

# Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea Initiative

Enhancing responses and seeking solutions

4 June 2015

**SUPPLEMENTARY APPEAL 2015**



**June – December 2015**

**Cover photograph:**

Hundreds of Rohingya crammed aboard a wooden fishing boat on the Andaman Sea, desperate for food, water and a safe haven.

AFP / C. Archambault

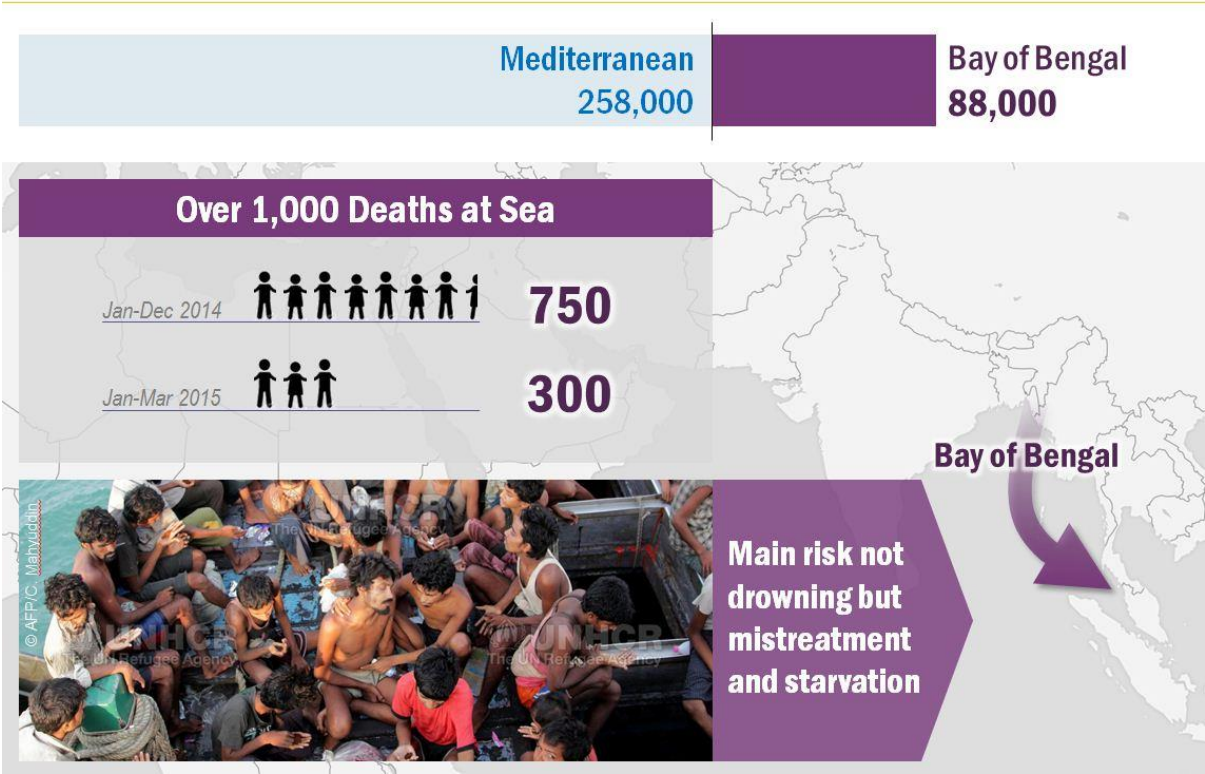
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# AT A GLANCE

## Irregular Maritime Movements in the Bay of Bengal



A total of **USD 13 million** in financial requirements\* for the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea Initiative in the affected countries of Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand.

\* This includes headquarters and regional coordination, as well as support costs (7%).



# CONTEXT

## Introduction

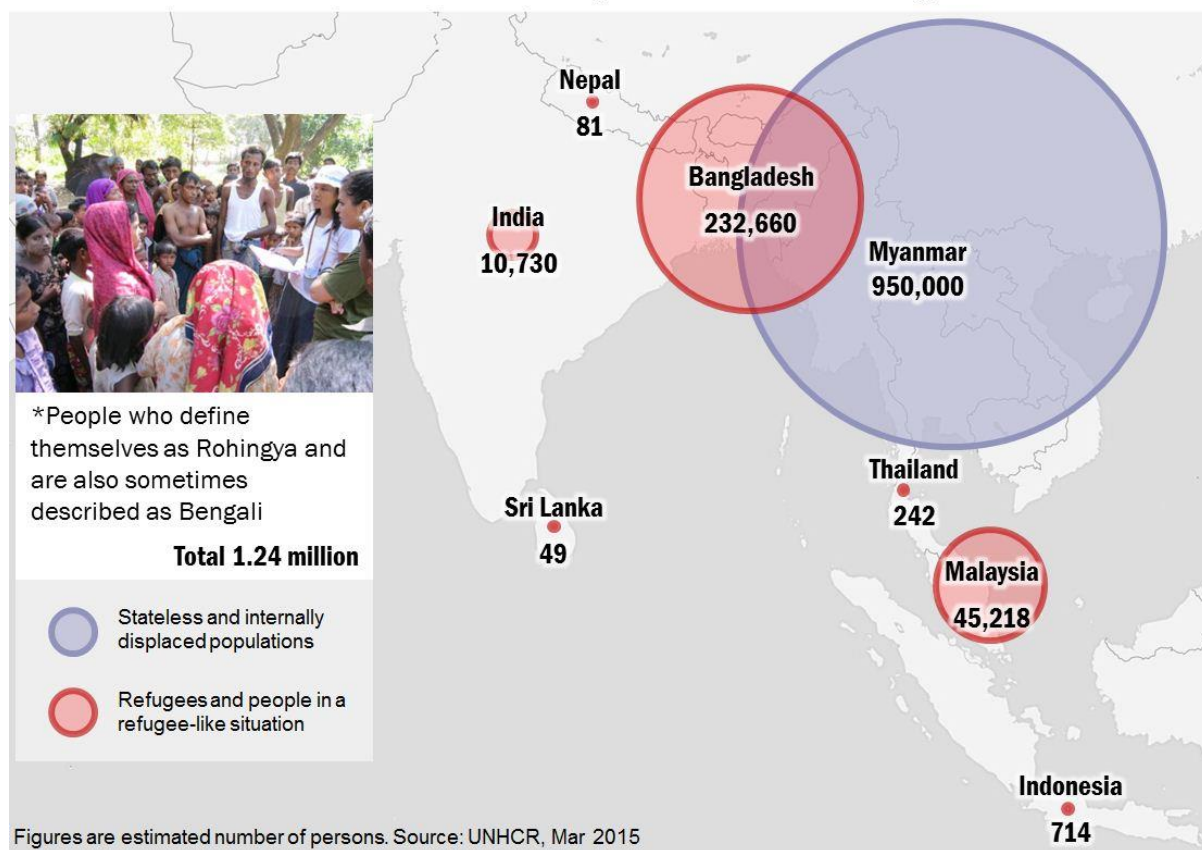
Irregular movements by sea in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea have tripled since 2012. An estimated 63,000 individuals made the journey in 2014, and 25,000 people have already taken the same route in the first quarter of 2015 - double the number of departures in the same period last year. The discovery of mass graves in smugglers' camps in Thailand and Malaysia, as well as the many stranded boats, indicates that unsafe population movements are likely to continue and increase.

Coupled with much-publicized tragedies in the Mediterranean, this longstanding movement in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea is drawing global attention. Governments of both transit and destination countries (sometimes one and the same) have called for action. While the humanitarian needs of the situation have been recognized from the outset, the demand for a more holistic protection-sensitive response has taken longer.

However there are now widespread calls for action to address the root causes of these movements, as presented in this appeal, which seeks both resources for the immediate response to the crisis in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea, and enduring solutions to the drivers of irregular movements.

## Population data

### Most Affected Population\* in the Region



## OVERALL STRATEGY AND COORDINATION

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UNHCR is appealing for support to respond to both the immediate needs of the more than 4,000 irregular migrants and refugees disembarked since 1 May 2015 (with potentially thousands more arriving or escaping from smugglers' camps), and to address the root causes of the movement.

This appeal is structured in three parts corresponding to UNHCR's role in:

- (1) Meeting the international protection needs of people who have been rescued at sea and disembarked in this situation;
- (2) Enhancing the information available both to people who are considering travel by sea and to those responding to them; and
- (3) Finding solutions for addressing the root causes of these movements in source countries of the movement.

These activities were informed by the results of the "Special Meeting on Irregular Migration in the Indian Ocean" convened on 29 May 2015 by Thailand.

## PLANNED RESPONSE

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### Protection

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A range of protection activities has been outlined jointly by UNHCR, IOM and UNODC for responding to the situation in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea. UNHCR will undertake a number of vital interventions under its international mandate for the protection of refugees and stateless people. The Office has a significant presence in all affected countries, including the source regions for these movements.

#### **Strengthen search and rescue at sea operations**

The recent Special Meeting on Irregular Migration in the Indian Ocean identified intensifying search and rescue operations among the priorities for the immediate response to the situation in the Bay of Bengal. Building on UNODC's creation of Port Intelligence Units (PIUs) in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, UNHCR proposes to enhance national capacities on international legal principles and protection in order to strengthen protection-based search and rescue operations, starting with training on relevant international legal principles for PIU staff in these three countries. This will be supplemented by training for coastguards, maritime police and other relevant personnel at local and regional levels in affected States without PIUs. UNHCR's joint publication with the International Maritime Organization and the International Chamber of Shipping on rescue at sea will be translated into local languages and disseminated widely.

UNHCR will also seek to reinforce its information base on boat movements through the acquisition of geospatial images. These can be shared with States, NGOs and other parties who contribute to the rescue of individuals in distress at sea. UNHCR is also examining the feasibility of supporting rescue vessels to complement these efforts.

#### **Assure effective, predictable and protection-sensitive disembarkation**

While States in the region have responded to the current crisis promptly with pledges of humanitarian support, the absence of an agreed disembarkation strategy has led to some confusion about where people who were rescued would be disembarked. States are now recognizing, including

through the outcomes of the Special Meeting, that an agreed, predictable disembarkation plan together with harmonized reception arrangements are top priorities for the protection of people stranded at sea.

Mapping of disembarkation is already underway in two States in the region, including one that is particularly affected by the crisis. This needs to be reinforced with the mapping of other States' practices, which are now becoming clearer as a result of the current crisis. Site visits, bilateral and multilateral discussions will complement the mapping, with a view to formulating a regional plan for disembarkation. It is proposed that this activity be undertaken together with the Regional Support Office of the Bali Process.

### **Establish or enhance reception facilities**

Appropriate reception arrangements, ensuring access for UNHCR, are crucial to address the most urgent basic human needs of new arrivals, including material (e.g. accommodation, food, and clothing), medical and psychosocial needs.

Safe and adequate shelter and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities are required. The specific requirements of children, including children who are unaccompanied or have been separated from their parents or guardian, need to be addressed e.g. through the provision of age-appropriate information and counselling. The establishment and improvement of sites and the provision of core relief items and other assistance represent a major expense. Efforts are underway but need to be accelerated and expanded.

Consultation with and the participation of those affected will help to ensure that the assistance provided is relevant to the needs and vulnerabilities of the affected population, and prevent further deterioration of their situation and their physical and protection conditions.

### **Identify and provide assistance for people with specific protection needs**

Core protection activities, including registration, are already being undertaken by UNHCR in all of the countries of disembarkation. Mobile multi-functional teams are needed to support Governments to determine the status and individual needs of affected people in a timely manner. Teams will include experts in areas such as registration; protection (including child protection), sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) prevention and response; mental health and psychosocial support; and resettlement.

The Special Meeting underscored the importance of identifying people with protection needs through effective screening processes, paying particular attention to vulnerable groups such as victims of trafficking, torture, slavery and child marriage; survivors of SGBV and women and girls at risk; people with physical or mental disabilities; stateless people; and unaccompanied and separated children.

Specialized services need to be put in place to address these specific needs in the immediate term. National capacities will be strengthened through close collaboration with relevant national welfare authorities in the longer-term.

In Malaysia in particular, protection interventions are urgently required for all Rohingya in a vulnerable situation including those recently arrived by boat. Registration is required to secure the release of those in detention. A range of social protection interventions is required especially for those still not registered but are likely to be of concern to UNHCR, including some 6,000 people in detention. In addition, UNHCR has proposed and will pursue alternative stay arrangements with host governments, in line with mechanisms developed through the Bali Process.

### **Facilitate solutions for people in need of international protection**

*It should be noted that the people of concern to UNHCR for whom this appeal is being launched do not include the substantial numbers of migrants who are nationals of a country to which they may return without fear of persecution.*

For refugees, who cannot return to their country of origin without fear of persecution, it is essential to assure temporary stay arrangements and the possibility of durable solutions as comprehensively as possible. This will include facilitation of long-term visas and work permits; voluntary return to their country of origin or resettlement to third country for special persons in need. The assistance that UNHCR offers to refugees will depend on the extent to which they are able to contribute to their own livelihoods and to access services such as health and education on the same basis as nationals. Where possible, UNHCR will support national structures to serve the needs of both refugees and host communities at the same time. Similarly, interventions to support income generation will be designed to complement national and regional programmes and to include host communities in both planning and execution.

UNHCR will expand its work in communities to include the new refugee arrivals and will address, in particular: the ability of communities to care for people with specific needs; the need for families to reunite around the region; and the identification and processing of resettlement cases. Should conditions improve sufficiently for refugees to opt for voluntary return, UNHCR will ensure that corresponding support is available.

## **Information and analysis**

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### **Reinforce gathering, sharing and analysis of information on movements by sea**

The establishment of the Regional Maritime Movement Monitoring Unit (R3MU) in mid-2014 has been very valuable in providing UNHCR with the most up-to-date and wide-ranging information available on movements in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea. UNHCR has put the information to use immediately, sharing the R3MU's reports and updates publicly. Through the R3MU and its contributors, UNHCR has been able to highlight the significantly increased scale and changing nature of movements in 2015, and to flag the discrepancies between departures and arrivals which characterize the current crisis.

Through interviews with refugees and stateless people, the R3MU provided detailed information on the modus operandi of smugglers, the extortion of travellers' relatives, and the brutal treatment and sometimes killing of those making the journey. It was the discovery of the mass graves in the smugglers' camps in Thailand and Malaysia that raised international awareness and drew media attention to the situation, giving rise to this new opportunity to meaningfully address a this longstanding critical humanitarian situation.

The work of the R3MU will be continued and expanded to help meet the information campaign needs (i.e. factual information about the risks and mistreatment faced by travellers at the hands of smugglers and traffickers) in source, transit and destination countries.

### **Undertake capacity building in transit and host countries**

The efforts to build capacity will include not only the meetings, trainings and workshops typically utilized to share experiences and best practice, but also to analyse these movements and formulate responses to them. Remarkable resources exist within the region, including in universities and regional organizations, which have not been adequately tapped in terms of identifying alternative stay arrangements and harmonizing approaches.



## Solutions

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### **Expand legal alternatives to dangerous movements**

The transition from refugee to migrant status requires further exploration and, where feasible, implementation. Models already exist in other regions and UNHCR is aware of considerable will on the part of some States to pilot projects in the region. In addition to the cost of studying the relevant legal regimes, reforming regulations and documenting those who are without documents also require resources. There is scope for collaboration and cost-sharing on this initiative with IOM, ILO and other stakeholders.

### **Support humanitarian, human rights and development needs in source countries**

While not categorized as an emergency response, human rights and development needs will nevertheless be included as a vital and substantial part of UNHCR's response. The root causes of the unsafe population movement in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea are threefold: the denial of citizenship and lack of documentation of a large number of people in Bangladesh and Rakhine State, Myanmar; the unresolved internal displacement in Rakhine State; and the high poverty and low-development levels in these areas. Immediate responses are available to address all three of these "push factors". A number of countries in the region have taken steps to address statelessness. An exchange of experiences by Governments in the region and elsewhere on these issues at the technical level and subsequent implementation of good practices, are recommended.

On its part, UNHCR will support the concerned Governments in their efforts to create a stable environment to address the current displacement as well as development needs, a convincing factor to anchor the population. Support will be in the form of catalytic and advocacy role with development-oriented actors as well as supporting capacity building of local communities, skills training and direct support for housing to the most vulnerable people in line with Government programmes.

More specifically, UNHCR proposes the expansion of assistance for IDP families who choose to return home or establish new homes, and monitoring of this. UNHCR will also undertake research on regional practices to address their status with the support of national expert consultants and will coordinate research activities with national centres of expertise. If circumstances improve sufficiently to allow voluntary return, UNHCR will support and monitor such voluntary returns, and work with development actors to include returnees in development programmes to ensure sustainable reintegration.

## Financial requirements (USD)

To address the root causes of irregular movements by sea in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea in 2015, UNHCR has established a supplementary budget for the requirements presented in this appeal, amounting to USD 13 million.

	2015 REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BAY OF BENGAL AND ANDAMAN SEA INITIATIVE
<b>Favourable protection environment</b>	
Strengthen search and rescue at sea operations	300,000
Assure effective disembarkation	500,000
Reinforce sharing and analysis of information on movements by sea	1,500,000
Undertake capacity building in transit and host countries	200,000
Expand legal alternatives to dangerous movements	1,500,000
Support humanitarian, human rights and development needs in source countries	3,700,000
<b>Fair protection processes and documentation</b>	
Establish or enhance reception facilities	1,800,000
<b>Basic needs and essential services</b>	
Identify and provide assistance for people with specific protection needs	2,000,000
<b>Durable solutions</b>	
Facilitate solutions for people in need of international protection	1,500,000
<b>TOTAL*</b>	<b>13,000,000</b>

*\* Includes 7% support costs. Further detailed breakdowns including by country will be provided upon completion of detailed planning.*



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