

Camp Profile *(Source: UNHCR)*

Size of population

	Households	Persons
Total population size	2,251	9,325



Vulnerable Individuals

- **157** children (**1.7%** of the general population) are separated from their parents
- **8.0%** of the total population suffers from physical or mental disabilities, or serious medical conditions.
- Approximately **4.0%** of the general population is considered elderly and in need of special attention
- **15.4%** of the camp is under the age of 5 years requiring close monitoring for nutritional and health concerns, and the high birth rate indicates an ongoing need for pre- and post-natal care.
- A total of **118** households (representing **7.4%** of the overall population) include woman who have been determined to be women-at-risk, generally because they are female-headed families.
- There are also a number of women in the camp who have been subjected to sexual and gender-based violence, including domestic abuse

Nature of Persecution and Flight

The refugee population in Tham Hin has been admitted to Thailand for temporary protection on a prima facie basis, and as such no individual status determination process has been undertaken. The majority of the group fled to Thailand in early 1997, following a major offensive against the Karen National Union (KNU) by the government army of Burma, which resulted in the KNU losing command over the area that had for several decades been outside the control of the central government. The population fled overland to Thailand in large waves over a period of some four months, and sought refuge in the area near the present location of Tham Hin. The Thai authorities granted temporary asylum to the group, and the international community established a network of NGOs to provide basic care and assistance; UNHCR was not granted a presence along the border until 1999. It should be understood that the flow of refugees from Burma had been steadily increasing over the two decades prior to the establishment of Tham Hin in 1997, and it is believed that more than one million Burmese refugees have sought protection in Thailand at various times since the beginning of the Karen independence movement in the 1950s.



For the most part, the population in the camp shares a common ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic background. This background is inextricably linked to the persecution the group faced in Burma at the hands of the Burmese authorities. Since the time of British rule there has been a growing level of animosity between the majority Burmese population in the country and the

various ethnic groups, particularly the Karen, who for more than the past half century have fought a continuous armed struggle for independence against the central government. The Karen, like most other ethnic groups in the country, have been subjected to systematic, widespread ethnic-based persecution by the central authorities. Forced labor, forced relocation, repression of cultural and religious identities and generalized and deliberate discrimination have been persistent aspects of the life of the Karen.

The Karen have also suffered from persecution for real or imputed political opinion – both on an individual basis and as a group. The Burmese government, in its long-standing civil conflict with the Karen, has generally associated all Karen with the armed resistance, and has been known to mete out punishment on entire villages for presumed support of the KNU. Such atrocities as the burning and forcible relocation of villages, arrest, imprisonment, and torture of suspected supporters of the KNU, generalized harassment and intimidation of the population, and the rape of ethnic women were commonly seen in the area of Burma from where the population fled.

Individuals who were in any way associated with the KNU or other anti-government organizations, either politically or militarily, are particularly vulnerable to serious abuse by the Burmese government; it has often been reported that close family members of persons with such affiliations were also frequently arrested and abused by the authorities for their imputed political views. Among the refugees in Tham Hin, some 1,215 persons (roughly 13.0% of the overall population) are members of families in which at least one individual has claimed to have been involved in political activities against the Burmese government.

Circumstances in the Country of Asylum

Under Thai law, all foreign nationals in Thailand without valid passports and entry visas are considered illegal immigrants; for the refugees residing officially in the camps, the Thai government has accorded temporary status allowing them to remain legally on Thai soil, provided they are formally registered through joint UNHCR-Ministry of interior procedures, and that they remain within the confines of the particular camp where they are registered. Any camp refugees who are found outside the camps without express authorization are subject to arrest, detention, and deportation, and to having their camp resident status revoked.



Of the nine camps in Thailand currently housing Burmese refugees, Tham Hin is widely known to have the worst conditions. The camp houses more than 9,000 persons, but is designed to accommodate less than half that number; refugees' homes are small and cramped, and are built literally side-by-side along very narrow pathways. This overcrowding, combined with the lack of appropriate sanitation and water facilitates for a population of this size, create a situation where serious public health risks are endemic, and where other social problems associated with such conditions are reaching alarming levels. It is because of the worsening conditions in Tham Hin that UNHCR and the US government have proposed that group resettlement activities in Thailand be initiated here as a matter of priority. In terms of the services provided to the refugees in Tham Hin, all camp residents are provided free medical care as well as primary education through the tenth grade.

Demographics

Nationality and Country of Origin (UNHCR)

All refugees in Tham Hin camp are considered to be Burmese nationals, though a large number were born in Thailand. The majority of the population, some 96.5%, originate from Taninthayi Division (formerly Tenasserim Division), which is located opposite Thailand's Kanchanaburi and Ratchaburi Provinces. Smaller numbers originate from Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) Division, Bago (Pegu) Division, Kayin (Karen) State, Mon State, Arakan (Rakhine) State, and Yangon (Rangoon) Division. The population is predominantly of rural background, with only negligible numbers having origins in urban centers.

Gender

- Male 51%
- Female 49%

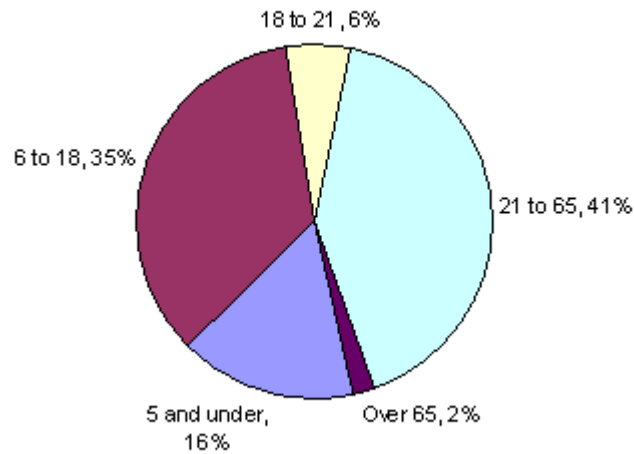
Ethnicity

- Karen 95%
- Burmese 1%
- Other 4%

Religion

- Christian 90%
- Buddhist 9%
- Other 1%

Ages



OPE Thailand: Tham Hin Camp



Social Profile

Birth Rate

There is an average of 30 births per month. Reproductive health services are available in camp.

Marital Status (Over 16)

- Married 68%
- Single 26%
- Other 6%

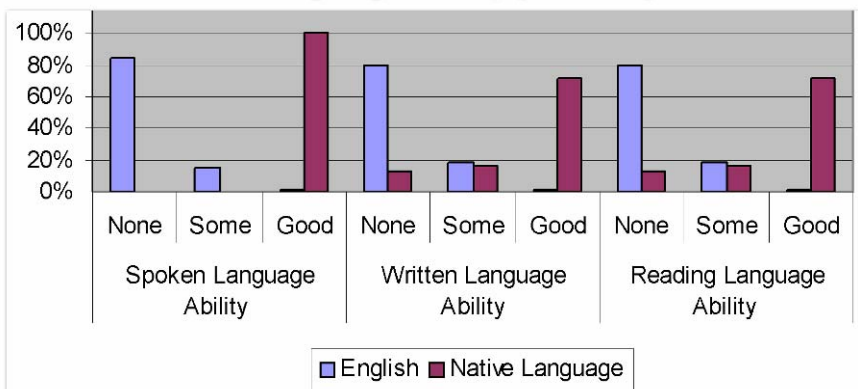


Health Profile

Generally, the population is in good health. Cases of watery diarrhea, dysentery, dengue fever, malaria and skin disease are the main causes of health problems. The camp has a low rate of infant and maternal mortality. Anemia, malaria and syphilis are the most prevalent concerns during pregnancy. Nearly all children under the age of one year old are fully vaccinated. Additionally, nutrition levels for the entire population are good, including children under five.¹

Literacy/Languages

Language Ability (Over 18)



Native Language (Over 18)

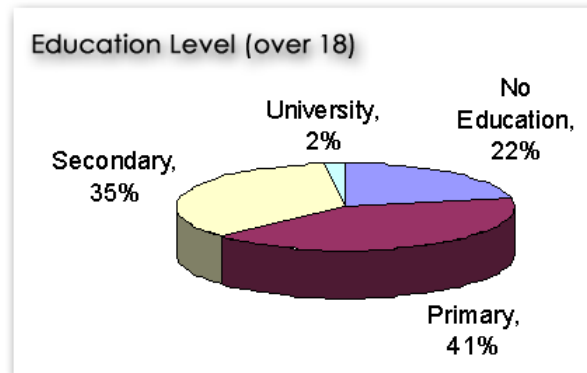
Karen	94%
Burmese	5%
Other	1%

Other Languages Spoken (Over 18)

Burmese	63%
Thai	30%
Karen	5%
Other	2%

¹ International Rescue Committee (IRC) Health Program in Thailand, 2006.

Education



Employment

Of those residing in Tham Hin and currently scheduled for DHS interviews, the majority of the employed population are involved in fishing, farming, or other agricultural activities. Secondly, many are involved in the education sector, either as professional teachers, or trainers involved with adult education within the camp. Additionally, there are a number of skilled laborers including tailors, interpreters, mechanics, or other professional services. A large amount of the population also has experience in the health sector, either as medics or nurses, or as trainers or water and sanitation workers. The remaining employed population has been working as daily-hired laborers, performing various, mainly manual tasks.

Cultural Orientation

IOM conducts a cultural orientation for all refugees departing Thailand for the US 14 years and older. The orientation runs for three days using the standard guidebook.

Modern Conveniences

The vast majority of the population likely has exposure to television and radio but limited experience with modern public transportation or other modern conveniences. Most of the population is aware of television, radio, and the internet; however, their actual use of the equipment may be limited. The most common technology used would be the radio as many of the refugees listened to Burmese radio.

Likely, 'Western' banking experience is quite limited, though they surely have some experience with currency transactions. While it



is difficult to ascertain the availability of electricity or other utilities in the country of origin (varies by location,) a large number of this population was actually born in Tham Hin and therefore have never had access to electricity or running water.

Additionally, those who have reached school age in Tham Hin have probably attended classes in the camp. Statistics available explore specific educational experiences of the older population (70% literacy rate in native language), but not the learning environment. Those under 30 years old were most likely taught in huts sitting on the ground instead of formal classrooms. The use of a classroom setting is not part of the culture as 'hands-on' teaching is preferred to tables and desks. Furthermore, with the threat of war, the ability to organize groups of students in one classroom setting was not an option.

Additional Information

For additional information about Tham Hin visit:

<http://www.tbcc.org/camps/sangklaburi.html#tamhin>

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