



What we do in Myanmar (Burma)

- We've helped nearly a million people recover from Cyclone Nargis
- We're helping children in 480 schools move successfully from home or preschool to primary school
- We've trained 14,000 children to protect themselves from HIV infection



Densely forested and fertile, Myanmar (Burma) exports teak, jade, rubies, sapphires and has its own deposits of oil and gas offshore. However, under military rule, its people remain poor. 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're 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 to provide labour in a factory – is a big problem.

In May 2008, Myanmar 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. We work in nine of the country's 14 states and divisions: Kayah, Mon, Shan, Ayeyarwaddy, Magway, Bago, Sagaing, Mandalay and Yangon.

A great deal of our efforts over the past year have been focused on helping the huge numbers of people affected by Cyclone Nargis, the worst natural disaster in the country's history. Nearly 140,000 people died and 2.4 million were severely affected. We played a key role in the overall response, reaching 338,000 children – nearly 40% of those severely affected by the cyclone.

Our work also includes 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. Overall, in the last year we've reached 736,000 children through our projects.

Our response to Cyclone Nargis

Because we have a strong programme in Myanmar, we were able to provide immediate help in the worst affected areas, distributing food, soap, mosquito nets, blankets and plastic sheeting for temporary shelter. We also provided 70,000 kits containing essential household items to families in areas other agencies couldn't reach

We reunited nearly 100 children with their immediate families and found safe places for 800 others to stay with relatives or neighbours. With our support, child protection committees have been set up in more than 100 villages affected by the cyclone to make sure that children aren't exploited or abused.

Because 2,400 schools were damaged, making sure children can continue their education has been a priority. We've repaired 250 and built more than 400 temporary schools, which has enabled nearly 145,000 children to return to school. We set up 165 centres where more than 35,000 children were given care and support to recover from their traumatic experiences. Already, 46 of these have been turned into permanent early learning centres run by volunteers we've trained.

Following the cyclone, there was a particularly high risk of respiratory infections, diarrhoea, malaria, dengue fever and the spread of illnesses such as measles. We set up 12 mobile and three static clinics providing health services in more than 80 rural villages. Clinics based on small boats visited villages and provided treatment, as well as distributing clean delivery and neonatal kits to pregnant women and midwives. We're also involved in health education, promoting the importance of hygiene in preventing disease, child immunisation and breastfeeding. We've trained village volunteers to identify malnutrition in babies and young children and to promote good feeding practices. And, because so much water was contaminated with salt water, we've built large-scale temporary rainwater catchment and storage systems and set up water treatment plants enabling us to deliver clean water to more than 60,000 people.

Many families' assets were swept away in the cyclone – including food stocks, seeds and livestock. Overnight, close to 1 million people were left without the means to get adequate

food. During May and June 2008 we distributed food to nearly 500,000 people. We're also distributing fortified noodles for pregnant and breastfeeding women. Every food distribution point is also an information centre, where mothers can learn about nutrition and where we can learn more about community needs.

We distributed more than \$2 million to 46,800 households so they could replace lost productive assets, such as fishing boats and nets. We've also paid local people to rebuild wells, roads, jetties, bridges, schools, clinics and homes, and we're piloting setting up village savings and loan associations so that families can rebuild their lives.

We're saving children's lives

Even before Cyclone Nargis, 60,000 children were dying each year from preventable diseases such as whooping cough, measles, diphtheria and diarrhoea. Trained medical staff and medicines were already in short supply and malnutrition caused many infant deaths. Building on our emergency work and the high profile this has given us, we'll be launching a major campaign to build public support for tackling high under-five mortality rates.

During the past year we've surveyed a number of townships to find out what healthcare is available and what is needed. We've distributed more than 12,000 mosquito nets to prevent children dying from malaria and dengue fever. We've also trained volunteers who provide information on family planning and we've distributed 320,000 condoms for safe sex and to prevent pregnancy. More than 28,000 malnourished children have benefited from our breastfeeding and community care programmes, which provide supplements and take-home ready-to-use food.

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. And all our research shows that investing in children at the start of their school lives has the greatest effect.

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 introduced the new curriculum in 480 schools across eight townships and wants to roll it out nationally, which will help 800,000 children entering primary school. We've also been asked to help review the curriculum for primary schools.

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.

During the past year, we trained 14,000 young people, many of whom are particularly vulnerable to HIV, in life skills that will help them protect themselves. 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'. More than 100,000 children have taken part in activities and exhibitions on HIV prevention.

We're also working to help mothers prevent transmitting HIV to their babies to child. We've been offering pregnant women and their partners counselling and testing. In two townships, the percentage of pregnant women who had HIV testing increased more than three times – from 23% to 80%.

We've set up 16 committees to support children who have lost their parents or whose families are affected by AIDS. These committees delivered monthly food baskets to 1,440 children and paid schools fees so that 850 children could continue to get an education.

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.

We've expanded our work on both internal and cross-border trafficking, to tackle a range of child protection issues. We've set up and equipped local child protection committees that have started to tackle issues such as: physical and sexual abuse, child labour, and child recruitment into armed forces.



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