Eye care services for refugee populations
Thai-Burma Border

Service Delivery Experiences

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Where we work:
• Nine refugee camps and Mae Tao Clinic in Mae Sod

Beneficiaries:
• 135,000 refugees, 200,000 migrants and IDPs

Existing structure:
• Ten camp eye clinics in collaboration with AMI, ARC, MI and IRC health teams
• Eye clinics open at least one day a week
• Clinic at MTC – open every day
• IRC – One Project Manager and two assistants
**Project Approach**

- **Empower** refugee health staff through primary eye care and refraction training
- **Early detection** of vision problems among schoolchildren
- **Integration** with medical NGOs
- **Cost effective** - using locally available ready-made eyeglasses and diagnostic tools
- **Partnership** with local Thai authorities and health offices
- **Coordinate** with Mae Tao Clinic – migrant eye services
- **Cooperation** with KarenAid, UK-based voluntary eye surgical team
**Project Objectives**

- **Overall Program Aim:** Restore sight to Burmese refugees and affected populations along the Thai-Burma border

- **OBJECTIVE 1:** To measurably restore sight through provision of 10,000 or more spectacles annually in refugee and other affected border populations over the next 2 years
  - Eye health worker training
  - Vision screening for School Children
  - Eye clinics in the camps

- **OBJECTIVE 2:** To measurably restore sight through facilitation of 500 cataract surgeries annually in Burmese refugees and other affected border populations over the next two years
  - Facilitate work of voluntary eye surgical team
Progress toward achievement - Objective One

Eye health worker training

Targets (Aug 08 – July 09)
- 25 health workers trained in basic refraction skills

Achievement at end Year One
- 29 health workers trained in basic refraction skills
- 23 health workers trained in primary eye care
Progress toward achievement - Objective One

Vision screening for School Children

- 11,802 children aged <15 years screened for eye conditions (Target – 16,000)
- 514 children aged <15 years referred by screening for eye examination (Target - 950)
- 97 children <15 year old with refractive error whose error is corrected (received eyeglasses). (Target – 500)
Progress toward achievement - Objective One

Eye clinics in the camps

Targets (Aug 08 – July 09)
- 9,500 ≥15 years old and above with refractive error whose error is corrected

Achievement at end Year one
- 11,406 adults received eyeglasses (4,858 male, 6,552 female)
Progress toward achievement - Objective Two
Facilitate work of voluntary eye surgery team

Targets (Aug 08 – July 09)
- 500 adults age 15 years old and above have received cataract surgery
- 50 adults age 15 years old and above have received other types of eye surgery

Achievement at end Year one
- 591 (255 male, 336 female)
- 79 (37 male, 42 female)
Service Quality Results

- 97% of < 15 children eyeglass recipients, 6/12 or better with eyeglasses provided (Project target 85%)

- 92% of adult eyeglass recipients, 6/12 or better with eyeglasses provided (Project target 80%)

- 77% of adult recipients still used eyeglasses after 6 months (Project target 75%)

- 59% of cataract patients see 6/18 or better 4-6 weeks after surgery (Project target 80%)
Challenges

• Resettlement of eye health workers to third countries
• Bringing together camp-based staff for joint training in single location
• Accessing remote camps during extended rainy seasons
• Increasing number of beneficiaries in camp and migrant settings
• Inaccurate data on number of school children
• Funding gaps
Conclusions, lessons learned, and way forward

• Building relationship with local authorities is crucial

• Resources for training eye clinic staff

• Raising awareness among school teachers on eye problems is important

• Future - expand to focus on blindness rehabilitation, low vision services, and related needs
Thanks for Attention