



January 2011

To the students of the Model United Nations Alfrink,

Firstly, we would like to congratulate you for participating in this event, and hope you will all be further inspired to make the world a better place for your generation and all that come after you.

The Burma Children Medical Fund (BCMF) would like to thank you for spreading awareness of the situation in Burma, as well as our work, within your communities. Together we can make a difference to the lives of children from Burma.

Human rights are violated daily in Burma and the military government neglects the population to a staggering extent. This is no more evident than in the denial of the right to health. A John Hopkins School Of Public Health report, *The Gathering Storm*, estimates that Burma's military regime spends as little as "3% of national expenditure on health, while the military, with a standing army of over 400,000 troops, consumes 40%".

Burma has the worst health record in Southeast Asia. The World Health Organisation (WHO) ranked Burma's health system as the world's second worst out of 191 countries. Burma's official spending on health per capita is estimated to be US\$0.74 compared with its neighbour Thailand, which invests US\$89 per capita.

The UN's Development Programme's Human Development Index ranked Burma 130 out of 177 countries. Over 7 percent of Burmese children will not survive to their first birthday, 10 percent will die before their fifth and one in 12 women will lose their lives from complications of pregnancy and childbirth. In Eastern Burma, one in 10 children will die before the age of one, and more than one in five before their fifth birthday. As well as this, Malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis rates in Burma are considered epidemics by international health organisations.

Burmese people have no option but to come to Thailand for basic health care. People in Burma are dying because there's no access to the most basic, cost-effective health interventions that should be available at home.

The Burma Children Medical Fund at the Mae Tao Clinic (MTC) on the Thai-Burma border was established in 2006 to ensure that children coming to the clinic with major illnesses could get the life-saving treatment they need.

Mae Tao Clinic provides comprehensive basic health care and preventative health education to its patients but does not have the resources to treat many life threatening illnesses. Before BCMF was established, children from Burma with conditions such as cardiac disease could not be treated and, despite the best efforts of medics, were sent home to die.

Kanchana Thornton, the BCMF program manager, seeing the denial of the right to health for these children, decided to raise money and organise to take some children who had come to the Mae Tao Clinic to Chiang Mai hospital 360km away. Kanchana, herself a child health nurse, realised that the facilities were available to treat these children – it was a matter of finding funds and getting patients to Chiang Mai.

BURMA CHILDREN MEDICAL FUND (BCMF)

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This was not as simple as it sounds – most of our patients have no legal status in Thailand and cannot travel freely. BCMF must get permission from Thai authorities for all our patients to travel within Thailand, and once they are in Chiang Mai they must stay at a safe house for security reasons.



Now, almost 5 years later, BCMF has helped over 400 patients, many of whom would have died otherwise. Since those first trips in the back of a rickety old pick-up truck (see picture to the left), BCMF now hires a comfortable mini-van that takes patients to Chiang Mai 4 times a month!

While all of our patients' experiences are unique, they all emanate from the same source – from the injustice they face as people from Burma whose human rights have been violated by an oppressive regime for many, many years.

All of our patients need access to healthcare, which has been denied them by Burma's military rulers - like Ma Sabel who was born at Mae Tao Clinic. She is the youngest of 5 children and her mother moved to Thailand 20 years ago to find work. She has been living in Thailand ever since.

Ma Sabel's mother noticed that whenever her baby cried, she would turn blue. In December 2010, her mother brought her back to the Mae Tao Clinic suffering from difficulty breathing. She was diagnosed with a heart condition called Dextrocardia (her heart is on the wrong side).

Ma Sabel's father is a daily worker and when he can find work, he can earn around 80 baht (US\$2.50) per day. Ma Sabel's mother stays at home and looks after the children. Ma Sabel's family know tragedy all too well – her 14 year old sister recently passed away in Burma from hepatitis, and her 6 year old sister was born prematurely (at 28 weeks) and is paralysed due to cerebral palsy.

There is no way Ma Sabel's family can afford to pay for the treatment she desperately needs, and without BCMF she would not live for long. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, she will now get the treatment she needs to survive.



You can follow the stories of Ma Sabel and others like her, by joining us on Facebook and You Tube to see the inspiring journey our patients take to get the medical care so many of us take for granted.

www.facebook.com/burmachildren www.youtube.com/burmachildren

Participants of MUNA - keep up the good work! We hope that you continue to spread awareness of the plight of the people of Burma, and all those around the world suffering from injustice.

Best of luck,

The staff of the Burma Children Medical Fund