

Emergency appeal: Reconstruction of homes destroyed by massive fire Umpiem Mai Refugee Camp – Mae Sot, Thailand

Executive Summary

diversethics Foundation is a charitable, non-profit organisation dedicated to empower marginalised communities in the Mekong Sub-Region, which includes Myanmar, Laos, Thailand and Cambodia. We achieve this by working in close partnership with these communities to improve their educational and health situation.

In the end of February 2012, a massive fire engulfed close to one-third of the Umpiem Mai refugee camp. The houses of 566 families were destroyed and another 350 others were damaged. It is estimated that close to 2,800 refugees had lost everything to the fire. Currently, most of the affected refugees are temporarily staying in emergency shelters and in the homes of their relatives. Although some families are already moving back to the site, the relocation process is slow. Support for rebuilding of houses is needed to help families in relocating back to their site.

Overview

Emergency Relief

To support Thailand Burma-Border Consortium (TBBC) in their efforts to rebuild the houses of refugees whose homes were destroyed by the massive fire incident in February 2012.

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Situational Analysis

Since Myanmar gained its independence from the British colonial rule in 1948, the country plunged into one of the world's longest running civil wars. The country's myriad ethnic groups were involved and the civil unrest remains unresolved to this day. For decades, the military junta, which displaced the democratically elected government in 1962, has been considered by many to be one of the world's most oppressive and abusive regimes. The regime struck terror on the people, especially the ethnic minority groups; villages were destroyed or relocated, land confiscated and the country's natural resources exploited. Today, corruption remains rampant in Myanmar and the basic rights of individuals continue to be violated; in 2011 alone, more than 112,000 people were forced to leave their homes. Nearly 140,000 registered refugees currently live in the nine official camps located along the Thai-Myanmar border.

On 23rd February 2012, a massive fire tore through the Umpiem Mai refugee camp, one of the nine official camps for displaced persons from Myanmar. As refugees are not allowed to build any permanent structures in the camps, all houses are constructed from bamboo, wood and leaves. The houses are particularly susceptible to fire, especially in the dry season; as a result, the blaze had spread like wildfire. In less than ten minutes, close to one-third of the camp was consumed in flames. Five sections of the camp were affected, of which, a minority of Muslim community lives in one of the sections. The fire destroyed the homes of 566 families and damaged more than 350 others. Allowing nothing to get in its way, the fire also destroyed two nursery schools, two mosques, one security office and a community building for Muslim women.

It is estimated that at least 2,800 refugees had lost everything, including the monthly food ration which they had received the day before the fire incident. While more than 200 families have moved back, the majority of the affected families are still staying in emergency shelters, such as tents, relatives' homes and community buildings. Much support is needed to aid the families in moving back to their site and to facilitate the rebuilding process. In addition, a major site clean-up would be necessary to remove the debris and prepare the land for the construction. Ensuring that families have access to clean drinking water and latrine facilities at the affected sites will also expedite the process of relocation.

Project Partner – Thailand Burma-Border Consortium (TBBC)

This project will be implemented in partnership with the Thailand Burma-Border Consortium (TBBC), a non-profit and non-governmental humanitarian relief and development agency. TBBC is an alliance of NGOs that works with displaced people of Myanmar; it is also the sole organisation that is responsible for delivering all food and shelter to the nine refugee camps along the Thai-Myanmar border, for displaced persons from Myanmar. Hence, given their experience in humanitarian relief efforts and familiarity with the refugee camps, TBBC is in a good position to implement and manage the operations of this project.

Project Implementation Plan and Timeline

Funding is urgently needed to support the affected families to rebuild their houses that were destroyed by the fire. To facilitate the rebuilding process, two standard building sizes were developed based on Sphere standards (i.e. internationally recognized sets of common principles and universal minimum standards in life-saving areas of humanitarian response) and local context. The size of the house will be determined by the number of persons in the family. The smaller house (with a maximum floor space of 28m²) will be built for families with 5 persons or less and the bigger house (with a maximum floor space of 39m²) will be built for families with more than six persons. The following detail budget for one replacement house was put together with inputs from the community on the amount and type of materials require for the construction.

Material budget for one replacement house (based on number of persons in family):

Material	Size	Unit	For Smaller Family (under 5 person) = 28m ²		For Bigger Family (above 6 person) = 39m ²	
			Quantity	Cost for one house	Quantity	Cost for one house
Euca	5"x6m	Pole	15	2,970 THB	15	2,970 THB
Euca	4"x6m	Pole	20	3,300 THB	20	3,300 THB
Bamboo	3"x6m	Pole	100	4,000 THB	120	4,800 THB
Bamboo	2"x6m	Pole	100	3,500 THB	140	4,900 THB
Grass Thatch	180cmx70cm	Sheet	250	3,700 THB	300	4,440 THB
Nails		Kg	5	151 THB	5	151 THB
Wire Tie		Kg	0.5	20 THB	0.5	20 THB
TOTAL				17,641 THB		20,581 THB

The average material cost to rebuild a smaller house is 17,641 THB; and a bigger house will cost 20,581 THB. These amounts only cover the material cost for rebuilding and does not include any cost for overhead or labour as shown below. While the majority of the houses will be rebuilt by the camp residents themselves, labour will be hired to rebuild those belonging to vulnerable groups, such as people with a disability. TBBC will hire people from the refugee community to help people from vulnerable groups to rebuild their houses. As the number of persons with disabilities represents close to 7% of the affected families, the cost of labour is budgeted separately.

Implementation Timeline

As the rainy season will not begin until 2-3 months later, TBBC is in a good position to procure and deliver the required materials to rebuild the houses that were damaged or destroyed by the fire. However, as this period also coincides with the annual building material cycle, our suppliers may encounter some difficulties in sourcing and delivering the additional materials required for this emergency relief effort. Therefore, a potential delay in delivery of material is expected, as these orders are additional to the demands of the annual building material cycle. On the other hand, house construction is generally fast, as families in the refugee community do help each other. Taking these issues into consideration, we can expect that the bulk of the construction and rebuilding process will be completed by July 2012. A final report that details the actual implementation process and financial expenditure will be submitted in August 2012.

Additional support provided by TBBC

Besides helping affected families in rebuilding their houses, TBBC has also been providing other forms of support since the fire incident. As many families had lost their food ration due to the fire, TBBC is working closely with the camp committees to distribute additional emergency food supplies to affected families. Community kitchens were established at all temporary sites where victims of the fire are staying currently. In addition, materials to establish temporary shelters and other non-food items such as blankets, mats, mosquito nets, cooking pots and other kitchen utensils were also provided to the affected families. Each household will also be provided with a large building knife (160 THB each), to hasten the rebuilding process.

Budget

Budget remaining from Emergency relief efforts in Myanmar and Thailand

In 2009 and in 2011 respectively, Fu Tak lam Foundation had supported us in providing emergency relief to the victims of [Cyclone Nargis](#) in Myanmar and the [Bangkok flooding](#) in Thailand. The donations were restricted and a total amount of approx. 1,500,000 THB is remaining from these two projects. We got the approval from Fu Tak lam Foundation to use the remaining 1,500,000 THB for today's emergency. The missing 500'000 THB still have to be raised. With 2,000,000 THB, 113 smaller houses can be built to benefit more than 500 refugees.

Risk Assessment

In spite of the volatility of the socio-political conditions, we consider this a low risk project. With TBBC being the sole organisation responsible for delivering food and shelter to the nine official refugee camps along the Thai-Myanmar border, they are familiar with coordinating emergency relief efforts in such circumstances and collaborating with the refugee camp committee, local government officials, UNHCR and other NGOs in their area of work. Thus far, TBBC has demonstrated that it is highly effective and efficient in responding to this emergency crisis.

Thank you

We hope to have your support for this project.

We would like to also like take this opportunity to thank you for your support to us and our partners in delivering emergency relief to the people from Myanmar.

Should you have any questions about this proposal, please do not hesitate to contact Daniel Siegfried (daniel@childsdream.org).

Best regards,

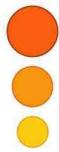
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marc Jenni'.

Marc Jenni
diversethics Foundation
Founder

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Daniel Siegfried'.

Daniel Siegfried
diversethics Foundation
Founder

Chiang Mai, 27th March, 2012



Project Photos



Umphium refugee camp



Camp situation at the end of raining season



Situation just before the fire



Fire started from a small area in the camp



Fire spreading from the small area



Flames got bigger as more houses were burnt



The fire spread quickly due to the wind



Fire getting out of control



Many houses were on fire



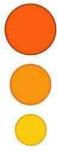
Big flames and fire from burning houses



Thick smokes and flames over the camp



The sky is red from the fire



View from when the fire started to stop



Situation after most fire has stopped



View after everything was burnt



Houses and toilets were turned into ashes



All belongings and kitchen utensils burned



Some belongings that were found after the fire



People going back to their area



Assessing the damage



Big lost after the fire



Salvaging whatever they can find



Search around what were remained



Families evacuated to the road side