



Burma Children *Medical Fund*

School Stationery and Health Information Project 6th June, 2016

As part of its Medical and Health Education expansion into Myanmar, Burma children Medical Fund (BCMF) received a request for assistance from eight schools, who could not provide a decent basic school supplies for their students, because of lack of infrastructure (power and water), poor to nil road access, and lack of funds. The initial response by BCMF was to set up the Stationery Project. This was fully funded by generous donations from Thailand, Ireland, UK and Australia. In addition, BCMF gave awareness about Dengue fever and others information about nutrition, body, vegetation and many more in a form of poster to all the schools.

In preparation, a week of frenetic activity in the BCMF office ensued, purchasing, labeling, sorting and packaging school supplies and clothing donations, a team of five then packed the van to deliver everything to a remote area of Karen State, Burma. It took one and half hours to reach a Community Leader's house where the intention was to begin the distribution. However, we discovered that teachers and students from three schools were coming to meet us on foot, because of the lack of road access to their area- there had been rain in the previous few days. They walked, on average, three hours to meet us, by which time they were tired, hungry and thirsty. So, we began by giving them mangos from nearby trees, drinks and noodles which were quickly purchased from the local shop.



Students were very keen to take the stationery back to their schools, but the large packs were much too heavy, therefore, we divided them into smaller quantities, and the remainder will be delivered when the weather conditions improve and adults will be able to carry the heavier load. Donated children's clothing was handed out, and the children were quick to try it all on, and display to their friends, before the long return journey.

Mae Kae School.

We spoke to a teacher from Mae Kae, where he has taught for four years. He told us that there are 49 students and 4 teachers, and the school is located in the center of the village, which students could reach easily. We talked to a 15-year-old girl, Naw Dah, who is in Grade 4 and the only one of her siblings who has a chance to study, because her family could not afford to send the others to school. Then, we talked to Moo, a 14-year-old boy who has five siblings. He was very excited to come and pick up the school supplies because without school supplies, he had to drop out of school



because his parents could not afford to buy his stationery. Moo will have to take care of his younger brothers and sisters in order for his parent to be able to work. Even after one and half hours of walking, Moo was happy to travel the long distance to help out.

Klay Poe Klo School.



We spoke to a teacher from Klay Poe Klo who is 18 years old and had finished two terms of teacher training conducted by the Karen Education Department (KED). He teaches Grades 1 – 4, the school has a total 80 students and it took 2 hours to walk to this distribution point. He said that parents often have to remove their children from school because they cannot afford teaching resources. Afterwards, we interviewed two students, Htoo (15-year-old boy) and Paw (13 year old girl), who are in Grade 4 and their parents are subsistence farmers. Htoo is the eldest child in his family and wants to become a teacher after finishing school. Paw has 3 siblings, and she wants to continue further study to become a nurse.

Htee Thu Kaw school.

We met a teacher who despite never having had any formal training, took on this role because he is aware of the importance of education for the children in his village. There are 48 students and 3 teachers there, and it took 2 hours for him and some of his students to come to meet the BCMF team. Two students, Shee and Mu were interviewed. Shee has 7 siblings and 4 of them were in school. Mu has 5 siblings and she is the only one who has a chance to study, because her parents cannot afford for them all to go to school.



After eating and resting the children set off on the long walk back to their villages, some were lucky enough to ride part of the way in a pick-up truck.

After lunch provided by the Community Leader, BCMF had a meeting with local Health Workers about the availability and supply of prosthetic limbs to patients in their areas. Clarifying access criteria was an important part of the discussion.

In the afternoon, BCMF undertook to reach one of the schools across the border in Burma. There, one headmaster (Saw Eh Doh) was responsible for three schools, and he took charge of distribution to the other,





even more remote, schools. He and some students came to meet us at the point where the van could go no further, and all the supplies were offloaded on to a local pick-up truck which was commandeered for the job. Taking two journeys, the pick-up carried students, staff and stationary supplies down to the river border. Everything was transferred to a small motor boat for the 10 minute ride down river, again taking two trips. Finally, goods and some passengers were piled onto two “Electric Buffalo” carts, and carried about 25 minutes, over streams and dirt roads to Mae la Ah Khee school. A few children and adults had to walk, carrying their goods to get from river to school, and the whole afternoon journey took over an hour and a half to complete.

Mae La Ah Khee school and Ma La Ah Tar school

We spoke to headmaster, Saw Eh Doh, who said that there are 123 students and 6 teachers at the schools, which are built in the middle of the villages for ease of access in all weathers, and the children can go home for lunch and to have drinks of water. He said that the parents, mainly subsistence farmers, could not afford their children’s stationary supply, because they only earned enough for their daily living expenses, and he is really happy for the help of BCMF. Saw Kyaw Nyut, a teacher for 20 years, said that his salary was only \$300 USD a year, so he has to supplement this income by working on his land, with the help of student’s parents. We also spoke to one student who has 4 siblings and his parents are subsistence farmers. He said that his two older brothers have to work because his parents need help; therefore, only Htoo and Hser younger sibling have a chance to study.



Schools that BCMF could not access

Raining season limited BCMF’s team to reach three remote schools on this journey due to lack of or no road access and difficulty with transportation.

The community leader took responsibility to deliver school supply for Karn Hta School, which serves 68 students and 5 teachers. In addition, BCMF met a health worker from Karn Hta village who explained about the difficulty of accessing his village.

The second school that BCMF could not access was the Bwo Byaw Lay School which serves 66 students and 5 teachers. The Headmaster from another school, Mae La Ah Khee (Saw Eh Doh), offered to later deliver the supplies to Bwo Byaw Lay School.

The final school that BCMF could not access was Tarai Hta School which is located in the middle of Karen state and has one teacher that serves 28 students. It takes a day-long journey to reach the school by car, boat and on foot. BCMF plan to deliver the school supplies to this school on another trip.

The delivery of all the stationery to the two central drop off points for seven schools was well worthwhile project for BCMF’s team event it took us 15 hours to accomplish this task. After long working hours we can still smiles with all the children.

BCMF would like to sincerely thank the following sponsors for their generous donations to make this project a reality.

- Leyla Ostovar
- Siam Saam Tri School
- Goodstowe School
- Friends in Bangkok, Australia and Ireland
- Zarchi family

The teachers and parents also wish to express their gratitude:

Mae Kae School, teacher “Thanks so much, and it is a blessing to have your support for our school, and we want to invite all the donors to come and visit our school”

Htee Thu Kaw School, teacher “Thank you so much for your support to help our children to be able to study, and lessen the burden on the parents”

Htee Thu Kaw School, parent “Education is really important for my children, because I didn’t go to school myself. Thank you so much to everyone who supports my children. Now I can spend more on food, rather than on school supplies, Amen”

Mae La Ah Khee School, headmaster “I would like to invite all donors to come and visit us and we really appreciate your support and help for our children. They can be proud to have the same education as others.”

