



Burma Children
Medical Fund
Health for All



Eye Screening Report 2024

Introduction

BCMF began its eye screening project in 2015 and has since provided free eye screening services to marginalised communities in Burma and Thailand. The team travels to remote and underserved areas in both countries, offering services to individuals who may be living with undiagnosed vision issues or unable to access specialised eye care due to financial, legal or geographical barriers.



Group photo of BCMF staff and recipients during the eye screening mission at Mae Kasa Church, Mae Sot District, Tak Province, Thailand, on 10 May 2024.

In 2024, the project continued to carry out missions and expand its reach and impact. This report outlines patient data, key project highlights, plans for 2025, and beneficiary stories. The growing demand for these services underscores the ongoing need for accessible eye care across border communities.

2024 Project Overview



In 2024, BCMF conducted **12** eye missions in areas with low-income, migrant, and refugee populations in Thailand, as well as **3** in remote regions of Burma. A total of **3,827** people were screened, **1,824** pairs of eyeglasses were provided, including standard eyeglasses given on-site, and **186** pairs of sunglasses were provided to those with eye sensitivity to light due to various eye conditions. A further **9** individuals received special cylindrical eyeglasses from an optical shop with the support of BCMF. Before each mission, we collaborated with local village leaders to assess needs and plan logistics. This included ensuring that all equipment and supplies were in place ahead of time, preventing transportation delays when our BCMF teams arrived.

These efforts identified **116** individuals who required surgery, with **21** of them who will receive free treatment at a hospital as Thai citizens. **46** of the total individuals identified as requiring surgery, received free surgery through our partners. Our largest mission at Thoo Mweh Khee Learning Centre in Phop Phra District, Tak Province, involved screening **1,536** students, teachers, and villagers over four days, which demonstrated the critical need in these underserved communities.

As BCMF does not provide surgeries directly, our partnerships with Fiona's Eye Fund, Malteser International, Mae Tao Clinic, and Karen Aid have made a critical difference by bringing free cataract operations to isolated communities. By combining our network with their clinical expertise, we've built a full care pathway, from vision checks to operations. Our collaboration has significantly boosted our reach, ensuring complete eye care reaches people who need it most.

Eyeglasses were also donated to Malteser International (MI) Thailand, an international nonprofit organisation that provides basic health care services in **2** refugee camps in Mae Hong Son Province, Thailand. In 2023, BCMF trained a team of medics from MI to conduct eye screenings in the camps and provide standard eyeglasses to those who need it.



Project highlight

One of our highlights in 2024 was that we held an eye screening mission over three days in an internally displaced person (IDP) camp in Shan State, Burma. The team screened over **450** residents during this mission.

Furthermore, in November 2024, the BCMF eye screening team partnered with Fiona's Eye Fund, Karen Aid and Malteser International in two refugee camps– Mae Ra Ma Luang Refugee Camp and Mae La Oon Refugee Camp in Mae Hong Son Province, Thailand. The team participated in a four-day mission, travelling with the surgical team from Karen Aid. The BCMF team conducted eye screenings, provided eyeglasses to those in need, referred patients with cataracts to the surgical team, and assisted the surgeons during the surgery and with translation. A total of **37** patients identified by BCMF received surgery. BCMF also referred **1** camp resident requiring eye surgery for complex cataracts to the partner hospital, Maharaj Nakorn Chiang Mai Hospital.

Looking ahead: Plans for 2025

➔ Eye doctor

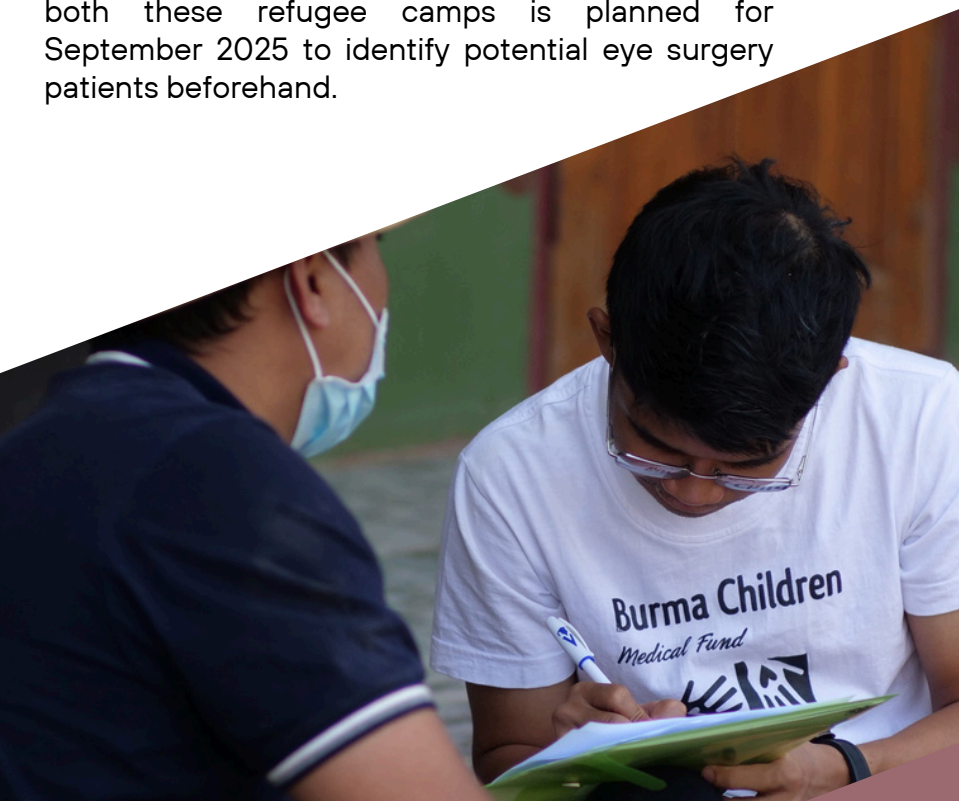
Dr Mon, an eye specialist, became a part of the BCMF team as well as working at Mae Tao Clinic at the end of 2024. She will attend the eye screening missions in the new year, supporting the BCMF team in identifying patients who need eye surgery. Furthermore, she will deliver further eye training and refresher workshops for BCMF staff, ensuring that the BCMF team continues to provide high-quality services during eye missions.

➔ Ongoing collaboration

In 2025, BCMF will continue its valued partnership with Karen Aid and Malteser International. Karen Aid is scheduled to return to Mae Tao Clinic from 24–28 March 2025 to perform cataract surgeries and will again visit Mae Ra Ma Luang and Mae La Oon refugee camps from 1–5 December 2025 to deliver the same services. BCMF will maintain its partnership role by supporting screenings, referrals, translation, and surgical assistance, as in previous missions. Additionally, an eye screening mission to both these refugee camps is planned for September 2025 to identify potential eye surgery patients beforehand.

➔ Eye screening expansion

BCMF also plans to expand its eye screening missions in Burma in response to increasing requests from Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps and underserved remote communities, while maintaining its current level of service in Thailand. A preliminary visit to Karenni IDP camps is planned for 2025 to assess the potential for holding a full mission there in 2026.



Recipients' success stories

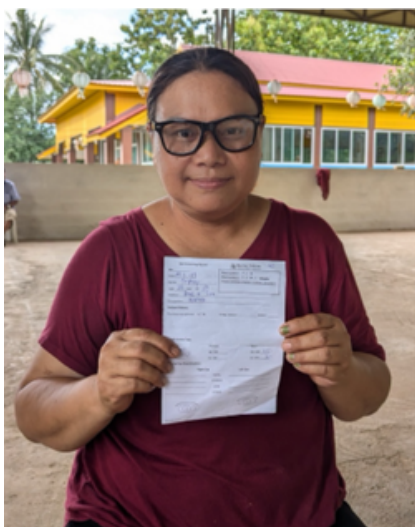


Khaing, 18 years old, is a student living at a school dormitory in Tak Province, Thailand. At 14, he injured his right eye playing football, leading to blurred vision. He could not afford treatment due to financial difficulties. The cost of eyeglasses, around 100,000 MMK was beyond what he could afford.

As his vision worsened, he began experiencing headaches. At a BCMF eye screening, he received a free eye test and eyeglasses. "I'm very happy," he said. "Now I can focus on my studies and hopefully get a scholarship to go to university."

Maw, a 50-year-old man, is a day labourer living on a farm in Tak Province, Thailand. For two years, his blurry vision made it difficult for him to read messages on his phone. As an undocumented migrant, he often worried about police encounters and avoided attending all medical appointments.

He had never received an eye examination until BCMF's eye screening mission. He was tested and given free eyeglasses to correct his vision. "This screening is great for people like me with no documentation," he shared. "Now I can finally keep in touch with my friends online again. Without this, I would never have received any eyeglasses."



Suphap, 48 years old, is a nutritionist at a primary school in Tak Province, Thailand. She had suffered from blurry near-sightedness for two years, which made sewing, reading and helping her children with schoolwork difficult. Although she was screened at Mae Sot Hospital, she did not receive any eyeglasses and is still unsure why. She did not follow up at a private clinic, as she could not afford the cost.

After hearing about BCMF's eye screening from school staff, she attended and received free eyeglasses. "Thank you to the donors," she said. "Many villagers can't afford to travel or buy eyeglasses. I hope BCMF returns every year, as some of the villagers are undocumented, and others can't take time off from work to travel to town for these examinations." She hopes to return to sewing and reading in her free time.

Recipients' success stories

Zaw, a 68-year-old monk from Tak Province, began experiencing blurred vision in his left eye in 2023. He did not seek any treatment due to financial constraints. On 28 June 2024, he attended an eye screening at his monastery, organised by BCMF, where he was diagnosed with cataract.

Initially, he was hesitant about the cataract surgery due to the cost, but he agreed to the surgery after learning BCMF could refer him to a free eye surgery mission supported by Karen Aid, Fiona Eye Fund, and BCMF. He received cataract surgery on 10 July 2024 at Mae Tao Clinic.

"Before, I could only see light with my left eye," Zaw said. "Now I can see clearly again and read Buddha's teachings to share with others."



Naw Eh is an 18-year-old student living in a dormitory in Tak Province with her sisters. Two years ago, the frames of her glasses broke, and she has not been able to afford a new pair since. She often had to sit right at the front of the classroom just to see the blackboard.

After attending the free eye screening held at the school by BCMF in July 2024, she was told she needed special cylindrical lenses, which would be too expensive for her to buy. BCMF offered to cover the cost.

Naw Eh received her new glasses on 13 August 2024. "Now I can see much more clearly," she said. "It's made such a difference with my studies. I'm hoping to get a college scholarship, I want to become a nurse and help people back in my village."

Nyunt, a 49-year-old shop vendor from Karen State, Burma, had been having trouble with her vision for a year. Her eyes were always itchy, watered, and were sometimes red. She also could not see people's faces clearly. Since she lives far from a hospital and cannot afford eyeglasses, she never sought help.

Nyunt said, "With these eyeglasses, I can see people's faces clearly. I can see phone numbers [on my phone], and the path clearly when I walk. I couldn't see the eye of the needle before when I tried to thread the needle to sew my torn clothes, but now I can. I will be more comfortable when I do my daily household chores like washing clothes, cooking, and cleaning. Thank you for coming to this village, and thank you to the donors who provided this pair of eyeglasses for me. You all have made my life easier."





GOT ANY QUESTIONS?



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administrator@burmachildren.com



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