



South-East Consultations  
Traders Hotel  
17 January 2014

**I. Introduction**

- Update from Mr. Richard Horsey regarding peace process. Overall, good progress in peace process in late 2013, cautious optimism continuing into 2014. Need to continue with South-East (SE) Consultations to exchange information on this process.
- As peace process was left at end of 2013, plan was for two meetings in Kayin State in early 2014, first among non-state actors (NSAs), and subsequently with government. In the interim, the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) was established after the Myitkyina meetings to coordinate position of the NSAs; led by representatives of KIO, NMSP and KNU. There have since been internal meetings of NCCT, and informal meetings between government and NCCT. Plan was for NSA meetings 20-22 and NSA-government on 24-25 January 2014 in Hpa-An, but the meeting with government has been pushed back until late February. First meeting among NSAs, 20-22 January 2014, may still take place. Postponement was in acknowledgement of the need ahead of time to further work out contentious issues and secure agreement on as many elements as possible before the Hpa-An meeting.
- Two weeks ago, KNU leadership met with President Thein Sein, where some of these issues were also discussed. Meetings were reportedly very positive, frank and constructive discussions on proposed nationwide ceasefire agreement. KNU was pleased with openness of discussions with Commander-in-Chief, after challenges in late 2013 in engaging with senior levels of Tatmadaw.
- NSAs are comfortable with about 80% of the language of the agreement, while the 20% requires further substantive negotiations between the parties. The effort at the moment is to converge the two texts, which should happen ahead of next meetings, so the negotiations focus on endorsing a single text. Further delays therefore possible for meeting with government.

**II. Mine Action Update (Norwegian People's Aid)**

- Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU) map on mine contamination shows that main concentration in South-East, with limited reports in Kachin and Rakhine. In 2011, Myanmar was third in the world among landmine victims, although 2012 totals

not as high, although reporting channels remains a problem and casualties continue. Lack of official reporting channels, as information is drawn instead from news reports and sources on Thai side.

- Third party accident data from various organizations identifies accident locations on village level, whereas MIMU data is township level. Since this is reported information from third party sources, NPA cannot verify the accuracy of the accident information displayed on the map. Maps will be added to MIMU website for all agencies.
- Mines in Myanmar are both factory made, and homemade manufactured by NSAs. Have both anti-vehicle mines that will destroy a car, even tanks, as well as anti-personnel mines of all kinds. Some also have trip wires that cross a path. Some mines are small and would take off only part of a foot, while others are deadly. NPA has generally identified 15-20 types likely in Myanmar, but have not verified on the ground.
- The problem: there are 47 townships in 9 states/regions that have a documented landmine problem. There were 381 recorded landmine accidents in 2011, third highest in the world.
- Mine action is crucial for peace process, but also a) enables for safe return of IDPs and refugees; b) provides access to land (roads, agriculture land...); c) opens up for aid and development projects; d) builds trust in the peace process.
- Myanmar mine action in January 2014. Mine risk education and victim assistance programs have been ongoing for the past couple of years. NPA started a non-technical survey pilot project on 13 January 2014 in Mon State, first ever in Myanmar. Still awaiting permission for Humanitarian Mine Action Organizations to begin clearance of the mines.
- NPA has been in country since 2004. Signed an MOU with the government in 2012. Two components: 1) survey and clearance of mines areas in Kayin, Kayah, Mon, Bago and Tanintharyi, 2) assist in establishment and capacity building of a national coordination body. Currently working in Mon State, but looking to expand throughout South-East.
- The non-technical survey involves mapping of mines areas and priority settings. Clearance of areas confirmed as mined is more straightforward, but also slow and risky.
- NTS training was done in Mawlamyine in December 2013. Was preceded by lengthy desk review, then going out to the field to speak with authorities and villages to collect information, followed by actually assessing the areas identified. The aim is to create a database that will be available to other agencies.
- National coordination aims to set up a coordination body in Myanmar. Positions have been advertised; in recruitment phase. First level is National Mine Action Authority (NMAA), an inter-ministerial body. Second is the Myanmar Mine Action Centre (MMAC), which will coordinate all mine action related activities and manage the database. And third, plan for Regional Mine Action Centres.

- Current situation impacted by slow peace process, and the role of the military remains undefined. There is a lack of trust between the government and NSAs, which is key as survey and clearance requires permission from all parties. A survey pilot project started this week is in Ye Township, south of Mawlamyine. Working in villages identified and suggested by NMSP and approved by Mon State government.
- UNHCR is aware of reports of NSAs trying to clear mines, which could not be verified. What has been NPA's experience in coordinating with NSAs, as well as looking to develop standards?
- For NPA, started process of drafting national standards a year and a half ago, in collaboration with other mine action INGO's present in the country, the UN and the Myanmar Peace Centre. Has been submitted to the government for approval. Ideally, all actors should adhere to these standards. Coordination with NSAs has been quite slow. NSAs and the military typically do mine lifting, which is not as systematic as humanitarian clearance.
- MPSI has discussed mine clearance with DKBA, and they assert they have cleared a large section of their territory through mine lifting. There is no available data for DKBA areas, hence its absence from the maps, but one agency reports that there is almost one victim per week.
- One agency questioned if people will look at recently cleared land as prime real estate, which raises questions of how to avoid land grabbing for this new land. For NPA, this is a familiar but difficult question; for now will flag for key stakeholders, put on the agenda.
- Otherwise, NPA clarifies that for the long term goal is a countrywide survey starting with most heavily contaminated areas, but for political reasons have to start where there is access, building confidence along the way. Greater access to NSAs areas right now, but this is also where there is the most landmine contamination as well.

### III. Preparedness for durable solutions (UNHCR BO Thailand)

- From UNHCR Thailand's perspective, there is a global desire on the part of refugees for return to Myanmar, but owing to limited prospects of return in the past, the focus historically has been on resettlement. Since 2006, there have been 90,000 Myanmar refugees resettled from the nine camps in Thailand, however Royal Thai government ended registration in 2006, and without registration refugees are not eligible for resettlement. For the moment, 8000+ departures in 2013, and expect around the same in 2014, along with 3000-4000 new submissions for resettlement. The 78,000 registered refugees in the camp have not come forward for the last 7 years for resettlement, which is indicative.
- Regarding voluntary repatriation, now entering third year of new/renewed ceasefires. Since 2010-2011, have been talking increasingly about return within the camps, and since 2012 has been a UNHCR focus, preparation for return. Put out a discussion paper on voluntary repatriation in October 2012, which is based on international law.

- Discussion on return has been exhaustive; anxiety continues within the camp although it has changed. NGOs and CBOs now bringing the discussion to the forums, rather than the other way around. There is no discussion of local integration, so the durable solution is voluntary repatriation and resettlement. Aware of possibility of some residual caseload.
- UNHCR continues strong and regular discussions with Royal Thai government, as well as informally with the NSAs. UNHCR's perspective is that regarding promotion of voluntary return, the conditions are not yet there. Everything is centered on the peace process, and ceasefires are not yet peace. Focus is therefore on preparedness for return.
- Have noted increased movement between camps and back home; coping mechanism for refugees. Also expect an increased number of locally-organized and locally-negotiated returns, including spontaneous returns and pilot projects.
- UNHCR Thailand has 126,000 refugees in the camps, including 78,000 registered. TBC's annual results on food verification will be coming later this month. Anticipating around a 7.5% decrease in the figure. Expect returns in 2014, primarily small group spontaneous returns, and perhaps organized movements at beginning of next dry season.
- Mae Fa Laung profiling – 80% participated in Mae La camp. In Umpiem, 100% participation. Results more reflective of mood than intent. Main concerns that came out are lack of confidence in the political and peace process. Landmines were nine on list of top 10 concerns. Profiling continues, with plans for all seven camps in 2014.
- As far as UNHCR is aware, the national census will not be done outside the territory of Myanmar. Will not go to the camps in Thailand. Any refugee at home will be able to participate. If a family in territory, they can indicate they have families in the camps. There is some talk of movements for the census, but no indication that it will be significant.
- Full results from profiling will be made available to agencies once the process is complete. Primary purpose is to guide preparation for durable solutions. Will help determine how to assist returnees.

#### **IV. Operations Update (UNHCR FO Mawlamyine)**

- Have had internal UNHCR cross-border meetings, as well as meeting with Chief Minister (CM) in Kayin State. Have noted intensification around discussion for return, and dialogue between state-level governments, NSAs and refugee representatives. Karen refugee chairperson has met twice with Kayin State Chief Minister.
- UNHCR received request from government in Kayah for meeting with refugee representatives there; appears positive. UNHCR continues to explore how to facilitate.
- UNHCR started picking up reports about six months ago of possible pilot projects (or resettlement projects), both concerning refugee returns but more often IDPs. Various locations and proposals have been floated. Very difficult to keep track of which are still on the table. Have identified approximately 20 projects under discussion at various

times in the four states, mostly in Kayin State (including KNU Brigade 6 area). As far as UNHCR is aware, only one or two have actually started moving forward, and they are targeting IDP returns.

- The big topic 7-8 months ago was sub-townships, nine of which were to be developed for return; no longer the focus. Kayin government has been open in saying there have been certain problems with this proposal, particularly land title in some areas. Focus instead on smaller pilot projects. There is a general move away from government designating large areas for return; instead turning to smaller, more collaborative approach.
- Regarding spontaneous refugee returns in 2013, it is extremely difficult to track these kinds of movements, and also to determine who is back permanently or temporarily. Some people recently coming back temporarily for documentation purposes, to get CSCs. Hard to distinguish all these movements from permanent return, particularly as they are doing it in low profile way.
- UNHCR Myanmar focused on four main ways on gathering information on these movements. First, the return log, which is a database capturing reports of returns from reliable sources, primarily partners and government sources, as well as Thailand colleagues. Only log return movements where information is at village level. Encouraging field partners to feed into this process by completing a simple return report form. Second, return assessment process, a verification carried out by UNHCR staff at field level. Third, UNHCR Thailand cross-checks TBC's annual figures against UNHCR registration database, and where there are absentees, UNHCR field staff follow-up to try to determine where they have gone to create database of non-formal movements. Fourth, facilitated return process continues, through national security committee in Thailand, which started in 2001.
- For 2013, UNHCR determined there have been returns to 34 villages, around an average of 10 persons per village (2-3 households each). Believe this is only a fraction of the overall number of returns. Very realistic and honest about the capacity and ability to actually monitor return movements. Results of TBC verification will be important in helping us determine the change in dynamics.
- UNHCR invites partners to support return monitoring, and to submit return reports to UNHCR staff. Have been sharing results of return assessments at state-level and can feed back to partners on that.
- NRC has received divergent information on a pilot project in Three Pagodas Pass area, as described by Kayin government as in collaboration with KNU. NRC was told project for IDPs only, but KNU Brigade 6 gave a different story. KNU said project targets two caseloads – refugee returnees and economic migrants from central Myanmar. Very important to continue sharing information; may consider a stand-alone operations meeting on pilot projects in the future.

- Nippon Foundation: Have been in Myanmar for 36 years. A total of 34M in projects already invested in Myanmar, covering education, health, disabled persons. Nippon Foundation chairman is also the appointed representative for the reconciliation process with the ethnic armed groups. Now launching a follow-up at 100M over the next five years, focus on war affected communities. Project planned over the next five years attempts to broaden transparency, information sharing and do-no-harm approach.
- WFP: Will be more active in the South-East going forward. At end of 2013, and early in 2014, conducted two scoping missions in South-East. Management discussion to open a field office in Mawlamyine covering Kayin and Mon States, however, targeted areas and people still being defined. Activity will focus on livelihoods and education. Timeline is for mid-March. Requesting colleagues already on the ground to assist in setting up an office. Will not do general food distribution as returnee emergency not there, but will be positioned to respond to future emergencies if needed.
- Bridge Asia Japan (BAJ): Have been present since 2004 as UNHCR implementing partner. Activities continue in 2014. Setting up technical training school in Hpa-An. In 2015, will expand into more mechanical training courses.
- Coordination in Kayin: positive discussions with Chief Minister, who suggested that agencies meet once a month. Action Aid meet with him once a month already, to discuss bottom up planning. Believe the CM wants to start slowly with coordination. IRC has also noted small steps towards coordination in education and health sectors.
- Next meeting: mid-March. Dates TBD.

UNHCR  
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