

Operations update



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Myanmar: Cyclone Nargis

Emergency appeal n° MDRMM002
GLIDE n° TC-2008-000057-MMR
Operations update n° 5
11 May 2008

Period covered by this Update: first five days since appeal was launched

Appeal target (current): CHF 6,290,909 (USD 5.9 million or EUR 3.86 million);
<[click here to view the attached Emergency Appeal Budget](#)>

Appeal coverage: This appeal is already well covered. Initial planning is underway in-country as the International Federation's ability to scale up effectively increases to support Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) and to meet the huge needs, taking into account various operational constraints. A revised appeal will be issued early next week; Tuesday at the earliest as the MRCS president and head of the International Federation's country office are currently on an assessment visit to the Ayeyarwady delta, and will only return to Yangon on Tuesday.

<[Click here to link to the donor response list](#)>
<[click here to link to contact details](#)>



Meal time: Families taking refuge in a school, cook on the verandah outside their classroom 'homes.'
(International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies)

Appeal history:

- This preliminary emergency appeal was launched on 6 May 2008 for CHF 6,290,909 (USD 5.9 million or EUR 3.86 million) for six months to assist 30,000 families.
- Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF): CHF 200,000 has been allocated from the Federation's DREF.

Summary:

The situation in the Ayeyarwady delta is appalling judging from first-hand accounts and pictures being brought back by Red Cross volunteers on assessment and distribution missions. Today (11 May), reports reached Yangon that earlier today the first Red Cross shipment of relief supplies travelling by river to the disaster area had sunk. Fortunately, all the crew and MRCS volunteers who were on board are reported safe, but much of the relief supplies have been lost.

On a brighter note, other relief is getting through increasingly, but still, eight days into the operation, no where near the scale required. The logistics effort has seen a notable increase in momentum with the in-country logistics team booking cranes, boats, trucks etc, consolidating reporting and tracking systems and simultaneously the MRCS/International Federation are in ongoing dialogue with key authorities to ensure relief channels continue. It is a major effort that has demonstrated the professionalism of the MRCS disaster team in partnership with the international disaster specialists now in Yangon.

The International Federation is in ongoing, high-level discussions with MRCS and the government emphasizing the depth of the crisis and the need for massive amounts of aid. Such access to this level of discussion is derived from the established relationship that the International Federation has had with the authorities since the delegation was opened in 1993.

By Monday 12 May, six International Federation flights will have landed in Yangon with a total of 35 tonnes of shelter materials, jerry cans and mosquito nets, and water/sanitation equipment for the French Red Cross water/sanitation emergency response unit.

Until today (Sunday 11 May), international staff are still unable to travel beyond the city limits. However, this morning the International Federation head of country office left Yangon by road with the MRCS president for an assessment mission to the Ayeyarwady delta townships of Labutta, Bogale and Pyapon, the exact locations where MRCS/International Federation are trying to focus the attention of the operation at the moment. The mission is due back to Yangon on Tuesday.

Official government casualty figures are now: 23,000-plus dead, 42,000 missing, about 1.5 million affected. However, unofficial sources now estimate that the death toll may be as high as 150,000.

Many partner national societies have already made contributions to the appeal: American Red Cross/American government, Australian Red Cross, Austrian Red Cross, Belgian Red Cross/Belgian government, British Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross, Red Cross Society of China - Hong Kong branch and Macau branch, Danish Red Cross/Danish government, Finnish Red Cross/Finnish government, French Red Cross, Hellenic Red Cross, Icelandic Red Cross, Japanese Red Cross, Korean Red Cross, Luxemburg Red Cross/Luxemburg government, Netherlands Red Cross, New Zealand Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross/Norwegian government, Qatar Red Crescent, Slovak Red Cross, Spanish Red Cross/Spanish government, Swedish Red Cross/Swedish government, Swiss Red Cross, Taiwan Red Cross Organization, United Arab Emirates Red Crescent and Vietnam Red Cross Society. Contributions have also been received from ECHO, the Italian and Estonian governments and Total Oil Company. The International Federation, on behalf of Myanmar Red Cross Society, would like to thank all partners for their very quick and generous response to this appeal.

The situation

An International Federation delegate toured Yangon yesterday and reported worrying scenes of homelessness in parts of the city: 'People are sleeping in the open or in one of thousands of flimsy shelters dotted around the city (of 6 million) ... I saw one group perched on a piece of land straddling a field of fetid water among goats, pigs, buffalos and dogs'. While clean-up has continued apace there are still thousands of trees down and not cleared, along with wreckage strewn across several streets visited. Yet in other parts of Yangon, the rhythm of life is relatively normal. One market seemed relatively normal; a game of football going on among children next to it.

Key information to share from various assessments from international organisations is as follows:

- In Bogale, 20,000 people living in 50 temporary 'camps'.
- In Pyapon, 16,000 people living in 31 camps. In one, five latrines are shared by 3,500 people.
- In Labutta, 150,000 people living in 117 camps. In Mawlamayinegyun, 50 percent of the villages have been destroyed and 20,000 people are living in 20 camps.
- Key problems with water supplies are that ponds are filled with dead bodies and cannot be used, and aquifers are saline. Normal water purification processes will not suffice in such circumstances.
- 10,000 people have been relocated as camps are too crowded. Some concern over reports around relocations.
- Buckets are among the main requirements; 50,000 have been produced locally, but ten times more are needed.
- Estimated up to 700 relief camps in Yangon and 72 in Ayeyarwady Division.
- A high number of injured people are being treated in hospitals in the affected area. Disease outbreaks are not as yet a great problem ... yet. 104 cases of diarrhoea and 36 cases of dysentery were reported from Yangon. Diarrhoea cases were also reported from affected townships of Ayeyarwady.



Strewn debris: Corrugated iron roofing was tossed around like paper by the storm. (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies)

News has come in today (Sunday 11 May) that earlier today, the first Red Cross shipment of relief supplies traveling by river to the disaster area sank. It is believed that the cargo ship carrying relief supplies for over 1,000 people, hit a submerged tree trunk and started taking on water. The crew steered to an island but the boat sank rapidly. All crew members and the four MRCS personnel on board managed to get to safety. The boat, a double decker S-type, was traveling from Yangon to Mawlamyinegyun, some 12 hours by boat, when it sank near Myinka Gone village.

The boat was carrying 100 bags of rice, 5,000 litres of drinking water, 10,000 water purification tablets, 200 jerry cans to carry water, ten stretchers, 30 boxes of clothes, 30 family kits containing 22 different household items each, 1,000 bars of soap, 800 rubber gloves and 1,000 surgical masks. Most of the supplies had been procured locally by MRCS but the jerry cans arrived on one of the first International Federation aid flights into the country on Friday. Local people in this remote area, the crew and Red Cross staff managed to save some relief items and these will be transported by foot, bicycle and any other means to the nearest town to await onward shipment. It is not known how much of the cargo has been lost, but the food supplies would have been contaminated by river water.

There are heavy showers forecasted for next week, especially Tuesday through Thursday. This may have implications for access as roads potentially flood and this may hamper relief operations.

The government of Myanmar is on a four days leave, ending Tuesday because of the national referendum in most of the country.

Tropical cyclone Nargis (which means daffodil in Urdu) struck the mid-south of Myanmar on 2 May. The scale of destruction and loss is massive. Official government casualty figures have remained unchanged: 23,000-plus dead, 41,000 missing, about 1.5 million affected. Other, higher casualty estimates have been made but have not been substantiated. The consequent storm surge (reportedly 3.5 metres in many areas and occasionally seven metres in some parts - important to note that this is different to a tsunami) caused the most loss of life rather than the cyclone per se. On flat land this phenomenon can be – and has been – devastating. While technology allows cyclones to be ‘seen’ in terms of wind speed and rain potential, storm surges are much more difficult to predict.

Red Cross Red Crescent action

Operation overview

The main needs are for safe drinking water, emergency shelter, hygiene items and food. The threat of health problems and communicable diseases looms greatly over the affected communities.

The in-country team has started to prioritize areas based on impact maps and the limited information available. This will assist in trying to develop longer-term distribution plans as well as contribute towards the revision of this appeal.

Coordination and partnerships

The Federation’s representation and input into the various cluster meetings in Yangon is being managed better now with the strengthening of the in-country team. Similarly in Bangkok, the coordination effort is being managed more effectively.

Capacity of the national society: special insight

Significant background information emerged 11 May (from the former head of the International Federation’s delegation in Myanmar who joined the regional team in Bangkok today (see below) and who knows the Ayeyarwady delta area well), that paints a richer picture of the opportunities as well, of course, the challenges, for this complex operation. Many challenges have already been flagged, and these need to be addressed, but the Red Cross Red Crescent is not ignoring building on strengths and opportunities that exist to be effective in helping people in the delta.



A blanket above our heads: many people are showing remarkable resilience and good grace despite losing family, friends and possessions. (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies)

Opportunities

- Because of the nature of the delta in normal times, boat travel is integral to the rhythm of much of the region; building on this existing capacity and way of life could be an opportunity during the operation.
- The region around Laputta was also affected by the 2004 tsunami, but to a relatively small degree: about 100 people were killed and about 15,000 affected. In this sense some of the local MRCS branches are used to being linked into a relatively significant international support operation so this in some ways gives this operation an advanced start in terms of local capacity and familiarity with international support (in parts at least).
- One issue that emerged from the 2004 tsunami disaster was that the mangrove protection in the delta area worked well; it causes one to reflect that perhaps the consequences of cyclone Nargis could have been even worse than the catastrophe it already is without this. But an opportunity for this operation is to reflect on strengthening existing coastal eco-systems that mitigate such disasters.
- The region is home to a majority Burmese population but there are also ethnic Bengalis (known as Rohingya) as well as large numbers of seasonal workers. The experience of the 2004 tsunami and other operations in this region is that MRCS has an established reputation for impartiality and that all parts of the population were supported solely on the basis of need.
- Some of the MRCS branches in the delta have good capacity (this is said in relative terms, ie in the face of this disaster most capacity of affected communities has been overwhelmed). For instance, Maubin branch in the affected area is active and involved in its community and has an established track record of community support. Holistic branch development work has taken place in this region. What is not known, however, is how much this branch has been affected in terms of personnel loss and damage. In general, disaster assessment response

team (DART) trainings were conducted in 2003. The teams and their capacity can be described as good, committed but relatively small scale.

- Another opportunity is that in past and recent training, the link to the fire brigade and other parts of emergency response in Myanmar were clear: people and organisations knew who should be doing what and how. Again, depending on how intact personnel and organisations are this is a strength that the operation could build upon.
- MRCS has an established tradition of mobilizing resources from unaffected parts to those that have been stricken by disaster. This already is happening. For instance, branches in Kachin state (in the north) are so experienced in flood response, that in the past their expertise has been used for storm operations in other parts of the country.

Challenges

- In normal times, the estimated drive time from Yangon to Pathien, the main 'launch-pad' into the delta is 8-10 hours. Beyond the main centres of populations such as Pathien, the roads deteriorate.
- One major challenge for the operation is that navigating this delta requires specific local knowledge and of course many people who have that may have been killed. The delta is tidal and boat pilots unfamiliar with the water network are vulnerable to sandbanks and getting into trouble. Already there is one reported Red Cross relief boat sinking although at this stage it is not known the causes of this.
- Even during normal times, freshwater supplies were a major challenge for this region. After Nargis, this threat can be considered extreme; this will inform the overall humanitarian operation very much.

Capacity of the International Federation

The International Federation's regional support team in Bangkok was considerably strengthened today with the arrival of a temporary Movement coordinator, who is the previous International Federation head of delegation in Myanmar (for 3.5 years). In addition, a temporary operations coordinator starts today (the Danish Red Cross Southeast Asia regional representative) to support the head of regional office and play the link role before a permanent appointment is made. He brings tremendous operational and International Federation experience to the role. The planning for a transition to a distinct operational structure separate from the regional office is well advanced. The communications coordinator, previously based in Kuala Lumpur, will also be based in Bangkok from tomorrow. The IDRL (international disaster response law) coordinator, also based in Kuala Lumpur, again will join the operations team tomorrow, working with the Movement coordinator. The head of regional office will retain overall management of this much strengthened and more focused (and distinct) structure.

The FACT team is coming together, with an advance group in Yangon already and the rest in Bangkok or about to arrive. In Bangkok, the following can be reported:

- An Operations Room has been set up in Bangkok next to the International Federation's regional office for FACT, RDRT, and ERU delegates.
- Four RDRT and 6 FACT members are now in Bangkok. Five were due to arrive today (May 11).
- FACT and RDRT are fully integrated as one team.
- The team will meet daily at 9 am and 6 pm for briefings and updates.
- FACT members are joining IASC coordination meetings.
- Four British Red Cross logistics ERU members have arrived, and one from Swiss Red Cross has also arrived.
- Briefings by the head of regional office and regional delegates to FACT, RDRT & ERU members are taking place, and handover is in process from the regional office to FACT members for various operational/coordination matters.



Lonely work: Red Cross volunteers are stretched so thin that sometimes they work alone to assess damage and help people in need. (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies)

International Logistics

- Two commercial flights are due into Yangon today (11 May), as well a flight containing water and sanitation equipment for the French Red Cross water and sanitation emergency response unit.
- Space on commercial flights from Kuala Lumpur to Yangon has been confirmed for every day next week.
- In addition to the three chartered Antonov 12 rotations confirmed for next week, the regional logistics unit is working towards chartering an IL76 for a minimum of 5 rotations next week.
- The current operation is showing the importance of having relief stocks in place in Kuala Lumpur, ready to be deployed immediately in disasters such as this.

Communications and advocacy

The value of the neutrality of the Red Cross Red Crescent approach to humanitarian work is being demonstrated in the field where it really counts, with a relatively high degree of access to people in need. This fundamental element of our work has been picked up in the media this past day. Several interviews from Yangon were given yesterday (10 May) to CNN, BBC, Sky, France 24 etc. From Monday, the communications hub will be consolidated in Bangkok, with an information officer also in place in Kuala Lumpur.

How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief and is committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

Contact information

- Federation regional office in Bangkok: Alan Bradbury, acting head of regional office, phone: +66 2661 8201, fax: +66.2.661.9322; email: alan.bradbury@ifrc.org
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[<click here to return to the title page>](#)

PRELIMINARY APPEAL BUDGET SUMMARY

Myanmar:Tropical Cyclone

MDRMM002

ORIGINAL

RELIEF NEEDS

Shelter	1,800,000
Clothing & Textiles	150,000
Utensils & Tools	1,200,000
Other Supplies & Services	1,200,000
Total Relief Needs	4,350,000

CAPITAL EQUIPMENT

Vehicles Purchase	280,000
Computers & Telecom Equipment	10,000

TRANSPORT, STORAGE & VEHICLES

Storage - Warehouse	50,000
Distribution & Monitoring	100,000
Transport & Vehicles Costs	500,000

PERSONNEL

International Staff	372,000
Regionally Deployed Staff	30,000
National Staff	50,000
National Society Staff	50,000

GENERAL EXPENSES

Travel	30,000
Office /Admin	30,000
Communication Costs	30,000

PROGRAMME SUPPORT

Programme Support - PSR (6.5% of total)	408,909
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Total Operational Needs	1,940,909
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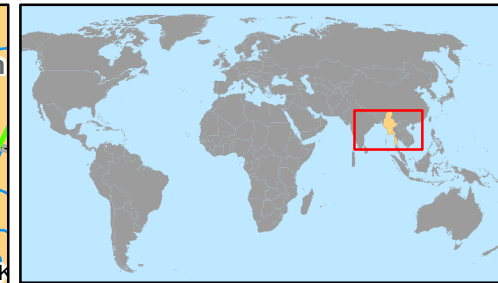
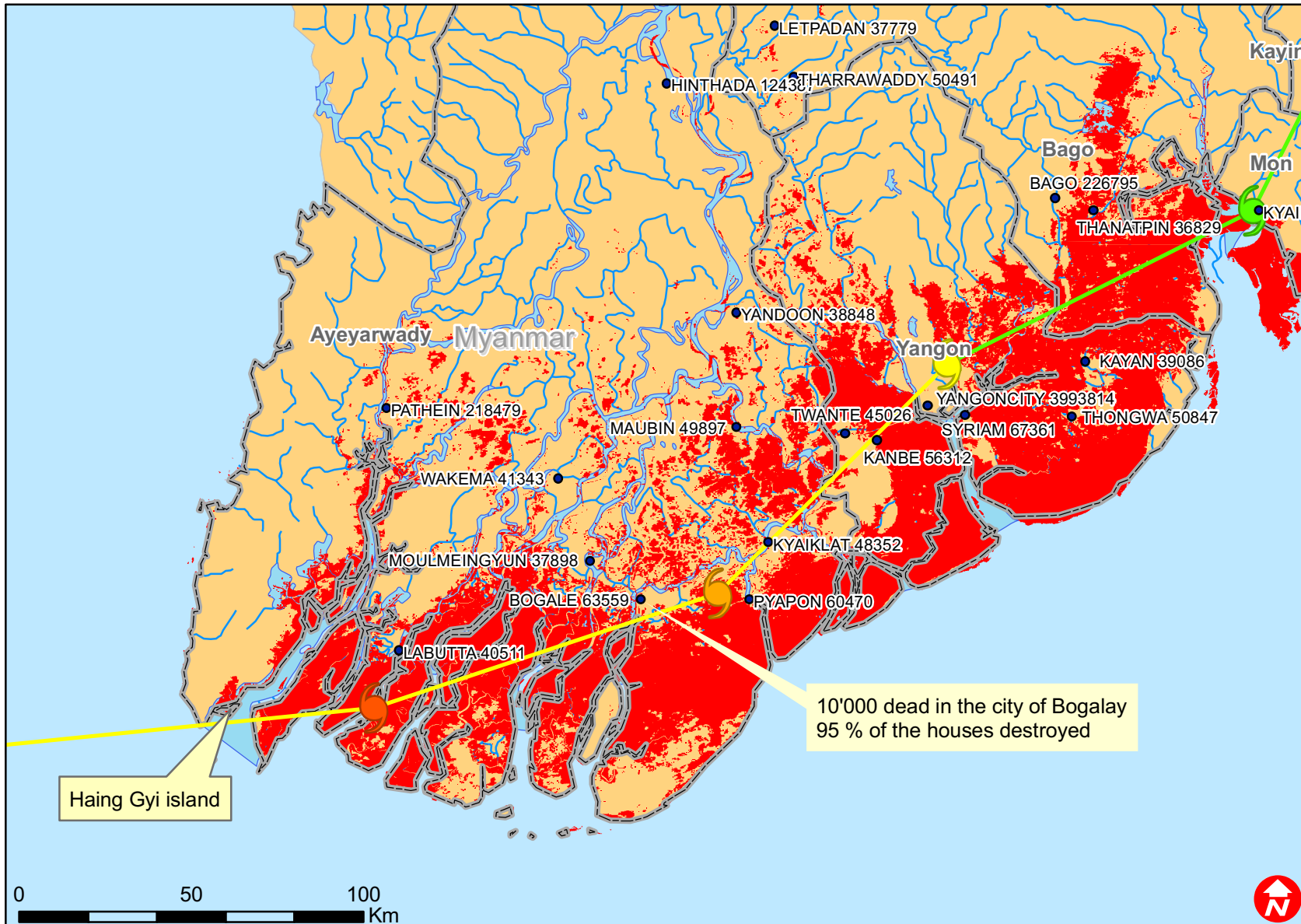
Total Appeal Budget (Cash & Kind)	6,290,909
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Less Available Resources

Net Request	6,290,909
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Myanmar: Tropical cyclone



- Main cities with population
- ☄ CYCLONE-1
- ☄ CYCLONE-2
- ☄ CYCLONE-3
- ☄ CYCLONE-4
- ☄ TROPICAL DEPRESSION
- ☄ TROPICAL STORM
- ▭ Provinces
- Inundated extend (MODIS derived)