

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Myanmar: Cyclone Giri

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This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) is currently engaged in assessing the casualties and damages caused by the cyclone. Assessment results will indicate if external donor support is required. Therefore, funding or other assistance from donors is not being sought at this time.

Summary

Category 4 Cyclone Giri made landfall in western Myanmar's Rakhine State around 8:00 p.m. (local time) on 22 October, triggering storms, heavy rains and huge tidal surges in coastal areas. Tidal surges hit the islands and coastal areas seven to eight metres above normal water level. The speed of winds was measured as 177 kph (110 mph) upon making landfall.

The most affected townships in Rakhine State are reported to be those in coastal areas, especially Kyaukpyu, Minbya, Munaung, Myebon and Pauktaw. The cyclone damaged infrastructure, buildings and houses in its path towards Magway, Mandalay and Sagaing Divisions. Roads, bridges, utility and telecommunication facilities and houses have been partly or completely destroyed while power supply and phone lines have been cut off. Overall, the number of casualties does not appear high as the authorities and MRCS have taken several cyclone preparedness measures in time.

The Myanmar government and local authorities made public announcements and prepared for timely response, search and rescue before the cyclone hit the country. Red Cross volunteers helped relay early warning messages among communities at risk, setting up relief camps and assisting evacuation efforts. Authorities airlifted food, water and relief supplies to affected areas and plan to airlift more in the coming days. Fire brigade rescue services are also working in the affected areas.

Authorities and various humanitarian agencies are sending assessment teams to the affected areas to establish accurate numbers of those affected and extent of damage caused. The National Disaster Preparedness Coordination Committee (NDPCC) and several ministries are organizing a fact-finding mission in which a small team of humanitarian partners will participate.

MRCS headquarters and state/division branches issued an early warning to respective township branches, which alerted the people concerned and put Red Cross volunteers on standby. In close cooperation with local authorities, township branches were actively engaged in cyclone preparedness.

On 23 October, MRCS held an emergency management meeting and formed an emergency task force comprising representatives of relevant MRCS departments, IFRC and French Red Cross, which will be responsible for the emergency relief operation including the assessment. The National Society has also activated a 24-hour duty system mainly with staff of the disaster management division and put 30 Red Cross volunteers of the Yangon division branch on standby for immediate deployment in operational areas if needed.

Two MRCS assessment teams will be sent to the cyclone-affected areas in Kyaukpyu, Ann, Myebon, Munaung, Sittwe, Pauktaw and Minbya townships on 24 or 25 October, depending on available flights or ferry services.

MRCS has disaster preparedness stocks for 1,600 households pre-positioned at its regional warehouses in Sittwe, Kyaukpyu and Thandwe in Rakhine State, and keeps more stocks in 17 regional warehouses in other states/divisions.

[<click here for contact information or a map of the affected areas>](#)

The situation

On 19 October 2010, an area of low pressure formed in the Bay of Bengal, developing on 20 October into a depression. At that time it was located approximately 250km southwest of Sittwe, Myanmar. Early on 21 October, the depression was upgraded to a deep depression, which later strengthened to a cyclone code-named *Giri*. On 22 October, *Giri* further strengthened into a cyclone of category 2 and escalated into category 4.

Category 4 Cyclone *Giri* made landfall in western Myanmar's Rakhine State around 8:00 p.m. on 22 October, triggering storms, heavy rains and huge tidal surges in coastal areas. Tidal surges hit the islands and coastal areas seven to eight metres above normal water levels. The speed of winds was measured as 177 kph (110 mph) upon landfall.

The most affected townships in Rakhine State are reported to be those in coastal areas, especially Kyaukpyu, Minbya, Munaung, Myebon and Pauktaw. The cyclone damaged infrastructure, buildings and houses in its path towards Magway, Mandalay and Sagaing Divisions. Many roads, bridges, utility and telecommunication facilities and houses have been partly or completely destroyed. Power supply and phone lines have been cut off and most roads, if not all, are currently inaccessible.

According to a report from MRCS branch in Kyaukpyu with the population of 185,550, almost 75 per cent of houses have been partly damaged. The most affected are five villages with 1,000 households or 4,500 people, which include Raidine Pikesapike, Sar Pyin Kevin, Pyin Phyu Maw, Sai De Taung and Kalar Par Taung.

In Pauktaw, many buildings and houses in the township seat area have been damaged with 4,000 people still remaining in temporary shelters set up in monasteries and schools. Up to 11 villages have been ruined to varying degrees and the Thit Poke village with 320 households is among the most affected. Initial assessment results in Myebon Township with the population of 123,985, show that there were serious damages to buildings and houses in the township seat and villages. Six temporary shelters are accommodating people evacuated from at-risk areas. In Minbya Township with the population of 177,586, damages have been mainly reported at the village level. Flooding by the water overflowing from a dam inundated 15 villages in Salin Township, Magway Division, cutting off power supply and communication lines, and destroying roads. Up to 15 villages in Sagaing Township, Sagaing Division are also reported damaged by the cyclone. Overall, however, the number of human casualties does not seem to be high due to disaster preparedness measures taken by the authorities and MRCS.

The Myanmar government and local authorities prepared themselves for timely response, search and rescue before the cyclone hit the country. State radio and television announcements warned communities of the impending storm in advance. Local authorities evacuated people to safer places. Red Cross volunteers took an active part in relaying early warning messages to people living in areas at risk, setting up relief camps and helping people evacuate in time. The authorities have sent food, water and relief supplies to affected areas by plane and helicopter, and plan to airlift more relief supplies in the coming days. Rescue teams from fire brigades are working in affected areas.

The authorities, non-governmental organizations and humanitarian agencies are trying to establish the exact number of people affected and the extent of damage caused. The authorities and various humanitarian agencies are sending assessment teams to the affected areas. The National Disaster Preparedness Coordination Committee (NDPCC) and several ministries have been mobilized and are organizing a fact-finding mission in which a small team of humanitarian partners will participate.

At present, urgent needs of affected people as identified by MRCS branches are food, water and shelter.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

On 20 October, MRCS headquarters and state/division branches issued an early warning to respective township branches, which alerted the people concerned and put Red Cross volunteers on standby. In close cooperation with local authorities, township branches were actively engaged in cyclone preparedness.

The MRCS branch in Kyaukpyu has sent 52 Red Cross volunteers to affected areas. Together with rescue teams from the fire brigade, they are now clearing the blocked or damaged roads in order to access the most affected villages. MRCS staff and volunteers are taking food and water, airlifted there by the authorities this morning (24 October). Red Cross volunteers are also busy with caring for people staying temporarily in five relief camps set up

in the township. The MRCS headquarters is trying to establish contact with other township branches to collect information about casualties and damages caused as well as the immediate needs of affected people.

On 23 October, MRCS held an emergency management meeting attended by its different departments, IFRC and French Red Cross. It confirmed the formation of an emergency task force comprising representatives of relevant MRCS departments, IFRC and French Red Cross, which will be responsible for the emergency relief operation, including the assessment. The National Society has also activated a 24-hour duty system mainly with staff of the disaster management division and put 30 Red Cross volunteers from the Yangon division branch on standby for immediate deployment in operational areas, as needed.

MRCS has formed two assessment teams to be sent to the cyclone-affected areas. Each team will comprise five members from disaster management, health, communications and other departments and are equipped with CDMA phones to ensure regular communication with the headquarters. One team will make assessments in Kyaukpyu, Ann, Myebon and Munaung townships while the other team will do the same in Sittwe, Pauktaw and Minbya townships. They are due to leave Yangon on 24 or 25 October, depending on available flights or ferry services. These assessment teams will be followed by logistics teams as more information becomes available.

Many of cyclone-affected areas are the locations in which MRCS has implemented the community-based disaster risk management programme with the support of IFRC. In each township, MRCS trained six CBDRM facilitators who subsequently conducted multiplier courses in villages. It is expected that these trained people will play an important role in the current assessments and the subsequent relief operation.

MRCS has disaster preparedness stocks for 1,600 households pre-positioned at its regional warehouses in Sittwe, Kyaukpyu and Thandwe in Rakhine State, and keeps more stocks in 17 regional warehouses in other states/divisions.

IFRC, UN agencies, INGOs and NGOs that form the humanitarian country team, met on 23 October to discuss the situation and share information on activities planned by different agencies. An inter-agency coordination mechanism has been established. In the field, humanitarian agencies will explore the possibility of setting up a coordination hub in Kyaukpyu or a suitable area nearby, if needs require the establishment of such a mechanism to ensure coordination with the authorities. In Yangon, the UN Resident Coordinator will ensure liaison with the Myanmar government and the humanitarian community. OCHA, with the support of all humanitarian partners involved in the response, will ensure the dissemination of situation reports.

The IFRC country office has offered to help MRCS in its assessments. Federation delegates are on standby to support the National Society if requested. The IFRC's Asia Pacific zone office units in Kuala Lumpur also remain on standby to support MRCS as needed. Similarly, the French Red Cross and ICRC delegations in Yangon are also on standby, ready to provide support, as needed.

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.

IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

IFRC's work is guided by [Strategy 2020](#) which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation, please contact:

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[<map below; click here to return to title page >](#)



Myanmar: Tropical cyclone Giri

