

# INFORMATION BULLETIN



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 لجمعية الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

## MYANMAR: CYCLONE MALA

03 May 2006

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 183 countries.

### In Brief

This Bulletin (no. 01/2006) is being issued for information only, and reflects the status of the situation and information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

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For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

### The Situation

After making its way inland from the Bay of Bengal, Cyclone Mala finally hit Myanmar on the western coast on 29 April 2006, packing winds of up to 240 kmph, lashing roofs off buildings and knocking out electricity in affected towns.

However, early preparedness and response measures taken by the government and the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) ensured minimal damages and loss of life. On 28 April, township authorities issued two warnings, and evacuations from high-risk areas took place the same day.



The coastal regions in Myanmar are at frequent risk to cyclones. As Mala approached, MRCS mobilized boats, many times the only form of transportation to areas cut off by cyclone.

The following is a brief summary of the situation:

In Hlaingtharya township, 586 houses were damaged while two people were reported dead and 12 were injured.

In Gwa township, one dead and four injured were reported. Of the houses affected, 88 were completely destroyed while 1,246 were partially damaged. Authorities estimated that three quarters of the township structures were damaged by the cyclone. Temporary shelters were established in a meditation centre, monastery and two schools.

In Ra Haing Ku Toe village, 132 houses were completely destroyed while 531 were partially destroyed.

Red Cross branches at Ayeyrwady division reported 88 houses damaged in Labutta township. Kyangin township (Hinthada district) at the northern tip of Ayeyarwady division was affected by strong winds and torrential rain at afternoon of 29 April. Flash floods caused by heavy rainfall drowned 18 people and left 14 persons missing.

Early assessments have identified around 6,000 damaged houses in 24 villages. 351 houses were completely destroyed.

The minister of transport and deputy minister of social welfare attended a ceremony where clothing, blankets and cash amounting to MMK 200,000 (approximately USD 160 or CHF 200) were handed over to Gwa township.

Disaster response systems already in place demonstrated their effectiveness during the disaster as government relief personnel were at the villages affected on the very onset of the cyclone, carrying out relief and health care services.

## **Red Cross and Red Crescent action**

MRCS was involved at the beginning, alerting state Red Cross committees and participation in local response committee meetings before cyclone Mala hit. Disaster preparedness/response teams from the headquarters established communication with states and divisions and mobilized boats for transportation to areas otherwise inaccessible by road. By 29 April, 30 volunteer groups were on standby at all townships. ICRC was also on stand by for possible logistic support.

MRCS Yangon division responded to storm damages at Hlaingtharya township where over 400 houses were damaged or destroyed during a thunderstorm on 28 April.

MRCS and the Federation delegation mapped the situation with local branches and tourist resorts at Southern Rakhine and Ayeyarwady coast. A disaster assessment and response team (DART) surveyed the forecasted impact area from Gwa to Thandwe on 30 April. A second assessment team was sent to Pyay, capital of West Bago division, on the same day, where communication lines had been lost during the previous night.

MRCS Labutta township distributed essential non-food items to all 164 households on 1 May. Replenishment of preparedness stock will be needed.

The DART assessment estimated the priorities of the affected areas to be food aid and construction material and identified local purchase just over 100 km from Gwa. In a coordination meeting on 3 May with local authorities, the team was requested for possible support with plastic sheeting for temporary roofing material. On the same day, MRCS arranged for 246 rolls of tarpaulin valued at CHF 40,000 to be transported to Gwa.

Telecommunications remained the biggest challenge throughout the entire operation as MRCS had not received any feedback for a radio application made in relation to the tsunami operation in early 2005.

## **Coordination**

The MRCS headquarters has been in constant coordination with local cooperating authorities including the relief and resettlement department, the fire brigade and the ministry of social welfare. The UN resident coordinator's office provided the Federation disaster management delegate with its field office contacts. World Health Organization contacts were checked and its country office is ready to support possible operations.

UNICEF had also been considering sending an assessment team to Gwa. Some tourist resorts, including Bayview Hotel, north from the landfall area have been contacted through telephone. The manager of the resort reported only strong winds and some minor damages at the area.

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