

## Monthly e-Letter

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Thailand Burma Border Consortium  
ไทยแลนด์-เบร์มา บอร์ดเดอร์ คอนซอร์ติียม

E-mail: [tbbcckk@tbbc.org](mailto:tbbcckk@tbbc.org) [www.tbbc.org](http://www.tbbc.org)



### Donors Responding to Border Food Crisis

During the last few months the Thailand Burma Border Consortium has been appealing for attention to a pending crisis for over 140,000 Burmese refugees along the Thailand Burma border, brought on by soaring rice prices. The situation has improved with the recent announcement of an additional of C\$ 1 million (USD 1 million, EUR 650,000) for 2008 from Canadian Government, an additional GBP 330,000 (USD 600,000, EUR 425,000) from the UK Government, as well as numerous other contributions from donors and friends who have responded at this critical time. Although there is still a funding shortage of USD 3.5 million (EUR 2.3 million), the reduced shortfall allows another two months to resolve the problem.

The future for Burma remains even more uncertain following the devastation caused by Cyclone Nargis. There are likely to be many new challenges ahead for refugees and displaced people and it is therefore crucial to maintain stability on the border during these uncertain times.

Read more about the [rice crises](#)



Jack Dunford with The Canadian Parliamentary Friends of Burma. Chair, Larry Bagnell MP is 3<sup>rd</sup> from right, Peter Gillespie of Inter-Pares 2<sup>nd</sup> from right.

### People from cyclone areas arrive in camps

TBBC have recently received reports of new arrivals coming from the Irrawaddy delta – the area that was worst affected by Cyclone Nargis on the 2nd of May. Up to date, 72 new arrivals from areas affected by the cyclone have arrived in the two of camps Mae La and Umpiem Mai, in Tak province. Saw Ler Lah, 47, from Laputta Township, is one of them:

'I said to the people in my village to take shelter in the church. We stayed there throughout the night and listened to the cyclone. When we came out in the morning, everything was gone. I used to be a farmer and fish trader. Life in Burma was already hard before the cyclone, we were very poor. Now, I have nothing left, it is impossible to stay. I found 3 of my people that I could bury, the others disappeared'.

As yet, it remains uncertain as to whether or not more survivors of the cyclone will find their way to the camps. TBBC will monitor the situation carefully.

### Selected article/ TBBC in the media

The Irrawaddy: [Humanitarian Aid Also Needed for Thai Border Refugees](#)

### Feeding figures for camps

**As of 31 May 2008**

The total feeding population in May for all camps in Thailand was **139,768**. For more detailed information, please visit TBBC's updated [population map](#)

### Resettlement figures

**As of 31 May 2008 – Source IOM**

**2136** individuals from camps border wide left for resettlement during May. Since January 2008 up to date, **7366** individuals have left for resettlement to the following countries, according to IOM statistics: USA (6007); Australia (845) ; Finland (229) Canada (139); Netherlands (83) ; U.K (29); Norway( 17); New Zealand (17).

It is expected that between 17,000 and 19,000 refugee camp residents will be resettled in a third country during 2008.

## Supporting each other in the US

In a visit to the US earlier this year, Jack Dunford, Executive Director of TBBC, met with refugees who have resettled in the US and who previously resided in camps along the Thailand Burma border. Jack travelled with Duane Binkley, former TBBC Chairperson, now with Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, visiting refugees in their new homes and also the resettlement agencies, churches and community groups helping them get established.

“Most of the refugees we visited had only been in the USA for a few months” reported Jack, “and we heard many stories of their struggles. After 4 months support from the government they are expected to take care of themselves and this means they have to quickly find houses and jobs which is where the resettlement agencies help out”. “This is not easy” he continued, “as most get only ‘entry-level’ jobs at about USD 7.50 an hour, and usually this means that two family members need to be working to cover daily expenses. We heard lots of complaints that the resettlement agencies were not giving enough support, but my general impression was that they do a pretty good job, but with limited resources. The agencies are stretched to help much after the initial period because they have ongoing inflows of new cases to deal with”.

Fortunately the Burmese refugees form strong supportive communities. “The picture shows a group of about 30 refugees we met on our first night in Philadelphia”, Jack said, “I was most impressed ... they came from 3 different camps and included Buddhists, Muslims and Christians ... Anglicans, Baptist, and Seventh Day Ad-



ventists and yet it felt as though they were all from the same community. They were very supportive of each other and were being helped by a couple of Burmese families who had settled in the area a few years back”

“It is obviously not easy starting a new life in the USA from scratch”, said Jack, “but when asked what they liked about their new country, almost all said that they now ‘feel safe’ and their children now have a future”. When asked what could be done to make the transition easier, Jack said that language seemed to be the biggest barrier. “I was surprised at their generally low levels of English skills and how difficult it was for them to learn at the same time as trying to start a new life”. If I could wave my magic wand” he added, “I would insist that that all resettled refugees should pass at least a course in survival English before leaving Thailand”

## Support the refugees from Burma – donate for rice!

Due to the drastic increase in rice prices during 2008, more funds must be raised to cover the increased cost to feed refugees in nine camps along the Thailand-Burma border. We believe that our network of family and friends will make a difference!

[TBBC Family and Friends Appeal](#)



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