

Thailand



Operational highlights

- The provincial admissions boards (PABs), the Government's admissions-screening mechanism, regularized the status of some 16,500 people from Myanmar, providing them with formal permission to live in refugee camps.
- Higher intake quotas from resettlement countries and the cooperation of the Government allowed UNHCR to resettle some 4,700 refugees in 2006.
- The legal aid centres project, designed to increase Myanmar refugees' access to justice, was launched in 2006 with the opening of two centres. Their opening is considered an important step in expanding refugee rights.
- The Government allowed UNHCR to issue identity cards to all Myanmar refugees more than 12 years old. The cards will be issued in the first quarter of 2007.
- UNHCR implemented the Strengthening Protection Capacity Project (SPCP) to identify gaps in protection and find ways of addressing them. In 2006 the SPCP secured funding to provide ID cards to 80,000 camp-based refugees from Myanmar.

- Nearly 3,000 refugee students benefited from vocational training. Courses in the Thai language were conducted for 3,540 refugees in eight refugee camps.

Working environment

A military coup in September 2006 removed the Prime Minister from office. Parliament, the cabinet and the constitution of 1997 were abolished and martial law declared throughout the country. A Council for Democratic Reform, consisting of senior military figures, was appointed to coordinate the drafting of a new constitution and prepare for general elections at the end of 2007. Martial law curtailed freedom of expression and political activity, but it was gradually lifted in most of Thailand's provinces.

Presenting the new government structure and strategies to the UN Country Team, General Surayud Chulanont, the interim Prime Minister, highlighted three priorities for the country: national reconciliation, resolution of the ethno-religious conflict in the south of the country, and refugees.

The high priority given to refugees was an encouraging sign, though no national policy has been adopted so far to reflect it. Indeed, the Government's stance on refugees has been inconsistent. In some cases it has restricted the existing asylum space. For instance, several thousand ethnic Lao Hmong living in Petchabun province are still subject to indeterminate status and at risk of deportation. In a move that alarmed UNHCR, 53 Hmong from Nong Khai province, including a newborn infant, were deported to the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Achievements and impact

Main objectives

In 2006 UNHCR's major objectives were: to ensure the reception, admission and documentation of asylum-seekers and refugees; improve refugee rights; mitigate the consequences of a protracted refugee situation; and ensure the physical safety of refugees. Furthermore, the Office aimed to plan and implement age, gender and diversity-based operations while expanding the strategic use of resettlement as a protection and durable-solutions tool.

Protection and solutions

The situation of thousands of refugees from Myanmar confined for decades in isolated camps on the Thai-Myanmar border remained unresolved. With local integration not possible and voluntary repatriation out of the question as long as conditions in Myanmar remain unstable, resettlement remained the only option for these refugees. In 2006, some ten resettlement countries offered generous intake quotas for refugees from Thailand. UNHCR proposed 19,900 refugees for resettlement in 2006 and resettled more than 4,700 of them.

The Office established legal assistance centres in two border camps, giving refugees greater access to

counselling and contributing to their safety and security. However, the project has got off to a slow start because of the Government's initial reluctance to authorize its full implementation. Nonetheless, a first goal was achieved with the completion of a detailed study on protection in the camps and on refugees' access to justice.

In 2006, UNHCR improved its communications with urban refugees and asylum-seekers. This followed participatory age, gender and diversity mainstreaming assessments which revealed that refugees were often misinformed about their status and right to protection, and that they were frustrated by slow resettlement procedures. In response, UNHCR created a roster of specialists in protection, legal issues, resettlement and community services to counsel urban refugees and asylum-seekers.

Activities and assistance

Community services: The Office improved the monitoring system for separated children in the Myanmar refugee camps and addressed their special protection needs. Currently, more than 2,300 separated children live in boarding houses, some 330 are in foster care and 19 live on their own. The establishment (with UNICEF) of child-protection committees in the camps has increased awareness of the plight of separated children and unaccompanied minors. In addition, training on how to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence (of which 110 cases were reported) was offered to more than 2,900 refugees and community leaders. Some 42,000 sanitary kits were distributed to all women of reproductive age. Finally, some 50,000 refugees participated in courses on the dangers of landmines.

Domestic needs and household support: UNHCR provided 930 extremely needy urban refugees with a subsistence allowance and gave supplementary food rations to the most vulnerable.

Education: More than 3,000 students enrolled to be trained in more than 50 different trades in seven Karen

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Myanmar	132,200	132,200	49	48
	Various	900	900	40	40
Asylum-seekers	Myanmar	17,900	9,200	44	37
	Lao People's Democratic Republic	100	-	45	47
	Various	400	-	33	22
Total		151,500	142,300		



Some 140,000 refugees from Myanmar live in nine refugee camps in Thailand. Many have lived in camps for almost two decades.

refugee camps. Although the students are not allowed to work in Thailand, the value of this programme in the event of resettlement or repatriation is recognized. Participatory assessments have shown the strong need for courses in the Thai language, which were provided.

Forestry: UNHCR saw to the planting of more than 20,000 trees to reduce soil erosion and encouraged refugees to protect the environment of the camps. More than 900 refugees were trained in various environment-related areas such as hygiene, community-based waste management, garbage separation and recycling. The planting of grass and bamboo to stabilize roadsides and drains was integrated into all road repair activities.

Health and nutrition: A medical clinic for urban refugees provided health care and referral services to more than 1,000 refugees and asylum-seekers. In the camps, UNHCR has expanded awareness campaigns, voluntary counselling and testing, as well as care and support for those living with HIV and AIDS.

Legal assistance: The PABs screened more than 16,500 unregistered refugees. Legal advice was given to about 600 urban refugees and asylum-seekers and others of concern, and some 300 interventions were made on their behalf.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR provided support to implementing partner agencies to meet their project management costs.

Sanitation: Sanitation in the largest refugee camp (Mae La) was improved as a result of the regular collection

and proper disposal of garbage. Some 1,600 refugees were trained in environmental management, hygiene, community-based management, and garbage separation and recycling.

Shelter and infrastructure: Emergency road repairs, the construction and maintenance of wooden bridges and the shoring up of river banks were completed in accordance with the recommendations of the Asian Institute of Technology. Better roads have allowed UNHCR staff to spend much more time in the camps.

Transport and logistics: Transportation arrangements were in place and several hundreds urban refugees departed for resettlement.

Constraints

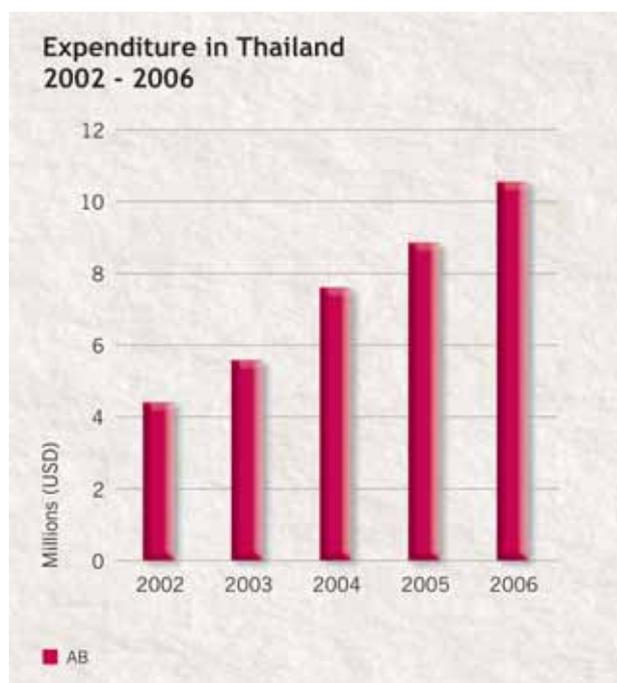
Progress on the issue of identity cards was slow and difficult and some elements of the legal aid centres project are still pending formal government approval. The authorities deported some refugees without giving UNHCR access to them.

Financial information

The effects of UNHCR's budget shortfall in 2005 were felt in 2006, when the regional Office in Thailand had to strictly prioritize its activities and reduce the scope of its projects. On the protection side, the cuts affected programmes to support the building of national asylum procedures; strengthen the administration of justice in

the camps; prevent and response to sexual and gender-based violence and maximize the use of resettlement as a protection tool. Regarding assistance, the Office had mainly covered the activities identified as assistance gaps that NGOs were unable to address. In the second half of 2006, additional contributions allowed UNHCR to provide more comprehensive assistance to refugees.

The constant increase of expenditures since 2002 is the result of UNHCR's strategy to strengthen its protection role and address the gaps identified in the assistance in the camps. UNHCR Thailand embarked in fund-raising campaigns which attracted donors' interest for specific activities. This necessity to address the gaps, combined with the search for durable solutions, resulted in an increase of expenditure. It should be noted that the budgetary increase in 2006 is mainly due to extra-budgetary contributions from both governmental and private donors.



Organization and implementation

Management

In 2006, the Thai operation had 184 employees comprising 20 international personnel (including five JPOs), 54 national staff and 110 UNVs, personnel and consultants seconded from UNOPS in Bangkok and other organizations, and the three field offices and one field unit. In addition, the office in Bangkok is also hosting two regional positions. The Bangkok office also covered activities in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam, and supported the field offices in Kanchanaburi, Mae Hong Son, which includes the field unit Mae Sariang, and Mae Sot.

Working with others

UNHCR maintained implementing arrangements with two government agencies and seven international and two national NGOs. The Office enjoyed excellent working relationships with government ministries, other UN agencies and NGOs. Partnership and coordination with humanitarian agencies working in the refugee camps were strengthened.

Overall assessment

The working relationship with the Thai Government has been positive at different levels, but the absence of clear national policies on asylum and refugees has prevented UNHCR from fully protecting refugees and promoting their rights. Indeed, difficulties in obtaining authorization for the Legal Aid Centres project, differences of opinion on refugee issues between the central, provincial and district authorities, and the severe curbs imposed on urban refugees and asylum-seekers have restricted UNHCR's ability to fulfil its mandate.

Resettlement appears to be the only durable solution for Thailand's protracted refugee situation. But it has had a negative impact on the remaining camp population because of the departure of the most skilful refugees, such as doctors and teachers, who provided essential services in the camps. UNHCR and its partners are addressing this gap by training the remaining refugees to ensure the continuity of services.

Partners

Implementing partners

Government agencies: Ministry of Education, Ministry of Interior (Operations Centre for Displaced Persons).

NGOs: *Aide Médicale Internationale*, Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees, Handicap International, International Rescue Committee, *Ruam Mit* Foundation for Youth, Shanti Volunteer Association, Japan, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Migrants, Women's Education for Advancement and Empowerment, ZOA Refugee Care, Netherlands.

Others: UNDP

Operational partners

Government agencies: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior/Department of Immigration, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Welfare, National Security Council.

NGOs: American Refugee Committee, *Internationale Christelijk Steunfonds* Asia, Jesuit Refugee Service, Malteser International, *Médecins Sans Frontières* (France), Tapei Oversea Peace Service, Thai-Burmese Border Consortium.

Others: UNEP, UNICEF.

Budget, income and expenditure (USD) Annual programme budget

Final budget	Income from contributions ¹	Other funds available ²	Total funds available	Total expenditure
12,300,874	6,628,558	5,508,370	12,136,928	10,559,707

¹ Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

² Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects	Previous years' projects
	AB	AB and SB
Protection, monitoring and coordination	3,185,394	0
Community services	775,595	140,538
Domestic needs and household support	293,623	31,719
Education	565,720	452,734
Forestry	73,246	9,710
Health and nutrition	152,025	46,343
Legal assistance	1,169,688	96,640
Operational support (to agencies)	378,494	90,724
Sanitation	65,308	20,126
Shelter and infrastructure	180,616	23,685
Transport and logistics	4,366	423
Instalments with implementing partners	1,587,155	(912,641)
Sub-total operational activities	8,431,229	0
Programme support	2,128,478	0
Total expenditure	10,559,707	0
Cancellation on previous years' expenditure		(17,143)
Instalments with implementing partners		
Payments made	3,907,722	
Reporting received	(2,320,568)	
Balance	1,587,155	
Previous years' report		
Instalments with implementing partners		
Outstanding 1st January		973,019
Reporting received		(912,641)
Refunded to UNHCR		(33,663)
Adjustments		0
Balance		26,715