

PRESS RELEASE: Thursday 08 May, 2008

AROUND 40 PER CENT OF DEAD OR MISSING IN MYANMAR CYCLONE ARE CHILDREN

Save the Children's team in Myanmar (Burma) reports that 40% of the dead and missing since Cyclone Nargis hit Burma last weekend are believed to be children. Official figures are that 22,000 people are dead and one million homeless. Save the Children aid workers on the ground believe the figures could be much higher.

Save the Children has launched a global emergency appeal to help surviving families after their homes were destroyed by the cyclone.

Andrew Kirkwood, Save the Children's Country Director of Burma, said: "We know that some areas are still completely under salt water – some people have no drinking water or food. Unless assistance gets into those kinds of areas very soon, the death toll will keep rising. It is a race against time and now our priority has to be those who are left - we urgently need help to be able to reach the surviving children and families and deliver what we know they need."

Families in Myanmar (Burma) need urgent help in a deteriorating situation. The charity is responding to the emergency and yesterday provided food, plastic tarpaulins, water purification tablets and rehydration salts to 50,000 people whose homes have been destroyed.

Mr Kirkwood said: "There is an incredibly urgent humanitarian need. We're talking about a similar situation to the 2004 tsunami. The storm surge in many parts of the delta following the major wind was reportedly as high as 25 feet in places and as the delta is a very flat area we expect that many, many people drowned. About 40% of the people living in the delta are children under 18, so we would expect that 40% of the dead and missing are children."

To donate to help children and families affected by the disaster please call: **1800 76 00 11** or online at www.savethechildren.org.au

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Notes to Editors:

- Save the Children has been working in Burma for 13 years and is one of the biggest INGOs in the country. The charity has 500 national staff and 35 offices across the country
- Cyclone Nargis hit the South West corner of Burma in the early hours of Saturday with winds of up to 120 mph causing mass destruction. The storm travelled North Eastwards up the Irrawaddy Delta, eventually tracking into NW Thailand.
- The five divisions declared to be in a state of emergency by the government are:
 - Rangoon Division (Yangon)
 - Pegu Division (also known as Bago Division)
 - Mon State
 - Karen State (also known as Kayin State)
 - Irrawaddy Division (also known as Iyawaddy Division)