



AusAID Management Response

Evaluation of Thai-Myanmar border programs (2012)

May 2013

The humanitarian situation of around 140,000 refugees from Myanmar living in camps in Thailand is one of the most protracted in the world. In 2012-13 Australia provided \$3.5 million for humanitarian assistance on the border, taking our support to over \$21.5m since 1999.

In recent years Australia's support has been channelled through three Australian NGOs: Act for Peace; APHEDA Union Aid Abroad; and Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) to four implementing partners in Thailand:

- The Border Consortium¹ – to provide food, shelter and camp management
- International Rescue Committee – to provide health services in three camps
- ADRA Thailand – to provide vocational training in three camps
- Mae Tao Clinic – to provide health services and training for migrants.

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the appropriateness of Australia's assistance to refugees on the Thai-Myanmar border to inform Australia's future programs, in the context of rapid political change and an anticipated increase in Australia's aid program in Myanmar.

The evaluation found that Australia's current aid program in the camps is appropriate and provides essential humanitarian assistance that is based on good quality needs assessment.

KEY RESULTS NOTED BY EVALUATION (in 2011-12)

- Over 1000 refugees graduated from Thai certified vocational training courses. These skills will help people increase their incomes in the camps and provide a livelihood should people return to Myanmar.
- 10,341 people received health consultations including: midwifery services for 125 new pregnant women; immunisation for 115 children and rehabilitation services for 48 people with physical disabilities.
- 142,638 bars of soap and 5,943kg soap powder was distributed to camp residents to help reduce the spread of disease in the camps.
- Over 9,000 refugees received food, shelter and basic household items like blankets and clothes.

¹ At the time of the evaluation The Border Consortium was called the Thailand Burma Border Consortium.

The evaluation recommended that AusAID consider the following for future support to the Thai-Myanmar border:

1. increasing flexibility of funding by moving to a multi-year funding arrangement
2. intensifying capacity building for leadership and governance of refugee communities
3. developing the quality and dissemination of information
4. focusing the program on preparedness of refugees for return to Myanmar
5. increasing potential for integration with programs in Myanmar
6. increasing opportunities for dialogue between Thailand and Myanmar-based organisations
7. increasing capacity for monitoring outcomes and promoting shared learning.

What we have done since the review

AusAID has:

- deployed an Australian Civilian Corps specialist to the Thai-Myanmar border to increase monitoring of our assistance and improve opportunities for dialogue with key partners
- developed criteria for a new program of support on the Thai-Myanmar border from July 2013 that identifies preparing refugees for potential return as a key objective of the program
- increased the flexibility of funding in the new program of support by offering multi-year funding to partners and providing Thailand-based partners with the opportunity to apply for direct funding from AusAID
- made integration of Thai-Myanmar border programs with the Australian aid program in Myanmar as a key objective of the new program
- invited organisations to submit concepts for programs to improve refugees access to information so they can make an informed choice about a potential return
- continued to support capacity building by helping refugees to manage the camps themselves and working with partners to include leadership skills in their vocational training programs.

Next steps

AusAID will:

- finalise the selection of partners through a competitive process to ensure we support programs that best meet the needs of refugees and prepare them for a potential return home
- work with partners to increase opportunities for monitoring and shared learning to ensure assistance remains relevant as the context on the Thai-Myanmar border continues to change.