

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° 13
31 May 2008

Period covered by this Update: 14 days since the revised emergency appeal was launched on 16 May 2008; the revised appeal (for CHF 52,857,809 (USD 50.8 million or EUR 32.7 million) to assist 100,000 families for three years) elaborates a plan of action that covers the provision of life-saving assistance and short-term relief (for up to six months) as well as medium and longer-term recovery needs. It aims to support a significant scale up in the humanitarian response of Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) as well as the wider Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. The appeal seeks to do this in a way that: is sensitive to the national society's capacity; builds on MRCS's long term strength; and takes account of the operational challenges that exist. In light of all this, partners are requested to continue their excellent support and understanding to the Cyclone Nargis appeal.

Appeal Coverage: There continues to be a very generous response to this appeal; with contributions received to date and those in the pipeline, the appeal is now some 82 per cent covered.

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

Appeal history:

- 16 May 2008: A revised emergency appeal was launched for CHF 52,857,809 (USD 50.8 million or EUR 32.7 million) to assist 100,000 families for three years
- 6 May 2008: A preliminary emergency appeal was launched for CHF 6,290,909 (USD 5.9 million or EUR 3.86 million) for six months to assist 30,000 families.
- 5 May 2008: CHF 200,000 was allocated from the International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF).

Summary: Following the Pledging Conference and the United Nations (UN) Secretary General's visit to Myanmar, the International Federation team in Myanmar are following up on the issue of access for international aid workers to the affected areas. However, to date, there has not been significant movement on the ground nor have these events had an impact on the operation. The situation is still very fluid and while the signals remain positive, there is still no permission for the six international staff applications put in this week for access for a period of one month into the delta areas. However, the International Federation remains optimistic that this will go ahead in the coming days (although a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which tried to send teams with international staff to the Ayeryawady Division have been asked to return to Yangon). It remains unclear if international staff can gain access to the delta area whether they will be able to stay and work.

In terms of applying for visas, there has been some progress obtaining visas from a number of different embassies. In practical terms, the International Federation is deploying the most needed delegates first in relation to operational priorities identified and agreed with MRCS to deliver the Appeal objectives. On 29 May, the International Federation received a further five invitation letters that will be used to allow two German Red Cross and two Austrian Red Cross water and sanitation emergency response unit (ERU) members to go into Myanmar to support the deployment of the unit and for a communications staff. So far, 13 invitation letters have been issued through the MRCS.

The MRCS President has requested to meet with all international Red Cross Red Crescent staff to ensure he is fully aware of their roles and the functions they will perform in relation to MRCS counterparts. MRCS is working to identify suitable candidates to enhance their disaster management capacity, particularly logistics, and will improve the counterpart relationships. The International Federation remains flexible in assigning and deploying personnel to be able to respond to the changing needs and priorities on the ground. This will of course change depending on the access granted to international staff to remain and work in the delta area.



Rebuilding efforts underway in Bogale with the support of local Myanmar Red Cross Society volunteers.

The World Food Programme (WFP) has sent out a request to all organizations to identify areas and villages which have not yet been accessed and not received assistance so far, so that these areas should be the first to be supported with aid through WFP helicopters. Wakema, a less affected area, was not accessible this week due to bad conditions of a bridge.

Information about camps suggests that those in the less affected areas of Myaungmya, Wakema and Maubin are decreasing because people are returning to their affected villages after receiving basic relief items and food. However, new camps are reported to be opening outside Labutta, with mainly women and children staying there, while the men have returned to their villages to protect their remaining livelihoods and to erect provisional shelter.

The International Federation Secretary-General and Director of the Coordination and Programme Division attended the pledging conference, co-chaired by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the UN in Myanmar on 25 May. The Secretary-General explained the activities of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, and, in particular, highlighted the role and efforts of the volunteers. The Secretary-General also spoke of the progress – and challenges – around this revised emergency appeal operation. He confirmed that the Red Cross Red Crescent had reached 113,570 beneficiaries, of whom approximately 72.5 per cent were in the delta region.

The International Federation then hosted a meeting on 29 May 2008 in Kuala Lumpur, with a number of ASEAN national societies, including the MRCS's Executive Director and the International Federation's head of delegation from Myanmar to discuss how the International Federation and ASEAN national societies can work to support the operation and cooperate with the UN coordination mechanism. The meeting brought together national societies of Southeast Asia from Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines and Indonesia, as well as the International Federation and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), together with the British Red Cross and Japanese Red Cross as key partner national societies in Asia Pacific. Its purpose was to discuss ways to increase the scale and effectiveness of the Red Cross Red Crescent response to the cyclone disaster in the light of the opportunities arising from the outcomes of the international pledging conference in Yangon on 25 May.

Currently, five MRCS volunteers are running an ICRC water purification unit in Dedaye, which is producing 72,000 litres of water a day. Meanwhile, in Yangon, a International Federation water and sanitation emergency response unit, staffed by five French Red Cross water engineers, has started another training of ten MRCS volunteers and nine engineers from a local water company to be dispatched to the field soon.

To date, the International Federation has transported 836 metric tonnes of relief goods to Myanmar to support the operation, coordinated through the regional logistics unit in Kuala Lumpur. These relief goods have been transported on approximately 50 flights made up of a mixture of full charter cargo flights and commercial air freights. In the coming weeks, the amount of goods shipped by air will be reduced and the quantity by sea freight in containers will begin to increase.

The previously appointed Programme Coordinator is now in-country and is providing support to Movement coordination. He is meeting with the partner national societies in-country for a briefing on their activities and a Movement coordination meeting will take place in the coming days.

Many partner national societies (with the support of their respective governments) have made significant contributions to the appeal: the American, Australian, Austrian, Belarusian, Belgian, British, Canadian, China (Hong Kong and Macau branches), Cook Islands, Danish, Finnish, French, German, Hellenic, Icelandic, Irish, Japanese, Korean, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norwegian, Portuguese, Singapore, Slovak, Spanish, Sri Lanka, Swedish, Swiss, and Vietnam Red Cross National Societies; and the Kuwait, Malaysian, Qatar, and United Arab Emirates Red Crescent; and the Taiwan Red Cross Organization. Contributions have also been received from the European Commission (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

Tropical cyclone Nargis struck the mid-south of Myanmar on 2 May. The scale of destruction and loss is massive, with official figures listing 78,000 people dead and 56,000 missing. The UN estimates that 2.4 million people are affected. A consequent storm surge, reportedly 3.5 metres in many areas, caused the most loss of life (as opposed to the actual cyclone).

By 28 May, up to 756 tonnes of relief had been airlifted through various Red Cross Red Crescent flights, and this is set to reach 836 tonnes by 31 May. As of 24 May, the operations mobilization table was covered for all items for 80,000 families and negotiations are underway with the field to consider additional needs. Presently, the field is reviewing the needs and the coverage of basic non-food items by all agencies. The mobilization table may not be increased to cover 100,000 families, but may also shift to other items needed for shelter and early recovery.

Field reports confirm that 80,000 blankets (an in-kind donation from the Netherlands Red Cross) will be shipped by sea from a supplier in India in the near future. The relief pipeline continues to move well and

the International Federation is now working with the in-country team to ensure that it is maintained at a level which can be well managed in country and is in line with distribution capacity.

Red Cross Red Crescent action

Operation overview

The overall goal is to restore and improve the lives and livelihoods and basic living conditions of communities affected by Cyclone Nargis.

The operation seeks to:

- Provide relief to meet the basic needs in a timely manner to those most affected;
- Provide recovery support to strengthen the resilience of the most vulnerable people among those affected; and
- Strengthen MRCS human resource capacity and overall operational effectiveness in the short, medium and long term (through an 'organizational development in emergencies' framework).

The plan of action focuses on the following needs: relief, community-based health and first aid, psychosocial support, emergency shelter, water and sanitation and hygiene promotion as well as food security and livelihoods. The operation is intended to be: needs based; integrated and holistic; recovery based; community based; and implemented in coordination and giving priority to areas not served by others. Lessons learnt from recent operations, including the tsunami, such as volunteering in emergencies, have been acknowledged and the current plan draws on these inputs.

The operation is planned in three phases:

- **Phase 1:** Acute and short term; up to six months: focus on survival needs, epidemic prevention and control and scale up to meet needs for larger target population while laying groundwork for early recovery.
- **Phase 2:** Medium term; six to 12 months: focus on enhancing operational efficiency and effectiveness for MRCS public services, volunteer base, and management/branch structures.
- **Phase 3:** Longer term; 12-36 months: focus on development/expansion of community based programmes; MRCS capacity building; and ongoing assessment to identify and support affected households not recovering well.

Operation update

Relief: The team is working with MRCS to formalize the planning framework for the operation and the distribution plan for this week has been completed. The distribution plan may have to be revised, but a basic framework is in place and the team is building capacity to established plans for distributions and to report against those plans. Daily assessment reports received are incorporated into the next week's relief plan, making assessments and relief planning more aligned.

Relief distributions within the present weekly plan have been increased to an average of 2,500 families per day, but due to some constraints in the relief supply not all families will receive a full package immediately. The next weekly relief plan will be prepared for up to Friday (30 May) to be started next Sunday (1 June) and will include some of the other goods also received over the last weeks (food, tents, different type of hygiene material, etc.)

Distribution problems in Pathein have been solved by MRCS management and Pathein warehouses are now being used as a backup system if the warehouse capacity in Yangon is exceeded. Transport to Pathein with larger trucks is now possible. However, distributions in some townships (Labutta, Pyapon, Bogale, Mawlamyinegyun) are being hampered by the lack of fuel for the boats. The provision of fuel from Yangon has been initiated today until more fuel is available locally.

Progress has been made on reconciling logistics and relief figures to provide consolidated information on distributions made to date and we are now including a table on goods distributed up to 27 May. This information is being updated every two days and will be shared in future operations updates.

Items	Yangon	Ayeyarwady	Total quantity distributed
WATER AND SANITATION			
Jerry cans	5,167	25,650	30,817
Purification tablet	117,400	81,000	198,400
Bottled water (Litre)	20,660	20,000	40,660
FOOD			
Rice (kg)	29,450	30,000	59,450
Ovaltine	2,908	0	2,908
Cooking oil (Litre)		1,620	1,620
Flour (kg)		1,500	1,500
Sugar (kg)		1,500	1,500
Noodles (packs)	1,000		1,000
Sardines (tins)	1,000	1,000	2,000
HEALTH			
First Aid kits	0	5	5
Hygiene kits ¹	0	0	0
Mosquito net	6,600	28,100	34,700
Stretcher	0	38	38
Face mask	250	3,050	3,300
Surgical gloves	0	1,900	1,900
Gloves	300	3,400	3,700
SHELTER			
Shelter kit ²	2,700	10,750	13,450
Tarpaulins	6,800	32,502	39,302
NON FOOD ITEMS			
Blanket	1,400	18,101	19,501
Sleeping bag	600	0	600
Kitchen set ³	2,800	11,513	14,313
Clothes	6,575	21,862	28,437
Soap	11,910	31,650	43,560
Family kit ⁴ (the total includes 318 family kits distributed in Mon State)	0	430	748
Cooking pot	500	1,500	2,000
Plastic plate	1,300	4,500	5,800
Mug cup	2,400	4,500	6,900
Steel spoon	500	3,000	3,500
Towel	2,155	6,980	9,135
Total Beneficiaries	32,105	104,625	138,320

This information does not capture all items distributed by local Red Cross branches without MRCS headquarters involvement or items distributed by other agencies using Red Cross Red Crescent structures.

1) One **hygiene kit** contains: Washing powder (3 kg), toilet paper (12 rolls), 5 soap, 5 toothpaste (75 ml), 5 tooth brush, shampoo (500 ml), 5 razors, 8 hygienic pads

2) One **shelter kit** contains rope, hand saw, roofing nails, shovel, hoe, machete, tin snips, nails, tie wire, claw hammer, woven sack and is usually distributed with 2 tarpaulins

- 3) One **kitchen set** contains: Cooking pot, plates, mugs, spoons etc.
- 4) One **family kit** contains: Kitchen set, male/female clothes, blanket, towels, soap

Emergency shelter: The new shelter delegate has arrived, has been briefed and will start to work on streamlining the International Federation support to MRCS on shelter.

The shelter cluster has now approved the contents and standards for the three different types of kits: hamlet tools kits; household shelter kits; and household non-food item kits. The International Federation will work together with the other main actors in the emergency shelter cluster to provide hamlet tool kits, in an approach that will work at community or “hamlet” level rather than at individual family level. In this way, communities will be able to share resources and tools in a more practical way and this approach will be supplemented by additional supplies of tarpaulins etc. to cover the needs of all families receiving the kits.

This strategy to distribute two community tool kits (shelter kit without tarpaulins) to ten families each is, however, proving difficult to implement due to the absence of trained staff on the ground to support and monitor the process. However, from the information received from the field, it seems families are sharing and using tool kits. Discussion continues on how to best implement the strategy of the shelter cluster under the present circumstances, and the International Federation shelter delegate will develop a more detailed strategy and plan of action to deal with the and to cover the next phase to provide mid-term assistance to rehabilitation of houses and livelihood.

Emergency health and care: The one-day community-based first aid refresher training for MRCS volunteers started on 28 May as planned, with the first 30 participants from Yangon Division. This workshop will be followed by daily workshops for the next two weeks with approximately 30 participants each from Ayeryawady Division, after which the future plan for workshops will be reviewed. The training includes sessions on community mobilization in emergencies, identification and prevention of communicable diseases including acute respiratory infections (ARI) vector-borne diseases, diarrhoea and dehydration, provision of safe drinking water, psychosocial support, restoring family links and simple instructions on dealing with dead bodies. The water and sanitation delegate is assisting in the refresher training for community-based first aid, providing a session on clean drinking water and basic sanitation. MRCS staff, together with the International Federation’s health team, have been actively participating in health cluster meetings and other associated workshops. The MRCS is also in the process of hiring additional health staff to support the operation.

The French Red Cross ERU team finalized the training on water and sanitation (M40 module) equipment on 27 May. Participants will continue to train on the German and Australian water purification equipment. It is still a challenge to consider site selection and installation of the equipment without the presence of experienced ERU delegates. It is hoped the entry of the two German and two Austrian Red Cross ERU delegates will result in field access.

Applications for travel permits for three International Federation teams to go to Bogale, Labutta and Mawlamyinegyung have been forwarded to the ministry of health and it is hoped that the teams might be able to leave Yangon on 1 June. In the meantime, the International Federation is dispatching equipment, engineers and volunteers to the locations to set up water treatment plants that will supply safe drinking water to the affected populations so that it will be available as soon as the Federation water and sanitation teams arrive on the ground. This is a very positive step in the operation which will strengthen the approach in water and sanitation beyond the existing provision of jerry cans and water purification tablets. In addition,

- Part of the French Red Cross ERU will be dispatched to Labutta township.
- Up to four filters from the German/Austrian Red Cross water and sanitation (M15 module) will be dispatched to Bogale township.
- the Australian water and sanitation equipment (Nomad) will be dispatched to Mawlamyinegyun township.

Logistics: Additional logistics human resources have started to arrive in Myanmar to support the logistics operation. To date, the logistics delegate and the air operations member of the British Red Cross Logistics ERU team are en route and the logistics coordinator is on his way to Kuala Lumpur for briefing and onward trip to Myanmar. The Logistics ERU procurement delegate is also on stand-by.

The five vehicles which came in with the three ERUs can stay in-country and the process has been started to release them for use in the present relief operation. A new warehouse has been identified which can accommodate all incoming relief items over the next months. The warehouse will be fully available in 1-2 weeks time, after the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has removed its items from the warehouse. In addition, two mobile warehouses have been transported to Labutta and contact has been made with the WFP team to erect them in the area, as storage facilities are currently not available there. Until they are erected, the French Red Cross ERU equipment will be stored in smaller tents. More relief items donated bilaterally to MRCS, which are not coordinated through the International Federation's Kuala Lumpur regional logistics unit pipeline, have been arriving in the airport, challenging the team there and adding pressure on unloading, storage and distribution. The International Federation stresses that all Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners wishing to donate goods to this operation should coordinate through the regional logistics unit in Kuala Lumpur for a more streamlined process..

MRCS: There has been recent success in moving forward on enhancing MRCS capacity through the strengthening of MRCS field structures, the plans to support the hubs and building MRCS branches in those locations and as well as the work to support MRCS human resources and volunteer management systems and procedures. Guidelines on support for volunteers are being revised, with support of the organizational development delegate.

Two teams have been dispatched to Bogale and Pyapon townships to rent and establish MRCS-Cyclone Nargis offices. These offices will be up and running as of early next week. A major recruitment process is ongoing to identify additional human resources to support these offices. Approval has been granted to arrange for an additional two teams to travel to Patheingyi and Ngapudaw townships and to the Labutta township in the coming days to set up similar offices. This is a big step forward in supporting the operation at field-level.

Despite this progress, challenges still remain, particularly in terms of longer-term planning. Logistics management is also one area that the MRCS/ International Federation team is continually looking to strengthen national society capacity and it will be a future challenge in terms of reinforcing logistics capacity at the field.

International Federation: The team in Yangon has been reinforced by two additional national staff: an administrative assistant for logistics and a receptionist. A notice has been circulated advertising for additional staff for the team, but demand for quality staff has increased dramatically with many organizations scaling up operations.

The focus is now on confirming the recruitment of key personnel for the longer-term posts in support of the country team. In the last couple of days, as well as the logistics positions, the existing programme coordinator for Myanmar (who was recruited before the cyclone) has also gone into Yangon to support the team and the overall Movement coordination function.

ICRC has offered an additional two water plants in support of the MRCS/ International Federation. There is also the possibility of getting support from ICRC personnel specializing in water and economic security in-country to support water and sanitation and livelihoods planning and programming.

Restoring family links (RFL): with the support of the ICRC, MRCS has established a department dedicated to the restoration of family links and reuniting relatives separated by the disaster. The necessary systems have been put in place to allow MRCS volunteers to collect information from people who are seeking news of their loved ones, or who themselves wish to inform their friends and family that they are safe and well. Support to MRCS volunteers in the Ayeyarwady Division will be provided by ICRC staff working from within the MRCS township branch offices currently being established. Joint MRCS/ICRC field trips have confirmed the need for RFL services, including those

related to specifically vulnerable groups such as separated and unaccompanied children. MRCS is actively cooperating with other agencies and organizations that share these concerns.

Management of mortal remains: the ICRC has provided specialist advice to the MRCS and other organizations on the most appropriate way of dealing with corpses that remain unburied four weeks after the disaster. MRCS volunteers are being trained in how to deal with dead bodies in a safe and dignified manner, and have been provided with kits assembled by the ICRC that contain the necessary protective equipment along with guidelines and forms on which to record vital data that satisfies legal requirements and that may assist with the restoration of family links. While not a core MRCS activity in its response plan, MRCS has recognized the need to properly equip its volunteers in the event they are called upon to assist with this task.

Coordination: The in-country MRCS/ International Federation team continues to participate in the key clusters: shelter, health, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Sector coordination is working well, but there continue to be some challenges with respect to inter-cluster coordination.

Discussions have been held with key donors in country, such as the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and ECHO regarding the progress and focus of the operation.

Coordination of the humanitarian response to the cyclone is currently being de-centralized from Yangon. With the main affected areas being in the delta region, the importance of sub-operational centres and information management in the delta region is clear. In this respect, six operational centres have been initially identified with the selection being based on the current needs and logistical feasibility. These centres include Yangon and five centres in the delta, namely Patheingyi, Labutta, Bugale, Pyapon and Mawlamyinegyun. It has been agreed that inter-cluster coordination functions at these hubs would be assumed, in the immediate future, by the organization with the appropriate operational capacity to perform these duties. Training of staff in these hubs will be provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Meanwhile, dedicated coordination capacity will be sought for the longer term by OCHA. All services provided should be complementary and in support of national efforts.

Communications

Media interest continues to subside given other world events but is expected to pick up slightly on the one-month commemoration next week (2 & 3 June) and when first international teams reach the affected delta region. The bilateral Japanese Red Cross/International Federation communications officer left Myanmar today. He proved to be an excellent resource, writing great stories and taking amazing photographs, among many other tasks. The communications department in Geneva, with support from Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur, continues to provide updates to national societies on a regular basis. Updated stories, press releases, photos, etc., can be found at www.ifrc.org or www.flickr.com/ifrc.

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
- Federation zone office in Kuala Lumpur:
 - Jagan Chapagain, deputy head of zone office, phone: +6012 2153765, email: jagan.chapagain@ifrc.org
 - Amy Gaver, acting head of disaster management unit, phone: +6012 2201174, email: amy.gaver@ifrc.org
 - For pledges of funding: Penny Elghady, resource mobilization and PMER coordinator, phone: +603 9207 5775, email: penny.elghady@ifrc.org
 - For mobilization of relief items: Jeremy Francis, regional logistics coordinator, phone: +60 12 298 9752, fax: +60 3 2168 8573, email: jeremy.francis@ifrc.org
 - For media/communications: France Hurtubise, spokesman in Bangkok, phone: +66 84 752 6523, email: france.hurtubise@gmail.com
 - Federation secretariat in Geneva: Christine South, operations coordinator Asia Pacific, phone: +41 22 730 4529; mobile: +41 79 308 9824; email: christine.south@ifrc.org

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