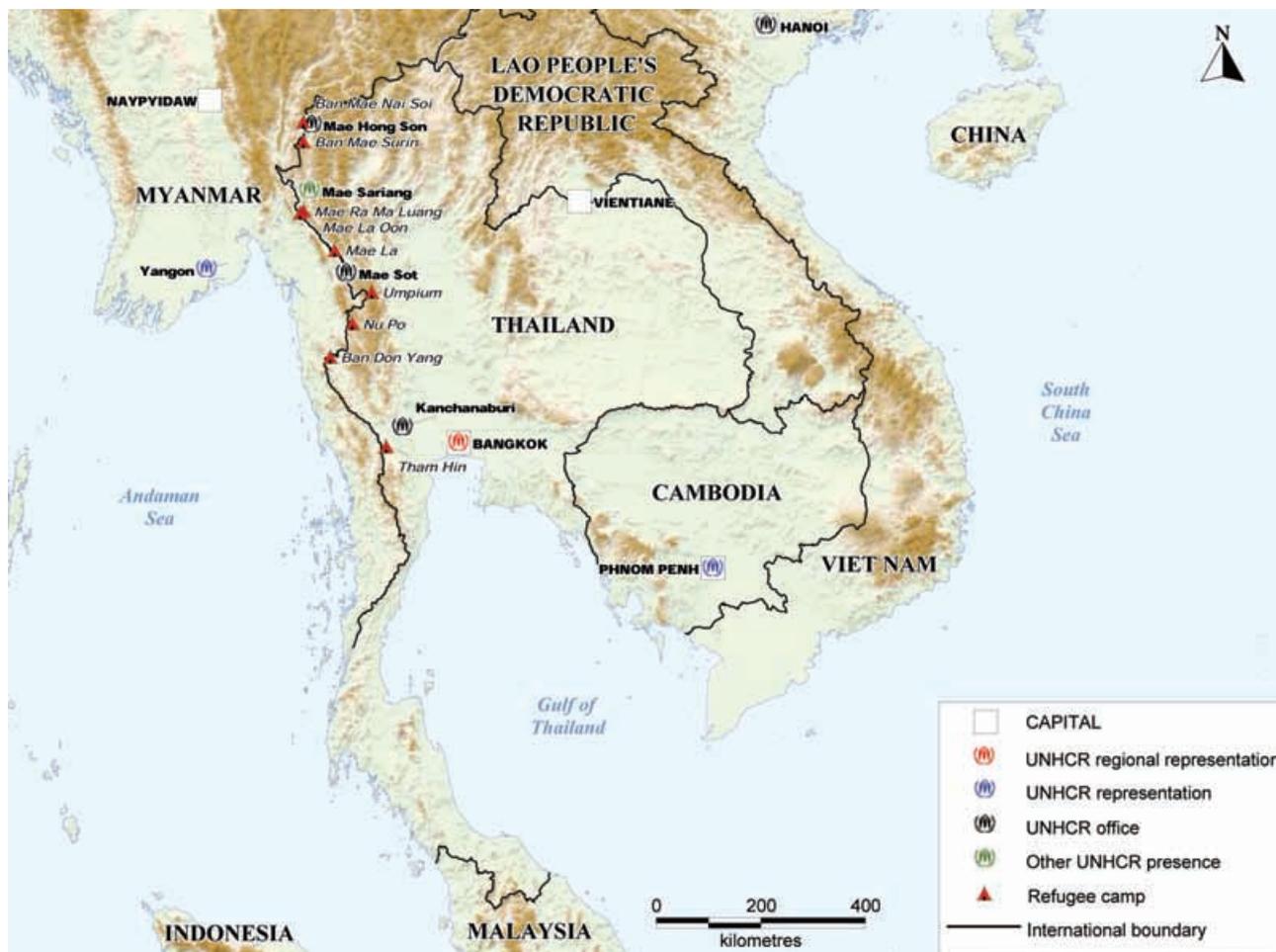


THAILAND



Operational highlights

- UNHCR's large-scale resettlement operation continued to benefit a significant number of refugees from Myanmar. More than 17,000 departed for third countries in 2008 alone, increasing the total number of departures since the beginning of 2004 to more than 40,000.
- Legal counsel and information was provided in more than 500 cases in 2008 through Legal Assistance Centres (LACs) operating in three camps. Access to the Thai justice system was improved, while capacity building led to reforms in the camp justice system.
- UNHCR monitored more than 7,500 unaccompanied or separated children living in nine camps. A child protection referral system developed in cooperation with NGOs and community groups enhanced the protection of refugee children from abuse, exploitation and neglect. Efforts to identify and monitor the well-being of separated children in the camps were complemented by a formalized, large-scale UNHCR-led Best Interests Determination (BID) process. More than 500 BID cases were completed in 2008 prior to referral for resettlement.
- Some 6,000 refugees were enrolled in Thai language classes offered by the Thai Ministry of Education with

financial support from UNHCR. A standardized curriculum was introduced in all eight camps to streamline teaching and examination.

- In 2008, mandate refugee status determination (RSD) for non-Myanmar asylum-seekers resulted in nearly 1,200 RSD decisions. UNHCR assisted urban refugees - who cannot work legally - with food, shelter, health services, education, vocational training and basic protection against arrest.

Working environment

The formation of a new civilian government following elections at the close of 2007 ended military rule. But the political climate remained volatile throughout the year, which saw three different governments in power and a series of public demonstrations that culminated in the seizure of Bangkok's international airport in November.

UNHCR operated in a challenging environment characterized by a reduction since 2006 in the protection space for all groups of concern. The Office observed more repatriations of Lao Hmong in 2008, but since it has not been granted access to this group, no assessment can be made of either protection needs or of the voluntariness of the return process. Some asylum-seekers from Myanmar were deported

without having had access to the government screening mechanism known as the Provincial Admissions Board (PAB).

Thailand is at the centre of numerous regional migratory movements which have grown in recent years. The country now hosts an estimated two million migrants. The mixed nature of these population movements has given rise to a blurring of the distinction between asylum-seekers and irregular migrants. In this context, UNHCR faces challenges in ensuring that those in need of protection are able to get it. Towards the end of 2008, an increase in arrivals by sea of residents from Myanmar's northern Rakhine State, coupled with reports that some boats had been pushed back out to sea, led UNHCR to advocate strongly for safe access to territory.

Achievements and impact

Main objectives

In 2008, UNHCR's objectives were to ensure the protection and physical security of all people of concern while assisting in the development of national refugee-management systems in line with international protection standards. The Office also aimed to improve the social and economic well-being of refugees and expand the search for durable solutions for them.

Protection and solutions

Myanmar refugees have been confined to closed camps for more than two decades. The refugees face restrictions on their freedom of movement and have no access to formal employment. UNHCR has advocated for a new strategic approach to their situation aimed at strengthening livelihood capacities, increasing vocational training opportunities and breaking the cycle of dependency.

The Office strengthened protection in the camps through projects to strengthen prevention and response mechanisms for sexual and gender-based violence (SGVB). It also worked to improve the administration of justice and identify, register and monitor separated and unaccompanied children.

Resettlement to third countries remained the only viable solution for many refugees. More than 17,000 of them departed for resettlement in 2008, maintaining Thailand's position as the largest resettlement operation in the world. The registered refugee population in the camps was reduced to some 111,000 persons by the end of 2008 from some 124,000 the previous year.

However, new arrivals of people from Myanmar in Thailand who have settled informally in the refugee camps

have contributed to the growth of an unregistered population of some 30,000 - 40,000. To address this concern, the Office and the Government agreed at the end of 2008 to take steps to register and screen this population.

The situation for urban refugees and asylum-seekers remained problematic in 2008; their status is not recognized under Thai law and they are subject to arrest and detention. At the end of the year, 283 refugees were held in detention centres. This number includes a group of 158 Lao Hmong refugees, among whom are 87 children, detained at Nongkhai since December 2006. No progress was made in finding solutions for these refugees, whose prolonged detention is of concern to the Office. Some advances were made in accessing refugees and asylum-seekers in detention during the year and UNHCR was able to conduct its mandate RSD activities without interruption.

There are an estimated 3.5 million stateless people in Thailand, including primarily members of hill tribes and immigrants, and their descendants, from neighbouring countries. The New Civil Registration Act and the Nationality Act became effective on 24 August 2008. They allow, for the first time, birth registration and certification of all children born in Thailand regardless of the status of the parents. This will help prevent statelessness in the broadest sense and will also benefit refugee and asylum-seeking children born in Thailand.

Activities and assistance

Most activities to assist the refugees from Myanmar in nine camps in Thailand are carried out by operational partners working within a common cooperative arrangement. UNHCR's involvement is limited to filling unmet needs and protection-related activities.

Community services: More than 7,500 unaccompanied or separated children across nine camps were monitored. A child protection referral system was developed in cooperation with NGOs and community groups to protect children from abuse. Physical rehabilitation and physiotherapy for the disabled, including landmine victims, benefited more than 5,000 people. Efforts to prevent and respond to incidents of SGVB in the camps involved training and counselling and referral services for SGVB victims.

Domestic needs and household support: Some 1,300 vulnerable urban refugees received subsistence allowances to meet their basic survival needs. Supplementary food rations were provided to almost 900 urban refugees.

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Myanmar	111,600	111,600	50	48
	Various	1,400	1,400	37	34
Asylum-seekers	Myanmar	12,200	3,200	41	27
	Sri Lanka	160	160	29	22
	Various	410	410	34	29
Stateless	Stateless	3,500,000 ¹	-	-	-
Total		3,625,570	116,770		

¹ Includes members of the hill tribes and immigrants, and their descendants, from neighbouring countries.

Education: Over 2,600 refugees participated in vocational training courses on 65 subjects. More than 2,500 refugees graduated from English-language courses, which are beneficial in view of the resettlement opportunities available. Some 6,000 refugees joined Thai-language courses.

Health and nutrition: UNHCR continued its HIV prevention activities to ensure equitable access to prevention and care services and provided improved information on HIV and AIDS. The Office also supported the standardization of a health surveillance system used by NGOs in all nine refugee camps. Some 1,300 urban refugees and asylum-seekers received medical care and support.

Income generation: Over 100 refugee families in Mae La camp received start-up capital to grow food for direct consumption and sale in local markets in order to increase their household incomes and self-reliance.

Legal assistance: Legal Assistance Centres expanded their activities in three camps, and legal counselling was provided in over 500 cases in 2008. Refugees enjoyed greater access to the Thai justice system as a result of the project. UNHCR worked closely with the Government to strengthen standards related to the admission, screening and protection of Myanmar asylum-seekers. The Provincial Admissions Boards convened seven meetings in 2008 that resulted in the regularization of more than 2,000 Myanmar asylum-seekers.

The resettlement operation continued to grow, and more than 17,000 refugees departed for third countries in 2008. Legal representation was provided to 100 urban cases, and legal counselling and advice were given to a total of some 1,100 refugees and asylum-seekers.

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

Sanitation: Some 45,000 refugee residents of Mae La camp as well as Thai villagers in surrounding communities lived in a cleaner and healthier environment as a result of effective waste-management systems.

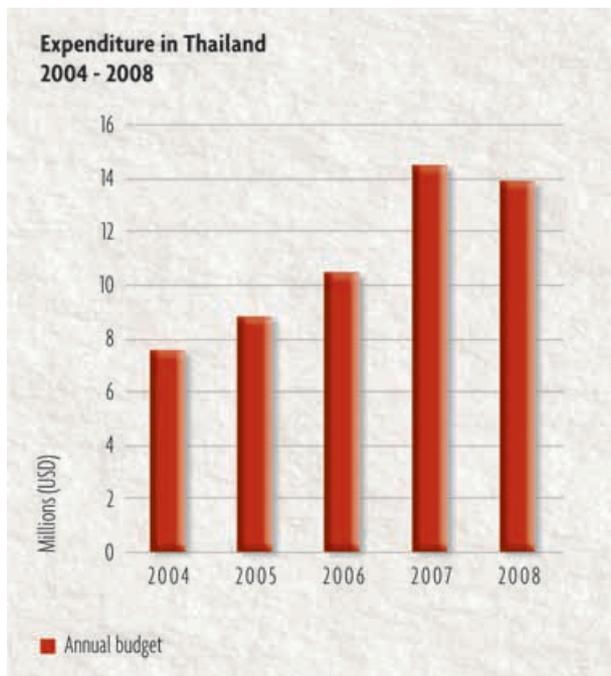
Shelter and other infrastructure: Infrastructure was upgraded and improved in five camps to reduce casualties and property damage resulting from landslides and soil erosion. Roads were repaired, drainage systems improved, bridges built and river banks stabilized.

○ Constraints

The number of unregistered families in the camps increased in 2008 as the Provincial Admissions Boards continued to function in an irregular manner. By the end of the year, UNHCR and the Government reached an agreement to revitalize the process in order to register and screen the unregistered population. No significant progress has been made in obtaining better access to employment for refugees, or in implementing self-reliance activities for them.



Refugees from Myanmar at Nu Po Refugee Camp in Thailand



Financial information

UNHCR worked to address protection and assistance gaps and provide for basic needs. Successful local fund raising helped increase the budget to cover some of these gaps. A face-to-face private sector fund-raising initiative was also launched in Thailand.

Organization and implementation

In 2008, UNHCR had a total of 158 employees, including 16 international staff, 12 UNVs, two JPOs, 30 UNOPS staff, two secondees and two consultants. 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 covered activities in Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam as well. The Regional Representative also served as Regional Coordinator, with management responsibilities in relation to UNHCR's operations in other ASEAN countries as well as Bangladesh and Timor-Leste.

Working with others

UNHCR worked with a number of implementing partners, including governmental agencies and international and national NGOs. In addition, the Office cooperated closely with operational partners within the framework of the common cooperative arrangement for assistance to Myanmar refugees in the border camps.

Overall assessment

Despite the changes in government in 2008, UNHCR maintained a good working relationship with the Thai authorities at the operational level. However, innovative approaches are needed to address the protracted situation of the refugees from Myanmar and work towards comprehensive solutions. The continuation of the large-scale resettlement operation provided a positive solution for many of these refugees. UNHCR filled some of the protection gaps for those remaining in the camps by implementing vocational and language training activities, consolidating the work of the LACs and addressing sexual and gender-based violence.

Partners	
Implementing partners	
Government:	Ministry of Education, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Justice
NGOs:	<i>Aide Médicale Internationale</i> , American Refugee Committee, Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees, Handicap International, International Rescue Committee, Mahidol-Oxford Tropical Medicine Research Unit, Makamphom Foundation, Malteser International, Planned Parenthood Association of Thailand, Right to Play, Ruam Mit Foundation for Youth, Shanti Volunteer Association, WEAVE, ZOA Refugee Care
Others:	UNDP (UNV), UNOPS
Operational partners	
Government:	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, National Security Council
NGOs:	ICS Asia, JRS, <i>Solidarités</i> , TBBC
Others:	FAO, ILO, OHCHR, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO

Budget, income and expenditure in Thailand (USD)

	Final budget	Income from contributions	Other funds available	Total funds available ¹	Total expenditure
Annual budget	14,241,292	5,514,492	8,386,243	13,900,736	13,882,256
Water and sanitation SB	49,850	0	49,146	49,146	49,146
Grand total	14,291,142	5,514,492	8,435,389	13,949,881	13,931,402

Note: Supplementary programmes do not include seven per cent support costs that are recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR. 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.

¹ Total funds available include currency adjustments.

Financial report for UNHCR's operations in Thailand (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects			Prior years' project
	Annual programme budget	Supplementary programme budget	Total	Annual and supplementary budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	4,205,551	0	4,205,551	0
Community services	1,192,990	0	1,192,990	314,428
Domestic needs and household support	563,243	0	563,243	54,948
Education	852,780	0	852,780	201,852
Forestry	0	0	0	30,558
Health and nutrition	529,711	0	529,711	104,850
Income generation	219,527	0	219,527	555
Legal assistance	1,983,291	0	1,983,291	495,446
Operational support (to agencies)	573,884	0	573,884	91,580
Sanitation	76,416	30,091	106,507	152,827
Shelter and infrastructure	249,376	0	249,376	225,320
Transport and logistics	1,827	0	1,827	148
Water	0	0	0	7,977
Instalments to implementing partners	818,436	19,055	837,491	(1,680,489)
Subtotal operational activities	11,267,032	49,146	11,316,178	0
Programme support	2,615,224	0	2,615,224	0
Total expenditure	13,882,256	49,146	13,931,402	0
Cancellation on previous years' expenditure				(17,570)
Instalments with implementing partners				
Payments made	5,700,410	49,146	5,749,556	
Reporting received	(4,881,974)	(30,091)	(4,912,065)	
Balance	818,436	19,055	837,491	
Outstanding 1st January				2,058,364
Reporting received				(1,680,489)
Refunded to UNHCR				(403,991)
Currency adjustment				26,116
Outstanding 31st December				0