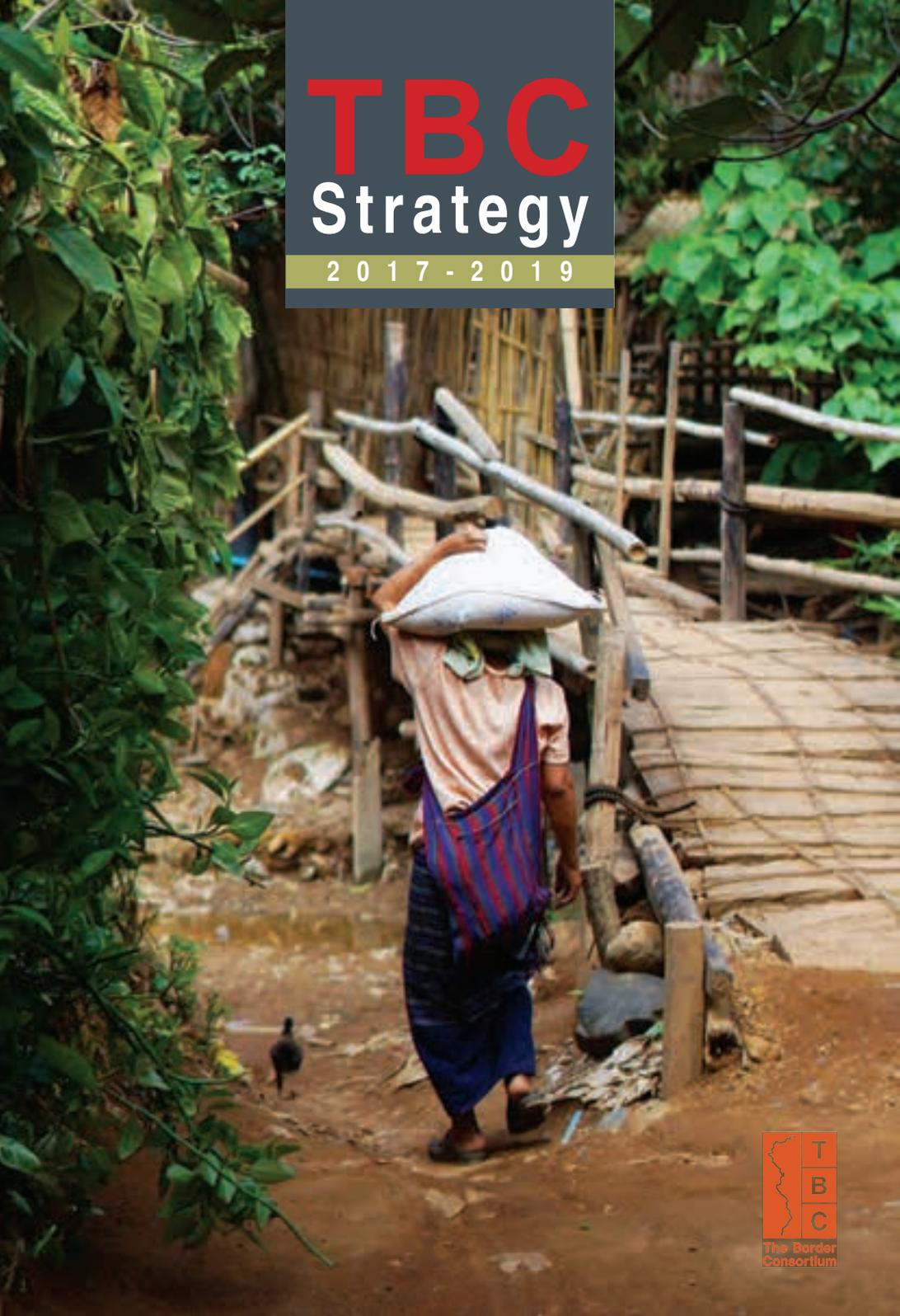


TBC Strategy

2017 - 2019







1 | Strategy

This TBC Strategy is focused on supporting the voluntary return, resettlement and reintegration of displaced communities from Burma/Myanmar between 2017 and 2019. At the same time, this Strategy also addresses the consolidation of services in refugee camps in Thailand and the eventual closure of TBC itself, which is planned for a year or two after the closing of most camps.

TBC grew out of the need to protect basic rights, and provide services and support, to people fleeing conflict in South East Burma/Myanmar starting in 1984 and until there is a resolution of that displacement. In 2013, TBC established a presence in Burma/Myanmar to support future return of refugees and internally displaced people in the South East and the transitional recovery of host communities after decades of conflict.

The rights and concerns of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP), and the people in the communities to which they might (re)settle, remain TBC's primary consideration in line with TBC mission, vision and values. In the coming years, TBC will continue to work alongside communities, their leaders and all their members, especially the most vulnerable – children, women and ethnic/religious minorities – until the return and reintegration of refugees from Thailand.

2

Context to Work on the Thailand-Burma/ Myanmar Border

In the last few years, both the situation within Burma/Myanmar and the position of the refugees in camps on the Thailand-Burma/Myanmar border have changed dramatically in some respects.

After three years of negotiations, the GoUM and eight ethnic armed organizations (EAO), including the Karen National Union (KNU), signed a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in October 2015. In general elections in November 2015 the National League for Democracy (NLD) won a landslide victory, which strengthened the NLD's mandate as it began negotiations to form a power-sharing government with the Tatmadaw (Myanmar armed-forces). The Tatmadaw maintains its administrative authority over the Defense, Border Affairs and Home Affairs' ministries, including the General Administration Department, which staffs all state, regional, district and township administrations.

Parliament elected the country's first civilian president in fifty years in March 2016, and the new government created a State Counselor position for Aung San Suu Kyi, with a portfolio that includes leading peace negotiations. Constitutional

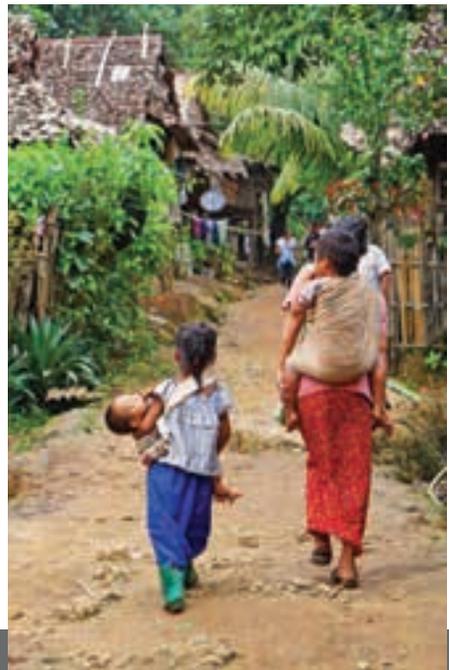


change, security sector reform, and decentralization/federalism are now seen as fundamental to the peace process and the inclusion of the signatories and non-signatories to the NCA are key to the negotiations. Civil society also seeks to be included in key planning and development discussions.



Refugees may return to areas in which temporary cease fires exist, but which are not governed by any peace agreements.

The RTG has emphasized that Thailand will wait to initiate any return process for refugees until the GoUM indicates it is ready. Dialogue on repatriation has continued between the two militaries, while the private sector continues positioning itself for an economic boom. Investment and economic cooperation in Special Economic Zones (SEZ) and on industrial estates, and for hydropower and tourism, are all highlighted for SE Burma/Myanmar. Among other things, this increase in normalized economic relations is likely to bring more pressure for a resolution to the refugee issue.





3 | Strategic Directions

As TBC moves toward its final phase of operation in South East Burma/Myanmar and in the refugee camps in Thailand, programmes and activities that started in the camps may well continue in communities in South East Burma/Myanmar to address a variety of issues, needs and rights.

TBC strives to meet agreed international standards for humanitarian action and so designs all programmes with the rights of individuals and communities as a key focus. As such, emphasis is placed on

- *the right to food*, ensuring that refugees and IDPs have access to nutritious food through rations, cash transfer, increased agricultural productivity or self-help initiatives, and that related TBC educational activities promote healthy dietary practices and give adequate attention to children's health and nutrition -

mainstreaming:

- *attention to issues of gender equity*, ensuring that activities are done with an understanding of the complex cultural dynamics around gender.
- *social inclusion*, emphasizing the importance of promoting social cohesion and recognizing the need of all members of vulnerable communities to be supported, while prioritizing attention to those who are most vulnerable.
- *justice*, ensuring that all community stakeholders and systems, uphold civil and political, economic, social and cultural rights, and that people are able to access and exercise those rights.

- *environmental awareness*, promoting the understanding that all TBC-sponsored activities have an impact on micro- and macro-environment and that we have to responsibly manage natural resources.
- *accountability*, recognizing that TBC and implementing partners are liable to all stakeholders, particularly refugees and IDPs, affected communities, donors, the RTG and GoUM, and Consortium members.

3.1

Displaced Communities And Civil Society Organisations Are Engaged In Planning Voluntary Return, Resettlement And Reintegration Processes

In 2017-2019, TBC will continue supporting initiatives to further strengthen leadership and management capacities among Burma/Myanmar Civil Society Organizations (CSO) so as to facilitate increased (1) community-driven resettlement processes and (2) community-voiced concerns in a variety of fora. TBC will continue to work with CSOs and governance entities in camps and in Burma/Myanmar, so duty bearers better address the rights, concerns and needs of returnees and potential host communities, by ensuring that:

- Financial, operational and project management capacities of CSOs are strengthened.
- Refugee, IDP and host community leaders (1) conduct multi-sectoral assessments of potential group resettlement sites during “Go and See” visits and (2) engage with local authorities in SE Burma/Myanmar and CSOs in group resettlement planning processes.
- Assessments of conditions in areas of potential return and resettlement are shared in local languages to inform all refugee community members.
- Ensure refugees have access to verified information on potential return areas and the peace process and opportunities to freely make individual decisions about return and resettlement to Myanmar.





- Deeper understanding of refugee/IDP planning needs to facilitate advocacy with relevant stakeholders (e.g., local authorities, EAGs, etc.).
- TBC advocates with all other stakeholders to plan cohesively and completely to address return and reintegration issues as they evolve once families have started to move.

3.2 Food Security and Sustainable Livelihoods of Displaced and Host Communities Are Strengthened

The aim of the livelihoods programming supports successful return and reintegration in the transitional recovery phase. TBC will continue to reinforce resilience by promoting equitable and sustainable natural resource management, strengthening agricultural productivity and improving nutritional awareness amongst displaced (refugee/IDP) and remote communities. Efforts to strengthen food security and promote sustainable livelihoods will ensure that:

- Joint refugee returnee, IDP re-settlers and Burma/Myanmar host community programmes are promoted.
- Customary land users and displaced communities' members are supported to claim secure land tenure rights or restitution.
- Awareness of rights-based approaches to forest and water governance is enhanced amongst GoUM, EAO, private sector and civil society actors.
- Increased farm production by smallholder farmers and returnees is supported by regenerated abandoned fields.
- Access to clean water and sanitation facilities is enhanced in resettlement areas and communities emerging from conflict.
- Environmental safety and sustainability issues are highlighted as natural resource management in the camps and potential return areas is strengthened.
- Livelihoods Committees develop and oversee livelihoods and food security activities in their camps and integrate livelihoods components into refugee return plans.

There will be increased competition for natural resources in return areas, which may stop some returnees from being able to develop sustainable livelihoods and attaining food security.





3.3 Humanitarian Needs of Displaced Communities Are Met

TBC will continue to support the most vulnerable displaced families by helping them meet their basic food and shelter needs. Wherever possible, TBC will provide cash rather than in-kind assistance. TBC will continue as the primary provider of food and shelter needed for maintaining a dignified standard of living for refugees in the camps. TBC will continue to ensure that:

- Access to adequate nutritious food and shelter is supported for refugees in the camps in Thailand, with additional support for the most vulnerable.
- Nutrition awareness campaigning is strengthened in camps and in Burma/Myanmar.
- Shelter and food basket alternatives for refugee camps continue to be innovated.
- Housing stock is efficiently managed and dismantled when no longer needed.
- Remote communities in South East Burma/Myanmar can access emergency assistance in response to livelihood shocks induced by conflict, displacement and natural hazards.
- Access to initial reintegration support is secured for group return and resettlement, with a particular focus on supporting local CSO responses in areas with limited access by international organizations.

3.4 Protection Is Promoted in Camps and Return Areas

TBC focuses on encouraging safe and voluntary repatriation. Safety, to TBC, incorporates issues as diverse as security from armed conflict and landmines to protection of basic human rights and access to remedies for injustice. TBC will endeavor to ensure a protective environment and will promote safety, individual and collective rights and access to justice for those who choose to return to Burma/ Myanmar and also for the people who remain in camps in Thailand, by ensuring that:

- Social cohesion is promoted through awareness-raising about basic human rights, particularly for women and other marginalized people.
- Community participation in reconciliation and peace-building initiatives by communities affected by protracted conflict and displacement increases.



- Civilian protection monitoring mechanisms are supported, with a focus on protection assessments in areas of potential group return and resettlement.
- Access to social protection mechanisms for remote and displaced communities is improved and supported.
- Refugee capacity to lead actions and access resources for protection and security of refugee camps is strengthened.
- TBC coordinates with consortium members, key agencies and local communities to advocate for remedies to protection and security concerns, and further to reinforce dispute resolution and referral mechanisms in camps as well as areas of return and resettlement.
- Labor, safe migration and human trafficking information is made available in camps and in return locations.

If refugee return is protracted, and TBC resources and responsibilities decrease, the safety and security of refugees remaining in the camps in Thailand will likely diminish.





3.5 Responsible Exit: Partners Develop and Sustain Programmes for displaced and conflict affected communities after TBC Closes

As the population declines and services in camps are consolidated, TBC will strive to promote the safety, well-being and self-reliance of refugees by gradually transitioning camp leadership and management fully to agreed duty bearers, including refugee leaders. The RTG, UNHCR and other stakeholders will determine the schedule for individual camp closures and while some camps may be consolidated. TBC will not exit all camps at the same time, and it is expected that a residual population (est. 20,000) will remain and require services. In all scenarios, TBC will be responsible for the dismantling of all camp shelters, TBC warehouses and community buildings.

Although TBC is an organization that will close after the majority of refugees return to Burma/Myanmar, some work will need to continue. TBC will seek to ensure that:

- Consortium members and other organizations are positioned to deliver on-going support for refugees who do not or cannot return to Burma/Myanmar.
- The added value of Consortium members is mobilized through exchange of information, technical resources and collaboration with local partners to capture/embed local knowledge.
- Consortium members and other partners will continue to work with CBOs and others in return areas to ensure that community driven initiative for natural resource management, nutrition and food security, social inclusion and gender equity and other issues continues.
- More and stronger links are developed to support research and advocacy that highlights issues still to be addressed in order to improve the lives of returnees and the communities they join in South East Burma/Myanmar.

In a best case scenario, camp departures by those returning to Myanmar/Burma will happen at a measured pace that will also allow key duty bearers to develop protection and service plans for residual populations to exit the camps in a well-managed, timely manner. In a worst case scenario, TBC and other partners would lose access to the camps, and be unable to ensure protection and services as planned.



4

Assumptions that Guide **TBC's** Work

TBC uses these planning assumptions:

External context

- The security situation in SE Burma/Myanmar will continue to improve.
- Most refugees want to return to Burma/Myanmar.
- Joint Monitoring Committees will be constrained in their ability to mediate disputes between ceasefire parties, and sporadic skirmishes will continue.
- Democratic reforms will suffer setbacks and delays, but gradually will deepen in Burma/Myanmar.
- Political and administrative decentralization will be a protracted process aligned with constitutional reform.
- Political dialogue in the Union Peace Conference will progress slowly throughout the term of the NLD-led government.
- Political changes in Thailand will not significantly impact TBC work in the camps, although there may be occasional, specific changes most likely be related to singular events.
- Thailand will continue to need migrant workers.

Refugee Camps

- The camps will not remain indefinitely.
- Essential services will continue to be available for refugees as long as camps remain open.
- Resettlement to third countries will continue to decrease.
- Some camp residents will enter the Thai work force, legally or informally, and stay in Thailand outside the protection of the camps.





Return roles

- UNHCR will lead the coordination of facilitated return in conjunction with World Food Programme (WFP) and International Organization for Migration (IOM).
- All key benchmarks for UNHCR Promoted Return will not be fully met.
- Not all refugees will return through a UNHCR-facilitated process, but these refugees may still need support for return and re-integration.
- Some refugees will want to return when conditions are right, even if for some this return means returning to Burma/ Myanmar and then navigating the complex process of obtaining documents for legal labour migration to Thailand.
- TBC capacity to deliver programmes/services will be determined, and perhaps limited, by funding available.
- TBC will have access, and funding, to work with returnees inside Burma/Myanmar.

Resources

- Funding for work with camp populations will decrease whether or not there are changes in camp-based workload.
- Funding opportunities for resettlement and development work in South East Burma/Myanmar will continue to evolve.
- TBC's relationship with the GoUM will be formalized through the Ministry of Border Affairs.

5 | Strategic Directions

TBC's strategy to deal with potential obstacles and risks is to maintain continuous information gathering on preparation for and implementation of the return process, and to reassess its implementation plans at least every six months. Should major events trigger a material impact on either preparation or return implementation, TBC will immediately reassess and update its implementation and/or exit plans in light of these events.

