



“The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much. It is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”
Franklin D. Roosevelt

In March 2024, Project HANDS faced the test, during a **cervical cancer prevention outreach trip** to the Thailand-Myanmar border, under the auspices of the Women’s Health Initiative (WHI).



Cervical cancer is nearly 100% preventable, yet it **claims 350,000 lives a year**. The highest rate of mortality is in low-income countries. Early detection and treatment save lives.



Our Tacoma, Washington based dream team was comprised of Irene Grias, MD, Patricia Sanchez, ARNP and Gayle Matthews, MD.

9,000 migrants and displaced persons from Myanmar reside in **the refugee camp where we were based**. The name and location are confidential, for their protection. Community leadership initiatives empower refugees with resource management decision making.



Our target demographic was low-income **women between the ages of 25 & 55**. They are at risk because of the prevalence of the cancer-causing HPV virus and lack of screening programs.

We also partnered with **Mae Tao Clinic**, founded by Dr. Cynthia Maung to provide essential primary health care to the vulnerable population of Mae Sot.



863 women were screened, most for the first time. **177 tested positive for pre-cancer dysplasia** and received potentially life-saving thermal ablation treatment. In this extremely vulnerable population, patient privacy is paramount.



Ultimate success is measured by upskilling and capacity building. Under the passionate, dedicated leadership of Dr. Hnin Cherry Htut, **50 enthusiastic local doctors, nurses, midwives and community health providers** worked side by side with our team to master the screening and treatment protocols, with the goal of self-sustainability. They were as eager to learn as we were to teach.



WHI exists at the intersection of need and compassion. The statistics help to tell the story, but when all is said and done, the story is really about **the power of human connection.**



We wish to thank our partners and collaborators at **International Rescue Committee, Mae Tao Clinic and American College of Surgeons H.O.P.E.**, for sharing our commitment to eradicating cervical cancer. Without them our work would not be possible.



*“Together, we have found a way to make a difference for a uniquely vulnerable population of women, and **I believe we have left the world a better place.**”*

Dr. Gayle Matthews

Project HANDS’ work continues because of our dedicated volunteers and generous donors. **Visit www.projecthands.org to learn how you can help** support equitable healthcare for some of the world’s most underserved communities.