

# Thailand

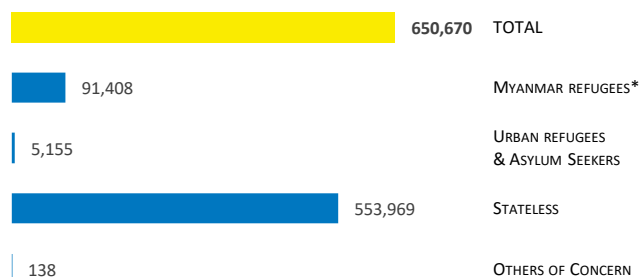
31 DECEMBER 2021

In Thailand, populations of concern include **91,408** Myanmar refugees, **5,155** urban asylum-seekers and refugees and **553,969** persons registered by the Royal Thai Government (RTG) as stateless.

Myanmar refugees reside in **9 temporary shelters on the Thai Myanmar border**, while urban asylum-seekers and 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 these groups.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

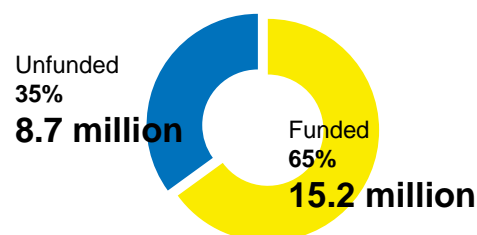


\* Verification Exercise conducted from Jan-Apr 2015 and subsequent data changes to-date. Under reverification

## FUNDING (AS OF 31 DECEMBER 2021)

# USD 23.9 M

requested for the Thailand Operation



## Population Overview

### MYANMAR CAMP-BASED REFUGEES

- The group of refugees residing in the nine camps on the Thai-Myanmar border are of **mainly Karen, Karenni and Burmese ethnicity**, some of whom have lived in Thailand as long ago as the mid-1980s after fleeing conflict between ethnic armed groups and the Myanmar military. Under the applicable legal framework for this group, they are **not permitted to access national institutions** (e.g., health, education), nor to move outside the camps, including for the purpose of accessing livelihood opportunities. They are, therefore, reliant on non-governmental humanitarian services for their basic needs. UNHCR's interventions focus primarily on **protection and solutions**, with material assistance provided by NGOs.
- The Facilitated Voluntary Return (FVR)** programme led by the Governments of Thailand and Myanmar, with the support of UNHCR and partners, has been suspended following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Since the military takeover in February 2021, UNHCR has been concerned about the deteriorating situation in Myanmar, which is not conducive for refugees to return. For this reason, UNHCR is not promoting returns to Myanmar and only assists those who have made a free and informed decision to return. In addition, UNHCR advocates for access to Thai territory and protection as long as is required, as well as for the principle of non-refoulement, to be maintained.

**URBAN ASYLUM-SEEKERS AND REFUGEES**

- At present, UNHCR continues its full complement of **protection and assistance activities** for some 5,000 urban refugees and asylum-seekers from over 40 countries residing in Bangkok and surrounding urban areas. Population flows into Thailand have been of a mixed nature, with **arrivals both from surrounding countries and other regions**. There is currently **no national legal framework** in place for the specific 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 documentation 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. Urban asylum-seekers and refugees are considered “illegal” in the country and are at risk of being detained on immigration grounds if they entered illegally or overstayed their visa.
- As they have no right to access employment, many urban asylum-seekers and refugees are **dependent on humanitarian or other forms of support**, including from UNHCR, to sustain themselves. Under the RTG’s **progressive “education for all” policy** urban asylum-seeker and refugee children can go to school although many face challenges doing so 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** and the **Sub-Committee on Criteria, Procedures, and Condition in 2021**. Once operationalized, it is hoped that the National Screening Mechanism will increase the protection space for those who need it.

**STATELESS PERSONS**

- According to the latest official RTG statistics as of 30 September 2021, there are 553,969 stateless persons registered with the RTG, although some unofficial estimates are higher. Almost **90% 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 do not hold any identity documents. These communities face a range of challenges, including language barriers to accessing civil registration and nationality procedures, difficulties associated with living remotely, and lack of understanding of the importance of civil registration in preventing statelessness.
- Important 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 have been unable to 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, stateless persons, and other persons of concern to UNHCR, while supporting their inclusion in national systems. On the Thai Myanmar border, UNHCR works with a consortium of NGOs called **the Committee for the**

**Coordination of Services for Displaced Persons (CCSDPT)** that coordinate provision of food, NFI, 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 to 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).

## UNHCR PRESENCE

### Staff:

113 National Staff

20 International Staff

### Offices:

1 Multi-Country Office in  
Bangkok

2 Field Offices in Mae Hong  
Son and Mae Sot



On 16 December, Thai Red Cross (TRC) conducted vaccination campaign for 56 urban refugees in Bangkok. In 2021, UNHCR supported vaccination campaign of 731 urban refugee, thanks to generous donation and support from Chulaborn Royal Academy and Thai Red Cross. ©UNHCR/ Morgane Roussel-Hemery

## Main Activities

### EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- The volatile situation in Myanmar following the 01 February 2021 coup has resulted in increased armed conflict and subsequent population displacement within and across borders, including into Thailand. In December 2021, the escalation of violence in Kayah State forced thousands of individuals to seek refuge in Thailand, some of whom subsequently returned to Myanmar. The Thai authorities lead the response to these movements at the border and have set up different Temporary Safety areas (TSA) to receive Myanmar refugees fleeing clashes and unrest. The local authorities have also set up donation points to collect assistance for new arrivals. UNHCR, together with partners, continues to support RTG efforts in receiving new Myanmar refugees to help ensure that they receive the protection and assistance they need.

**PROTECTION**

- UNHCR and its partners are aware of the continuing increased level of hardship being faced by POCs in Thailand as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to provide support to POCs to address some of their basic needs. In urban areas, UNHCR provided **cash-based intervention (CBI) to 2,639 vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers** between October and December 2021. CBI is distributed to POCs through cash cards via monthly deposit, and the amount distributed varies based on family composition and vulnerabilities. The average amount provided to each household is approximately **THB 4,400/ household** (approx. USD 135). This helps refugees meet their basic needs, particularly given the marked decrease in informal income opportunities due to the pandemic. Cash grants empower refugees by allowing them to choose how they meet their basic needs, and helps them to be economically active and financially inclusive.
- UNHCR with the Bangkok Refugee Centre supports gender-based violence victims through remote counselling and psychosocial assessments. Separately, UNHCR conducted **six focus group discussions** during October-December, targeting mothers with young children and fathers recently released from Immigration Detention Centres. The focus groups discussed parenting skills, anger management and stress coping mechanisms managing anger and stress. The discussions also served as a vehicle to raise awareness about issues and prevention of Gender-Based Violence. During October-December, UNHCR provided protection counselling support to 450 POCs.
- During October-December 2021, UNHCR continued to conduct regular remote monitoring of Rohingya POCs accommodated in government facilities and undertake protection counselling and interviews of new arrivals. UNHCR also continued to advocate for non-refoulement as well as access to alternatives to detention (ATD), including in the case of children, under Thailand's Memorandum of Understanding on ATD for children. UNHCR continued to undertake joint assessment interviews with the Thai authorities such as protection needs and Best Interest Determination for children. UNHCR distributes Core-Relief Items, material assistance and multi-purpose cash to Rohingya POCs in Immigration Detention Centres. In October 2021, UNHCR and, jointly with IOM, delivered training to 90 operational staff from the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. The training focused on international law and the protection needs of the Rohingya and was designed to strengthen case management and service mapping.
- UNHCR's implementing partner, ADRA, continued to support stateless persons in 2021 and throughout the pandemic. Since September 2021, it strengthened support by providing **remote legal counselling through an online platform** and implementing a "delivery box" system to collect documents from stateless persons to continue ongoing assistance during COVID19 pandemic.

**EDUCATION**

- In urban areas, as of 31 December 2021, a total of **558 refugee children were enrolled in primary education**, and **96 refugee children were enrolled in secondary education**. In addition, **84 refugee children** were attending Thai language classes provided through a partner to equip them with skills to access public schools under Thailand's progressive "Education for All" policy. In addition, UNHCR has supported the continuity of Thai formal education for persons of concern over 17 years old: four at the primary level and 14 at the secondary level.
- In December 2021, UNHCR, in partnership with Venerable Phra Medhivajirodom, Sasin Sustainability and Entrepreneurship Center (SEC) and Kanachai "Kit" Bencharongkul, launched a global campaign "Aiming Higher" for the first time in Thailand. The campaign aims to raise funds supporting refugee scholars worldwide



and will run until 2023. UNHCR is thankful for donors' generosity that pledged USD 100,000 to support gifted refugee students to pursue higher education after the press conference held on 3 December.



## HEALTH



Saw Paw Htoo, 22 years old, wears a cloth face mask donated by Uniqlo Thailand Company Limited during his working hours in the quarantine facility at Ban Mae Surin camp.

©UNHCR/ Supo Minglaksami – 17 December 2021

■ UNHCR, with the support of partners, has conducted distributions to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 based on advice from health partners. In urban areas, 1,665 masks were distributed to 555 urban refugee students by Bangkok Refugee Center between October and December. In the refugee camps, **3,105 hand sanitizer bottles** were distributed to 3,099 refugees and community-based organizations in Mae La Oon and Mae Ra Ma Luang camps. UNHCR also provided **47,500 cloth facemasks**, washable and reusable, to **refugees above three years old** in Mae La, Mae Ra Ma Luang, Mae La Oon, Ban Mai Nai soi and Ban Mae Surin camps. **UNIQLO Thailand Company Limited** generously donated 16,362 of the facemasks that were distributed in the refugee camps located in Mae Hong Son province.

■ In refugee camps, Risk Communication & Community Engagement (RCCE) continues to be carried out twice a week to raise awareness with the people in the community about COVID19 and preventive measures. UNHCR's partner, ADRA, has disseminated leaflets about COVID-19 prevention, vaccination, and how to use masks properly. In

addition, The Border Consortium (TBC) and Karen Information Center developed a video on COVID19 prevention. This was shown in refugee languages during the screening of a film on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

- In urban areas, UNHCR continues to support inpatient care - focusing on life-threatening conditions and children under 5 - and financially assisted **74 Persons of Concerns (POCs)** during October – December. In addition, **212 POCs** benefited from UNHCR psychosocial support, complemented by 284 visits. More specifically, the UNHCR psychologist addressed the specific needs of 12 individuals with tailored

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[https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5\\_16734](https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_16734)

