



## Review of the past year

**Rarely has survival at the year's end been celebrated as in 2008.** Still in the throws of an unprecedented global financial crisis and with many ongoing conflicts around the globe, the world was keen to move on and to dare hope for better things in 2009.

Certainly 2008 was a dreadful year for Burma with the devastating Cyclone Nargis in May and renewed political oppression and human rights abuses as the junta began to prepare for a general election in 2010.

It was also one of the most difficult years ever faced by TBBC with a financial crisis brought on by the Global Food Crisis, exacerbated by donor frustration at the lack of progress in resolving the refugee crisis after 24 years. The conflict continued in eastern Burma and TBBC recorded at least another 66,000 people internally displaced during the year and an ongoing influx of new refugees who, together with new born in the camps, largely balanced out the 17,000 leaving to start new lives in third countries. A major concern was the growing number of unregistered people in the camps and the lack of an effective screening procedure to determine genuine asylum seekers.

Despite the difficulties, all essential refugee services were sustained. Under such circumstances, this should be considered a major achievement.

**During 2009** TBBC will have been working with Burmese refugees for 25 years but of course continues to hope that the day will come before too long when the situation changes and they can go home. Until that day it will remain a huge challenge to sustain interest, support and funding with so many other competing demands elsewhere. The key to this will be establishing effective refugee screening procedures and finding ways forward to help refugees become more self-reliant.

**On behalf of the Burmese refugees and displaced people we would like to thank all of our supporters and donors for your generosity and encouragement.**

*“ Oh, I miss the place where I was born, but never can see. I want to go back if we have democracy and peace in Burma. I think that is possible”.*

Clever Htoo, resettled in Sweden since 2006

## Verification of unregistered camp residents in all camps

TBBC's mandate is to feed all camp residents unless they are screened out as non-eligible for protection status. Neither TBBC nor the Camp Committees are able to make refugee status determination. There has been no effective status determination procedure for new asylum seekers since the last official registration in 2005, resulting in a growing number of unregistered people in the refugee camps. To ensure that TBBC has accurate feeding figures in 2009, TBBC recently initiated a verification process to document all unregistered camp residents. The verification process was a major logistical exercise that required coordinated planning between field and head office staff, including a highly focused effort to digitally record demographic data and photograph all unregistered camp residents.



Verification of unregistered camp residents in Umpiem Mai camp.  
(Photo: TBBC)

## Refugee camp population (TBBC's feeding figures)

**As of December 31, 2008**

The total feeding population in October for the 9 refugee camps in Thailand was **135,623**. For more detailed information, please visit TBBC's updated [population map](#)

## Resettlement

**As of December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2008 – Source: IOM**

**34** individuals from camps border wide left for resettlement during December. Throughout 2008, a total of **17,172** individuals left for resettlement to the following countries: USA (14,280); Australia (1,562); Canada (637); Finland (283); Netherlands (144); Sweden (134); Norway (77); U.K (29); New Zealand (24); Denmark (1).

## Partnerships workshop

In December, a meeting was held in Mae Sariang where all TBBC's partners in the field were represented, including the refugee committees and community based organizations (CBO's). A new stipend policy for camp workers provided the framework for the meeting. Currently, TBBC hands out stipends to around 2000 stipend workers in all camps. Roles and responsibilities between refugee committees and CBO's were discussed as well as the need to include more people from the camps to fulfil the necessary functions within the food security programme.

## Distribution of ration books and food rations

New ration books are being distributed to all camp residents eligible for food. With this document in hand, refugees will receive TBBC's monthly food ration.

TBBC's food basket is designed to meet international nutritional standards. The basket is made up of, rice, mung beans, soybean oil, iodized salt, fish paste, chilli, vitamin and mineral enriched flour, and sugar.



Camp workers preparing the ration books in Tham Hin Camp. (Photo: TBBC)

## Nutrition education

TBBC's Food Security team encourage health NGO's in the camps to include nutrition education activities in their health program planning. Currently, health agencies in 6 of the 9 camps are conducting nutrition education & AsiaMIX promotion activities with support from TBBC. (AisaMIX is a vitamin and mineral enriched flour).

## Related links

### Forced Migration Review:

[Achievements and limitations of the Guiding Principles in Burma](#)

### Humanitarian Exchange:

[Protracted crisis in eastern Burma](#)

[TBBC: 2008 IDP report available in Thai](#)

**TBBC is the principal supplier of food, shelter and non-food items to the refugees from Burma.**

Our aim is to work in partnership with displaced communities to build capacity, strengthen self-reliance and food security, ensure an adequate standard of living and human rights are respected. To make a contribution, visit TBBC's [donation page](#)

## Internal displacement in Eastern Burma

**Karenni State:** Karenni Social Welfare and Development Centre (KSWDC) report that over 1,100 people from Shadaw relocation site returned back to their former villages to the south during December. Local SPDC authorities have accepted this return so far, but the lack of official permission makes reconstruction and reintegration initiatives tenuous.

**Pegu Division:** Karen Women's Organisation (KWO) reported the case of a 7 year old girl who was raped and murdered by soldiers from SPDC LIB 350 in Kyaukkgyi township on December 27, as an example of the impunity with which sexual violence continues to be used as a weapon of war. Free Burma Rangers (FBR) reported that in the last week of December, around 200 civilians in this township fled from their hiding sites after SPDC patrols attacked nearby areas.

**Karen State:** SPDC and DKBA militarisation continues to intensify in Myawaddy and Kyain Seikkgyi townships, with both of KNU's military bases along the border overtaken during December and January. Displacement amongst the surrounding populations has also spilled over into Thailand.

## 'It became too dangerous to stay'

**Man, 38 years on why his family had to made the decision to flee to a refugee camp in Thailand:**

*"I come from a village in Taungoo district in Burma. From my village we could hear fighting about one hour's walking distance away. I used to work on a farm in a nearby village where I was paid with food. Due to a curfew imposed by the Burmese military, I had to come home every night making it difficult to keep working on the farm. The Burmese military had camps around our village. Village people were being used for carrying materials and constructing a road. My wife and I were made to work hard in road construction. We worked on roads for three weeks per month for no money. We did this for three years. People who didn't cooperate were punished and beaten. One person in my village was killed just before we left. Our family stayed as long as possible. But it became very dangerous and each year, survival got more difficult. Therefore we made the decision to sell our home and leave. It took us four days to reach the border by car, boat, and by feet.."*



The family arrived to Mae Ra Ma Luang camp in March 2008. Upon their arrival they received food and shelter. Today, the oldest children go to school in the camp. (Photo: Erik Olsson)