

COERR Emergency Relief for Victims of UMPIEM FIRE!

Umpiem refugee camp in Tak province's Pop Phra district had suffered from 4 fires happened during January – early March 2012. The 3rd and most damaging occurred on 23 Feb at noontime. Within only 30 minutes, 5 out of 16 Sections were completely affected (Section 6-10). 566 families (2,830 persons) completely lost their homes and almost all of their belongings. A further 350-400 families living in close proximity to the fire dismantled their roofing to prevent further spread of the fire, and required shelter support and replacement of some basic NFIs (non-food items). Very fortunately, there was no fatality and only about 10 persons reported to be injured.

131 extremely vulnerable individual refugees (63 children & 68 adults) completely lost their homes to the fire, while the homes of 57 other EVIs (20 children & 37 adults) were partially damaged. Furthermore, 4 of COERR Camp-based Staff (Community Social Workers) also lost their homes during the fire and took temporary shelter at COERR Social Service Center (SSC) in Zone A.

COERR' 2 Staff were on-site at the time the fire broke out, alertly and promptly phoned-in the news to COERR Mae Sot Office. A team of our staff was quickly formed and brought 2 pick-up loads of emergency items (some food, blankets, clothes and face masks) to the camp. COERR and TBBC were the first 2 NGOs to be on-site and respond to this emergency.

An Emergency Response Committee was then formed coordinating the following sectors: Food, Non-food Items (NFIs), Shelter, Health, Water & Sanitation, Protection, Education. COERR was appointed as the Sector Lead for NFIs, with ADRA as second lead. COERR Staff in Mae Sot put in extra effort and worked well as a team to effectively and successfully handle all NFIs needed for the Umpiem relief operations.

Following the fires, warnings have been issued from Camp Commander/Camp Committee of all 3 camps (Mae La, Umpiem and Nupo camps in Tak province) to prepare sand bags and water in all houses to mitigate possible fires.



On February 23, the fire took place in Umpiem Camp where houses are crowded. The wooden and bamboo houses with leaf roofs fed the fire that it took only some minutes to spread in wide range, made it difficult to control and put out.



After the fire, only smoke and ashes remain



Thousands of homeless people staying in the temporary shelter





Houses situated along the roadside had become ashes



The affected person living in a tent



Need assessment and emergency relief plan for operations has started while smoke above the fire area reluctantly subsided.



Drinking water has been delivered in no time



Meeting for planning before operations





Preparation for Relief Supply Delivery





Non-food Items were delivered through the camp authority for the fire affected refugees



COERR truck brings relief supplies to the camp



Visiting the homeless refugees whose houses were burned by the huge fire





The Fire affected people awaiting assistance



Fast coordination is the heart of emergency relief work