

For immediate release: 1st August, 2008

Burma three months on: Food shortages and earning a living biggest challenge for cyclone-affected families

Burmese children and their families are still in need of international assistance to help rebuild their lives, three months after Cyclone Nargis devastated the country.

Save the Children, the biggest international aid agency responding in Burma, has already reached over half a million people, including 225,000 children, but says that much more needs to be done.

The international aid agency said that children are at risk of going hungry as parents struggle to make a living to feed their families. The cyclone devastated the agriculture and fishing industry in the delta as paddy fields were flooded and boats and fishing equipment were destroyed. Rice and fish not only make up the staple diet of people living in the affected areas, they are also responsible for most people's livelihoods.

Guy Cave, Director of Programmes for Save the Children in Myanmar, said: "A great deal has been achieved in the last three months, but there is still so much more work to do. The scale of this devastation is equivalent to what we faced in Indonesia after the tsunami and it will take years for these families to rebuild their lives. It's vital that aid agencies, like Save the Children, have enough money to keep working."

Save the Children said the international relief effort needed more money to respond to the longer-term needs in the cyclone-affected areas. At a donor conference in May, world governments pledged to give more money on condition that an independent assessment of the needs was carried out and that international relief workers were given improved access to the delta region worst hit by the cyclone. These conditions have now been met, so it is time for donors to give more. The UN appeal for Burma is currently around \$300 million off target.

Save the Children's immediate response has included giving out plastic sheeting to 100,000 families to build shelters, distributing 1.9 million kgs of rice, 96,000 sachets of diarrhoea treatment, 10,500 mosquito nets, 7,000 blankets and 14,000 bars of soap.

As the response moves into the rehabilitation phase, Save the Children will be helping children get back to school, assist parents to start earning money again and taking care of children who were orphaned or separated by the cyclone. We have set up 78 safe play areas for around 8,000 children, given out school supplies and helped over 50,000 children get back to school.

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- **For more information contact Sharyn Hanly, Save the Children Australia who has recently returned from the affected region, Mob: 0437 355 096.**
- Save the Children has been working in Burma for 13 years. We have more than 950 staff and volunteers working on the emergency response to the cyclone, and around 1,300 staff in total.