

MEDIA STATEMENT
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APS Psychologists reflect on the impact on families of the natural disasters in Burma and China during National Families Week in Australia

As we celebrate National Families Week in Australia, it's worth taking time to think about the destructive impact of the natural disasters on families affected in Burma and China.

Developing nations such as Burma tend to be poorly prepared for natural disasters, and have a diminished capacity to assist families and communities to recover when disasters occur. Families will therefore bear the full brunt of the disaster, and be forced to rely on their own resources to recover. Widespread loss, grief, dislocation and poverty will affect most families in the disaster zone.

So this week, let us give a thought to the families in Burma and China whose lives have been devastated by natural disasters. At the same time we should be grateful that we live in a country like Australia, which has a world-call system in place to prepare families and communities to manage natural disasters, and strong response and recovery systems to support short, medium and long term recovery from the effects of disasters when they occur.

Australian families might give a thought to finding ways of offering support to the people whose families have been torn apart by the tornado in Burma and earthquake in China. The most useful form of assistance during a humanitarian crisis is the donation of money to non-government overseas aid organisations such as the Red Cross, who work to offer immediate practical support, provide psychological first aid and try to link dislocated children and adults with other family members.

"It is unfortunate that it takes disastrous events such as these to remind us of our global family," said APS President Amanda Gordon. "We can show compassion and provide hope where possible for families affected by the disaster."

"Let us also take time to look around at own families, whatever shape they may take, and feel a sense of gratitude for what we have."

The APS is the largest professional association for psychologists in Australia, representing more than 15,700 members. The APS is committed to advancing psychology as a discipline and profession. It spreads the message that psychologists make a difference to peoples' lives, through improving psychological knowledge and community wellbeing.

For media enquiries please contact:

Elaine Grant

Communications Manager

Australian Psychological Society

T: 03 8662 3363 | M: 0412 683 068

www.psychology.org.au