



Myanmar Times

## PEACE PROCESSES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

As progress continues in negotiating the cessation of hostilities, the challenge of transforming ceasefires into a substantive peace process is becoming more apparent in Burma. Various issues addressing military affairs, political processes and the protection of human rights have been identified for further discussion, with the challenge being to translate these principles into practices which can be monitored. The apparent lack of an overall plan for merging different agreements into a common process of national reconciliation remains a concern. Nonetheless, the Government of Myanmar's peace initiative is welcome and deserving of support.

Preliminary reports from Karen and Shan States suggest that fighting has decreased significantly since the KNU and SSA-S agreements were negotiated, but that skirmishes are have not completely stopped. Small gains in humanitarian access into Karen State have been reported from Rangoon during the past few months but most of the political and bureaucratic obstacles remain rigid. Human rights abuses, including restrictions on civilian movement in contested areas, continue and it will take time before the rule of law can begin to be restored and impunity challenged.

The uncertainty of the peace process has inevitably inspired hope as well as arousing suspicion amongst displaced persons along the border. Thailand's National Security Council has reassured UNHCR that international standards will be respected and any potential repatriation of refugees will be voluntary. One of the challenges ahead for TBBC is to consult refugees about their fears and expectations, while building preparedness for their eventual return and rehabilitation in safety and with dignity.

## SAVINGS, LOAN AND MICRO INSURANCE

TBBC started a Savings, Loan and Micro-Insurance Programme in Mae Ra Ma Luang and Tham Hin camps. This programme aims to help create a local fund with savings. As a component of TBBC's Entrepreneurship Development, Grant, Savings and Loan Programme (EDGSLP), it follows the principles of community-based microfinance for savings and loan activities. This local fund is easy to access and helps promote the development of entrepreneurial activities in camps. It is also used to provide security to the investment camp people have in animal raising.

The programme assists group members in defining member roles, formulating a constitution, mobilising saving efforts and lending and bookkeeping procedures.

It is anticipated that with the creation of the fund, refugees can have easy access to financing to start or expand their small businesses.

The insurance fund compensates a certain amount of loss to prevent the entrepreneurs from further borrowing when restarting animal raising activities.



Group 18 in Tham Hin - Weekly Meeting for Savings

15 groups with 102 members in Mae Ra Ma Luang and 20 groups with 140 members in Tham Hin have been saving since October 2011.

## NUTRITION PROGRAMME BUDGET CUTS

TBBC has had to reduce the food basket because commodity costs, particularly rice, have increased. The new food basket was implemented in January 2012.

The monthly food ration will be adjusted to provide an average of 1,640 kcals/person/day (78% of min standard of 2,100 kcals/person/day). Main changes include a reduction in rice, fishpaste, and vegetable oil, and removing AsiaREMix from the adult ration.

The decisions about what commodities to reduce in the food basket and in what quantities were based on **3 main criteria**:

**1) Nutrition: Maintaining a nutritionally balanced food basket is TBBC's priority.** The foods that have been reduced and/or redirected into Supplementary Feeding Programmes (SFP) reflect our effort to ensure that nutritious foods are provided in appropriate proportions.

**Some important points include: Yellow split peas have not been reduced to ensure adequate protein. AsiaREMix will be provided to young and older children at the same levels** to ensure that children have adequate protein and micronutrients.

**2) Cost:** The food basket is the majority of TBBC's overall budget: with the current funding shortfalls, **major cuts to the food basket are unavoidable.** As rice is the main food basket commodity, it is necessary to cut this commodity to meet budget shortfalls.

However, TBBC will provide better quality rice, which means that households can use all of the rice provided, instead of sieving out and discarding the very small bits that cannot be cooked.

**3) Targeting:** TBBC plans to ensure that nutritionally vulnerable groups (children and pregnant/lactating women) are provided with adequate nutrition. We will do this by:

1. Re-directing the adult ration of AsiaREMix into SFP for pregnant/lactating women
2. Providing ALL young children (6-24 months) with AsiaREMix Supplementary Feeding.
3. Ensuring continued support for Nursery School Feeding programmes.



Food distribution at Tham Hin camp

TBBC also plans to initiate **Community Managed Targeting**. This is a system where community members and groups work together with TBBC to develop criteria to identify the most vulnerable households that are not able to meet their needs for food. TBBC will provide these households with a small amount of additional food.

## SCALING-OUT CAN

An innovative training approach guided by a newly developed Community Agriculture Nutrition (CAN) Training of Trainers (ToT) Manual was trialed in the 5 CAN project camps during the past six months. The approach is designed to scale-out the transfer of skill and knowledge to increase the participation and implementation of small-scale agriculture activities and the understanding of the nutritional benefits of gardens. The training builds on the traditional concept of 'Ma Doh Ma Ka' – loosely translates in the Karen language as 'helping one another', and thereby promotes people sharing and learning from each other to strengthen and support CAN in their community.

The training focuses on areas related to increasing participants understanding of how to effectively transfer information via a *Farmer Field School* group learning process, rather than only learning about agricultural techniques or nutritional knowledge per se. Modules include content related to understanding ToT, Adult Learning, Facilitation and Farmer Field School principals, nutritional benefits of gardens, agricultural techniques and monitoring. Modules are also accompanied by practical exercises and activities to further stimulate and consolidate learning.

The TBBC CAN project team have provided a 3-day ToT in 5 camps to all camp based CAN staff. The camp based CAN staff in turn have supported this new training approach to deliver a 3-day ToT to train Cluster Leaders and representatives of garden cluster groups. A *cluster group* (defined as a number of households or gardens in close proximity to each other) forms the basic unit through which the Farmer Field School group based learning process and delivery of support is provided. In 2012, CAN staff will continue to expand this training approach to support the formation and development of more garden cluster groups.



A *Farmer Field School* has been described as a 'school without walls' as learning takes place with a group in the field. Learning is by doing and is in response to identified problems. Learning is built on past experience and knowledge with occasional outside technical support required to jointly develop solutions to problems.

Participants identifying the nutritional value of garden foods at a CAN ToT in Nu Po camp (November, 2011)