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## ANNOUNCEMENT: HUMAN SECURITY IN SOUTH EASTERN MYANMAR

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Bangkok / Yangon – The legacy of protracted conflict and displacement continues to threaten human security in south eastern Myanmar according to recent field research. At least 162,000 people remain internally displaced while assessments found that 17% of children in communities affected by conflict are acutely malnourished.

This research compiles estimates of internal displacement, assessments of food security, interviews with refugee returnees and analysis from local civil society organisations. The Border Consortium (TBC) has supported refugees in Thailand since 1984 and released the findings today during its annual meeting with donor governments and member organisations.

“Given that another 87,000 refugees are still spread across nine camps in Thailand, it means that one-quarter of a million people remain displaced by decades of conflict. In many cases, communities are too afraid to return because the same troops they fled from have now established outposts near their villages”, commented Sally Thompson, TBC’s Executive Director.

Interviews with returnees suggest that factors pushing refugees to leave the camps, such as the gradual withdrawal of assistance, are the most prominent reason for return to Myanmar. Obtaining citizenship cards and household registration documents to re-establish a legal identity is highlighted as key to successful reintegration. However, securing land tenure and re-establishing livelihoods appear to be the main challenges. “The peace process has not begun to address the causes of displacement”, reflected Ms Thompson.

The international community no longer prioritises humanitarian needs in south eastern Myanmar. However, indicators from surveys with over 1,000 households in conflict-affected communities and camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) suggest there are critical challenges to food security and public health.

“Field surveys have consistently found that chronic malnutrition rates are high which is consistent with poor access to agricultural land, safe drinking water and sanitary latrines. However, the extremely high rate of wasting found amongst children in conflict-affected areas is particularly concerning because it reflects recent nutritional deficiencies”, warned Ms Thompson.

Analysis from civil society organisations underscores the importance of building on local capacities in designing policy and delivering services to respond to this protracted emergency. Local civil society organisations have the trust of conflict-affected communities after providing life-saving support for decades. As Ms Thompson notes, “If we want to leave no one behind, then ethnic service providers need to be embraced rather than marginalised during this interim period between war and peace”.

“Human Security in South Eastern Myanmar” can be downloaded from

<https://www.theborderconsortium.org/media/114642/TBC-Human-Security-in-South-Eastern-Myanmar-2018.pdf>

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