



Burma Children
Medical Fund
Health for All



2024

**Outreach ECHO and Ultrasound
Mission Report**

Report on BCMF Outreach ECHO and Ultrasound Screening Program using Butterfly IQ plus Portable Ultrasound Supported by DAK Foundation (2024)

Background Information

Congenital heart conditions and rheumatic heart disease are significant health issues in Burma and along the Thai-Burma border. Approximately 8 in 1,000 Burmese babies are born with congenital heart defects, highlighting the need for early detection and treatment. Rheumatic heart disease, often due to untreated bacterial infections, is prevalent due to limited healthcare access.



Programs like BCMF Outreach ECHO and Ultrasound Screening are vital in providing services and timely referrals, reducing the impact of these diseases.

Objectives

The key objectives of the outreach missions are:

- **Early Detection and Referral of Cardiac Conditions:** Identifying heart conditions among young children allows for timely medical intervention and referral, which can significantly improve long-term health outcomes.
- **Maternal Health Monitoring:** Providing antenatal ultrasound screenings ensures early detection of pregnancy-related complications, fostering better maternal and fetal health outcomes.
- **Enhancing Access to Basic Healthcare:** Many IDPs face significant barriers in accessing healthcare, and these missions were an effort to mitigate that gap.
- **Strengthening Community Health Awareness:** Through education and engagement, the missions aimed to enhance health awareness among residents, empowering them to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing.

Mission Summary

Mission Locations and Demographics

Plaw Tah Poh IDP Camp (14 June 2024):

- Population Served: Approximately 30,000 residents.
- Total Screened: 31 children.
- Findings: Among the 31 children screened, two cases of congenital conditions (Ventricular Septal Defect and Tetralogy of Fallot) were identified, requiring surgical intervention. Most other children exhibited normal cardiac function.



Leh Khaw IDP Camp (7 June 2024):

- Population Served: Approximately 12,000 residents.
- Total Screened: 23 children and 2 pregnant women.
- Findings: All children were found to have normal cardiac health, with no immediate surgical needs. Both antenatal screenings showed no abnormalities.



Activities

During the outreach missions at Plaw Tah Poh and Leh Khaw IDP Camps, the following activities were conducted to ensure comprehensive health screenings and community engagement:

Planning and Coordination

BCMF collaborated with local camp leaders, community health workers, and volunteer teams to schedule the missions and arrange the necessary logistical support, including transportation, lodging, and security. Portable ultrasound and echo machines were tested and prepared for transportation, ensuring the functionality of devices essential for the screenings.

Health Screening Procedures

Initial medical checkups, echocardiography for children, and antenatal ultrasound for pregnant women were conducted to identify any congenital and acquired heart anomalies, and surgical cases and monitor fetal health, respectively.



Data Collection and Documentation

Detailed medical records were created for each patient to document findings from each screening. This documentation supports future follow-ups, referrals, and continuity of care for the beneficiaries.



Post-Screening Counseling and Referrals



Families of children with identified health issues received one-on-one counseling on condition management and care options. Pregnant women were also counseled on maternal health practices and any observed risk factors. For cases requiring further treatment, BCMF provided referrals to specialized healthcare facilities.

Distribution of Essential Health Supplies

Essential supplies and hygiene kits for infants, including items like diapers, clothing, socks, hats, and teddy bears were distributed to promote good health practices for the children among families in the camps.



Feedback and Community Engagement



After the screenings, BCMF conducted feedback sessions to gather insights from beneficiaries and community leaders on the mission's effectiveness and areas for improvement. Feedback collected helped identify additional health needs that could be incorporated into future outreach missions.

Screening day at Plaw Tah Poh IDP Camp



Screening day at Ler Khaw IDP Camp



Challenges and Lessons Learned

- **Logistics:** Transportation of equipment and personnel to the remote IDP camps posed challenges due to difficult terrain and security concerns.
- **Limited Follow-Up:** Consistent follow-up care for cases requiring surgical intervention is challenging due to limited local facilities and resources.
- **Community Awareness and Participation:** Ensuring community participation required ongoing education to communicate the importance of screenings and preventative care.

Key Outcomes

- **Early Diagnosis of Heart Conditions:** The identification of two congenital cardiac cases requiring surgery highlights the importance of echo screenings in these populations.
- **Positive Maternal Health Outcomes:** Antenatal screenings for pregnant women confirmed healthy fetal development, providing relief to the mothers and reducing anxiety associated with unmonitored pregnancies.
- **Community Engagement and Trust Building:** The missions fostered trust within the IDP communities, as residents appreciated the presence of medical teams offering free, high-quality care.

Beneficiary Stories

Than Toe, one year old, lives with his family in Plaw Tah Poh IDP Camp. Diagnosed with Tetralogy of Fallot, a congenital heart condition, Than Toe struggles with breathing and fatigue. BCMF's outreach mission enabled a referral for further echo screening, which will connect him to future opportunities for surgical intervention.

His mother shared, "I am thankful for the screening. Because of that, we know our son's condition and get the chance for further treatment. I hope for my son to receive treatment soon and to grow up healthy and attend school someday."

Than Toe Oo has undergone an additional ECHO screening and has been scheduled for cardiac surgery.





Naw Yamin Htwe, a 39-year-old nurse, fled to Plaw Tah Poh IDP Camp due to military persecution. Working at a local clinic, she supports displaced individuals in the community.

She said, “I believe that BCMF’s screenings help detect and manage conditions that would otherwise remain untreated. I am grateful for the screenings and I hope for bi-annual screenings for children by BCMF if possible.”

Success Story of Naw Mu Lar Gay

Naw Mu Lar Gay, a nine-year-old girl, resides with her family in Palaw Ta Poh IDP camp, Karen State, Burma. Originally from a village near Kawkareik Township, they moved to the camp in 2022 due to conflict. Shortly after arriving, Gay experienced tiredness, palpitations, and sweating. The camp doctor suspected a congenital heart disease and recommended further investigation, but the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and nearby conflict hindered their efforts.



Fortunately, BCMF organized a screening in the camp, and on June 14, 2024, Naw underwent an echo screening, leading to a referral to the Save Blue Heart Foundation. She was diagnosed with atrial septal defect (ASD) and recommended for surgery.

With BCMF’s support, Naw and her father traveled to Bangkok for surgery at the Queen Sirikit National Institute of Child Health. The surgery on September 4, 2024, successfully closed the hole in her heart. Naw was discharged on September 10, 2024, after a thorough recovery period.

She returned home in time to prepare for her exams, expressing her dreams of becoming a teacher. Her father stated, "What you are doing is truly commendable, and I believe you can do even more in the future, helping more patients and achieving greater success. Many patients in Burma need this kind of support."

Conclusion

The missions at Plaw Tah Poh and Leh Khaw IDP camps highlight the need for accessible healthcare in Karen State. These outreach missions have shown that screening for heart conditions and providing antenatal care can improve lives and build trust within the community. BCMF's work, evidenced by beneficiary feedback and significant health findings, underscores the value of continuous and targeted healthcare outreach in IDP camps. Future missions, supported by enhanced follow-up systems and increased community engagement, will strengthen BCMF's impact and address unmet healthcare needs in Karen State and Thai-Burma border areas.

