

Myanmar

Refugee quota factsheet

New Zealand Refugee Quota Burmese Refugees

The New Zealand Government works with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to offer permanent resettlement solutions in New Zealand for 1000 refugees annually.¹ Refugees from Myanmar are included in the 2017/2018 refugee quota and will be resettled to New Zealand throughout the year.

The Burmese refugees resettled to New Zealand under the refugee quota programme have been living in either Malaysia or Thailand. Refugees located in Malaysia live in urban and often very over-crowded conditions. Refugees located in Thailand generally live in one of nine refugee camps location on the Thai/Myanmar border.

Before settlement in the community all refugees accepted under the annual refugee quota programme complete a six week reception programme at Auckland's Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre.

In order to become successfully resettled, refugees will be accessing the assistance of mainstream services such as health, education, housing and Work & Income. The New Zealand Red Cross is the key agency responsible for assisting quota refugees in their initial community settlement.

This document aims to provide New Zealand's community-based professionals with general information about Myanmar, the human rights situation in Myanmar, the Burmese culture as well as some general information on supporting successful refugee resettlement in your community.

¹ This figure includes an additional intake of 250 Syrians in the 2017/2018 quota year before the permanent quota increase to 1000 refugees takes effect from 2018/19.

Humanitarian situation and needs

Myanmar is one of the most ethnically diverse nations in the world. Out of the approximately 45 million people in Myanmar, around one third come from ethnic minority groups, principally the Mon, Kachins, Chins, Shans, and Karen, each of which have traditionally dominated a particular area of the country.

In 2015, peaceful elections ended more than 50 years of military-controlled government in Myanmar, yet the new government faces many human rights challenges. Throughout the year, Myanmar's government and non-state actors continued to violate religious freedom; these violations became a defining element of the campaign season. Instead of protecting those most in need, like the Rohingya, Myanmar's government intensified its isolation and marginalization of vulnerable groups, leaving hundreds of thousands internally displaced and without basic necessities. The government allowed expressions of hatred and intolerance toward religious and ethnic minorities to continue unchecked and shepherded the passage into law of four discriminatory "race and religion bills."²

Occasional flare-ups of violence, involving fighting between ethnic groups and the army, and their subsequent tensions have marred different parts of Myanmar/Burma. The United Nations estimates that more than half a million people in the country are currently in need of humanitarian assistance, including those displaced in the conflict-torn states of Rakhine, Kachin and Shan. In Rakhine state, more than 1,000,000 people from the minority Rohingya Muslim community are also stateless and deprived of basic rights, including freedom of movement. Inter-ethnic clashes in 2012, have resulted in some 120,000 people internally displaced,

² United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), 2 May 2016, *USCIRF Annual Report 2016 – Tier 1 CPCs designated by the State Department and recommended by USCIRF – Burma*

living in camps and entirely dependent on international aid. A deadly assault by Rohingya insurgents on multiple police posts in northern Rakhine on 25th August 2017 triggered a new cycle of violence, prompting more than 530,000 civilians to flee across the border into Bangladesh over the course of a month. The latest clashes come less than one year after a previous assault by insurgents on three border guard posts on 9th October 2016 sparked a series of violent incidents and military operations that saw more than 87,000 Rohingya fleeing to Bangladesh in search of refuge.

In Kachin and Shan states, prolonged armed conflicts have also taken a heavy toll on the local population. To date, some 98,000 people remain displaced following clashes between armed groups and security forces.³

The United Nations, the United States and human rights groups have described Myanmar's treatment of Rohingya Muslims as 'ethnic cleansing'.⁴

Burmese cultural communications:

- › It is considered rude to touch a person's head, because it is the "highest" point of the body. It is also considered taboo to touch another's feet, or to point with the foot, because the feet are considered the lowest.
- › Burmese culture is paternalistic whereas New Zealand culture is largely based on gender equality
- › Acknowledge the male parent first if present
- › It is acceptable for men and women to shake hands
- › It is important to give and expect returned eye contact
- › Shoes are always taken off before entering homes
- › A modest dress code is recommended
- › It is ok to decline invitations for food and drinks but the host will often offer three times.

3 European Commission: European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), 19 October 2017, Myanmar/Burma - ECHO Factsheet

4 The Guardian, 23 November 2017, US calls Myanmar treatment of Rohingya 'ethnic cleansing'

Supporting successful refugee resettlement:

- › Be aware of differences between yourself and your client / student in terms of customs, values and belief systems, as well as perceptions of service delivery and treatment. It may be advisable to obtain the assistance of a cultural adviser, or someone familiar with the culture of your client's home country to help you develop culturally appropriate forms of service delivery when working with a new refugee community in your area.
- › Many adult refugees will have only had limited formal education so communication styles may need to be adjusted accordingly.
- › Refugees may also have difficulty comprehending the importance New Zealand society places on official documentation. Some refugees may associate the recording of personal information with suspicion because of past experiences in their home country. As such, it is important to ensure refugee clients understand why you are recording information, where it will be stored and with whom it will be shared.
- › Explain your role carefully to the client and always use a professional interpreter if the client is not proficient in English. If your organisation does not have established procedures for using interpreters, interpreting services can be found through the following organisations: Interpreting New Zealand – <http://www.interpret.org.nz/> and Language Line – <http://ethniccommunities.govt.nz/browse/language-line>
- › The Citizens Advice Bureau Language Connect provides free and confidential support in different languages. Advice on settlement needs, such as housing, renting, health, education and any other settlement issues. They can also help with immigration questions. Please call 0800 788877 (free phone) or email: language@cab.org.nz

Language

Burmese (official) *note*: minority ethnic groups have their own languages.

■ BASIC BURMESE:⁵

Hello (literally, 'it's a blessing') – *min-gala-ba*

Goodbye (I'm leaving now) – *thaw-ba-oun-meh*

Thank you – *ce-zu-beh*

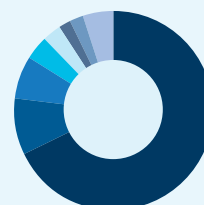
Yes – *houq-keh*

No – *mahouq-pa-bu*

5 Source: Reid, Robert [et al], [2012], Myanmar (Burma), Lonely Planet, Footscray, Victoria, p.382

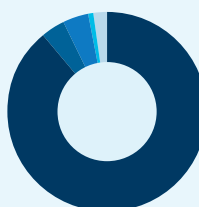
Ethnicity

- Burman 68%
- Shan 9%
- Karen 7%
- Rakhine 4%
- Chinese 3%
- Indian 2%
- Mon 2%
- Other 5%



Religion

- Buddhist 89%
- Christian 4% (Baptist 3%, Roman Catholic 1%)
- Muslim 4%
- Animist 1%
- Other 2%



New Zealand is one of thirty seven countries that take part in the United Nations Refugee Agency's regular refugee resettlement programme. Our annual refugee quota of 1000 refugees is a reflection of the government's commitment to fulfilling its international humanitarian obligations and responsibilities to provide protection to refugees.

The New Zealand Government and a number of local organisations, such as New Zealand Red Cross, are helping these families to resettle, and to access the goods and services they need to restart their lives.



Rangoon (Yangon)
is the capital city of Myanmar.

Note: Nay Pyi Taw is the administrative capital.

Myanmar has not agreed to formally establish an office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), restricting monitoring by human rights observers.

A humanitarian crisis has been unfolding on both sides of the Myanmar-Bangladesh border. There have been widespread allegations of attacks on civilians, threats and violence used to drive people out of their homes and other serious human rights violations, including the killing of civilians and large scale burnings of villages.

*According to the UN, a total of **616,000** people fled across the border from Rakhine into Bangladesh in the period between 25 August 2017 and 12 November 2017. This has resulted in the world's fastest growing refugee crisis in Bangladesh and new humanitarian needs amongst people remaining in Rakhine.*

*In 2016, armed attacks on police personnel led to a major security crackdown which resulted in an estimated **87,000** people fleeing to Bangladesh.*

Additional Resources

- › New Zealand Immigration has factsheets and videos for refugees and family members settling in New Zealand which are available at <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/what-we-do/our-strategies-and-projects/supporting-refugees-and-asylum-seekers/information-for-refugees-settling-in-new-zealand>
- › Detailed UNHCR guidelines for working refugees are available in a publication called *Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration*, see <http://www.unhcr.org/4a2cfe336.html>
- › Amnesty International, 18 October 2017, "My World Is Finished" – Rohingya Targeted in Crimes Against Humanity in Myanmar, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/59e70f224.html>
- › BBC, 31 October 2017, [last updated], Myanmar country profile, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-12990563>
- › Encyclopaedia Britannica, 16 November 2017, [last updated], Myanmar (Burma), <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>
- › Every Culture, [2017], Burman, <http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Mauritania-to-Nigeria/Burman.html>
- › Every Culture, [2017], Shans, <http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Mauritania-to-Nigeria/Shans.html>
- › United States Department of State (USDOS), 3 March 2017, 2016 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Burma, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/58ec8a6113.html>

Contact Information

For more information about New Zealand's Refugee Quota programme, or New Zealand's Refugee Policy, please contact:

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New Zealand Immigration
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If you require further information or support on any health or education issue for the refugees recently resettled in your region, please contact the following specialist agencies located at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre:

Refugees as Survivors New Zealand (RASNZ)

(09) 270 0870
www.rasnz.co.nz

Refugee Health Screening Service

(09) 276 6719
www.refugeehealth.govt.nz

AUT - Centre for Refugee Education

(09) 921 9366
www.aut.ac.nz/community/aut-in-the-community/centre-for-refugee-education

INZ Resettlement Team

(09) 928 2648
www.immigration.govt.nz

New Zealand Red Cross

0800 RED CROSS
www.redcross.org.nz

Please note: No personal information will be released without written consent from the client.