

### New arrivals fleeing military attacks in Karen State

Since the beginning of June, more than 3000 people have fled into Thailand, following shelling and fighting between the Burmese army-backed Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) and Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) in Karen state, Burma. People who have come across the border are staying in 6 temporary locations and are saying that they want to go back as soon as it is safe.

In coordination with other aid agencies, UNHCR and Thai Ministry of Interior, TBBC is providing essential necessary assistance to the affected people.

*Right: Displaced villagers from Ler Per Her camp wait to leave the area by boat as they flee to Thailand on June 5<sup>th</sup> 2009 to avoid SPDC/ DKBA attacks. Photo: KHRG*



### Internal displacement in Eastern Burma

**Shan State** - After the PaO National Liberation Organisation (PNLO, who renounced their ceasefire agreement in 2008) ambushed a Burmese Army patrol early in May, SPDC's LIB#425 retaliated against villagers in Hsi Hseng township with the summary execution of two villagers, arbitrary arrest of another 80 civilians, and increased demands for porters.

**Karenni State** – Karenni Social Welfare and Development Center (KSWDC) report that the Burmese Army's response to the PNLO ambush also spilled over into Shadaw township, where SPDC's LIB#421 patrols increased the commission of arbitrary arrests, extortion and forced porting during May and June.

**Karen State** - After an increase in artillery attacks on civilians and restrictions on travel along the Taungoo-Maw Chit road during March and April, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) ambushed a Burmese Army patrol and killed the senior commanding officer Brigadier General Kaung Myat in May. See also above regarding developments in June.

**Mon State** - Tensions between the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and the Mon Peace and Defence Force (led by NMSP's former Army chief General Aung Naing and established in liaison with SPDC during 2008) have escalated into violent conflict with a series of skirmishes and executions since April.

**For more information about Internal Displacement in Eastern Burma, visit the [IDP pages](#) on our web site.**

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

To make a contribution, visit TBBC's [donation page](#)

### Refugee camp population TBBC's feeding figures as of 30 June 2009

The total feeding population in June for the 9 refugee camps in Thailand was **134,401**. For more detailed information, please visit TBBC's updated [population map](#)

### Resettlement Statistics as of 31 May 2009.

**Source: IOM**

Since 1st January 2009, a total of **6,737** individuals left the camps for resettlement to the following countries: USA (5,122); Australia (1,138); Norway (203); Sweden (56); Finland (122); Canada (86); New Zealand (30), Denmark (8), Netherlands (3), Others (3).

In June, UNHCR announced that 50,000 persons have left the border for resettlement in third countries since the programme started in 2005.

### TBBC has introduced a new ration book

**system** in the camps whereby all camp residents aged over 18 have to show up in person in order to receive their ration. This is to make sure that only people actually living in the camps will receive TBBC's rations.

## New perspectives on bamboo

In May, TBBC commissioned Benchmark Consulting to review the standard of shelter in the camps. The refugees build their own houses with construction materials supplied by TBBC, mainly bamboo, eucalyptus and thatch, similar to those traditionally used in rural areas in Burma and nearby Thai villages. TBBC provides sufficient materials to ensure houses offer the minimum international standard of at least 3.5 square meters of covered area per person. The cost of these items is the second largest in TBBC's annual budget (after rice).

The consultants looked at the adequacy and appropriateness of building materials, skill levels in construction and the way supplies are distributed. The consultants were impressed by the community involvement in shelter provision and considered the general standard to be well above global average. They even pointed out that this is probably the biggest bamboo project in the World!



Houses in Mae Ra Mae Luang. Photo: Erik Olsson.

However, they noted that while designing and constructing houses made from bamboo, wood and thatch is a common skill, the quality of housing in the camps is very variable and the choice and way materials are used have a huge affect on the lifespan of the buildings. There are many factors involved; from the type of bamboo used and when it is harvested, to design aspects that protect or expose bamboo to rain and pest infestation. Construction styles and expertise also tends to vary between different ethnic communities within the camps and sometimes the lack of tools is problematic.

In a draft report, Benchmark Consulting have made many suggestions about ways to improve the efficiency and quality of shelter, potentially reducing costs in the long run as well as reducing environmental impact and providing refugees with livelihood opportunities. TBBC is excited at new insights gained and the opportunities offered for improved shelter as a result of this study.

## Replacing key positions in camp management work not an easy task

Maintaining camp management structures is becoming increasingly difficult, as skilled camp workers within the supply chain and camp management are leaving for resettlement. As many of them are on the resettlement lists but do not know when they will be leaving almost until last minute, they are reluctant to resign from their jobs until they are sure they are actually leaving. This sometimes results in staff literally leaving their job with less than 24 hours notice. To deal with this, TBBC will develop a "resettlement replacement and training policy", whereby replacement staff for key positions are identified in advance, and 1 month on-the-job-training is conducted prior to the current staff leaving.

## Field day in Mae La camp to increase awareness about small scale agriculture

On 11<sup>th</sup> June, TBBC's "CAN staff" (CAN – Community Agriculture and Nutrition) organized a field day in Mae La camp to increase awareness about small scale agriculture among residents in Mae La camp. The activities brought together both young and older people, exposing many of the youths to agriculture for the first time.

Read more: [CAN Field Day, Mae La camp](#)

## World Refugee Day

The 2009 World Refugee Day (20 June) was marked in the refugee camps. The refugee communities in the camps organised speeches dance and music performances.

Below: Karen (Kayan) traditional bamboo dance. Photo: TBBC



## Resources and related links

Irin: [New IRIN photo gallery](#)

Christian Aid: [Online resource for young people.](#)

Blog: [Karen Refugee live Journal](#)

Rehmonnya.org: ["I Will Never Go Back:" Human Rights](#)

[Abuses in Mon State and Tenasserim Division](#)