



Mae Tao Clinic

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Press Release

Mae Tao Clinic's New Facilities to Continue Providing Healthcare Services to the Displaced and Migrant Community of Burma

On 28 May, 2016, Mae Tao Clinic (MTC) opened its new and improved health service facilities in Mae Sot, Thailand. The grand opening is a culmination of years of partnership, work and unwavering efforts made by MTC and its partners to provide the best free healthcare services in multiple languages for displaced and migrant communities from Burma.

"We are so pleased to finally be able to host our patients in this new facility. We have worked for over 10 years to secure the funds, find the land, design the buildings and relocate," explained Dr. Cynthia Maung, the Director and founder of MTC. "Our old rented site was difficult to upgrade and the space was limited," she continued.

Despite much-touted political and economic changes in Burma, public health indicators in eastern Burma remain among the worst in the world. Decades of neglect of the health system has left people in the country without adequate healthcare and it will take decades to fix the plethora of issues. Among the myriad of obstacles, government services remain focused on Township-level health services, which makes it difficult to accommodate all health and social needs of the highly mobile population. This barrier is in addition to the costs for government health services, which remain prohibitive. Approximately 45% of MTC's patients seek its services from inside Burma; the other 55% are mostly from the growing number of undocumented migrant workers living in Thailand who have limited access to the Thai healthcare system.

Dr. Cynthia Maung believes that "this population will continue to be here along the border and require health services." "MTC is the most accessible health facility for this population," she continued.

Since 2012, MTC began informally engaging with local and State-level health officials, learning more about each other's services and health programs along the border. "We hope the change in government means that we can start to have more formal referral systems with the local hospitals in Burma, like with the Myawaddy Hospital," she added.

MTC was established in 1989 on Thailand-Burma border, after the nationwide pro-democracy demonstrations in Burma, which led to a violent crackdown by the Burmese government and the arrival of thousands of peaceful protestors in Burma's border areas. When MTC was first founded, it was a simple, one-room building with only a rice cooker to sterilize instruments. Now it is a large and organized clinic providing services including free healthcare, education and child protection to at least 150,000 displaced people from Burma every year.

"I am very pleased that MTC can continue to provide their essential services since their work is very important to us," stated Dr. Witaya Swaddiwudhipong, Chief of the

Department of Community and Social Medicine at the Mae Sot General Hospital in Thailand who believes that MTC plays a crucial role in providing healthcare along the border. His team has been providing essential advice on the design and layout of the new facilities.

Unlike the rented site in the previous location, MTC's close partner Suwannimit Foundation – a registered organization in Thailand – owns the new site, providing a more stable location for the new clinic. Other improvements include upgrading the quality of services provided by MTC, such as isolation rooms for child in-patients with contagious diseases and a more spacious maternity ward. MTC hopes that the new layout of the facilities will allow patients to navigate the clinic with ease.

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