



burma children medical fund

BCMF | Operating to give Burma's kids a future

Burma Children Medical Fund (BCMF)

seeking funding for

Burma Adults Medical Fund (BAMF)

Program Manager

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BACKGROUND

Mae Tao Clinic and Burma Children Medical Fund

People are not only fleeing Burma because of Cyclone Nargis or the oppressive and brutal military Junta, they are now also fleeing to find health care. Medical assistance is inaccessible to many people living in Burma due to the high costs of treatment and the lack of free clinics. Less than 3% of national expenditure is allocated to health, compared to 40% that is allocated to military expenditure^{1*}, even though Burma is not involved in any external conflicts. There are also an estimated 1 million Burmese living in Thailand and many cannot access the Thai health system.

Mae Tao Clinic was established in Mae Sot, Thailand in 1989 to meet the needs of Burmese migrants in Thailand and Internally Displaced People in Burma. Its founder is Dr. Cynthia Maung, a Karen doctor who fled Burma along with many others in 1988. Dr Cynthia has gained international recognition and accolades including the Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership in August 2002 (the "Asian Nobel Peace Prize"). Mae Tao Clinic provides free basic health care for people from Burma but does not have resources to perform specialized surgery or funding to refer patients to other hospitals for treatment.

The Burma Children Medical Fund (BCMF) was set up in response to the increasing number of children from Burma presenting at Mae Tao Clinic who required surgery. The only chance these children have to undergo surgery is to be referred to a hospital in Chiang Mai. Before BCMF was set up, children who required surgery had their symptoms treated and lived either severely incapacitated or died prematurely. BCMF gives these children a chance to a healthy life by funding their medical treatment. All children have a right to healthcare, and we strive to provide this opportunity for the children from Burma. Please see our website www.burmachildren.com for further information on the children BCMF has funded.

Funding for BCMF

In 2007, *Child's Dream* (a charity organization supporting children in need www.childsdream.org) agreed to sponsor BCMF, funding all child referral patients from Mae Tao Clinic under the age of 20 years. This partnership has been ongoing for almost one year and is proving very successful. Everyday more people are hearing about the program and asking for help, including adults.

Current situation

We are now faced with a difficult situation; we have referral funding for all our younger patients from Burma but no funding for older patients (above 20years). Young adults present at the clinic with malignant and benign tumors, severe fractures/deformities, abscesses/cysts, eye diseases and other conditions that require specialized surgery. Currently, we cannot refer them to Chiang Mai and are forced to tell these patients that there is nothing we can do, even though we know we could save their lives or improve their quality of life, if we had funding.

Most patients understand that funding to treat children is a priority, however in the long run many children are suffering as their primary carer and provider cannot work due to a condition that can often be corrected with minor surgery or further treatment. It is difficult for us to raise the money for adult surgery but it is even more difficult to turn these people away with no hope.

^{1*} "Open Society Institute (OSI). 2001. *Burma: Country in Crisis*. <http://www.burmaproject.org/CRISIS/index.html> referred to in the Back Pack Health Worker Team (2006). *Chronic Emergency Health and Human Rights in Eastern Burma*.

PROPOSAL

Expand BCMF to adult patients

The children's referral program has been such a success that we are now looking to expand the program to adult patients – **Burma Adults Medical Fund**. We have been able to secure funds for some adult patients on an ad hoc basis but as more patients come to the Mae Tao Clinic requiring treatment, this is becoming difficult. On the last pages of this proposal, we have included examples of three adult patients that received funding. You will see how a relatively small amount of money can completely change a person's life and help the community. After these successful cases, we are motivated to try to find additional funding and to create the Burma Adults Medical Fund (BAMF). We are seeking an organization or a group of individuals who will sponsor BAMF or one off adult patients to enable more people from Burma, no matter what their age, to receive adequate medical treatment.

How you can support this essential program

We are looking for a sponsor/s for BAMF to fund adult referrals from Mae Tao Clinic to Chiang Mai. You or your organization can adopt the whole program, choose a specific patient in need, make a one-off donation or set up monthly donations that will be used directly for the adult patients. If you would like to donate for a specific patient we can send you further information about the patients waiting for surgery and the estimated costs. We have a partnership with APHEDA – Union Aid Abroad who have kindly agreed to process all donations and issue Australian tax deductible receipts.

All the logistics and program procedures have been tried and tested in the BCMF program and BAMF will be tailored accordingly and adapted to suit any internal reporting or accountability protocols that you/your organization apply. For many Burmese people this program is the only way that they can access much needed medical care. With your support, we can make a positive impact on the lives of many people from Burma who have suffered so much over the years from natural and manmade disasters. We know that the program can work, we just require funding.

BAMF Staff

Kanchana Thornton is the Program Manager and has been working at the Mae Tao Clinic since 2001 as a volunteer through Australian Volunteers International. She was born in Thailand and has lived in Australia for a number of years. She graduated from UTS, Australia with Bachelor of Nursing, Post-Graduate Diploma in Maternal and Child Health. Kanchana has been working at the clinic as a Thai Government liaison coordinator, Child Health Program coordinator and Referral Program manager liaising between Mae Tao Clinic, Mae Sot Hospital and Chiang Mai Hospital.

The heads of each department at Mae Tao Clinic, who have all fled from Burma and have been trained at the clinic, will identify prospective patients. A staff member in Chiang Mai will act as the patient coordinator and liaison. Liz Doran is a volunteer with BCMF and helps coordinate the fundraising.

How BAMF will be administered

The program will be run as a partnership with Mae Tao Clinic. BAMF will be administered the same way as the children's program. Patients over 20years old, who require a hospital transfer to Chiang Mai, will be identified at Mae Tao Clinic by local staff and referred to the Program Manager, Kanchana Thornton. She will assess the urgency and the need for special medical procedures.

A decision will be made on the suitability of the patient taking into consideration many factors, such as cost/availability of resources, chances of survival without treatment, expected improvement in the

quality of life and overall prognosis. Cases with the greatest likelihood of being corrected with a single surgery will be given priority. The patient will firstly be transferred from Mae Tao Clinic to Mae Sot Hospital to be assessed. The first priority is to have the patient treated at Mae Sot Hospital, however, if more specialized treatment is required Mae Sot Hospital will sign a referral to Chiang Mai.

Not only do the patients require funding, they also require the expertise of our staff to ensure they arrive safely in Chiang Mai for their treatment. Without assistance from BAMF, it is extremely risky for Burmese migrants /refugees to travel outside of Mae Sot. The Program Manager has developed a working relationship with the Thai authorities and the hospitals in Chiang Mai over the years to ensure the safe passage for patients from the border to Chiang Mai. Once in Chiang Mai, we have a staff member who translates between the patients and the hospital staff and arranges travel from the safe-house to the hospital.

How funds will be used

The medical procedure, surgery and cost of treatment for the eligible patient will be paid for using money from the adult program fund. The money will not be used for general clinic expenditures. It will be used for accommodation, transport, food, local staff, communication costs or to buy a medical device or crucial medicine that would not otherwise be available to the patient (e.g. wheelchair, thyroxine for a patient with hypothyroidism).

Estimated Budget summary

A mini bus was recently donated by *Child's Dream*; it transfers patients to Chiang Mai an average of three times per month and often there are one or two seats vacant. These transport costs are currently covered by *Child's Dream*. We estimate that we can include an additional 20 adult patients over the year at no extra cost to BCMF or BAMF. If the program expands, and special adult trips are required, we will need to revisit these costs and discuss with Child's Dream.

In Chiang Mai, the patients stay at a safe-house run by the Migrant Assistance Program (MAP) at a cost of 80Thai Baht per day (\$AUD2.45*). Most patients stay an average of one month, but this varies.

BCMF has recently employed 1 staff member in Chiang Mai (funded by *Child's Dream*) to liaise with the hospital to: translate; organize travel; and to coordinate hospital appointments. If we expand the program to include adults we will look at hiring another part-time local staff member in Chiang Mai and increase the Program Manager's salary to take on the additional work. The salary contributions will be approximately 5,000TB (AUD\$152.439) per month for each. The staff will also require accommodation and transport costs in Chiang Mai at 3000TB (AUD\$90) per month.

The main costs are the medical expenses, which average at 70,000TB (AUD\$2,135.28) per patient. Most patients stay in the hospital an average of half a month and we provide a food allowance at the hospital of 300TB (AUD\$9) for each patient per week.

Below, we have put together an estimated annual budget for the whole program, based on our experience with BCMF. With approximately, **1,672,060 Thai Baht** (AUD\$51,006.50) annually we can help an average of 20 patients per year. Obviously, this amount is not feasible for most people, and

* *Conversions Rates as at 15 July 2008 – www.xe.com*

every donation (no matter how small) that contributes to this fund will go a long way to ensure the program can help all those in need, no matter what their age.

Estimated Budget

	Thai Baht /month	Quantity	No. Months	Total per year
ACTIVITY PERSONNEL				
Volunteer part time in CM - Salary	5000	1	12	60,000
Program Manager – Salary	5000	1	12	60,000
Patient Transport in CM	1560	20 adults	1	31,200
Transport CM to/from Mae Sot	<i>No cost</i>	<i>No cost</i>	<i>No cost</i>	<i>No cost</i>
NON-PERSONNEL INPUTS				
Medical Costs	5833.33	20 adults	12	1,400,000
Patient Accommodation	2400	20 adults	1	48,000
Food allowance (at the hospital)	1286	20 adults	.5	12,860
Program Manager Accommodation	3000	1	12	36,000
ACTIVITY SUPPORT				
Admin – stationary etc.	1000	1	12	12,000
Telephone /communications	1000	1	12	12,000
TOTAL - Thai Baht				1,672,060
TOTAL - Australian Dollars				51,006

Reporting

If you sponsor one patient or the whole program, we will send a photograph and information detailing the patient/s you have sponsored including the patient's social and economic situation (similar to the profiles on the following pages). We will provide updates; reporting when a patient's surgery is scheduled and when it has been completed. After the surgery is completed we will send the post operation profile with photographs and an itemized account to you. We have found that these pre and post-operation profiles are an excellent way to document the positive effect this program has on a person.

If a group of individuals or an organization provides long term funding (monthly donations) we will also provide profiles of the patients receiving your funding and send accounting reports every four months setting out costs and updates on the patients. If an organization or individual/s would like to pay directly to the hospital, we will forward the hospital bill to you and the details of the hospital's bank account.

We would also welcome anyone who was interested in funding the program to come and visit the clinic and the patients at Mae Tao Clinic.

Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to consider this proposal. We know that this program will provide a vital avenue for people from Burma to receive essential health care that is not available to them. On the following pages are examples of adults that were fortunate to receive funding. You will see how helping one person benefits a whole community. The gratitude the patients and their families constantly express shows how worthwhile this program is. The sad reality is that if we don't provide this service, nobody will, and more people will die needlessly. We hope you will be inspired to get involved with BAMF to give Burmese adults, who cannot afford medical treatment, a chance to live a healthy life and to enable them to support their families and community.

Please donate

Please visit our website for all donating details: http://burmachildren.com/index.php/how_to_donate APHEDA – Union Aid Abroad, kindly support our program and process all the donations and issue Australian tax deductible receipts. Please confirm when donating through APHEDA that the funds are for "Burma refugees- Mae Tao Clinic".

If you are interested in making monthly contributions, a tax deductible receipt will be issued at the end of the financial year (July) with all your donations from that year. If 80 people make tax deductible donations of AUD\$50 per month we can provide surgery to 20 adults per year. If we receive more donations, we can continue to expand the program and help more patients. We know there are people in the refugee camps along the border that require surgery and the camps cannot provide specialized surgery or fund transfers to Chiang Mai. If we receive more funding we can also start helping refugees based in the camps.

Contact us

If you are interested in BAMF or if you would like any further information please email administrator@burmachildren.com , kanchanathornton@hotmail.com or liz_doran@hotmail.com.

Alternatively, if you are in Chiang Mai or Mae Sot we would love the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this proposal further. Please contact us and we will arrange a meeting time.

If you know of any other organization or individuals that would be interested, we would greatly appreciate it if you would forward this proposal to them.

We look forward to hearing from you.

ADULT PATIENTS WE HAVE FUNDED— *More adults need our help*



U La Pu was a special case for BCMF. While the fund usually deals only with children under 20 years of age, an exception was made for this man, because of the nature of his condition. He is 51 years old from Beelin, Tha Hton Province, Burma.

U La Pu presented with a tumor on his upper lip. The tumor began to get worse in March 2007, and he tried to get treatment in Poh Prah hospital but received only a cream to apply to the upper lip and some medicine. Neither had any effect and the condition continued to worsen.

U La Pu and his wife have been working in and around Poh Prah for the last 4 years. They have no work permits, and earn between 60-70 baht a day (AUD\$1.80-2.15). Income is irregular and sometimes they may earn nothing for days at a time. One trip to the hospital in Poh Prah cost the couple 1000 baht (AUD\$30.50). When the condition started to worsen they decided to make the long and costly trip to Mae Tao Clinic, costing them 50,000 Kyat (AUD\$63) about one month's wages. U La Pu and his wife have 3 children living in Burma, two daughters aged 20 and 15 and one son aged 17. The children live with their grandparents in Beelin while their parents try to earn a living on the Thai border to be able to afford to send them to school.

Shortly after U La Pu arrived at the clinic in April 2007 he was referred to Mae Sot Hospital and it was confirmed that the growth was cancerous. Mae Sot Hospital advised that without a referral to Chiang Mai hospital, there was nothing they could do. U La Pu's wife said that when they heard it was cancer, they were very worried because, if untreated, it was likely that it would spread through his body and he would eventually die. U La Pu is the primary provider for the family and as his condition worsened he could no longer work. U La Pu knew that without treatment not only would he suffer, but also his family.

There is no funding at Mae Tao Clinic to refer adult cases to a hospital in Chiang Mai. Thankfully, BCMF raised money for this special case and U la Pu was transferred to Chiang Mai for treatment. He started his treatment in May 2007 and after chemotherapy and radiation for three months he said that he was happy to be feeling better and also looking better.

U La Pu has gone from worrying constantly about the possibility of not being able to support and be with his family much longer to being so happy to have recovered. He looks a great deal better and his happiness radiates through him. He looks forward to many more years spent with his loved ones.

He said that he is forever grateful to his sponsors for the treatment and he would like to thank them, he knows he could not have afforded it without their generosity.



De Pel is a 40 year old father of 4 children, who works as a subsistence rice farmer in Karen State, Burma. De Pel's village is located in the heart of the Karen state of Burma where fighting between the militaries of the government and the Karen National Union (KNU), has been ongoing for almost 60 years. De Pel's eldest son attended school but the younger three are less lucky, as the school in the village has been closed because of military unrest.

The family often has too little food, and relies on rice and vegetables found in the surrounding jungle. It is for this reason that De Pel went into the jungle looking for food. It was during this hunting expedition that he was attacked by a bear, which jumped out at him, biting his face and scratching his arm. Fortunately, he was able to get away as the bear ran off into the jungle, after which he was able to slowly make his way back to the village.

De Pel was unable to travel to hospital that evening as the roads are too unsafe at night. The next day, he and his wife travelled to Ko Krit hospital where they were told that their only options for care would be to travel to Yangon or to Thailand. Knowing that they could not afford treatment in Yangon, the two made the trip to the Mae Tao Clinic a day later. However, once at the clinic, De Pel was told that the clinic did not have the facilities to reconstruct his face. With the wound open, it was bound to get infected and it was highly likely that De Pel would die as a result. The only option was to be transferred to Chiang Mai hospital. De Pel and his wife obviously could not afford treatment in Chiang Mai and unfortunately Mae Tao Clinic does not have funding for adult referrals.

Due to the severity of De Pel's wounds and the high risk of serious infections BCMF and some individuals raised money to fund De Pel's transfer to Chiang Mai hospital. They grafted skin from his arm and legs onto his face to cover the wound and created a nose. He says he no longer has any pain, just some numbness and is happy to have a new face.

He and his wife came back to the clinic for a follow up in July 2008 and brought a large bag of gifts; including Karen jam and freshly picked orchids to give to the staff to show their gratitude. After the bear attack they thought he was going to die. During the interview De Pel's wife kept repeating "I didn't think it was going to be like this" - expressing how grateful she is that De Pel is alive. De Pel and his wife wanted to thank everyone who helped them and tell them that they are very grateful.

Without BCMF De Pel would not have survived long. They said if they ever get the opportunity to return the favor they will. Thanks to the donors, De Pel now has the opportunity to see his children grow old and continue to support his family.



Ma Khin Myint presented at Mae Tao Clinic with a large growth on her upper lip called a haemangioma, an abnormal mass of blood vessels, which is present from birth. It has slowly grown throughout her life and when she arrived at the clinic it hung down from her upper lip, dragging her face and extending up inside her nose. It caused her great pain, heavy nosebleeds and she was afraid to go out into public because her neighbors teased her and thought she was abnormal.

Ma Khin Myint is originally from Pha Ar, about 1 day by bus from Mae Sot. Ma Khin Myint is 27 years old and lived by herself. She was married but is now divorced and has no children. She said that she had not been able to work because when she worked her lip would bleed. She did not go to school because her family could not afford it and she did not like to go out in her village because people teased her, so she stayed at home. Her family supported her and without them she said she would not have survived. Ma Khin Myint said that all that she has ever wanted was to have a normal life and look like other people.

BCMF does not usually take patients who are older than 20 years but Ma Khin Myint was considered a special case because of her severe deformity and the impact it had on her life. In April 2006 Ma Khin Myint went to Chiang Mai for surgery. She had been waiting at Mae Tao Clinic for 1 year before funding was raised and she could start her operations.

It has now been more than two years since Ma Khin Myint started her medical quest to regain some dignity and pride in her face. After several surgeries and skin grafting, her face is unrecognizable in comparison to two years ago.

Ma Khin Myint has many friends now and people tell her she looks great. She feels beautiful and all this makes her very happy. One of the problems was that she couldn't work anymore because of the pain and this made her feel very useless. Now she can work hard and be proud of herself. Ma Khin Myint can even speak Thai now because she spent so many months in Chiang Mai.

Ma Khin Myint said it feels as if Kanchana, the program manager for BCMF, is one of her parents and she is extremely grateful that BCMF and her donor were willing to help her. She is now confident she can lead a normal happy life.