



KWO and KPSN Message on World Refugee Day 2026
Theme: “Until Everyone is Safe”

20 June 2026

On the occasion of World Refugee Day, 20 June 2026, the Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN) and the Karen Women’s Organization (KWO) would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Royal Thai Government for its generosity and commitment to supporting refugees. In particular, we welcome the policy introduced on 26 August 2025 that allows refugees to leave the camps and seek employment outside. We also welcome the initiative announced in May 2026 to provide Non-Thai Identification Cards to refugees.

These measures represent important opportunities for refugees to improve their lives, gain greater independence, and contribute to society. We commend the Royal Thai Government for taking these significant steps toward expanding opportunities and dignity for refugees.

However, these opportunities also bring new challenges. With humanitarian support in the camps continuing to decline, many refugees remain in vulnerable situations. Refugees working outside the camps also face a range of difficulties and risks. Therefore, on this World Refugee Day, we respectfully urge the Royal Thai Government, UNHCR, donor agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders to consider the following concerns:

1. Reconsider the Cabinet Resolution of 5 July 2005 and the Ministry of Education Notification of 27 January 2026

Many refugee students have long attended Thai schools near their temporary shelter areas. The latest Ministry of Education Notification’s interpretation of the Cabinet Resolution of 5 July 2005 has led schools to deny enrollment to new students, and in some cases to existing students as well. As a result, many children and young people are unable to continue their education and cannot change their curriculum midway. At the same time, education in the Thai language and an understanding of Thai society are essential for the younger generation of refugees who are entering the labor market and integrating into Thai society. We therefore respectfully urge the Royal Thai Government to reconsider this policy and restore refugees’ access to education in Thai schools as before.

2. Continue Supporting the Most Vulnerable

As in any community, there are groups of people who remain particularly vulnerable and require ongoing assistance. These include older persons, people with disabilities, those who are seriously ill and have mental illness, children, pregnant women, and mothers with newborn babies.

While opportunities to work may benefit many refugees, these vulnerable groups continue to depend on humanitarian support. We therefore appeal to donors and humanitarian agencies to continue providing essential assistance, including food, healthcare, and social services, to those who are unable to support themselves.

3. Create Livelihood Opportunities for Those Who Cannot Leave the Camps

Although refugees are now permitted to seek work outside the camps, certain groups are unable to leave. These include teachers, healthcare workers, community leaders, and other individuals who play essential roles in maintaining community services within the camps.

In addition, many mothers with young children face significant barriers to working outside the camps. We are concerned that if mothers are forced to leave their children behind in order to seek employment elsewhere, it could create serious child protection risks and negatively affect family well-being.

We therefore encourage the Royal Thai Government, donors, and humanitarian organizations to develop programs that allow women and other camp residents to work from home or within the camps while earning a sustainable income. Such opportunities would help families remain together while strengthening their economic security.

4. Strengthen Protection for Refugees Working Outside the Camps

While some refugee families have successfully secured decent employment opportunities outside the camps, many others—particularly those working in agricultural sectors and low-wage industries—continue to face challenges.

There have been reports of exploitation, discrimination, unfair treatment, and labor rights violations affecting refugees in the workplace. To address these concerns, there is a need for an effective monitoring and protection mechanism involving relevant government agencies, including the Ministry of Labour, Thai civil society organizations, refugee representatives, UNHCR, and humanitarian partners.

Such a mechanism should include accessible complaint, grievance, and referral systems to ensure that refugees can safely report abuse, seek assistance, and obtain protection when their rights are violated. At present, these systems remain insufficient, leaving many refugees vulnerable to exploitation.

5. Expand Local Employment Opportunities Near the Camps

Many refugees have expressed a desire to work in areas close to their camps rather than traveling long distances or depending entirely on recruitment by companies.

With the introduction of Non-Thai Resident Identification documents, we hope refugees will have greater freedom and flexibility to seek employment in nearby communities and local economies. This would allow them to support themselves while maintaining close connections with their families and communities.

Conclusion

Refugees want the opportunity to stand on their own feet, support their families, and live independently with dignity. The Royal Thai Government has taken important and commendable steps toward making this possible.

At the same time, there remain vulnerable populations who continue to require humanitarian assistance, and many women and caregivers who need opportunities to earn an income while remaining with their families in the camps. On this World Refugee Day, we raise these concerns and call upon the Royal Thai Government, UNHCR, donor agencies, NGOs, and local civil society organizations to work together to address these challenges and provide the support that refugees need.

This year's World Refugee Day theme, **"Until Everyone is Safe,"** reminds us that our collective responsibility does not end when opportunities are created. We must continue working together to ensure that all refugees can live in safety, dignity, and hope for the future.

Until everyone is safe, our work is not done.