

MOU Signing Ceremony by UNICEF and CreatiVision for Myanmar Children's Cyclone Appeal 2008

Friday, 8 August 2008 • Chulan Square, Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA

SPEECH BY

Mr. Youssouf Oomar

UNICEF Malaysia Representative

Ms. Adelyn Lim,

Managing Director, CreatiVision D.C. Sdn. Bhd

Professor Dr K.L. Chuang,

Director, CreatiVision, and Advisor to Rainbow of Life Forces

Members of the media,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good Morning, Selamat Pagi to everyone.

Remembering Cyclone Nargis

On the second and third day of May, Cyclone Nargis swept through the delta plains of Myanmar and flooded our hearts with tears for all the death, damage and suffering.

We ached for our neighbours, who saw their homes ruined and their crops destroyed. We wept for the children who lost their families, their schools and their entire community.

It has been 3 months since. Today, caught up in our own lives and dramas, we have all but forgotten about this tragedy.

But let us not forget! Let us not forget that the children of Myaungmya and Pyapon, of Bago and Kaying, as well as so many other areas around the Irrawaddy Delta, are still suffering!

Children's lives are still at stake

Over a million children have been left orphaned, homeless and injured by the cyclone.

With over 600 health centres destroyed, more than 4,000 drinking wells contaminated, and the depletion of health workers in affected areas, the health and survival of the children are our immediate concern. They are incredibly vulnerable to outbreaks of severe diarrhoea, malaria and dengue haemorrhagic fever.

With the loss of crops, livestock and material possessions, the children are also at especially high risk of malnutrition. Up to 60,000 children in affected areas urgently need therapeutic food or energy-dense specially-blended food.

Additionally, over 4,000 schools have been damaged or reduced to mere rubble. How are these children to continue learning when they have no schools, or even roads, power lines and bridges that facilitate schooling? When their teachers are as much the casualties of the disaster as they are?

The scars are not just on the outside, but on the inside as well. I was particularly heartbroken when I heard that the children had become afraid of rain, as they had bad memories of the intense rain and wind during the Cyclone. Instead of happily playing among rain puddles today, these children huddle in tents, terrified of what the storm will bring.

From aiding the psychological recovery of these children, to providing them a safe environment in which they can live, learn and play, we can do a great deal to help rebuild lives, restore dreams and translate hope into reality.

What the Appeal has achieved to date

Indeed, we have done a lot so far. I was very impressed by the rush of unconditional generosity displayed by Malaysians after Cyclone Nargis struck. As a result, UNICEF Malaysia raised almost RM 650,000, which was critical in providing aid and rehabilitation in many ways:

- Providing emergency drugs and medical supplies.
- Conducting a measles campaign.
- Providing nutritional supplementation and supplies of high-nutrition food.
- Providing safe and clean water.
- Repairing and rehabilitating water sources.
- Repairing schools, establishing temporary safe learning spaces and providing learning and recreational materials.
- Establishing child-friendly spaces to help children return to normal lives.
- Establishing an information hub to reunite children with their families.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Much more needs to be done

I would like to thank Creativision for taking the first step in reminding us that MUCH MORE needs to be done for the children of Myanmar. Through their Rainbow of Life Forces campaign, they have harnessed their resources to print and distribute 500,000 appeal envelopes, and channel the funds to UNICEF's Myanmar Children's Cyclone Appeal.

The next step now is for Malaysians to come forward and do their part. I know that the rising prices of fuel, food and consumer goods have hit us hard. But here is a cause where every sen donated will be completely worthwhile, where every ringgit contributed will save Myanmar's future generations.

Allow me to give you an example of how far your humble funds will go in Myanmar:

- RM 50 will buy 250 sachets of oral rehydration salts to prevent diarrhoea and dehydration.
- RM 500 will provide clean and safe water for 15 families.
- RM 800 can help 80 children continue their schooling, through a school-in-the-box kit.

An opportunity to make things better

In rebuilding Myanmar, let us take this opportunity to create a better life for the children. Let us take this opportunity to develop a stronger foundation for them to stand on, so that they may reach for the stars.

To everyone who has dug deep into their pockets – I am honoured to have been in your presence or received your hard-earned money on behalf of the Myanmar children. I have no doubt that many more Malaysians will display the same unwavering support and empathy for this second round of fundraising for the Myanmar Children's Cyclone Appeal.

Thank you.