

EI TU HTA

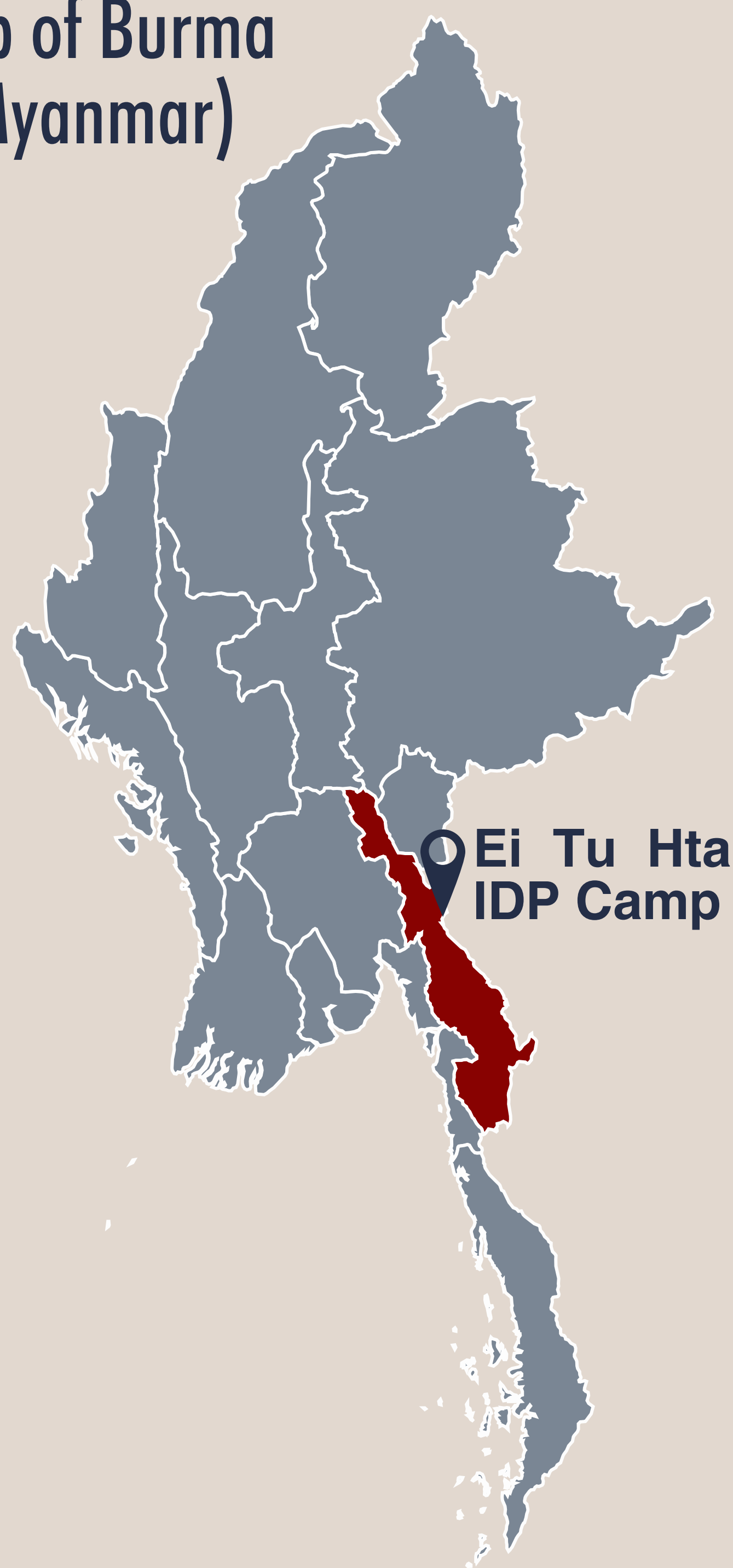
INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSON CAMP

#KeepSupporting
#NotSafeToReturn
#CrossBorderAid



Situation Overview

Map of Burma
(Myanmar)



■ Karen (Kayin) State

Introduction

Long-standing international food aid to Ei Tu Hta IDP (internally displaced person) camp ceased in October 2017, and it is now uncertain how the residents' basic needs will be met in the future.

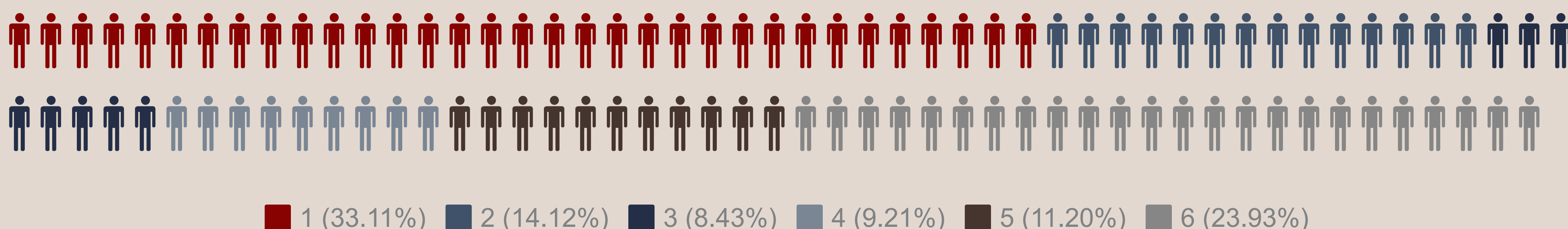
Since 2006, Ei Tu Hta has provided refuge for thousands of Karen civilians fleeing armed conflict and Burma Army abuse in northern Karen State. Burma Link urges the international donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to maintain their vital support until the IDPs' livelihoods are sustainable or until they are able to voluntarily return in safety and dignity.

Background

Ei Tu Hta IDP camp is located on the Thailand-Burma border, in mountainous terrain along the banks of the Salween River. The area sits within Brigade 5 of the Karen National Union (KNU) – the political organization representing the Karen – which is one of the eight ethnic armed groups that signed the 'Nationwide' Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) with the Burma Government in October 2015. Since the peace process began, the Karen State has been increasingly militarized by the Burma Army, and the state is one of the most landmine-infested areas in the world. To this day, IDPs in Ei Tu Hta continue to seek protection and to rely on international assistance.

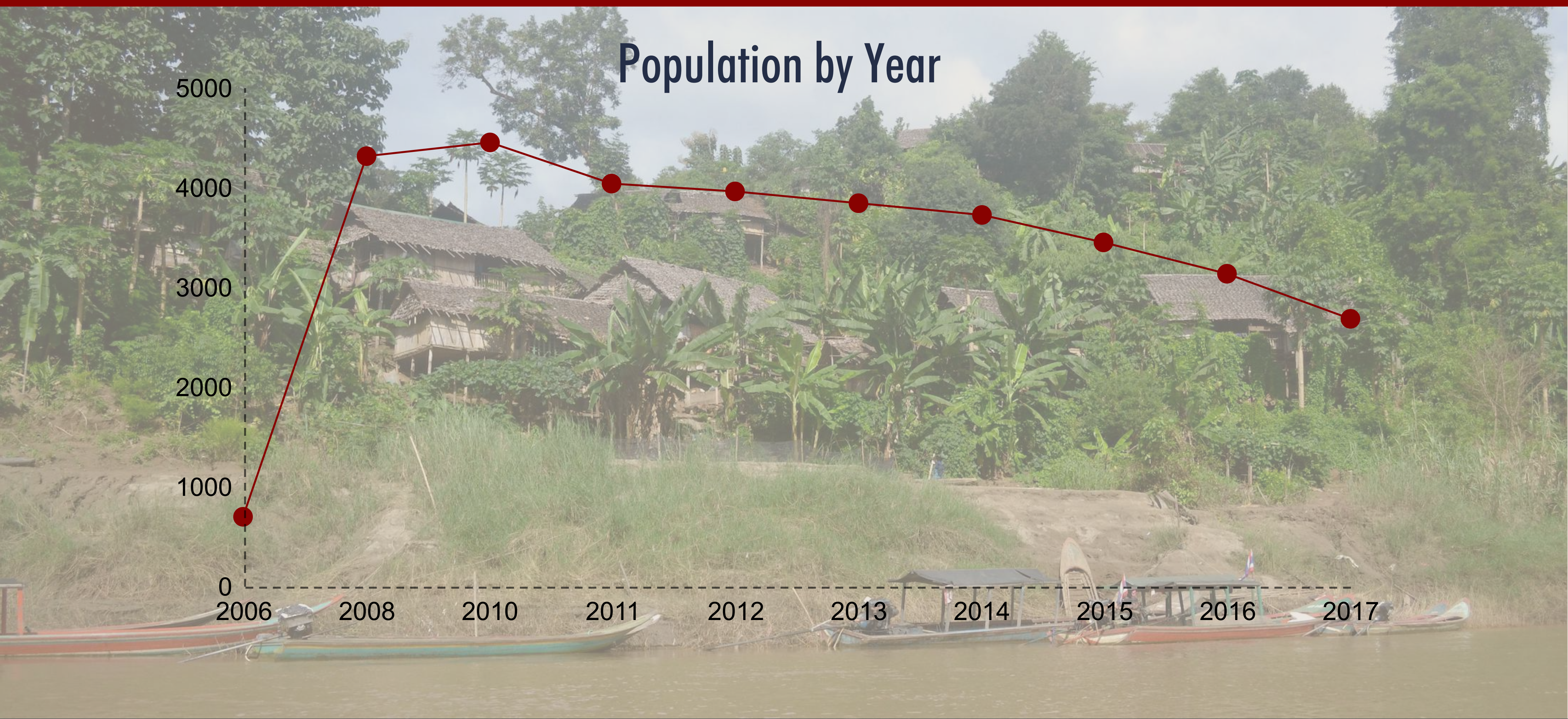
Population

As of October 1, 2017, according to the Ei Tu Hta camp committee, the camp had a total population of 2,673, including 3 newborn babies. The 'main camp' encompasses sections 1-5, with section 6 (U Wee Klo) located upstream the Salween River. The graphic below shows the camp's population as it is divided between each section. (*Newborns' section unspecified – not included in graphic below*).



Note: There is no official English spelling for Ei Tu Hta or U Wee Klo.
Other used terms for Ei Tu Hta include Ei Thu Hta, Ei Tu Ta and Ee Tu Hta. U Wee Klo is at times spelled U Way Klo.

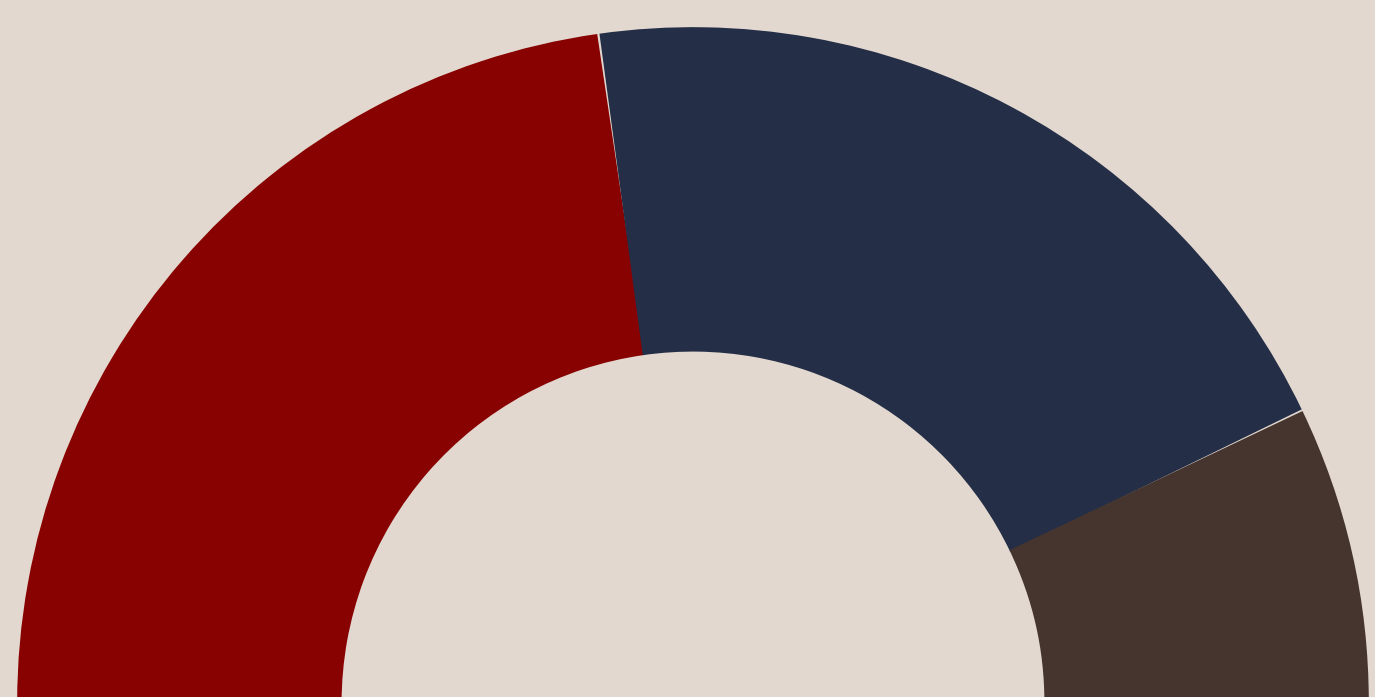
Camp History & Demographics



Camp History

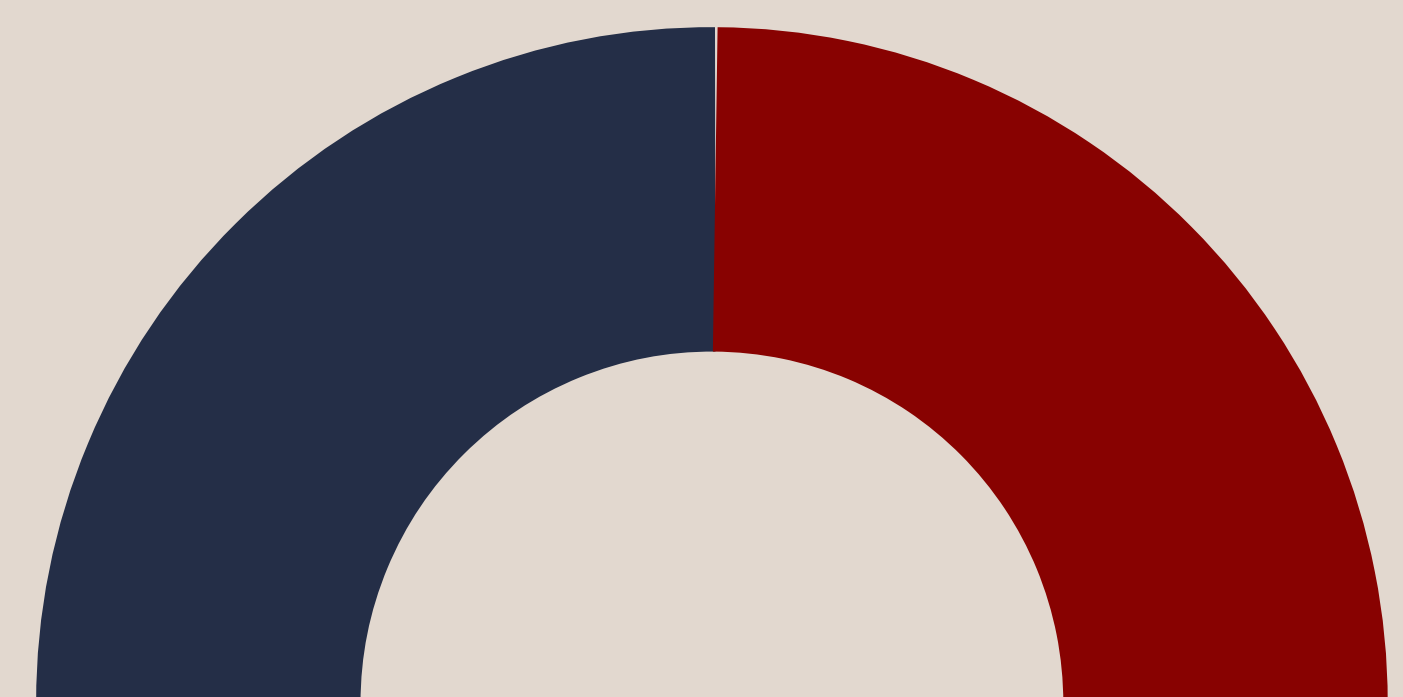
Ei Tu Hta camp was established in 2006, when around 700 Karen civilians fled from Burma Army attacks on the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) Brigade 2 areas in northern Karen State. The IDPs mainly came from Taungoo District, but also from Nyaung Lay Bin and Mu Traw [Papun] Districts. Although the camp was intended as a temporary refuge, the population steadily grew over time as armed conflict and Burma Army abuse continued. The camp population started declining after 2011, when the narrative of democratic transition and ceasefires signed between ethnic armed groups and the Burma government led to reductions in donor support. Although the KNU signed a preliminary ceasefire with the government in January 2012, and subsequently inked the NCA in October 2015, the situation on the ground remains dire. The peace process is uncertain, ceasefires are fragile, and the Burma Army continues to abuse the rights of civilians particularly in rural ethnic areas. Thousands of Karen have been newly displaced by conflict since the NCA was signed, and Burma Army has expanded their territory and built new military camps in Karen areas. The nearly 3,000 IDPs who remain in Ei Tu Hta express well-founded fears and life-threatening obstacles for return.

Population Age (October 1, 2017)



■ Over 18 (45.53%) ■ Ages 5-18 (40.22%) ■ Under 5 (14.25%)

Population Gender (October 1, 2017)



■ Male (50.21%) ■ Female (49.79%)

Current Situation

Food & Water Supplies



TBC rice storage,
empty since October 2017

Food Rations

As of October 1, 2017, Ei Tu Hta no longer receives any international food aid. Previously, aid was provided through The Border Consortium (TBC), an aid coordination network along the Thailand-Burma border, primarily as rice rations distributed in collaboration with Karen Organization for Relief and Development (KORD) and other Karen community-based organizations (CBOs). The amount of aid previously provided was as follows (unverified numbers based on interviews with camp leaders in Ei Tu Hta):

Rice rations per month

- **2006-2008:** 16 kg per person + other food items such as fish-paste and beans
- **2009-2010:** 16 kg per person + salt, discontinuation of supplementary food items
- **2010-2017:** 12 kg per adult / 6 kg per child (lasts on average 20 days) + salt
- **October 2017:** No more support

Water Access

Ei Tu Hta's main camp comprising of sections 1-5 relies on water from a stream that flows down from nearby mountains. Water transport systems have been built in the camp by KORD and church groups. However, the system is largely inoperative today as materials have deteriorated over time.

The SPHERE Handbook, initiated in 1997 by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and a group of NGOs, defines a set of minimum standards in key aspects of everyday life. One standard is that a household should be no

further than 500m from the nearest water point. On average 500m is about 6-10 minutes walking.

According to the Ei Tu Hta IDP Supporting Committee, retrieving clean water can take anywhere from fifteen minutes to one hour.

Currently, section 6 of the camp, U Wee Klo, has a sufficient amount of clean water. Sections 1-5, or more than 75% of the population, however, do not have enough drinkable water, and have an urgent need for working pipes.

"We do not get enough water due to the farming and the problem with [maintaining] the pipelines. In the summer, we go and carry water from the stream. We shower and drink from the same stream. We put virus killer in the water and we drink it. So, it causes us to worry for our health too [...] As we are facing with water shortage, we have no choice but to use the water from the stream. Sometimes, the groups of cows or buffalos come play in the stream. So, the water becomes dirty and we drink that water."

– Saw Kai Doe, camp committee leader



Current Situation

Health Services

Sections 1-5

- 1 clinic with 2 unpaid medics
- Treats around 100 patients per month
- Patients requiring more intensive care are sent to Mae La Oon refugee camp in Thailand (4 hours away by boat)

Section 6

- No clinic
- 2 unpaid medics
- Patients requiring more intensive care are sent to Mae La Oon refugee camp or the clinic downstream at the main camp

Common Health Concerns

The common health issues in the camp depend on the weather and seasons, but include dengue fever and diarrhea, and other issues caused by the unsanitary water and malnutrition. In March 2017 alone, medics in the camp reported that at least 20 people (mostly children under the age of 2) in sections 1-5 suffered from diarrhea.



Outside Support

The camp suffers from lack of medicine. Medical donations have become increasingly irregular over the years, and medications such as Normal Saline (NS), Zinc, and Ciprofloxacin, Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) are urgently needed. The camp medics also need medical equipment such as Transform Scops.

Health support for Ei Tu Hta section 6 was discontinued in 2011, and obtaining medicine is dependent on individual donations. The medics often know how to treat the patients, but are unable to provide medicine.

Since 2016, there has been no more provision of financial support for patient transportation to Mae La Oon refugee camp when more complex care is needed. Most patients cannot afford to pay the transportation costs themselves.

Current Situation

Education

Sections 1-5

The cuts in food aid have had detrimental effects on educational services. In June 2017, both high schools in Ei Tu Hta were closed due to the impending cuts in rice rations, when the teachers had to start looking for other work to support for their families. Most youth in the camp are now unable to continue past middle school as their families have no means to pay for the transport and school fees to continue education elsewhere. The future of other education levels is now also uncertain.

The main section of the camp has:

- 1 primary school
- 2 middle schools

Section 6 (U Wee Klo)

Education in U Wee Klo is supported by the Karen Women's Organization (KWO) and Italian association Moses Onlus. Due to continued support from Moses Onlus, education in U Wee Klo has steadily grown and is presently unaffected by the ration cuts. Moses Onlus supports teachers and dormitory students with food, blankets, mosquito nets, and personal hygiene and other materials.

U Wee Klo has:

- Nursery school supported by KWO
- Primary/middle school supported by Moses Onlus

U Wee Klo School Growth

- 2007 Grades 1-4
- 2009 Expansion to Grade 1-7
- 2011 Expansion to Grade 1-10

U Wee Klo school supported by Moses Onlus



"Even though they [Burma Government] set up schools in the Karen villages, they do not allow to teach the Karen literature and language at school because they want the Karen culture to disappear."
– Saw Soe Khu, education committee leader



Funding Cuts

No More Rice Support

Premature Cuts

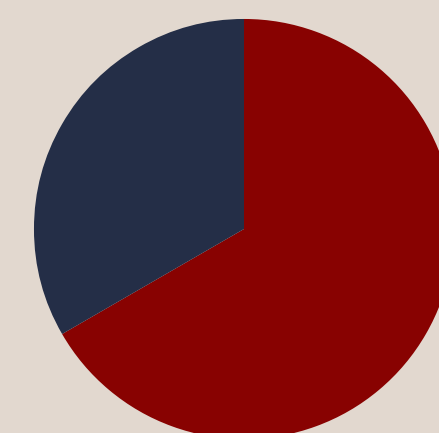
At the beginning of 2015, TBC announced to the Karen CBOs who had been providing services in the camp that aid provision would cease by September 2015. Preparedness Committee was formed to facilitate the return of IDPs and to inform them that food assistance was coming to an end. Subsequent advocacy efforts successfully ensured that aid distribution was extended until 2017.



Since December 2015, a number of discussions and surveys have been undertaken by Karen CBOs, TBC, and KNU to ensure that camp residents' opinions were heard and understood. Three surveys revealed that:

■ **Less than 1/3 of IDPs were willing to return to their homes**

■ **Over 2/3 were afraid to return**



As of October 1, 2017, TBC ceased food aid provision to the camp due to “competing humanitarian concerns”. The camp now relies on individual donations and support from associations like Moses Onlus. This support remains as vital as ever, but with the cutting off the monthly rice supply, the residents have no guarantees for their survival.

Agriculture & Lack of Land

- Some IDPs find daily work in nearby Thai villages especially during the harvest season, but opportunities are limited in the remote area.
- Some IDPs are able to cultivate small lands around the camp. Due to a shortage of arable and available land, however, agriculture provides no comprehensive solution for the camp's large population.
- Individuals who are unable to work or cultivate land, such as single parents and the elderly, are particularly vulnerable and heavily rely on international food support.

Small plots of land cultivated in Section 1



Funding Cuts

Obstacles to Return

#1

Safety & Security

- Uncertain peace process and ongoing conflict in ethnic areas
- Fragile ceasefires and sporadic conflict in Karen and other ceasefire areas
- Ongoing and increasing Burma Army militarization of Karen and other ethnic areas
- Ongoing human rights abuses of Karen and other ethnic civilians and serious violations of international law by Burma Army
- Karen State is among the most landmine infested areas in the world

"The Burma Government wants to take control over us and wants to make our [Karen] ethnic group disappear. For this, the Burma Government and the military take advantages of the ceasefire process [...] The government's plan is to persuade the donors to stop giving us funds."

– Saw Soe Khu, education committee leader

#2

Socio-Economic Factors

- Lack of access to land
- Lack of employment or livelihood opportunities
- Lack of basic services such as health and education
- Lack of political solutions that guarantee equal rights and self-governance

“ We have made up our minds that we will not return home yet. We will face more difficulties if we go back. They are not doing a true peace process. So, we want to stay here and make a living here. Our villagers should have peace, freedom and the right to have jobs, to work to earn for a living. If there is no freedom, we cannot go back yet.” – Saw Kai Doe, camp committee leader

#3

Insufficient Planning

Food aid was cut despite having no comprehensive plan or sustainable solutions in place for IDPs' continued survival and livelihood.

They Need Your Support

Messages to the Int'l Community



“Our current situation is that we can neither go back nor stay [...] I want the international community to carefully observe the real situation in [Burma] before they tell us to return.”

– Saw Kai Doe, camp committee leader

“We are in desperate situation and cannot move forward without your help. We are asking you to continue to support these IDPs [...] so that they and their children will have a better life guarantee to return home when there is genuine peace and political stability reinstates.”

– Padoh Mahn Mahn, chairperson of Ei Tu Hta IDP support committee in the emergency appeal (Sep 4, 2017)

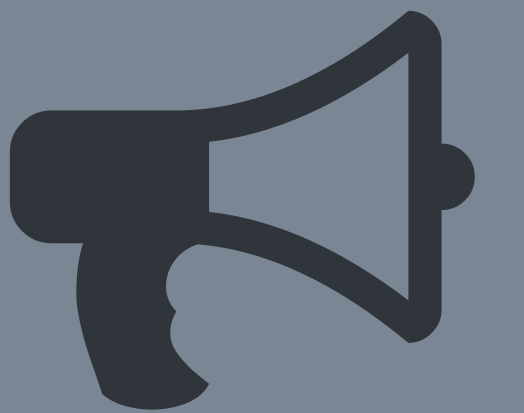


“I would love the world to check the situation of Burma’s peace process in detail, and think deeply whether it is a real peace process or not.”

– Naw Thein Nay, KWO chairwoman in Ei Tu Hta

Discover More Voices from Ei Tu Hta:

Read the full Burma Link interviews with Ei Tu Hta camp leadership:
<https://www.burmalink.org/category/karen-idp-stories/>



Read More Information About Ei Tu Hta:

Ei Tu Hta IDPs Supporting Committee Letter of Appeal for Continue Cross Border Humanitarian Aid: <https://www.burmalink.org/ei-hu-ha-idps-supporting-committee-letter-appeal-continue-cross-border-humanitarian-aid/>

Asia Times article “ Myanmar’s Forgotten and Forsaken War Victims”:
<http://www.atimes.com/article/myanmars-forgotten-forsaken-war-victims/>



About Keep Supporting Campaign and how to help: <https://www.burmalink.org/keep-supporting-displaced-populations-along-thailand-burmamyanmar-border/>

Keep Supporting Campaign factsheet (PDF): <https://www.burmalink.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Keep-supporting-IDPs-refugees-factsheet.pdf>



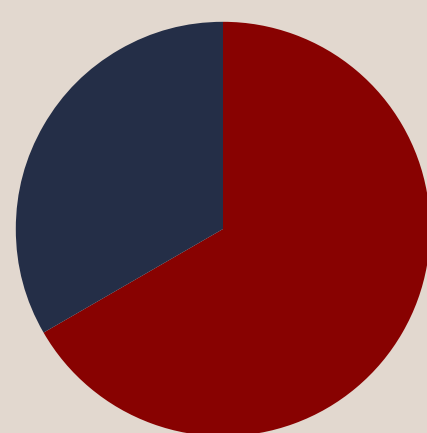
Get Involved

Long-standing international food aid to Ei Tu Hta IDP camp ceased in October 2017, and it is now uncertain how the residents' basic needs will be met in the future. They still need support.



2,673

**Displaced
persons
currently
living in Ei Tu
Hta**



**2/3s
afraid to
return
home**

How to Help

Donate directly to the Ei Tu Hta IDP camp Supporting Committee – Bank details: <https://www.burmalink.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Keep-supporting-IDPs-refugees-factsheet.pdf>

Follow Keep Supporting Campaign on Facebook and Twitter. Use the #KeepSupporting #NotSafeToReturn and #CrossBorderAid hashtags to spread the word about the cause.

Contact:

Ei Tu Hta IDP Supporting Committee: ettidpsc@gmail.com

Burma Link: office@burmalink.org

Burma Link website: www.burmalink.org

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Endnote: The information presented was collected through several interviews with camp residents and camp leaders in March and October 2017 as well as from Ei Tu Hta IDP Supporting Committee emergency appeal published in September 2017. When possible, the information was verified from TBC reports and other sources.