

THAILAND

Operational highlights

- UNHCR's large-scale resettlement operation for refugees from Myanmar continued in 2009, when the total number of departures since the operation commenced in 2004 surpassed 50,000.
- The development of a five-year strategic plan by UNHCR and the Committee for Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT) engaged all stakeholders in the search for a comprehensive solution to end the protracted refugee situation on the Thai-Myanmar border.
- Cooperation between UNHCR and the Thai Government revitalized the national screening mechanism for asylum-seekers from Myanmar. In a pilot pre-screening exercise, more than 11,000 interviews were conducted with unregistered persons.
- A large-scale UNHCR-led process of Best Interest Determination (BID) identified the most appropriate durable solution for unaccompanied and separated children. More than 450 BID cases were completed in 2009, benefitting more than 640 children.

Working environment

Politics in Thailand remained volatile throughout the year, with the Government facing persistent demands from the opposition for elections. In this context, priority was given to national security and maintaining favourable bilateral relations with neighbouring countries. The result was a marked erosion of the protection space in Thailand for all groups of concern to UNHCR.

UNHCR observed a sharp increase in deportations, notably the forcible repatriation of some 4,000 Lao Hmong to whom UNHCR had never been granted access. In addition, 158 refugees who had been held in detention since 2006 were *refouled*. Deportations of asylum-seekers to Cambodia and Myanmar also took place during the year. Some Muslim residents of Myanmar's northern Rakhine State, who arrived in Thailand by boat in January 2009, were placed in detention and by the end of the year had not been provided with access to any mechanism for examining their protection claims.

Renewed fighting in the border area of south-eastern Myanmar contributed to the steady flow of new arrivals into



Thailand. There was an increase in the number of non-Myanmar asylum-seekers arriving in Thailand as well. Most were from Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam.

Achievements and impact

• Main objectives

In 2009, UNHCR sought to ensure protection and physical security for all people of concern, especially against sexual and gender-based violence. Other key objectives were to strengthen national bodies and procedures in support of an international protection regime and to streamline RSD procedures for various groups of non-Myanmar asylum-seekers. Furthermore, the Office sought to improve the social and economic well-being of refugees and expand the search for durable solutions for them.

Protection and solutions

Confined to camps for more than two decades, Myanmar refugees have limited freedom of movement and no access to formal employment. They rely on the international community for food, shelter, medical care, education and other basic needs. UNHCR continues to advocate for a new strategic approach to address their situation, one that aims at fostering self-reliance by increasing opportunities for vocational training and the development of livelihood capacities.

UNHCR reinforced protection in the camps through programmes aimed at facilitating access to the national justice system and improving the administration of justice in the camps. Projects to strengthen prevention and response mechanisms for sexual and gender-based violence and to provide support to more than 7,000 separated and unaccompanied children in nine refugee camps were priorities.

Resettlement to a third country remained the primary solution for many refugees. In 2009, UNHCR submitted more than 19,400 refugees of Myanmar nationality to 11 different countries for resettlement. Almost 17,600 people were accepted for resettlement during the year and over 16,500 departed for receiving countries. Large-scale resettlement reduced the number of registered refugees in the camps to 104,000 by the end of 2009, from 111,000 at the end of the previous year.

Urban refugees and asylum-seekers continued to face problems in their everyday lives as they are not distinguished from other illegal migrants under national law and are subject to arrest, detention and deportation. The indefinite nature of such detention remained an issue of concern for UNHCR, as did the detention of children of concern. UNHCR assisted urban refugees, who are not allowed to work legally, with food, shelter, health services, education, social services, vocational activities, legal support and basic protection against arrest.

Advances were seen in the implementation of the 2008 Civil Registration Act and Nationality Act. The new legislation allows all children born in Thailand, regardless of their status, to have their births registered and documented. The Office continues to work with the Government to ensure that children born in refugee camps benefit from the new provisions. The authorities are already allowing registration of the births of children of concern born in Bangkok.

Activities and assistance

The majority of assistance activities supporting Myanmar refugees in the nine camps in Thailand are carried out by operational partners working within a cooperative arrangement. In this context, UNHCR conducts protection activities and fills unmet needs.

Community services: In all reported cases of sexual and gender-based violence, survivors received psychosocial support and referrals in accordance with their wishes. The number of refugees with disabilities gaining access to services in the camps increased from 21 in 2008 to 74 persons in 2009. Several refugees with disabilities have been elected as representatives of their communities. UNHCR provided all refugee girls and women of reproductive age with sanitary kits in both camp and urban settings.

Domestic needs and household support: Approximately 1,500 urban refugees with specific needs received subsistence allowances, supplementary food rations and donated household items. Emergency cash assistance was given to those with special needs.

Education: Camp-based refugees do not have access to Thai educational institutions outside the camps.

Refugees in nine camps enjoyed access to vocational and skills training. Emphasis was given to those with specific needs. Vocational training courses have been upgraded in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, which certified 11 courses and 108 refugee trainers. Refugees in eight camps enjoyed access to Thai language training and those in seven camps have access to 22 libraries funded by UNHCR. More than 3,000 refugee students attending Thai language lessons within the camps have access to library materials in Thai. A total of 175 urban refugees and asylum-seekers attended English, math, arts, and basic computer classes; 108 refugee children attended primary and secondary schools in Bangkok.

Health and Nutrition: More than 8,000 refugees made use of voluntary counselling and testing services in five camps. All pregnant refugee women were tested under the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission programme. A series of training sessions on HIV and AIDS, family planning, sexual and gender-based violence, health and sex education were conducted for refugees. Nearly 5,000 refugees and asylum-seekers benefited from medical

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Myanmar	104,100	104,100	50	47
	Various	1,200	1,200	37	33
Asylum-seekers	Myanmar	9,000	240	40	24
	Sri Lanka	470	470	36	28
	Pakistan	290	290	41	34
	Viet Nam	150	150	34	23
	Various	380	380	35	24
	Stateless*	Stateless	3,500,000	-	-
Total		3,615,590	106,830		

* Numbers based on publicly available estimates. Includes members of the hill tribes and immigrants, and their descendants, from neighbouring countries.



Young refugees from Myanmar attend a dressmaking workshop run by the NGO Zoia in Mae La camp.

UNHCR / T. FAHSE

services in 2009. UNHCR collaborated with partners to purchase and distribute materials for H1N1 pandemic preparedness.

Income generation: A project benefiting more than 100 refugees in Mae La camp, who received start-up capital to grow food in order to increase their household income and self-sufficiency, was expanded to Mae La Oon and Umpium camps, where it will benefit another 120 refugee and local Thai families.

Legal assistance: The camp-based legal assistance centres boosted their activities, providing legal support to 370 individual clients in a variety of cases. Training and sensitization activities to disseminate information on Thai laws and the means to access justice were provided for some 3,500 camp residents. The Office continued to protect and assist urban refugees and asylum-seekers, and determined the status of over 800 persons in 2009. In addition, 450 refugees benefited from the hotline service, and 98 people of concern were released from police custody due to UNHCR's intervention.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR supported implementing and operational partners to ensure effective delivery of services to refugees and asylum-seekers.

Sanitation: Daily garbage collection at Mae La Camp reduced health hazards for the camp residents.

Shelter and other infrastructure: More than 1,000 volunteer refugees participated in road repairs in and around the refugee camps. Segments of four access roads were repaired.

● *Constraints*

The political situation rendered it difficult for UNHCR to engage in high-level discussions with the Thai authorities on policy matters. In this environment, refugee issues remained low on the Government's agenda.

The composite nature of migration flows into Thailand continued to present challenges to the Government and UNHCR. Thailand now hosts an estimated two million migrants and the distinction between them and those fleeing persecution has become blurred.

| **Financial Information** |

Budgets for the Thailand operation have increased steadily over the past few years. Additional funds over the annual budget have supported various protection activities, resettlement, education and sanitation projects, as well as

Thailand

efforts to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.

| Organization and implementation |

In 2009, UNHCR had a total of 169 staff in Thailand, including 19 international personnel, 13 international UNVs, one JPO and 35 UNOPS staff. Operations were managed 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 managed activities in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam. The Regional Representative served also as the Regional Coordinator, with management and oversight responsibilities in relation to UNHCR's operations in other ASEAN countries, plus 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.

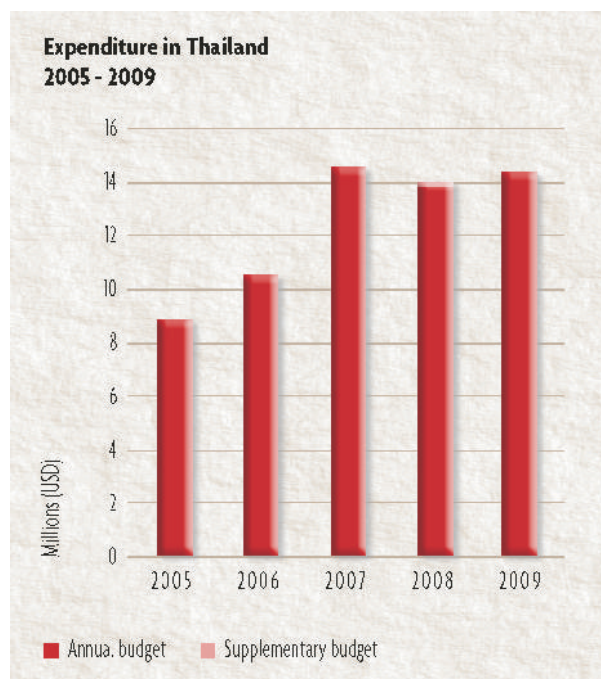
| Overall assessment |

Despite the large-scale resettlement operation, the camp population has not significantly declined as conditions in Myanmar have not improved and the steady flow of new arrivals across the border continues. The intermittent functioning of the Government's screening mechanism for admission to the camps has contributed to a large unregistered population, estimated at some 50,000 people. To address this issue, UNHCR supported the Government's efforts to revitalize its screening and admissions system. A pre-screening exercise for new entrants to the camps was piloted in four camps in 2009.

UNHCR and the Committee for Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT) have developed a joint five-year strategic plan, which provides a platform for discussion between the Government and partners working along the Thai-Myanmar border. Innovative approaches such as promoting self-sufficiency through strengthening

livelihood capacities and increasing employment opportunities are needed to address the protracted situation of the Myanmar refugees. The large-scale resettlement operation continues to provide a positive solution for many refugees.

Partners	
Implementing partners	
Government:	Ministry of Education, Ministry of the Interior
NGOs:	<i>Aide Médicale Internationale</i> , American Refugee Committee, Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees, Forum Asia, Handicap International, International Rescue Committee, Malteser International, Right to Play, Shanti Volunteer Association, 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, Solidarites, TBBC
Others:	FAO, ILO, OHCHR, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, IOM



Budget, income and expenditure in Thailand (USD)

	Final budget	Income from contributions	Other funds available	Total funds available	Total expenditure
Annual budget	18,799,208	7,897,757	7,972,821	15,870,579	14,377,184

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.

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

Expenditure breakdown	Current years' project			Previous years' project
	Annual budget	Supplementary budgets	Total	Annual and supplementary budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	4,342,979	0	4,342,979	0
Community services	1,212,299	0	1,212,299	70,550
Crop production	33,350	0	33,350	0
Domestic needs and household support	501,743	0	501,743	50
Education	681,091	0	681,091	42,337
Health and nutrition	332,912	0	332,912	113,565
Income generation	203,581	0	203,581	(257)
Legal assistance	1,875,732	0	1,875,732	299,580
Operational support (to agencies)	476,205	0	476,205	61,029
Sanitation	67,936	0	67,936	45
Shelter and infrastructure	33,073	0	33,073	0
Instalments to implementing partners	1,498,231	0	1,498,231	(586,899)
Subtotal operational activities	11,259,133	0	11,259,133	0
Programme support	3,118,051	0	3,118,051	0
Total expenditure	14,377,184	0	14,377,184	0

Cancellation on previous years' expenditure

(3,466)

Instalments with implementing partners

Payments made	5,344,060	0	5,344,060
Reporting received	(3,845,829)	0	(3,845,829)
Balance	1,498,231	0	1,498,231

Previous year's report

Instalments with implementing partners:	
Outstanding 1st January	837,491
Reporting received	(586,899)
Refunded to UNHCR	(243,944)
Currency adjustment	0
Outstanding 31st December	6,648