

OPERATIONS UPDATE



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

MYANMAR: RAKHINE CYCLONE

03 September 2004

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilising the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organisation and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

Appeal No. 14/04; Operations Update no. 2; Period covered: 9 July 2004 – 31 August 2004; Appeal coverage: 92% (including direct transfers in support of appeal objectives to the Myanmar Red Cross);
[Click here to go directly to the attached Contributions List](#)
[Click here for the weekly updated Contributions List \(also available on the website\)](#)

Appeal history:

- Launched on 4 June 2004 for CHF 201,000 (USD 163,770 or EUR 134,204) for three months to assist 14,000 beneficiaries.
- Appeal budget has been revised and doubled – to CHF 414,000 for 25,000 beneficiaries – and the project extended by one month to 30 September, with the final report still due on 30 November 2004.
- Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF) allocated: N/A

Outstanding needs : CHF 33,170

Related Emergency or Annual Appeals: Myanmar Annual Appeal 2004 ([Appeal No. 01.65/2004](#)); Southeast Asia Regional Appeal 2004 ([Appeal No. 01.66/2004](#))

Operational Summary:

The Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS), together with the local authorities, was the first organisation to respond to the cyclone and has subsequently provided assistance to many of those most affected. The three phase operation – covering immediate relief, recovery and rehabilitation – is now reaching its conclusion and is on target for completion by the end of this month. During this reporting period, the main focus was on the distribution of food and non-food items to more than 25,000 people affected by the disaster.

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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

Background

Rakhine is a sparsely populated, coastal state (population 2.7 million) in the southwest of Myanmar, covering 14,200 square miles. Sittwe, the state capital, is the biggest city. The Rakhine people generally depend on fishing, prawn breeding, farming and salt production for their livelihood.

On 19 May, a cyclone, reportedly the worst to strike the area since 1968, generated winds of up to 160kph blowing in from the Bay of Bengal into the area near Myanmar's eastern border with Bangladesh. Following a joint assessment by the MRCS and the Federation, the number of affected people significantly increased from initial reports to 25,000 (over 4,600 households) in the townships of Sittwe, Myae Bon, Pauk Taw, Myauk Oo, Ponnar Kyun, Min Byar, Kyauk Phyu, Ann and numerous islands off the coast. The local authorities reported damage to houses, offices and religious buildings, schools, dams, embankments and prawn breeding ponds, while many motor and rowing craft were sunk.

At the request of the MRCS, an emergency appeal was launched on 4 June 2004. The overall goal of the appeal was to provide immediate assistance to those affected and in the longer term, to reduce risk of disaster and enhance the resilience of some of the most vulnerable people in Myanmar.

The operation comprises three phases, set down in more detail in Operations Update 1:

- Immediate relief, including food, temporary shelter, water sanitation and health/hygiene.
- Recovery, including distributions of food supplies, plastic sheeting, blankets, water buckets and first aid kits and disaster response training.
- Rehabilitation, including stock replenishment and community self help.

Operational developments

Phase 1 of the operation was reported in the first operations update, issued on 8 July 2004. The reporting period covered by this document focuses mainly on the second phase of the programme. In summary, the condition of the affected households is normalised in that their houses are repaired and/or replaced, with affected households receiving Kyat 20,000 (USD 20) from the government to restore their homes.

Among outstanding needs is the replenishment of warehouse stocks especially in Yangon and Sittwe. The process is underway with a tendering committee in place targeted at completing the task before the end of the extended emergency operation period, subject to full funding of the Federation appeal – currently some CHF 33,200 in shortfall.

To date 85% of the appeal funds received have been utilised with the balance reserved for the warehouse replenishment component.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action - objectives, progress, impact and constraints

Relief distribution of food and basic non-food items: MRCS has achieved a significant breakthrough in this operation by becoming the first and only indigenous organisation in Myanmar to undertake direct distribution of relief items to beneficiaries without the specific involvement of the National Disaster Relief Committee (NDRC). Even so, there were some delays while waiting for local authority approvals and dealing with transportation problems in some of the remote areas. Hold-ups in the transfer of appeal funds to the Myanmar delegation further delayed the procurement process. Fortunately, there was no significant impact on the beneficiaries due to the expeditious activities of other agencies and the local authorities, working through the NDRC.

The decision of where to purchase the food items from was adjusted on a number of occasions due to fluctuations in the cost of rice and transportation. Finally, it was decided to procure in Sittwe, where a local supplier of basic food items to the whole of Rakhine state was contacted through the secretary of the State Peace and Development Committee (SPDC). The quoted price of the required items was much lower than originally estimated, including the cost of packing and transporting the goods to the various points as identified and agreed. The following items, rice (100kg), cooking oil (1 litre), pulse (1.8lbs) and salt (3.6lbs), were distributed to households in all the affected townships as shown in the following chart:

Townships	Households	Number of affected persons
Sittwe (11 townships)	213	1,245
Pauk Taw (5 townships and 13 villages)	1,694	10,408
Myay Bon (9 townships and 45 villages)	2,051	9,943
Kyauk Taw (43 villages)	300	1,328
Min Byar (14 villages)	370	2,120
Total	4,628	25,044

Distributions were carried out in several stages. The first (beginning 14 July) only covered the township areas where access is relatively easy and where there was no requirement for logistical assistance from the local authorities. Stage two (fourth week of July) involved collaboration with the local authorities to reach areas of the disaster zone that were difficult to approach. Beneficiaries were able to collect the relief items from selected distribution points, whereas in the more remote parts, delivery was direct to each listed household.

As there were savings from the procurement and transportation, the MRCS and the Federation agreed to expand the basic non-food items list at the request of the local authorities. In addition to the plastic sheeting, blankets and water buckets, the following items were included: two cooking pots, two plates, three bowls (two standard sized and one large). Distribution of the non-food items is underway.

Health and care: At the initial stage, an outbreak of disease was anticipated following the disaster and provision was made in the appeal for health and care. However, the joint assessment team confirmed that there is no major health risk, so this element of the operation no longer remains a priority. Nevertheless, as a basic service and support to the community, it was agreed that the MRCS would distribute 100 first aid kits to the five Red Cross townships in Rakhine.

Water and sanitation: Discussion is ongoing between the MRCS and the Irrigation Department on the feasibility of repairing and constructing water shelter ponds. Funding for this project is earmarked by a direct contributor to the MRCS. As this component is expected to take a longer period to complete, it will be treated outside the emergency appeal period, which ends on 30 September.

Logistics: The quickest access to Sittwe is by air. However, domestic flights are not reliable especially during the monsoon season. Within Rakhine itself, access is predominantly by land and sea with costs rising recently due to the destruction of motor and rowing craft, and associated difficulties. When accessing certain remote areas, the MRCS members/volunteers had to pay very high prices for motorboat fuel. All previous distributions through the NDRC in these districts were carried out by the SPDC members and on this occasion too, this was found to be the easiest way to reach this group of beneficiaries directly. The journey to the remote villages of each township can take up to 10 days, by motorboat and on foot – while carrying 50kg bags of rice – often through swamps.

Accordingly, the MRCS and the Federation sought assistance from the SPDC to distribute relief items directly to each household in the remote areas – always accompanied by Red Cross volunteers. In addition, the SPDC members were paid for their labour and transportation costs, which certainly helped expedite the distribution process.

During the third phase of the operation, efforts will be made to replenish the depleted stocks in the warehouses especially in Yangon and Sittwe, depending on available funds.

Telecommunications: A request to install telephone and fax lines in the Sittwe branch has been submitted to the local authorities. It is envisaged that the branch will benefit from smoother and faster communication with the headquarters upon the installation of these facilities.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Throughout the operation, the Federation's Myanmar delegation and MRCS headquarters staff have conducted several monitoring and evaluation missions to the stricken region. The Rakhine State Red Cross does not have the resources to implement major procurements such as those required for an operation on this scale, hence the need for mentoring and monitoring by Red Cross Red Crescent colleagues throughout all phases of the programme.

The head of the Federation's Southeast Asia disaster risk management unit travelled to Myanmar for a mid-term review during the reporting period. One of the key findings of his report centres on the delay in receiving funds to procure the relief items. Upon completion of the relief operation, a more formal review is envisaged. Agencies and organisations that were involved in the Rakhine operation will be invited to participate in this important exercise.

Red Cross and Red Crescent coordination

The central government in Myanmar, through the relief and resettlement ministry, takes the lead in emergency response coordination. The role of MRCS is complementary, as an auxiliary to the authorities. The NDRC, which was immediately convoked following the disaster, comprises various ministries and also includes the state level Red Cross among its membership. The Red Cross placed considerable emphasis on coordination efforts with the local authorities, so as to ensure an effective and efficient relief distribution operation in the selected areas.

In all the meetings with the national and local authorities, the MRCS was assiduous in advocating its humanitarian mission and the consistent need to be independent and neutral when assisting those affected.

The Federation's Myanmar delegation continued to share information with UN agencies and other organisations involved directly and/or indirectly in the relief operation. In addition, firm contact was established in Sittwe with the Bridge Asia Japan (BAJ), an organisation that is, inter alia, offering vocational training programmes and carrying out repair and maintenance of vehicle and equipment in Myanmar. Close ties were also established with one of the leading and most active local NGOs, the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association (MMCWA) which has access to the affected areas. The Red Cross relief distribution was undertaken together with the MMCWA on some occasions.

National society capacity building

The positive impact of a Disaster Assessment and Response Team (DART) multiplier course organised in Rakhine in March this year has been clearly demonstrated through this operation. The course, which was attended by Red Cross volunteers and numerous government departments and local NGOs who are responsible directly or indirectly for disaster management, has increased the understanding of the Red Cross role in times of disaster and has enhanced cooperation amongst the agencies during the ensuing operation.

In each township, the required numbers of volunteers were selected to assist in the relief operation. The nature and importance of the relief operation were highlighted to all the volunteers, this being the first international emergency appeal by the Red Cross for some years. During the operation, the volunteers put into practice many of the disaster related training techniques learned on various courses.

Although maintained in good condition, the warehouse in Sittwe underwent an upgrading process. The upgrade is complete and a similar exercise at a smaller warehouse in Kyauk Phyu is underway. Arrangements have also been made to repair the branch's one and only ambulance which has been unreliable for more than a year. The repair work is tedious and costly, and often spare parts are hard to find. The BAJ has sourced the needed items and will assist in repairing the ambulance.

Communications – advocacy and public information

The Federation office, situated in the MRCS building, is in constant communication with the MRCS disaster management team, and is providing regular information to the ICRC delegation in Myanmar. The office also maintains close contact with the Federation's regional delegation in Bangkok and the Geneva secretariat. Since the launch of the emergency appeal, the Federation has supported the MRCS and has contacted and updated the international and local media, donors and other stakeholders.

[Contributions list below; click here to return to the title page.](#)

Myanmar - Rakhine cyclone

ANNEX 1

APPEAL No. 14/2004

PLEDGES RECEIVED

08/09/2004

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
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CASH

REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->					TOTAL COVERAGE	
					414,000	92.0%
AUSTRALIAN - GOVT/RC		30,000	AUD	26,145	14.07.04	
BRITISH - RC		10,000	GBP	22,860	30.06.04	
CHINESE - RC		20,000	USD	25,290	02.07.04	DIRECT TRANSFER
DANISH - GOVT/RC		6,918	USD	8,748	30.06.04	PROGRAMME SUPPORT
JAPANESE - RC		8,319	USD	10,516	14.06.04	
MONACO - RC		10,000	EUR	15,360	28.06.04	
NORWEGIAN - GOVT/RC		377,562	NOK	68,905	29.06.04	
SPANISH - RC		12,000	EUR	18,348	02.07.04	DIRECT TRANSFER
SWEDISH RC/GOVT		200,000	SEK	33,800	18.06.04	
MYANMAR - PRIVATE DONORS				6,900	02.07.04	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				236,872	CHF	57.2%

KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
DANISH - GOVT		113,846	USD	143,958	30.06.04	600 ROLLS TARPAULINS, 16800 BLANKETS, TRANSPORT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				143,958	CHF	34.8%

ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	