

Thailand



Operational highlights

- The pace of resettlement increased significantly in 2007, with third countries accepting over 18,200 refugees, of whom 14,600 departed.
- Following dialogue with the Royal Thai Government (RTG), Legal Assistance Centres (LAC) became fully operational in three camps as of July and examined 174 cases. Training in Thai law for 700 refugees and justice personnel contributed to the rule of law in the camps.
- The Strengthening Protection Capacity Project (SPCP) focused on security from violence and exploitation, and has provided community-based organizations with the knowledge and resources to take the lead in preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence.
- The Ministry of the Interior, concerned government agencies and UNHCR collaborated to strengthen admission, screening and protection standards to benefit Myanmar asylum-seekers. The Provincial Admission Boards regularized the status of nearly 2,500 asylum-seekers. In addition, the distribution of 88,200 identity cards in early 2007 benefited all Myanmar refugees over the age of 12.

Persons of concern

Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Myanmar	124,600	124,600	49	48
	Various	1,100	1,100	-	-
Asylum-seekers	Myanmar	12,800	4,100	42	29
	Sri Lanka	250	250	21	18
	Various	480	480	-	-
Total		139,230	130,530		

- The 38,000 refugees in Mae La camp benefited from a clean environment through the effective operation of a waste management system.
- Some 4,500 refugees participated in training in Thai language, culture and environmental protection, and vocational skills.

Working environment

A general election was held at the end of 2007. Migratory movements into Thailand have increased, with the country currently hosting more than two million migrants. Thailand is particularly concerned about national security and bilateral cooperation, which restricts the availability of asylum space for certain groups of concern. UNHCR faced challenges in upholding its mandate as well as in finding solutions for refugees and asylum-seekers in detention, a trend which increased during the year and also affected many children.

Achievements and impact

Main objectives

In 2007, UNHCR's objectives were to improve protection in the camps, promote and assist the development of a State-run asylum system, mitigate the consequences of prolonged encampment on refugees, and improve their prospects for self-reliance. The Office also aimed to broaden the strategic use of resettlement as part of a comprehensive solution to the protracted refugee situation in the camps, strengthen partnerships with NGOs and other stakeholders, and find solutions for refugees from countries other than Myanmar.

Protection and solutions

Myanmar refugees have been living in closed camps for more than two decades. Some children and adolescents do not know any environment other than that of a refugee camp. Despite UNHCR's advocacy, the refugees do not enjoy freedom of movement or access to the local labour market. The negative consequences of such prolonged encampment on refugees' protection, mental health and social life are significant.

UNHCR has made efforts to mitigate this by improving the administration of justice in the camps, ensuring that an adequate prevention and response mechanism for sexual and gender-based violence is in place, and implementing vocational training activities. Access to education has also been improved, although it is still limited.

While UNHCR will continue to work on comprehensive solutions, resettlement to third countries is the most accessible solution for many refugees. The scope of this activity grew considerably in 2007, as the Office was able to submit the cases of some 30,400 refugees to resettlement countries, making Thailand the largest resettlement operation in the world.

The situation of asylum-seekers and non-Myanmar refugees was precarious throughout 2007. Arrests and prolonged detention for certain groups were reported, most notably 152 Lao Hmong refugees (including 82 children) detained since December 2006. UNHCR and the Thai authorities continued their consultations on the Office's mandate and its exercise of refugee status determination with the aim of reaching a common understanding.

Activities and assistance

Most assistance activities for the Myanmar refugees in nine camps in Thailand are conducted by operational partners working within a common cooperative arrangement. UNHCR's involvement is limited to filling unmet needs, and it can therefore focus on protection-related activities.

Community services: The monitoring system for unaccompanied and separated children identified over 8,000 cases in the nine camps. It ensured that children with special needs received support and assistance. UNHCR staff visited 1900 children living in 100 boarding houses, as well as 350 children in foster care. Prosthetic and rehabilitation services for the disabled, including landmine victims, benefited a total of 3,500 persons. As part of the strategy to address sexual and gender-based violence in the camps, all victims in need of assistance were provided safe shelter. Committees to address this issue were established in all camps, and awareness campaigns were conducted.

Domestic needs and household support: Subsistence allowances were given to over 1,200 very vulnerable urban refugees, and supplementary food rations were provided to almost 900 people of concern.

Education: Some 1,500 refugee children attended nursery schools and 850 students benefited from computer training. Almost 3,000 refugees graduated from 50 vocational training courses and some 8,000 refugees participated in Thai language courses. In addition, 378 children took advantage of the playgrounds in two of the camps.

Health and nutrition: Awareness campaigns on hygiene and reproductive health in Tham Hin camp targeted refugee children and adolescents and had a positive impact on health and sanitation. UNHCR expanded its substance-abuse and HIV-prevention activities in 2007.



UNHCR/McKinsey

Computer center in Tham Hin which was built and equipped with ninemillion.org funds. The courses benefit 850 teenagers in the camp on the Thai-Myanmar border. Most of them are ethnic Karen.

Some 1,300 urban refugees and asylum-seekers received medical care.

Income generation: Refugees in Mae La camp benefited from start-up support to engage in self-reliance activities, which included the provision of 10 sewing machines.

Legal assistance: Legal Assistance Centres became operational in three camps, and counselling was provided in 174 cases. The Ministry of Justice assisted these efforts to strengthen the rule of law in the camps and improve the administration of justice.

The Provincial Admission Boards convened several meetings in the first half of 2007 which resulted in the regularization of nearly 2,500 Myanmar asylum-seekers. The resettlement operation grew significantly, and more than 14,000 refugees departed to a third country. Some 490 urban refugees and over 230 asylum-seekers were given legal advice and counselling in Bangkok.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR helped implementing partners meet their project management costs.

Sanitation: Effective waste management systems benefited 38,000 refugees in Mae La camp.

Shelter and infrastructure: Roads were upgraded, bridges constructed, gabion boxes installed, drainage systems repaired and trees planted in five camps.

Water: The risk of water-borne diseases in the landslide relocation areas in Mae La Oon camp was reduced by the installation of a water back-up system.

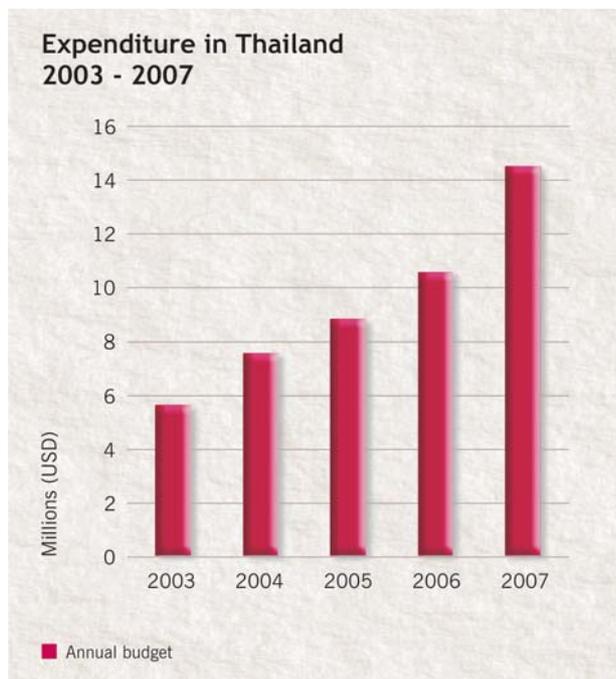
Constraints

The Provincial Admission Boards reduced their activities from mid-2007, resulting in an increase in the number of unregistered families in the camps. UNHCR and the Government are discussing ways to improve the situation.

A total of 61 urban asylum-seekers and 159 urban refugees were arrested during the year. As of April, UNHCR's access to the detainees in the Immigration Detention Center in Bangkok was restricted. In addition, 152 Lao Hmong refugees were still in detention in Nong Khai.

Financial information

Local fundraising by the Office helped to increase the initial budget and enabled UNHCR to provide basic needs. Nonetheless, many protection and assistance needs remained unfulfilled. A comprehensive needs assessment is planned for 2008. Thanks to growing contributions, the operational expenditure in Thailand increased steadily over the past four years.



Organization and implementation

Management

In 2007, UNHCR had a total of 110 employees, including 20 international staff, 10 UNVs, three JPOs, 26 UNOPS and three secondees. The operations were covered by the Regional Office in Bangkok, three field offices (Kanchanaburi, Mae Hong Son and Mae Sot) and a field unit in Mae Sariang. The Regional Office also covered activities in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

Working with others

In addition to its implementing arrangements with governmental agencies and international and local NGOs, UNHCR cooperated closely with operational partners within the framework of the common cooperative arrangement. This resulted in a comprehensive plan to address the overall needs of people of concern.

Overall assessment

Despite the difficulties experienced in 2007, UNHCR and the Thai authorities have maintained a good working relationship. However, ties need to be strengthened to address issues related to the provision of adequate protection space for certain groups of concern to UNHCR. On the other hand, the establishment of the Legal Aid Centres, the improvement in the administration of justice and the growth of the resettlement operation represent positive achievements in 2007 for Myanmar refugees.

Partners

Implementing partners

Government: Ministry of Education, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice

NGOs: Aide Médicale Internationale, American Refugee Committee, COERR, HI, IRC, Right to Play, SVA, USCRI, WEAE, ZOA

Others: UNDP (UNV), UNOPS

Operational partners

Government: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Social Welfare, National Security Council

NGOs: ICS Asia, JRS, MI, TBBC

Others: ILO, OHCHR, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO

Budget, income and expenditure (USD)

	Final budget	Income from contributions	Other funds available	Total funds available	Total expenditure
Annual budget	15,026,774	6,156,578	8,437,471	14,594,049	14,504,988

Note: Income from contributions includes contributions earmarked at the country level. Other funds available include transfers from unearmarked and broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects	Previous years' projects
	Annual budget	Annual and supplementary budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	3,594,956	0
Community services	1,161,650	138,330
Domestic needs and household support	411,907	73,869
Education	953,664	206,368
Forestry	103,218	16,322
Health and nutrition	326,737	102,159
Income generation	280,106	0
Legal assistance	2,446,195	602,510
Operational support (to agencies)	525,996	52,914
Sanitation	130,850	64,490
Shelter and infrastructure	174,006	59,457
Transport and logistics	7,388	3,853
Instalments with implementing partners	2,058,364	(1,320,273)
Sub-total operational activities	12,175,036	0
Programme support	2,329,952	0
Total expenditure	14,504,988	0
Cancellation on previous years' expenditure		(44,290)
Instalments with implementing partners		
Payments made	7,083,558	
Reporting received	(5,025,194)	
Balance	2,058,364	
Previous years' report		
Instalments with implementing partners		
Outstanding 1st January		1,613,870
Reporting received		(1,320,273)
Refunded to UNHCR		(390,925)
Adjustments		97,328
Balance		0