

# Save the Children in Myanmar Case Study on Children's Participation in Evaluations 'Young Voices, Big Impressions': Children's Feedback on our Post Nargis Response

## **Brief Note on the Process and Methodology**

**Introduction:** In February 2009 an external evaluation of Save the Children in Myanmar's emergency response to Cyclone Nargis was undertaken by a multi-disciplinary team. A focus on the meaningful participation of children was integrated into the evaluation. The evaluation team visited 16 villages across West and East Delta over a 2-week period. Findings concerning children's feedback to Save the Children's Post Nargis response are presented in a child friendly document 'Young Voices, Big Impressions'. This document shares brief descriptions of the process and methodology used to: a) ensure children's voices were elicited and heard during the evaluation; and b) efforts made to share the evaluation findings/ report back with children (as part of Save the Children's broader efforts towards accountability).



Children's participation is a key principle of child rights based programming. Children have the right to express their views, access information and participate in decision making on all issues affecting them. Girls and boys have their own distinct views and experiences which need to be heard in all stages of programming. A children's participation working group was established in Save the Children in Myanmar in October 2008. This working group played a role in developing the methodology and ethical guidelines for children's participation in the external evaluation. An external consultant focusing on children's participation was appointed as a key member of the evaluation team.

### **a) Ensuring Children's Voices were elicited and heard during the evaluation**

A 2-prong approach was taken to ensure meaningful children's participation :

- ⇒ 1 (*Mainstreaming children's participation*)  
Ensuring a strong focus on integrating children's meaningful participation – seeking and listening to girls and boys views and experiences (as key stakeholders) by each member of the evaluation team.
- ⇒ 2 (*Extra focus on children's views, children's feedback workshops*)  
Creating additional opportunities for children's voices to be heard in the formative evaluation through organising 1 day children's feedback workshops (preceded by creative preparatory processes with children) in one village in the West Delta and one village in East Delta.

The consultant played a strategic and practical role within the overall evaluation team to support each member of the evaluation team to integrate opportunities for children's meaningful participation. For example, sharing ideas for adapting questions and methods of evaluation team members to make it more child friendly; identifying times and places when children, including working children, were most available and able to share their views; and sharing guidelines for safe and meaningful involvement of children in assessments.

*One day children's feedback workshops* (on non-school days) were also facilitated in one village in the West Delta and one village in the East Delta to provide children with more space and time to share their views and experiences on key questions relating to the external evaluation. In both these villages, *pre-workshop briefings* with children in the village during the week before the children's feedback workshop gave time for:

- child friendly information sharing with children and adult community members about the purpose of the evaluation;
- efforts to gain adult permission for children’s participation;
- identification of a suitable venue based on children’s suggestions;
- introducing the possibility of creative pre-workshop activities by children (including photography, drawings, poetry, drama) enabling children to discuss, explore and document what activities and initiatives Save the Children’s has undertaken in their village since Nargis, what quality, what strengths and weaknesses, and what impact on children, families and communities?
- Enabling children to identify and select a core group of 20 children (5 out of school girls, 5 school going girls, 5 out of school boys, 5 school going boys) to represent their peers in the feedback workshop

they see or how they are seen (eyes), what they hear or how they are listened to (ears), how they communicate or how others communicate with them (mouth), how they feel (heart), what they do (arms), where they go (legs), overall health (body).

- ✓ Drama, songs and drawings by children (both core group and other children) to share their views and ideas.
- ✓ End of Day Wrap Up including a reminder about how the information would be used, and that a child friendly report of the findings would be shared with them.

**b) Efforts made to share the evaluation findings/ report back with children**

Ensuring that children receive feedback relating to their participation in the evaluation is key to achieving Save the Children’s Practice Standards in Children’s Participation. One role of the children’s participation consultant was to develop a child friendly version of the evaluation findings which would be disseminated to children. ‘*Young Voices, Big Impressions*’ publication was the result using creative artistic design and cartoon images to share information in an interesting and attractive way. Efforts to ensure that children and communities gain feedback include:

- translation of printing of the ‘Young Voices, Big Impressions’ report in Burmese

*The Children’s Feedback One Day Workshops* used participatory methods and provided space for children to share their own creative presentations.

Key activities used included:

- ✓ introduction and icebreaker games;
- ✓ development of a visual time line of Save the Children activities;
- ✓ use of a ‘H’ assessment to explore strengths and weaknesses, as well as ideas to improve the Save the Children response;
- ✓ use of a ‘Body Map’ to explore changes in children’s lives before and after SC activities using body parts to explore changes in: knowledge (head), what



- Sharing copies of the report with children and communities in: the villages where the children’s feedback workshops took place; in all villages where the evaluation team visited; in other villages through Save the Children’s Information Centres.
- In each place the Area Managers, Monitoring and Evaluation Staff and relevant sector staff are involved to develop practical dissemination plans which further encourage dialogue and action planning with children and community members based on the findings.



### Key challenges

- a) While working and vulnerable children were involved in the evaluation, the majority of children involved were school children. It is important that all groups of children are involved in the evaluation because the emergency response created different impacts on different groups of children. It was not easy to involve working children in discussions with other children due to time constraint (e.g. some were working out of the village). Special efforts were made to identify those who were available for group discussions.
- b) Discussions and activities with children were usually set in private (e.g. in monastery and classrooms) in order to make children feel comfortable to speak out. However, written consents could not be obtained from parents due to certain sensitivities. This implied a feeling of insecurity of the beneficiaries to provide information. In the preparatory process for evaluation, it is therefore important to gain the trust from and make the beneficiaries feel safe to participate and speak out.