

“Happy Children” kindergartens without children

A September 15 [article](#) on the New Era website reports that UNICEF-funded kindergartens in cyclone affected areas of Myanmar’s delta are empty. The Kale Pyaw Neya (literally, Happy Children Place) kindergartens have no kids in them, Aung Kyaw Moe writes, because parents can’t afford to pay for carers. He quotes an INGO staff person working in Bogale Township as saying that:

“In just about every village I’ve been to, of the Kale Pyaw Neya only the buildings are left. I didn’t see any kids still attending. I was told the reason is that people in the villages can’t pay the salaries of the staff for the Kale Pyaw Neya.”

The author also quotes a farmer from Methila Village in Taungkale Tract, Ngaputaw as commenting that:

“To give a monthly salary of about 25,000 to 30,000 Kyat (USD 25-30) for a youngster to take care of the children, each household in the village had to put in about 500 Kyat. Now that the village economy isn’t good, people can’t put in money so the Kale Pyaw Neya kindergarten had to be shut.”

The article continues that these and other kindergartens were constructed after Cyclone Nargis with funds from UNICEF as well as donations from local groups and businesses, and with help from parents. The project included not only the buildings but also provision of toys, books and food, but after completion, responsibilities fell entirely to the local authorities, women’s groups, health and education officers, and parents.

Are the Kale Pyaw Neya another example of an internationally-funded project without legs? Are they failing everywhere, or does this article give the wrong impression? Do any New Mandala readers working in the delta, or who have been to these areas recently and perhaps seen the kindergartens (there’s a photo of one in the original article) care to comment?