



For immediate release

Mae Tao Clinic: 30 years of caring for displaced communities from Burma

[Mae Sot, 20 June 2019] This year marks Mae Tao Clinic's 30th anniversary. Mae Tao Clinic (MTC) is based on the Thai-Burma/Myanmar border and was founded by Dr. Cynthia Maung in 1989. Starting out as an emergency medical referral facility, the clinic has evolved into a key provider of not only primary health care but also a training center for health workers and a vital source of education and child protection services for the peoples of Burma. In addition to services offered by MTC and its affiliates, the clinic has also built a wide collaborative network of regional and international organizations to help support and expand essential health, education and protection services. Over three decades, MTC has gained a reputation that extends far beyond the Thai-Burma border and today it is a beacon of hope for Burma's marginalized, the impoverished and those fleeing conflict and human rights abuses.

The Mae Tao Clinic, locally also known as 'the student clinic', started in 1989 after its founders fled from the Burmese military's crackdown on peaceful pro-democracy demonstrators, many of whom were students. As the only source of health services, word about the clinic quickly spread and soon, other displaced populations, especially ethnic peoples, would come to MTC to seek emergency health care and protection. Since that time, patients come from far and wide to seek primary care provided by the clinic in a setting where they will be treated by members of their own communities who also ensure safety and respect. Today, the clinic's patient population is diverse in nature and background and includes migrant and displaced populations from all over Burma as well as impoverished communities, especially subsistence farmers of eastern Burma, many of whom are increasingly losing their land and livelihoods as a result of "land grabbing," environmental pollution, militarization, or forced eviction. The clinic also serves as an important source of health services for Thailand's many migrants from Burma, particularly undocumented ones without official access to Thai health facilities and vulnerable arrest and abuse. And today, as in the past, when much of Burma's conflict zones were restricted to humanitarian aid organizations, MTC and its partners continue to care for those in Burma who could not access services.

Against a challenging background of conflict, political instability, ongoing displacement and financial crises, MTC has positively impacted the life of hundred thousands of people. Since its inception, the clinic has provided 1.78 million medical consultations, safely delivered over 75,000 babies, trained more than 3,000 health workers and ensures enrollment in school of 2,000 children per year through our child protection program. In addition to direct services provided through MTC, through its programs to train ethnic and community health workers along with providing scholarship opportunities to students from conflict-affected areas, many others in displaced communities have been able to benefit from the clinic. Throughout 3 decades, MTC has been a critical player in building the capacity of the displaced community on the border and passing on community leadership to next

generations. The community continues to trust MTC and despite its lack of legal status, MTC has and continues to be widely recognized by governments, universities and international organizations.

Although MTC has made a huge impact, the clinic has had to continuously adapt to rapidly changing conditions in order to continue providing vital social services and addressing community needs. In 2015, the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement was signed by major ethnic armed organizations in eastern Burma and has resulted in a reduction of fighting and abuse. However, progress has stalled and a sustainable peace remains elusive in eastern Burma, where militarization and clashes continue, and the legacy of longstanding armed conflict remains. An estimated 500,000 IDPs in Burma and 96,000 refugees still reside in camps along the Thai-Burma border, with ongoing abuse of civilians in ethnic areas, particularly forced labor and land grabbing, contributing to further displacement and making communities' safe return today highly unlikely. Meanwhile, the surge in drug production in Burma, linked to militarization and conflict, has led to increasing problems with addiction in many already impoverished communities. And in the near future, an inflow of economic migrants from Burma to the Thai-Burma border is expected with the development of the Special Economic Zone on the Mae Sot-Myawaddy border region. Given these changes, coupled with the increasing number of humanitarian organizations that have moved to Burma, affordable and accessible services are needed on the border, now and in the future, particularly as official Burmese government health, education, and child protective services are still woefully inadequate for rural and border communities of Burma.

MTC has and continues to remain in a unique position, linking governments and civil society to jointly address these issues for among Burma's most neglected. Our vision for the near future is to become a community resource center that provides essential services to vulnerable populations. We aim to develop education and career pathways for marginalized young community members. As a community hub, we will facilitate and further expand collaborative programs with local community-based organizations, ethnic health organizations, and Thai and Burmese government institutions, strengthening local grassroots health systems in eastern Burma, and foster joint efforts to advocate for community service providers in both Thailand and Burma. Working with local, regional and international partners, we will continue to raise awareness for the human rights of displaced and marginalized communities of Burma, many of whom are left further behind with the country's transition. We at MTC are dedicated to continue our mission of making quality services accessible and affordable to communities in need.

This week, Mae Tao Clinic celebrates its 30th anniversary through showing appreciation for the strong commitment of our donors, partners, community representatives and supporting volunteer organizations. A series of events will take place from June 20th until June 22nd, including an anniversary ceremony, a border symposium, an exhibition, cultural shows and a donor meeting.

Please support Mae Tao Clinic in continuing our services by sharing our story or making a donation on: <https://connect.clickandpledge.com/w/Form/1b93e15d-2585-47a9-9be7-65800f993273>

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

For media and other inquiries please contact:

- Annie +66 (0)899165866 (English, Burmese)
- Pattinee +66 (0)876771415 (Thai)
- Ellen +66 (0)635735036 (English)