



## Refugees in Thailand

ECHO FACTSHEET

### Facts & Figures

**EU humanitarian aid since 1995:** € 119.7 million to help refugees on the Thai-Myanmar border

#### In 2016:

- € 1.3 million in assistance to refugees living in camps along the Thai-Myanmar border

#### In 2015:

- € 2.1 million in assistance to refugees staying in camps
- € 300 000 in assistance to Rohingya and Bangladeshi irregular migrants in Thailand and Indonesia



*ECHO funding supports medical services for 80 000 refugees on the Myanmar/Burma border ©EU/ECHO/Pierre Prakash*

### Key messages

- More than 30 years on, the situation of refugees from Myanmar/Burma in Thailand has become one of the world's most protracted refugee crises, and there is a need to find durable solutions.
- Since 1995, the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) has provided funding for humanitarian assistance in the refugee camps. Most recently, efforts have focused on primary health care and food assistance for the most vulnerable, as well as protection activities.
- There is a need for better information to refugees on conditions for their potential return, which should be strictly voluntary.
- Since 2013, ECHO has helped Rohingya and Bangladeshi nationals under detention in Thailand. After the boatpeople crisis of May 2015, the EU humanitarian assistance was extended to the entire region, particularly Indonesia.

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\* All the latest ECHO  
Factsheets:  
[bit.ly/echo-fs](http://bit.ly/echo-fs)

## Humanitarian situation and needs

### Background

The Thai government is not signatory to the UN Refugee Convention but has allowed refugees from Myanmar/Burma (currently over 106 000) to stay in nine camps (temporary shelters) along the border between the two countries.

Over the past few years, Rohingya and Bangladeshi men, women and children fleeing violence and difficult conditions in Myanmar/Burma and Bangladesh, have been intercepted by Thai authorities en route to Malaysia and kept in Immigration Detention Centres (IDCs) and social shelters in Thailand. This exodus has given rise to ruthless human trafficking networks, triggering Thai authorities to launch a crackdown on smuggling rings in 2015. This resulted in what came to be known as the “boatpeople crisis in the Andaman Sea”, which saw thousands of Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants stranded at sea without food or water after the traffickers abandoned the ships, fearing arrest if they came to shore. Disembarkations were eventually allowed in Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia in May-June. Since then, the number of arrivals in the region has significantly decreased.

### Major challenges

Despite a large scale resettlement programme (almost 103 000 individuals resettled in third countries since 2005), the major challenge is still to find durable and sustainable solutions for the remaining refugee population in Thailand. In addition, stranded Rohingya migrants in shelters and IDCs remain a growing concern due to their stateless status.

## The European Union's humanitarian response

The European Commission has provided humanitarian aid to refugees from Myanmar/Burma in Thailand since 1995, funding mainly [food assistance](#)\*, primary health care, and protection. In 2016, the European Commission has allocated € 1.3 million, bringing the total amount over the past two decades to almost € 120 million. These EU funds are channelled through various partners, enabling around 80 000 refugees from five different camps to access basic health services, whilst health workers received additional training. Through other EU funding instruments, the European Commission also finances basic and vocational education, livelihood, water supply and complementary health programmes for both refugees and host communities. This additional EU assistance totals some € 51 million since 1995.

Since 2013, EU humanitarian funding has also allowed the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to provide Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants in Thailand with emergency humanitarian support, interpretation and medical care. Following the boatpeople crisis of May 2015, ECHO extended this support to the regional level, providing IOM with funding for operations in several areas, particularly in Thailand and Indonesia.

More information on the Rohingya can be found on the [Rohingya crisis factsheet](#)\*.

