

Adaptation, Resilience and Transition:
Report of the Formative Evaluation of Camp Management in the Burmese
Refugee Camps in Thailand

Short Report

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Acronyms

AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BBC	Burma Border Consortium (precursor to TBBC)
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CC	Camp Committee
CCSDPT	Committee for the Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CL	Camp Leader
DHAWG	Donor Humanitarian Actors Working Group
DO	District Office
EU	European Union
KRC	Karen Refugee Committee
KnRC	Karenni Refugee Committee
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LAC	Legal Assistance Center
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MHS	Mae Hong Son
MOI	Ministry of Interior
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NSC	National Security Council
ODDP	Office for the Coordination of Displaced Persons
PAB	Provincial Admission Board
RC	Refugee Committee
RTG	Royal Thai Government
SC	Section Committee
SL	Section Leader
TBBC	Thailand Burma Border Consortium
TCC	Thai Camp Commander
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	United States

Camp Name (Acronym)

Ban Don Yang (BDY)
Ban Mae Surin (Site 2)
Ban Mai Nai Soi (Site 1)
Mae La (ML)
Mae La Oon (MLO)
Mae Ra Ma Luang (MRML)
Nu Po (NP)
Tham Hin (TH)
Umpiem Mai (UM)

1 Introduction

This report summarizes the findings of a formative evaluation of camp management in the Burmese refugee camps in Thailand. The report is divided into the following sections: background, purposes, methodology, findings, lessons and recommendations. Carried out in 2011-2012, the evaluation was commissioned jointly by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and Act for Peace (Australia).

2 Background

It appears that Myanmar has embarked on an important period of political and economic transition. As western governments begin to ease their sanctions, and investors position themselves to increase their activity in the country, most stakeholders are treating the current political aperture with both optimism and caution. Among other challenges in the years ahead, the complex process of repatriation and resettlement of Burmese refugees outside the country's borders must be planned and then managed effectively and efficiently. Geography, ethnicity, language, gender and religion are among the many sensitive factors that must be handled with care in reintegrating refugee populations into the Burmese nation. It is clear that throughout this transition period, and particularly over the next five to ten years, bolstering the qualities of adaptation and resilience need to be one of the highest priorities for success across all sectors and institutions of Myanmar society.

One adaptive and resilient system that has demonstrated its value and which could be of considerable relevance to the success of the repatriation and resettlement process is that of the camp management system in the Burmese refugee camps in Thailand. Evolving over the past 25 years, this community-based approach to camp management has involved refugees and refugee structures in the day-to-day management of the camps, sought to promote self-reliance among displaced peoples, and, in so doing, has provided its participants with experience and skills that could be helpful in Burma's longer term nation-building process.

Presently, the system manages nine camps serving 140,000 refugees belonging mostly to the Karen (primarily in seven camps) and Karenni (primarily in two camps) ethnic groups. Although the camp management system has recorded some impressive successes, it also has come under considerable stress, especially over the past five years. Beginning in 2008, a series of reviews by donors which are supporting programs in the camps, identified issues of concern and the need for changes to the system. Commissioned in 2011 by CIDA, AusAID and Act for Peace, the present evaluation sought to examine these concerns and assess the appropriateness of the camp management model in the present context.

Basic data on the Burmese refugee camps in Thailand are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Basic Data on Burmese Refugee Camps in Thailand¹

Camp Name (Acronym) ²	Population Total (at Dec. 2011)	Population Mix				Province	Refugee Committee
		Majority Ethnicity (%)	% Unregistered	% Female	% Adults		
Ban Mai Nai Soi (Site 1)	13,592	Karenni (93.4)	24.2	48.3	54.8	Mae Hong Son	Karenni
Ban Mae Surin (Site 2)	3,579	Karen (84.2)	48.5	49.2	49.7		
Mae La Oon (MLO)	13,763	Karen (99.2)	34.6	49.5	51.5		
Mae Ra Ma Luang (MRML)	15,901	Karen (99.8)	42.5	50.4	49.3	Tak	Karen
Mae La (ML)	46,431	Karen (83.9)	51.0	49.9	55.7		
Umpiem Mai (UM)	17,609	Karen (74.7)	52.1	48.6	58.3		
Nu Po (NP)	15,325	Karen (77.9)	50.7	50.1	55.7		
Ban Don Yang (BDY)	3,883	Karen (95.0)	36.2	52.3	52.5		
Tham Hin (TH)	7,074	Karen (98.5)	50.9	51.5	54.4	Kanchanaburi	Ratchaburi
Total	137,157	Karen (78.5)	45.3	49.8	54.5		

3 Purposes

The purposes of this formative evaluation were three-fold:

- 1) to facilitate a constructive dialogue among stakeholders on the issue of camp management in refugee camps situated on the Thai-Burma border;
- 2) to comprehensively and accurately describe the current camp management model that is in place; and
- 3) to identify areas where improvements and changes should be initiated.

More specifically, the terms of reference of the study directed the evaluation team to document the history and evolution of the model, to assess the effectiveness of the coverage of its responsibilities, to assess the extent to which the work of the management structures is in compliance with international standards, and to foster dialogue between partners about the model, based on documented evidence.

4 Methodology

The methodology employed by the evaluation team was focussed on utilization and emphasized stakeholder engagement. In addition to document review and key-person interviews with representatives of donor agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the Royal Thai Government (RTG), data were collected in the nine camps through a series of workshops and focus groups with a large sample of randomly selected refugees themselves, including special discussion groups for minorities, women and youth (girls and boys). An 11-member team of foreign and local researchers facilitated these discussions. Some 545 general residents of the camps were consulted, together with 308 refugee managers and representatives of community-based organizations working in the camps. In addition, the evaluation team interviewed 50 RTG officials inside and outside the camps, 57 shop owners inside and outside the camps,

¹ In this report, unless otherwise stated, the figures used as reference are the 'verified caseload' figures of TBBC appearing in Appendix A of the TBBC Programme Report – July to December 2011, p. 109

² Throughout this report we will often use the camp name acronym in lieu of the camp name as we understand that most readers are familiar with these.

and 69 individuals located near the camps: owners of estates, large farms, resorts and restaurants, as well as general community members. Overall, the evaluation team gathered data through direct interactions with approximately 1,060 informants in and around the camps under study when representatives of the UN, international NGOs and Refugee Committees are included.

Table 2 presents the number of participants who took part in the workshops and focus groups with the general refugee population. Table 3 summarizes the number of participants in the evaluation’s sessions with refugee managers and community-based organization (CBO) representatives.

Table 2 Total Number of Participants – All Refugee Sessions

	Site 1	Site 2	MLO	MRML	ML	UM	NP	BDY	TH	Total
Women	23	25	29	21	46	35	41	27	23	270
Men	41	14	39	28	43	36	33	20	21	275
Registered	47	27	51	32	36	28	41	34	30	326
Unregistered	17	12	17	17	53	43	33	13	14	219
Total	64	39	68	49	89	71	74	47	44	545
Minimum Sample Size Intended	62	46	62	62	78	62	62	46	46	526

Table 3 Total Number of Participants – Refugee Managers and CBO Representatives

	Site 1	Site 2	MLO	MRML	ML	UM	NP	BDY	TH	Total
Women	11	7	7	11	7	10	10	14	19	96
Men	24	21	26	19	30	26	25	23	18	212
Total	35	28	33	30	37	36	35	37	37	308
Registered	28	20	23	22	28	30	24	25	25	225
Unregistered	0	0	0	0	9	6	0	0	0	15
Total³	28	20	23	22	37	36	24	25	25	240

The evaluation has several limitations. In particular, with its strong focus on camp-level data collection, the evaluation team devoted relatively less time to the broader level of the coordination of humanitarian assistance across the camps. Indeed, the camp-level work proved to be more labour-intensive and complex than expected. Factors here included the geographic dispersion of the camps and the two Refugee Committees, the leadership change in a key organization, delays in certain approvals at the camp level, and the availability of local personnel fluent in Karenni as a result of delays. Nonetheless, in spite of these and other constraints, the evaluation team is confident that the findings and recommendations presented here are accurate and appropriate.

It is also important to recognize that this evaluation did not directly focus on the role and performance of a key player in camp management – the Royal Thai Government, which hold the ultimate authority and responsibility over the camps and their management. A condition for this evaluation to proceed was that the focus would be primarily on the refugee-based management structures. Where issues related to the role and performance of various Thai officials are pertinent, these have been noted. While some of the findings would seem to point to obvious recommendations to the RTG, therefore we have refrained from doing so since it was not of the purview of this report to address recommendations to the RTG.

³ Information on whether CBO representatives are registered or un-registered refugees was only collected for ML and UM. Therefore the totals of registered and un-registered refugees for the other seven camps will not add up to the number who actually participated in the sessions.

Finally, the evaluation validation process had to be curtailed due to budgetary constraints which led to replacing the validation mission that had been planned with a series of video and audio conferences with key stakeholder groups in Thailand: the DHAWG, the RCs and the OCDP/MOI. This final version of the report reflects much of the feedback received during these sessions. However, interested readers can also consult Annex 12 of the long version of the report for a summary of the discussions that took place during these validation sessions.

5 Findings

5.1 Understanding the Camp Management Model

As it has evolved in the nine camps on the Thai border, the camp management model is composed of three clusters⁴ of responsibility, each comprising a network of sub-component organizations. How the model functions overall is influenced by the capacity and performance of sub-component organizations in each of the clusters, as well as their effectiveness in coordinating within their cluster and across clusters.

A series of graphics depict the camp management model as it has evolved to this point. Figure 1 shows the three basic clusters. Figure 2 details the components of the camp clusters, Figure 3, the components of the donor cluster, and Figure 4 the components of the RTG cluster. Figure 5 presents a detailed picture of the full camp management model or eco-system.

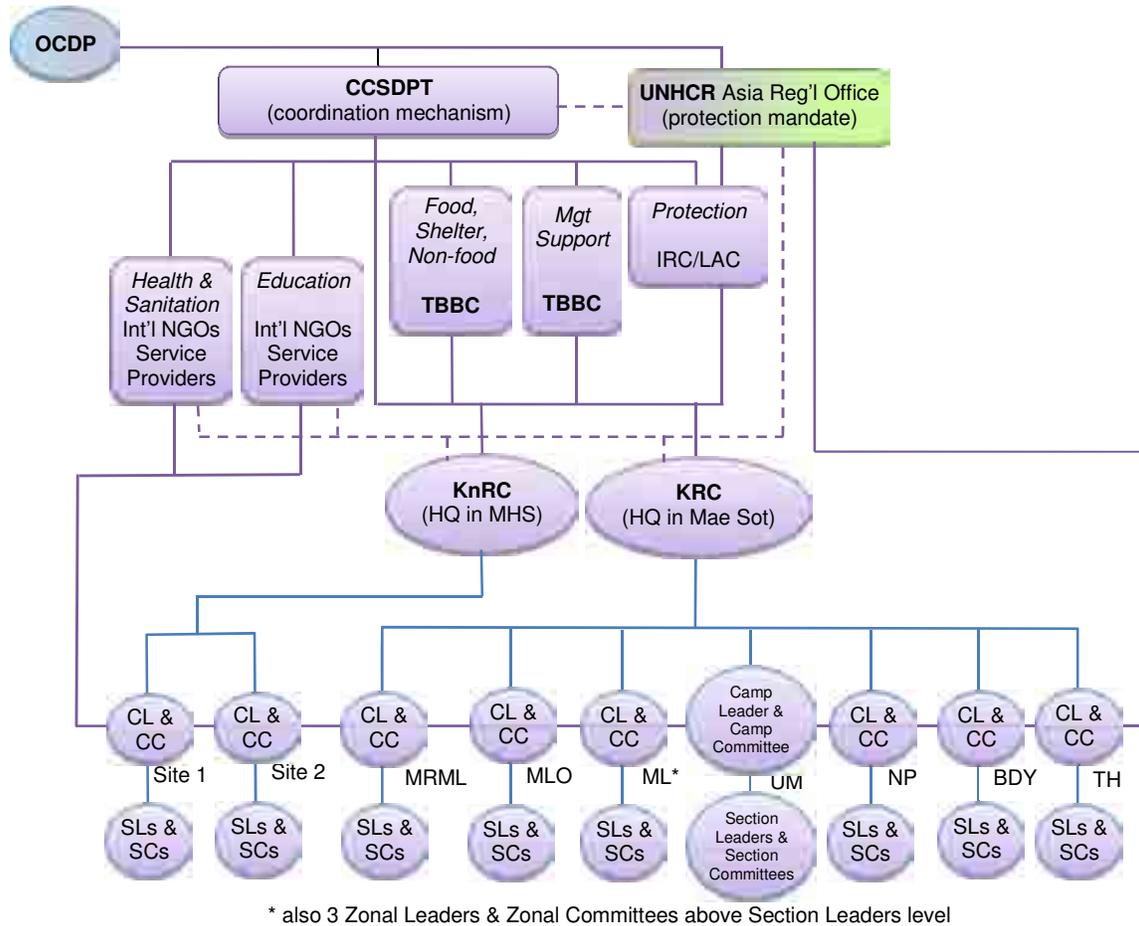
Figure 1 Camp Management Model – Three Clusters



In the “camp cluster” (our term), are the organizations concerned with the delivery of services to the camps themselves. At the core of this cluster are the two Refugee Committees (RCs) and nine Camp Committees (CCs). Under each of the CCs and reporting to them are section leaders supported by section committees. These structures are supported by international NGOs whose main programs involve health and sanitation, education; food, shelter and non-food support, as well as management support, provided by the Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC); and protection, provided by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and more recently in five of the nine camps by a special International Rescue Committee (IRC) project, the Legal Assistance Centres (LAC). The NGOs operating in the camps are coordinated by the Committee for the Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT), which also acts as the interface between these NGOs and the Royal Thai Government (RTG).

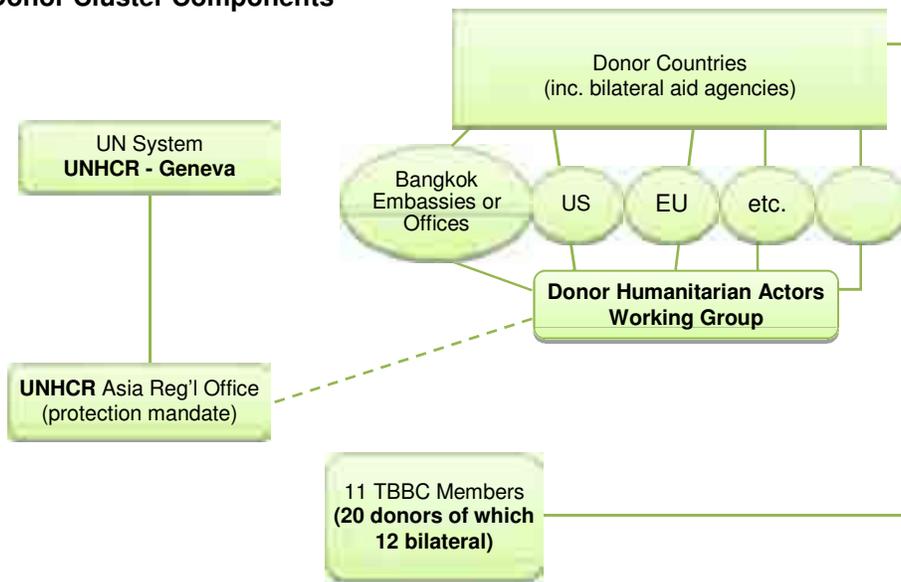
⁴ The use of the term ‘cluster’ in this instance should not be confused with the *cluster approach* introduced by the IASC in its response to the 2005 UN Humanitarian Response Review and discussed in Section 3.3.1 of the ‘long version’ of the evaluation report.

Figure 2 Camp Cluster Components



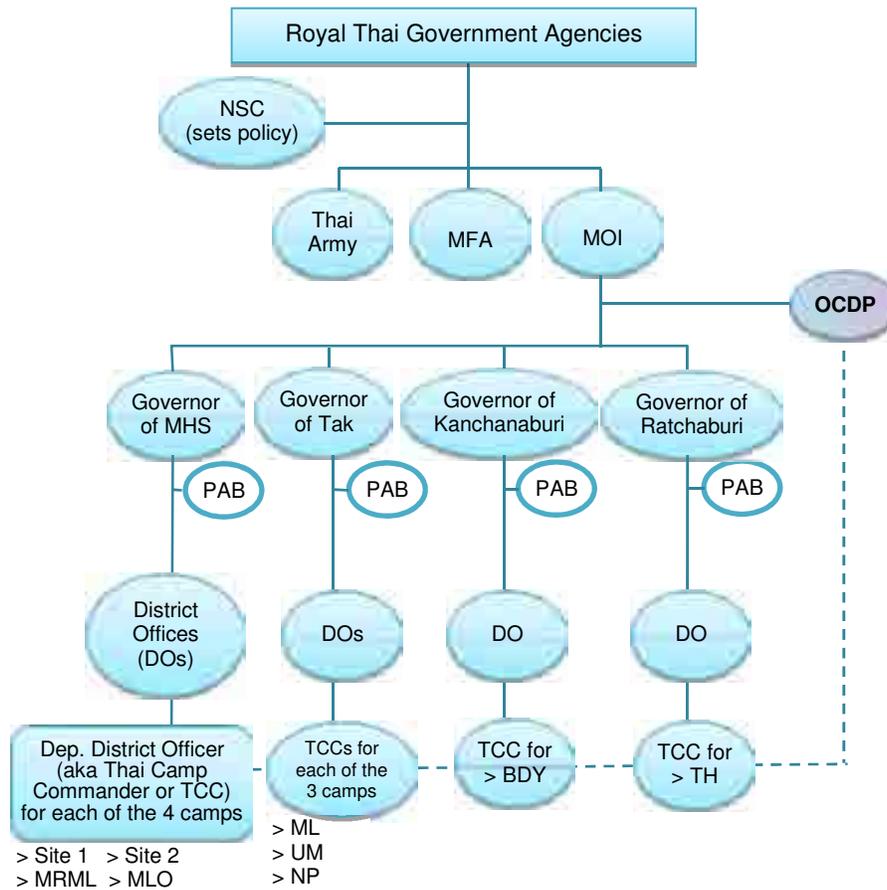
A second cluster in the system is the “donor cluster” (again, our term). Here the donor countries, often through their embassies in Bangkok, participate in the Donor Humanitarian Actors Working Group (DHAWG). The major donors include the United States and the European Union. The Working Group, in turn, coordinates and shares information with the CCSDPT and its programs, liaises with UNHCR, and also consults and coordinates with key actors in the Royal Thai Government (RTG). In contrast, however, funds flow directly from individual donor agencies through the TBBC or through NGO service providers to the camps.

Figure 3 Donor Cluster Components



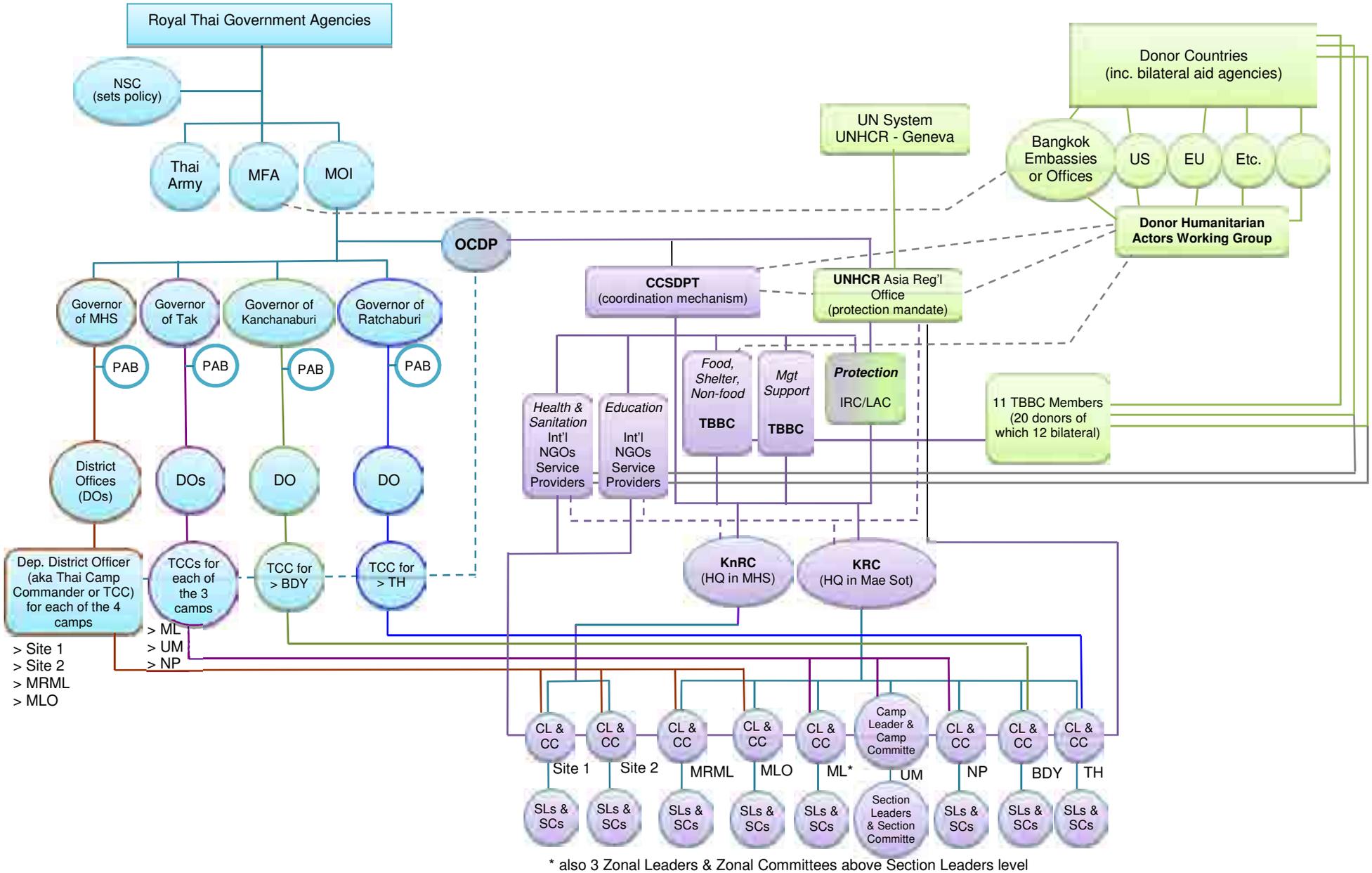
The third cluster involves the Royal Thai Government (we call it the “RTG cluster”). The main actors here include the National Security Council (NSC), the Ministry of the Interior (MOI), the Thai Army, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), and MOI’s Office for the Coordination of Displaced Persons (OCDP), which is tasked to approve CCSDPT member plans, and work with UNHCR and other bodies. Reporting to the MOI are the four Governors of the provinces in which the camps are located, with Deputy District Officers (the title for Thai Camp Commanders) reporting via their District Offices to their respective Governor’s Office. Thai Camp Commanders interact directly with and retain ultimate authority over Camp Committees and their sub-structures.

Figure 4 Royal Thai Government Cluster Components



For most of the past two decades, this set of actors has evolved in their relationships and have, collectively, constituted a kind of eco-system. That eco-system has generally functioned in an adaptive and resilient manner, responding and adjusting to new players and needs as conditions have changed, and mobilizing resources to achieve the objectives of its constituent parts. For much of its history, this eco-system has operated generally effectively because, in our view, of two main factors: first, a common vision and set of values; and, second, mutual trust. At the centre of these positive working relationships was a commitment to the welfare of the refugees and the value and practice of transparency.

Figure 5 Full Camp Management Model



5.2 Perceptions of Refugees and Their Leaders in the Camps

There is considerable consistency across camps in terms of *how refugees perceive their lives in the camps*, both in what they appreciate and the challenges they face. Furthermore, there is also considerable consistency across categories of residents of the camps (women, minorities, youth) and between categories and the general population. In fact, the evaluation found that there does not seem, for the most part, to be systematic discrimination against minorities in the camps. Nor did women register significantly different perceptions about camp life from those of men. For their part, however, youth did express a higher degree of concern for their future prospects and lack of opportunity for further schooling, and greater concern with the issue of substance abuse.

With respect to the role of *refugee management structures*, the general population is aware of the limitations of these committees to resolve many of the challenges faced in the camps. Indeed, refugees demonstrate a good sense of what their leaders are able to do and what is beyond the capacity of their leaders to change. Refugees also show quite a clear sense of the duties of their camp leaders. Furthermore, they know what they want in their leaders: residents of the camps generally seek leaders with a good level of education, the capacity to work in more than one language, strong character traits, and effective ways of relating to the population. Overall, for the most part, refugees are positive in their assessment of their management structures. While there are some expected differences in specific issues identified across camps, residents do not call into question the refugee camp management model per se.

Moreover, the refugees engaged for this evaluation display a good recollection and understanding of the *election processes* carried out in 2010. However, they observe that there are challenges to be addressed, notably giving “unregistered” refugees the right to vote. We also note the need for further improvements in women’s representation, and finding mechanisms to give voice to the concerns of key categories, especially minorities and youth.

For their part, *refugee leaders* have a clear understanding about their roles and responsibilities, which align well with the job descriptions which guide their efforts in the camp management system. Most of the major challenges they face are beyond their capacity to address solely at the camp management level. Instead, such issues must be addressed at the broader level of coordination of humanitarian assistance.

5.3 Other Key Issues in Camp Management

With regard to *protection and access to justice*, refugees and their leaders are aware of the importance of work in this area. However, there is also some resistance to these efforts. One challenge is that the judiciary must be separated from the executive in the refugee justice system. A second is the need for security personnel to be supported by innovative programs with new ways of dealing with delinquent youth, an issue that is growing in prevalence.

In terms of *camp-level coordination*, there is information sharing but a lack of consultation on program planning and priority setting in some sectors. Further, a more strategic, camp-wide look at unmet needs and gaps has only recently been a focus of monthly coordination meetings. Some international NGOs, such as those in the health sector, have not made it regular practice to consult CCs and RCs on decisions on program priorities or budget cuts.

With regard to *service delivery and monitoring*, CCs and RCs are doing well in areas where they have direct responsibility, such as keeping track of population figures, warehousing and distribution of rations, maintaining basic infrastructure, and maintaining peace and order within the camps. It is less clear, however, that the CCs and RCs have sufficient technical capacity to monitor and ensure standards in specialized sectors such as education and health.

The refugee camp management system is generally perceived as positive by other *stakeholders*, especially in light of a number of changes in recent years, including improvements in the election processes. Given the many changes in leadership positions in the camp structures as a result of the elections and third-country resettlement, external stakeholders see an ongoing role for capacity building. For its part, UNHCR has been mainly engaging with these structures around the protection agenda, and, while supportive of these structures, believes that, as part of its protection mandate, there is a continued need for vigilance about the potential interference of non-state actors on them. To support the strengthening of these structures, an area where the UNHCR could make a valuable contribution is in advocating that RTG explicitly recognize these structures as legitimate governance and management structures of the refugee population, make explicit the responsibilities and the authority that have been devolved to them, and make explicit the terms that govern their relationships with the RTG.

The evaluation also examined the *impact of the refugee camps on neighbouring Thai communities*. Such impacts, either positive or negative, are not a major challenge for the camp management structures. Issues that arise between the camps and the local Thai communities seem to be effectively mediated between the CCs and community leaders by the Thai Camp Commanders. However, there are concerns by some representatives of other RTG agencies (Forestry Department, Police and Army) that the Thai Camp Commanders and Ministry of Interior are not actually effectively applying RTG policy regarding the camps, particularly with respect to movements of refugees in and out of many of the camps. Some Thai Camp Commanders note that some policies are a challenge to implement given that the camps are not set up as fenced-in prisons with security perimeters, and that the camps should not be set up as prisons since refugees are not criminal convicts.

The evaluation also examined the question of whether the camp management system is meeting *international standards and norms* for the humanitarian assistance of refugees. On the whole, the team found that these norms and principles are understood and are guiding the refugee management structures and other agencies working with the refugees in the camp management system. There are, though, some problems identified by stakeholders. One involves the large number of unregistered refugees (more than 50% in some of the larger camps), whose lack of official status renders them more vulnerable. There is also the case where TBBC rice was provided by RCs to combatants who, in exchange, provided security around camp perimeters; this is no longer happening, but the parties involved were not transparent about it when it was. Concerns regarding the practices and transparency and accountability of some Thai Camp Commanders were also raised with the evaluators by different parties.

The provision of explicit support to camp management is relatively recent. For the first twenty years, neither the UNHCR nor any of the NGOs took (or could take) any responsibility or provide any support to camp management, but only engaged with the communities as it related to direct service provision. The task of providing such support fell to TBBC which, because of its commitment to refugee empowerment and its strong relationships of trust with the RCs, was best positioned to undertake this work. Much progress has been made since the situation was first examined in 2003: Clear management and governance structures and processes are in place and standardized across the camps. Clear job descriptions exist for all positions within these structures, and extensive training and capacity building for all concerned have been provided. And Codes of Conduct have been adopted by both RCs for all refugees occupying positions within these structures. However, challenges remain with respect to management capacities, notably due to substantial turnover of former leaders occupying key positions as a result of resettlement and periodic elections. Further, new challenges will emerge as attention turns towards the eventual repatriation of the population. Going forward, therefore, it is imperative the donor community more explicitly acknowledge that camp management is a sector in its own right that must be guided strategically and supported financially.

One of the issues at the level humanitarian assistance coordination that has hurt the performance and credibility of the camp management system is a decline in **mutual trust** that had been critical to the effectiveness and the resilience of the response over the years. TBBC's knowledge of the provision of rice by RCs to combatants (in exchange for providing security around camp perimeters) was not initially shared with the donor group, and the level of trust between the parties fell markedly, triggering concerns and a series of reviews. This mutual trust must be, and is being, rebuilt. We believe that one of the contributing factors here is the general asymmetry of knowledge between TBBC and other long-term players on the ground, and the donors, whose personnel change frequently. Among other things, the donors need to increase their independent knowledge on the ground on a permanent basis.

Notwithstanding these and other problems, the camp management eco-system, policies and practices provide a comprehensive example of community-based operations in refugee management which may be relevant beyond the case of Burma. Indeed, the evaluation found that this model aligns fully with **UNHCR's community-based approach**. As Appendix B shows, the camp management model has involved a robust and sustained application of the five principles of this approach: rights-based approach, meaningful participation, empowerment, ownership solutions and sustainability, and transparency and accountability.

6 Lessons

Three overarching lessons arising from this assessment are worth noting:

- 1) *There is deep potential for self-governance and self-management in refugee communities.* The experience of the camp management system in the refugee camps along the Thai border shows that refugee management structures can work. This is true at the level of the individual camp. And it is also true, in this experience at least, at the supra-camp level, where refugee structures established common camp mechanisms and policies, provided guidance and leadership, and negotiated with outside stakeholders, including local governments, donor agencies and service providers. Moreover, the experience reviewed here showed that refugee management structures can adapt to changing conditions and needs over time. In fact, in many ways, they function very much as resilient eco-systems. To be sure, refugee management structures also experience stress and must be regularly revised, retooled and otherwise strengthened. At its most general level, enabling refugees to exert as much control as possible over their own lives and livelihoods through self-management is an important affirmation of the essential humanity of refugee populations.
- 2) *Shared values and vision, and mutual trust, form the foundation of effective refugee camp management.* Early on in the case reviewed here, efforts were made by the major stakeholders to develop a common vision and set of values upon which the camp management model would be built. One of these values, in particular, was transparency. Furthermore, there were equally serious efforts made by the parties to establish and maintain mutual respect and trust. In combination, these factors provided the bedrock upon which many gains were made by the camp management system. Over the past five years, it is evident that, because of both internal and external dynamics, the shared values and trust among the actors had weakened. This weakened state requires key changes and improvements in the system. However, if such changes are made in a forthright and timely manner, it is very likely that the camp management system will emerge stronger and will continue to provide value to refugees, government agencies and other development actors alike.
- 3) *Camp management and governance skills and experience may promote nation-building in the repatriation effort.* This is less of a lesson and more of an expectation. The building of leadership skills in political decision-making and in public administration through the hands-on experience

of camp management could serve refugee populations and receiving communities well. Assuming that issues related to region and ethnicity can be managed in an orderly and peaceful manner as refugees return, it is likely that refugee leaders with camp management experience would be qualified to run for public office or take up appointments as government officials in their locality. In other words, camp management structures have functioned as “public administration schools.” And, for the broader refugee population on the Thai border, camp management structures have animated an experience of citizenship—narrowly defined, but quite real nonetheless. Both of these experiences—of public leadership and of citizenship—will be carried into and will hopefully strengthen Burma’s transition process.

7 Recommendations

In light of these findings and lessons, it is recommended that:

7.1 At the Camp Management Level

- 1) All NGO service providers working in the camps consult fully with refugee management structures, as the legitimate governance structures of the refugee population, in decisions related to priority setting, program planning, program implementation and budget reductions. *Lead: NGO service providers.*
- 2) All agencies working in the camps should participate in the monthly coordination meetings at the camp level and strengthen the strategic role of these meetings in identifying gaps and emerging needs and how these can be addressed in a timely fashion. *Lead: Camp Committees.*
- 3) While continuing to require that the RCs and CCs meet the highest standards regarding the protection of each and all refugees and the civilian and humanitarian character of the camps, UNHCR actively advocate with the RTG that:
 - (1) the RTG explicitly recognize the RCs and CCs as legitimate governance and management structures of the refugee (*aka* displaced persons population); and
 - (2) the RTG make clear and explicit the responsibilities and authority that it has devolved to the RCs and CCs in the day-to-day running of the camps (*aka* temporary shelter areas) and the terms that govern the relationships between these structures and RTG agencies and representatives. *Lead: UNHCR*
- 4) The RCs and CCs ensure that all adults in the camps (as determined by TBBC’s verified caseload numbers), registered or unregistered, be given the right to vote in the 2013 elections. (If the RTG continues to object to unregistered residents voting, then the camp structures should find other ways of ensuring that the voice and concerns of this constituency are heard). *Leads: Refugee Committees and Camp Committees.*
- 5) The RCs, CCs and election committees at both the camp and RC levels take the necessary measures to ensure that the current minimum quota of 33% women on camp management structures is met and, preferably, surpassed. This includes measures to offset, minimize or eliminate deterrents to women’s participation (e.g., long hours away from home).⁵ *Leads: Refugee Committees and Camp Committees.*
- 6) The RCs and CCs institute mechanisms, including direct minority representation or minority advisory bodies, to ensure that the voices of ethnic and religious minorities are heard and that their special needs are given due consideration. *Leads: Refugee Committees and Camp Committees.*

⁵ Recommendations 5, 6 and 7 focus on the formal refugee management structures and do not explicitly speak of the role of CBOs. The evaluation team recognizes that there are a number of CBOs currently active in the camps and that, as civil society organizations of the refugee population, they play an important role in the provision of certain services, allow refugees to organize and build capacity and leadership in certain areas and, within democratic settings, often play an important role as critiques and watch-dogs of formal management and governance structures. The current CBOs in the camps are important resources and structures that the CCs and RCs should draw on, where appropriate, in responding to these recommendations.

- 7) The RCs and CCs should put in place mechanisms (e.g., a camp public forum) for consulting youth about their ideas and concerns, encouraging young people to participate in activities that would benefit youth and the community as a whole. *Leads: Refugee Committees and Camp Committees.*
- 8) UNHCR, RTG and IRC/LAC, in collaboration with the RCs, i) support a clearer identification and delineation of the roles and responsibilities of the various parties with respect to protection and access to justice; and ii) strengthen the capacity of the camp justice system and camp security in their complementary roles of maintaining peace, order and the rule of law and dealing with petty crimes and infractions of camp rules.
Furthermore, that these parties endeavour to find the necessary resources to expand these 'protection and access to justice' activities to all nine camps from the current five.
Leads: UNHCR, RTG and IRC/LAC.
- 9) UNHCR, RTG and IRC/LAC continue their support of the RCs to revise and roll out an updated set of camp rules and regulations as soon as possible, and ensure that the roll-out includes an effective process of public education of the population in the camps about the nature and purpose of these rules and regulations and how they must be consistent with and remain subservient to overarching Thai law. *Leads: UNHCR, RTG and IRC/LAC.*

7.2 At the Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Level

- 10) In the context of the transition process beginning in Myanmar, and the associated priority of refugee repatriation, the Donor Humanitarian Actors Working Group (DHAWG) invest in a facilitation process that would identify and then rectify any dysfunctions in the workings of the complex of agencies operating at this level. *Lead: DHAWG and lead donor agency.*
- 11) The effectiveness and efficiency of the DHAWG itself be enhanced through the establishment of a small secretariat that would provide the donor community with ongoing support, coordination, continuity, timely information and independent analysis. *Lead: DHAWG and lead donor agency.*
- 12) The Refugee Committees be recognized as the legitimate representatives of refugees in the nine camps and be formally involved in the planning and priority setting processes of the DHAWG. *Lead: DHAWG Chair.*
- 13) DHAWG formally endorse the leadership role played by TBBC with respect to supporting and strengthening the refugee management structures, and ensure that adequate financial resources are earmarked for the capacity building and general operations of these structures and that an appropriate agency is engaged to provide oversight of the camp management dimension of the humanitarian assistance. *Lead: DHAWG and lead donor agency.*
- 14) UNHCR be requested by the DHAWG to take on a leadership role on behalf of the donor community in developing a coordinated approach in preparation for the repatriation of Burmese refugees. *Leads: DHAWG and UNHCR.*
- 15) In the context of transition planning for the repatriation of refugees, DHAWG commission a more detailed strategic analysis of ways and means in which the camp management model, and in particular, its experience, lessons, tools and capacities can make an optimum contribution to Burma's nation-building efforts over the next five to ten years. *Lead: DHAWG and lead donor agency.*

We propose that the *Committee for the Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand* take responsibility for animating and tracking action related to the nine recommendations at the camp management level. We further propose that the *DHAWG* as a whole take responsibility for tracking action related to the six recommendations at the humanitarian assistance coordination level and that it identify within its membership an agency or agencies to take the lead for each of the recommendations where such is not identified.

8 Conclusion

The evaluation found that the camp management system has generally worked well and is a valuable model of participation and administration of refugee affairs. Its structures are generally regarded as legitimate and effective by the refugee population. But the system is under stress and steps must be taken to strengthen it at both the camp level and the broader coordination level, to strengthen the system and improve the environment within which it operates. As a tool for the well-being and governance of the 140,000 refugees in the camps along the Thai border, the camp management system is worthy of further investment and improvement. It is also likely to prove to be a valuable touchstone for the nation-building efforts, including the repatriation process, by the people and institutions of Burma in the years ahead.

Appendix A: Timeline

- 1984 Nearly 10,000 Karen farmers and traders and some families of combatants enter Thailand to flee the fighting
- CCSDPT and OCDP, set up to deal with Indochinese refugees in Thailand, become involved with Burmese refugees
- 1985 Further offensives by the Burmese military send thousands more refugees fleeing to Thailand
- Burma Border Consortium (BBC, precursor to TBBC) is established, initially to provide rice to refugees; partnerships and trust are the basis of operations; refugee leaders at camp level play key role
- 1994 First evaluation of BBC program recommends more staff and formal monitoring activities
- 1995 Burmese refugee numbers reach 92,000
- To improve security from cross-border attacks, RTG consolidates refugee settlements into nine major “temporary shelter areas” or camps
- 1998 RTG invites UNHCR to play a role in line with its protection mandate
- 2000 BBC introduces competitive tendering and professional quality-control standards on its purchases, plus methodological monitoring, while trying not to undermine refugee structures
- 2003 BBC and RCs undertake detailed review of camp management practices
- 2005 At the international level, the UN launches Humanitarian Response Review of global system
- Changes instituted in camp management model: TBBC provides monthly supplies for 132,000 refugees in all nine camps and financial support for staff stipends for RCs and CCs, plus other costs; in exchange, CCs agree to no longer sell TBBC supplies or tax residents and to revise and use more accurate stock reporting and population figures
- In collaboration with RCs, TBBC works to create greater uniformity among committees and camps, changes to election procedures, and codes of conduct for leaders and structures
- 2006 Large numbers of new arrivals begins and continues for the next five years, resulting in a large number of unregistered camp residents
- Resettlement to third countries by current camp refugees also increases and continues for the next five years
- 2008 Nordic Refugee Council publishes Camp Management Toolkit that sets out roles and responsibilities for international, national and camp-level stakeholders
- 2010 Most recent elections of camp leaders and committee members
- 2011 MOI publishes new guidelines for service providers to displaced persons in temporary shelters

Appendix B: UNHCR’s Community Based Approach: Application of Five Guiding Principles

Guiding principle ⁶	How it is applied in the current refugee-based camp management model
<p>Rights-based Approach</p> <p>A rights-based approach is founded on the principles of <i>participation</i> and <i>empowering individuals and communities</i> to promote change and enable them to exercise their rights and comply with their duties.</p> <p>It identifies rights-holders (accounting for diversity), as opposed to beneficiaries, and seeks to strengthen their capacities to make claims; and identifies duty-bearers and seeks to strengthen their capacities to satisfy those claims.</p>	<p>Adopting a refugee-based camp management model was in part driven by a belief that the refugee camps, when they were initially constituted, involved an amalgam of natural, self-governing communities and that to the extent possible these self-governing processes should be retained within the camps that were being set up, rather than transforming the camp populations into passive beneficiaries.</p> <p>In recent years, additional efforts have been undertaken to ensure that the management structures are representative of their population and that leaders are chosen democratically.</p> <p>The arrival of large number of new refugees since 2007 is a challenge to this principle, since new arrivals, for the most part, do not currently have the right to vote, and do not have the same degree of protection as registered refugees.</p>
<p>Meaningful Participation (based on age, gender & diversity analysis)</p> <p>The full and equal involvement of all members of the community in decision-making processes and activities that affect their lives.</p> <p>Meaningful participation will often require special efforts to ensure that that those traditionally marginalized (e.g., women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities and minority groups) are given support and specific opportunities to contribute.</p>	<p>Considerable investment has been made by the management structures, TBBC and service providing NGOs into needs assessments in order to ensure that the diversity of the population and its needs are well understood and responded to.</p> <p>A number of refugee-run CBOs that focus on the needs of special groups (women, youth, minorities, etc.) have also emerged and are supported in their work by the camp management structures. Places of congregation and worship for different faith groups have also been allowed to flourish.</p> <p>Registered refugees (but not, currently, non-registered) chose the leaders and people that occupy camp management positions.</p> <p>Allocation of resources to the population is, for the most part, done in a non-discriminatory manner. Individual refugees have access to their leaders, and there are also opportunities for information/consultation sessions between leaders and the community (mostly at the section level).</p>
<p>Empowerment</p> <p>The process by which individuals in the community analyze their situation, enhance their knowledge and resources, strengthen their capacity to claim their rights, and take action to achieve their goals.</p>	<p>As well as accessing services and resources within the camp, many refugees also venture outside the camps to gain access to additional resources and/or income to complement what is available within the camp. While it is difficult to put an accurate figure on the true size of the camp economy, it clearly involves considerable resources beyond what is provided directly by the international donor community and the RTG.</p> <p>The Muslim minority has played a major role in the market economy of the three Tak camps and has generated considerable wealth in so doing. This has made it easier to ensure that their particular needs as a religious minority are met. The challenges faced by other minority groups are more significant.</p>

⁶ Information in this column is drawn from Chapter 2 – The context, concepts and guiding principles (pp. 11-26), *A Community-based Approach in UNHCR Operations*, UNHCR, January 2008 (<http://www.unhcr.org/47ed0e212.html>)

Guiding principle ⁶	How it is applied in the current refugee-based camp management model
<p>Ownership, Solutions and Sustainability</p> <p>Ownership is achieved when persons of concern assume full responsibility for the continuation of the work and manage the activities and services they consider priorities. (Support and assistance from external actors might still be required, however, because of an absence of resources or opportunities.)</p> <p>Sustainability involves building on the capacities and skills of community members to manage representative and fair structures that can respond to both immediate and long-term protection risks and needs, and to develop solutions while upholding individual rights.</p>	<p>Through the camp management structures, refugees play an important role in ensuring that, within the camps, they live in peace and security in a clean and orderly place. While their basic livelihood needs (food, shelter, clothing) are being met through contributions from international donors, the management structure ensures that these contributions are, for the most part, provided to all refugees in a fair and non-discriminatory fashion regardless of sex, ethnic background, religious affiliation or socio-economic status.</p> <p>Access to land where refugees can grow some of their own food (or produce shelter materials) is limited. And access to alternate sources of income outside the camps is also very limited, and for the most part ‘illegal’ (against official RTG policy).</p> <p>The camp management structures only have limited input in how budgets are allocated and priorities set re the provision of health care to the population. While the provision of health care involves the mastery of considerable technical knowledge this should not preclude the involvement of the refugee population in consideration of various options and the identification of priorities.</p>
<p>Transparency & Accountability</p> <p><u>Transparency</u> refers to the provision of accessible & timely information to stakeholders and the opening up of organizational procedures, structures and processes to their assessment.</p> <p><u>Accountability</u> is the process through which an organization makes a commitment to respond to and balance the needs of different stakeholders in its decision-making processes and activities, and delivers against this commitment.</p>	<p>The efforts to clarify, standardize across camps, and make explicit the management structures, job descriptions and election processes have contributed to greater transparency and accountability.</p> <p>The RCs, the management structures within the camps (leaders and committees at different levels) and the TBBC have strived to ensure that the refugee population is provided with timely information. In some camps this have been quite challenging given the many different languages spoken by the refugee population.</p> <p>Regular meetings (on a monthly basis at the camp level) are held to facilitate the sharing of information and the coordination of activities between various stakeholders (e.g., between the CC and the TCC (Thai Camp Commander), between the CC and the NGOs and CBOs working in the camp). The recent introduction of community forums as a way of providing the population with opportunity to speak directly to their leaders has also been well received and proven to be an effective means for feedback.</p> <p>At the intra-camp level, the RCs hold regular meetings of all the camps under their responsibility and an RC rep will visit each camp on a regular basis.</p> <p>In terms of service provision, there are regular meetings of the CCSDPT standing committees which bring together the various service providers in a range of fields (health, education, etc.). At an overall, strategic level, there are also various encounters that take place between the RTG, the UNHCR, the donor community, and the CCSDPT.</p>