



Keeping Track of Refugees from Burma

Stephanie Spencer, M.A.
TB Control Branch
TB Epi Network Meeting
June 21, 2006
Richmond, CA

Objectives



- ❖ Where are these refugees from?
- ❖ Who are these refugees?
- ❖ Why did they leave?
- ❖ How do they get to the U.S.?
- ❖ When will they arrive in the U.S.
- ❖ Where will they resettle in U.S., CA?
- ❖ What is their TB rate likely to be?
- ❖ How do we keep track of them?

Summary: What to expect this year

~11,000 refugees from Burma will be resettled



→ 9,000 ethnic **Karen** from Tham Hin refugee camp in Thailand

→ 1,400 activists who were living in Thai cities (now in camps)

→ 1,300 ethnic **Chin** refugees in Malaysia

~ at least 7,150 will be resettled in U.S.

~ at least 3,500 will be resettled in CA



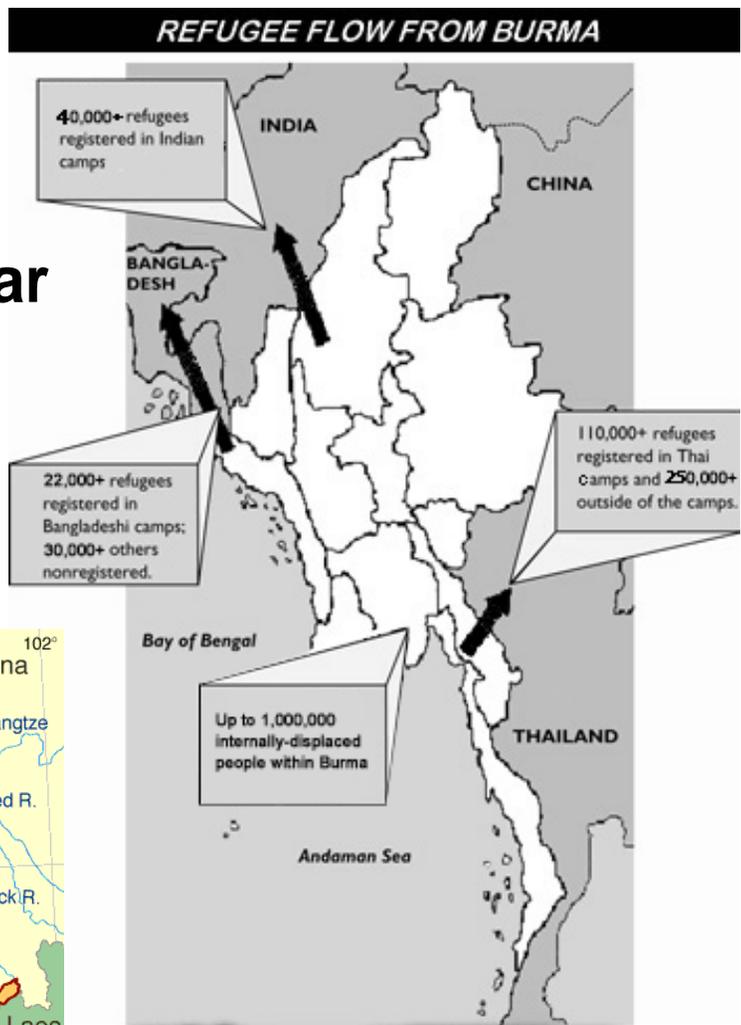
Burma/Myanmar

Chin, Mon,
Karenni, Shan,
Rakhine states

Burma/Myanmar in Asia

Borders:

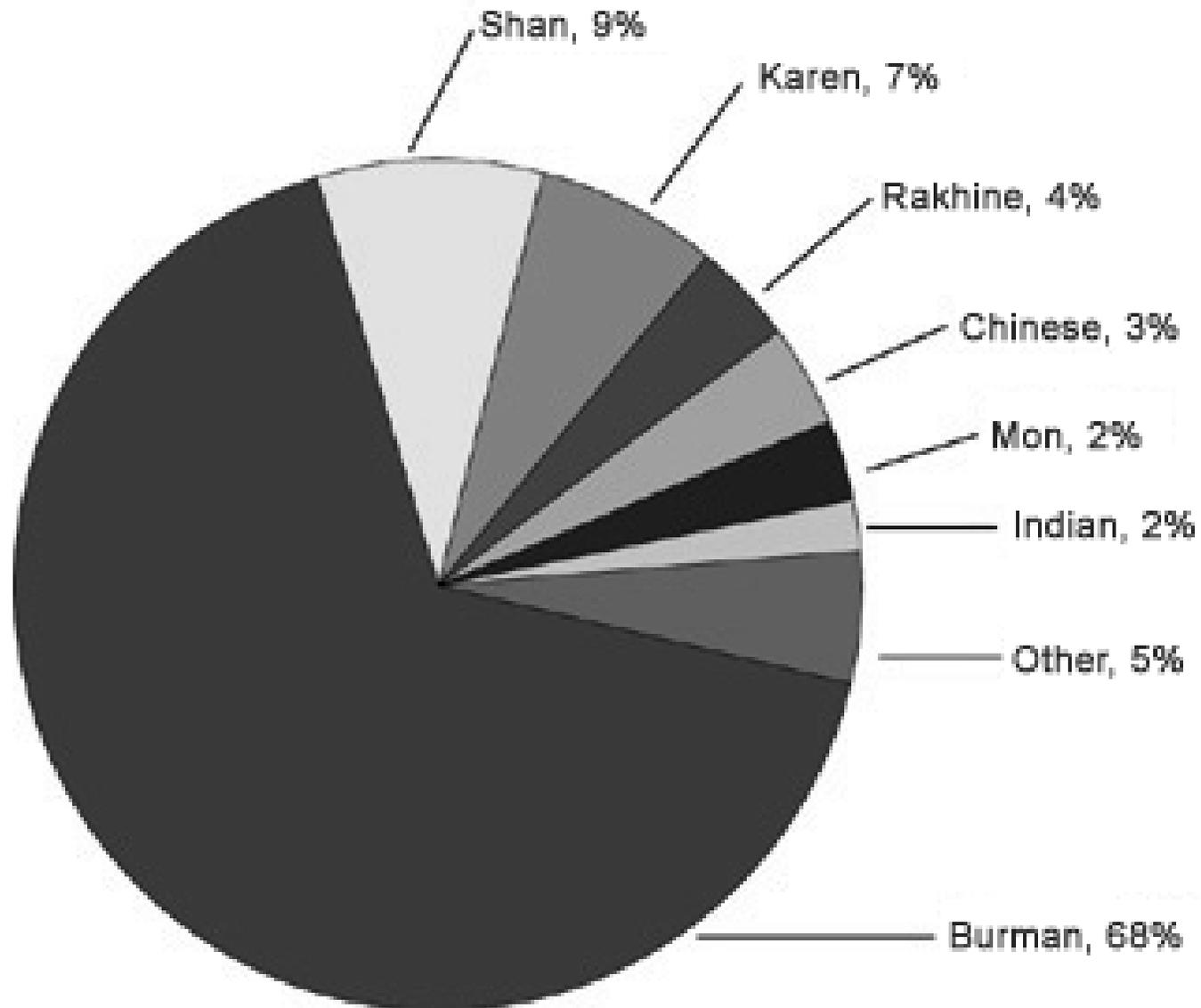
Thailand, India,
Bangladesh,
China,
near Malaysia



Refugees:

- Karen, Mon, Shan → Thailand
- Rohingya → Bangladesh & India
- Chin → Malaysia

Ethnic Groups in Burma



Where are refugee camps in Thailand?



Myanmar Thailand border

FICSS in DOS

Field Information and Coordination Support Section

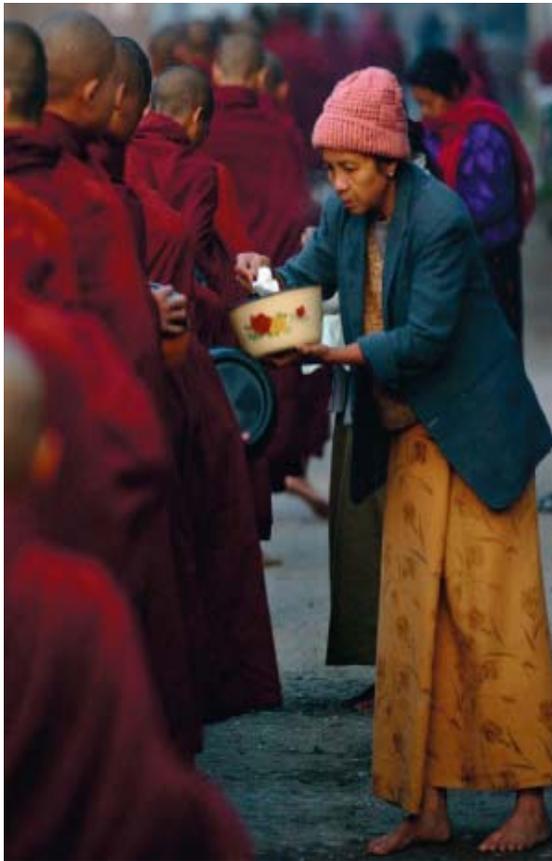
Division of Operational Services

As at end March 2006

Email: mapinfo@unhcr.org



Burma/ Myanmar History



Kingdoms

1057 - First Burman kingdom; becomes Theravada Buddhist

1287 - Shan kingdom established

1752 - Burman Kingdom — fought Mons, Arakanese, Thais

British Colony

1885 - Burma becomes a province of British India.

WWII

1945 - Britain liberates Burma from Japanese w/Aung San

1947 - Aung San assassinated

Independence

1948 - Burma becomes independent—U Nu prime minister

1949 - Karen Free State declared

**MANY ETHNIC MINORITIES FORM ARMIES AGAINST
ETHNIC BURMAN GOVERNMENT**

One-party, military-led state

1962 - U Nu ousted in military coup by General Ne Win,
Socialist Programme Party sole political party.

1982 - Burmese army takes over many ethnic states

ETHNIC MINORITY PEOPLE BEGIN FLEEING BURMA

1988 - State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC)

Martial Law

1989 - SLORC declares martial law, renames Burma
Myanmar, capital, Rangoon, becomes Yangon.

1990 - Aung San Suu Kyi & National League for Democracy
(NLD) win general election—military ignores result

1991 - Aung San Suu Kyi awarded Nobel Peace Prize

1997 - SLORC→State Peace & Development Council/SPDC

2001 - Burmese army, Shan rebels clash on Thai border.

2006 - Capitol city moves from Rangoon to central Myanmar
Worst Burmese army attacks on Karen in 10 years 7



Why are they refugees?

- ✘ Largest ethnic group is the Burman people—culture and language related to Tibetan & Chinese
- ✘ Burman dominance over Karen, Shan, Rakhine, Mon, Chin, Kachin, etc. ethnic groups includes using Burmese as national language in schools & government, forced labor & military conscription
- ✘ The Burmese gov't attacks on other ethnic groups since 1984 caused over 1M people to become internally displaced (IDPs), and 600,000 to flee to other countries—only 300,000 registered refugees and eligible for resettlement.

Refugees from Burma in Thailand



- ❖ Living in 9 refugee camps along the Thailand-Burma border
- ❖ Thai government will not let people from Burma become permanent residents or citizens
- ❖ So, people from Burma must stay in refugee camps, live illegally in Thailand, go back to Burma, or resettle in a third country
- ❖ In 2005 Thailand required all refugees from Burma living in Thai cities to move to refugee camps if wanted to be resettled

Tham Hin Refugee Camp



- ✓ Ethnic Karen
- ✓ Most are Christian
- ✓ First refugees settled there in 1997
- ✓ From rural villages, not cities

- ✓ Until 2005, residents could go in and out of Tham Hin for work, to sell things, for health care
- ✓ Thai gov't now requires refugees to stay in camp
- ✓ Worst over-crowding of all 9 refugee camps
- ✓ No room for gardens
- ✓ Worst sanitation, not enough healthcare

How refugees are resettled

- ✓ Registered as refugees by U.N. or other agency, e.g., International Rescue Committee—must show they are fleeing persecution, and not just looking for a better job.
- ✓ Cleared by U.S. State Dept. (if they want to resettle in U.S.) and Dept. of Homeland Security.



- ✓ Medical screening by International Organization for Migration (IOM)—same protocol as for Hmong
- ✓ After medically cleared, IOM makes travel plans
- ✓ Voluntary Agencies in U.S. arrange for arrival

Where are Tham Hin refugees in this process?



- ✓ Registered as refugees
- ✓ IOM is conducting medical screenings
- ✓ Patriot Act held up further processing until March 2006 (material support clause & KNU)
- ✓ Voluntary Agencies have been getting some notifications, and a trickle of arrivals
- ✓ Will have several hundred arrive each month now

Thai Refugee Camp



Where in the U.S. will they go?

- ❖ Fort Wayne, IN has the most Burmese **refugees**—2,000 to 3,000—in the United States. Local relief groups assisted 700 Burmese to resettle since 1990, expect another 115 this fall.
- ❖ Others resettled in Indiana from around U. S.—a tolerant community, affordable housing, factory jobs, Buddhist temples, Asian groceries.
- ❖ Other places with large Burmese **immigrant** populations, where **refugees** *may* resettle:
CA, NY, IL, MA, PA, OH,
MD





Where in California will they go?

- ✘ Where ethnic Burmese populations already are:
 - ✘ Bay Area (Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Mateo, Santa Clara, SF, Solano)
 - ✘ L.A., Orange County
- ✘ According to Bay Area CBO
 - ✘ Bay Area



What is TB Burden among refugees from Burma?

- ✓ Very hard to get good epi data:
 - Burmese government is VERY secretive
 - Lab facilities uneven or not available
 - Epi data not collected or not reliable
 - Incidences and risk factors vary tremendously by region (see Johns Hopkins SPH report)
- ✓ WHO considers Burma in top 22 countries contributing to world burden of TB infection and TB disease
- ✓ Significant evidence of high rates of MDR (up to 4% of cases); TB drugs available on black market
- ✓ Significant evidence of high HIV rates and IDU
- ✓ Similar TB burden to Hmong could mean importation of 30 TB cases and 5 multidrug-resistant TB cases (2006)

Summary of key points

- ❖ ~20,000 to 30,000 people from Burma in U.S. (~300,000 Hmong)
- ❖ People from Burma mostly immigrants, ethnic Burmans, many educated professionals
- ❖ New refugees from Burma
 - ❖ are from different ethnic groups;
 - ❖ they speak different languages;
 - ❖ are from rural villages; and
 - ❖ they may not settle near current populations of Burmese.
- ❖ There are not many CBOs
- ❖ **In 2006, expect ~ 3,500 in US**



How will we keep track of them?



Hmong

- Hmong (1 ethnic group)
- Hmong (1 language)
- Laos (country of origin)
- Persecuted b/c CIA allies
- Thailand (1 refugee camp)

“Burmese”

- Karen, Shan, Chin, Mon, Rohingya, Burman (ethnic *groups*)
- Karen/Burmese, Shan/Burmese, Chin/Burmese, Mon/Burmese, Rohingya/Bengali, Burman/Burmese (*languages*)
- Burma/Myanmar (country of origin)
- Persecuted because of ethnic identity
- Thailand, India, Malaysia, Bangladesh (refugee camps)

Summary of possible FUTURE refugees from Burma



- ~140,000 refugees from Burma in 8 remaining camps in Thailand
- ~8,000 Chin and Rohingya refugees from Burma in Malaysia
- ?? Chin refugees from Burma in India
- ~19,000 Rohingya refugees from Burma in Bangladesh
- ?? Other Muslim ethnic groups from Burma in Malaysia

References



www.freeburmacoalition.org/

[//news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/country_profiles/](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/country_profiles/)

[//fwnextweb1.fortwayne.com/ns/projects/burma/Flashfiles/final_printed_book.pdf](http://fwnextweb1.fortwayne.com/ns/projects/burma/Flashfiles/final_printed_book.pdf)

www.irc.org (international rescue committee)

www.refugeesinternational.org

www.alertnet.org (reuters)

www.theworld.org (public radio international)



Glossary

- ❖ Burma/Myanmar – historical and official new name of country. Each has political connotations.
- ❖ Burman – majority ethnic group in Burma
- ❖ Burmese – language of Burman ethnic group and national language of country of Burma; second language of minority ethnic groups
- ❖ Refugees from Burma – people of any ethnic group fleeing Burma who resettle in U.S.

Further Reading

Myanmar Backgrounder: Ethnic Minority Politics, 2003 May 7. International Crisis Group. www.crisisgroup.org

Phyu S, Lwin T, Ti T, Maung W, Mar WW, Shein SS, *et al.* *Drug-resistant tuberculosis in Yangon, Myanmar*. *Scand J Infect Dis* 2005;37(11-12):846-51.

Beyrer C, Mullany L, Richards A, Samuals A, Suwanvanichkij V, Lee T, Franck N. *Responding to AIDS, TB, Malaria and Emerging Infectious Diseases in Burma: Dilemmas of Policy and Practice*. March 2006. Report of the Center for Public Health and Human Rights, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Ngamsuk Ruttanasiatian. *Htam Hin Refugee Camp*. Impact of Globalization, Regionalism and Nationalism on Minority Peoples in Southeast Asia. 17 Nov 2004, Chiang Mai, Thailand. www.kwekalu.net/photojournal1/refugees/articlerefugee_01.html.