

Protection at Sea in South-East Asia


2,400
 People have attempted the sea journey in 2020

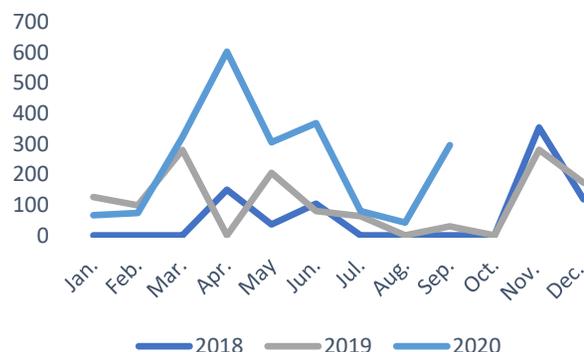

2,200
 People have disembarked


200
 People are believed to have died or gone missing at sea in 2020

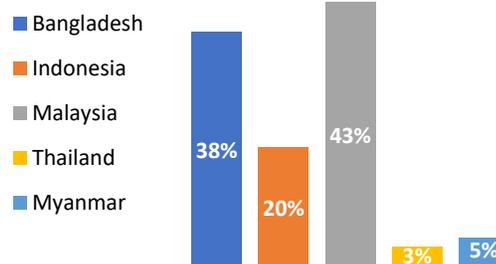

63%
 of rescued persons were women and children

Most people moving irregularly across the Andaman Sea are **Rohingya refugees**, a stateless Muslim minority from Myanmar. The Rohingya suffer serious limitations on their fundamental human rights in their country of origin.

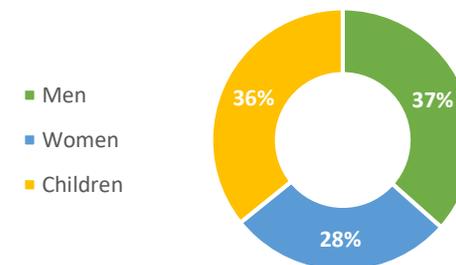
CONFIRMED SEA ARRIVALS BY MONTH (PERSONS)



2020 DISEMBARKMENT LOCATIONS



SURVIVORS' GENDER AGE BREAKDOWN



The gender age breakdown is only available for 50% of survivors due to access constraints.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

On 7 September, 297 Rohingya refugees were rescued and disembarked in Aceh, Indonesia. After some seven months at sea in desperate conditions, survivors were in a weakened state and needed immediate medical attention. Over 30 are estimated to have died at sea before they were rescued, and one young man and two young women passed away shortly after disembarkation. Survivors have reported physical and sexual abuses at the hands of smugglers.

TREATMENT OF PERSONS RESCUED AT SEA

Upon disembarkation in Aceh, the authorities and humanitarian actors immediately mobilized to address the medical and other needs of the rescued persons. Given the predominant concern of COVID-19, health screening and quarantine measures were implemented. In addition, UNHCR and protection partners have deployed experts to identify survivors with specific needs and provide specialized services. Vulnerable people include potential victims of trafficking, unaccompanied and separated children, and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

ROLE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The local community in Aceh has a history of solidarity and compassion towards those in need. Acehese fishermen have fulfilled on multiple occasions the duty to rescue those in distress at sea in line with international maritime law. More than 20 local NGOs have contributed to the response to the needs of the Rohingya from the boats rescued on 25 June and 7 September. UNHCR will continue supporting local capacities for basic humanitarian assistance and essential services in reception areas.

Key Developments: Maritime Movements of Rohingya Refugees in South-East Asia in 2020

RECOMMENDATIONS

As long as the root causes of displacement remain unresolved, refugees will undertake dangerous journeys in search of safety. A regional comprehensive response to mixed maritime movements remains essential to address threats to life at sea and ensure more equitable and predictable responsibility-sharing.

Such an approach should include:

- 1) Prompt search and rescue operations.
- 2) Timely disembarkation in a place of safety.
- 3) Support regional solidarity and countries of disembarkation in their response to the needs of rescued persons and search for solutions.
- 4) Effective prosecution of smugglers and traffickers.
- 5) Expand prevention measures such as safe legal pathways for refugees to reduce the need for dangerous journeys.
- 6) Support efforts to address the root causes of displacement in the country of origin.

The current crisis in the Andaman Sea is a crisis of solidarity. Without a regional response, States will continue adopting unilateral policies endangering life. ASEAN and the Bali Process have a responsibility to foster the needed equitable and life-saving arrangements.

