

Statement on the Impact of Covid-19 on Refugees and Conflict-Affected Communities

2nd April 2020

90,000 refugees from Myanmar have become even more marginalised in camps along the Thailand border during the Covid-19 pandemic. Restrictions on movement in and out of the camps have eroded refugees limited opportunities for informal income making them solely dependent on humanitarian assistance for their essential needs. A lack of legal status and language barriers combine to limit access to information and national response plans. TBC with the Committee for Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons (CCSDPT) and UNHCR is coordinating COVID 19 outbreak response, following guidance from WHO and Thai Ministry of Public Health in its preparedness, prevention and response efforts in the nine refugee camps.

There have not yet been any Covid-19 cases confirmed in the camps. However, refugee committees are mobilising a range of preventative measures with support from The Border Consortium (TBC) and other stakeholders. TBC's response focuses on ensuring food security and includes the following highlights:

- TBC is working with suppliers and vendors to ensure a three-month stockpile is available for rice, tinned fish, cooking oil and charcoal in all camps.
- The value of the Food Card will be increased for all refugees to the same level as previously afforded to the most vulnerable households, at least for April to June 2020.
- The value of the food card will increase by 5% to account for increases in food prices.
- Risk management measures for the food card system, warehouses, gatherings, and movement in and out of camps have been introduced.
- Public awareness campaigns about washing hands thoroughly, maintaining social distance and other preventative communications have been disseminated in local languages.

TBC is negotiating with donor governments for an **additional US\$ 1.6 million** to address this Covid-19 emergency response in the refugee camps for 6 months with **total US\$ 2.4 million** needed to cover to end 2020.

Protracted conflict and displacement have also had a debilitating impact on public health and vulnerability for conflict-affected communities in south eastern Myanmar. Ongoing militarisation and fighting impede humanitarian responses and prevents assistance from reaching those most at risk of contracting the virus. TBC has supported ethnic health service providers and civil society organisations in conflict-affected communities respond to Covid-19 in the following ways:

- Deployment of personal protective equipment including face masks, hand gloves, thermometers and handwashing facilities to community health workers in ethnic administered areas.
- Public awareness campaigns have been adapted and disseminated in local languages to promote social and behavioural change.
- Advocacy with Myanmar's Ministry of Health and Sports to coordinate responses with ethnic health service providers so that no one is left behind.

Covid-19 does not discriminate in its attacks against people of all nationalities, ethnicity, sex and religion. TBC reiterates the calls of ethnic armed organisations, civil society, the UN Secretary General and 18 Ambassadors for a genuine nationwide ceasefire so that all stakeholders can focus on responding to the pandemic.