



For Immediate Release

250,000 People Along the Thailand-Burma/Myanmar Border at Risk of Losing Access to Essential Health Care and Education

[Mae Sot, 11 October 2017] The Mae Tao Clinic announced today the public launch of its fundraising campaign. The fundraising campaign aims to raise funds for its 2018 operational costs in order to continue its provision of essential health care, education and protection to over 250,000 displaced and vulnerable people from Burma/Myanmar. Since it was founded in 1989, the Mae Tao Clinic has served as a primary health facility along the Thailand-Burma/Myanmar border. For many conflict- and poverty-affected people in the region, Mae Tao Clinic is the only option to access health care, as the clinic provides its services free of charge. Without its operations, hundreds of thousands will be at risk of losing access to affordable and quality health care, particularly along the Thailand-Burma/Myanmar border.

The founder of Mae Tao Clinic, Dr. Cynthia Maung, explains that ‘We have spent the last 30 years caring for vulnerable people of Burma. Mae Tao Clinic is very important for providing service to the poor. Until there is an established health system in Burma, we need to protect and care for our communities, especially women and children. Even today, half of our patients come to Thailand for accessing health and protection services. They rely on us to help them. We cannot let them down’.

Even though the partial signing of the 2015 nationwide ceasefire agreement is regarded as a first step towards peace, the situation in Burma/Myanmar remains fragile. The armed conflict in the north of the country continues to intensify, while fighting also occasionally flares up along Southeast Burma/Myanmar. The decades of armed conflict have produced over 640,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), while over 96,000 refugees continue to reside in camps along the Thailand-Burma/Myanmar border. In addition, land-grabbing is endemic across the country, contributing to further displacement and migration of the most vulnerable and marginalized people. Those seeking medical care under these conditions are presented with huge barriers, particularly in accessing facilities that provide adequate and affordable care.

Mae Tao Clinic’s patients come from far and wide to seek the primary care provided by the clinic where they are able to take comfort in the safety and respect we provide our patients through our services. The patients are diverse in nature and background, including refugees, IDPs and subsistence farmers from eastern Burma/Myanmar, as well as undocumented migrant workers residing in Thailand. The clinic’s major focus is given to maternal and child health, however, other treatments including chronic diseases, infectious diseases and trauma patients are also treated at the clinic. Last year, over 110,000 patients visited the clinic and more than 2,500 women safely delivered their babies. Often, Mae Tao Clinic is the patients’ only option for medical care. Should the clinic be pushed to cut its programs due to funding shortages, patients will be forced to cover high out-of-pocket expenses for treatment in other facilities, which many cannot afford. Due to these reasons, we fear that these communities will avoid seeking health care all together, which will worsen their health status and place their already vulnerable lives at risk.



The ongoing funding shortage will force Mae Tao Clinic to significantly reduce its activities, particularly in 2018. It will become increasingly difficult to train new health workers, pay staff stipends and provide necessary care at a level required to protect the lives and health of the community we serve. In order to cut expenses, staff stipends have been reduced – a decision made by the staff members themselves – and all programs have been reviewed for cost-effectiveness. However, we are still urgently in need of additional support in order to keep providing safe and affordable health care to the community that the clinic serves. Burma/Myanmar faces many challenges during this time of fragile transition towards achieving sustainable peace, democracy and development, in which the basic needs for its most vulnerable populations are well taken care of and protected. It is vital that the clinic continues to provide access to health care for these most vulnerable populations, including migrants and displaced people, who have very little or no access to health services inside the country or in Thailand. Mae Tao Clinic is committed to providing this accessible quality health and social services and we need your help to carry it out. Together, can continue to provide a life in dignity for the most vulnerable and marginalized population of Burma/Myanmar.

Please support the work of Mae Tao Clinic and the community we serve by sharing our story or donating on our [fundraising page](#).

For more information, visit maetaoclinic.org or contact fundraising@maetaoclinic.org

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