

# THAILAND

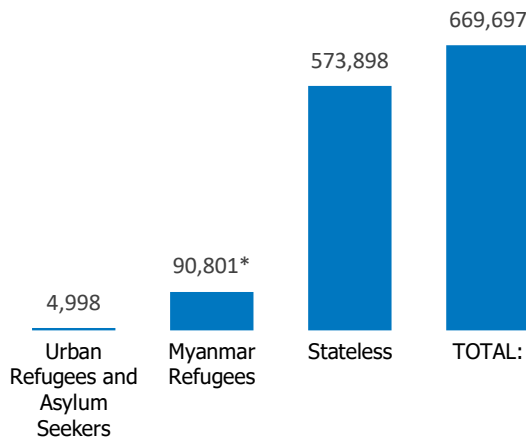
30 SEPTEMBER 2023

Thailand hosts 90,801 Myanmar refugees in nine temporary shelters on the Thai-Myanmar border while 4,998 urban refugees and asylum-seekers reside in other areas.

In addition, the Royal Thai Government (RTG) registered over half a million stateless people, mostly living in highland border areas.

UNHCR works with the RTG, international agencies, NGOs and donors to address the protection assistance and durable solutions needs of these groups.

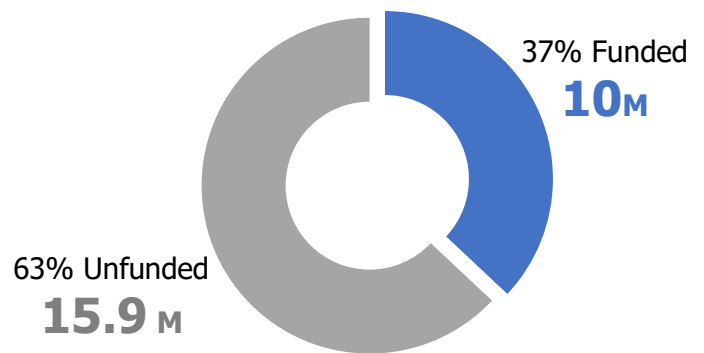
## FORCIBLY DISPLACED AND STATELESS PEOPLE Figures



## FUNDING (AS OF 30 SEPTEMBER)

**USD 25.9 M**

Requested for the Thailand Operation



\*Myanmar Refugees living in the nine refugee camps as of 31 May 2023. The figures will be updated upon completion of the joint MOI-UNHCR verification exercise in January 2024

## UNHCR PRESENCE

### Staff:

**149** National Staff  
**20** International Staff

### Offices:

**01** Multi-Country Office in Bangkok  
**02** Field Offices in Mae Sot and in Mae Hong Son



# Population Overview

## MYANMAR CAMP-BASED REFUGEES

- Refugees residing in the nine temporary shelters on the Thai-Myanmar border are of **mainly Karen and Karenni ethnicity**, some of whom have lived in Thailand since the mid-1980s after fleeing armed conflict between ethnic armed groups and the Myanmar military. Under the national legal framework, they are generally **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 other sectoral areas are covered 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-PAB in close consultation with the MOI. UNHCR, jointly with the Ministry of Interior (MOI) of the Royal Thai Government (RTG), has started a data verification exercise in the nine temporary shelters since May 2023. The exercise has already been completed in Ban Don Yang, Tham Hin, Nupo and Umpium temporary shelters. The final figures will be shared once the exercise has been completed in all nine shelters.

## URBAN ASYLUM-SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

- **UNHCR** continues its full complement of **protection and assistance activities** in relation to urban refugees and asylum-seekers from 47 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. UNHCR-issued documentation/identification in the form of a Refugee or Asylum-Seeker Card is not officially recognized by the RTG. Asylum-seekers and refugees continue to be at risk of being detained on immigration grounds for illegal entry or overstaying visas as they are considered “illegal” in the country without a national legal framework for protection.
- 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, enrol 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 (NSM)** to distinguish people who need international protection from economic migrants, UNHCR welcomed the establishment of the Screening Committee in 2020, the Sub-Committee on Draft Criteria, Procedures, and Conditions in 2021, the Sub-Committees on Screening and Appeals in 2022. In 2023, the Criteria for determining status as a protected person in Thailand were published in the Royal Gazette. The NSM officially commenced on 23 September 2023. However, the implementation will be gradual as the broader set of procedural standards and policies required to implement the NSM remain under development by the RTG, with UNHCR technical support and advocacy.

## STATELESS PERSONS

- In 2023, there are over half a million people registered as Stateless with the RTG. 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, 66,594 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.

## 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. From February 2021 until 30 September 2023, the RTG recorded that **45,025 Myanmar individuals sought safety temporarily in Thailand during several movements**. According to the authorities, these groups reportedly returned to Myanmar once the fighting subsided.
- Since June, Myanmar refugees who fled the surge in conflict between Karenni forces and the State Administration Council (SAC) in Kayah State, are sheltered in Temporary Safety Areas (TSAs) placed under the jurisdiction of the Royal Thai Army (RTA). Upon the authorities’ request, UNHCR and partners distributed various Core Relief Items (CRIs) to all five TSAs, including plastic sheets, blankets, sleeping mats, mosquito nets, mosquito repellents, kitchen sets, buckets, slippers, hygiene items, clothes, and solar lamps. As of 30 September, the RTG reports that 7,259 refugees remained in TSAs in Mae Hong Son Province in three different districts (i.e., Mae Sariang, Mueang Mae Hong Son and Khun Yuam).



### 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 access to birth registration. Additionally, UNHCR collaborates 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 provided legal services to 31 individuals and facilitated 6 individuals with access to the Thai justice system between July and September.
- UNHCR, in partnership with the COERR Foundation, conducts case management and focuses on the protection of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC). Between July and September, UNHCR Field Offices conducted Best Interest Procedures (BIP) assessments for 12 refugee children across all refugee camps for protection or durable solutions.
- UNHCR Thailand, jointly with the Ministry of Interior, continued **the verification of refugees living in the nine camps along the border**. During the reporting period, the teams completed the verification in Tham Hin (THI) camps in Kanchanaburi and proceeded to verify Nupo and

Umpium camps. As of 30 September, UNHCR completed the verification in Ban Don Yang, THI, Nupo and Umpium. The exercise is still ongoing in Mae La Refugee camp. Once finalized, the team will travel to the Mae Hong Son to achieve the last bulk of the exercise.

- In urban areas, UNHCR continues to provide **multipurpose cash grants (MPCG)** to refugees with specific needs. Between July and September, the UNHCR Cash Based Interventions (CBI) panel allocated MPCGs to 437 households covering 1,407 individuals.
- UNHCR supported the displaced population with protection issues through **in-person counselling and referrals for needed services**. Between July and September, UNHCR provided protection counselling for 192 refugees and asylum-seekers living in urban areas. In the nine refugee camps, UNHCR counselled 158 camp refugees. Furthermore, UNHCR Reception for urban refugees continues conducting in-person activities by appointment, including card renewal, RSD interviews and notification of decisions, and ad hoc counselling. Registrations continue mostly remotely.
- UNHCR conducted **in-person counselling and protection monitoring** at five different Immigration Detention Centres (IDC) and four different MSDHS shelters and the Welfare Protection Center for Victims of Human Trafficking. UNHCR distributed Core Relief Items, material assistance, and multi-purpose cash to 304 Rohingya individuals and 15 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 August, six urban refugees started their undergraduate school year at Siam University in program ranging from Civil Engineering to International Hotel and Tourism Management, thanks to the **DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) scholarship program**. The program offers qualified refugee and returnee students the possibility to earn an undergraduate degree in their country of asylum or home country.
- In urban areas, 515 refugee and asylum-seeker children aged 6-17 were enrolled in primary education, and 123 children aged 6-17 were enrolled in secondary education as of 30 September.
- In partnership with COERR, 92 children attended the **Intensive Preparatory Programme (IPP)** that aims to equip children with skills to access public schools under Thailand's "Education for All" policy. In addition to learning Thai language, children are also taught basic science concepts and IT skills.
- UNHCR continues to provide a 3-month **Thai intensive learning program** to 22 adult refugees and asylum seekers 18-45 years old living in urban areas as of 30 September. In addition, UNHCR also supported the access of 19 refugees over 17 years old to the primary and secondary level.



## HEALTH

- In urban areas, **UNHCR supported inpatient care** - focusing on life-threatening conditions and children under 5 years old. Between July and September, 68 refugees benefited from this support (through 95 referrals). In addition, 32 refugees benefited from first-time in-person psychosocial support conducted by UNHCR's psychologist, and 198 refugees received psychosocial support from COERR Psychosocial unit.



## 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 in the Temporary shelters. In May, UNHCR

installed four solar lights in the bathing facilities to mitigate the risk of GBV in the Ban Mai Nai Soi refugee camp. Furthermore, UNHCR installed 100 solar streetlights in Umpium, Nu Po, and Mae La camps in communal spaces to enhance the safety and protection of refugees.



## DURABLE SOLUTIONS

- Between July and September, resettlement submissions were made for **544 refugees in the whole country, while 573 refugees departed on resettlement.**
- During the same reporting period, UNHCR in partnership with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) submitted **1,081 nationality and permanent residency applications** on behalf of stateless persons.

## 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 provide food, shelter, health, education, water/sanitation, protection and livelihoods to refugees in the nine border camps.
- **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), Thailand, , 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).

### 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 2023:**

Canada | European Union | Denmark | France | Germany | Italy | Japan | Norway | Sweden | United States of America

**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 to support forcibly displaced and stateless people both in Thailand and globally.

### CONTACTS

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### LINKS

[UNHCR Thailand](#) - [Twitter](#) – [Facebook](#)

[HUMAN STORY: Imagine if you had to prove that you belong](#) – UNHCR, 22 July 2023