



Burma Children

Medical Fund operating to give people a future

BCMF Wheelchair Training and Fitting Mission in Kamma, Magway Division, Burma

15-16 October | 2018

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Overview

- ❖ **Background:** Since 2014, Burma Children Medical Fund has been providing wheelchair fitting training for children and adults, and has also held distributions and fittings for communities in Burma, Thailand and Laos. In October 2018, BCMF held a wheelchair mission in the town of Kamma in Magway Division, Burma. In Kamma, children and adults with mobility impairments rarely have access to a wheelchair.
- ❖ **Project:** BCMF's team provided training to local charity groups on how to correctly fitting children and adults for wheelchairs.
- ❖ **Aim:** Encourage and create mobility and independence of people living with mobility impairment while decreasing the burden of caregivers.
- ❖ **Beneficiaries:** Total of 64 members from five local charity groups received fitting training. As a result, 50 children and adults with mobility impairments received wheelchairs and walkers. BCMF also enrolled 2 patients with cardiac condition into its surgical referral services program and referred 4 patients with complex orthopedic conditions to its partner organization - Children Action.

Summary of the Mission

BCMF Distributed:

29 wheelchairs for kids
13 Mobility Carts for adults
6 Wheelchairs (RICD) for adults
2 walkers

Enrolled into BCMF's Referral

Services Program:

2 patients with cardiac conditions
4 Patients with Orthopedic conditions

*WFK= Wheelchairs for Kids

*MC= Mobility Cart

*RICD= Rajanagarindra Children Development Foundation



Introduction

Kamma Township is home to 75,195 people. It locates in Magway Division, central Burma. According to a report released by the Myanmar Information Management Unit in 2014, 10 out of 100 people in Kamma Township have, at least, one type of disability, such as a visual, hearing or mobility impairment, or a learning disability. Most common types of disability are visual and mobility impairments.¹ Since the government provides no support, people must rely on external support through organisations. Through a partner organisation of Burma Children Medical Fund (BCMF), an Abbot from Yoon Monastery in the town of Kamma asked BCMF to hold a wheelchair fitting and training in October 2018. Recognising the needs of

the local people, BCMF agreed to provide the fitting and training.

¹ (2014). *The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census Department of Population Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population October 2017 Kamma Township Report MAGWAY REGION, THAYET DISTRICT*. [online] Themimu.info. Available at: https://themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/TspProfiles_Census_Kamma_2014_ENG.pdf [Accessed 31 Oct. 2018]. Pg 24-26.

Mission

On the 13th of October 2018, 5 members from BCMF left Thailand for Yangon. The next day, the team, joined by BCMF interns, continued to Kamma, an eight-hour journey.

On the morning of the 15th, the team divided itself into two groups; one team held the *wheelchair fitting and training* while the other team conducted medical screening on

patients that need further treatment and assistance from BCMF's medical referral services. During the first day of the mission, a total of 30 trainees from Myaunt Chaung Rescue Team, Linn Myitta Youth Charity Group and Thukihita Rescue Team participated in the

training. During the second day a total of 34 trainees from Ayate Thit Rescue Team and Myitta Yang Zin Charity Group participated in the training. The training is divided into two parts. Part one, trainees received theoretical and safety aspects of wheelchair and part two mechanical aspect of wheelchair fitting and the importance of user comfort. BCMF and trainees fitted and provided 48 adults and children with wheelchairs. Two adults received walkers.



The Host Organization

Kamma is an old town and was used as a transportation hub for goods during colonial times because of its convenient location on the bank of Ayeyarwady River. Today, traffic has decreased as Kamma is bypassed by trucks. Despite recent improvements in infrastructure in Burma, development has largely bypassed Kamma.

Yoon Monastery, the host, is one of the two active monasteries located in the town. The monastery is led by the Abbot U Kaw Widda.

Since this was the first wheelchair mission held in Kamma, children and adults hoping to receive a wheelchair, arrived from 35 villages as far as six hours from the monastery.



Patient Stories

Ei Thardar Aung | 6 years old

Ei Thardar lives in Gone Toung Village in Kamma Township, Magway Division, Burma. When she turned two months old, she suffered from a fever and later a seizure. She was taken to a nearby hospital where she was admitted for a week. Upon discharge, her health improved but she could never walk by the time she supposed to walk. Later on, her parents never sought treatment from a clinic or hospital due to the financial difficulty. Currently, to get around she moves herself with her hands on the ground. On the 16th of October, Ei Thardar received a her first wheelchair that was donated to BCMF from Wheelchairs For Kids (WFK). This wheelchair, will make it easier for Ei Thardar's grandfather will to take her to school, the market and around their village. Her grandfather said, "[I pray that] *may this organisation be more successful. I am very grateful to have this wheelchair for my granddaughter. She will be able to see the world outside [our home] now*".

Ei Thardar Aung

Wheelchair For Kids (WFK) Recipient



Aung Chan Min Oo

Mobility Cart (MC) Recipient



Aung Chan Min Oo | 29 years old

Chan Min lives with his mother and four younger sisters in Kyaung Bin Thar Village, Thayet Township, Magway Division, Burma. At the age of 6, he was riding with his friend on the back of a bicycle. All of a sudden, his right leg got caught in between the bicycle's wheel and was no longer able to fully use his right leg. A few years later, his left leg became weak, and he was unable to stand up without support. Since then, he use a stick to move from place to place. As a child he could move fast but four years ago, after he gained weight, he started to have difficulty moving by himself. As a result of this, he is usually housebound, rarely leaving his house. Chan Min knew about BCMF mission via Facebook. He arrived at Yoon Monastery with four others that also needs of wheelchairs. The day after Chan Min received his first mobility cart, he returned to Yoon Monastery with other people that also needs wheelchairs.

Chan Min said, "*The reason I came back with my friends is because I want them to enjoy what I am enjoying now. They are not from my village but I want them to get a wheelchair too. Now I can go out with others. I will also use this wheelchair to sell lottery ticket; I probably start in the beginning of December [2018]. I am very thankful to donors for this wheelchair. In my village, no one had seen a wheelchair like this [mobility cart] before.*"

Maung Thiha Hein | 17 years old

Maung Thiha Hein is from Kamma Township, Magway Division, Burma. When he was five years old, he fell out of his house on stilts and could no longer walk anymore. In the past he had an old wheelchair, but it was nearly broken and became unusable. His parents could not afford to buy a new wheelchair for him. Now, he is very happy to have received a new wheelchair. In his free time, he likes to paint and sing and in the future he would like to become a painter.

Maung Thiha Hein

RICD wheelchair Recipient



Voice from the Host



“There are no words to express how happy I feel with the results of this [wheelchair] mission.” | **U Kaw Widda**

“Recipients of the wheelchairs came from many villages. For some, it took six hours to arrive at the monastery. These people [people with disabilities] are the most underprivileged in their communities. Some are born with their disability while other acquires it when they are older. When they were living without hope in a helpless situation, BCMF stepped in and provided them with wheelchairs to make their lives easier and more mobile. Now, they can go outside like non-disabled people. Now, some of them already travel around their villages. BCMF is the first and only charity group that helps us with wheelchairs. There is no word to express how happy I feel toward the result of this [wheelchair] mission. People who live with a disability and without outside support are like people living an empty life. When I see them going around in their wheelchairs, I feel so happy, so I

am sure the patients themselves will feel happier than me. I hope that BCMF will be able to do the same things in other parts of the country. This mission was very beneficial for the people here because the trainees gained skills and the patients received wheelchairs. Later, the trainees will be able to fit wheelchairs by themselves. In the near future, I would like to continue working with BCMF because it is for the benefit of the people who need our help."

Summary

People with disabilities in central Burma receive no help from the government. As a result, many rely heavily on external support. But people living with a disability in Kamma Township hardly receive any external support from NGOs or INGOs due to remoteness. For many wheelchair recipients, the wheelchairs they received from BCMF were their first. Throughout the two- day mission, BCMF also screened patients for BCMF's referral services program.

Acknowledgment

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