



# Recognise Us!



CPPCR Working  
to Protect Children.



COMMITTEE FOR PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF CHILD RIGHTS (BURMA)



"Recognise Us" – CPPCR working to protect children – 10th anniversary  
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## CPPCR Mission Statement

The Committee for Protection and Promotion of Child Right [Burma] (CPPCR) support children of migrant parents and stateless children from the Thai-Burma border to meet their basic rights such as citizenship, health and education according to the Convention of the Rights of the Child. CPPCR's commitment to children is reflected in the provision of birth documentation, child protection activities, and child rights awareness campaigns to ensure their safe physical and mental development.





# RECOGNISE US!

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## ACKNOWLEDGING 10 YEARS OF SUPPORT

CPPCR would like to acknowledge the contribution and support from all the individuals and organisations that made our activities and achievements over the last 10 years possible. We would especially like to mention the contribution of those involved in the founding of CPPCR; to recognise their vision and honour their work that has been continued to this day. They are: Dr. Cynthia Maung, U Myint Thein, U Myint Aung, U Swan Myaing, Mahn Mahn Mahn, Daw Myint Myint Win, Daw Nyo, Daw Lay Lay Phyu, Daw Aye Aye Maw, Naw Paw Ray, Mahn Shwe Hnin, and Daw Aye Aye Mar. We would also like to mention our major donors over the years that have sustained our activities. These are: The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF), Terre des hommes – Germany, Burma Relief Centre (BRC), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), World Education (WE), ADRA Thailand, the Body Shop Foundation, and Children on the Edge. We would also like to mention the contribution of the Lawyers Council of Thailand and other Thai civil society

groups and individuals for their support and advocacy work in the area of migrant children's rights. CPPCR thanks the Thai government, particularly those individuals that have worked closely with us and supported our activities. We are also very grateful to the many individuals and community based organisations from the migrant community from Burma that have joined with us over the years to address the violation of children's rights. Finally we thank all those who have worked as committee members, staff, interns, and volunteers for CPPCR for your time and dedication to this important work.

We regret that we are not able to name all our supporters, partners and staff by name; however each and every one has been necessary for sustaining our work. This document is testimony to your support, which for 10 years, has allowed us to work for the protection and promotion of the rights of children from Burma who are living in Thailand or who are internally displaced in Burma.

*International Children's Day celebrations*



# FOREWORD BY

## Dr. Cynthia Maung

For 10 years CPPCR has worked to improve the situation of stateless children by assisting them to access education, health care, legal status and protection from harm. We feel proud of these achievements, which were made possible by working closely with other community organisations and through collaboration with Thai civil society, sections of the Thai government and international organisations. However this is only the beginning. Recent reforms in Burma and entry into the ASEAN community have brought new opportunities and challenges.

CPPCR is now able to build connections with civil society groups inside Burma to work to promote the rights of children. As the government looks to develop the country it needs to recognise the existing networks of civil society groups; particularly those working on both sides of the Thai/Burma border.

Movement of people between Burma and Thailand will continue into the future because of ongoing economic disparity and

opportunities. Along both sides of the border there are many ethnic communities with their own languages and cultures. The governments of both countries need to recognise this cultural diversity.

In Thailand, Thai activists and human rights groups have continuously lobbied governments for reforms to address problems facing refugees and migrants from Burma. This kind of civil society action needs to occur in Burma to address issues facing people living on both sides of its borders with neighbouring countries.

Peace doesn't just come from economic development, but from being able to practice beliefs and culture freely, having equal access to resources and protecting the environment within which people live, so as to provide a secure future for the children of all peoples in the region. Being recognised as citizens of a country helps children to feel they are a part of one society or community, so they have a sense of responsibility and can make a contribution to that society.



Dr. Cynthia Maung  
Director of Mae Tao Clinic and  
Chairperson for the Committee for Protection  
and Promotion of Child Rights (Burma)

## FOREWORD BY

### Manida Adisaisakul

The Committee for the Protection and Promotion of Child Rights [Burma] (CPPCR) was set up in 2002 to combat the issue of statelessness, promote child rights and respond to child protection issues. CPPCR works closely with other CBOs, NGOs and Thai authorities to promote the issues of child rights and child protection among the migrant communities in the Thai-Burma border area through education workshops. CPPCR has also been registering births of children born to migrants and displaced people from Burma living in Thailand so that their identity is recorded and one day they could return to their country.

CPPCR has worked continuously to assist migrant children. The Tak Primary Educational Service Area Office 2 (TAK PESAO 2) has been working together with CPPCR to ensure that children have access to education, and to assist children at risk of child labour and trafficking. We have also conducted relevant workshops for teachers and students in the migrant learning centers.



Manida Adisaisakul  
Deputy Director  
Tak Primary Educational Service Area Office 2  
(TAK PESAO 2)

## FOREWORD BY

### U Myint Thein

As a result of 60 years of civil war in Burma, the basic human rights of all ethnicities have been suppressed and violated – in particular the younger generation faces an uncertain future. Following the end of the Second World War, people all over the world have raised their voice in demanding their rights. However, the children of all ethnic nationalities in Burma have faced or are facing ongoing conflict along Burma's borders and are at risk of becoming stateless in neighbouring countries.

Over the last decade CPPCR has been painting a picture of hope for the new generation of Burmese children within the dark pages of a history filled with danger. The value of CPPCR's work cannot be measured as it endeavours to recognise the identity of children from Burma. In the current political climate of Burmese politics, the parliament needs to be guided by the rule of law and abide by genuine democratic principles. This includes the application of existing laws such as the 1982 Burma citizenship law and the implementation of new laws.

The relevant parliamentary subcommittees should work with CPPCR to guarantee a lawful future for our children. Furthermore, we must raise awareness for the current situation of children who are living in war zones, along the borders, and in neighbouring countries; there needs to be proper protection of these children's basic rights.



Myint Thein  
Joint General Secretary – Burma Lawyers  
Council (BLC)  
Legal Consultant for CPPCR

# INTRODUCTION CPPCR



Birth registration by CPPCR

Decades of military rule, civil war and economic mismanagement have forced thousands of people from Burma to flee. In the last 20 years a generation of young people from Burma have grown up in Thailand. Many of them are classified as illegal residents and many are stateless as they lack any identity documentation from Burma or Thailand.

## FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHTS OF CITIZENSHIP

To be stateless is to be without a place that you can legally call home. Stateless people are denied basic rights, including the right to freedom of movement, work, education, property and it can rob children of a stable future.<sup>1</sup> Not being recognised as citizens of Burma makes it very difficult to return to a stable life in that country.

Living in Thailand is also fraught with danger and difficulty for many children from Burma who are considered illegal. They face discrimination, poverty and a lack of access to health and education. At home children can face harsh discipline, neglect, physical and sexual abuse. They can be forced into many

forms of work which can harm their health and development. There is also the risk of being trafficked and working in the sex industry.

Efforts to combat statelessness are vital. The UNHCR has stated the importance of documenting those who are stateless in order to protect their rights and dignity and to work towards future recognition.<sup>2</sup> The Committee for Protection and Promotion of Child Rights [Burma] (CPPCR) was established in 2002 to document the births of children of migrants from Burma for the purpose of having them recognised as Burmese citizens in the future. CPPCR has also sought to assist children from Burma to gain legal status while living in Thailand. For 10 years CPPCR has been working to document migrant children and to advocate on their behalf to both Thai and Burmese authorities.

CPPCR also works with the migrant community from Burma to prevent and respond to the conditions that violate child rights and situations that harm children.

- **Preventative activities** include birth registration, advocacy and community education on child rights issues with other organisations, authorities and in the migrant community.
- **Responsive activities** include the Child Protection Response System which intervenes in cases where children are at risk. Birth registration is also a direct response in combating the problem of Statelessness.



# HISTORY OF CPPCR

## BIRTH REGISTRATION AS A RESPONSE TO STATELESSNESS

10 years ago, activists and community workers from the expatriate community from Burma living in Thailand who were concerned about the situation of children of migrants and displaced people from Burma becoming stateless, decided to form CPPCR. CPPCR was set up primarily for the purpose of documenting the births of children of migrants from Burma systematically so that one day those children would be given official recognition and legal status as citizens of Burma and not become stateless.

In 2002, CPPCR with strong backing from the Thai Human Rights Commission and the Lawyers Council of Thailand, began advocacy activities and started working towards registering the births of these children. With additional advice from the Burma Lawyers Council, CPPCR was able to develop a process for registering births that was based on international legal standards and thus recognisable as being a thorough and systematic process.

While aware that there was no guarantee the Thai or Burmese Governments would recognise the initiative, on May 2, 2003, a birth registration centre was set up by CPPCR in Mae Sot which began registering children born to Burmese parents living in Thailand.

Since then CPPCR has expanded its activities in birth registration significantly within the community. We have worked hard to promote the importance of registration within the migrant community from Burma especially since the changes to Thai Law in 2008 which allow undocumented migrants to have their children registered by the Thai authorities. We have also worked hard to advocate for the needs of children and parents made stateless.

Since 2009, CPPCR has expanded its work in

child protection by being directly involved in responding to instances of abuse. We also continue to educate members of the community on issues of child rights and child abuse in an effort to protect children from the most serious forms of harm.



IDP family eastern Burma © Phil Thornton



Meeting at Mae Tao Clinic



CPPCR staff in 2003

# CPPCR HISTORY

1988-2001    2002    2003    2004    2005    2006    2007    2008    2009    2010    2011    2012



**MAE TAO CLINIC**

1989 - 2001 MTC recording births leads to creation of Committee for Protection and Promotion of Child Rights [Burma] (CPPCR) to make a more systematic process



**2002 - Birth Registration as a response to Statelessness - CPPCR Formed**

Activists and community workers within the migrant community from Burma formed CPPCR for the purpose of documenting the births of children of migrants from Burma systematically to prevent children from becoming Stateless.



**2002 - 2012 CPPCR ADVOCACY and EDUCATION**

**2002 CPPCR Birth Registration process developed**

In 2002 CPPCR began advocacy and working towards registering the births of displaced people from Burma in Thailand. Those involved developed a thorough process for registering births based on international legal standards

**2003 - Registration Begins**

2nd May, 2003, birth registration centre established in Mae Sot commence registering children born to parents from Burma living in Thailand.



**2003 - CPPCR Registration at MTC**

Initially almost all babies were registered at MTC as most migrants living in the Mae Sot area have their babies delivered there, while many others come from far away. Children registered on site and parents receive the documentation for their child



**2002 - 2012**

Together with Thai, Burmese and international organisations and individuals, CPPCR has continuously advocated to the Thai authorities for recognition of its birth registration initiative and promoted the situation of migrant children made stateless.

**2005 - 2012 IDP Delivery Certificates**

Collaboration and Training held in 2005 with BPHWT to begin issuing delivery certificates from 2006 for IDPs in conflict areas within eastern Burma.

**2005 - Registration Expanded into Migrant community**

The process of registration was expanded into the Burmese migrant community in areas surrounding Mae Sot and beyond in an effort to reach those most likely to miss out.



**2005 - Birth Registration in the community**



**2007 - 2012 CTDCEP**

As a response to the needs of unaccompanied children the Coordination Team for Displaced Children's Education and Protection (CTDCEP) was formed to work with boarding houses and schools, organise funding and support, and is involved in advocacy both internationally and domestically.

**Networking**

**2007 - IDP Birth Registration**

Through negotiations with communities from eastern Burma, Karen and Karenni Birth Registration Committees established. From 2007 - Karen BRC begins registering IDP children.

**2008 - 2012 On going work in birth registration**

CPPCR continues to be involved in birth registration by assisting parents to register children at the district or municipal office while continuing to register births at MTC and in the community

**2008 - Thai Birth Registration**

Changes to Thai Law allows children of undocumented parents to receive an officially recognised record of their birth and identity preventing them from being document-less and stateless. Allows greater opportunity for participation in Thai society: access Thai education, chance for gaining legal residency and work permits



**Child Protection**

**2009 - Research Project**

Documenting situation of migrant children in Mae Sot published in 2009. Title: "Feeling Small in Another Persons Country".

**2009**

CPPCR organised and facilitated discussions with CBOs and NGOs to develop a comprehensive system to respond to cases of serious abuse

**2009 - Response to child abuse**

Identification of serious abuse of children leads to consensus on the need to respond to child abuse and exploitation within the Burmese community.

**2009- Child Protection Policy**

Policy developed collaboratively, in-line with international legal and human rights standards protecting the "best interests of the child" while also being sensitive and relevant to local circumstances.

**2010 - Child Protection Response System (CPRS) pilot launched with support from World Education**

**August 2010- CPRS launched under IRC - IMPACT**

Pilot program developed to work within IRC's IMPACT program: CPPCR is a program partner and coordinates CPRS with participation of 14 other CBOs/NGOs in Mae Sot area

**2009 - 2012 Community Education for CPRS IMPACT Program**

**2012 - Continuing Registration in IDP areas**

Discussions ongoing with BPHWT, Karen BRC, Karenni BRC on how to proceed with birth registration activities in IDP areas in light of recent government reforms within Burma.



**Assisting children seeking to gain Thai residency or citizenship**

Assisting people from Burma to have citizenship identity in order to return to Burma

**2012 - CPP Implementation**

CPP to be implemented from 2012 across schools, boarding houses and CBOs in the Mae Sot area in conjunction with MTC and the CRWG (Child Rights Working Group)

**2010 - 2013 CPRS managed under IRC's IMPACT Program**



**CPRS from 2013**

CPPCR will take increased responsibility for coordinating CPRS when the IMPACT program comes to an end in 2013

**Education in community on child rights and child abuse issues**

## BACKGROUND: CAUSES OF STATELESSNESS



ABOVE: Displaced children in Karen state © Phil Thornton

## SITUATION IN BURMA

### MILITARY RULE

Since colonial times Burma has had a history of being ruled under laws which are often arbitrary and unjust; since the military coup of 1962 Burma was under continuous military rule. Recently, reforms have led to elections being held in 2010 and a nominally civilian government being instated; however the ruling party is controlled by the military and the new constitution still guarantees military control as 25% of seats in parliament are set aside for the military<sup>3</sup>. The regime has perpetrated gross human rights violations seen in the suppression of the 1988 student

BELOW: Senior Burmese officers and Democratic Karen Buddhist Army soldiers. ©Karen News





*Forced labour porters in blue.* © KHRG

protests and the “Saffron revolution” of 2007 and most recently in the ongoing violence and repression of peoples in ethnic minority areas<sup>4,5</sup>. Since the recent elections many reforms are being implemented, but there is a long way to go to correct years of harmful policies, and not enough transparency in current government decision-making.

### **ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Over the years the government spent up to a quarter of its budget on the military while spending only 4% on health and education combined, leaving these neglected and in need of restoration and development. In a positive move military spending was reduced to 14% in the 2012 budget while spending on health and education was increased slightly<sup>6</sup>. However most public infrastructure is in disrepair and the economy is one of the poorest in the region.<sup>7</sup>

Most people in Burma struggle to make a living, but the situation is particularly dire in the ethnic minority dominated states<sup>8</sup>. These were starved of government funding for basic services such as health and education. Logging, mining, and infrastructure projects in these areas have brought wealth to the ruling

elite and foreign investors, while the local people’s land is forcibly confiscated, leading to displacement, forced labour, environmental degradation and destruction of livelihoods.<sup>9</sup> A lack of citizenship identities or the loss of documents due to war and displacement in minority areas has prevented people from claiming ownership of land forcibly taken by the government<sup>10</sup>.

### **CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS**

Although citizenship is guaranteed in the Burma Citizenship Law of 1982 for all ethnic groups within the country, the law also states that “The Council of State may decide whether any ethnic group is national or not”<sup>11</sup>; which has been used to deny citizenship and recognition of the Rohingya people.<sup>12</sup> The



*Jungle school in Karen State*  
© Phil Thornton



© Phil Thornton

government has also been guilty of arbitrarily denying citizenship to anybody from Burma. For example those fleeing the country for any great length of time face the possibility of having their citizenship revoked.<sup>13</sup>

In areas of conflict, such as in the east of Burma, many people from ethnic minority groups do not possess Burmese citizenship. In one survey of Eastern Burma more than half of respondents said they could not prove their citizenship.<sup>14</sup> Civil war and displacement as well as restrictions on movement and lack of knowledge of processes have made it difficult

for children born in these areas to be registered in accordance with government requirements. Recently the government has begun a process of providing identity papers for people in these areas<sup>15</sup>. However this cannot be fully successful without a lasting peace and an end to dispossession of land.

## CONFLICT AND DISPLACEMENT

Over the years the Burmese regime has promoted a militant “Burman Nationalism” to the exclusion of the more than 100 ethnic minorities within the country<sup>16</sup>. Since the end of colonial rule there has been almost continuous fighting between the Burmese army, known as the Tatmadaw, and various ethnic armed groups including the Karen, Shan, Mon, Karrenni and Kachin.<sup>17</sup> As a result of war the vast majority of those displaced internally or who have fled Burma due to violence are from ethnic minorities<sup>18</sup>. Despite recent ceasefire negotiations, reports of violence, forced labour and displacement persist.<sup>19, 20</sup>



IDP child © Phil Thornton



Karen father and child  
© Phil Thornton



Displaced Karen girl  
© Phil Thornton



IDP family © Phil Thornton



Children  
Injured and displaced  
© Phil Thornton



Landmine victim  
© Phil Thornton



Karen child soldier  
© Phil Thornton



Boy soldier © Phil Thornton



© Phil Thornton



© Phil Thornton



*Displaced Child*  
© Phil Thornton

In ethnic minority dominated states of Burma, the Tatmadaw is accused of deliberate killing of civilians, executions, forced labour and systematic rape.<sup>21,22</sup> The Army has also deliberately destroyed community schools, health services and other civilian infrastructure<sup>23</sup>.

Land-mines have been used by the Tatmadaw to target soldiers from armed groups and civilians. Ethnic armed groups have also used land-mines to a lesser extent. Since 1988 the government has also forcibly recruited children to swell the ranks of the army, forcing them to fight and to commit atrocities against civilians; other armed groups have also recruited child soldiers but in far smaller numbers.<sup>24</sup> Many children have lost one or both parents in conflict areas; children are often malnourished, can be stunted in growth, and are more susceptible to disease.<sup>25,26</sup>

“The SPDC burnt the place where I lived and many people were homeless and didn’t have enough food. I had to struggle to escape with my life. Because of SPDC cruelty I felt pain in the chest and my mind was always agitated.”

17 year old boy attending High School in Thailand<sup>27</sup>.

It is estimated that since 1988, violence has led to over 500,000 people being internally displaced and caused millions of people to flee across the borders with India, China, and Thailand.<sup>28,29</sup> Along the Thai Burma border, it is estimated that currently 140,000 people live in refugee camps, while close to 60,000 people have been resettled in third countries<sup>30</sup>.

# CHILDREN CAUGHT BETWEEN COUNTRIES

“I came with my grandmother’s friend who lived in my village. We could not come by car as there are military checkpoints on the way. We had to come secretly by foot through the forest and it took seven days. We could not let the soldiers see us or we will be killed. We were afraid.”

16 year old boy attending learning centre<sup>29</sup>

## LIVING IN THAILAND

As adults flee conflict or seek a better life across the border, many bring their children with them, or have children while they live in Thailand. Many of these people are not legally registered in Thailand which makes daily life very difficult for both parents and children. As of 2009 it was estimated that people from Burma make up 82% of more than 1.3 million legal migrant workers in Thailand<sup>32</sup> while the total number of people from Burma living in Thailand both legally and illegally may be close to 3 million<sup>33</sup>. In addition to economic necessity, violence and instability are major contributing factors in migration to Thailand, particularly for those who are from ethnic minorities.<sup>34</sup>

## IDENTITY AND STATELESSNESS IN THAILAND

For many children with parents from Burma living in Thailand it can be difficult to identify a country to call home, especially when not legally recognised by either country. Children will naturally identify with the culture of their parents while also adapting to their surrounding environment. Although some children may identify Burma as their home others may have more of a connection with Thailand.

Birth registration is the first legal document issued to most citizens of any country and without it a person can become stateless. Officially the Burmese government issues citizenship status to those children born to Burmese citizens in Thailand who have an official birth certificate. However this was not possible for the many displaced and migrant



© Phil Thornton



© Phil Thornton

*Houses of migrants from Burma*







© Phil Thornton

people from Burma classified as illegally living in Thailand who could not have their children's births registered. Additionally it is virtually impossible for most undocumented migrants and displaced people living along the Thai Burma border to travel to the consulate in Bangkok because of cost and fear of arrest. The Burmese government has done very little to address this situation, which is making children stateless. Many people from Burma have no idea of these requirements and cannot meet them in any case. There is a need for more flexibility on the part of the Burmese government to recognise the citizenship of its people's children.

In 2008 changes to Thai law made it possible for all children born in Thailand to receive Thai birth certificates. Although such a certificate does not give the children Thai citizenship, it is an important legal document giving children a registered identity<sup>35</sup>. However it can still be challenging for displaced refugees and migrants, because of their situation and lack of information, to have their children's birth registered.<sup>36</sup>

### **MIGRANT PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN**

The wage that a migrant worker can earn, although better than in Burma, is far lower than the Thai minimum wage, and even less if the worker is illegal<sup>37</sup>. In addition, the work is dangerous, dirty and difficult, and many workers face harsh treatment from employers, including unpaid wages, threats, and violence. Because of this the lives of migrant workers

and their children in Thailand is difficult and they face many challenges because of poverty, discrimination, and lack of legal documentation.<sup>38</sup>

### **CHILDREN AT RISK**

Children of parents from Burma living in Thailand who are undocumented face deportation, harassment, and abuse, and parents can be accused of trafficking their own children because they lack documentation. Undocumented people, including children, are not free to travel for fear of arrest, fines and deportation. Sometimes children leave Burma because they have been sent away by their parents for their own safety, or they have lost one or both parents. Children may be working to survive and often send money home to their families. Others are separated from parents in Thailand, who are working while the children attend school in a different location. In some cases, parents have abandoned their children, while others have been tricked into selling, or even knowingly sold, their own children to be trafficked.<sup>39</sup> Those children who work and are alone in Thailand without parents are most vulnerable to being trafficked and entering the sex industry or other exploitative situations.<sup>40</sup>

### **CHILD LABOUR**

Large scale inequality in a society, as exists between migrant workers and the Thai community, is a contributing factor in the proliferation of child labour.<sup>41</sup> Many from Burma choose, or are forced because of poverty, to take their children out of school



Working children © Phil Thornton

so they can work and contribute to the family income. Thai laws are supposed to protect children from exploitation, particularly in the worst forms of child labour such as those which are dangerous and harmful to the healthy development of children. However it is not unusual for children over 13 years old to be working full time without attending school in many areas of work, such as the construction or agricultural sector where they are exposed to injury and dangerous chemicals. Stories of children younger than thirteen working are not uncommon.<sup>42</sup>



*Migrant learning centre*

### **CHILD EDUCATION**

The “education-for-all” policy in Thailand has allowed many children from Burma to attend Thai schools. However, for many more, lack of documentation such as birth certificates or identity papers has prevented this. Migrant children from Burma can also experience discrimination and bullying in Thai schools. Parents from Burma often want to prepare their children for a future back in Burma. The many Migrant Learning Centres in the border city of Mae Sot in Thailand, attempt to fill this need for education of migrant children. Many children living away from parents stay in boarding houses in order to attend Migrant Learning Centres. Unfortunately some children suffer from loneliness, bullying, and harsh discipline in these environments.<sup>43</sup>

from peers and family members and some may also turn to illicit drugs at a young age.<sup>44</sup> Some children face great risks both physically and psychologically because they are sexually abused, or because they work in the sex industry. Instances of malaria and dengue fever are common among the migrant community from Burma along the Thai-Burma border. For years health care under the Thai system has been unaffordable for many as migrants were excluded from the universal healthcare policy.<sup>45</sup> The Mae Tao clinic attempts to fill this gap by providing free health care to migrant people in the Mae Sot and surrounding areas and many more travel from far away areas in Thailand and Burma to receive treatment for their children.

The Thai Ministry of Education has been working with many Migrant Learning Centres through initiatives combining the learning of Thai curriculum at learning centres and the teaching of Burmese classes at some Thai schools attended by Burmese students. Thai schools have also been assisting some students to gain residency in Thailand.

*Child at Mae Tao Clinic © Phil Thornton*



### **CHILD HEALTH**

Poverty and child labour contribute to serious health risks for children living in Thailand. Violence at home, work, in the street or school can lead to severe injury and has a very negative psychological impact on children. Children can be exposed to underage drinking

## BIRTH REGISTRATION

Birth Registration is a major activity of CPPCR which helps to protect children from violations of their rights. Registering births is a preventative measure for the protection of children's rights as it gives children a document to prove their identity; it records their age, gender, and the names and other identifying information of parents including country of origin.

### THE BENEFITS OF CITIZENSHIP

Being recognised as a citizen is not just a right in international law, but has been shown to bring immediate benefits to individuals who were formerly stateless. Generally speaking these benefits can be said to include "the fundamental right to enjoy a nationality; to obtain identification documents; the right to be represented politically, to access the labour market beyond the informal sector or underground economy; and to move about freely<sup>46</sup>." In a world of nation states citizenship is essential for enjoying rights taken for granted by others and to have the opportunity to reach one's full potential.

### CPPCR REGISTRATION.

Recording those who are stateless is a crucial first step in protecting the rights of adults and children. It provides unofficial recognition which may eventually lead to formal legal residency or citizenship. In 2003 CPPCR's activities in birth registration started with

issuing certificates not officially recognised by the Thai or Burmese authorities, and these certificates do not provide formal legal status or protection within Thailand as such. The aim is that eventually those registered will be granted citizenship by the Burmese government and that while they live in Thailand they will be given documentation to reside legally in that country.

Even though they are not official, these documents have been able to protect parents from accusations of trafficking children from Thai police, because detailed information is recorded systematically proving the parent-child relationship. In addition some Thai schools have allowed students who have CPPCR registration to attend their schools as the certificates provide proof of birth in Thailand and of the child's identity. In cases



Children registered by CPPCR in 2003

where children have appeared in Thai courts these documents have been relied upon to prove the young person in question is under the age of eighteen. For stateless children CPPCR's unofficial registration may be the only identity papers they possess.

**CPPCR BIRTH REGISTRATION**

For many years Mae Tao Clinic was issuing delivery certificates to the thousands of babies born every year at the clinic to migrant parents from Burma. In 2003 CPPCR began registering births at the MTC issuing our more detailed documentation for birth registration.

Until recently the majority of CPPCR birth registrations occurred at the Mae Tao Clinic. In 2005 registration was expanded to include areas surrounding the Mae Sot area. Our staff set up temporary registration centres at various locations accessible to the migrant community so that parents could bring their children to be registered. Through community awareness campaigns knowledge of our activities has increased greatly in the migrant community and the results of this can be clearly seen in the steady increase in the numbers of those registered by CPPCR.

**TYPES OF REGISTRATION**

CPPCR issues two types of birth registration to children in the migrant community from Burma: depending on their situation children are issued the Birth Record of Child Record Certificate.



*Registration in the community*



*Community registration*



*CPPCR registration at Mae Tao Clinic*

**Birth Record (BR)**

The **Birth Record** (BR) is issued for children who have a delivery certificate from any Burmese or Thai hospital and for babies who are registered with CPPCR within 15 days of birth including those born at Mae Tao Clinic. CPPCR will also issue a Birth Record if a Vaccination Card and / or an Antenatal Care Record is shown within 45 days of the birth.



**Child Record Certification (CRC)**

The **Child Record Certification** (CRC) is issued for children up till 18 years of age who do not have any form of documentation and do not meet the criteria for being issued with a Birth Record.





Children registered in the community

### NUMBERS REGISTERED

Since July 2003 to June 2012, CPPCR has recorded information on 21,331 children with 16,463 (77 %) receiving a Birth Record or Child Registration Certificate from the organisation. Over the years numbers being registered grew steadily, reaching a high point in 2009 when 2,891 certificates were issued. These days the Birth Record is mostly superseded by the Thai Birth Certificate issued by the Thai District Office; this is the reason for the subsequent decline in the issuing of BR from 2009 onwards. On the other hand CRC registration numbers have fluctuated, and the highest number of registrations was seen in 2011. The more inclusive criteria for CRC means it continues to be an important document for those who have no other options of being documented in Thailand or Burma.

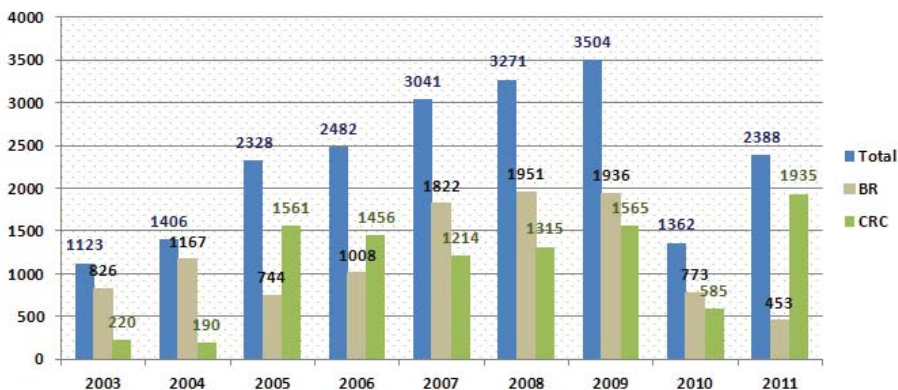
### CHANGES TO THAI LAW IN 2008

The Royal Thai Government has recognised that, over the years, people from various communities living in Thailand have been made stateless. Since the 2008 amendment of the Thai Civil Registration Act, it has become an entitlement for all children living in Thailand, no matter what the legal status of their parents, to receive a Birth Certificate issued by the Thai government<sup>47</sup>. The Thai issued Birth Certificate does not give the child Thai Citizenship; however it does allow children to access an education in Thailand. It also increases the likelihood of those applying for legal residency or for a work permit to be successful in their application.

CPPCR has been encouraging migrant people to deliver their children at registered hospitals and clinics as this is the easiest way to guarantee the child receives a Thai Birth Certificate. However the reality is that many parents cannot afford the cost as they must pay significant fees and are not covered by the universal health provision policy for Thai health services<sup>48</sup>.

This is why many Burmese migrant parents come to the Mae Tao Clinic to deliver their children. In 2011, out of 3,240 babies born at the clinic, Mae Tao Clinic and CPPCR staff were

BR and CRC registrations per year from 2003 - 2011



able to assist 2,837 (87%) to be registered at the Thai district office in Mae Sot. Some of those who could not be registered at the district office were registered by CPPCR however the remainder were not as the parents did not consider registration to be beneficial.

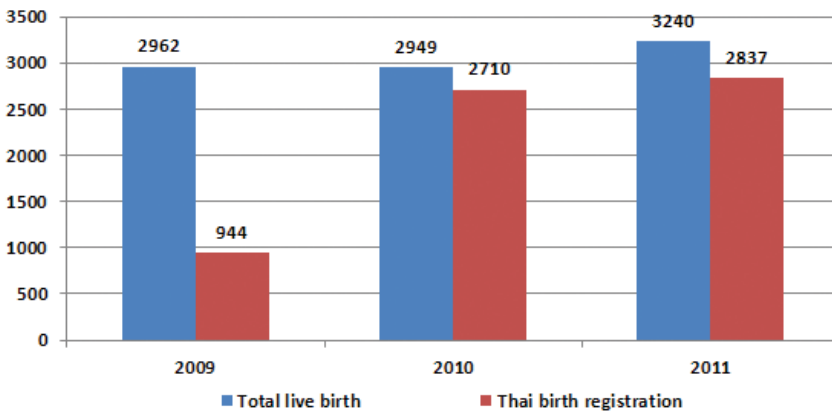
**Criteria for Thai Birth Registration**

- Criteria for obtaining a Birth Certificate issued by a Thai District Office are as follows:
1. Possession of a delivery certificate from a Thai registered clinic/hospital when a child is born at a clinic/hospital. If the child is born at Mae Tao Clinic or at home, outside of a Thai registered clinic/hospital, a recommendation from the village leader/headman is required.
  2. Reporting the birth and applying for a birth certificate from the Thai district office within 15 days of birth.
  3. If a child is not registered within 15 days and is still in its 18th year there is a complicated process involved in obtaining a certificate.



Baby Paw Tid receives birth certificate from Thai District Office © Saw Mort

**Thai birth certificate issued to children born at MTC**



Community registration



Delivery certificate from MTC ©Saw Mort

## Case Study:

### Naw Mi (30) and Paw Tid (7 months)

7 years ago Naw Mi, a Karen woman from Burma, came to Thailand for work. When she was young there was violence from war near her village. Because of poverty she decided to try and find work in Thailand. Her daughter Paw Tid was born prematurely at 7 months at Mae Tao Clinic and was registered at the Thai district office in Mae Sot.



Paw Mu with daughter Paw Tid  
© Saw Mort

*I am Naw Mi from Pi Ta Khar village and I have only completed grade 3 of elementary school. Due to fighting near my village, we had to move our homes and the school many times and later there was no school at all... When I was 18 I moved and worked in a factory in Mae Sot where I met my husband. I couldn't speak Burmese very well and I earned only 700 baht per month. I started work from 8 am and finished work at midnight. I needed the money just to survive. ... My friend told me to deliver my child at Mae Tao Clinic because if my child has a birth certificate she will be able to attend Thai School and will be able to travel freely. Our facilitator [at Mae Tao Clinic] arranged transportation and assisted us to go to the District Office. I want my child to learn Thai and English and grow up like other children."*

#### ASSISTING PARENTS TO REGISTER THEIR CHILDREN

CPPCR staff inform new and expectant mothers and their families within the migrant community about the process of birth registration and obtaining Thai Birth Certificates for their children and in some cases assist them in the process to gain registration from the district office. In many ways obtaining a Thai Birth Certificate involves a race against time, collecting information and securing approval from village or local authorities.

Many expectant mothers are unable to travel to Thai clinics or hospitals or to the Mae Tao Clinic because of the distance, cost, time, and dangers involved in travel.

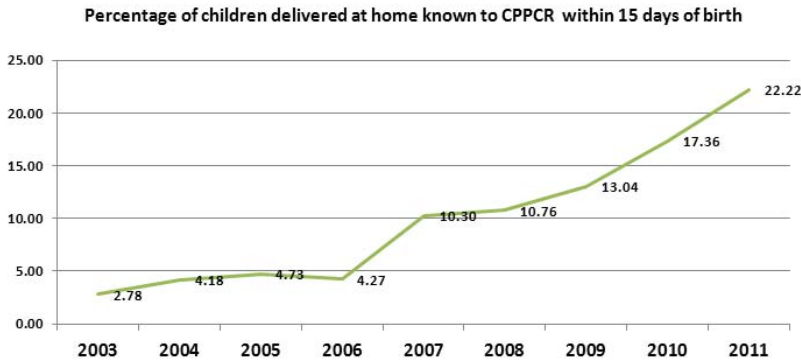
Babies born at home in the community are the least likely to receive any form of documentation, especially Thai birth certificates. It is encouraging that since we first started registering births the number of children born in the community known to CPPCR within 15 days has been increasing



Information session on birth registration



Information session at MTC on Thai birth registration



steadily from 2% in 2003 to 22% in 2011. With the correct documentation, and written authority from a village head, these children are now able to receive a Thai birth certificate.

There is also the possibility for some migrant children to receive a Thai Birth Certificate even after 15 days after birth has elapsed. However it is a very difficult process which requires documentation that proves a family connection between the child and parents. Sometimes DNA testing is required to prove a biological relationship. CPPCR has been able to assist a small number of children in this process and intends to continue in these efforts.



### Case Study: Ma Hnin Watt Yee (15)



Ma Hnin Watt Yee (15) studying at Thai school  
© Saw Mort

15 years ago Ma Hnin Watt Yee was born at Mae Tao Clinic and her parents received her delivery certificate. Later when she was a teenager the family applied for and were issued with a CPPCR Birth Record. Ma Hnin Watt Yee also holds a 10 year student ID card issued through her Thai school. Currently we are helping the family apply for more permanent legal status with the Thai authorities.

*"My name is Ma Hnin Watt Yee, my father's from Shan State [Burma] and mum is from*

*Mate Ta Mo[Burma]. I'm studying in ... grade two of high school. I was born in Thailand. ... At school my Thai Teachers are good to me and I have many Thai friends and the teachers treat us [Burmese kids] the same. When I visited Burma I didn't feel anything special... I didn't feel at home there I felt like a stranger. If I have Thai ID, it will be easy for me to find work... it will give me better opportunities and freedom. In the future I want to be a Teacher."*



## ONGOING WORK

CPPCR will continue to work with the migrant community from Burma and both Thai and Burmese authorities to assist people register the births of their children. We will continue to assist children who are stateless and lack documentation for citizenship or residency which would assist them to reach their full potential.

## IDP BIRTH REGISTRATION

In Burma if a child is born in a government hospital or clinic they are usually issued with a birth certificate. However in remote areas within Karen, Karenni, Mon or Shan state, where accessing these facilities is difficult, children are commonly delivered by Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA) and are registered with

state to any child up to three months old.

In 2007 following negotiations with Karen, Karenni and Mon communities, Birth Registration Committees (BRC) were established in Karen and Karenni state to conduct birth registrations. CPPCR also organised children's rights training at the district and township level to build the capacity of communities to protect children. These trainings included information on the benefits and importance of birth registration. Since 2007 BRC Karen has registered 4,522 children who have been internally displaced.

Initially there was some resistance to these efforts to issue delivery certificates or birth registration documents as people were not familiar with this concept and unsure of the benefits. Registration in these areas is challenging because of the remoteness of the populations who have had to move regularly due to fighting. Because of the stressful circumstances that staff work under mistakes were often made in recording information.

Currently CPPCR and partner organisations are considering how to proceed with birth registration activities inside eastern Burma in light of the recent reforms of the Burmese regime. The government has indicated its interest in working on this issue and has taken some steps to register undocumented people.<sup>49</sup> Further cooperation and negotiation is needed so that thousands of young people can gain official Burmese citizenship.



IDP birth registration ©BPHWT

the village head. War, displacement and the destruction of villages has meant that this system of village registrations has broken down in conflict areas, leaving people vulnerable to becoming stateless. In some areas of eastern Burma close to half of the population cannot prove their citizenship.

In 2005 negotiations were held between CPPCR and the Back Pack Health Worker Team to begin registering births in IDP areas to prevent statelessness. CPPCR provided training and developed a registration form to be used by the BPHWT workers inside Burma. Since 2006 until June of 2012, BPHWT has issued 9,765 delivery certificates inside Karen



Kachin IDP's ©BPHWT

## EDUCATION AND RAISING AWARENESS IN THE COMMUNITY



*Child rights Information session*

Educating and informing the migrant community from Burma on child rights, birth registration and child protection is an important activity for CPPCR.

The various education and information sessions held by our staff are conducted at locations easily accessible to people from the migrant communities. These include migrant schools, the Mae Tao Clinic, and in front of the private homes of community members willing to help. We promote upcoming events and conduct sessions with the help of community leaders, community organisers, and teachers at migrant schools.

### COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

In order to promote the concept of Child Rights, CPPCR staff have conducted education workshops in the community on the 40 articles of the UN Convention for the Rights



*Child rights training session*



*Child rights work shop*



of the Child. While all cultures have customs which help in protecting and raising children to develop into active members of society, no culture is static. The harsh circumstances faced by migrants and displaced people from Burma living in Thailand have created the circumstances in which the violation of children's rights is common. In this cross border context it is very important that CPPCR emphasise the concept of universal human rights for children. Through our programs and community education, we emphasise the right for children to have citizenship, to access education, be free from exploitation and hard labour and that the physical and psychological abuse of children is recognised as a violation of their rights.

### **BIRTH REGISTRATION CAMPAIGNS**

Since 2003 CPPCR has been conducting information sessions on the importance of birth registration. It has been found that many parents from Burma living in Thailand are unaware of the importance of having their children's births registered. When CPPCR first began very few knew about the organisation

or what we did so it was crucial to work hard to inform the community on this service and why it is important. The steady increase in the number of children registered by CPPCR is testament to the success of these publicity and information sessions.

Since the changes to Thai law in 2008 allowing undocumented parents to register their child's birth with Thai authorities, CPPCR has been informing the community of these changes. Our staff have worked closely with Mae Tao Clinic staff who hold regular information sessions with new parents regarding how to have their children registered at the Thai district office in Mae Sot. We have also been conducting information sessions with migrant communities to inform as many people as possible on the changes to the law and the benefits of Thai issued birth certificates.

### **CHILD PROTECTION AWARENESS RAISING**

Since the launch of the Child Protection Referral System (CPRS) in 2009 CPPCR staff have run seminars and workshops on the importance of child rights and child protection



*Birth Registration at Migrant Learning Centre*



*Information session for IMPACT program*

issues. These have included information on what constitutes child abuse and how such abuse can be addressed through reporting to the appropriate services such as CPRS.

During the sessions our staff encourage participants to think about what they consider to be acceptable and what is not in the treatment of children. Sometimes common practices in the treatment of children have been challenged. For example, in migrant schools, teachers sometimes use physical punishment to gain obedience from students. Our staff have challenged such practices and informed communities on the physical and psychological harm that this can cause. Staff have also challenged community silence and complacency on the sexual abuse of children and encouraged the reporting of suspected or known cases of abuse.

### **ANTI CHILD TRAFFICKING**

Trafficking is a major problem facing migrant children of Burmese origin. Often parents can be tricked or coerced into arrangements leading to their children being trafficked. By conducting one-day discussions in the community on the issue of trafficking, CPPCR is trying to address this issue with the migrant community. These discussions have focused on both the circumstances that lead to trafficking and the consequences of children being trafficked into abusive situations of work or being forced into the sex industry.

### **INFORMATION EDUCATION COMMUNICATION (IEC)**

CPPCR has produced, published and distributed material as a means to communicate educational information to the migrant community on topics such as children's rights, child protection and health information. ADRA-Thailand has supported our publication activities beginning in 2009 and concluding at the end of this year through the Attainment of Migrant Women's Rights and Entitlement (AMWRE) program.

CPPCR has produced a booklet for teenagers aged 13 to 18, containing information on

basic health issues and life skills which has been distributed widely through CBOs and migrant learning centres. CPPCR also produce a calendar every year which is distributed to the general migrant community. The calendar presents information on ways to keep children safe from harm and how to respond if a child is at risk. We also produce a yearly planner to be used by teachers at migrant learning centres, by boarding masters, CBO and NGO staff and community volunteers. The planners help to promote the work done by CPPCR and to raise awareness for children's rights. In 2009 we published and distributed the research report concerning migrant children at risk in the Mae Sot area titled "Feeling small in another person's country."



*ABOVE: Anti trafficking workshop  
BELOW: Anti trafficking campaign*





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© Phil Thornton

## CHILD PROTECTION REFERRAL SYSTEM



© Phil Thornton

The Child Protection Referral System (CPRS) that CPPCR coordinates as a partner in the IMPACT program aims to provide an active response to the abuse of children and the violation of their rights within the migrant community from Burma living in Tak province Thailand. It aims to provide a child protection service that will work to achieve the best outcome for the child by working with the family, community, other CBOs and NGOs and the Thai authorities.

### CHILD PROTECTION REFERRAL SYSTEM

During regular meetings with CBOs and NGOs regarding child protection issues it emerged that some serious cases of abuse within the

migrant community from Burma had led to severe injury and even death of some children. These cases demanded a response due to the seriousness of the cases and because they were very well known within the migrant community and wider Thai society. The decision was made to develop a mechanism for actively responding to cases such as these.

In the refugee camps along the Thai/ Burma border the Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees (COERR) had already been involved in child protection and developed a system for that context. This model was adopted, and used in developing a pilot

program for responding to child abuse cases which became the Child Protection Referral System (CPRS).

Once the structure was developed the pilot of this project was launched in 2009 with the cooperation of other CBOs working in the migrant community. World Education provided technical support through a series of trainings for staff and also provided funding. The program was considered a success as it quickly established itself within the community and was able to respond to very serious cases of abuse and intervene on behalf of children who were victims of abuse.

This initiative then led to the involvement of more partner organisations including the International Rescue Committee (IRC). Efforts were made to establish communication and cooperation with Thai authorities. Through a collaborative process CPRS was adopted into the wider structure of a comprehensive system for addressing child protection issues in the area.



© Phil Thornton



Children in refugee camp. © Phil Thornton



© Phil Thornton

### IMPACT PROGRAM

In August 2010 CPRS was launched by CPPCR as part of the IMPACT program under the overall coordination of the IRC.



The program is divided into prevention and response. The preventative side of the program works with families and communities to strengthen families and build safe environments for children through the Happy Families and Community Mobilization programs (see figure 1).

CPPCR coordinates the CPRS, working with partners in responding to cases of abuse, working in conjunction with 14 other organisations who have designated Focal Point case managers responsible for handling

Figure 1

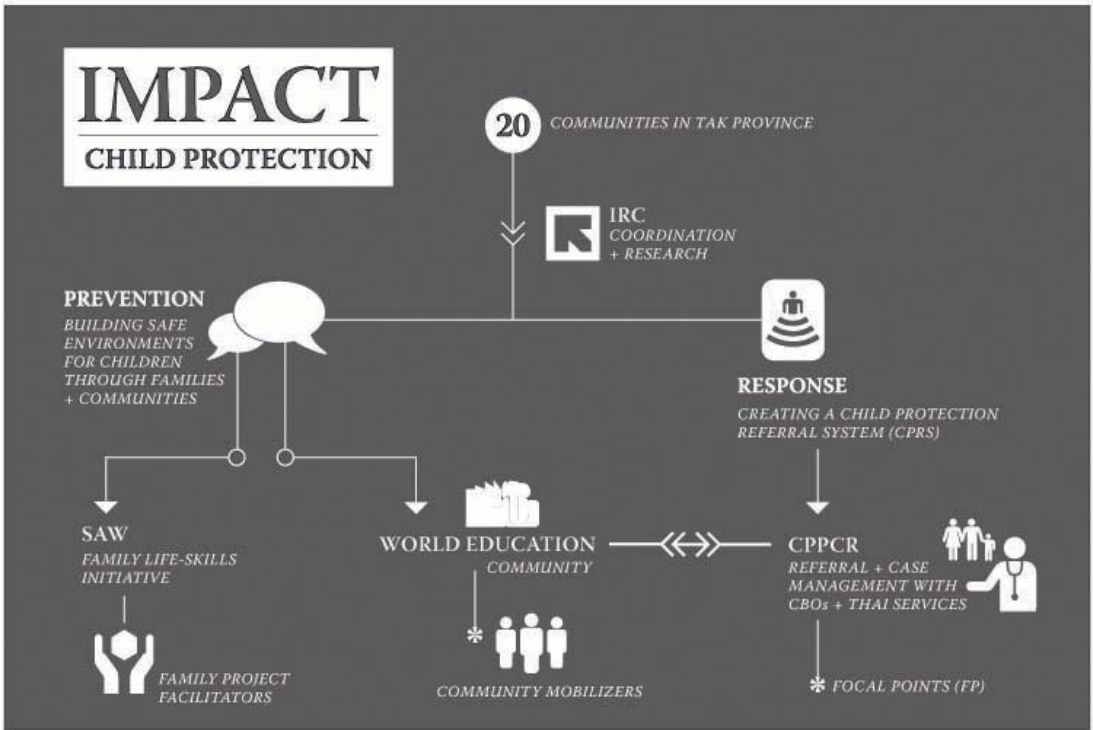


Figure 2



**CPRS partner organisations with a Focal Point staff:**

Burma Lawyers' Council – BLC
Yaung Chi Oo Workers Association – YCOWA
People Volunteer's Association – PVA
Overseas Irrawaddy Association – OIA
Social and Health Development Association – SHDA
Arakan Workers' Union – AWU
Burmese Migrant Teachers' Association – BMTA
Social Action for Women – SAW
Mae Tao Clinic – MTC
Burmese Women's Union – BWU
World Education
Compassion
Compassio Relief and Development
International Rescue Committee – IRC

reports of child abuse (See figure 2).

CPPCR have 5 staff involved in the project: the Program Coordinator, two Focal Point case managers (FP), and two Child Protection Advocates (CPA). Our FP staff focus on case

management and working with victims and families; CPAs are responsible for liaising with Thai services, authorities and police. Unlike most of the FP's within the CPRS our CPA staff can speak Thai providing vital channels of communication with Thai authorities and reducing misunderstanding.

**CPPCR FP STAFF: HTET MYAT**

**STAFF VOICE:**

*"My name is Htet Myat, I'm from Burma and have been living in Mae Sot since 2009. In May of 2010 I joined CPPCR to work as a Focal Point case manager responding to reports of children at risk. I am responsible for intervening and managing cases of abuse,*



*making assessments of the situation through family visits, immediate response in urgent cases, making referrals to appropriate services, provide support to children, reporting incidents of severe abuse to police, and supporting victims as they give evidence to police and at court."*

## **WORKING WITH PARTNER ORGANISATIONS**

Our FPs and CPAs respond to cases that are reported by the FPs in our partner organisations or directly to CPPCR. Our staff discuss cases and allocate one case manager to each case. They work with the reporting organisation to assess the case and formulate interventions and referral of children and families to appropriate services that provide emotional support and counselling, health services, safety through shelters and boarding houses and other material needs. The majority of cases our staff manage are resolved through this kind of cooperation with partner CBOs and NGOs working within the IMPACT program.

## **WORKING WITH THAI AUTHORITIES**

Our CPAs inform the Thai Ministry of Human Security and Social Welfare in the most serious cases where children are in urgent need of intervention. Cases of child sexual abuse require medical check ups at Mae Sot Hospital where the Thai government's One Stop Crisis Centre (OSCC)\*, organises medical checkups and will contact the police. In some cases CPRS staff also notify Thai police and the child may be removed from the family and placed in the care of the Thai authorities. Our case managers prepare victims so they are able to clearly state their case to police and in court. They also provide emotional support for children giving testimony to police or in court and help them through this very difficult time.

### **STAFF VOICE:**

*"I find child sexual abuse cases very difficult to manage, as there is also a lot of emotional abuse from the family or abuser to stop the child from talking about their abuse. This can*



*Children recycling work © Phil Thornton*

*be because the family feels ashamed of the situation. Sexual and emotional abuse can lead to the child developing emotional and mental problems in the future. Also the health problems that come with sexual abuse are very serious."*

## **TYPES OF ABUSE REPORTED THROUGH THE CPRS**

Serious abuse is occurring in the Mae Sot area and this has been the case for many years.<sup>51</sup> Of all the cases to which CPPCR staff respond the overwhelming majority of cases are those where children have a life threatening injury or illness. Most of these are not due to parental abuse and are a reflection of the difficult situation in which migrant children and families are placed. Data indicates that in addition to these cases there is also serious abuse of children which the CPRS has been responding to. Of these physical or sexual abuse, neglect and school non attendance were most common. The presence of unaccompanied or abandoned children also continues to be of concern.



*Girl begging © Phil Thornton*

\* OSCC is a Thai government service assisting women and children who are victims of sexual abuse and or domestic violence





Child severely burned in accident  
© Phil Thornton



Street kids © Phil Thornton



© Phil Thornton

#### STAFF VOICE:

*"One problem we face is that abusers can cross the border back to Burma when we become involved in a case. Family members who are abusing their own children may flee with their child back to Burma. Other families return to Burma because they are ashamed of what happened. In trafficking cases we often don't know who the perpetrator is or where they are and usually the child cannot be found because they have been trafficked to another location."*

#### CHALLENGES

A challenge faced by our staff is that many migrant parents are already mistrustful of authority, because of their experiences inside Burma of government violence, political persecution, and corruption. They have also often experienced mistreatment and corruption from some Thai police. The CPRS requires that staff work with Thai authorities, and families may be very reluctant to cooperate, particularly as the interventions impact directly on their personal family life.

#### STAFF VOICE:

*"Sometimes when we are working on cases the family members or those accused of abusing children have threatened us with violence. There may also be threats of violence towards the child who is already the victim in the case. Some people become angry with us because they feel that the response is too slow especially if the abuse is ongoing."*

The work is also made difficult because many adults and children are classified as illegal and have no documentation proving their identity. On top of this the difficult circumstances families face contribute to conditions that can lead to serious abuse of children; these include a lack of education, poverty, despair and alcohol or drug dependence.

#### STAFF VOICE:

*"The children we work with face many difficulties from lack of security and their illegal status. Transportation is a challenge, as there*

is the risk of being abducted and trafficked, or arrested by Thai Police. If children have no documentation, parents can be accused of trafficking. To help in this situation we need to advocate strongly in order to convince the police to release the parents. There can also be problems in working on cases with teenagers who have no identity papers as we cannot prove they are children under the age of eighteen”

Another challenge is that CPPCR is not a legally registered organisation in Thailand because the criteria for registration are very difficult for CPPCR to fulfil. This has meant that in the past Thai police and social welfare staff would question the actions of our staff who removed children from parents. Through networking and building a relationship with registered NGOs such as IRC and the Thai authorities these problems have been reduced. However not being a legally recognised organisation is a problem as it means the legitimacy of our work can be called into question at any time.

**OUTCOMES OF CASES**

Cases are usually closed once some resolution has been reached that provides the child with safety. While some cases are resolved through intervention under the IMPACT program, in other cases children continue to be at risk. It is almost impossible to find solutions which are acceptable to all. However our staff work in the best interest of the child while being sensitive to the circumstances and needs of the families and communities concerned.

**STAFF VOICE:**

*I'm proud to be working to help children be safe from abuse and I have confidence in achieving good outcomes for cases that I work on which are often very complicated. I have also made many connections in the migrant community which helps me do my job well. I am very happy to have developed my knowledge and skills in child protection case management.*

**LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

The IMPACT program coordinated by IRC is scheduled to come to an end in 2013.



However the CPRS and CPPCR's coordination of this program is to continue into the future. In preparation for this change CPPCR is building its capacity to lead the CPRS more independently. Through discussions with, local and international organisations as well as the Thai authorities we aim to ensure the successful continuation of the program.



Refugee boy © Phil Thornton



© Phil Thornton

# ADVOCATING FOR THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

## ADVOCACY AND NETWORKING

From the beginning, CPPCR has been involved in advocacy for promoting the rights of children who are from Burma and those born to parents from Burma living in Thailand. Such advocacy and networking continue to be an essential part of CPPCR's efforts to protect children.



ABOVE: Ceremony for those receiving CPPCR birth registration in 2003

BELOW: Meeting with partner organisations at CPPCR



To achieve the aim of protecting the rights of children and responding to children in need CPPCR has worked to build connections with other CBOs as well as NGOs working with the Burmese migrant community. We have also made connections with migrant community leaders the Thai authorities and members of civil society.

Meeting regularly with partner organisations to discuss child rights, displacement, statelessness and child protection has been vital for sharing ideas and information to address these issues. Networking has led to the development and implementation of various initiatives including the Coordination Team for Displaced Children's Education and Protection (CTDCEP), the Child Protection Referral System, Child Protection Policy, and community education and awareness campaigns.

## STATELESSNESS AND BIRTH REGISTRATION

From the beginning it was crucial that CPPCR inform the Thai authorities of our birth registration activities. The informal recognition of our birth registration documents and the benefits that these can bring to migrant children mentioned in previous chapters have been granted partly as a result of successful advocacy to the Thai authorities. The changes to Thai laws in 2008 allowing all migrant children to receive a Thai birth certificate can also be attributed in part to the hard work by those from CPPCR who advocated on this issue.

CPPCR continues to advocate for the rights of children who could not have their births registered in Thailand or Burma. We also are advocating the need for recognition of young people who have grown up in Thailand and know no other home.

## IDP BIRTH REGISTRATION EAST BURMA

In 2005, through supporting the work of BPHWT, recording births of IDP children within eastern Burma's conflict areas commenced with the issuing of delivery certificates. Following negotiations in 2007 with organisations from Karenni, Mon and Karen communities, Karen



IDP children © Phil Thornton



© Phil Thornton

and Karenni Birth Registration Committees (BRC) were established. Since 2007 birth registration activities have been carried out in Karen state. Currently there are ongoing discussions with all organisations involved in recording births of displaced people within eastern Burma in light of the recent reforms by the Burmese regime. Eventually CPPCR and our partners aim to work with the Burmese government so that people lacking proof of identity inside Burma will receive official documents proving their citizenship.

### **CHILD PROTECTION ADVOCACY**

CPPCR has also been involved with other CBOs and NGOs in promoting the needs of children who are at risk of severe harm in Mae Sot and surrounding regions. Although there have been various concerned individuals and organisations within Thai civil society and also within the government, the situation of many migrant children suffering abuse was previously receiving little or no official attention. Working with CBOs and Thai and International NGOs, CPPCR has successfully raised awareness and concern for the plight of migrant children from Burma with the Thai authorities. This has made it possible for CPPCR to work closely with these authorities in cases of serious abuse of children within the migrant community.

### **WORKING TO ASSIST DISPLACED CHILDREN**

In 2007 the Coordination Team for Displaced Children's Education and Protection (CTDCEP) was set up to address the growing concern expressed by various organisations and

individuals regarding the growing number of unaccompanied children from Burma living in Thailand. CPPCR is an active member of this network which includes CBOs and NGOs who are working together to address problems faced by unaccompanied children. CTDCEP provides a network for organisations to provide a coordinated response for children in need of access to services which support their basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Members work together to provide financial and material support for children staying in boarding houses linked to migrant learning centres. The network also assists children to attend these schools. Currently the network is still expanding its membership and is deciding on future directions for providing assistance.

### **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

During October 2009 CPPCR organised a collaborative process with CBOs and NGOs in consultation with the migrant community to produce a Child Protection Policy document. The policy is for CBO's in the Mae Sot area to have a standardised policy document so that organisations are applying consistent child protection policies inline with Thai Law and international standards. This document is to guide staff and volunteers to protect the best interests of the child while being sensitive and relevant to local circumstances of the migrant community from Burma living in Thailand. The policy is set to be implemented among migrant learning centres, boarding houses and CBOs working in the Mae Sot area with the migrant community from 2013 onwards.



*International Children's Day (ICD) celebrations*

## **CHILD PROTECTION RESEARCH.**

In May 2006 a research project began in order to document the situation and personal experiences of migrant children in the Mae Sot area and the difficulties these children have faced. The research included 23 interviews with those who work with the migrant community and 14 focus groups of professionals working in various relevant sectors. "Most importantly, children's voices and opinions were sought in a participatory process of activities, drama and discussion with 45 children"<sup>51</sup>. The research also drew on available existing literature and reports. The research was published in 2009 in English, Burmese and Thai and the English title is "Feeling Small in Another Person's Country". This publication clearly shows the dangers threatening illegal and undocumented children living in Thailand, as they face the possibility of arrest, fines and deportation, abuse, trafficking, hard labour and sex work. Following its publication, educational seminars were held to present the results and recommendations to organisations working in the Mae Sot area. The research results have been used by CPPCR and our partners to develop strategies addressing the needs of children at risk in the region.

## **WORLD'S CHILDREN'S PRIZE**

Since 2007 CPPCR has been involved in helping to organise the participation of migrant children living in the Mae Sot area in the World's Children's Prize for the Rights of the Child (WCPRC). This award works towards preventing violations of Children's Rights through promoting child rights, democracy, peace, and global friendship among the young people of the world. This prize links children

and adults from around the world who are working to improve the lives of children in their communities.

In 2007 children of Burmese migrants and refugees living in Thailand and IDP's from Burma participated for the first time in the global vote where Dr. Cynthia Maung was chosen as one of the award recipients. In 2009 approximately 7,058 migrant and refugee children living in the greater Mae Sot area, and IDP children in Burma, participated in the voting process. The involvement of displaced and migrant children along the Thai Burma border helps to raise the profile of the problems these children face and promote the work done by organisations working to assist them.

## **INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S DAY**

Every year CPPCR has helped to organise celebration activities on International Children's Day. In order to encourage the participation of children, these events have included organised activities such as football, dancing, singing, and arts and crafts presentations.

## **INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY AND NETWORKING**

CPPCR committee members have been involved in attending international conferences addressing issues of child rights, statelessness, birth registration, and child protection. CPPCR constantly seeks to partner with international organisations that are interested in our work or are concerned about statelessness and the protection of Children's Rights.



*WCPRC event*

# ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF CPPCR



*Executive Committee for 2012 – 2013*

## MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

CPPCR operates under the guidance of the CPPCR Executive Committee; daily operations are carried out by CPPCR staff and managed by the General Secretary of the Executive Committee. The CPPCR Executive Committee is made up of representatives from CBOs in the Mae Sot area that work in the areas of education, health and children's rights. Members of the Executive Committee are elected every two years at CPPCR's biennial conference. The conference is an opportunity to develop the strategic direction which will be taken by CPPCR over the following 2 years. Executive Committee members then fulfil their roles in guiding the work of CPPCR for a 2 year period, after which new members are nominated and elected. At these conferences members of CPPCR's Advisory Board are also appointed by nomination. These advisors provide CPPCR with specific information on legal, child rights and educational matters. The next conference is due to be held in December 2013.

## CPPCR CURRENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2012

- Dr. Cythnia Maung (Chairperson)
- Naw Blooming Night Zan (Vice Chairperson)
- Ko Naing Min (General Secretary)
- U Maung Maugn Gyi (Joint General Secretary)
- Ko Thant Zin Kyaw, Ko Min Min, Saw Thar Win, Naw Lady, Ko Naing Naing Htun, Ma Nway Nway Oo.

## STAFFING

At CPPCR policies and practices for staff recruitment and management are reviewed as part of our annual organisational assessment process. When hiring staff, we promote gender and ethnic-racial equality. More than half of CPPCR staff are female; including staff with key program management responsibilities.



CPPCR 5<sup>th</sup> conference



CPPCR 5<sup>th</sup> conference

Our staff come from a variety of ethnic groups in Burma including Burman, Karen, Pao, and Mon. CPPCR also employs two Thai citizens and regularly hosts international volunteers. Through the recruitment of interns CPPCR provides opportunities for young people to gain experience and employment prospects in the non-government welfare sector in Thailand that works with the migrant community from Burma.

### PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY

Gender inclusiveness in CPPCR's structure and work is ensured through hiring processes aimed at equality in recruitment. In meetings and workshops with staff, management and members of our networks, we encourage equal participation of both genders. CPPCR also encourages the participation of girl children in the activities we organise with the migrant community.



ABOVE: CPPCR staff birth registration activity

BELOW-LEFT: WCPRC event for children organised by CPPCR

BELOW-RIGHT: Organisational development meeting

### CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

Over the years CPPCR has engaged in organisational assessment and development for continual improvement on an annual basis. CPPCR is undertaking this process with technical support from World Education for the 2012 organisational assessment, which will include participation of management, staff and stakeholders. This process will be used to set CPPCR's goals for the next 12 months in organisational management and structure, policies, practice and service delivery. ADRA has been providing support to CPPCR for strategic planning activities, including review of the mission, vision and goals of CPPCR.





Birth registration at Migrant Learning Centre



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## FUTURE DIRECTION AND CHALLENGES

For 10 years CPPCR has worked hard to promote the rights of children from Burma living in Thailand and to protect them from harm. However, children living along the Thai Burmese border continue to be at risk of statelessness and having their human rights violated. In recent years the changing political conditions in Burma and Thailand have brought new opportunities and also many new challenges. Therefore CPPCR intends to continue to advocate for and work to protect the rights of children.

### PREVENTING STATELESSNESS THROUGH BIRTH REGISTRATION

CPPCR's birth registration activities are set to continue while adapting to the reforms and changes in Thailand and in Burma. We will continue to inform the migrant communities from Burma of the importance of registering children and provide information and assistance to have children registered by Thai authorities. For those children who cannot receive Thai birth registration, CPPCR will continue to register children with our BR and CRC documentation to protect children from statelessness. We also intend to expand our activities in assisting children from Burma growing up in Thailand to gain legal status while living in Thailand. Some of these children do not feel a connection to Burma and consider Thailand to be their home; CPPCR will support the right of children to choose their own future.

CPPCR intends to continue negotiations with other ethnic community organisations on registering births of IDP children within eastern

Burma. Recently the Burmese government together with the Norwegian Refugee Council has been registering people who lack citizenship documentation in eastern Burma.<sup>52</sup> However, to date there has been no direct cooperation between the Burmese government and ethnic community organisations to address issues of statelessness. Until recently the government has been issuing various types of citizenship documentation to people from ethnic minorities that do not guarantee full rights to Burmese citizenship. Government policy on recording ethnic nationality status is also considered unacceptable by many ethnic communities. It is essential that the government make the process for issuing citizenship identity papers transparent and allow input from those most familiar with, and most effected by such policies.

### CHILD PROTECTION WORK IN THAILAND

In order to promote child protection issues there is a need to expand the CPRS and Child Protection Policy Implementation and Monitoring among CBOs working along the border; especially throughout migrant learning centres. CPPCR will work to ensure the protection of children across many CBOs by promoting standards of care and protection of children as outlined in the Thai Child Protection Act and according to international norms. CPPCR will also continue to inform and raise awareness within the migrant community on issues of child rights and child protection.

### RESPONDING TO CHILD ABUSE

CPPCR will continue to protect children at risk by responding to cases of abuse through CPRS.



We need to continue to identify new partners in Thailand to continue our work in this area. In particular, strengthening our relationship with Thai authorities is crucial for meeting the needs of migrant children at risk.

### CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN BURMA

Currently in Burma the child protection system is inadequate for dealing with cases of abuse. However, Burma does have a national human rights commission that has the opportunity to focus on child rights and child protection issues within the country. CPPCR aims to be part of this process of promoting the rights of children and protecting them from harm in Burma.

### LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

What CPPCR has achieved over this decade was only possible through the support and cooperation of many individuals and organisations who dedicated time and expertise to help promote and protect the rights of children. Fundamentally CPPCR is a partnership between those concerned about the challenges facing children of migrants and displaced people from Burma living in Thailand. We hope that you will continue to partner with us to promote the right of children, to citizenship and to a safe and secure future.



ABOVE: IDP children © Phil Thornton

BELOW: CPPCR staff 2012



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“အသိအမှတ်ပြုပေးပါ” - စီပီစီအာရ်သည် ကလေးများအား အကာအကွယ်ပေးနေသည်

