

## **International Organization for Migration/Bangkok Cultural Orientation Southeast Asia Program**

### **ANNEX 2: TAK PROVINCE REFUGEE CAMPS**

#### **Mae La camp**

Mae La camp is located in Tak province, in the northwest part of Thailand. The camp is situated about 35 miles along a well-maintained road north of the large border town of Mae Sot. Driving time to the camp from Mae Sot is about 50 minutes. The camp is only about 5 miles from the Thai-Burmese border, and in the past has been subject to intermittent mortar shelling from Burmese or rebel Karen troops across the border.

The latest population figures from the Thai Burmese Border Consortium (TBBC) puts the population of Mae La at 49,796 people; this number is quite flexible, however, as new refugees fleeing the fighting in Burma arrive regularly and an unknown number are living in the camp unregistered.

There are two primary ethnicities present in the camp, the Karen (including speakers of both the S'Kaw and Po dialects), who make up approximately 70% of the camp population, and the 'Muslims', who make up another 25% or so. Other ethnicities present include Mon, Chin, Kachin, Shan, and Burman.

The camp is administrated by the Thai volunteer army organization, under the direction of the Thai Ministry of the Interior. Access to the camp is restricted, and permission must be obtained from the camp commander for any refugee to leave, even to conduct the IOM physical examinations.

#### **Umpiem camp**

Umpiem camp is located just over 60 miles to the south of Mae Sot, and about 6 miles from the Thai-Burmese border. The mountainous terrain makes the one-and-a-half hour drive to the camp a stomach-churning experience. Surrounded by mountains, the climate in the camp is more temperate than tropical, and it rains frequently throughout the year.

The latest estimates put the population at just over 20,000 people, primarily Karen and Muslim, as in Mae La, with small numbers of other ethnicities.

#### **Nupo camp**

Located in the remote Umphang district of Tak province, Nupo camp lies approximately five miles from the Thai-Burmese border. It is about 140 miles, a four hour drive, from Mae Sot, and 40 miles, a one-and-a-half hour drive, from Umphang, the nearest sizable town. The journey can take much longer in the rainy season, and many sections of the road are poorly maintained.

The latest population figures put the population of Nupo at 15,533, with the same majority mix of Karen and Muslims, and a still sizable minority of Burmese 'PoC's (Persons of Concern) who were relocated from the cities by the Thai government in 2005.