



STUDY TOUR: THAI BURMA BORDER

Migrant Workers * Refugees * Health * Education * Women's rights

21 April - 29 April 2012

(Applications close 24 February 2012)

Union Aid Abroad APHEDA is pleased to announce the 2012 Study Tour to the Thai Burma border. This unique opportunity will give you an insight into the lives of people living and working on the border as well as increase your awareness of the situation for refugees and migrant workers from Burma living in Thailand.

Union Aid Abroad APHEDA has been supporting local partners on the Thai Burma Border for many years and we currently have nearly 30 projects with 16 different community based organisation (CBO) partners. These projects include:

- Primary health care;
- Migrant worker health and labour rights education;
- Schooling for the children of migrant workers;
- Activist training;
- Women's empowerment through capacity building;
- Drug and alcohol rehabilitation for refugees;
- Capacity development of ethnic media organisations.

INSIGHTS AND HIGHLIGHTS - WHO WE MAY BE MEETING WITH AND LEARNING ABOUT?:

HEALTH: Mae Tao Clinic (MTC); Back Pack Health Worker Team (BPHWT); Shan Health Committee (SHC); Burma Children Medical Fund (BCMF), DARE Network

MIGRANT WORKERS/LABOUR RIGHTS: Migrant Assistance Program (MAP)

EDUCATION: Burma Labour Solidarity Organisation School (BLSO); School for Shan State Nationalities Youth (SSSNY)

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: Karen Women Organization (KWO); Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN); Social Action for Women (SAW)

GOVERNANCE/LEGAL/ENVIRONMENTAL: Burma Relief Centre (BRC); National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB); Alternative Asean Network on Burma (ALTSEAN-Burma); Shan Sapawa Environmental Association

Feel free to call me in the Sydney office with any questions. You can email, post or fax your expression of interest to the details below, made to the attention of Zoë Bedford:

Email: office@apheda.org.au

Post: Level 3, 377-383 Sussex St, Sydney NSW 2000

Fax: 02 9261 1118



Tour program overview

Day	Date	Details	Overnight
1	Sat 21 April	Arrive in Bangkok. Journey begins...	Bangkok
2	Sun 22 April	Fly from Bangkok to Mae Sot (Thai-Burma border). Afternoon free.	Mae Sot
3	Mon 23 April	Visit the Mae Tao Clinic, Burma Children Medical Fund (BCMF) and Burma Issues. Speak with ex-political prisoners.	Mae Sot
4	Tue 24 April	Drive to Mae La refugee camp. Visit Karen Women's Organization (KWO), DARE and Thai Burma Border Consortium (TBBC). Return to Mae Sot for the evening	Mae Sot
5	Wed 25 April	Visit Social Action for Women (SAW) and the Burma Labour Solidarity Organization (BLSO) migrant school. Free time to explore the markets.	Mae Sot
6	Thu 26 April	Travel by road from Mae Sot to Chiang Mai (360kms/5 hours)	Chiang Mai
7	Fri 27 April	Visit to partner organisations: School for Shan State Nationalities Youth (SSSNY), Migrant Assistance Program (MAP) and MAP radio and the Burma Relief Centre (BRC).	Chiang Mai
8	Sat 28 April	Drive to Wieng Heng refugee camp to see the work the Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) and the Shan Health Committee	Chiang Mai
9	Sun 29 April	Flight to Bangkok then onwards home to Australia	Flight

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 (Sat 21/4): Arrive in Bangkok

After flying from different parts of Australia, today we come together as a group to embark on a journey which takes us beyond the regular tourist trail.

For those who have arrived early on Saturday we will have a briefing from a representative of ALTSEAN which will be followed by a visit to Federation of Trade Unions of Burma (FTUB) time permitting.

For those who arrive later in the day we will have a briefing at the hotel before dinner about the itinerary for the coming days.

Day 2 (Sun 22/4): Mae Sot

Today we go to Bangkok's Don Mueang Airport to take a one-hour flight to Mae Sot on the Thai-Burma border. As the plane heads north-west, you will see the high-rise buildings and serpentine road networks of Bangkok turn into rice fields and agricultural land as far as the eye can see. You will know when the plane is getting close to the border when you see a vast mountain range unfold before your eyes. The captain will announce the imminent descent into Mae Sot while flying over the mountains and will take an increasingly low flight path over the area surrounding Mae Sot before landing on a tarred landing strip at Mae Sot Airport, just 3 short kilometres from the border. Depending on the flight path and the weather, you may catch a glimpse of Karen State, Burma out of the window. We will be met at the airport by a van which will transport us a short distance to our hotel in town.



After we check-in, you will have free time to visit the Moei River which forms the border between Mae Sot (Thailand) and Myawaddy (Burma). The Friendship Bridge, which connects the two countries, has recently been reopened after being closed for eighteen months. This bridge acts as a vital conduit for trade between Thailand and Burma. The closure of the bridge by Burma has resulted in large economic losses for Thailand who were keen for the bridge to re-open as soon as possible. Under the Friendship Bridge you will see a number of shacks in 'no mans land'. These are inhabited by people from Burma who make a living out of selling anything from tobacco to alcohol and fake viagra. Looking at Burma across the river you can understand the saying 'more trade goes *under* the friendship bridge than over it'. You will also be able to spend time wandering around the maze of stalls and shops in the undercover border market.

Accommodation will be in a comfortable hotel within walking distance to the centre of Mae Sot Township.

Day 3 (Mon 23/4): Mae Tao Clinic/Burma Children Medical Fund; Political Prisoners; Burma Issues

Today we will spend the morning at Dr. Cynthia's Mae Tao Clinic and witness the inspirational work they do on a daily basis to provide essential primary health care to refugees and migrants from Burma. In 2010, the Mae Tao Clinic provided treatment to over a 140,000 patients. They have many departments including maternity and child health, an eye clinic, a prosthetics department, counselling centre, and pharmacy. Providing this range of care is no mean feat for a clinic which has limited resources and is entirely donor funded.

We will also hear about the important work of the Burma Children Medical Fund (BCMF) who organise the logistics and fund the treatment of seriously ill children (and adults) from Burma. Most of their patients are referred to them by the Mae Tao Clinic as well as other larger organisations and Thai hospitals in the area. BCMF's patients all need specialised medical care and treatment which is not available on the border. BCMF has developed a unique relationship with the Thai authorities and each week they send a van to Chiang Mai for further investigation, surgery or follow-up.



Images from left: Patients being treated at the Mae Tao Clinic; Prosthetics fitting; Baby and mother with the BCMF special needs program.

If time allows we will visit the AAPP (Assistance Association for Political Prisoners) museum to learn about Burma's political prisoners past and present.

Day 4 (Tue 24/4): Mae La Refugee Camp; KWO; DARE;

Today we will leave Mae Sot early to drive to Mae La refugee camp (65kms north of Mae Sot). Mae La is the biggest refugee camp in Thailand with approximately 45,000 refugees. APHEDA supports a number of



projects in camp and we aim to give you insight into the DARE centre (drug and alcohol rehabilitation) where you can meet staff and hear about their success.



Images from left: The DARE education and rehabilitation team; Camp life in a KWO student dormitory; Camp life for some young girls

Next we will visit projects run by the Karen Women's Organisation (KWO) such as the women's capacity building training, women's health project and school dormitories for unaccompanied minors. You will be able to see firsthand the wide scope of the work that KWO does for their community.

We may have time to visit the TBBC rations distribution centre to hear about how food, shelter and goods distribution is managed in the refugee camp.

Day 5 (Wed 25/4): Social Action for Women (SAW); Burma Labour Solidarity Organization School

Today we will go and visit an APHEDA-funded shelter for women with HIV/AIDS which is run by Social Action for Women (SAW). Vocation education and training is the core focus of SAW's work as well as the welfare and education of orphans. They work closely with children and women to build a positive future.

Next on the agenda is a visit to the site of the BLSO migrant school. APHEDA was a founding donor for getting this school established with the help of Jamie Parker MLC (NSW Greens). The school is currently undergoing major changes as a new school building is under construction. This school caters for the needs of the children of migrant workers who have often missed large portions of schooling. As our tour coincides with the school holidays, we will meet with a representative from BLSO and hear about the labour rights work they do as well as hear about the school and its history.

We will also hear from the Back Pack Health Worker Team members about their program to provide vital primary health care to internally displaced people trapped in Burma's conflict zones.

In the afternoon if participants wish we can shop at the ethical handicraft shops: Borderline, Weave and the KWO shop. These shops stock books, clothes, bags and other fair trade goods, all produced by Women from Burma's minority groups – they make great souvenirs!

Day 6 (Thu 26/4): Travel to Chiang Mai

After our last breakfast in Mae Sot, we will move onto the next stage of our Study Tour - visiting partner organisations in Chiang Mai. Today we will drive 380kms from Mae Sot to Chiang Mai, Thailand's second biggest city. On the drive there is the opportunity to stop en-route to visit the 'Doi Muser hill tribe' market



located on the Tak road. Once we arrive in Chiang Mai participants are free for the afternoon to explore the city's temples, river restaurants and night market.

Day 7 (Fri 27/4): MAP; BRC; SSSNY School

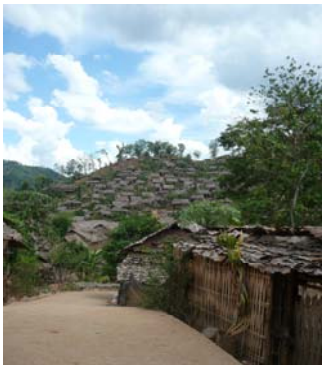
Today we meet the inspiring students of the School for Shan State Nationalities Youth (SSSNY). These young adults have come from arduous environments in Shan state (Burma) or from working as migrant workers in Thailand. They would love to share their stories with you and hear about the wider world from your perspective.

In the afternoon we will meet with the hard working team from MAP. The Migrant Assistance Program is a workers organisation which helps to organise Burmese migrant workers to access their legal rights in Thailand and to educate workers on health and safety issues. We also hope to meet with the team at Burma Relief Centre (BRC) to hear about their varied program of work assisting groups to campaign around environment issues in Burma, such as natural resource extraction and dams.

Day 8 (Sat 28/4): SWAN, Shan Health Committee

Today we will drive 160kms north of Chiang Mai to visit the Wieng Heng refugee camp* which caters for the refugees from different nationalities of Shan State. We will be able to see the work of the Shan Health Committee and meet a representative from the Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) to hear about their work in women's advancement. You will be able to experience traditional Shan food as lunch will be provided in camp. We will return to Chiang Mai in the late afternoon.

**NOTE: This excursion is dependent upon the security situation at the time as well as ability to obtain required permissions.*



Images: camp life – it is very crowded in a refugee camp; SHC medics doing their work; mother and child at the SHC clinic in camp

Day 9 (Sun 29/4): Chiang Mai - Bangkok - Australia

Today we will say farewell and reflect on the experiences we have undertaken in the last week on the Thai-Burma border.

Upon return to Australia, APHEDA will be there to answer any questions you have about what you saw and felt during your time on the Thai-Burma border. APHEDA will also be there to provide ongoing support for the vital work that our partner organisations do.



MONEY MATTERS

APHEDA will be looking after all ground costs once you arrive in Thailand (meals and personal spending money excluded). These costs will include ground transport and your internal flight from Bangkok to Mae Sot as well as hotel accommodation and other logistical costs.

Total amount for ground costs will be **AU\$1,000**.

As participants will be arriving from all around Australia we will expect that participants will arrange their own flights to Bangkok, Thailand and then from Chiang Mai to home.

Please contact Zoë Bedford:

Email: office@apheda.org.au

Post: Level 3, 377-383 Sussex St, Sydney NSW 2000

Phone: 02 9264 9343

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON TRAVEL

Booking flights

Travel arrangements are to be made with our travel partner Thor World Travel.

Please contact Ayra Baer to organise your flights to and from Thailand. Ayra Baer will also book you on our domestic flights in Thailand.

Thor World Travel: 22-32 Frome Street , Adelaide SA 5000. PH: (08) 82323071 Fax: (08) 82323541 web: <http://www.thorworldtravel.com> or email Ayra: ayra@thorworldtravel.com

Thor World Travel can also assist you with your travel insurance.

Visas

If you are travelling on an Australian passport, you are eligible to get a 30-day visa on arrival in Thailand. You need to ensure that your passport has adequate validity to meet the entry requirements of Thailand, this may be a requirement for 6 months of validity from the date of entry into Thailand. This information is current as at January 2012. Please double-check with the Thai embassy or consulate in Australia or Thor World Travel, our travel partner.



Thai Burma Border Study Tour 2012

Expression of Interest Form ~ Please return by 24 Feb 2012 ~

Name:

Electorate/ Union:.....

Address:
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Phone: office: Other:

Email:

1. What would you hope to get out of the study tour?

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2. Do you have any prior knowledge or experience of Burma and its history?

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3. Which of the following content areas are of most interest to you? Please number in priority order:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|--------------------------------|-----|
| • Refugees and human rights | [] | • Gender issues | [] |
| • Culture and custom | [] | • Political activism | [] |
| • Education | [] | • Media and arts | [] |
| • Environment | [] | • Trade union situation / OH&S | [] |
| | | • Vocational training | [] |



4. Any other areas of particular interest?

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5. Do you think you would be attending the study tour alone or with a colleague/partner/friend?

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Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA Study Tour to the Thai Burma Border: a week that will awaken your understanding of development, the struggle to overcome poverty, the aspirations of a nation and the hopes of a people. You will be travelling with like-minded people who also believe in justice and human rights, and you will be meeting refugees, community workers and migrant workers from Burma who will inspire and amaze you.

If you have any enquiries please contact Zoë Bedford at Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA.

Ph: 02 9264 9343 **Fax:** 02 9261 1118 **Email:** office@apheda.org.au

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Please return this form by Feb 24, 2012