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RICE RATIONS BEING CHANGED FOR REFUGEES FROM BURMA/MYANMAR IN NOVEMBER

After November, rice rations will be needs-based and community-managed in refugee camps in Thailand

18 September, 2013

Bangkok, Thailand – Rice rations are being revised in refugee camps in Thailand following reductions in funding for humanitarian food aid and a transition to needs-based and community-managed humanitarian relief. These changes are being introduced by The Border Consortium (TBC), which provides humanitarian relief and development assistance to refugees and conflict-affected people from Burma/Myanmar.

Changes are being implemented for December rations, which are distributed in late November. As of July 30, there were 129,787 people from Burma/Myanmar living in refugee camps on the border.

TBC is making a transition to providing assistance based on household need. Rations are not being reduced for any children under 18 years of age.

“In order to ensure that the community’s basic needs are met, TBC is continuing to maintain a standard monthly ration while introducing four staged levels of assistance,” said Sally Thompson, Executive Director of TBC. “People who are in need of extra assistance may receive an increase in their rations,” added Thompson.

Households will be categorised by community committees as ‘Most Vulnerable,’ ‘Vulnerable,’ ‘Standard,’ and ‘Self Reliant’. Households categorised as ‘Most Vulnerable’ will receive an increase in rations, ‘Vulnerable’ households will maintain their current level of assistance, ‘Standard’ will see a change in the rice provided for adults, and ‘Self Reliant’ households will no longer receive food assistance for adults over 18 years old. Again, there will be no reductions in rations for any children under 18 years of age, including in ‘Self Reliant’ households.

Please see the attached background information for specific changes applicable to each category.

Currently, the Standard Ration of rice is 12 kg per month for adults.* The Standard Ration is being changed to 8, 10, or 12 kg, depending on camp vulnerability/need. Residents also receive yellow split peas, vegetable oil, vitamin and mineral-fortified flour, fishpaste**, iodized salt, and charcoal, none of which are affected by these changes.

No reductions in rations are being made in the camp at Ban Mae Surin, which was devastated by a fire in March of this year. There are also no changes being made in the camp at Ban Don Yang.

“In order to give the community more experience in managing their food supply, TBC is also introducing Community-Managed Targeting,” noted Thompson. “This means that the camp community, not TBC, will determine which level of assistance each household qualifies for.”

“It is important to note that, currently, the refugee community, the Royal Thai Government, the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and UNHCR all agree that conditions do not yet exist for an organised return,” Thompson said. Ration changes are not intended to promote an early return to Burma/Myanmar.

TBC is conducting an extensive outreach and communications campaign to communicate directly with those affected by these changes.

TBC and the other NGOs working in the camps offer a variety of income, employment, and skills training programmes in the camps, which can help offset these changes.

-30-

For more information or interview requests, contact Mike Bruce, TBC Communications Specialist

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Attached: Background - Ration Changes in Refugee Camps

Background - Ration Changes in Refugee Camps

- Ration changes are being implemented in advance of December 2013 monthly rations, which are distributed the week of November 26. Changes are being driven by reductions to funding for food aid.
- Ration changes are being implemented in 7 of the 9 refugee camps on the Thailand side of the border with Burma/Myanmar. No changes are being made at the camps at Ban Mae Surin and Ban Don Yang.
- The current standard monthly food ration* for each adult/child (under 5 years of age) includes:
 - 12kg/6kg rice
 - 1kg/.5kg yellow split peas
 - .5 litres vegetable oil
 - 1kg/1kg AsiaREMIX (vitamin and mineral-fortified flour)
 - 500g/500g fishpaste** and iodized salt
- Only rice rations are being revised. No other food items are changing.
- Rations are not being reduced for any children under the age of 18. Children in households designated as “Most Vulnerable” will receive additional food rations.
- Households in the 7 camps where rations are changing will be classified in one of four categories: Most Vulnerable, Vulnerable, Standard, and Self-Reliant. The revised rice ration for adults in each category includes:
 - Most Vulnerable: 13.5 kg
 - Vulnerable: 12 kg
 - Standard: 8-10-12 kg, according to camp
 - Self-Reliant: food rations will only be provided to children under age 18.
- A very small proportion of households are expected to be designated as “Self-Reliant”. These are the few households that have substantial income and no longer require food assistance for adults.
- TBC and several other NGOs offer a variety of employment and income generating options to residents in the camps. These livelihood opportunities can help offset any changes in rations and also offer valuable skills training as part of TBC’s ongoing investment in preparing refugees for their eventual return to Burma/Myanmar.
- TBC wishes to emphasise that these changes are in no way intended to encourage refugees to return to Burma/Myanmar prematurely. TBC, The Union Government of the Republic of Myanmar, the Royal Thai Government, and TBC’s international partners all agree that conditions do not yet exist for the organised return of refugees.
- As of July 30, there were 129,787 people from Burma/Myanmar in refugee camps on the border.
- TBC provides food, shelter and capacity building to refugees from Burma/Myanmar, internally displaced persons, and conflict-affected people through community managed programmes.
- TBC is a consortium of ten International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) from nine countries. TBC’s head office is in Bangkok, with field offices in the border towns of Mae Hong Son, Mae Sariang, Mae Sot, Umphang, Kanchanaburi and a Programme Office in Yangon.

* Households identified as vulnerable currently receive additional food rations.

** Tham Hin, Site 1, and Muslim households receive an additional .2 kg of yellow split peas in lieu of fishpaste.