

## **Contents of the TBBC evaluation report – April 2007**

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### ***'Healthy but Chained'***

The photo at the cover page was taken at a warehouse in Mae La refugee camp. It said a lot to me about the present situation of the people in the camps. The girl was dressed nicely and looked healthy but she wasn't happy and all the time that I observed her she looked sad and with empty eyes. She is one of the chained people living a very difficult life as refugee close to the border of her motherland Burma. The chain she was holding in her hand made this picture even more impressive to me. The chain is surrounding her and keeps her away from blossoming up.

Mae La, April 17<sup>th</sup> 2007 Aad van der Meer



## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### EVALUATION

#### THAILAND BURMA BORDER CONSORTIUM PROGRAM

NCCA/CWS has had an established partnership with the Thailand Burma Border Consortium since 1984 and has regularly supported the Burmese Refugee program from that time. During that time CWS staff has been involved in participating in Advisory Group Meetings and Donors' Meetings as well as visiting camp sites during visits for those meetings. NCCA/CWS is now a member of the Consortium and Board, with CWS holding the position of Secretary on the Board.

CWS has received funding from the Australian Government through the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) for a number of years. Therefore, as a condition of the current 3 year funding period an evaluation is required for a final acquittal to AusAID for that period.

It is timely for the initiation of an external evaluation by CWS in the light of changes occurring within the organization to assess our development effectiveness and the need for current partner reviews.

#### **1. In-depth Evaluation of the Thailand Burma Border Refugee Program**

##### ***1.1. History and Development***

In February 6 1984 the Ministry of Interior (MOI) invited NGOs working with Indochinese refugees in Thailand to provide emergency assistance to around 9,000 Karen refugees who sought refuge in Tak Province. The situation was expected to be temporary and MOI stressed the need to restrict aid to essential levels only. Nothing was to be done to encourage refugees to come to Thailand to stay longer than necessary.

After assessing the border situation in March 1984 the agency representatives agreed to work together to meet the small need at that time and the Consortium of Christian Agencies (CCA) was formed. The CCA became the main supplier of food as refugees were unable to return to Burma during that rainy season. 1991 saw the change of name to the Burmese Border Consortium (BBC) to become more inclusive, accessing a broader range of donors. BBC adopted a more formal organizational structure with five recognised member agencies in 1996, but still had no legal identity other than through the legitimacy of its individual members. The name changed again in 2004 to the Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC) when it was incorporated in London with ten member agencies.

##### ***1.2. Background of the program***

- 1984 The Consortium of Christian Agencies (CCA) was formed to provide basic aid to restricted levels only.
- 1989 NGOs were approached by the Karenni Refugee Committee to assist Karenni refugees who had fled fighting in Karenni state to Mae Hong Son province.
- 1990 Mon and Karen refugees also began to arrive in Kanchanaburi province from Mon state. Another relief program was set up at the request of the Mon National Relief Committee.
- 1991 the agencies were given written approval to provide assistance under the authority of the Ministry of Interior and in accordance with their guidelines which confirmed earlier informal understandings, limiting assistance to food clothing and medicine, restricting agency staff to the minimum necessary and requiring monthly requests to be submitted through the Committee for Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT). Three NGOs provided assistance under this agreement. The Burmese Border Consortium focused on food and relief item supplies, providing around 95% of all of these items.
- 1992 A number of other agencies were providing services on the border in coordination with approved programs, with the tacit approval of the MOI.
- 1994 May MOI confirmed that sanitation and education services would be permitted and also announced that all agencies should re-submit their programs for formal approval by CCSDPT  
An NGO/MOI Burma working Group was set up and meetings were held to establish new operational procedures.
- 1997 With the Indochinese refugee caseload almost gone, CCSDPT was now principally engaged with Burmese refugees and was restructured for 1997. Refugees arrived in sensitive areas of Kanchanaburi, Ratchaburi and Prachuap Khiri Khan provinces. Requests for supplies had to be made monthly to the MOI and also the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division of the Royal Thai 1st Army which could override MOI approval and on occasion exercised this prerogative.
- 1998/9 In the first half of 1998 the Royal Thai Government decided to give UNHCR an operational role on the Burmese border for the first time. UNHCR established a presence on the border and became fully operational in the early part of 1999.
- 2004 TBBC was incorporated in the UK on 11<sup>th</sup> October, 2004 with Charity Status granted in May 2005.

## **2. Objectives of the Burmese Refugee Program as in original proposal to AusAID**

- a. Provide food and relief assistance to Burmese refugees on the Thai border in cooperation with the Royal Thai Government and in accordance with the regulations of the Ministry of Interior (MOI)
- b. Provide basic commodities to meet the basic living needs of refugees on the border including food items, cooking fuel, mosquito nets, blankets, housing materials and basic education needs.
- c. Coordinate activities with agencies supplying medical and educational assistance through the Committee for Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT)
- d. Respond to emergencies as they occur, extending relief to new refugees arriving in the camps.

### **3. Evaluation Objectives:**

To ascertain

1. the effectiveness of the program
2. the risks associated with the program
3. the achievements, Impact and Progress on Strategic Outcomes:
  - 3.1. Adequate provision of all basic needs for camp populations?
  - 3.2. The impact of emergency food items on the health of the beneficiary families
  - 3.3. The impact of the Asia Mix on children and infants' health
  - 3.4. Why is assistance for shelter repair or replacement important?
  - 3.5. Camp Committees – their composition and management
  - 3.6. TBC governance and management
  - 3.7. The role of the TBBC Board and member organizations in governance and advocacy
  - 3.8. NCCA/CWS value adding to the program?
  - 3.9. Impact of resettlement on camp populations, depletion of skills in camps, adjustment in host countries, etc.
4. Identify possible new directions and focus for TBBC and donors

### **4. SWOT Analysis of the Program**

What are the  
Strengths  
Weaknesses  
Opportunities  
Threats

### **5. Methodology**

- a. Interviews with all stakeholders
  - i. TBBC Staff
  - ii. Camp Committees and Authorities
  - iii. Beneficiaries
  - iv. In-country donors
  - v. Committee for Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT)
  - vi. UNHCR and other international bodies (if applicable)
- b. Perusal of TBBC documentation
- c. Possible survey

### **6. Outcomes and Reporting**

- i. Evaluation report to NCCA/CWS, TBBC Executives and Board and AusAID
- ii. Lessons learnt
- iii. Recommendations for future support and funding of program

## **Evaluation report**

**Project name:** Burmese Refugee Relief Program

**Country/Region/Specific Location:** Thailand - Thai/Burma border

**Project period:** 2004-2007

**Implementing organisation:** Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC)

**Australian NGO:** National Council of Churches in Australia / Christian World Service

**Backdonor:** AusAid

**Evaluator:** Mr. Aad van der Meer, Meer Mens consultancy - The Netherlands

## **Introduction**

Burma is ruled by one of the most brutal military dictatorships in the world; a dictatorship charged by the United Nations with a 'crime against humanity' for its systematic abuses of human rights, and condemned internationally for refusing to transfer power to the legally elected Government of the country- the party led by Nobel Peace Laureate - Aung San Suu Kyi.

Aung San Suu Kyi is now serving her third term of house arrest. She was arrested on May 30<sup>th</sup> 2003, after the regimes militia attacked her convoy and killed up to 100 of her supporters.

The inhuman and repressive acts of the Burmese regime caused (and are still causing) a deep human tragedy of uprooting of millions of ethnic people. At the end of 2006 about 3.000.000 Burmese People had left their towns, villages or homesteads in search for safer places.

This number consist of the following groups of people: (source TBBC)

- Eastern Burma – Internally Displaced Persons (IDP's) 500.000
- Thailand – Refugees in camps 154.000
- Refugees outside camps 200.000
- Migrant workers 2.000.000

This project and this report are about the refugees in the camps, since 1984 already (on invitation of the Ministry of Interior of Thailand) provided with emergency assistance by the 'Thailand Burma Border Refugee Program'.

TBBC emerged out of a process that started in 1984 with the Consortium of Christian Agencies, with an important name change in 1991 into 'Burmese Border Consortium', and was finally incorporated in 2004 in London with ten member agencies. At present TBBC has 40 resource partners (donors) and a total annual budget of US\$ 33.000.000,-. TBBC is responsible for food, shelter and non-food items and is playing a crucial coordinating role.

As part of the agreement with AusAid an evaluation at the end of this phase of this programme support was foreseen.

Therefore, on behalf of NCCA/CWS an evaluation was done on the basis of the attached Terms of Reference. The outcome,

conclusions and recommendations of that study-visit can be found in this report.

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## **Summarizing conclusion of the TBBC evaluation – April 2007**

On behalf of the National Council of Churches / Christian World Service in Australia I brought an evaluative visit to the programme of the Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC) and reported about that in Australia immediately afterwards.

TBBC is a consortium of currently ten NGO's from eight countries working to provide food, shelter, non food items and capacity-building support to Burmese refugees and displaced persons living in refugee camps in Thailand. It also engages in research into the root causes of displacement and refugee outflows and lobbies on various strategic levels.

The organisation receives support from 40 resource partners (donors) up to a yearly budget level of presently US\$ 33 million.

I brought 2 good visits to TBBC's head-office in Bangkok and visits to the Mae Sot field-office and the refugee camps in Mae La en Umpiem Mai.

My general conclusion about the quality of the work and programmes of the organisation is very positive.

Based on what I have read in the many documents provided, the visits I made, the discussions I had with the TBBC staff, beneficiaries, camp-committees and staff of UNHCR and other resource partners I can say the TBBC programme is an excellent programme. The programme is being managed and implemented in a very efficient and professional way. The staff is committed and professional, monitoring and logistical systems are excellent and the programmes are highly relevant.

This very positive general assessment can be the basis and fertile soil for possible additions or changes to the programmes on the basis of a number of observations, conclusions and 9 concrete recommendations formulated by me and presented via this report.

The red line in these recommendations is that, due to various reasons, the pressure on the programme will increase in the near future.

Resettlement, intake of new refugees, lack of hope for people after many years of being a refugee will have their impact on the atmosphere, relationships and peaceful living together in the camps. The recommendations touch that new dimension in the camps and their relationship with the work of TBBC and the other active NGO's at the border.

It will ask more from the TBBC organisation and staff and it would be good to prepare the organisation for this new phase.

I warmly recommend this report for reading, reflection and (re)action.

## **Observations, conclusions and recommendations of the TBBC evaluation done by Aad van der Meer for NCCA/CWS**

### **1. The effectiveness of the programme**

In general I can say that TBBC implements a refugee relief and service programme (focussing on more than 160.000 ethnic Burmese refugees in camps at the border between Burma and Thailand) in a very efficient, professional and effective way.

The staff is committed and professional, monitoring systems and logistical systems are excellent, accountability is on a high level, lines are short, programmes are relevant, and internally TBBC has attention for staff training and motivation in this difficult type of work. So all the elements of Organisational Sustainability are being taken care of.

Where there is a full positive assessment of the effectiveness of the TBBC programme remarks have to be made in relation to

### **2. The risks associated with the programme**

It is unavoidable that in a situation like in the TBBC work risks are part of the organisation's day to day reality. Clear risks that can be mentioned are:

\* *Long term Dependency of aid* – 160.000 refugees from Burma ( of which a high percentage never saw Burma in their life) are - some for decades, some for shorter periods but for many already their whole life long – living in the refugee camps in Thailand alongside the border with Burma. They live in a situation without the right to develop themselves, to find decent jobs or to go around freely.

The longer the period in the camps lasts for them the more difficult it is to keep up the spirit and moral, to keep the hope alive, to remain alert and active. Waiting for rations year in year out, sitting idle for a great part of the day or being exploited on nearby farms as cheap labourers is not a stimulating situation.

It can make people passive and even lead to identity problems and mental problems with domestic violence and other tensions as immediate results.

\* *Liquidity problems* – on organisational level TBBC with such a huge amount of monthly purchases via tenders is structurally facing problems in having sufficient financial capacity to pay all the bills on time regularly. This phenomena endangers the continuity of deliveries, undermines the corporate image of TBBC as a reliable and solid partner, leads to unnecessary tensions and to a weakening of the position of TBBC in case of delivery problems.

Resource partners should know their responsibility on this point and be aware that funds has to be made available timely in sufficient quarterly or half yearly instalments. Especially government authorities often have their own strict rules on this point. Rules that doesn't seem to tally with the relief nature of the work. This is a well known and already old phenomena in relief work and anno 2007 the time is ripe for change and a subsequent fundamental reduction of the risks related to it.

\* *Pressure on the staff* – with TBBC's relatively small staff the danger of over asking of people is always there. Adequate staffing numbers in relation to the tasks on TBBC's shoulders should be appointed. Especially now in a period when the nature of the programme (due to - after so many years without political progress - increasing mental problems and effects of resettlement) will change during the coming years.

The monitoring of the programme, the day to day work, the meetings, the welcome but many visitors and the new developments ask a lot from the people in the field. In the long run this can endanger the motivation level, the personal development and sharpness of staff members.

\* *The risk of forgetting Burma as an international priority* – After more than 50 years of civil war and military repression in Burma the erosion of the international attention for this long lasting conflict is a constant threat.

Fortunately the recent developments on this field are promising since the UN's Security Council in September 2006 decided to put the situation in Burma on their permanent agenda.

\* *The dark side of resettlement (see 3.9)* – Apart from clear individual positive effects of resettlement to host countries there are many negative points to be mentioned about it (especially related to the quality and life in the camps).

Listed here under 'risks' and worked out under 3.9

\* *The upcoming phenomena of 'haves' and 'have nots' in the camps* – Due to recent changed policy of the Thailand government not to register any

new refugee in the camps TBBC is not allowed to give rations to a number of people (at the moment about four hundred but the number is increasing). Out of solidarity people in the camps are sharing food with the most vulnerable among this group but here we see a potential risk. So far everyone had the same rights and everyone in the camps was in the same situation and on (more or less) the same level of level of vulnerability. On a beginning scale there are different levels now and this new situation can definitely lead to problems and has to be addressed with priority.

So far the present risks as clearly felt by me. Of course there are many more risks TBBC will face on a daily basis. Work like this is complicated and per definition not easy and full of unexpected, and often unwanted, developments.

TBBC is coping with this situation in an admirable way.

I am also confident they will try to formulate serious answers to the risks as formulated under this chapter 2.

### **3. Achievements, impact and progress on strategic outcomes**

#### **- 3.1 Adequate provision of all basic needs for camp populations**

Based on what I have read in the many documents provided, the visits I made, the discussions I had with TBBC staff, beneficiaries, camp committees and staff of other resource partners (donors) I can say there is an absolute adequate provision of all basic needs for the greater majority of the camp population under this programme.

The food basket, the housing and the logistical and tendering aspects related to it are under control, very necessary and on a good quality level.

A remark is in place with regard to the warehouses/go downs where the delivered goods are being stored for a short period ( 4 to 10 days) before the distribution of the entire stock takes place. Some (2 out of 9) of the go downs I observed were not up to standard. TBBC is working on it and tries to bring all warehouses up to the ECHO/SPHERE standards for the storage of relief goods. Priority has to be given to the improvement of that situation.

Another remark ref. the food basket comes under 3.2..

#### **- 3.2 The impact of emergency food items on the health of the beneficiary families**

From a physical point of view there is definitely a positive impact of the emergency food items on the health of the beneficiary families. Rations are balanced (from a nutrition point of view) and the contents of calories per person (2210 kcal) per day is according to the set standards.

Psychologically, however, remarks have to be made about the composition of the food basket which is always the same. So, eating became a necessary but boring and itself repeating event for these people. During this visit I heard this comment from various sides. Minor changes could make a world of difference here.

### - 3.3 The impact of the Asia Mix on children and infants health

Two years ago the Asia Mix was added to the food basket as a rice/soy blended food formula fortified with minerals and vitamin in an attempt to address the high levels of chronic malnutrition in the refugee population (resulting in micronutrient deficiencies and an imbalance in the proportion of carbohydrate/protein/fat in their diet).

TBBC is doing ongoing regular research on the effects of the food support (including of course the effects of the Asia Mix). Based on general knowledge and proven scientific information that the ingredients of the Asia Mix are standard elements of a balanced diet it is crystal clear that there is a positive impact on children and infants health.

It is still too early, however, to really support that assumption with statistical data. Chronic malnutrition is the result of a long period of structural deficiencies in what people are eating. The recovery from it is also a slow and long process so as yet the results are not yet clearly visible in the statistics.

Examples of handouts to people (especially mothers) about the use and importance of the Asia Mix are added as annexes to this report as a good example of food security/health education undertaken by TBBC.

### - 3.4 The importance of the assistance for shelter repair or replacement

Because of the 'temporary' nature of the camps (according to the Thai government) no brick, clay or solid wooden houses are allowed in the camps.

Houses are made of bamboo and roofing of leave material hence very vulnerable and subject to wind, sun and rain every day. This leads to a situation in which constant recovery work is needed to avoid leakages in the rainy season or other deficiencies in the total protection a good house should provide. This ongoing need for repairs is a constant big headache for TBBC (for instance - where to procure the bamboo?) and a substantial part of the yearly budget (7% in 2006).

### - 3.5 The Camp Committees (composition and management)

Camp committees are elected bodies from the various organisational levels in the camps. Each camp is divided into zones (there are also zone

committees) and sections and all these layers bring in their candidates for elections.

A camp committee is an important body in the camp and the camp leader an important person who represents the people and stands for the rights and duties of the people and for the quality of the delivered services.

During my trip I visited two camps (Mae La and Umpiem Mai) and met with the camp leaders and camp committees. (please see annex 1 with my reports about these meetings)

I had a very good impression of these committees and even think the people on this level could be capacitated more to do their work with more skills, knowledge and authority. Especially also into the direction of the resource partners (who always need that equal partner in the development process).

### - 3.6 TBBC governance and management

As far as I can oversee it I can say that TBBC is being governed and managed very well. Staff members make a competent, satisfied and sharp impression and are performing with confidence and on a good quality level.

The top management is also very competent and experienced. Special mention is made here of Mr. Jack Dunford as founder member, general director and source of motivation, knowledge and vision for TBBC. Deputy director Mrs. Sally Thompson is a great second in line on that level. Both of them have many years of experience in TBBC and with the border situation.

The atmosphere in TBBC is open though the office in Bangkok really seems to be the spider in the web overseeing and controlling everything very well (which is of course the role of a central office). TBBC's intention is to create a good learning atmosphere but the working pressure is challenging that important aspect of TBBC's organisational life.

The new monitoring system is functioning very well and acts as a vital source of information for the management to base policy development and day to day decisions on.

Accountancy is in good hands with an excellent financial controller in the person of Mr. Brian Brook. Budget control is functioning and outstanding financial reports are being produced.

The liquidity situation is also being monitored well but continues to require extra active attention into the direction of the various resource partners (donors).

A question I had to the team about the composition of the top management was about their white or foreign background. Wouldn't it be

time for more local people on this level of leadership? And for more women?

Now there is 1 Asian management staff member (Lassay Sawwah – field coordinator in Mae Hong Son) apart from 6 foreign management staff. The answer I got at the Bangkok office was ‘that all the NGO’s active in Thailand are having foreign staff. TBBC is on all levels open to Thai people and they are really trying but in general Thai people don’t seem to be so much interested in management jobs in NGO’s for which a cosmopolitan and broader world view is needed. They either prefer to choose a career in the corporate sector or a career with a more nationalistic focus.

On middle management level and ‘lower’ in the organisational structure many Thai and Karen people are active in various key positions’. So far the reaction on this point from Jack Dunford and Sally Thompson.

- 3.7 The role of TBBC board and member organisations in governance and advocacy.

Based on what I have read and heard the TBBC board and member organisations are playing an important role in governance and advocacy.

Especially on the advocacy on the repressive political situation in Burma. More people should know about it and more international pressure should be developed via governments and international organisations. Monitoring information is frequently shared with board members and member organisations on a detailed and high quality level and frequent meetings keep these crucial bodies connected to what’s happening in the camps and to the developments in the political situation.

Much more I can’t say on these points since, apart from ICCO’s Elske van Gorkum and my hosts at NCCA/CWS, I was not able to speak to other participants acting on this level in the TBBC structure.

- 3.8 NCCA/Christian World Service value adding to the program?

With the paramount support of AusAid NCCA/CWS is taking a prominent position in the board and membership of TBBC.

Support is given to TBBC and via them to the people in the camps. At the same time, however, information is coming back to Australia about the present situation in Burma also in relation to the position of the people in the camps. So it is giving and receiving.

Australia as a continent on its own with an Asian perspective should be present in this international platform related to the situation in Burma since they bring in a different perspective.

NCCA/CWS adds one great unique element to that which is the element of Christian presence everywhere where there is need and injustice. Right from the beginning in 1984 the NCCA has been involved in this work

leading to a great level of trust and knowledge about the Burma situation.

- 3.9 Impact of resettlement on camp populations, depletion of skills in camps, adjustment in host countries and other elements related to resettlement

There is no subject in this file where the opinions are at the one hand so similar and at the other hand so divided over two contradictory interests. These interests are:

- the well being of the people in the camps and the vitality of the services provided in the camps
- the individual chance for people to break out of a vicious circle of stagnation and lack of freedom. Often after many years of waiting and waiting without much progress or perspectives

Recently 8 foreign governments decided to accept a number of Burmese refugees in their countries for resettlement. USA with a yearly allocation of 17.000 people goes by far on top followed by Australia and Canada both with about 1.000 people. These 3 are being followed by EU and other countries on a much more limited scale. I looked at it from both the interest perspectives.

The criteria for selection in the camps vary per country. The factual selection is being done on the basis of some political criteria related to the person's connection to the camps, health condition, basic knowledge of English language and education level.

In practice this means that many of the most educated people will leave the camps. The implications for vital camp life and well being of people are drastic. Many teachers, medics and other people in service roles qualify for resettlement and are on the lists.

It is even hard to hear how some countries (like Canada) are strictly creaming of the market of educated people. Resettlement?, they seem to say fine, but it has to be to their benefit first.

I conclude with saying that individually (especially for young people) resettlement is a right a blessing and a real new chance in life. For the situation in the camps, however, resettlement is a disaster.

It is high time that a new international code to base resettlement policies and criteria on is being formulated at short notice. The basic idea of such a code is that all relevant interest levels are being matched in a fair way.

Finally the resettlement shouldn't be seen only as going to the land of milk and honey. Good information needs to be given about life over there, about study and job opportunities, about climatical differences and about other often very surprising (or shocking) elements of other countries and cultures.

Acculturation and preparation is a prerequisite for a successful integration and a better life in the new home country. These people went through many years of misery in their lives and resettlement shouldn't add misery to that.

#### **4. Possible new directions and focus for TBBC and her resource partners**

Based on my visit with a clear evaluative focus (in spite of time constraints) I carefully share the following ideas about possible new directions:

- The following set of recommendations can, according to my opinion, lead to necessary strengthening of the TBBC programme and show ways to possible new directions, dimensions and focus in the work.
- It became clear to me that the longer the people are staying in the camps the more new type of problems will occur, especially on the mental field. Resettlement will bring new chances for a minority among them but a majority is left out. This combination (of resettlement and increasing mental pressure) will lead to a new type of situation and can lead to fundamental changes in the nature of the programme. TBBC and her resource partners and other stakeholders in CCSDPT have to be aware of that and start preparing themselves and anticipating to that new situation without delay.

#### **5. Recommendations**

- 5.1 (ref. observation/conclusion under 3.2. which is about the negative psychological effect of having, a quality wise o.k., but every day the same meal which makes eating a boring and not very stimulating event)

It is recommended that TBBC intensifies the research of approaching the food basket in a more creative and innovative way with more variety and

access for the people to different food items. A coupon system for some complementary food items might be an option.

- 5.2 (ref. observation/conclusion under 3.1 which is about the 'just good/not good enough' condition of some of the go downs where relief goods are being stored temporarily.

It is recommended that before the end of 2007 all TBBC warehouses are brought on acceptable quality levels and before the end of 2008 all TBBC warehouses will be organised, maintained and brought into the condition according to the ECHO/SPHERE standards for warehouses.

- 5.3 (ref. observation/conclusion under 3.5 which is about the composition and role of the camp committees)

It is recommended that a process of further capacitating of the camp committees will be initiated by TBBC (via CCSDPT) before the end of 2007. This capacitating will especially focus on the skills of the camp committee to interact with the various resource partners and other stakeholders in an assertive and pro active way.

- 5.4 (ref. observation/conclusion under 3.6 which is about TBBC governance and management / issue – work pressure)

It is recommended that TBBC addresses with priority the pressing issue of the heavy workload on the shoulders of the staff. Work patterns or priority settings could be looked into in order to create ample time for the staff to do the work in a satisfactory way and at the same time work on self development, refreshing of knowledge and motivational activities. This all in the light of the heavy nature of this work and the extra burden that can be expected when resettlement is really starting to take of. Part of the solution can also be the appointment of a qualified staff member for the preparation of visits (programmes) and hosting of visitors. This can save an enormous amount of time.

- 5.5 (ref. observation/conclusion under 3.6 which is about TBBC governance and management / issue – liquidity problem )

It is recommended that TBBC at the shortest possible moment brings up the urgent issue of liquidity scarcity with her members and resource partners with the highest priority. Crises like in early 2006 has to be prevented and the entire consortium (on NGO and government level) is co-responsible for that prevention. See above for the rationale behind this 'demand'.

- 5.6 (ref. observation/conclusion under 3.9 which is about the impact of resettlement on the people in the camps.

a. It is recommended that TBBC takes initiatives (via CCSDPT) in the direction of receiving governments to develop an international code to base policies and criteria on related to good resettlement that matches the interests of resettled people with the interests of the culture and context these people come from. A good and fair selection and qualification system has to be developed.

b. It is further recommended that TBBC, in collaboration with the other stakeholders in CCSDPT, starts gathering and distributing basic information for the people who have to take the decision whether to opt for resettlement or not.

Lobby of these points a and b towards Embassy's or Consulates of receiving countries is highly recommended.

- 5.7 (ref. mental health/trauma care in relation to the very long period in the camps without having any perspective of repatriation, a reasonable job or own income generating activities.)

It is recommended that TBBC takes initiatives (via CCSDPT) to address the psycho traumatic mental health problems under the people due to lack of hope and lack of perspective. The longer the people stay in the camps the more difficult the situation becomes. Additional attention is very advisable at this moment.

- 5.8 (ref. gender based violence and trainings for men)

It is recommended that the very valuable work of the legal aid centres and the women's organisations on the field of empowering women in the struggle against gender based (domestic) violence is being supported by programmes focussing on men, men's behaviour, attitudes and responsibilities.

- 5.9 (ref. better coordination among the active NGO's on camps level)

It is recommended that TBBC takes the initiative in CCSDPT to arrive at better cooperation and a better level of coordination among the various NGO's working in the field on their specific programmes.

At Bangkok level this coordination among the NGO's is o.k. but on field level there is room for improvement  
(main source for this recommendation is the Umpiem Mai camp committee)

## **Flow of the TBBC evaluation by Aad van der Meer – Meer Mens (including reports about the various discussions)**

### Preparation stage:

Early March 2007 I was contacted by Miss Gwen Willis of NCCA/CWS in Australia about my willingness and availability to do this evaluation. I felt privileged to be asked and made myself free in a, during that period, rather busy schedule.

A period of preparations followed in which I received a lot of background material from NCCA and started reading it. Also the TBBC website appeared to be a great source of information. While reading all this I started becoming more and more interested in and informed about the situation at the border between Thailand and Burma.

A Terms of Reference was formulated and also appeared to be very workable and clear. Perhaps only a little bit too ambitious for the limited time available. You'll find the Terms of Reference document herewith as an annexure.

A crucial step in my preparation was the discussion with my former colleague at the Dutch development organisation ICCO, Mrs. Elske van Gorkum. Elske is senior project officer at ICCO and since 5 years already responsible for the TBBC project. A heavy file since ICCO is facilitating a huge programme via the EU relief organisation ECHO.

### Discussion with Elske van Gorkum

Elske briefed me about the general insights of the programme. The camps are there for more than 20 years already but still in the condition of being temporary camps. So no bricks or wood for houses, only bamboo!

Thailand hasn't signed the UN charter for refugees. When doing so Thailand would recognize these refugees as permanent refugees which is an unwanted situation for them. Thailand wants to keep the full grip on the situation and at the same time Thailand doesn't want to worsen the relationship with the Burmese junta.

Because of that situation the UN via their relief organisation UNHCR is not in charge of this refugee programme that services about 154.000 people and many thousands of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP's ) in Burma.

Therefore the answer had to be given by NGO initiatives and in 1984 a church platform took up that challenge. The name of the platform changed from CCA, via BBC into TBBC (Thailand Burma Border Consortium).

Elske further briefed me about the total support structure with the Coordinating Committee for Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT), the protecting role of the UNHCR and the various organisations related to Food, Shelter en Non Food items (TBBC), Primary Health Care and Sanitation and Education.

As a relief programme the TBBC programme is very successful but the pressure is high and the programme is limited. So far Thailand doesn't allow any agricultural or income generating activities.

The structure of TBBC is low profile and the number of staff is relatively small. The programme and process of transport, storing and distribution of all the relief items is fully decentralised and in the hands of the refugees.

Elske especially asked my attention for the TBBC website ([www.tbbc.org](http://www.tbbc.org)), a rich source of information indeed.

Resettlement is a recent phenomena. Eight countries are willing to take up a selection of people from the camps. For the individual people a good situation but a definite setback for the camps since the most educated people are being selected.

The refugee situation in Burma is worsening, Elske felt.

In spite of resettlement there is growth in numbers of refugees and the newly arrived people are not allowed to be registered. A confusing situation.

The Asia mix, the porridge with Vit. A and minerals as a complementary quality input to the food basket, was introduced in 2004.

Elske was very satisfied about the TBBC management of the programme, actually fantastic how they perform and what they achieve, she said.

Especially the accountability and monitoring are up to high standards. Of course I am going to make up my own mind but it was good to hear such positive things from a professional like Elske van Gorkum. A promising start.

Elske gave me even extra material and reports to read and with all this material I rounded off the preparations. I started looking forward to my visit.

**Sunday April 15<sup>th</sup> / Monday April 16<sup>th</sup>** were the travel days. KLM gave me a good chair that allowed me to work long before having some nice hours of sleep. After 11 hours and 30 minutes we landed at Bangkok

International Airport and an hour later after a failed process of bargaining about the taxi drive I was driving through this immense city. I checked in at the Bangkok Christian Guesthouse at and at the end of the afternoon I did some town exploration of this part of Bangkok with all those lively aspects like trade and food stalls. Very amusing and I immediately felt safe and o.k. with the Thai people. It was the last day of the Thai New Year / The Water festival (Song Kran) and some people were still throwing water to each other as a sign of cleaning of old dirty things at the beginning of the Buddhist New Year. A kind of Buddhist baptizing perhaps.

Back in the hotel I got a welcoming phone call from Sally Thompson, deputy director of TBBC, which was very nice. She informed me about the start of the programme the next day. After some hours of final reading I capitulated and slept 9 hours.

**Tuesday April 17<sup>th</sup>** - the first real working day in Thailand on the evaluation. At 9.00 a.m. Sally picked me up from the guesthouse from where we went to the TBBC office where I was introduced to the staff members who were still in the New Year festival mood. Of course I also met with the general director Jack Dunford and with him and Sally I had the introductory session till the end of the morning.

#### First discussion with Jack Dunford and Sally Thompson

During this very good start off I introduced myself as a person who had the privilege to work for 24 years as project officer in the development organisation ICCO. During these years I built up a solid level of experience on the field of development processes, democracy building, human rights and also emergency and relief work (with a focus on food aid).

On behalf of my Australian 'employer' I brought forward that the outcome of this visit is important for the supply of objective information to AusAid, the back donor for this programme for NCCA/CWS from Australia.

I also shared with my TBBC hosts that although the time of the evaluative study is quite limited it will be very much possible on the basis of my preparation, experience, and the facilitation/cooperation by TBBC, to come out with a valuable report with evaluative observations, conclusions and workable recommendations.

We started going through the ambitious set of points in the Terms of Reference. Of course this document is my leading paper in this exercise but I shared with Jack and Sally that I will definitely also try to go beyond the framework of this ToR in my observations and recommendations.

Aspects like *dependency* (on various levels), *vitality* (of TBBC as an enabler and of the people's communities), *dignity*, *environmental aspects* and *the mental condition of the people* are examples of that.

After that I came forward with my pre-conclusion, based on reading of TBBC material and my total preparation, that TBBC is a well managed, smoothly running organisation with successful programmes.

The main reason for that, Jack reacted, is that we are focussed and don't have the ambition to duplicate ourselves somewhere else. There is a lot of continuity among the senior staff so that we have a lot of experience and never have to re-invent the wheel. TBBC is the main advocacy voice for the ethnic refugees from Burma. Our documents are read since almost nobody in the world is writing about Burma and the situation at the border with Thailand.

I was briefed about the reasons for Thailand not to go into a full fledged UN led refugee programme. During the Cold War Thailand had 300.000 refugees from Cambodia and a very complete support structure was built up with high tech hospitals and an enormous fleet of 4 wheel drives of the NGO's.

Thailand didn't want to duplicate this and only accepted a structure with minimum conditions without any motivation to stay longer than necessary.

An extra reason for Thailand was that these refugees, though coming from a very hostile and repressive environment, hadn't gone through a holocaust.

A simple housing and feeding arrangement was, therefore, found sufficient. It was temporary anyhow. This temporary situation, however, is lasting now for 24 years already and things should definitely be seen now in a different light.

An NGO platform was invited by the Thai Ministry of Interior (MOI) to take up this basic relief work for these ethnic (mostly Karen) refugees from Burma.

Right from the beginning the programme has been very decentralised and given in the hands of the people for the implementation. That was (and is) possible because all the rural cultures in Burma have strong community values, cohesion and respect for hierarchy. The result of that is that CCA, BBC and later TBBC have always been able to work with a relative low number of staff. The people themselves are organizing the distribution work in the camps.

Unfortunately, Jack continued, there is more aid dependency but that is not because of TBBC or the people. In the first period the people were up to 75% self sufficient but in 1997 the Thai government consolidated the refugee situation at the border and banned the refugees from doing anything on the field of income generation or cultivation of fruits or vegetables. In 1997 the UNHCR was allowed in, especially for the protection role.

The programme is fully built on trust in the people and definitely more than 90% is used by them where it is meant for.

TBBC is working at a staff development plan that is like to give a boost to staff motivation which is not low but under pressure because of a heavy workload.

The advocacy work of TBBC is focussed on the Thai government. UNHCR is of great support with that. Their approach is to directly involve the Thai civil society which works in many cases.

TBBC, the other agencies and the people in the camps want to go for skills training, income generating projects, kitchen gardens and education and it is possible that they will be given the green light for that very soon. That would be a breakthrough in the camps.

Via UNHCR the people in the camps are now having ID cards which is found very important for their self esteem and dignity.

Further on we discussed the advocacy role towards the Thai government (about issues related to the camps) and towards 'the world' (for issues related to the situation in Burma and the required international pressure.

We also discussed the work with Internally Displaced People (IDP's) in Burma, environmental issues, sanitation situation in the camps, the Asia mix and the storage systems and facilities.

Last but not least we covered the excellent tendering and monitoring systems (many examples were shown to me) and the resettlement issue which can be seen as a blessing for individuals but a disaster for the life in the camps.

So I had a good discussion as a perfect start of my assessment work.

After a nice Thai lunch with noodles and sweet and sour duck the taxi was ready for the 7 hours drive to Mae Sot. Not a punishment with such a good, and very friendly driver as Mr. Ronnaichai.

**Wednesday April 18<sup>th</sup>** – visit to TBBC office in Mae Sot and Mae La camp.

Getting to know the TBBC Mae Sot field-coordinator Mr. Chris Clifford

At 07.30 Mr. Chris Clifford, the Australian field coordinator of the Mae Sot office, picked me up from the hotel and in a small local restaurant we had our first conversation about the work. A good setting for breaking the ice and getting to know each other. He informed me about the packed programme.

We discussed the Burma issue, the resettlement, the role of TBBC and the increasing stress factor in the programme due to frustration caused by lack of hope for change and lack of perspective. For Chris this increasing stress element is a new and worrying dimension in the camps. Chris was proud of the capacity of TBBC to support the people in a unique model of full participation of the people in the camps themselves who actually organize and do all the storage and distribution work.

A big problem he found the increasing gender based violence and the high work pressure (due to increased monitoring requirements and the many visitors). The net time for field work is really under pressure he said.

#### Discussion with Mae Sot field assistants

We went to the office where I was introduced to the staff and started with a good discussion with the 3 field assistants (Richard, Tiew and Pachon) about the motivation for their work and how to keep the spirit in this hard work with a repeating nature of stagnation and frustration (for the people). The energy they generate from the people and the cooperation with the people's organisations. Sometimes it is very difficult and in those cases you need each other as a team. That is so important, they said, and our team is small but strong.

The most successful element of TBBC they found the strong relationship and communication with the refugees. It is very professional and based on trust.

They fully considered the camp committee as 'the boss' in the camps. The most difficult point for the staff was the quantity of work, especially on the field of paperwork for monitoring. Necessary and useful but it takes a lot of time and we have to explain to the people in the camps that we can't come and do more because of that. So far the summary of this good meeting.

#### Visit to UNHCR office

Before driving to Mae La camp we had an appointment at the UNHCR office with the deputy protection officer Mr. Robert Kai Lin Ho.

It was an informative discussion in which Mr. Ho was giving extra information about the protection role of UNHCR. Due to the position of the Thai government UNHCR is not leading the refugee operation here but in 1997 they were asked in for protection and assistance with the registration of the newly arrived people. Hence UNHCR is 'only' playing a complementary role in this refugee programme at the border between Thailand and Burma.

Complementary but so useful as complementary elements can be. This also because of UNHCR's constructive and not superior approach towards the active NGO's in CCSIPT.

A very good thing UNHCR achieved is the introduction of identity cards. I could see, feel and hear that the relationship between TBBC and UNHCR was o.k. which was also explicitly expressed by Mr. Ho and Chris Clifford.

#### IGP consultant Mr. Bob Duffy

At the end of the UNHCR visit we got a bonus in a short discussion with the Australian consultant on Income Generating Programmes (IGP's), Mr. Bob Duffy.

He was pessimistic about the willingness of the Thai government to really make progress with their agreement to allow more freedom on the field of IGP's. Duffy told that 8 NGO's had shown interest but 7 withdrew from that initial commitment due to lack of hard guarantees from the Thai government. A frustrating situation (mostly for the people in the camps of course).

### The visit to Mae La

After this visit the time was ripe to see the first camp – Mae La which is about an hour drive away from Mae Sot. Field coordinator Chris Clifford and field assistant Richard Sakha Chuttiwallarnasuk accompanied me this day.

Seeing the camp for the first time was special and even a moving event. You can read about the camps and the people living there, you can hear and see it on websites, books or photo-exhibitions but the reality is always different.

I saw a piece of land in a nice hilly environment where 50.000 people live together as human beings without real rights to use their talents. Living together in bamboo houses, without much privacy and with meagre life perspectives. Their basic needs are taken care of in a good way, o.k., but basic needs are also necessary to feed a situation of human growth and development.

The Thai army was checking us before entering the camp but everything went smoothly.

My first impressions were not bad. As such are the houses not really small, the sun was shining and it looked reasonable.

I saw children playing, very small shops with some basic things, the first church of the day, and we stopped at the first go down.

That first warehouse from where the two-weekly distributions are organised was not up to standard. Old and not well maintained. The TBBC staff told me that the people are working on it but I think that has to be done with priority. The maintenance group working on it didn't seem too motivated.

### Meeting with the chairman of the camp committee - camp leader Mr. Jolly

His name was Mr. Jolly and we had a good discussion with him. Firstly he gave some details about the Mae La camp. There are about 50.000 people living here (49.476 people as per the end of February 2007 and the number is slowly growing). There are 30 schools, 25 churches, 4 mosks and 4 temples. Also women and youth committees and a

structure for the distribution of the food items, bamboo and roofing material

The camp committee has 15 elected positions from the various sections and zones but also for women and youth representatives, supply managers en educational coordinators.

The camp-leader is a real leader but not really a mayor. He (or she - but most probably he) has power about the distribution of goods and other aspects of life in the camps but has no access to financial resources.

Mr. Jolly gave me a good overview of the tasks of a camp committee, the good relationship with TBBC and the quality of the relief goods. Here I heard the word 'boring' in relation to the food basket for the first time.

O.K but boring.

I asked him about the most pressing issues in Mae La camp at the moment.

There are many rumours about new fights and attacks from the Burma side of the border and the people are very scared. Since 10 years this open fear for direct attacks of the camp had not been there. Another setback for the people.

A different tension gives the fact that people in Mae La presently don't want to accept new arrivals. Thailand doesn't want new people to be registered at the moment so TBBC is not allowed to give rations to them for relief items. This creates tensions at the moment and a situation of haves - have nots arises.

A third point are the worries about the resettlement as a blessing and right for individuals but a disaster for camp life since resettlement is skimming of all the (higher) educated people. See the observation in the main report.

From this meeting we went around through the camp and I could see more of the houses, small streets and people sitting and waiting. Not all of them of course because many people are also working (as farm labourers) but quite a number of people were sitting idle with empty eyes. It is great that Right to Play just started sports activities in the camps. That is so important and can make a world of difference.

We also passed by and checked other warehouses. These ones were much better though not yet fully up to standard. In a world where the safety of food items is carefully being safeguarded via standards, certifying organizations, labels and control systems (all with the aim to protect consumers) food items for refugees should also be stored in a safe and optimal way.

### Meeting with the women's organisation KWO (Karen Women Organization)

Our next meeting was the meeting with the active women of KWO. This group has 21 elected members and is very active indeed on various fields.

Activity fields presented to me are:

<b>Social</b>	<b>Health education</b>	<b>Organizing</b>
Vulnerable women	Adult literacy	Cultural events
Conflict resolution	Nurseries	Sports
Vocational training	Sexual education	Events/Meetings
Income generating (Looms project)	TBA Training	
	Women's Rights	
	Gender awareness	
Safe houses	Health education	

All explained and found very relevant to me under the difficult camp circumstances.

Special focus in our meeting was the strengthening of the position of women, especially after violence against them. Support is given to them with legal support, advice, safe houses, reporting of domestic violence and rape.

Due to building up of frustration among the men domestic violence is increasing rapidly and KWO wants to empower women to handle that. Our discussion was about how to prevent this and the role of men in it. The KWO programmes are answers to symptoms of a situation of frustration leading to violence. The question of TBBC's Chris Clifford and me were on the field of prevention. Wouldn't it be good to embark at special programmes for men as well. Gender programmes for men to discuss their attitudes, behaviour in relation to their responsibilities, rights and duties.

Protection is central but prevention is even better. Relations improving programmes can play a complementary role. It was well received by KWO.

We further discussed about the effects of resettlement (on the camps and KWO specific). Many KWO women are qualifying for resettlement at the moment. Understandable but a big threat for the quality of services in the camps. An example of a real dilemma.

The relationship between TBBC and KWO is good. TBBC is involving women regularly (also via KWO) in activities related to distribution and quality improvement of the relief items.

So altogether KWO is playing an important role but it is really overburdened. The women are making many hours (for free) which leads to many tensions for themselves on family level. The introduction of a reasonable stipend for them for their work would mean a lot in this regard.

Well addressed women's issues are key (everywhere but certainly also in the camps). KWO women should be enabled to continue their important work.

We followed our way and visited more go downs. It was not a deliberate sequence but the quality of these warehouses became better and better. The systems of distribution and logistical solutions were explained to me in detail and ration books showed.

That made our day a day and we returned to the Mae Sot office with a lot of food for thought and reflections. Especially on the field of the gender training for men which is also one of my recommendations in this report.

### **Thursday April 19<sup>th</sup> 2007 – visit to Umpiem Mai camp**

Today a very early start for a visit of another camp, situated 2 hours away from Mae Sot, in the beautiful mountainous area around Umpiem Mai.

This camp (which a combination of two smaller camps) houses 19.601 people. Some data about them are interesting:

- 49% women/51 % men
- Ages: - under fives – 14%, 5-17 yrs. 34%, 18-49 yrs. 49%, 60+ yrs. 3%
- Ethnic background of the people: Mostly Karen
- Situated 3 to 4 km from the border

After the long drive with hundreds of curves we saw the camp behind the village Umpiem Mai. After Mae La this is the second camp under responsibility of the TBBC Mae Sot field office. Nu Po camp (more down South) is the third camp under their jurisdiction.

My first impression of Umpiem Mai camp was beautifully situated but with the thousands of houses much more close together than in Mae La it looked more like a camp or high density township. Also inside the camp there were more smaller set ups to live in and also difficult to reach for lorries (especially in the rainy season)

### Warehouses in Umpiem Mai

The programme of the day brought us to many (6) warehouses / go downs and it is good to say that these warehouses here in Umpiem Mai were reasonable to really good. A just opened new one is certainly up to the ECHO/SPHERE standards and it would be good to take this structure as a standard for the rest of the warehouses in the entire TBBC programme.

### Meeting with the Umpiem Mai camp committee

In a very good and open meeting we met with 9 (5 man and 4 women) of the 21 members of the Umpiem Mai camp committee under the chairmanship of the outspoken leader Mr. So Wae Tee.

Also here it became very clear to me that the camp committee is playing a crucial role. Mr. So Wae Tee rightly took the time to finish his business before he said to be ready for the discussion.

On our request he started with giving an overview of the issues and problems addressed by the camp committee:

- Rights of the people – a very urgent issue related to the structural lack of freedom and limited possibilities to grow and develop as human beings
- Education – up to 10<sup>th</sup> standard
- Health issues – pressure on health situation is increasing due to increasing population in the camps
- Water – very scarce in Umpiem Mai/Urgent problems – ARC is working on it in close collaboration with the camp committee. Every day 138 litre of diesel has to be used to pump up sufficient water for the camp population. A very expensive and daily increasing problem.
- Food supply – is going well/relationship with TBBC is excellent. The only remark that can be made here is the contents of the food basket which is always the same. The word “boring” was also used in this meeting.
- Young people – without exception this group is interested in resettlement due to lack of job and higher education options.
- Resettlement – a good chance in life for individual people but a disaster on camp level since all the educated people qualify for it and want to leave the camp.
- Lack of hope – the situation in Burma is still very difficult at the moment and it is unlikely that people can return in the near future. For many people, especially for those who don’t qualify for resettlement, their life situation won’t change as a result of that. This leads to an increasing lack of hope, frustration and mental problems. The camp committee tries to address that.
- Coordination of distribution of relief items. Via a special committee that manages this crucial element of work the distribution activities are being organized. It is going well under full control.

The camp committee really showed commitment and an active attitude to address these type of issues in close collaboration with all the stakeholders. The coordination of that work, however, could be organised much better. At this moment too many NGO’s are working for themselves, not showing much active interest or as opposite reaction showed too much interest with dictating what should happen. We discussed this and really found this a matter of active interest for the CCSDPT which is functioning and coordinating extremely well on Bangkok level but could do more coordinating work on local level.

From my side I emphasized that the camp committee should choose an assertive position towards all stakeholders proactive and full of initiative. The committee members know exactly what's happening in the camps and what the feelings of the people are. They should be in charge. NGO's are great as service partners but they are not solely in charge. It should be a fruitful common process and the camp committee can demand such a process. In this regard it was good to see that the camp committee sees TBBC as a positive example of collaboration.

CCSDPT will be informed about this need for more coordination on field level. Mr. Jack Dunford (TBBC and chairperson), Mr. Gary (ARC and vice chairperson) and Mr. Art (IRC and treasurer) can be approached for that. At the end of our meeting Mr. Chris Clifford suggested the camp committee members to make monthly simple matrix documents with progress of activities and fields of concern and action per NGO. This was found very helpful.

### Meeting with Karen Youth Organisation (KYO)

This youth organisation wants to focus on the young people from 15-35 year in the camps (about 50% of the population). A crucial age full of energy and opportunities (at least in normal situations but the situation where these young people live in is far from normal).

In the present situation the KYO tries to make the best of it and offers all kinds of trainings and ways to prepare young people for the future (how uncertain that may be).

KYO has officially 7 members and I speak with 2 of them namely: Chairperson Saw Poe Dah en Secretary Nay Blut Daw.

Activities they organize are on the field of:

- Traditional Karen dancing (financed by UNICEF)
- Courses in drawing and writing (financed by UNICEF)
- Language course English and Burmese
- Health training ; with ARC teacher (on health and hygiene)
- Sexual education and HIV and Aids prevention training
- World Refugee Day participation
- Drawing art and painting (with beautiful results)
- Sharing information and ideas about resettlement

KYO has a representation in the camp committee.

Every camp section has a youth leader. KYO is reaching hundreds of young people. They play an important role with that since under these circumstances bad habits like alcohol, drugs and violent behaviour are around the corner and happening in practice.

KYO's counter power is pivotal to keep the camps a reasonable place to live in and to work on people's dignity.

### Visit to individual families

At the end of the day we brought a good visit to an individual family living in the Umpiem Mai camp for 7 years already. The house looked organised and clean. The man we met lives in the house together with his 3 sons of 15, 17 and 20 years. In 2000 they came here but the mother in the family and the two daughters couldn't join them yet for political reasons. So since 7 years already this family is fallen apart. With letters now and then they try to keep the contact but we felt this was a very bitter situation. In the camp there is not much work. Food and rations are o.k., though very much the same all the time. Four people, just four people, out of 20.000 in one of the camps. Every person has a story. Care is good and on time, participation o.k. but people are chained and with that their dignity is under high pressure.

#### Rounding off with Chris Clifford

At the end of the field visit to Mae Sot I shared with Chris Clifford my thoughts and views about my good and very informative visit. In general I am impressed by the quality of the work at the TBBC Mae Sot office. The staff is committed and competent and the contacts with the camp committee and the people representing the distribution structure in the camps are excellent. There is mutual trust and a good climate for success.

Having said that a few remarks are at place:

- the go downs / warehouses for the short term storage of goods should be improved and brought up to the ECHO/SPHERE standards
- having food security is a first priority of course and in a factual way that condition is certainly realised. The composition of the food basket, however, could be looked into in order to create more diversity and dignity since eating is more than securing the intake of enough calories and other nutrients
- resettlement could be coached better and the selection process made more fair and less abrupt for the quality of camp life.
- Coordination on camp level among all the NGO's working at the various aspects of relief work should improve
- Gender training could get an awareness building aspect focussed on men in order not to only focus on victims and protection but also on prevention as crucial entry point of relation building at family level.

#### Rounding off with Jack Dunford, Sally Thompson and Francois Fille

In Bangkok I had a debriefing of my visit to Jack Dunford and Sally Thompson, directors of TBBC. Program coordinator Francois Fille was also present during that final meeting.

I shared with them my observations and planned recommendations.

They listened carefully, gave me wherever necessary helpful advices and appreciated my oral reporting, line of thinking and planned recommendations as affirmative suggestions.

### **Word of thanks**

At the end of this important document about the flow of my evaluation visit I would like to thank everyone who made my visit a success and made it possible that I could arrive at such insights and opinions in such a relative short time. People like Elske van Gorkum of ICCO, my taxi driver Mr. Ronnachai Thongsima, camp leader Mr. Jolly, TBBC directors Jack Dunford and Sally Thompson and everyone in between these important pillars under my visit. Thank you very much for all your cooperation and assistance.

And many thanks to the colleagues at NCCA/CWS for the entrusted work.

### **Information about evaluator Aad van der Meer**

Aad van der Meer, self employed consultant from The Netherlands is active in the development sector since 1980.

For 24 years he was working as project officer India (1980-1993) and senior programme officer Southern Africa (1993-2004) with the Dutch development organisation ICCO.

His educational qualifications are on the field of accountancy and theology.

Apart from a broad knowledge of a range of aspects of development work he specialised, via trainings and assignments, in the following fields:

- Organisational development and Organisational Sustainability
- Democracy building issues
- Communication
- Food security and food production
- Fair Trade options for Trade
- Gender

Mid 2004 he left ICCO and he started his own business and advisory body named *Meer Mens*. 'Meer Mens' stands for 'People Unlimited' or 'People in the centre of development'. In his work and approach Aad always tries to have central attention for the position of people in the context and culture where they are living in. Always with special attention for the options and possibilities to grow and to develop themselves.

### **For Aad van der Meer and *Meer Mens* participation is not an academic notion but a hard precondition for real development.**

In his business so far Aad got assignments from a large number of government and development organisations from The Netherlands and

abroad. Foreign assignments came from organisations in South Africa, India, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Swaziland.

Meer Mens is working in Southern Africa, East Africa, the Indian subcontinent and Eastern Asia (all Anglophone areas).

With this very interesting assignment to access the work of TBBC the countries Thailand and Australia are now also part of the Meer Mens portfolio.

## **Methodology and organisation of evaluation**

As has been said before the approach of Meer Mens is highly participative so also with this evaluation. The Terms of Reference document is the basic reference point but there is also optimal attention for the deeper layers under provided facts and information.

Meer Mens is approaching and analysing organisations from the idea of balanced organisational development. Every entity should be balanced and for organisations there should be balance among the four main levels being:

1. Organisational level
2. Programme level
3. Accountability level
4. Contextual level.

Searching for balance and quality are the key focus points for Meer Mens in the analysis of an organisation and the related brought out recommendations.

The sequence in the programme of the TBBC evaluation was

- Laying contacts / file preparation / contextual preparation on Burma
- Travel to Thailand
- Long begin discussion with TBBC management
- Visit to field office Mae Sot
- Discussions with field coordinator and field assistants
- Visit to UNHCR office
- Visit to Mae La camp and discussion with camp leader
- Visit to various campsites (go downs, schools, distribution points)
- Meeting with women's organisation

- Visit to Umpiem Mai camp
  - Meeting with camp committee
  - Go downs visit and check
  - Meeting with youth organisation
  - Visiting of beneficiaries
  - Rounding off discussion with Mae Sot field coordinator
  - Rounding off discussion/debriefing with TBBC management Bangkok
  - Writing of draft report
  - Travel to Sydney / Australia
  - Presentation draft report and discussion with CWS / NCCA
  - Making of final draft of the report
  - Defining of the cover picture and report title and under title
- Presenting the final report to Christian World Service / NCCA - Australia