



burma children medical fund

BCMF | Operating to give Burma's kids a future

# Burma Children Medical Fund (BCMF)

## May 2011

## Activity Report



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*“Burmese people are coming to Thailand for basic health care. People in Burma are dying because there's no significant investment in health infrastructure, no access to the most basic, cost-effective health interventions that should be available at home. Over 7% of Burmese children don't survive to their first birthday and 10% will die before their fifth.”<sup>1</sup>*



Mya Sandor is assessed by Mae Tao Clinic medic, Naw May Soe (23 May 2011)

## May 2011 Cases: An Overview

In May 2011, BCMF accepted 12 new patients onto the program. This included referrals to all of our programs: Burma Children Medical Fund (**BCMF**), Burma Adult Medical Fund (**BAMF**) and Burma Women Medical Fund (**BWMF**).

A notable case this month was 6-year-old **Mya Sandor** (see photo) who travelled to the Mae Tao Clinic with her mother, her older brother and baby brother. Mya Sandor presented with complications possibly due to cerebral malaria. She was unable to walk and her brother was carrying her everywhere. She was referred to BCMF and a date was set to transfer her to Chiang Mai for further investigation. During the patient interview process, it was noted that Mya Sandor's brother, **Poe Kyaw**, had a crossed-left eye and had to leave school as his vision was deteriorating. BCMF decided to send Poe Kyaw to Chiang Mai with his sister to have his eyes assessed. Whilst in Chiang Mai (June 2011), Mya Sandor was diagnosed with a brain tumour. It is believed that the tumour is benign and BCMF will continue to fund Mya Sandor's treatment. Poe Kyaw was diagnosed with a cataract in his right eye. He will undergo surgery in August 2011 to correct this condition. Unfortunately nothing can be done for his left eye but the cataract surgery should restore some of his vision so that he can return to school.

Four-year-old **Tin Htun** also made his way to the Mae Tao Clinic for treatment. He presented with a large mass on his neck and was quickly referred to BCMF. Tin Htun was born with a small lump on his neck and it has become a large mass since April 2011. His family are farmers and live in Myawaddy, on the Burma side of the border. In November 2010, the conflict in eastern Burma escalated and Tin Htun and his family were forced to run for their lives. They sought refuge in Thailand for three days. When they returned to Burma, they felt unsafe and decided to relocate to his parents village further away from the fighting. They returned to Myawaddy in April with a new baby and with Tin Htun's condition deteriorating. Tin Htun has since been to Chiang Mai and is scheduled to have non-invasive treatment in July (aspiration and cortisone injections).



Tin Htun at Mae Tao Clinic (11 May 2011)

<sup>1</sup> Suwanvanichkij, Voravit in Thornton, Phil "For Choo it's all work and no play" in Bangkok Post, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009 <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/investigation/29651/for-choo-it-all-work-and-no-play> accessed March 12, 2010.

Tin Htun's case illustrates that the situation in Burma is dire and the ongoing conflict continues to affect the lives of ordinary people. His father says that they are always listening for the sounds of fighting and are always prepared to flee if it comes too close.

BCMF continues to hear stories about the ongoing fighting in Karen State from parents and caregivers who take great risks coming to the Mae Tao Clinic to seek treatment for their sick children (like fourteen-year-old **Mya** who was forced to huddle in a room with her family while her town was shelled in November 2010).

Not only are BCMF patients fighting to overcome serious medical problems, they are fighting for survival on a daily basis. Many of them live in areas that are constantly under threat from different armed groups including the Burmese army. Villages continue to be attacked and villagers are forced to run. In addition to their medical condition, these children and their families face displacement, psychological trauma, loss of income-earning family members (due to death and being forcibly made to act as porters and carry military supplies), injury and even death. Not to mention exacerbation of their medical condition from being exposed to preventable conditions such as malaria and malnutrition.



Mya and her mother (26 May)

## May 2011: Summary of New Cases

<b>Total number of new cases across the program</b>	<b>12</b>
- Children – Burma Children Medical Fund (BCMF)	8
- Children (under 12) with surgery funded by donor in Chiang Mai	1
- Special Adult Cases – Burma Adult Medical Fund (BAMF)	1
- Gynaecological Surgery – Burma Women Medical Fund (BWMF)	2

NAME	SEX	AGE	PROGRAM	CONDITION
Hnin Wout	F	7	BCMF	Hypoxic brain injury
Tin Htun	M	4	BCMF	Cystic neck mass
Mya Sandor	F	6	BCMF	Brain tumour
Poe Kyaw	M	13	BCMF	Crossed-eyes; cataracts
Mya	F	14	BCMF	Congenital Heart Disease
Kyaw Zin	M	5	BCMF	Unresolved Tuberculosis
Kyi	F	2	BCMF	Congenital Heart Disease
Aung Pyint	M	3m	BCMF	Hydrocephalus
Yoon	F	9m	BCMF/CDF	Meningocele
Ahyut	M	25	BAMF	Bilateral club foot
Aye Aye	F	28	BWMF	Uterine prolapse
Daw Ni	F	55	BWMF	Uterine prolapse

# May 2011: BCMF Patient Movement

In May 2011, BCMF organised the logistics for the departure of four (4) vans departing the Mae Tao Clinic. Forty (40) patients (plus their carers) were transported to Chiang Mai for surgery and follow-up (existing cases) and also for initial investigation and detailed diagnostics (new cases). The departure dates and patient load were as follows:

## BCMF PATIENT VAN - 5 MAY 2011

NAME	SEX	AGE	PROGRAM	CONDITION
P. Htwe	F	5	BCMF	Meningocele/Spina Bfida
M. Kyaw	M	7	BCMF	Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia
C. Chai	M	14	BCMF	Cardiac
K. Mar	F	39	BAMF	Eye tumour
K. K. Kyaw	M	6	BCMF/CDF	Cardiac
Y. K. Linn (SMRU case)	M	2m	OTH/CDF	Mass
S. G. Paw	F	1m	BCMF/IRC	Eye (cornea) problem
T. Z. Moe	F	9m	BCMF	Meningocele/Hydrocephalus
C. Chit	F	7	BCMF/ICRC	Shrapnel-induced nerve injury (from Nov '10)
N. L. Oo	M	14	BCMF	Gastrointestinal bleeding

## BCMF PATIENT VAN - 11 MAY 2011

NAME	SEX	AGE	PROGRAM	CONDITION
T. T. Soe	M	17	BCMF	Cardiac
H. H. Hlaing	F	2	BCMF/CDF	Congenital Heart Disease
M. S. San	M	1	BCMF/CDF	Congenital Heart Disease
N. Y. Win Lae	F	2	BCMF/CDF	Haemangioma (right arm mass)
S. L. Bwe	M	1	BCMF/CDF	Imperforate anus
M. Yann (SMRU case)	M	11m	OTH/CDF	Congenital Heart Disease
C. C. Win's baby	F	5m	BCMF/CDF	Club foot/Meningocele
M. Myo	F	40	BAMF	Rheumatic Heart Disease
N. K. Paw	F	36	BAMF	Breast mass (cancer)
Y. K. Ko	M	6m	BCMF/CDF	Imperforate anus

### C. Chit – 7 years old – nerve damage from shrapnel injury

*"...around 9am on 8 November 2010, C. Chit's extended family were sitting together inside their house discussing what to do and where to go because they knew that fighting had broken out in their area. Things were very intense as they could hear the sounds of war closing in around them. There was a lot of noise - they could hear gunfire and the sound of mortars falling not far away from their house. C. Chit's father said that whenever the mortars landed they heard a big noise and could see smoke rise....Two houses in their community were bombed... including their own... one of the bombs landed just behind their house in the area where the family cook... At the time C. Chit says she didn't know what happened – she just started running with the rest of her family. She said that they ran and ran and ran..."*

[C. Chit had surgery in Chiang Mai in January 2011 - she is recovering well.]



C. Chit went to Chiang Mai on 5 May for follow-up

## BCMF PATIENT VAN - 19 MAY 2011

NAME	SEX	AGE	PROGRAM	CONDITION
S. M. Hlaing	F	17	BCMF	Cardiac
Z. M. Oo	F	14	BCMF	Congenital Heart Disease
A. A. Nyan (SMRU case)	F	4m	OTH/CDF	Congenital Heart Disease
M. D. Htoo	F	2	BCMF/CDF	Congenital Heart Disease
T. N. San	F	11	BCMF/CDF	Congenital Heart Disease
H. K. Mu	F	9	BCMF	Urological disorder
N. S. Paw	F	9m	BCMF/CDF	Meningocele
S. S. Maw	F	32	BAMF	Lung condition (fungus in TB cavity)
K. T. Say	M	2m	BCMF	Haemangioma (left cheek)
A. P. Zone	M	3m	BCMF	Hydrocephalus



Z.M.Oo in 2008



Z.M.Oo in May 2011

### Z. M. Oo – 17 years Congenital Heart Disease

Z. M. Oo has been on the BCMF program since 2008. She had major heart surgery in November 2010 and is recovering well. Z. M. Oo says that she would like to resume her education and study towards becoming a doctor. Her mother moved the family to the border region when Z. M. Oo became sick so that the family could be close together. She says that her daughter would have died without treatment.

## BCMF PATIENT VAN - 21 MAY 2011

NAME	SEX	AGE	PROGRAM	CONDITION
M. Sat	M	13	BCMF	Cardiac Disease
S. T. L. Aye	M	5	BCMF	Congenital Heart Disease
W. Shin	M	1	BCMF	Congenital Glaucoma
M. H. Paung	F	2	BCMF/CDF	Congenital Heart Disease
M. K. Aung	F	19	BCMF	Pituitary Gland disorder
N. Pi	F	18	BCMF	Cardiac Disease
M. T. They	F	3	BCMF/CDF	Congenital Heart Disease
N. D. D. Ler	F	3m	BCMF/CDF	Congenital Heart Disease
M. S. M. Nwe	F	6	BCMF/CDF	Congenital Heart Disease/Neurological



M. K. Aung has been on the BCMF program since 2009. She has a problem with her pituitary gland and has grown very tall due to this condition. She returned to Chiang Mai on 21 May for a neurological follow-up and a blood test.



19-year-old M. K. Aung's enlarged hands (right) compared to those of her mother. M. K. Aung has now completed her treatment under BCMF.

## May 2011: Meet some of our new cases...



### Hnin Wout – 7-years-old – Hypoxic Brain Injury

Hnin Wout was born at home in a village in Karen State, Burma with the help of a Traditional Birth Attendant (TBA). Soon after she was born, she cried a lot and suffered from difficulty breathing – eventually turning blue (cyanotic). She then had a seizure and continued to have seizures two or three times a day for two months. Her mother sought help from traditional healers. When she was three years old, her mother took her to Rangoon Hospital. They did some investigations and informed Hnin Wout's mother that she had polio. No treatment seemed to work.

Hnin Wout's mother sells dry food from home and her father sells corn. He travels to and from Thailand selling corn once a month during dry season.

Sometimes he has difficulty getting to Thailand

because of fighting in the border area. He doesn't earn a regular income but between them they earn enough to support themselves. Her mother says they tried many years ago to get to the Mae Tao Clinic but they didn't have enough money or know where it was. This time they asked many people how to get to the Clinic and they were determined to make it. When they came to the Clinic, they traveled by motorbike. There were four on the bike: Hnin Wout, her mother, father and three year old sister. The road was very narrow and dangerous with lots of mountains. There is often fighting in that area and many car accidents because of the poor state of the road. It took six hours to reach Myawaddy. Her father stayed in Burma and Hnin Wout, her mother and sister, crossed the river by small boat and caught a motorbike taxi to the Clinic.

Her mother says that there used to be around 200 houses in their village but it was burnt down three times. The villagers escaped but many came back to rebuild. Now there are only 60 houses left. The fighting was between the Burmese army and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNU). The Karen army were trying to protect the village. The last time it was burnt down was 15 years ago. Though Hnin Wout was not yet born, her parents and grandparents had to escape but they returned to rebuild and settle.



In general, Hnin Wout is healthy and sleeps and eats well. When she needs to urinate or pass stool, she lets her parents know by making a sound. She has actions and signs to communicate with her parents. She is able to feed herself but she has difficulty getting her hand to her mouth. Her mother says that it is very difficult to care for her and it is getting harder and harder because Hnin Wout is growing up and getting bigger. Her mother is not able to leave the house much as she has to stay at home to look after her. Her mother understands that there is not much that can be done for her daughter but she is looking to get a wheelchair for her daughter.

***BCMF has taken measurements for a special custom-made wheelchair to be built for Hnin Wout (Freedom Wheelchairs).***



## Mya – 14-years-old – Heart Disease

Mya is the youngest of 6 children all of whom were born at home. She has extremely thin arms and legs that look out of proportion with her upper body. Her body has tried to compensate to correct poor oxygenation of her blood supply by expanding her rib cage (*this condition is known as 'barrel chest'*).



When she was five years old she was sent to live with an aunty in Rangoon. Her parents were poor and the only way to ensure she had an education was to send her away. Her aunt soon realised that Mya was in poor health and took her to a hospital in Rangoon. She was diagnosed with a heart problem which required surgery to correct it. Mya's family thought that she didn't appear sick enough to warrant the potential that the operation could result in her death. In 2005, Mya's father died of liver cancer and her older siblings have to find work as day labourers in order to pay for rent, utilities and food for the family. Mya's condition continued to deteriorate...

By the age of 9 Mya was experiencing chest pain, shortness of breath with increasing lethargy and she was unable to continue going to school. At the age of 14 her family sent her to Rangoon to try and access treatment again. The cost of surgery was prohibitive so her older sister suggested that Mya go to the Mae Tao Clinic instead. Mya's mother was hesitant because she was afraid of the journey into Thailand. Late last year the family experienced the full force of mortar attacks in their town when the armed conflict escalated after the election.

*Mya's family were so frightened that they all huddled together in one room deciding it was too dangerous to make a run for the border. The family felt that if they were going to die then they would all die together in their home.*

Mya and her mother finally made their way to the Mae Tao Clinic on 24 May 2011. Medical documents from Burma indicate that Mya has an enlarged heart and an irregular heartbeat. Her mother is upset that her youngest child is weak and not active and her greatest wish is that Mya will be healthy again and be able to return to school. Mya does not know how to answer when asked about her hopes for herself.

**Mya says she doesn't remember a time when she wasn't unwell. She doesn't know what it would be like to be healthy.**



## Yoon – 10-months-old – Meningocele

Yoon was born with a bump at the base of her skull (later diagnosed as a 'meningocele' - a condition where the tissue covering the spinal cord sticks out of a bone defect and appears like a skin cover sac). Yoon's parents were informed not to worry because an operation could be performed at a hospital in Rangoon when the child was older. However her parents soon became concerned about the rapid growth of the protrusion which has the appearance of an animal's tail. Fellow villagers encouraged Yoon's parents to take her to the Mae Tae Clinic for treatment.

Yoon's father is a street vendor serving Burmese tea and light snacks. He cannot take any time off work since the family relies on his income which is only enough to meet their most basic needs. Her mother is so terrified of western medicine that she can't even witness her daughter being vaccinated. Therefore Yoon's grandmother volunteered to take her over the Thailand border to seek medical attention at the Mae Tao Clinic. Yoon has now been referred to BCMF and will travel to Chiang Mai with her grandmother as her carer.

