

WORKING WITH DISPLACED PEOPLE

TBC STRATEGY 2023-2025





INTRODUCTION

TBC has been working with the displaced and conflict-affected people of southeastern Myanmar for almost forty years to address humanitarian needs and protection concerns of people impacted by fighting and recurrent displacement and to support rights-based and community-led approaches to peace and development.

This document outlines the current context and TBC's primary ambitions and commitments for 2023 – 2025. It details the four strategic directions that will guide programming in Thailand and southeastern Myanmar. It was developed in close consultation with the TBC board, members, staff, partners and other stakeholders.





VISION

TBC envisions a future where displaced communities can realise human rights and embrace diversity to live in safety and with dignity.

MISSION

TBC is an alliance of civil society organisations working together with displaced and conflict-affected people of southeastern Myanmar to address humanitarian needs and to support rights-based and community driven approaches in pursuit of justice, peace and development.

CORE VALUES

DIGNITY
AND RESPECT

JUSTICE
AND EQUITY

TRUST AND
INTEGRITY

MEANINGFUL
PARTICIPATION
AND LEADERSHIP

THE
BORDER
CONSORTIUM

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS (2023-25)

1. PRIORITISE THE HUMANITARIAN IMPERATIVE:

Address the humanitarian needs of displaced and conflict-affected communities, with a focus on especially vulnerable people. Provide equitable access for displaced communities to food, shelter and non-food items.

2. REINFORCE RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY:

Mitigate the longer-term impact of displacement on food security and nutrition. Enhance nutrition, environmental hygiene, climate-smart agriculture, small businesses and access to employment for displaced and conflict-affected communities.

3. PROMOTE PROTECTION AND SAFER FUTURES:

Reduce the exposure of displaced and conflict-affected communities to harm and mobilise safe and dignified pathways. Defend human rights including access to human security in Myanmar, temporary shelter and work in Thailand and resettlement to third countries.

4. STRENGTHEN LOCAL GOVERNANCE:

Diversify representation and enhance accountability in the ownership and oversight of programs and services. Responsibly and transparently manage change in collaboration with refugee and civil society partners, local authorities, donors and other stakeholders.



UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

TBC is committed to international standards for humanitarian action and refugee protection. The rights of individuals and communities are the foundation for program design, implementation, and advocacy. These commitments underpin all TBC's work and reflect TBC values of dignity and respect, justice and equity, trust and integrity, and promotion of the autonomy of local communities.

• RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

Recognising that all human beings equally have inherent value and dignity, TBC supports partners and communities' recommendations for policies, decisions, and programs to respect their Indigenous rights and perspectives to uphold and protect the rights, needs, and interests of the displaced and conflict affected people of Myanmar.

• EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Emphasising the importance of non-discrimination and inclusion of non-dominant groups for social cohesion, TBC pays particular attention to vulnerable groups including women, children, older persons, and people with disabilities. TBC has a commitment to gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) and supporting those with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE).

• ACCOUNTABILITY

Committing to quality to ensure accountability, transparency, and responsiveness to communities, donors, and consortium members.

• ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Working collaboratively to promote equitable and sustainable natural resource management which respects Indigenous land rights and practices and prioritises resilience to climate change using technological solutions. TBC is committed to minimise any negative impact that our activities have on the environment.

• DO NO HARM

Taking appropriate measures to minimise the risk of inflaming conflict or harming those TBC is trying to assist.

• PROTECTION

Prioritising the safety, dignity and rights of displaced and conflict-affected communities, including promoting durable solutions and ensuring adequate safeguarding.

• RESPONSIBILITY AND ADVOCACY

Working with partners, CSOs, international organisations and donors to advocate for the fundamental rights of displaced and conflict affected people to be respected, protected, and promoted.

CONTEXT ANALYSIS

On 1st February 2021, the Myanmar military attempted a coup to seize power from the elected government. Millions of protestors took to the streets and continue protesting and engaging in civil disobedience to this day. The military response to these protests is increasingly violent, with over 16,000 people arrested; over 5,000 people killed¹; over 30,000 houses burnt or destroyed and at least 1.1 million people displaced². In southeastern Myanmar there have been numerous attacks targeting civilians with airstrikes and heavy artillery hitting homes, schools, and medical clinics. Civil society networks estimate that there are more than 550,000 internally displaced Karen and Karenni persons alone.³

Civil society organisations (CSOs) are being routinely targeted and aid workers killed. The State Administration Council (SAC) has deliberately prevented aid reaching internally displaced persons

and others who need it. The failing economy and rapidly depreciating Kyat are having dire impacts on livelihoods and will contribute to people's further decline into poverty. These factors increase the likelihood of large-scale irregular migration on top of forced displacement of people across borders of neighbouring nations such as Thailand. By the end of 2022, tens of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) were located near the Thailand-Myanmar border at high risk of harm and deteriorating food security.⁴

TBC has assisted 500,000 civilians in southeastern Myanmar since the coup through an extensive network of local civil society organizations (CSOs) and ethnic service providers. This solidarity-based approach mitigates shocks to human security in communities subjected to military attacks. It is complementary to the approaches of other agencies who

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1 <https://aappb.org/>

2 <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-humanitarian-update-no-23-31-october-2022>

3 <https://www.facebook.com/kcsnengbur/> and <https://www.facebook.com/KPSN.karen>

4 <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-humanitarian-update-no-23-31-october-2022>





are striving to expand humanitarian access through engagement with the SAC. A spectrum of responses ranging from conventional operations to moving beyond neutrality towards humanitarian resistance⁵ is necessary to address the widespread and acute needs in Myanmar.

The Royal Thai Government (RTG) has stipulated that newly arrived refugees will be triaged at "temporary safety areas" under the purview of the Royal Thai Army (RTA). However, almost two years after the coup, newly arrived refugees are still reporting constraints in accessing temporary shelter, assistance and protection. Human rights defenders, who have fled from the fear of political persecution and sought asylum in Thailand and resettlement in third countries, have also experienced difficulties securing recognition.

In response, TBC has reinforced community response mechanisms to address immediate needs. This has been complemented by coordinated

advocacy with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international agencies for the RTG to respect the principle of non-refoulement.

In the RTG recognised camps, restrictions on movement remain broadly in place which continue to place pressure on refugees' ability to secure livelihoods. TBC increased the value offered through the food card system to mitigate lost income during the Covid-19 pandemic. This proved successful in maintaining the high level of food security and nutrition in camps and retaining refugees' agency.

TBC advocates with agencies, embassies, and the RTG to open options for refugees for resettlement and local integration. Given Thailand's continuing demand for migrant workers, the possibility of permitting legal local work opportunities for refugees as a transitional step to a future beyond camps remains a priority. TBC continues to advocate for safe and productive pathways for all refugees, including the most vulnerable and marginalised.

5 <https://odihpn.org/publication/humanitarian-resistance-its-ethical-and-operational-importance/>

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

DIRECTION 1: PRIORITISE THE HUMANITARIAN IMPERATIVE

Address the humanitarian needs of displaced and conflict-affected communities, with a focus on especially vulnerable people. Provide equitable access for displaced communities to food, shelter and non-food items.

- 1.1 Evidence-based innovation, including digital monitoring, that improves equitable access to adequate nutritious food, cooking fuel and shelter is facilitated for refugees in Thailand.
- 1.2 Market-based food-card system in the camps is monitored and regulated to ensure access to diverse, nutritious, quality food as well as sustainably-sourced charcoal at fair prices with monitoring information regularly shared with camp residents.
- 1.3 Housing materials in the camps are efficiently managed and houses dismantled when no longer needed.
- 1.4 Displaced and conflict-affected communities in southeastern Myanmar and in Thailand can quickly access food, temporary shelter and non-food items in emergencies.
- 1.5 Access to basic health care and education is reinforced for displaced and conflict-affected communities in southeastern Myanmar during emergencies.
- 1.6 Civil society preparedness for human-induced or natural disasters is strengthened through targeted and innovative disaster risk reduction (DRR) initiatives on both sides of the border.





DIRECTION 2: REINFORCE RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY

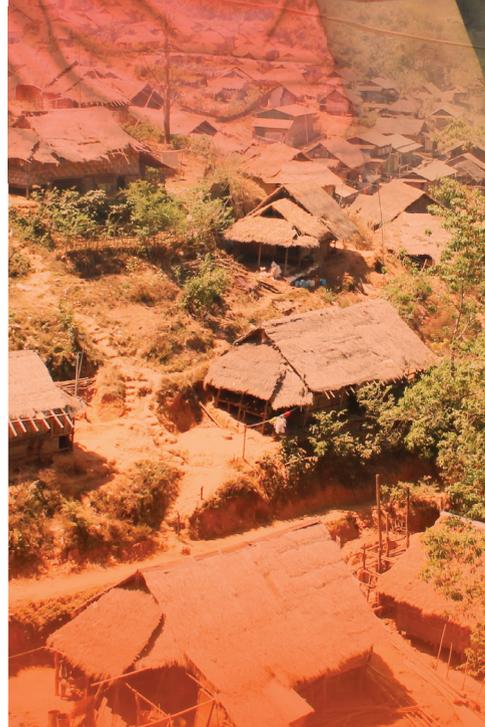
Mitigate the longer term impact of displacement on food security and nutrition. Enhance nutrition, environmental hygiene, climate-smart agriculture, small businesses and access to employment for displaced and conflict-affected communities.

- 2.1 Healthy maternal, infant and young child feeding (MIYCF) practices are adopted and sustained within displaced and conflict affected communities, with an emphasis on the first 1,000 days of life.
- 2.2 Nutritional status of displaced and conflict affected communities is monitored and supplementary feeding is prioritised for pregnant and breast-feeding women, with a focus on children under five years of age.
- 2.3 Increased adoption of climate-smart and nutrition-sensitive agricultural practices improves productivity, income, and food security.
- 2.4 Support for sustainable entrepreneurial development and economic empowerment, focusing on women, strengthens local market engagement and legal local work opportunities in Thailand.
- 2.5 Productivity of agricultural practices and sustainability of natural resource management is increased on both sides of the border while land tenure security is reinforced in southeastern Myanmar.
- 2.6 Household access to safe water and environmental hygiene is enhanced in southeastern Myanmar.

DIRECTION 3: PROMOTE PROTECTION AND SAFER FUTURES

Reduce the exposure of displaced and conflict-affected communities to harm and mobilise safe and dignified pathways. Defend human rights including access to human security in Myanmar, temporary shelter and work in Thailand and resettlement to third countries.

- 3.1 Community leaders and civil society organisations foster protective and gender sensitive environments by practising the principles of social inclusion, equity and accountable leadership.
- 3.2 Community-based protection is promoted through the documentation of violence and abuse and advocacy to promote human rights and international humanitarian law.
- 3.3 Social protection mechanisms, including psycho-social support and community rice banks, are reinforced for the most vulnerable groups.
- 3.4 Reinforce and mainstream safeguarding policies, procedures, and consistent responses to protect vulnerable groups from abuse, exploitation, and harm.
- 3.5 Community-driven responses to sexual and gender-based violence, including referral services, counselling and safe houses, are strengthened.
- 3.6 Displaced communities and civil society organisations are engaged in planning and preparedness for refugee lives beyond the camps, enabling refugees to make better informed decisions about their futures.





DIRECTION 4: STRENGTHEN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Diversify representation and enhance accountability in the ownership and oversight of programs and services. Responsibly and transparently manage change in collaboration with refugee and civil society partners, local authorities, donors and other stakeholders.

- 4.1 TBC's structure and programs are increasingly governed by local partners and adapt responsibly to changes in context, needs, and concerns of displaced and conflict-affected communities.
- 4.2 Financial, administrative and human resource management policies, procedures and capacities are enhanced within both TBC and local partners to promote accountable, transparent and sustainable institutions.
- 4.3 Technical capacities are developed, monitored and evaluated to ensure both TBC and local partners are providing responsive, effective and efficient services of high quality.
- 4.4 Feedback and beneficiary complaints mechanisms encourage broad community participation including non-dominant minority groups and help ensure TBC and partners' accountability to communities.
- 4.5 Risk mitigation is prioritised with a particular interest in minimising physical security risks for local partners by negotiating with donors for TBC to assume additional fiduciary risks.
- 4.6 Representative and accountable local governance bodies in southeastern Myanmar are promoted through investments in democratic principles, public administration capacities and building federalism from below.

MANAGING RISKS

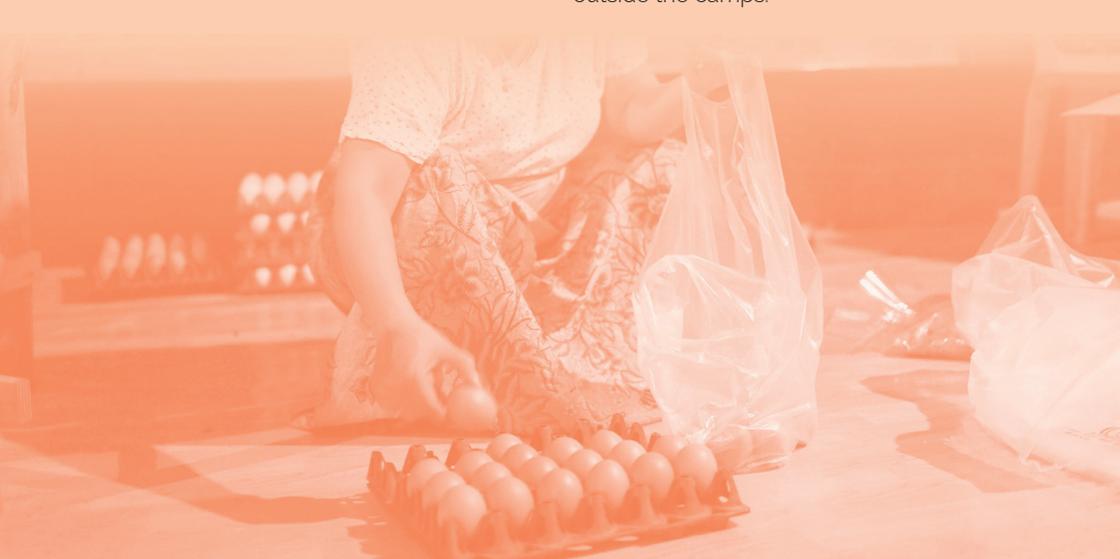
TBC's risk management strategy recognises the immense security challenges faced by TBC staff, partners, and communities in southeastern Myanmar and Thailand as a result of the attempted coup in Myanmar and the escalation of conflict. The risk management strategy is flexible and frequently reviewed as the situation evolves.

Potential risks include but are not limited to restrictions on humanitarian access and civil society space, physical security threats for local partners, fiduciary risks in the management of emergency responses, political risks of reduced RTG tolerance of the nine camps, and reduced donor engagement and financial support for TBC activities.

TBC will monitor risks to review and adapt mitigation strategies and contingency

plans to respond to these risks and will continue to adapt to changing conditions which may require negotiation when considering donor and other stakeholder expectations and requirements.

TBC will also continue to monitor risks to adjust implementation plans in the camps, along the border, and in southeastern Myanmar as needed. TBC members and leadership, alongside refugees and displaced persons, will continue to advocate with governments, donors, and other stakeholders to ensure funding to maintain an acceptable level of services in the camps. Given that conditions are not currently conducive for voluntary return and that the impact of Covid 19 continues to negatively impact refugees' opportunities for legal local work, TBC will more assertively help refugees identify alternate paths to safe and dignified lives outside the camps.



FINANCING THE STRATEGY

In Myanmar, TBC will apply for additional emergency funding to meet the increased and varied needs of conflict-affected and displaced communities in the southeast. In Thailand there remains an expectation that TBC will have donor support to meet essential humanitarian needs as long as there are refugees remaining in the camps. TBC advocates for joint responsibility among international partners and donors to share the funding of emergency humanitarian needs in Myanmar in addition to sharing the burden of funding the protracted displacement with the government of Thailand.

Three key external factors determine TBC's Budget and expenses, namely the price of commodities, the rate of arrivals to and departures from the camps, and foreign exchange rates. Through localisation and community-led programming, TBC seeks to minimise organisational costs whilst recognising that community organisations also need access to core funding. TBC has set aside funds to cover severance costs of all staff and close out of the organisation after all operations have ceased, whenever that may be.





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