

Mae Sot Field Office

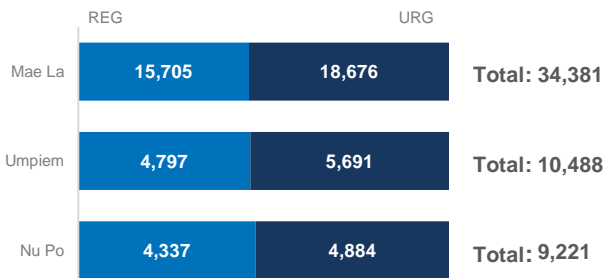
May 2023

The Mae Sot Field Office operates in **three temporary shelters** in Tak Province on the Thai-Myanmar border: Mae La (MLA), Nu Po (NPO) and Umpium (UMP).

A total of **54,090 Myanmar refugees** reside in these three temporary shelters, with the majority comprising members of the Karen ethnic minority group in South East Myanmar.

UNHCR works with the Royal Thai Government (RTG), international agencies, NGOs and donors to address the **protection and durable solutions needs** of this group.

POPULATION OF CONCERN – VERIFIED REFUGEES



Registered (REG) refugees is a term used in Thailand for individuals initially registered during the official group registration process conducted jointly by the RTG/ Ministry of Interior (MOI) and UNHCR in 2005. Verified (VER) refugees comprise Registered (REG) and Unregistered refugees (URG) verified in a joint exercise by UNHCR and the Ministry of Interior (MOI) in 2015.



UNHCR PRESENCE

29 National Staff

1 International Staff

Temporary Shelters

- **Mae La (MLA)** Temporary Shelter is located in Tha Song Yang District, Tak Province. It was established in 1984, with its size later increasing due to the merging of six temporary shelters due to strategic and safety reasons. It is the largest temporary shelter on the Thai-Myanmar border.
- **Nu Po (NPO)** Temporary Shelter is located in Umphang District and is the smallest and most remote temporary shelter in Tak Province. It was established in 1997 to accommodate refugees fleeing offensive attacks in Myanmar. Nu Po also hosts a number of refugees recognized under UNHCR's mandate in Mae Sot who were transferred in March 2005, as per the RTG's policy of having all recognized refugees from Myanmar residing in the temporary shelters.
- **Umpium (UMP)** Temporary Shelter is located in Phop Phra District. It was established in 1999 to accommodate refugees who were relocated from the previous Huaykalok and Mawker temporary shelters.

Main Activities

Protection

- The **registration of refugees** along the Thai-Myanmar border is led by the Royal Thai Government Provincial Administrative Board (RTG PAB), with UNHCR support. Since 2008, registration is only possible in exceptional cases with significant medical and/or protection concerns. UNHCR leads the identification of such cases in close consultation with the MOI.
- In line with amendments to the Civil Registration Act (2008), the RTG is responsible for conducting birth registration activities in the temporary shelters. UNHCR continues to advocate for a consistent and inclusive approach to ensure every child has their right to birth registration upheld.
- UNHCR provides **legal services** and **facilitates access to the Thai justice system**, coordinating with Thai law enforcement and prison authorities. Family disputes, civil issues, and minor crimes are managed through alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in camps following the Mediation and Dispute Resolution Guidelines (MDRG). UNHCR conducts regular monitoring of in-camp detention facilities and continues to work with relevant partners and advocate for conditions meet minimum standards and that fundamental rights are upheld. In 2023, 4 cases (6 individuals) were facilitated to the Thai justice system, 8 individuals receive ongoing support to obtain state compensation and 446 refugees received legal services from January to May.
- **Child Protection concerns** are addressed in partnership with COERR, in the form of case management, with a focus on the protection of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) and those for whom there are serious protection concerns, including sexual or physical abuse, neglect and/or exploitation. COERR currently provides case management and case-specific material support to 980 UASC. In partnership with COERR, regular training and capacity-building are provided to camp-based volunteers on the Child Protection Referral System (CPRS) and on other relevant topics, such as early marriage in order to address recent concerns over a perceived increase in prevalence and risk.
- UNHCR conducts the **Best Interest Assessments (BIA)** and the **Best Interest Determination (BID)** of children's best interests. A multi-agency **Best Interest Determination (BID) panel** meets regularly to discuss recommendations made for each case. In 2022, the best interests of 59 children were assessed and/or determined through BIA and BID as of 31 December 2022. From January to April 2023, a total of 16 BIA and BID were completed.
- UNHCR directly supports and works closely with the **Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Committees**. Activities include the provision of technical guidance on case management, capacity-building, and direct legal support. UNHCR also provides awareness-raising on topics of GBV and LGBTIQ+ to camp communities. UNHCR participates in the **Engaging Men in Accountable Practices (EMAP)** project, with the aim of engaging men in the prevention of GBV. The GBV committees currently assist and monitor 37 survivors of GBV and identified 12 GBV survivors to receive legal services from UNHCR between January and May 2023.
- UNHCR works in partnership with COERR and Humanity and Inclusion (HI) to address the needs of **persons with specific needs (PSN)**, specifically through psycho-social support to 489 **persons with disabilities (PWD)** and 218 caregivers of PWD COERR assisted 1,736 PSN, including the provision of case-specific material support.
- UNHCR maintains its commitment to **Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)**. With the support of the Sermpanya Foundation, a short film was produced aiming to increase knowledge and awareness on PSEA and reporting mechanisms. More than 220 screenings and consultations took place in Umpium, Nu Po and Mae La temporary shelters, reaching around 11,211 refugees. In addition, UNHCR ensured that implementing partners, camp-based staff and refugees well acknowledged PSEA core principles via trainings which reached 1,035 individuals.
- UNHCR engages with refugee communities in line with UNHCR's **Accountability to Affected Persons** and **Age and Gender Diversity** policies for the meaningful participation of refugees as rights holders and effective programming. This requires direct and sustained engagement with communities. In 2022, UNHCR led **362 focus group discussions** with 3,273 participants on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, future planning view, Child Protection, and GBV. UNHCR provided capacity-building activities on LGBTIQ+, GBV, case management, and referral systems. In addition, comprehensive sessions regularly take place related to PSEA, civil documentation, and birth registration in coordination with operational partners.
- In 2022, Mae Sot Field Office set up the "**Communication with Community (CwC) room**" equipped with internet connectivity in the three camps. These "CwC rooms" foster continuous communication with refugee communities and enable the provision of distance training, meeting, counselling, and interviews with camp residents.

- So far in 2023, UNHCR delivered core relief items to 37 vulnerable families consisting of 157 individuals in the camps.

Access to Energy

UNHCR is also engaging in efforts in line with the Global Strategy on Sustainable Energy, such as installing solar energy at UNHCR workstations in the camps. UNHCR is advocating with the RTG to install solar lights in communal spaces in the camp to enhance the safety and protection of refugees. Between 2022 and 2023, 313 units of solar streetlights were installed by UNHCR in all three temporary shelters.

Emergency preparedness and response

- UNHCR maintains a strong **coordination** role, chairing the Protection Working Group for refugees in the temporary shelters. Following the February 2021 coup in Myanmar, UNHCR has been chairing the Field Inter-Sector Working Group and leading the NFI and Protection Working Groups in Tak province as part of the emergency and preparedness response.
- Since the 2021 February coup, the Royal Thai Government (RTG) reported that between December 2021 and 12 April 2023, some 25,589 **Myanmar refugees crossed into Tak Province** and returned to Myanmar once fighting allegedly subsided. In accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) established by the RTG in March 2021, refugees were sheltered in Temporary Safety Areas (TSAs) placed under the overall jurisdiction of the Royal Thai Army.

Durable Solutions

In 2019, UNHCR worked closely with the Thai and Myanmar governments, the refugee community, and other stakeholders to unlock a multi-solutions approach to find a dignified, sustainable and comprehensive end to the situation of protracted encampment on the Thai-Myanmar border. The events that occurred in Myanmar on 1 February 2021 have dramatically changed the situation and triggered a new wave of violence and unrest in the country impeding prospects of voluntary, safe, and sustainable repatriation.

Facilitated Voluntary Repatriation

- UNHCR is currently not promoting or facilitating returns to Myanmar. The Facilitated Voluntary Return programme led by the Governments of Thailand and Myanmar was suspended at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and completely came to a halt following the February 2021 military takeover in Myanmar which led to a deterioration in the human rights and security situation, thus affecting refugees' confidence to return home.

Resettlement

- As of 30 May 2023, **1,939 individuals** in Mae La, Nu Po and Umpium temporary shelters are in the resettlement pipeline at various stages of case processing. Between January and May 2023, 767 refugees departed: 203 from Mae La, 94 from Umpium, 470 from Nu Po to third countries.
- In May 2023, UNHCR, together with the Governments of Thailand and the United States, announced a renewed opportunity for refugees in the nine border camps to be resettled to the US if they were previously verified by UNHCR in 2015 or by MOI in 2019-2020. A verification exercise was launched on 29 May to confirm the population for resettlement. All individuals who meet the eligibility criteria and express interest in resettlement will be submitted for resettlement consideration. Resettlement submissions are due to commence later this year.
- UNHCR **works in collaboration** with the Resettlement Support Center (RSC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and third countries' embassies on the resettlement process.

Working with Partners

UNHCR works in close partnership with the RTG, UN agencies, humanitarian organizations and civil society to improve protection and solutions for refugees on the Thai-Myanmar border. UNHCR currently has agreements with four partners for its operations on the border:

- **Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees (COERR)** provides protection for unaccompanied and separated refugee children and for children at risk and works to strengthen community-based child protection capacities. COERR also provides assistance to Persons with Specific Needs (PSN).
- **Humanity and Inclusion (HI)** provides Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS) assistance to Persons with Disabilities in order to cope with stress and other mental health issues.
- **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** organizes and supports pre-departure medical screenings for resettlement.
- **Ministry of Interior (MOI)** provides operational support to local authorities on registration and status determination for the Fast-Track Provincial Admissions Board (PAB).

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