

Imagined Future: The Struggle of Refugees in Thailand's Temporary Refuge

A Joint Consultation Report developed by Karen Refugee Committee, Karenni Refugee Committee
and Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network

Supported by the *Staying Resilient Amid the Pandemic in Southeast Asia* initiative of SEA Junction
in partnership with CMB Foundation

Project partners:

**Asia Pacific
Refugee Rights
Network**



Supported by:



Executive Summary

The Joint Consultative Report, titled **Imagined Future: The Struggle of Refugees in Thailand's Temporary Refuge** was developed in partnership with the Karen, Karenni refugee communities at the Thailand-Myanmar border, presenting the ongoing ground realities to the current situation and narratives to shed light on most pressing protection needs. Much support and work are needed towards improving human rights conditions for the protracted situations of refugees at the border.

Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the camps witnessed a continuous influx of refugees, with at least 9,230 new arrivals seeking safety in Thailand up to date. With over 91,000 refugees temporarily sheltered across the nine border camps, with thousands more fleeing the ongoing violence and crisis in Myanmar, pressure is added to the already strained conditions and resources in the camps.

To unravel and strengthen the understanding of some of the issues and barriers faced by the refugee communities, APRRN's Southeast Asia Working Group conducted a series of closed-door consultations from September 2022 to February 2023 with the Karen and Karenni refugee organisations, as well civil society organisations actively working at the Thailand-Myanmar border. The consultations aimed to gather insights and perspectives from the ground and to identify priority areas for further advocacy, accountability, and action.

The consultations with the Karen and Karenni refugee communities highlighted several key issues and challenges faced, and the interconnection between these challenges. The major issues strongly emphasized include the lack of legal identification and documentation; the lack of access to legal work and livelihoods; and limited access to quality education, among others. The lack of protection in one area severely impinges and impacts the access to other rights and exacerbates vulnerability amongst communities. Common incidents reported include sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) across all levels of society; increase in mental health issues such as depression and suicide attempts; and substance and alcohol abuse amongst youth.

The consultation with the NGOs reflects on similar urgent themes: the reverberating impact of COVID-19 on refugee communities, declining mental health, limited opportunities for younger refugees, lack of livelihood and opportunities for income generation, and the lack of durable solutions.

This report identifies four major areas for further advocacy, namely pushing for legal recognition and documentation for refugees; improving accessibility and quality of education; granting refugees the legal right to work; and providing durable solutions towards ending protracted displacement. This report emphasizes the need for the refugee community to be empowered as advocates with lived experiences of displacement, not only as leaders in their respective community groups but also to be included as representatives for meaningful participation in progressive discussions with other key stakeholders. The report also highlights the need to optimize care, access to services and opportunities for all vulnerable members of the displaced community such as women, children, elderly, and persons with disabilities.

Acknowledgement

This report acknowledges the contributions from partners along the Thailand-Myanmar border, participants of the community consultations, members of the APRRN Southeast Asia Working Group, and appreciates the support provided by SEA Junction through their Small Grants Program.

Karen Refugee Committee

Karen Refugee Committee is a refugee-led community organization supporting refugee camp management along the Thai-Burma border by working with International Non-Governmental Organisations, United Nations Agencies, and the Royal Thai Government.

Karenni Refugee Committee

Karenni civilians have to flee from their country and temporarily seek the protection and security in Thailand since early 1987 due to armed conflict and human rights violation occurred in Burma. In the past, Karenni people have been living in 6 temporary shelters in Mae Hong Son province, Thailand. Currently, there are only 2 camps, namely Ban Mai Nai Soi and Ban Mae Surin remaining with the population about 10,286 people in the camps. There are several nationalities, namely Karenni, Karen, Shan, Pa O and Burmese that are living in the camp with the population of 8,172 while there are the nationalities of Karenni, Karen, Shan and Rakhine with the population of 2,124 that are living in the camp. KnRC was founded on 18 May 1997 to coordinate for those who are living in both camps to receive humanitarian assistance, life security, wisdom, and social improvement.

Background

Generations of ethnic Myanmar civilians have been living in protracted forced displacement, with some 91,004 refugees currently residing in nine temporary shelters¹ (or refugee camps) along the border of Thailand and Myanmar. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing violence stemming from the Myanmar military coup since February 2021 have been a constant driving force of displacement within and beyond the country, resulting in 9,230 and more new arrivals fleeing across to Thailand since 5 April 2023².

The Mae La Refugee Camp is the most populous camp along the border and home to 34,539 ethnic Karen and Karenni communities. A large protest was held mid-December 2021, expressing long standing frustrations about human rights abuses and violations in the camp and triggered when four refugees were detained and beaten by authorities after failing to pay for travel permits required to leave the camp during COVID-19 travel restrictions. Refugees who could not afford the 1,000 THB payment are unable to access employment or livelihoods to supplement their basic necessities with limited humanitarian assistance, worsening their living conditions.³ Furthermore, refugees in the camp lack access to livelihood, education, health services and effective durable solutions.

The compounding effect of protracted displacement, the COVID-19 pandemic and the Myanmar military coup raised the demand for humanitarian aid along the border region, and had a profound impact on the refugees residing in the border camp with reported incidents of domestic violence, alcohol and substance abuse, and mental health issues such as depression and suicide attempts. In order to shed light on the issues and barriers faced by these displaced communities, members of the Southeast Asia Working Group from the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) conducted a series of closed door consultations from September 2022 to February 2023, to draw insights and perspectives from the lived experiences of Karen and Karenni refugees representatives from various Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and to level with representatives from International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) and NGOs working with communities in the region on the ongoing and new challenges, and to identify opportunities to strengthen advocacy, accountability and action.

¹ UNHCR Thailand: Refugee Population Overview - March 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/99962>

² UNHCR Myanmar Emergency Update (as of 10 April 2023), <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/100115>

³ Anger Over 'Pay for Travel Permits' Led to Protests and Riot in Mae La Refugee Camp – Live Ammunition Fired. <https://karennews.org/2021/12/anger-over-pay-for-travel-permits-led-to-protests-and-riot-in-mae-la-refugee-camp-live-ammunition-fired/>

This Joint Consultative Report was initiated by and developed in partnership with the Karen, Karenni and other communities in Mae La Refugee Camp, to present and amplify, for the general public, humanitarian practitioners and organisations, potential donors and state and non-state actors to gain a critical understanding of the ground realities, as well as demonstrate a concerted effort and work towards improving the conditions and respect for the human rights of men, women and children in the camps.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS



Mae La Refugee Camp. © Mikhail Esteves

I have been living here for more than 3 generations. My grandpa has passed away in this camp. My parents are in this camp and now my generation. My friends have already gotten their next generation, having kids. People keep saying, 'Come, meet us. Tell us your problem'. They want us to speak up. Of course we do! But there is no change! We need [a] specific plan and specific timeframe. If not, it's a waste of time. Time and tide wait for no man. We are also human beings. We also have our goals and aims with specific and limited time. We know we are living in uncertainty. We don't need the answer. At what age, what do we want to be, what degree do we want to pass. Please give us hope. Make us dream again. So that people in the camp will live again. We want to live, not just to survive. [...] We must have human rights. And protection for human rights. We cannot see any change. They keep saying that we will try. When we see nothing happen, we are lost in hope.

- Participant, CBO Consultation

Consultation with Karen Community

The consultation with the Karen CBOs was held on 30 September 2022, with 14 representatives based in Mae Sot and Mae La camp of different committees and organisations present. The committees and organisations are formed around specific thematic focus areas of protection and advocacy, and the participants reflected the diversity and range of experience within the camps, including age, gender, those born within the camps and those newly arrived. The consultation was facilitated and led by a community leader from the Karen Refugee Committee (KRC) and the primary language used during the discussions was Karen and exchanges with APRRN were enabled via an interpreter. Key issues raised during the consultation include but are not limited to the need for legal identification and documentation, the right to work and livelihoods, and access to education. These issues, coupled by others, are seen to perpetuate and intersect with wider societal problems within the community, especially sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). The links between education and access to income as a preventive measure against SGBV is evident amongst the community. The flow of people fleeing Myanmar into Thailand's border was continuous, especially following the military coup in February 2021. With the increase in the number of people in the camps raises the need for better camp organisation and management.

Access to Education

Not all children living in the camps have equal access to education. Generally, most children in the camps are able to access education through the centres set up by the Karen community from pre-school up until the secondary level. Despite refugees developing and leading these formal education and systems, they are not recognized by the host country and/or home country. There are, however, quite a number of children who have limited to no access to education due to the lack of resources, the inability for their guardians to afford the fees, the weighted opportunity costs of working, and the remoteness of their locations. The latter is especially true for refugee youth with disabilities who are isolated from their own community due to inaccessibility, as highlighted by young people in the consultation.

Even though the Karen community considers their education systems to be a formal education for refugees in the camps, the curriculum used and the certification provided are not provided or recognised by the Thai Government or the Myanmar Government. As a result, many graduates from the learning programmes are unable to pursue higher education or access decent work with its qualifications. The value of withdrawing from school and earning an income to help support their

families hence outweighs the value of obtaining an education. Families would rather rechannel the investment toward their children's education to other more urgent needs.

The issues revolving around protection are interwoven with the lack of access to rights, basic needs and opportunities. Children who are not in school ended up getting involved and abusing drugs. Serious concerns were also raised with the increase of the number of suicide cases amongst youth, attempts and thoughts arising from mental health impacts such as depression. In the camps, it is not uncommon for educators and teachers in the learning centers to be volunteers from the community, with very minimal pay. Qualified teachers with training in education are few and a dire need in the camps as they play a crucial role in shaping the future of the younger generation.

Education within the camp is also more focused on academics. Some of the young people noted that there is the lack of vocational programmes and opportunities for youth in the camps, which is useful to equip them with skills for work within their areas of interest.

Lack of Documentation and Recognition

The lack of proper documentation and recognition of refugee status by the Thai Government heightens the vulnerability of those who are in need of protection and creates barriers for them to access essential services and decent work. This includes adequate healthcare for conditions such as communicable diseases, severe illnesses, maternity complications, mental healthcare needs. Thailand is not signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and hence, lacks proper domestic framework or administrative procedures in place to screen and grant refugee status. The National Screening Mechanism⁴, whilst progressive have excluded “persons who are forcibly displaced” in its consideration.

There have been reports of children born in refugee camps along the Thailand-Myanmar border who do not have birth certificates or whose birth certificates are not recognised by Thai authorities. This lack of documentation can create difficulties for the children in accessing basic services and protections, including education, healthcare, and legal status. It also raises concerns regarding the fulfillment of their rights and the potential for discrimination and statelessness.

⁴ Fortify Rights - Thailand: Ensure “National Screening Mechanism” Is Accessible to All Refugees: <https://www.fortifyrights.org/tha-inv-2022-12-15/>

Right to Work and Access to Livelihoods

The right to work closely intersects with the lack of proper documentation to recognise refugees in need of protection in Thailand. Participants began by discussing the realities of how the lack of access to decent work and documentation has affected the community. Firstly, the refugee community heavily depends on aid from international organisations. With the depletion of foreign funding flowing into the camps, the support currently received by the community is barely sufficient for their daily needs. The limitation around aid makes it difficult for refugees to be self-sufficient and shortages have led people to become desperate and seek for alternative solutions by taking risky routes to work illegally outside the camps. This led them to be prone to exploitation, abuse, danger and violence, especially women and girls. Without access to learning or other safe options, some families had to leave their children alone and without protection while they work outside. There is also an alarming increase in SGBV, particularly domestic and intimate partner violence. The abuse of alcohol and drugs are prevalent due to financial stress in the family and lack of access to livelihood opportunities.



Provisions for the refugees. © Mikhail Esteves

Consultation with NGOs

The consultation with NGO/INGOs was conducted on 31 October 2022, involving representatives from three prominent NGOs and was facilitated by a member of the APRRN Southeast Asia Working Group. While NGOs representatives were not based in Mae La refugee camp, they report to have a close working relationship with refugee camp committees and community leaders in the camps, which made it possible for humanitarian assistance to continue even as there were restricted access in-and-out of camps during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Other key concerns raised include the impact on durable solutions, limited access to livelihood and opportunities for income generation, how protracted displacement compounded by the pandemic and border closures saw the deterioration of the community mental health, rise in protection issues such as SGBV, arising incidents of delinquency, alcohol and substance abuse. NGOs reflect on the limited opportunities younger refugees have for education and how access to legal work can provide a means for these refugees.

Sustaining operations on the ground and ongoing support for the community

In order to minimise the spread of COVID-19, NGO B stated that they had to limit staff movements in-and-out of camps to protect refugees from potential exposure. There was minimal impact on camp management services especially the provision of basic necessities, food and cash assistance, since NGO B have been collaborating and empowering the refugee camp committees even before the pandemic struck. Multiple NGOs working along the Thailand and Myanmar border continue to receive ongoing support from donors, including to account for the increase in cash assistance for most vulnerable households, ensuring the provision of vital humanitarian assistance to address refugees' basic needs.

Restricted movement and access in-and-out of refugee camps

While there was fluidity of movement within refugee camps in Thailand and across the border in Myanmar prior to COVID-19, a respondent from NGO A shared that the borders were shut down during the pandemic and what once was a viable durable solution - voluntary repatriation - had grind to a halt. NGO B reported that refugees were crossing the border to visit their land, home villages and were planning for voluntary repatriation until the pandemic hit, the hope for a future diminished and the social and psychological impact was devastating.

Due to COVID-19, access to Mae La refugee camp was closed off and NGOs had to limit staff movements within and out of the camps to minimise the spread of the infectious disease. The movement of refugees was heavily restricted, unless people with serious medical conditions had to be medically evacuated.

Declining mental health and implications

As the world grappled with COVID-19 and the uncertainty of life in the post-pandemic, various NGOs witnessed the significant impact of restricted freedoms on the already precarious psychosocial well-being of refugee communities. Border closures halted voluntary repatriations and it had a profound psychosocial impact on people who were preparing for return. Overall, mental health issues were increasing steadily and some of the implications which NGOs have highlighted include increased use and dependency on alcohol and drug/substance, delinquency and deviant behaviour increasing school dropout rates, and sexual and gender based violence (SGBV). A number of women organisations in the camps have expressed serious concerns regarding SGBV, to that, NGOs support the development and implementation of community-driven solutions for better management and outcomes.

Limited opportunities for younger refugees

The young generation of ethnic Myanmar people who were born into displacement still have a strong sense of ethnic identity as Karen or Karenni people, despite having no direct connection to their ancestral land in Myanmar and/or have limited exposure to agriculture being a source of livelihood, NGO C shared while basic education may be available and accessible to an extent in larger refugee camps such as Mae La, the quality of education in camps are not on par with Thailand's national curriculum nor does it have formal accreditation or international recognition such as the Cambridge 'O' Levels or the International General Certification of Secondary Education (IGCSE). Through a gendered lens, NGOs also report that limited water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities in camp settings hinders the access to education for female students especially when they are menstruating. The lack of quality facilities could exacerbate protection risks.

Young refugees now have greater aspirations for further advancement and look towards higher education beyond the secondary level (or post-10 level), but opportunities are few and far. Besides academic studies, NGOs have also started to expand into developing vocational training with key stakeholders under the Ministry of Education, which will be held to industrial standards. The

introduction of vocational training will enable working-age refugees to gain the essential skills required in order to meet or fulfill the shortfall of manpower in specific industries.

Lack of livelihood and opportunities for income generation

Refugees were once able to move freely in-and-out of camp to find rural work for supplementary income. With the restrictive movements enforced, some families had unwittingly become fully dependent on food and cash assistance from NGOs, to counter the impact on livelihood and reduced income. In 2021, the protest in Mae La camp erupted as a result of unfair treatment of refugees arising from the disparity in freedom of movement for certain individuals. The issue was later addressed by the camp committee formed by refugees as well as camp authorities.

© Mikhail Esteves



As Thailand is heavily dependent on migrant labour⁵, NGOs have reported that a high percentage of working-age refugees could already contribute to Thailand's economy and be self-sufficient. However, there needs to be labour laws ensuring workers rights and protection of refugees from any potential risks of exploitation and deportation. In addition, refugees will need to bridge their understanding of local practices and be equipped with Thai language skills to remove barriers to access the formal or informal labour or employment sector.

Lack of durable solutions

While resettlement is not on the table and voluntary repatriation is complicated by border closures due to the pandemic and the ongoing instability under Myanmar's junta rule, NGOs believe that the overarching challenge regarding the lack of durable solutions can be tackled by taking a step towards access to safe and legal work outside of the camps. NGOs agree that various stakeholders such as CBOs, INGOs, national organisations and international donors need to come together to engage local authorities for discussions to chart the pathway forward.

Opportunities for further advocacy

In light of the ongoing challenges, participants from the consultation also identified four major areas for further advocacy, namely to

1. *Improve the accessibility and quality of education*
2. *Expanding on post-10 education opportunities including vocational training*
3. *Grant refugees the legal right to work*
4. *Remedy durable solution to end protracted displacement*

NGO representatives concur with the need for the refugee community to be empowered as advocates with lived experiences of displacement, not only as leaders in their respective community groups but also to be included as representatives for meaningful participation at the discussion table with other key stakeholders and this is already happening. In addition, NGOs have also brought to attention the inclusion of vulnerable members of the displaced community such as women, children, elderly and persons with disabilities, and the need to optimal access to services and opportunities for all alike.

⁵ APRRN: Towards Refugees' Right to Work: An Analysis of Employment Trends for Refugees in Thailand and Malaysia - https://www.aprrn.org/media/Publications/files/Final_Report_Refugee_Work_Rights_Cover.pdf

Consultation with Karenni Community

The consultation with Karenni CBOs was conducted on 16 February 2023 and it involved 12 attendees from various Karenni organisations who are working on refugee rights around the Thailand-Myanmar border. The consultation was led by a representative from the Karenni Refugee Committee (KnRC) and Burmese interpreter was present throughout. There were 3 main issues raised by the Karenni CBOs during the consultation, namely the right to education, right to work, and right to documentation. Apart from these, other issues such as inadequate food rations and increasing cases of domestic abuse were raised. The participants shared that these issues are interconnected, thus, a lack of protection of one of the rights impacts the protection of other rights. The participants believe that there are gaps to be addressed, and solutions to be explored to better protect refugees in the Thailand-Myanmar border.

Recognizing education certification from the camps

Many children and young refugee adults undertake their studies within the education system established in the camps which they consider as formal education. While not every child and young adult have access to education, the camps provide education access from kindergarten to college. One of the main issues around the right to education is that there is no recognition of the syllabus developed by the education system within the camps, nor their certificates, by either Thailand and Myanmar governments. Without recognition of the students' proof of studies, refugees from the camps face serious discrimination on their access to work.

Many students do not have options to continue their education further because there is no opportunity to pursue future education after they graduate from college in the camps. This resulted in a big percentage of college graduates being unemployed as they are unable to find opportunities with their education completion not being recognized by Thailand and Myanmar governments. There is also a lack of vocational opportunities in the camps, which participants feel important to fill in the gaps of work opportunities.

The lack of adequate protection for the right to education has resulted in many students getting married at an early age, experiencing depression and other mental health issues as they face uncertainties of their future due to the limited opportunities in being restricted in the camps. Some families are not interested to have their children pursue education since there is no recognition, nor opportunities after they graduate. The participants shared that many students work for the family to

overcome shortage of the ration, rather than focusing on their studies to build a promising future upon graduation.

The recognition of the education undertaken by students in the camps is required to protect the rights of children and refugees in the camps to further ensure that opportunities are available for refugee students from the camps to improve their quality of life after graduation. Recognition of the education led by the Karenni community should also be made in parallel with the support for students to continue their post-college studies, including to seek enrolment in foreign universities. Options to access free studies and scholarship in Thai schools should be broadened, as many refugees are escaping persecution from Myanmar. Enrolment in Thai schools will certify their studies from the Thai government.

Addressing inadequate access to work within and outside of the camps

The issues around the lack of working opportunities stem from the situation that there are very limited job opportunities within the camp, yet refugees are prohibited to go outside of the camp. Refugees face consequences from the camp authorities when they are found to go out of the camp to work, yet there is an inadequate effort to widen job opportunities within the camp. Job opportunities are mainly offered when there are small projects organized by NGOs and INGOs, which is very limited and unable to reach refugees in productive age in the camps. Due to the limited resources offered by the projects, there has been competition in getting a job in these projects.

The camp does not have sufficient space for agriculture, although it might potentially be a sustainable business for the refugee community in the camp. The participants shared that many refugees are interested in the idea of farming to build sustenance in the community within the camp, but there is a very limited space to establish an agriculture system in the camps. There is a livestock project in the camp, but implementers have found it difficult to source food for the livestock.

The lack of protection of the right to education contributes to the difficulties of refugees in the camps to access work opportunities which are evidently scarce. Youth groups are unable to become independent and are experiencing mental health problems. Women are making crafts from the camps, but there is no potential buyer as their products are targeted to populations within the camps who would rather spend their precious resources for primary needs, such as foods.

Fear of being arrested consistently haunts refugees in the camps, including when they go out to work and buy rice to feed their livestock. Refugees are trapped in camps, not having options to work and improve their life due to the fear of being arrested and experiencing violence by the Thai authorities.

The camps do not have enough job opportunities, yet authorities restrict refugees from working outside of the camps. This results in refugees being trapped in a cycle of not being able to be financially empowered and improve their quality of life, even after the children have received education. Thai authorities should explore possible ways to open more job opportunities in the camp and stop punitive measures for refugees who are working outside of the camp. Instead, the camp authorities should allow refugees to work outside the camps and connect them with potential employers. Development of vocational programs, especially those targeted to youth and women groups, are in dire need to prepare refugees to work. The implementation of vocational programs need to be done in parallel with establishing a market for people with specific skill sets to access potential buyers to ensure that there is a sustainable business model to support refugees with skill sets.

Resolving issues around documentation

Issues pertaining to documentation for refugees along the Thailand-Myanmar border have been around for the longest time. There are 4 recognized documents for refugees which are issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Ministry of Interior of Thailand (MOI). There has been confusion around these different documentations and their purposes, as the Thai authorities are yet to provide explanation of the differences and instructions for the usage of these documentations.

The issues around documentation has led to different challenges faced by refugees, such as not having the understanding if a birth certificate would be integral for the Thai citizenship application, enrolling in schools and accessing public facilities, among others. Refugees have been living in the camps for more than 30 years, and children are born in the camps. However, there is an issue of the birth certificate of refugee children not being recognized, which raises issues around discrimination and fulfillment of rights that the child will need to face as they grow in the camps. The issue then further continued as to whether the birth certificate can be used to apply for Thai citizenship application, given the unresolved conflicts in Myanmar that poses risks for the refugees and stateless children to go to the country.

The discriminatory practices around recognition of refugees' documentation in the camps along Thailand-Myanmar border should be addressed by legally recognized forms of documentation that refugees in the camps are entitled to under Thai law and legislation, in order to protect their rights. The Thai government should coordinate with relevant bodies, such as the UNHCR and camp authorities, to develop an efficient documentation process of every individual in the camps, especially children.

© Mikhail Esteves



Addressing concerns around insufficient food ration

The refugees in the camps receive food ration only from an international organisation that provides them rice, oil and salt. At the moment, refugees are given an amount between 170 to 412 Thai Baht (THB) for each person, whereas the price is around 300 THB.⁶ The inadequate cash support further led to insufficient provision of food that resulted in refugees getting out of camp in search of food in the forest and money, where they face the risks of being arrested should they get caught by the camp authorities. This problem is tightly linked with the lack of job opportunities and the restriction of mobility for refugees within the camp, which were the reasons they tried going out of the camps to seek solutions for their problems. The international organisation, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders should review its food ration to ensure it meets the needs of refugees in the camps. Simultaneously, efforts should be conducted to provide more job opportunities within and outside of the camps.

Preventing and resolving domestic violence in the camps

The participants shared that there has been an increasing pattern of domestic violence occurring in the camps. Some linked this worrisome pattern due to the degradation of mental health of people in the camps who have constantly been under a lot of stress and depression, due to the lack of uncertainty of their circumstances and their future. Domestic violence is one of the results of not having sufficient protection, where women and children are most affected by this situation. Serious steps have to be taken to ensure that there are prevention measures to be undertaken to raise awareness about the issue of domestic violence, while working on the root cause of the problems which are linked with the main issues of right to education, right to work and right to documentation. The Thai authorities must provide support for victims of domestic violence by ensuring that they have access to safe houses, have their needs addressed, and have access to seek accountability from the perpetrator.

⁶ Information is based on Community Management Target criteria.

Recommendations

Based on the series of consultations held with Karen CBOs, Karenni CBOs and NGOs/INGOs groups working on refugee issues around the Thailand-Myanmar border, we have identified some recommendations for stakeholders to address concerns raised.

1. To Thailand Government

- a. Take concrete steps to resolve issues around documentation by legally acknowledging documents provided for refugees in the camp
- b. Consider developing pathway to citizenship for refugees in Thailand territory
- c. Identify the gaps on refugees' right to education and recognize certification for refugees completing their studies inside the camps
- d. Grant access to safe and legal work for refugees both in the rural and urban setting, to support the demand for workers in agriculture and the industries
- e. Collaborate with CSOs, CBOs and business owners to widen job opportunities for refugees through the easement of restriction of mobility from and to the camp
- f. Collaborate with CSOs, CBOs and other relevant institutions to develop vocational and productivity programs, especially for youth
- g. Provide support for refugees to develop their skill sets in producing goods and providing services, and connect them with interested consumers
- h. Take steps to ensure victims of domestic violence have access to rehabilitation and access to justice

2. To UN bodies

- a. Strengthen cooperation with Thai government to clarify issues around legal documentation for refugees along the Thailand-Myanmar border
- b. Collaborate with CSOs and CBOs to identify the humanitarian needs for refugees along the Thailand-Myanmar border, including ensuring adequate food ration and access to essential health services including mental health provisions
- c. Collaborate with CSOs and CBOs to advocate for improvement on right to education and access to work

3. To donor organisations

- a. Strengthen coordination with CSOs and CBOs to provide humanitarian needs for refugees, including ensuring adequate food provision, sanitary and hygiene kits and other primary needs

- b. Allocate support for CBOs to engage in developing programs that will improve sustenance for the camp community, such as vocational programs and other productivity programs such as creating agriculture system in the camps
- c. Increase support for CSOs and CBOs working to advocate for policies that will create structural changes on refugee rights protection in the camps along Thailand-Myanmar border.