

THE BORDER CONSORTIUM

Mid- Year Overview: January to June 2022



CONTEXT

Field reports from TBC's partners in southeastern Myanmar documented the escalation of widespread and systematic attacks against civilian populations since the military coup. These attacks included military assaults on civilian settlements, fields, schools, churches and medical clinics. Roving Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF) patrols committed murder, torture and rape of civilians suspected of supporting opposition groups. In 2022, the MAF seems to be increasingly resorting to air strikes and heavy artillery fire. This deliberate military strategy increases the indiscriminate nature of attacks putting more civilian lives at risk in violation of customary international law.

Without a multi-lateral mandate to address the political causes of the complex emergency in Myanmar, UN international engagement with the State Administration Council (SAC) has focused on securing humanitarian access. However, there has not been proportionate engagement with other political stakeholders such as the National Unity Government and ethnic revolutionary forces.

A review of the Humanitarian Response Plan's (HRP's) Mid-Year Report for 2022 indicates that 81% of food aid beneficiaries during the first half of 2022 were in urban areas of Yangon and Rakhine State. Only 16% of the HRP's beneficiaries were internally displaced or stateless persons. In contrast, the most urgent needs were in rural areas where the MAF were targeting attacks against ethnic minorities. The SAC has deliberately obstructed multilateral aid from reaching displaced and conflict-affected communities in rural areas.

Commonly reproduced estimates of internal displacement appear to grossly understate the scale and distribution of people forced to flee from their homes. UNHCR estimated that there are 274,000 IDPs in southeastern Myanmar in July 2022, whereas the Karen National Union estimate that there are 347,000 internally displaced Karen alone while the Karenni Civil Society Network estimates that 202,000 Karenni have been displaced since the military coup. Even discounting the Shan, Mon and other ethnic groups,

these assessments of internal displacement amongst Karen and Karenni communities are double the official UN estimates.

The ASEAN Humanitarian Agency's (AHA) lack of experience in responding to complex emergencies was highlighted when it agreed with the SAC to conduct a needs assessment in southeastern Myanmar. OCHA and the AHA Center then proceeded to approach relevant ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) about securing access but were rebuked for consulting too little and too late. The EAOs indicated they would be willing to engage with the AHA Center in planning assessments to be conducted by local civil society partners, but were not willing to allow SAC to instrumentalise militarisation under the guise of humanitarian aid. The AHA Center tried to go ahead with their plan regardless only for the missions to be suspended when local MAF authorities denied access into rural areas.

More than 15,000 people crossed into Thailand during this period. All new arrivals, in accordance with Thai Policy, were denied official access to the existing nine refugee camps with many instead kept in tightly controlled "temporary safety areas" . Numerous protection issues have been raised regarding these "temporary safety areas" and their suitability for human habitation. Access to these areas has been tightly restricted, increasing the challenges of providing protection and humanitarian aid. Many new arrivals have been coerced to return, under the knowledge they will not be granted long term refuge in Thailand.

78,755 refugees remain in nine camps in Thailand. In these camps the COVID-19 vaccination programme continued and by the end of June 25,793 (33%) refugees over 18 had received at least one dose, with 23,277 (30%) refugees being fully vaccinated. During this reporting period there were 6,579 cumulative cases of COVID-19, with 43 deaths from COVID-19 related illness.

PROGRAMME RESPONSES

Programme interventions were guided by the TBC Strategy 2020-2022¹ and adapted to respond to the military coup and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Mitigation measures in line with Infection prevention and control (IPC) ensured essential services were delivered without interruption in the camps. TBC and local partners in Myanmar scaled up low-profile, community-led emergency responses during a time when the international community's formal humanitarian architecture's reach has been severely curtailed.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1: Contribute to meeting the humanitarian needs of displaced communities, with a focus on women, children, older persons, and people with illness or disabilities.

Thailand

More than 15,000 thousand displaced people crossed into Tak and Mae Hong Son Provinces seeking assistance. Most of these new arrivals came under the purview of the Royal Thai Army (RTA) and were held in temporary safety areas. INGOs and UNHCR were repeatedly denied formal access to such sites. There also remained a significant population of refugees in hiding, either amongst local rural communities along the border, or urban refugees in Mae Sot. TBC updated its Food and Shelter Emergency Logistics plan to assist new arrivals in Thailand following the coup. The work of the National and Provincial Inter Sector Emergency Response Working Groups guided assistance to new arrivals, which was largely dependent on local organisations for effective delivery, due to lack of access for INGOs.

Despite COVID-19 restrictions, essential programmes were uninterrupted and Food security for 15,408 households in refugee camps remained stable. TBC continued to provide a higher level of food card assistance to refugee households, in order for them to mitigate COVID-19 travel restrictions, food price increases and to help alleviate potential anxiety of food security while meeting nutritional needs.

As outbreaks of COVID-19 continued to be detected in camp, TBC maintained the implementation of IPC protocols in its supply chains, ensuring the continuous delivery of charcoal, shelter items and food to refugees, while mitigating the potential spread of COVID-19. No touch methods of distribution, temperature checks, hand washing and face masks all contributed to reduce the risk.

In-camp Shelter Teams responded to shelter damage which affected 298 households following floods, landslides, fires and storms. Households with special needs received bamboo, eucalyptus poles and leaf thatch to ensure all their shelters were in an acceptable condition prior to the rainy season. Stockpiles of key construction materials were replenished in all camps. Shelter Teams with Camp Committees reviewed Shelter post distribution monitoring questionnaires, methods, processes and annual work plans together in border wide coordination meetings. Routine shelter work continued, including the maintenance of fire prevention activities, such as construction of fire breaks, distribution of sand and water bags to each household and metal hooks for rapid dismantling of flammable thatch roofs in case of fire. Fire safety messaging also took place, with households learning best practices for fire prevention.

The re-scheduled 2020 Annual Population Verification of encamped refugees began, which will provide detailed demographics of refugees in camp and contribute to increased understanding of People with Disabilities (PWD). It is due to finish in the third quarter of 2022.

Myanmar

TBC's network of local partners coordinated the distribution of emergency relief for 190,000 people disbursed over 20 townships during the first half of 2022.

Cash transfers remain TBC's preferred mode of emergency relief assistance, with the coping strategies of 80,000 individuals reinforced by the cash equivalent of three months rice supply. Cash enables beneficiaries to determine their own priorities and reinforces social capital by enabling the repayment of loans to host communities. The injection of cash also incentivises nearby traders to reach out across political lines to maintain links with communities affected by conflict.

Where access to markets is limited, such as for communities adjacent to the border, the delivery of in-kind assistance was coordinated. Food aid covering at least three months supply was distributed for 20,000 people during this period. That was complemented by smaller amounts of material assistance for a further 40,000 rights-holders. This included the distribution of dignity kits (including sanitary pads, soap and underwear) to women and girls and temporary shelter materials (including tarpaulins, ropes and kitchen utensils) for newly displaced households.

Infection prevention and control measures were mobilised by ethnic health service providers to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in Kayah and Karen States. Over 22,000 people directly benefitted from these measures which included training for health workers and the disbursement of personal protective equipment (PPE), testing kits, oxygen cylinders, oxygen concentrators and generators for quarantine centres as well as vaccination campaigns. This was complemented by public awareness campaigns about risk mitigation by civil society organisations in Mon and Shan States as well as in Tanintharyi Region.

Ethnic health service providers restocked medical supplies and equipment in Village Tract Health Centres (VTHCs) and community health clinics across rural areas of southeastern Myanmar. This was complemented by inservice training for community health workers and enabled access to medical treatment for an additional 26,000 patients.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2: Reinforce food security through improved nutrition and productive livelihoods.

Thailand

TBC ensured food provision and reinforced food security. The Food Security post-distribution monitoring results for June 2022 showed how the food card system provided access to diverse and nutritious food with 86% of HHs reporting a diverse diet. 99% of HHs reported little to no hunger.

Aside from supplementary feeding programmes for pregnant and nursing mothers, additional needs for households were met through TBCs "Healthy Babies, Bright Futures" Infant and Young Child Feedings Programme (IYCF). This programme sees approximately 2,000 children enrolled on a monthly basis and provides fortified feeding supplement BabyBRIGHT alongside complimentary IYCF education to promote infant nutrition.

Throughout the period, ongoing capacity building and vocational skills trainings have taken place, designed to equip refugees with income generation skills which they can use to secure their livelihoods in Thailand or wherever they choose their future to be.

Myanmar

Despite a hostile environment, agricultural productivity was reinforced for over 21,000 farmers in less volatile rural areas during the first half of 2022. Successful interventions included the construction/ repair of motorbike roads and bridges to improve access to markets. The provision of mechanical ploughs for farming collectives and extension of irrigation canals and micro-dams improved agricultural productivity. Agricultural extension workers strengthened awareness about climate-smart and nutrition-sensitive agriculture. Longer term impacts will be realized as a result of increased land demarcation and registration in KNU-controlled areas and, on a smaller scale in Mon and Karenni lands, as well as the establishment and protection of locally-managed community forests and fish conservation zone networks.

Almost 11,000 people benefitted from improved access to safe water and environmental hygiene. The construction of water supply, storage and filtration systems provided clean water for cooking, drinking and daily household use. Hygiene was improved through the installation of sanitary latrines, while public forums about hygiene and sanitation encouraged healthier practices.

Malnutrition was mitigated by ethnic health service providers for over 17,000 people. Nutrition trainings for partners' staff and community members have increased awareness and provided practical advice for how to eat healthier, while infant and young children feeding trainings have allowed mothers to make more informed and healthier feeding decisions. During this reporting period, 4,240 under-5 children were screened for acute malnutrition of which 238 (5.6%) were identified as moderately or severely malnourished and admitted into supplementary and/or therapeutic feeding programmes.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3: Promote protective environments and safe and dignified futures for displaced and conflict-affected communities.

Thailand

The likelihood of returns to Myanmar in the immediate future have been drastically impacted by the military coup and rapid deterioration of human security in southeastern Myanmar. While exploration of legal pathways for refugees in camps to gain work and livelihoods in Thailand have been ongoing, limited progress has been made so far.

As a result of the military coup and COVID-19 movement restrictions, the camp populations have remained relatively static. The camp population at the end of June was 78,755, a 1.6% reduction from 80,046 in June last year.

While immediate new opportunities are limited, active planning and preparation for dignified futures continued. Meetings, trainings and orientations took place involving programme staff, Camp Committees and security staff to ensure all were up to date on TBC's policies and procedures. This includes training on Code of Conduct, the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PSEAH) and Child Protection Policy. Further trainings were also held on social inclusion and gender sensitivity. These trainings are designed to help ensure that local camp governance provides safe and protective

environments. Community members are best placed to manage their communities. A series of vocational trainings were also held on construction of bamboo furniture and cement block construction, which provide refugees the ability to generate revenue to support their livelihoods as well as improve resource management. These skills are applicable both inside and outside of camp.

TBC and partners presented at a wide range of webinars and panel discussions on the evolving humanitarian crisis. These aimed to raise awareness of the scale, distribution and needs of displaced people and to advocate for improved access to refuge and protection, in line with Thailand's long-standing tradition of offering sanctuary to those in need.

Myanmar

Despite the ongoing humanitarian crisis, TBC's local partners were still able to reinforce social safety nets for over 7,000 people in the first half of 2022. This included mobilising rice and seed banks to mitigate food insecurity and protect biodiversity respectively. Nursery and primary schools in ethnic administered areas were subsidised to reinforce teaching capacities for early childhood development amidst an influx of students previously enrolled in the SAC's basic education system. Local human rights defenders were supported in the documentation of 85 reports detailing violence and abuse and in raising awareness about human rights principles, standards and self-protection strategies. Ethnic women's organisations managed safe houses and referral services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence while also organizing campaigns to promote women's empowerment and gender equality.

While the humanitarian imperative demanded prioritising responses to basic needs, TBC also supported longer term investments in strengthening public administration capacities amongst local ethnic authorities. 45 participants (47% female) representing 10 different ethnic backgrounds were subsidised to complete a six-month long Diploma in Public Administration. Students participated both online and in person with the course focusing on the key concepts and tools in public administration, public policy and budget management.

TBC facilitated a field visit for the United Nations' Secretary General's Special Envoy on Myanmar to meet with civil society actors. This enabled an opportunity for local partners to share their perspectives about the scale, distribution and trends of violence targeted against ethnic minority communities. Border-based agencies outlined their current engagement in humanitarian action, longer-term recovery and conflict-mitigation interventions and the potential for scaling up the responses if additional funding is secured.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4: Reinforce accountability, partnership, and local ownership to ensure responsible transitions

Thailand

TBC continued to reinforce local ownership. While COVID-19 camp travel restrictions eased slightly and some in-person meetings resumed, much communication between TBC and refugees continued remotely. This regular communication facilitated flows of accurate and current data between each camp and TBC, as well as among refugee partners, ensuring staff were up-to-date and able to co-ordinate responses to problems and programme activities effectively.

Immediate return planning remained on hold, however long-term preparation continued. This focused on improving refugees' management and vocational skills capabilities so they can play proactive roles in their communities and the economies of their future homes.

TBC received three complaints through the Beneficiary Complaints and Response Mechanism (BCRM), primarily about rising food prices and food assistance allowances. All complaints were resolved within 30 days and, as previously noted, TBC provided an extra allowance on the Food Card to all households to compensate for price increases. TBC initiated deeper analysis of the value on Food Cards from a nutritional perspective, the focus being to ensure that most vulnerable households can purchase a full food basket each month in accordance with SPHERE standards. As a result, many households received increases on their cards from May. These nutritional assessments will be conducted quarterly.

Camp Information Teams disseminated a variety of information to refugees during this period. This included updates on camp activities and developments inside Myanmar as well as COVID-19 related information to refugees such as best practices in COVID-19 mitigation, updates on the pandemic and its impact on the resettlement process. The Camp Information Teams used a variety of methods to safely share this information, including socially distanced film screenings, home visits and loudspeakers.

Myanmar

TBC coordinated partnerships with over 30 civil society organisations and ethnic service providers during the first half of 2022. Apart from ongoing grant management and organisational development support, TBC also successfully mobilized resources for these community-driven responses to the complex emergency in southeastern Myanmar. The United States of America, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, European Union, Sweden and the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust (LIFT) all channelled additional funding through TBC as an intermediary for local partners. Apart from fund raising, TBC strives to mitigate the physical security risks for local partners by negotiating an increased donor appetite for fiduciary risks.

TBC's Capacity Building Team coordinated 11 organizational and technical development trainings either virtually or face-to-face during this project period. Technical topics addressed included the management of acute malnutrition, nutrition-sensitive agriculture, mobilising seed banks and community forestry management. Organisational development topics included Quickbooks accounting software and supply chain management procedures. There were few in-person trainings possible due to the challenging context in Myanmar, so most trainings were conducted virtually. Most trainings were conducted by TBC staff while some were conducted by other agencies.

Future Outlook

Following the 2021 coup in Myanmar, it is imperative that options for refugees' long term future are broadened and improve refugees access outside of the camps in safety and in dignity. As the potential for return to Myanmar has drastically diminished and likely remains unfeasible for the present, options for dignified futures require the transitional step of legal local work for refugees.

It is also likely that more conflict-displaced persons in Myanmar will seek refuge in Thailand, and ensuring these newly arriving refugees get access to humanitarian aid is imperative.

TBC will be developing its 2023-25 strategy over the second half of 2022 and this strategy will need to have the flexibility to meet the humanitarian needs of displaced people in a variety of contexts.

While TBC currently has funding for the next 12 months, securing long term donor support, amidst a backdrop of worldwide rising food prices and economic instability, combined with other competing humanitarian emergencies, will remain a challenge.

TBC FINANCIAL REVIEW January- June 2022

TBC 2022 financial overview and update as of 30 June is presented in the following table:

Financial Summary 2022			
Item in THB (Millions)	Original Budget	Updated Projections	Variance
Income	627	836	209
Expenses	-777	-830	53
Net Movement in Funds	-150	6	156
Opening Fund Balance	492	492	
Closing Fund Balance	342	498	156
Restricted Funds	249	402	153
Designated Funds	61	61	0
General fund	32	35	3
Total fund Balance	342	498	156
Balance Sheet:			
Net Fixed Assets	1	1	0
Receivable from Donors	241	397	-156
(Payable) to Suppliers	-50	-50	0
Bank Balance	150	150	0
Net Assets	342	498	156
Liquidity	100	100	

Income

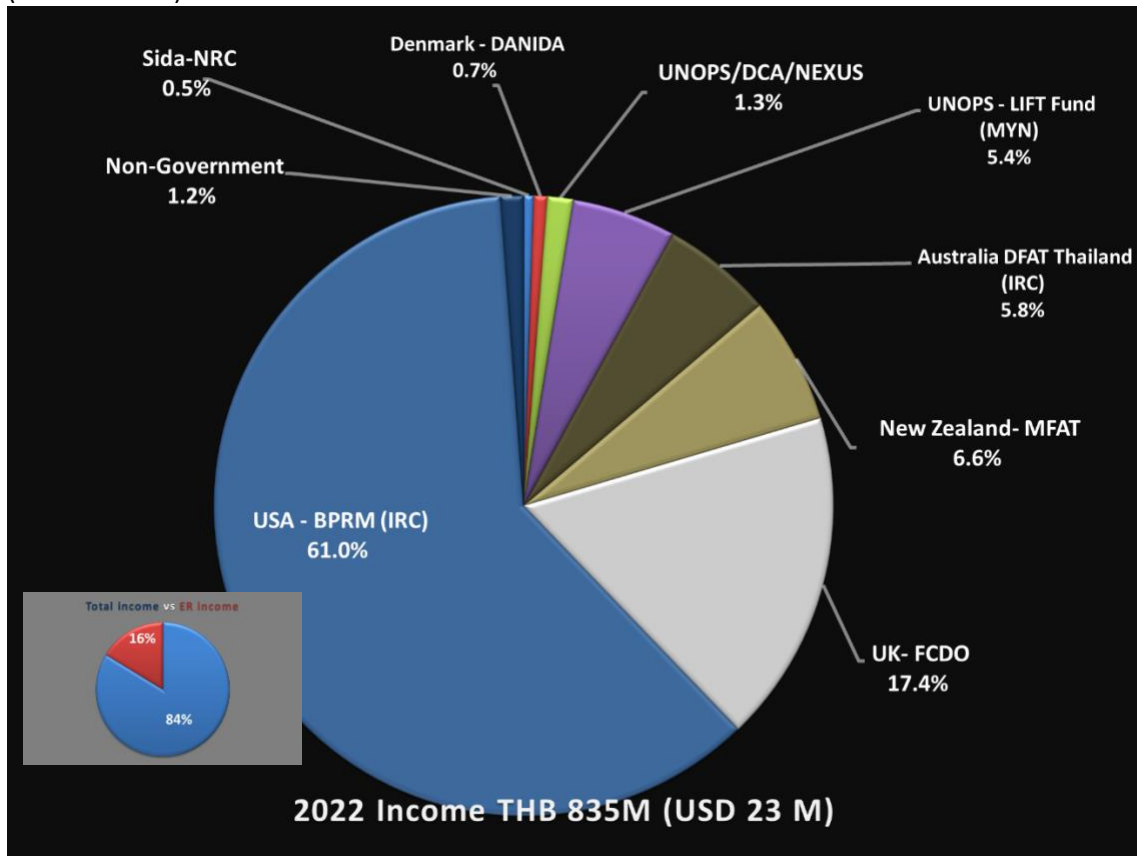
TBC started the year with income projection of THB 627 million and currently plans to end the year with THB 836 million. The 33% increase stems from two major causes: one, the largest grants accruing at higher foreign exchange rate than originally expected, and two, additional funds secured for the continued emergency response to Myanmar.

Government contributions make up for 98% of total portfolio with the USA-BPRM remaining the largest donor at 61%. BPRM primarily supports the bulk of the cash assistance for food, and the cooking fuel needs in all of the camps along the border. The current BPRM grant ends in July and we are expected to enter into a new three year agreement in August.

The UK (FCDO) government makes up for 17% of the overall portfolio and covers a broader scope of TBC programmes in both the refugee camps and development activities in Myanmar. The current grant was extended until September 2022 and we are in talks for continued support beginning October 2022. Other Government support comes from Australia (ANCP/DFAT) ending December 2022, Denmark (DANIDA), POLAND and LIFT (UNOPS).

Non-governmental support of Thailand camp programmes comes from Caritas Australia, Church World Service, and ICCO. These combined funds make up 1% of TBC portfolio. Approximately THB 162 million, or 16% of this year's annual income will support the emergency response. The main contributors to the emergency in Myanmar are USA-BPRM- (THB 51 million), MFAT-New Zealand (THB 48 million), FCDO-UK

(13 million), UNOPS-NEXUS via DCA (THB 11 million) , World Vision (THB 333,000), and Sida via NRC (THB 4 million)



Expenditure

January through June programme expenditure totalled THB 404 million (52% of original budget). The revised year-end forecast could reach as much as THB 831 million. (7% more than the original budget) The amount of expenditure relates to financial support received and how soon TBC will need to deploy the funds for the ongoing emergency; unspent balances will carry over to 2023. Travel restrictions due to COVID-19 have eased in recent months, subsequently allowing for more direct access to camps and much needed face-to-face meetings with TBC partners and constituents. This has caused an increase in related expenditure compared to what we have seen in the past three years.

Figure 3: Expenditures by Strategic Objectives:

Strategic Objectives	2022 Budget Original	2022 Actual 30 June	2022 Budget Update
1 Humanitarian Need	405,000,000	205,500,000	400,000,000
Emergency Myanmar	169,000,000	88,000,000	200,000,000
Emergency Thailand	35,000,000	10,000,000	57,000,000
2 Food Security & Nutrition	23,000,000	21,000,000	29,000,000
3 Protective Environment & Safe Futures	39,000,000	24,000,000	39,000,000
4 Accountability & Partnership	16,000,000	13,000,000	16,000,000
Organizational Costs & Governance	90,000,000	43,000,000	90,000,000
Grand Total THB	777,000,000	404,500,000	831,000,000
Grand Total USD	23,545,455	12,257,576	25,181,818

Key Notes:

- Recent global crises have affected costs in Thailand, particular those involving logistics and commodity production; thus TBC made efforts to stockpile additional charcoal to take advantage of negotiated prices and potential production slow-down
- TBC will continue to monitor the markets and costs of goods purchased by the refugees to assure that they have the buying power needed to purchase sufficient food.
- The FC Rations calculations were recalculated in March, after the Nutrition Specialist found that the rations did not represent a complete and appropriately diverse nutritional basket. As a result, some rations for groups increased.
 - In cases where the new calculation was less than previous amount, the ration remained the same.
 - Vulnerable households still receive Most Vulnerable rations and Standard households are receiving Vulnerable ration this year.
 - Impact is an annual THB 4 million increase to the FCS
 - 2022 budget projects food assistance will remain similar to the past three years, largely due to a generally static population of around 80,000.
- Myanmar programme will make up approximately 25% of TBC's overall budget compared to 11% in previous years. The main donors consist of UNOPS-LIFT, FCDO-UK, MFAT-New Zealand, UNOPS/Nexus-DCA, UNOCHA-MHF, SIDA-NRC, and World Vision.

All of the additional funding to support the emergency fall within the Humanitarian Need Objective. They cover primarily food assistance, natural disasters within the camps, and emergencies caused by the Myanmar crisis and the lingering COVID-19 pandemic.

OTHER FINANCE RELATED NEWS

In the 2021 AGM, TBC Members recognized that after several years of using the same auditing firm, it was timely to open a tender for the 2022 audit of its annual financials and Trustees Annual Report (TAR). TBC published the tender in June 2022 and will close the process by end of August after interested firms have applied.

TBC is still in the process of trying to open a bank account in the UK. Although the current banking situation has proven adequate, TBC wishes to keep footing in the UK where possible.

Financial Outlook 2023

TBC will consider the following variables as it plans the operational budget for 2023:

1. Population to remain at around 80,000 for the indefinite future.
2. Food card values and cooking fuel prices will include a 4% inflation factor and remain the largest expenditure item. It is also expected that charcoal prices could increase up to 20% in 2023, causing budget increase of THB 20 million for cooking fuel.
3. TBC will assume similar funding levels from all of its current donors to assure adequate coverage of costs to support the nine refugee camps along the border.
4. Foreign exchange rate fluctuations will continue to play a major factor in TBC's budget and management of cash flow. Since writing, the USD foreign exchange rate has rapidly strengthened by over 8% in recent weeks and the trend is looking to go higher. Conversely, the GBP has depreciated at a similar rate. The largest portion of TBC's portfolio is in USD and GBP currencies, thus this volatility will need to be carefully monitored for foreign exchange gains and losses.
5. TBC downsized to a minimum number of staff several years ago but the demands and workloads are increasing. Thus, TBC will consider increasing structural capacity in the most critical areas of the work.
6. TBC will remain nimble enough to support emergencies as funding become available. In addition to current donors, TBC in partnership with another Consortium is in discussion with USAID for potential multiyear funding.

TBC would like to thank its Donors and Members for their generous contributions and support



Livelihoods and Food Security Fund

