



What we do in Myanmar (Burma)

- We've helped more than half a million people recover from Cyclone Nargis
- We're helping children in 480 schools move successfully from preschool to primary school
- We're providing 150 HIV-positive patients with antiretroviral therapy to enable them to stay healthy



Densely forested and fertile, Burma exports teak, jade, rubies, sapphires and has its own deposits of oil and gas offshore. However, under military rule, its people remain poor and are getting poorer. Life is particularly harsh for the minority ethnic groups on the country's east and north-west borders and for people in the central dry zone.

Out of a total population of 52 million, 40% are children and young people. Many don't have enough food to eat and can't get treatment when they are ill. **One child in ten dies before reaching their fifth birthday.** Although 80% of children enrol in primary school, more than half fail to complete their schooling. Child trafficking – to work in the sex trade, as organised petty criminals or child soldiers, or to provide labour in a factory – is a big problem.

In May 2008, Myanmar (Burma) was struck by Cyclone Nargis. According to the United Nations, nearly 140,000 people died, more than half of them children, and more than 2 million people were directly affected.

Save the Children in Myanmar (Burma)

We started work in Myanmar in 1995. There are still restrictions on access for international non-governmental organisations (NGOs). We work in 9 of the country's 14 states and divisions: Kayin, Mon, Shan, Ayeeyawaddy, Magway, Bago, Sagaing, Mandalay and Yangon.

We focus on providing early years services for preschool children, reducing the number of children who die from preventable diseases, helping those affected by HIV and AIDS and building up a community-based system of child protection. A great deal of our efforts are focused on helping the huge numbers of people affected by Cyclone Nargis to rebuild their lives.

Our response to Cyclone Nargis

The cyclone devastated farming and fishing as fields were flooded and boats and equipment destroyed. Many parents lost their means to earn a living and are now struggling to feed their families. Some 700,000 homes, 75% of health clinics and more than 4,000 schools were damaged or destroyed. We are working in 14 of the 15 most affected townships in Yangon and the Ayeyewaddy Delta.

We provided immediate help

We provided plastic sheeting for more than 80,000 households, for temporary shelter, distributed more than 2 million kilogrammes of rice, almost 96,000 sachets of oral rehydration salts (essential when people become sick with diarrhoea), 7,000 blankets and almost 14,000 blocks of soap.

We're keeping children safe

We set up 158 centres where children can play. We trained 257 community volunteers to look after the children and help them recover from their traumatic experiences through games and role play.

We're helping children go back to school

We've repaired 174 schools and distributed 35,800 student kits to 332 primary schools. We've helped more than 90,000 pupils in total.

We're reuniting children with their families

We've registered 976 children who have lost their families and have helped 45 find them.

We're providing healthcare

Working in two townships, we've treated 18,000 patients at our three static and 12 mobile clinics. We're also involved in health education, promoting the importance of hygiene in preventing disease, child immunisation and breastfeeding. We've distributed more than 8,000 mosquito nets to prevent malaria.

We're helping people earn a living

We've secured funding to pay local people to rebuild their devastated towns and villages, repairing roads, schools, clinics and homes. More than 27,500 families have benefited.

We're also helping fishing communities replace their boats and nets.

We're improving the care of young children

We want to give children aged between three and six a good start in life, particularly children from minority ethnic groups who often miss out on a decent education.

Together with the Ministry of Education and UNICEF, we've developed and tested an eight-week 'Transitions Curriculum' to help children with the move from preschool to primary school. Children from minority ethnic groups often find the transition particularly difficult, partly because many do not speak Burmese, which is the language used for teaching and learning. The Ministry has now agreed to introduce the new curriculum in 480 schools across eight townships.

We're keen to maintain a close relationship with the Ministry of Education, to ensure that successful ideas can be replicated across the state education system.

We're saving children's lives

Some 60,000 children in Myanmar die each year from preventable diseases such as whooping cough, measles, diphtheria and diarrhoea. Trained medical staff and medicines are in short supply.

Through funds raised by Save the Children's Wish List, we've distributed 625 water filters benefiting 3,475 students from 177 primary schools, 29 rural health centres and 113 communities.

Malnutrition is an underlying cause of many deaths, and we're expanding our work to tackle this. We'll help the poorest households get better access to regular, nutritious food. We'll work with mothers to help them find ways to stay at home longer so they can continue breastfeeding. And we'll demonstrate how to treat acute malnutrition using Community Therapeutic Care (with take-home ready-to-use food), as well as providing micronutrient supplements (particularly iron and vitamin B1) for children who need them. We'll continue to persuade other organisations to adopt a similar approach, as we know that what we do is effective in reducing child malnutrition.

We're fighting HIV and AIDS

The rate at which people are becoming infected with HIV in Myanmar has fallen. Approximately 0.7% of the adult population has HIV or AIDS. Together with other NGOs, we're working in 17 of the country's 325 townships to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS and help those already affected.

We're reducing rates of infection

Young people listen to and receive information from other young people much more effectively than from adults, so we've trained thousands of children and young people as

'peer educators'. In the past year they've talked with thousands of young people about how to avoid contracting HIV and AIDS. In all of the 14 townships where they've been doing this, 75% of young people now know how to avoid contracting HIV.

We've also been working to prevent the transmission of HIV from mother to child in 139 villages in Pakkoku township, upper Myanmar. We've been offering pregnant women and their partners counselling and testing. Early detection of HIV means that HIV-positive women can be helped to deliver their babies safely and the newborn babies given Nevirapine to reduce HIV infection.

We're providing antiretroviral therapy (ART)

We run a community home-based care programme that provides nursing care and other support to people living with HIV and AIDS.

Together with Care, Marie Stopes International and the Myanmar Nurses' Association, we're providing ART to 150 people in three locations, with a view to expand this next year. The drugs enable patients diagnosed as HIV positive to live healthy lives.

We're preventing trafficking

For many in the eastern border regions of Myanmar, the only way to survive is to migrate. Conflict between guerrilla fighters and the Myanmar army has forced thousands to flee. Others have lost their land in government development initiatives such as dams or castor oil plantations. But often the effort to escape leads people into the hands of human traffickers, who take them to neighbouring countries to work illegally and for very low pay.

We're working across six countries in the region to combat child trafficking. This year, we've helped to organise the first national children and young people's forum on trafficking. Five participants then attended the second Mekong youth forum on trafficking. They submitted their recommendations to an inter-governmental delegation.



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