas of the country**

UNHCR works with the RTG, international agencies, NGOs and donors to address the **protection, assistance, and durable solutions needs** of asylum seekers, refugees, and stateless persons.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN



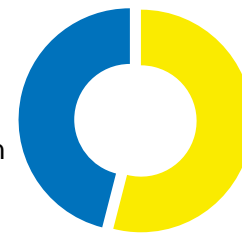
\* Verification Exercise conducted from Jan-Apr 2015 and subsequent data changes to-date. Under reverification

## FUNDING (AS OF 31 DECEMBER 2022)

**USD 24.8 M**

requested for the Thailand Operation

**Unfunded**  
**48%**  
11.4 Million



**Funded**  
**54%**  
13.4 Million

## UNHCR PRESENCE

### Staff:

142 National Staff  
17 International Staff

### Offices:

1 Multi-Country Office in Bangkok  
2 Field Offices in Mae Hong Son and Mae Sot



© UNHCR/ Engaged Men in Accountable Practices (EMAP) activities in –Tham Hin refugee camp, 1 December 2022. The training included 10 females participants attending sessions twice a week. Here, participants are doing role play on power and status to better understand the impact of gender norms.

# Population Overview

## MYANMAR CAMP-BASED REFUGEES

- Refugees residing in the nine temporary shelters on the Thai-Myanmar border are of **mainly Karen, Karenni, and Burmese ethnicity**, some of whom have lived in Thailand since the mid-1980s after fleeing conflict between ethnic armed groups and the Myanmar military. Under the national legal framework, they are **not permitted to access national institutions** (e.g., health and education) nor to move outside the camps, including for the purpose of accessing livelihood opportunities. Therefore, they rely on non-governmental humanitarian services for their basic needs. UNHCR's interventions focus primarily on **protection and solutions**, whereas material assistance is provided by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).
- Registration of refugees along the Thai-Myanmar border is led by **the Royal Thai Government Provincial Admission Board (RTG-PAB)**. Since 2008, registration is only open to exceptional serious protection and/or medical cases. UNHCR identifies and refers such cases to the RTG-PAG in close consultation with the MOI.

## URBAN ASYLUM-SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

- UNHCR continues its full complement of **protection and assistance activities** the urban refugees and asylum-seekers from over 51 countries residing mainly in Bangkok and surrounding urban areas. Currently, there is **no national legal framework** for the protection of "urban" refugees and asylum-seekers in Thailand. Nor has Thailand acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol. As such, UNHCR issued documentation/identification in the form of a Refugee or Asylum-Seeker Card is not officially recognized by the RTG and therefore **provides no official protection** for them. The asylum-seekers and refugees are considered "illegal" in the country and are at risk of being detained on immigration grounds if they entered into the country illegally or have overstayed their visas.
- As they have no right to access employment, many urban asylum-seekers and refugees depend **on humanitarian or other forms of support**, including from UNHCR, to sustain themselves. Under the RTG's **progressive "education for all" policy**, asylum-seeker and refugee children can, in principle, enroll in public schools, although many face challenges due to language barriers and costs associated with schooling.
- Following the Thai Cabinet's approval in December 2019 to establish the **National Screening Mechanism** to distinguish people who need international protection from economic migrants, UNHCR welcomed the establishment of the Screening Committee in 2020, the Sub-Committee on Criteria, Procedures, and Condition in 2021 and the Sub-Committee on Screening and on Appeals in 2022. In October 2022, the Thai Cabinet approved the National Screening Mechanisms (NSM) Criteria. This progress does not concern the broader set of procedural standards and policy that will be required to implement the NSM, which still remain under development by the RTG with UNHCR technical support and advocacy. Once operationalized, it is hoped that the NSM will increase the protection space for those who need it.

## STATELESS PERSONS

- According to the latest official RTG statistics, there are 566,686 stateless persons registered as of 30 June 2022, although some unofficial estimates are higher. Approximately **81% of the registered stateless population reside in provinces near border areas**. While statelessness in Thailand has a

range of causes, many affected communities migrated to Thailand hundreds of years ago. They are mostly members of ethnic minorities living in mountainous regions, including indigenous groups who had not been registered and did not hold any identity documents. These communities face various challenges, including language barriers to accessing civil registration and nationality procedures, difficulties associated with living in remote areas, and a lack of understanding of the importance of civil registration in preventing statelessness.

- Significant reforms to Thailand's nationality and civil registration laws (e.g., 2008, 2016, 2019) have provided a route to restoring nationality to those who had been deprived of it or could not acquire it, and **a progressive nationality strategy was adopted in 2005 to address statelessness**. Consequently, over 57,000 registered stateless persons have acquired Thai nationality since 2015. Whilst some progress has been made, stateless people in Thailand continue to face challenges accessing some of their basic rights, including freedom of movement – many stateless individuals face restrictions travelling beyond their registered provincial areas - and healthcare, including gaps in access to national health insurance.

## Working with Partners

- UNHCR works in **close partnership** with the Royal Thai Government (RTG), UN agencies, humanitarian organizations, and civil society to improve protection and solutions for refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless persons, while advocating for their inclusion in national systems. On the Thai-Myanmar border, UNHCR works with **the Committee for the Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT)**, a consortium of NGOs that coordinates the provision of food, shelter, health, education, water/sanitation, and livelihoods.
- **Strategic alliances** with key international and national NGOs, civil society and faith-based organizations, private sector partners, and academia help address a range of issues, including alternatives to detention, improved access to domestic legal and social services, and alternative forms of temporary protection pending solutions.
- **Partners:** Ministry of Interior (MOI), Adventist Development and Relief Agency Thailand (ADRA), Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees (COERR), Humanity and Inclusion (HI), International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UN Volunteers (UNV).

## Main Activities

### EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- The volatile situation in Myanmar following the 01 February 2021 coup resulted in increased armed conflict and subsequent population displacement within and across borders, including Thailand. UNHCR continues to engage with the Royal Thai Government (RTG) on its availability to complement RTG-led response and preparedness efforts in close coordination with other relevant partners. Since the event of February 2021, the RTG recorded that some 22,200 Myanmar individuals sought safety temporarily in Thailand during several movements, 6,500 of whom crossed in 2022. According to the authorities, these groups reportedly returned to Myanmar once the fighting allegedly subsided. As of 31

December 2022, the Thai authorities report that no refugees are currently staying on the side of the Thai border.



## PROTECTION

- In the refugee camps at the Thai-Myanmar border, in line with amendments to the Civil Registration Act (2008), UNHCR supports the RTG in **ensuring every child has the right to birth registration**. Additionally, UNHCR works in collaboration with Partners to identify refugees with severe protection and medical cases to be registered by the RTG through the Fast-Track Provincial Admission Board (FT-PAB) process. Moreover, UNHCR facilitates **camp refugees' access to the Thai justice system** for serious criminal cases. UNHCR coordinates with Thai law enforcement authorities in pursuing these responsibilities.
- UNHCR, in partnership with the Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees (COERR), **conducts case management and focuses on the protection of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC)**. In addition, UNHCR Field Offices conducted Best Interest Procedures (BIP) assessments for over 70 refugee children across all refugee camps for protection or durable solutions purposes.
- UNHCR's implementing partner, COERR, **provided training and capacity-building to camp-based volunteers between October and December on the Child Protection Referral System (CPRS)** and other relevant topics, such as early marriage. COERR, supported by UNHCR, organized three CPRS workshops for stakeholders working inside and outside the camps in Mae Hong Son and in Mae Sarian. In October and November, the youth clubs in the refugee camps – with the support of COERR – organized several youth talent activities, reaching some 800 children and youth in the Ban Don Yang refugee camp, and over 1,000 in refugee camps in Tak Province. The events allowed young people to express their creativity and interests.
- During October-December, in all nine camps along the border, **UNHCR organized a wide range of activities to raise awareness on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) issues using different approaches such as focus group discussion (FGD), film screening, and dialogue sessions**. To mark 16 Days activism which is an annual international campaign that kicks off on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, UNHCR and its partners organized several activities such as awareness-raising sessions in the Tak refugee camps as well as a session reaching 90 students in Ban Don Yang camp. The sessions were articulated around information about children's rights and GBV and included some games. In 2022, UNHCR camp-based volunteers in all nine camps supported the implementation of the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) film screening on PSEA principles and reporting pathways, reaching over 15,000 refugees through more than 500 sessions.
- In 2022, UNHCR implemented **Engaging Men in Accountable Practices (EMAP) activities**. This programme fosters transformational change by addressing the norms and beliefs that promote violence and confront inequitable gender norms of masculinity and femininity. In urban areas, 13 refugees who endorsed the role of community facilitator during the EMAP rollout were trained in November 2022 on GBV and PSEA. The training was followed by women sessions targeting 80 participants. In border areas, the EMAP activities targeted refugee communities in Tham Hin, Ban Dan Yang, Umpium, Mae Ra Ma Luang, Mae La Oon, and Ban Mae Surin camps. In total in 2022, over 1,000 refugees and stakeholders were trained on key concepts related to GBV and PSEA.



©UNHCR/ Engaged Men in Accountable Practices (EMAP) activities in – Ma Ra Ma Luang camp, 25 October 2022. The activity was about "understanding the status". Each participants held a game card without knowing what number they were holding. The rest of the participant would go up to each one of them and greet them according to the card they were holding. The person who held the highest number would be greeted with respect, while the person who held the smallest number would be ignored.

- UNHCR continues to **provide multipurpose cash grants (cash-based intervention ((CBI)) to refugees with specific needs in urban areas**. Between October and December, the UNHCR CBI panel allocated 543 cash grants, covering 1,806 individuals. As COVID-19 restriction measures are being eased in Thailand, some refugees could access some livelihood opportunities, reducing their reliance on assistance from UNHCR and other actors . As a result, the total number of refugees in CBI assistance has been reduced by 18%.
- UNHCR supported **the displaced population living in urban areas with protection issues through in-person counselling and referrals for needed services**. Between October and December, UNHCR provided protection counselling for 190 refugees and asylum-seekers. Furthermore, UNHCR Reception continues conducting in-person activities by appointment, including card renewal, RSD interviews and notification of decisions, and as hoc counselling. Registrations continue mostly remotely.
- In late 2022, many Immigration Detention Centers (IDCs) continued to suspend in-person visits in 2022. Thus, **UNHCR conducted in-person counselling and monitoring at the IDCs that allowed this access**, while in other IDCs, UNHCR continued its activities through **remote arrangements**. UNHCR distributed Core Relief Items, material assistance, and multi-purpose cash to Rohingya POCs and Urban Refugees in IDCs. Besides, UNHCR pursued its advocacy for non-refoulement and access to alternatives to detention (ATD), including in the case of children and mothers, under Thailand's Memorandum of Understanding on ATD.



## EDUCATION

- In urban areas, **540 refugee and asylum-seeker children aged 6-17 were enrolled in primary education, and 92 children aged 6-17 were enrolled in secondary education** as of 31 December. In addition, 22 children attended Thai language classes provided in partnership with COERR to equip them with skills to access public schools under Thailand's "Education for All" policy.
- UNHCR continues to provide a **3-month Thai intensive learning program to adult refugees and asylum seekers above 18 years** old living in urban areas. The program, which offered almost a 100% completion rate during the first two trimesters of 2022, recorded 22 new registrations between October

December and experienced an 91% completion rate. In addition, UNHCR also supported access to Thai formal education for refugees over 17 years old: one at the primary and 25 at the secondary level.



## HEALTH

- **In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic**, UNHCR endeavored to engage all refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless communities in awareness-raising efforts to the extent possible through integrating COVID-19 risk communication messages into its ongoing outreach activities and exploring ways to step these up if needed. UNHCR ensured that materials and messages shared were culturally appropriate and in relevant languages. UNHCR also supported efforts to promote vaccination in the refugee camps.
- In urban areas, **UNHCR supported inpatient care - focusing on life-threatening conditions and children under 5 years old. In the last quarter**, 90 refugees benefited from this support. In addition, **28 refugees** benefited from remote psychosocial support conducted by UNHCR's psychologist.
- In the refugee camps, UNHCR, in partnership with Humanity and Inclusion (HI), conducted **Mental Health and Psychological Support (MHPSS) activities for Persons with disabilities**. The objective was to raise awareness and strengthen community support – allowing camp residents to have a better understanding of mental health and be empowered by strategies to cope. These activities included group activities such as art therapy and, breathing exercises, individualized counselling. The latter was provided via home visits for the more vulnerable groups, and awareness-raising sessions took place on World Mental Health Day. Between October and December, 84 persons with disabilities participated in MHPSS activities in Mae Ra Ma Luang and Mae La Oon refugee camps. In Tak province, HI reached a total of 769 refugees in Mae La, Umpium, and Nu Po camps, 283 of whom were people with disabilities and 486 caregivers.

**Read more about UNHCR and Humanity and Inclusion support to mental health in the refugee camps at the following link:** [Boosting mental health in Thailand's refugee camps – 10 October 2022](#)



## ACCESS TO ENERGY

- In the refugee camps, **UNHCR is engaging in efforts in line with the Global Strategy on Sustainable Energy by installing solar energy** panels at UNHCR workstations and Camp Committee offices. Furthermore, UNHCR installed solar street lights in Umpium, Nu Po, and Mae La camps in communal spaces to enhance the safety and protection of refugees.



## DURABLE SOLUTIONS

- Between October and December, resettlement submissions were made for **374 refugees** in the whole country, while **262 refugees** departed on resettlement.
- Despite setbacks caused by COVID-19, UNHCR in partnership with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) **submitted 3,697 nationality and permanent residency applications on behalf of stateless persons** between January-December 2022.

Read more about statelessness at the following link: [How Thailand's grassroots organizations are working to end statelessness](#) – 04 November 2022

## External / Donors Relations

- **Special thanks to major donors of un-earmarked and broadly earmarked funds as well as to donors who have contributed directly to the operation to date during 2022:** European Union | Denmark | Germany | Italy | Japan | Netherlands | Norway | Sweden | United States of America | United Kingdom
- Un-earmarked, broadly earmarked, and direct contributions were also received through private donations from Thailand. UNHCR has raised funds from the private sector since 2008 for POCs both in Thailand and globally.

### CONTACTS

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### LINKS

[How Thailand's grassroots organizations are working to end statelessness](#) – 04 November 2022

[Boosting mental health in Thailand's refugee camps](#) – 10 October 2022

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