

INFORMATION RELEASE

Bay Area Burmese Community Organizes in Preparation for 2010 US Census

San Francisco, CA March 6, 2009 – To ensure an accurate count of the Burmese population for the upcoming 2010 US Census; a grassroots effort has been underway, since 2008, to organize the ethnically and racially diverse San Francisco Bay Area Burmese Community. In the 2000 Census the Burmese population was recorded at only 18,000 throughout the United States, which is believed to be a low number considering the number of immigrants who have come to the U.S in the past 20 years. Because of the low numbers, the community did not reach necessary population thresholds for government assistance and much needed services for the growing population. The Bay Area population alone has thousands of individuals who identify themselves as coming from Burma or as Burmese.

Through a series of town hall meetings a small ad hoc committee was able to effectively reach out to enough community leaders to form a representative committee aptly named the “2010 US Census Committee for the People of Burma”. The committee has members from the majority of the ethnic and religious groups but continues its outreach to be as inclusive as possible. As a further step towards achieving their goal of an accurate count, the committee have partnered with the U.S. Census Bureau as an official Complete Count Committee; thus enabling them to have access to the resources and expertise of the Bureau’s Partnership Specialists who have been working for decades with hard to count populations.

The primary focus of the outreach and organization is to communicate the benefits to the community in an accurate count as well as address fears they may have dealing with the government in general. The benefits would include Burmese language versions of government forms and tests, translation services, and the ability to qualify for grants, aid and scholarships from foundations and the government. The Census data determines the distribution of \$300 billion dollars annually. Local decision-makers depend on this data for planning community services, additional social services and who gets needed funding, such as community development block grants.

Addressing fears the community has in filling out the Census form as Burmese or filling out the forms at all is another issue. Any of the data collected on the forms is used strictly for statistical analysis and is protected by Federal law. Every person living in the U.S. is required to participate therefore legal status is not questioned.

Since the formation of the committee in January 2009, the members have created materials to distribute to the community at different events in both English and Burmese. These materials include a sample Census form showing how the form should be filled out when received in March of 2010, Q & A brochures, presentations and flyers for census jobs. The focus of the materials and presentations is on communicating the benefits of the community coming together and being counted as well as addressing the reasons that may have contributed to the low counts historically. These materials are available for viewing and downloading on the committee's website at www.usburmesecensus.net.

For additional information on the 2010 US Census Committee for the People of Burma visit: www.usburmesecensus.net.

About the 2010 US Census Committee for the People of Burma:

The 2010 US Census Committee for the People of Burma is a grassroots committee formed exclusively to unite the Bay Area Burmese Community to be accurately counted for the upcoming 2010 US Census. The committee welcomes all ethnic and religious groups and individuals who identify themselves as originating from Burma regardless of race.

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