

# SKILLSLINK REPORT

## 2015-16



Union Aid Abroad APHEDA  
The global justice organisation of the Australian union movement



Shan Health Clinics: health checks for community members and medic refresher training.

Myanmar

Refugees

Essential Health Care

## Shan Health Clinics

### Background

Following the beginning of political reforms in 2011 Myanmar has seen a period of significant change. These political reforms culminated in the first democratic election in decades, with a civilian National League for Democracy (NLD) government being elected in 2015. An immediate and pressing issue for the new government was the armed conflict between Myanmar's military and non-state armed groups in the outer ethnic states, particularly along the Thai-Burma border. This conflict had been the major contributing factor to people becoming internally displaced in Southern Shan State.

In a repeat of her fathers 'Panlong Peace Conference' held in 1947, Aung San Suu Kyi planned a '21st Century Panlong Peace Conference' for August 2016. This conference aimed to build support for a national ceasefire agreement, and ultimately to an end to conflict between the Myanmar armed forces and armed ethnic groups in the country. There was great hope for this 21st Century Panlong Peace Conference, as it would give representatives from nearly 20 armed ethnic groups a chance to air their grievances and outline their political aspirations.

Unfortunately, no resolution emerged from the four-day summit and plans for a nation-wide cease fire agreement did not come to fruition. As a result there has been no

### Project name:

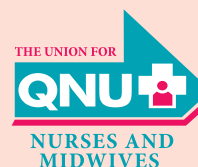
Shan Health Clinics

**Location:** Loi Kaw Wan Camp, Mae Fah Luang District, Chiang Rai and Loi Tai Leng IDP Camp, Thai-Shan border, Mae Hong Son Province, Northern Thailand

### Implementing Partner:

Shan State Development Foundation (SSDF)

### Unions SKILLSLINK partner:



### Total SKILLSLINK funding in 2015-16:

**ANMF Victoria SKILLSLINK funding: \$10,000**

**NSWMA SKILLSLINK funding: \$10,000**

**HACSU SKILLSLINK funding: \$5,000**

**QNU SKILLSLINK funding: \$5,000**

improvement for refugees and internally displaced peoples (IDP's) living along the Thai-Burma border. Since the conference violence has again broken out in Northern Shan State between armed Shan groups and the Myanmar armed forces, with air strikes being used for the first time by the Myanmar air force in November 2016.

It has been reported that some of these air strikes were aimed at targets despite being in close proximity to existing IDP camps. According to NGO's working in the region, there have been over 20,000 new people internally displaced by the renewed conflict, many fleeing to IDP camps in the south of Shan State.

As is always the case, displacement brings with it serious implications for the affected communities, especially for women and girls. This includes greater risk of sexual violence, medical risks relating to reproductive health issues and concerns for the nutritional needs for pregnant women, nursing mothers and young children. This unfortunate reality means that ensuring adequate provision of health care for IDP's is more important than ever. The Shan State Development Foundation, through the Shan Health Clinics project, continues to provide this vital care to those in need.

### **Key achievements in 2015-16**

In 2015-16, funds from Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA's SkillsLink program supported SSDF to provide health services at the Loi Kaw Wan Clinic. The Loi Kaw Wan Clinic provides access to free curative and preventative medical services to IDPs living in Loi Kaw Wan IDP Camp. The Clinic offers outpatient (Monday-Friday) and inpatient (around the clock) services as well as a team of outreach health workers, a dedicated maternal-child health clinic (two days a week) and programs to provide access to basic childhood immunisations and supplemental feeding programs to combat malnutrition in IDP children.

The Loi Kaw Wan Clinic also gives IDP families access to family planning and services for the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. Patients with HIV can access voluntary, confidential counselling as well as receive anti-retroviral therapy (ART) through an outreach and referral system to the local Thai hospital. Clinical staff are given the opportunity to build on their skills and knowledge base through ongoing thematic trainings and workshops.

The Outpatient Department treated 2,041 patients (1,057 M / 984 F) with the most common diagnoses including respiratory infections, stomach problems, worm infestations, urinary tract infections, hypertension, diarrhoea, and injuries/wounds. The Inpatient Department

treated 37 patients (29 M/8 F) with the most common cases being admitted for urinary tract infections, respiratory infections and skin infections.

The Reproductive-Child health clinic provided reproductive health care services to 139 patients with 47 antenatal cases and 40 cases requiring post-natal care. There were 5 cases of normal labour and other cases for peptic ulcer (3) and worm prevention (8). A total of 178 more serious cases were referred to Thai government hospitals for conditions including epilepsy, hypertension, brain tumours, osteoarthritis, cirrhosis, pneumonia, lung cancer, complicated births, heart disease, hepatitis, fractures, hernias and skin infections.

### **Other achievements:**

While the primary focus of Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA's support for the Shan Health Clinic is for the hands on delivery of essential health services and medicines for IDP's, the clinic continues to also provide transportation for patients, food for in-patients and the production of materials for health education (including reproductive health education). Where necessary the clinic also provides referral, transportation and treatment in Thai hospitals and specialist HIV treatment facilities.

The clinic conducted four health education workshops on topics including; universal precautions, family planning, sanitation and school health.

### **Looking forward to 2016-17:**

Moving forward, the Shan State Development Fund (SSDF) will continue to work in an extremely challenging environment. It is unlikely that there will be an end to the political unrest and armed conflict in the near future and as such the level of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) will continue to remain high. Given this, it is vital that the SSDF (through coordination with all relevant stakeholders) continue to deliver health services for the IDP community. SSDF will also work towards improving the delivery of existing health services, as well as actively promoting health education to ensure that patients and the community are as healthy as possible.