



WHEELCHAIR REPORT 2024



Burma Children
Medical Fund
Health for All

INTRODUCTION

BCMF's wheelchair project was established in 2014 to provide free wheelchairs and mobility aids to children and adults in Burma and Thailand living with mobility-limiting conditions, such as neurological disorders.

Through regular outreach to communities along the Thai-Burma border — including hospitals, educational centres, villages, towns in Thailand, and schools and rehabilitation centres in Burma. BCMF delivers mobility aids and wheelchairs both directly and through local partners, helping individuals regain independence, return to education, and re-engage in community life. In 2024, due to the worsening conflict in Burma, recipients, their caregivers and BCMF partner staff from Yangon travelled to our partner monastery where BCMF held four missions, to ensure it is safer for them to access support.

This report outlines recipient data, key project highlights, plans for 2025 and beneficiary stories.



BCMF staff running a wheelchair fitting training in Burma.



Natthawoot looking cheerfully at BCMF staff assembling his wheelchair.

2024 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The BCMF wheelchair team focuses on four main areas: outreach trips, distribution, training, and donations.

The team continued to donate **76** standard wheelchairs to Thai hospitals, two wheelchairs from Free Wheelchair Mission are donated to the bachelor of Nursing program at Mae Tao Clinic as teaching material. In addition, we offer a wheelchair distribution service, in which our specialists fit wheelchairs based on information provided by referral partners, family members of the recipients and through social media, and deliver the wheelchairs directly to the recipients.

In addition to individual fittings, our team also organises wheelchair fitting and training outreach missions to remote as well as

underserved areas in both Thailand and Burma.

During these missions, we deliver, assemble, and fit wheelchairs according to each recipient's needs, and provide support to hospitals and community organisations.

In 2024, the team trained **40** staff from the referring organisations to properly and safely fit recipients with wheelchairs. **209** wheelchairs were fitted for recipients by BCMF and **6** mobility aids were given to recipients. **95** wheelchairs were fitted by our trained partners. Altogether, **428** individuals directly benefited from our combined distribution, donation, and training activities this year.

The team participated in **23** outreach trips, including **4** in Burma and the rest in Thailand.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT



Nihit patiently waiting while BCMF partner staff re-adjust his wheelchair.

A major achievement for the BCMF wheelchair project in 2024 was receiving the children's wheelchairs from Burma in late 2023. This important delivery enabled us to address our long-standing waiting list of **110** recipients, and throughout 2024, we successfully fitted **64** wheelchairs for child recipients in Burma.



Thazin poses proudly in her new wheelchair.



Techapon heads home happily with his mother in his new wheelchair.

BCMF also expanded the distribution of unfitted wheelchairs in Thailand, allowing trained partner organisations to deliver mobility aids more quickly to remote areas without requiring our direct involvement in every fitting. We received requests for wheelchairs from several new provinces and returned to others to carry out additional wheelchair fitting missions. After completing their training, the staff from the partner organisations are equipped to fit the wheelchairs locally in both Burma and Thailand, ensuring that recipients nevertheless receive properly adjusted wheelchairs. This model has significantly improved the efficiency of service delivery, reduced the need for BCMF staff to travel extensively, and empowered local organisations to respond more quickly and independently to community needs.

PLANS FOR 2025



Maung and his mother wait for the taxi driver to drive them home, along with Maung's new wheelchair.



Ei being measured for her new wheelchair by a BCMF staff and a newly trained partner, with support from her family.

In 2025, BCMF aims to take a major step forward by expanding wheelchair fitting services into new areas and continuing our mission in the areas of Burma that have previously been difficult to access due to conflict and logistical challenges. Over the past three years, BCMF has received numerous requests for wheelchair fittings that could not be fulfilled due to the logistical challenges posed by the ongoing conflict in the region.

In response, the team aims to conduct a mission to fit over 100 wheelchairs in Naypyidaw Township, as well as in Yangon, Mandalay, and Bago Divisions.

In addition, the wheelchair team will continue its wheelchair project in Thailand. We plan to increase the number of fitting missions in all areas in Burma and Thailand to ensure improved access to wheelchairs in all areas of the countries. This includes not only fitting but also the distribution and donation of standard and customised wheelchairs to hospitals and community partners.

These efforts promote greater social inclusion and enable service users to actively engage with their communities, fostering independence and mobility for those in need.

RECIPIENTS SUCCESS STORIES



Say and his father with Say's new wheelchair.

Say, an eight-year-old boy from Karen State, Burma, has cerebral palsy and he is unable to move independently. He had never owned a wheelchair because his family could not afford one or the transport costs to access physiotherapy.

During a visit from a mobile health team, Say was referred to Hpa-an Orthopaedic Rehabilitation Centre (HORC), where staff trained by the BCMF wheelchair team, fitted him with a wheelchair from Wheelchairs for Kids (WFK). His parents saved for two months to travel and have Say fitted with the wheelchair.

His father said, "I was so happy to see my son smile. He had always wanted a wheelchair to go outdoors more often. This free wheelchair has changed his life. I'll take good care of it and take him out to church and the market. Thank you to everyone who helped."



Nyein poses happily sitting in his new wheelchair.

Nyein is a 38-year-old from Karen State, Burma. He fell from a rambutan tree and underwent spinal fracture surgery. Although the surgery successfully stabilised his spine, he was left unable to walk and has relied on a wheelchair ever since. He attended physiotherapy sessions at Mae Tao Clinic, where the physiotherapist referred him to BCMF for a new wheelchair.

His old wheelchair had become worn out over time, and the brakes no longer worked. It caused stress and made it unsafe for him to transfer between his bed and the chair. He could not afford to replace the new wheelchair.

Nyeain said, "With this new wheelchair, I feel much safer and more comfortable. Before, I often had to repair my old one or shuffle on my buttocks to move around. Now, I can go to the monastery and help my family at the market. Without it, I wouldn't be able to do any of that."

Pityaporn, a 16-year-old girl with cerebral palsy from Ranong Province, Thailand, relied on an old, unsafe wheelchair donated by a school. The wheelchair did not have a seatbelt; she frequently slipped out of the chair, and it did not provide head support or enough space for her legs. Her family could not afford a replacement with the necessary features.

The BCMF wheelchair was designed as a customised wheelchair using parts from wheelchairs from Wheelchairs for Kids and the Free Wheelchair Mission, adding local materials to ensure it met Pityaporn's needs for head support, a seatbelt, and more legroom.

Pityaporn was overjoyed with her new wheelchair, and her mother stated, "I'm grateful to BCMF and the donors for giving my daughter freedom with this wheelchair; she can finally go outdoors more often."



Pityaporn smiles while sitting happily in her new wheelchair.

Natthawoot is a 12-year-old boy with cerebral palsy from Tak Province, Thailand. He has significant mobility challenges due to weak muscles, which made it difficult for him to stand or walk. He previously relied on walking on his knees, which limited his ability to go outside. His old wheelchair, donated by a hospital, was broken, and his family could not afford a new one.

BCMF provided Natthawoot with a custom-fitted wheelchair, which greatly improved his posture and mobility. His mother expressed, "I'm relieved I no longer have to carry my son outside. With his new wheelchair, he can go anywhere with his sister. I'm grateful to BCMF and the donors for providing such a valuable gift for my son." Natthawoot was thrilled with his new wheelchair, which has enhanced his freedom and joy, particularly in playing with his siblings.



Natthawoot sits contentedly in his new wheelchair.



Thel Thel gives a thumbs up for her new wheelchair.

Thel Thel is a 14-year-old girl from Ranong province, Thailand. She was born with cerebral palsy, and she lives with her parents. Thel Thel studies at the Ranong Special Education Centre. She had a wheelchair donated by the school, which stopped fitting for 2 years. So she often crawled around the house or relied heavily on her parents to go outdoors. As her family couldn't afford a new one, she was fitted with a new wheelchair with a special tray, designed by the BCMF 3D printing team, during BCMF's wheelchair mission between 11–12 December 2024.

With her new wheelchair, she can visit her friends' houses and the monastery with her family. Thel Thel said, "I am so happy for the wheelchair. I like the wheelchair with the tray so I can eat and study on the tray. I want to be a teacher and teach children with disability like me."

Sun, a 39-year-old man from Tak Province, Thailand, was in a car accident when he was 25 years old that left him with foot drop and spinal issues. Since then, he has been unable to walk without aids.

Sun used to use wooden crutches, but while visiting a friend who works at Mae Tao Clinic (MTC), his crutch broke from use over time. His friend referred him to BCMF for a new pair of crutches as Sun could not afford to purchase one.

After receiving new aluminum crutches from BCMF, Sun was very pleased. He found them light and easy to carry and said they made him feel more independent and mobile. "I think of my crutches as my legs," he said. "Thank you for the crutches, they are very useful for me. I don't know how long they will last, but I will take good care of them."



Sun with his new pair of crutches.



GOT ANY QUESTIONS?



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