

**MMC Asia and the Pacific**

**QUARTER 2 2025**

# Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Asia and the Pacific



This Quarterly Mixed Migration Update (QMMU) covers Asia and the Pacific. The core countries of focus for this region are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Australia. Depending on the quarterly trends and migration-related updates, more attention may be given to any of the countries over the rest.

The QMMUs offer a quarterly update on new trends and dynamics related to mixed migration and relevant policy developments in the region. These updates are based on a compilation of a wide range of secondary (data) sources, brought together within a regional framework and applying a mixed migration analytical lens. Similar QMMUs are available for all MMC regions.

MMC is a global network engaged in data collection, research, analysis, and policy and programmatic development on mixed migration, with regional hubs in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Latin America, and a global team based across Copenhagen, Geneva and Brussels.

For more information on MMC and the quarterly updates from other regions, visit [mixedmigration.org](https://mixedmigration.org) and subscribe to the [MMC newsletter](#) to receive our latest research. Follow us on Bluesky [@mixedmigration.org](#), on X [@Mixed\\_Migration](#) and LinkedIn [@mixedmigration-centre](#).

### MMC's understanding of mixed migration

"Mixed migration" refers to cross-border movements of people, including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking, and people seeking better lives and opportunities. Motivated to move by a multiplicity of factors, people engaged in mixed migration have a range of legal statuses as well as a variety of vulnerabilities. Although entitled to protection under international human rights law, they are exposed to multiple rights violations along their journey. Mixed migration describes migrants travelling along similar routes, using similar means of travel – often travelling irregularly, and wholly or partially, assisted by migrant smugglers.

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Many Afghan families travel to Pakistan through the "Zero Point" of Spin Boldak. Spin Boldak District, Afghanistan, 2023.

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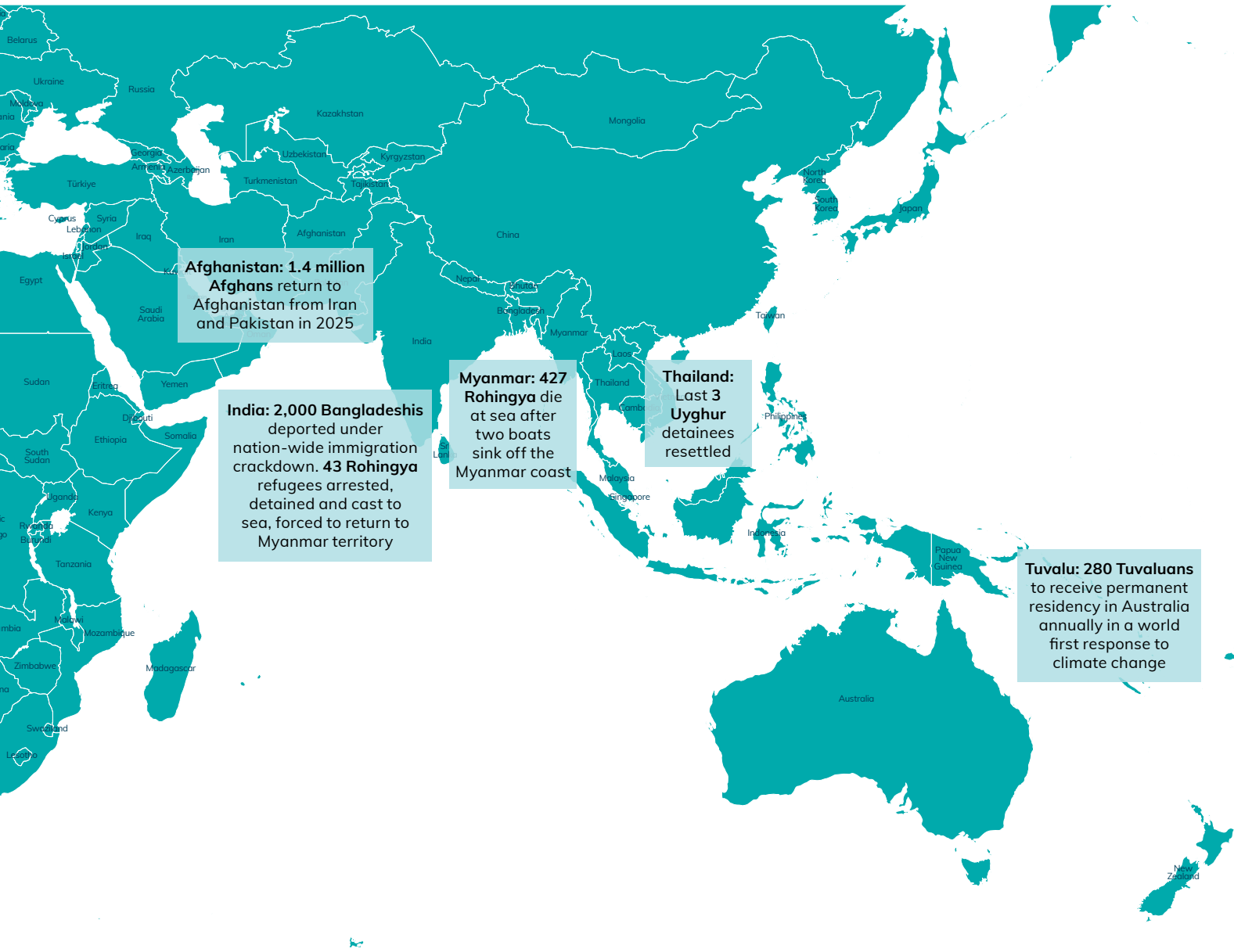
# Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Asia and the Pacific

## Quarter 2 - 2025

## Key Updates

- Afghan deportations from Iran and Pakistan:** As part of a national immigration crackdown, exacerbated by the outbreak of conflict with Israel, the Government of Iran has accelerated the [forced and voluntary return](#) of Afghan migrants in Iran, with over 700,000 returning since January 2025, and a record 256,000 in June alone. Similarly, Pakistan initiated the second phase of its deportation plan on 1 April 2025, targeting around [800,000 Afghan Citizen Card \(ACC\) holders](#). In total, UNHCR estimates [1.4 million Afghans](#) returned to Afghanistan this year from both Pakistan and Iran with limited financial resources and [employability](#), straining already over-stretched resources.
- Rohingya and Bangladeshi deportations from India:** Following a [terrorist attack in Kashmir](#) in April 2025, the Ministry of Home Affairs has ordered an [expedited process](#) for verifying nationality or valid migration status of Bangladeshis and Rohingya. As of June 2025, [more than 2,000 Bangladeshi migrants](#) have been deported from six states. India has also allegedly been [unlawfully arresting, detaining, and casting Rohingya refugees](#) in the sea, forcing them to return to Myanmar territory.
- More Rohingya die at sea:** [427 Rohingya refugees died](#) after two boats sunk off the coast of Myanmar in May.
- Last Uyghur detainees in Thailand resettled:** After a decade in immigration detention, the final [three Uyghur detainees](#) in Thailand were resettled in Canada in April 2025. This follows the controversial [deportation of 40 Uyghur detainees](#) to China in February 2025, which critics hold violates the non-refoulment principle. The three remaining detainees were distinguished from others in the cohort as they were verified to [hold Kyrgyz nationality](#), and entered Thailand on their Kyrgyz passports in 2014.
- Permanent citizenship pathway for Tuvaluans affected by climate change:** Under [the Falepili Union Treaty](#), Australia and Tuvalu have agreed to create the world's first special visa pathway granting permanent citizenship for 280 Tuvaluans (of a total population of 11,000) annually. The pathway is presented as a catalyst for [economic development](#) for climate resilience, but also allows for gradual resettlement given Tuvalu's vulnerability to sea level rise and climate change.

Regional Overview\*



\*Information on the map relates to selected updates and does not represent all mixed migration within and out of Asia and the Pacific.



# Mixed Migration Regional Updates

## United States (US) ends Temporary Protected Status for Afghans

On 21 May 2025, the US Department of Homeland Security [announced that the Temporary Protected Status \(TPS\) would no longer be applied](#) to Afghanistan from 12 July 2025 onwards. The nonprofit, AfghanEvac, estimates that the TPS, which provided protections to refuge to Afghans who helped the US military or were persecuted by the de facto authorities, [supported up to 11,000 Afghans](#) in the US.

In [justifying the decision](#) to terminate the TPS application for Afghanistan, the Department of Homeland Security cited the [improved security and stabilising economic conditions in Afghanistan](#), which meant that it no longer met the statutory requirements of a TPS designation.

## US travel bans and impact on refugee resettlement

In early June 2025, the US expanded its travel restrictions by fully barring entry to nationals of 12 countries, notably including [Afghanistan and Myanmar](#). Stemming from an [Executive Order](#) signed in January 2025, from 9 June 2025, this measure suspended the issuance of both immigrant and nonimmigrant visas for those countries' citizens, essentially cutting off all travel and migration to the US. This move comes on top of an existing freeze in US refugee admissions: a January 2025 executive order had already [suspended the US Refugee Admissions Program \(USRAP\)](#). As a result, opportunities for vulnerable migrants, refugees and asylum seekers from Afghanistan and Myanmar to reach safety in the US have narrowed significantly, with pathways complementary to the asylum system cut off.

## Deportations of Afghan nationals from Iran

The Government of Iran has proceeded with its campaign to deport hundreds of thousands of Afghans this quarter. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), [over 640,000 Afghans have returned from Iran](#) since the Iranian Government's return deadline of 20 March 2025. Amongst those, 366,000 were deported, including refugees and people in refugee-like situations.

### Anti-Afghan xenophobia

This surge in departures coincided with the outbreak of conflict between Iran and Israel in mid-June 2025, which further inflamed anti-Afghan sentiment in Iran. In that 12-day conflict, Iranian officials reportedly grew [suspicious](#) of the large Afghan refugee population, with state media reporting that several Afghans were arrested on accusations of [spying for Israel](#) during the hostilities.

Returns from Iran to Afghanistan sharply increased through May and June 2025, reaching record levels by late June. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) recorded more than [256,000 Afghans](#) leaving Iran in June alone. On the single, busiest day (26 June 2025) roughly [36,000 Afghans](#) crossed the border back into Afghanistan. Since the ceasefire, Iranian authorities have reportedly [intensified Afghan deportations and launched a sweeping crackdown](#), with officials accusing Afghans of alleged security threats.

## Deportations of Afghan nationals from Pakistan

This quarter, Pakistan advanced the second phase of its “Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan”, expanding the scope of deportations beyond undocumented Afghans to also include the approximately [800,000 holders of Afghan Citizen Cards \(ACC\)](#). Between 1 April and early June 2025, over [230,000 Afghans](#) returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan, of which [about 42,800](#) were reported as deportations. The NGO Save the Children reported [50,000 children](#) crossed into Afghanistan from Pakistan in early April alone, noting the risks of separation from families and vulnerability to contagious disease. Pakistani officials signalled that the campaign’s third phase would commence on 30 June 2025, targeting the 1.4 million registered Afghan refugees holding Proof of Registration cards, once they expire.

The deportation drive in Pakistan has drawn criticism over its lack of [procedural fairness and the treatment](#) of Afghans during removal. Enforcement has often been heavy-handed, with reports of destruction of homes, [theft of livestock and property](#), and abuse and violence during police raids and detention of Afghans in major cities. Many affected individuals and families have lived in Pakistan for decades, yet were given little opportunity to contest their deportation or collect belongings.

### Humanitarian impact of deportations in Afghanistan

UNHCR estimates that over [1.2 million](#) Afghans have returned or been deported from Iran and Pakistan since the start of 2025, deepening Afghanistan’s humanitarian crisis. Aid facilities in Afghan border provinces have been [overwhelmed](#) by the sheer number of returnees. There is particular concern about the treatment of women and girls, as they must resettle under conditions where there are [severe restrictions](#) on female education, employment, and freedom of movement. The de facto authorities have announced an amnesty and urged Afghans to return, promising safety and reintegration assistance. However, international observers warn that the sudden arrival of so many returnees is straining Afghanistan’s limited absorption capacity and could further [destabilise](#) the country’s delicate social and economic fabric.

## Deportation of Bangladeshi migrants and Rohingya from India

In May, the [Union Ministry of Human Affairs in India issued a directive](#) calling all state governments and union territories to designate special task forces in every district to identify and deport undocumented Bangladeshi nationals and Rohingya within 30 days. According to the directive, the STFs are ordered to collect personal details of people who are suspected to be undocumented, with those believed to be undocumented sent to designated holding centres, whereupon their [biometric data is recorded](#) and they are to be deported by the Border Security Force.

Following this order, in June 2025, more than [2,000 Bangladeshi migrants](#) are estimated to have been deported across the border in Tripura, Assam, and Meghalaya by Indian authorities. The [measure comes amidst tensions following the April 2025](#) terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir where 26 people were killed.

## Reports of Rohingya cast into the sea by Indian Navy vessels

On 8 May, under the pretext of biometric registration, Indian authorities [arrested and detained at least 40 Rohingya refugees living in Delhi](#), blindfolding them and flying them to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, where they were transferred to an Indian navy vessel.

The Rohingya refugees were then allegedly given life jackets and forced to swim to an island in Myanmar territory. According to a [UN statement](#), their current whereabouts and conditions are unknown. This was [followed by another incident](#), where approximately 100 Rohingya refugees were removed from Matia Transit Detention Centre in Assam and sent to an area bordering Bangladesh.

These incidents have prompted grave concern among rights groups and the UN, which warned that such actions may amount to unlawful pushbacks in violation of international obligations. The [UN Special Rapporteur](#) on the situation of human rights in Myanmar condemned the alleged returns, urging Indian authorities to investigate the incidents and cease any actions that endanger lives or breach the principle of non-refoulement.

## Resettlement of Uyghur detainees from Thailand

The [final three Uyghur detainees](#) held in Thai immigration custody since 2014 have now been released for third-country resettlement in Canada, ending a decade-long detention saga. These men were part of a group of about [300 Uyghur asylum-seekers](#) fleeing China's Xinjiang region who were arrested for illegal entry near the Thai-Malaysian border in March 2014. They were held in the Suan Phlu Immigration Detention Centre, noted [for severe overcrowding](#), unsanitary facilities, and shortages of water and medicine, and limited provision for halal food.

This protracted situation posed [a diplomatic tightrope](#) for Bangkok as China consistently labeled the Uyghurs as “illegal migrants” and pressed for their return, while UN experts and Western nations warned that sending them back to China could expose them to torture. By early 2025, Thai authorities, citing Chinese assurances of the group's safety and an alleged absence of third-country offers, [deported 40 of the remaining 43 Uyghur detainees](#) to China, a move that again drew widespread criticism for violating international non-refoulement principles.

However, the final three detainees were not sent to China because they had entered Thailand on Kyrgyz passports, distinguishing their legal status. Instead, Thailand allowed UNHCR to process their cases, and under a bilateral agreement with Canada, the trio were transferred to Canada in April 2025.

Although the resettlement concludes the long-running diplomatic impasse, it [highlights a gap in Thailand's refugee policy](#). Without legal recognition of refugees, authorities treated the Uyghurs as violating Thai immigration law, resulting in years of indefinite detention.

## Rohingya deaths at sea

In early May 2025, two boats carrying hundreds of Rohingya refugees sank off the coast of Myanmar, resulting in a combined death toll of [approximately 427 people](#). According to UNHCR, one vessel carrying about 267 passengers sank on 9 May 2025 with only 66 survivors, and another carrying 247 people sank on 10 May 2025 with just 21 survivors.

Many on board had departed from refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, while others were fleeing persecution in Myanmar's Rakhine State. These twin shipwrecks are feared to be the deadliest maritime tragedy involving Rohingya refugees so far this year. UNHCR has [expressed grave concern](#) that such disasters reflect the "extreme desperation" of Rohingya refugees amid deteriorating conditions in Myanmar and in the camps in Cox's Bazar. In 2025, nearly one in five Rohingya attempting sea crossings has been reported dead or missing, making the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal among the [world's deadliest waters for migrants and refugees](#).

## Biometric registration and food aid for Rohingya in Bangladesh

UNHCR and Bangladeshi authorities have made [biometric registration](#) (fingerprints and iris scans) effectively mandatory for refugees to receive services in the Cox's Bazar camps, as part of a new "smart" ID card rollout. Nearly 1 million Rohingya in the camps have complied, but about [400 families, or 2,000 individuals](#), who refused have had their access to food rations and other aid curtailed. An official notice warned that anyone declining to submit biometrics would be "inactivated" and receive no further assistance – essentially a "[no fingerprint, no food](#)" policy. In the aid-dependent camps where refugees' movement and work are heavily restricted, this cut-off has left the holdouts in dire hardship.

Observers argue that conditioning essential aid on biometric compliance violates humanitarian principles. UNHCR's own policies state that assistance should be delivered based solely on need, without coercion, and that personal data collection requires freely given, [informed consent](#). The 400 families' refusal was driven by fears of (i) losing their existing refugee documentation, as the new cards do not mention their [Rohingya identity](#), and (ii) distrust of how their biometric data might be misused as [earlier biometric data](#) was handed to Governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar. [UNHCR defends](#) the biometric drive as essential for effective and accountable aid delivery. The agency stresses, that with shrinking donor funds, it must prevent fraud and duplication so that limited resources reach those most in need.

## Pioneering pathway responding to climate change in the Pacific

In late 2023, Australia and Tuvalu concluded the Falepili Union Treaty, a pioneering visa pathway that formed part of a broader agreement on climate resilience, security, and economic cooperation. The agreement entered into force on 28 August 2024, and as a [world first](#) provides successful Tuvaluan applicants with [permanent residency in Australia](#), granting them rights to live, work, and study with access to health and education services upon arrival. Visa holders can travel freely between Australia and Tuvalu to maintain familial and cultural ties, without the need for [employment](#) required by other migration schemes from Pacific Islands to Australia. In addition to this migration pathway, Australia has further committed to support Tuvalu in [coastal adaptation](#), and disaster risk reduction and response.



A ballot for the initial intake was launched in June 2025, and [demand quickly outstripped supply](#), with over one-third of Tuvalu's population (totaling approximately 11,000) entering the first draw for 280 available slots. This interest underscores the significance of the new pathway for a community facing severe climate threats.

While Tuvalu faces significant climate change impacts including sea level rise, it is not seeking to relocate its population. Rather, international migration opportunities are pursued for their contribution to economic development and, in turn, climate resilience through remittances and upskilling. As such, the program is capped at 280 visas annually to prevent rapid [depopulation or “brain drain” of Tuvaluan talent](#).

In exchange for this permanent mobility pathway, Tuvalu has [committed](#) to “mutually agree with Australia any partnership, arrangement, or engagement with any other State or entity on security and defence-related matters”. While this allows Australia to obtain security guarantees sought, the replicability of the scheme in other climate-vulnerable Pacific states as a purely humanitarian framework may be limited.

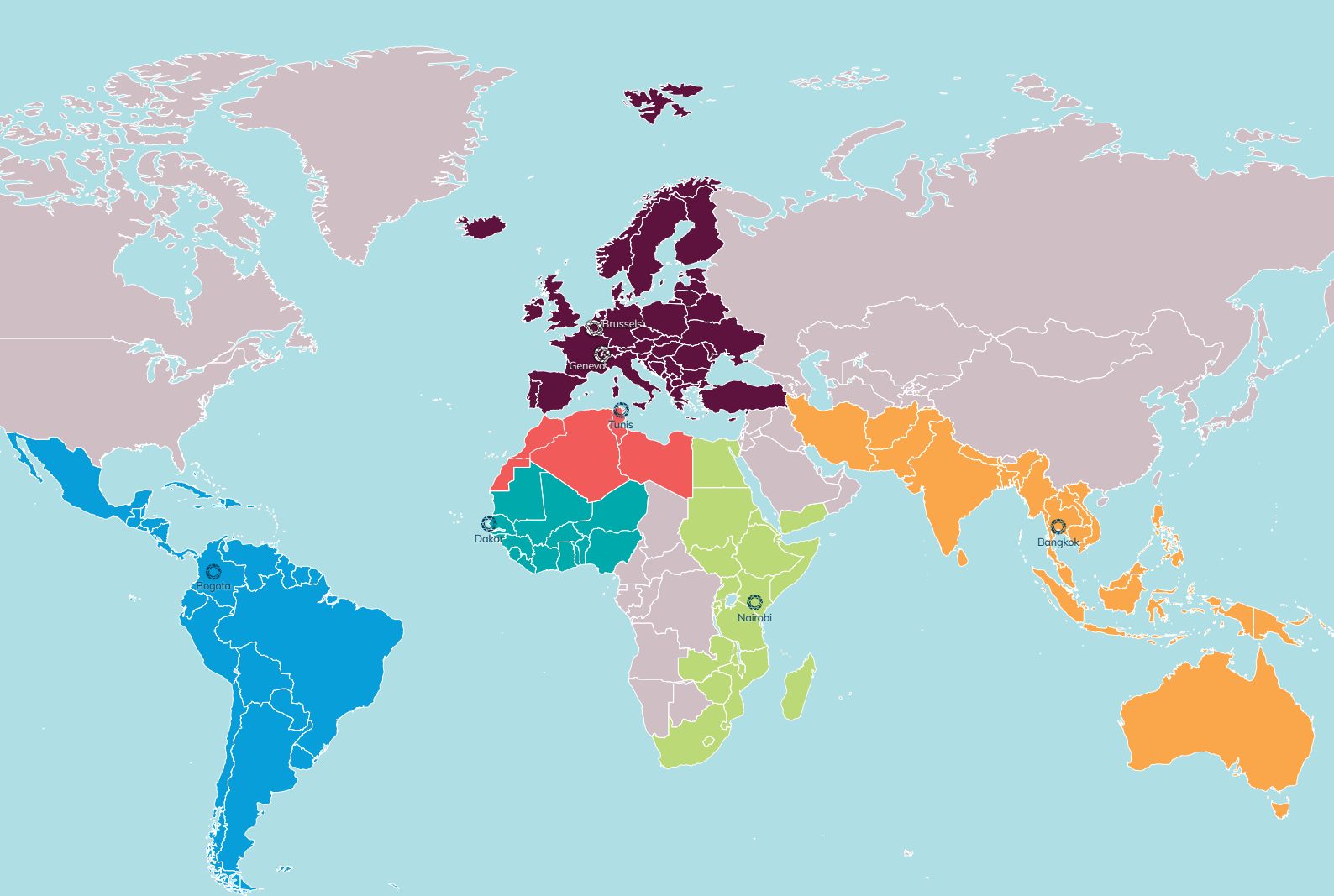
## Funding cuts and humanitarian impacts

In Bangladesh, the Rohingya refugee response in Cox's Bazar experienced renewed strain as international donor contributions continued to fall short. As of June, [only 15 per cent](#) of the UN's US\$934 million appeal had been met, leading to the partial or full suspension of education programs, food aid, and livelihood initiatives. The cuts imposed a [dramatic reduction](#) in support for Rohingya education, from US\$300 million in 2024 to US\$12 million by mid-2025, resulting in thousands of children losing access to structured learning. Humanitarian partners have warned that continued underfunding risks worsening protection outcomes, reducing community resilience, and further destabilising the refugee-hosting context.

In Thailand, organisations such as The Border Consortium (TBC), a primary provider of food assistance, have been forced to [implement drastic reductions](#) in food rations for over 80 per cent of families across the nine temporary shelters along the Thai-Myanmar border. This has pushed already vulnerable populations, including children whose daily food budgets have been slashed towards [severe food insecurity and malnutrition](#), undoing years of progress in preventing acute and chronic malnutrition.

TBC reports that adults in “standard household” groups may now receive as little as [US\\$8 per month](#) for food, a drastic 80 per cent reduction from previous allowances. Beyond food, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), a long-standing provider of healthcare in the camps, [informed Thai health officials](#) on 20 June 2025 that it would terminate medical services after July 31 due to the cessation of US government funding, with no other donor stepping in to fill the gap.

This follows the [abrupt shutdown](#) of IRC-run, USAID-funded hospitals in camps in February 2025, straining an already stretched Thai public health sector and increasing the risk of preventable diseases. [Educational services](#) are similarly affected, with schools facing funding shortfalls for teachers and maintenance, potentially curtailing education access for children.



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MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise. MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based mixed migration responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

MMC is part of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC).

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