

An Alternative Assessment of the Humanitarian Assistance in the Irrawaddy Delta

Situation after 60 days

Prepared by Ko Shwe
23rd July, 2008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	2
• Objectives	3
• Length of time	3
• Methodology	3
• Main Findings	3
II. ASSESSMENT	6
1. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE CYCLONE	6
1.1 Forced Relocation	6
1.2 Temporary camps	6
1.3 Discriminatory Distribution of Relief	7
1.4 Relief Supplies and Corruption	7
1.5 Land and Ownership Issues	7
2. RELIEF EFFORTS	9
2.1 Lack of Strategic Co-ordination	9
2.2 Questions of Aid Effectiveness	9
2.3 Government regulations	10
2.4 Victims lack access to international agency support	10
3. WATER, SANITATION AND DISEASE	11
3.1 Lack of access to clean water	11
3.2 Inadequate health care services	11
4. ORPHANS AND CHILDREN	12
5. EDUCATION	12
5.1 Unsystematic access to education opportunities	12
6. CROSS BORDER RESTRICTIONS	13
7. OTHER GROUPS' INVOLVEMENT	13
7.1 Politically motivated relief offers	13
7.2 Concerns of Human Trafficking and Young Women at Risk	13
8. HOUSING AND RECONSTRUCTION	14
III. RECOMMENDATIONS	14
IV. FUNDING GAPS	15
V. FURTHER COMMENTS	16
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	16
REFERENCES	17
APPENDIX	18

I. INTRODUCTION

After the UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon met with General Than Shwe, the government officially announced that the country would open its door to any relief support for Cyclone Nargis victims. Since then, there is a daily announcement in the government newspaper “New Light of Myanmar,” saying that “any donor from any area may go down to any storm-hit areas of their choice, and can provide any assistance to any person in any area”. However in reality, 60 days after the Cyclone Nargis hit, the government has still failed to provide assistance to most of the villages in Irrawaddy delta. There are also a lot of limitations on the UN agencies, international agencies, local NGOs and social groups who are providing relief in the storm-hit areas.

Almost everyday at Rangoon International Airport you can see planes landing and bringing relief supplies to the Nargis victims. And, everyday on the government's pro MRTV 4, announces that they have provided food and other necessities to the victims and have announced that the relief phase is over and that it is now time for recovery and reconstruction. However, questions have to be asked: how is the support provided and who actually receives the support? and why has the affected population in further delta areas not been given enough support to meet their basic needs? This report aims to answer these questions based on research in Ngeputaw and Laputta townships in June 2008, and also outlines the major problems that need to be addressed such as access to land and ownership issues, health care, water, sanitation, education, orphans, and other social problems.

Laputta township one of the most affected areas. UN agencies, international agencies, local NGOs and social groups are actively involved in the relief effort in this area. Ngeputaw Township was not directly hit by the cyclone and there were no deaths. Many assistance groups assume there is no damage here, however there was a lot of damage to houses, schools, churches, ponds and lakes. There is limited relief provided by local NGOs and social groups and some roofing provided for schools by UNICEF, however no international agencies are active in this area. The researcher also interviewed social and local NGO workers in Patheingyi, Myawmya and Rangoon.

Objectives

The representative's primary role was to:

- work alongside local relief efforts and where possible, assess the situation in the affected areas
- strengthen existing local assessment efforts
- report to potential donors about funding needs

Length of Time: One month

Methodology

The researcher visited eighteen villages in Laputta and Ngeputaw townships in the delta area, over a two week period and conducted informal discussions with villagers, local leaders, relief workers from social organizations and local NGOs. The researcher also met with social groups involved in relief activities in Pathein and Myawmya townships. Another two weeks were spent in Rangoon volunteering with a social group, discuss the situation with youth who actively volunteer in the relief effort, and facilitating training on assessment skills (such as data collection, interview and analysis), and concepts of community participation.

The research was conducted from the 7 June - 4 July in Laputta township, Ngeputaw Township, Pathein township, Myawmya township and Rangoon. On the basis observations and informal interviews in these areas, this report will reflect on the situation experienced by many people in the delta areas. This report also includes some information gained from existing reports on conditions in the delta.

Research limitations included difficulties in transportations, villagers and relief workers having limited time for interviews, lack of access to areas such as camps set up to the government and the short timeframe of the research period.

Main findings

i) Government Response to the cyclone

- 45 temporary camps have been set up by the government to showcase to the international community. On the basis of this showcase, the government claims the relief phase is over and that it is now time for recovery and reconstruction.
- The government has failed to provide support to the wider affected population in the delta areas. Most of the assistance that the government has provided outside the camps has been distributed to villages in and nearby military and marine force bases.
- The government is discriminating in its relief effort, favoring villages near marine and military based and those where generals were born. There is little support in areas where Karen communities live.

- Many relief supplies have been switched with domestic products and resold in local markets.
- The government has ordered villagers to restart farming activities in their original villages, however has not provided enough resources for farmers to begin planting. Some farming equipment is being offered, however it is unaffordable for the majority of farmers.
- Many land markers and land documents were lost during the cyclone. The government has announced that any farmers who cannot restart their farming activities as they have done in the past will have their land taken over by the government. Many people are returning to their original villages even if they don't have enough food, for fear that their land will be falsely claimed or confiscated.

ii) Relief efforts

- There is lack of strategic coordination amongst UN agencies, international agencies and local groups (including local NGOs and social groups), in the delivery of relief, data collection, impact assessments and information sharing and therefore there is an overlap in relief distribution.
- There are questions of aid effectiveness due to inadequate consultation between i) the UN agencies international agencies and ii) local communities. Furthermore, the aid distribution process which is often through the USDA (a government affiliated organization), raising questions of accountability, transparency and how much aid is actually delivered to affected communities.
- International agencies and intergovernmental organizations can only access areas that are permitted by the government, and some registered organizations and agencies, both international and local are limited to the areas they can access by previous by previous MOU's with the government.
- The government has regulations closely monitoring the movement of foreigners who are visiting the affected areas with registered organizations.
- In the relief distribution effort, villages where people took refuge after the cyclone do not have access to food registration lists of the UN and international agencies. People in these areas receive limited support from social groups.

iii) Water, Sanitation and Disease

- There is a lack of access to clean water in affected areas, people are using rain water for drinking and cooking, however access will become increasingly difficult when the rainy season is over.
- There are a number of efforts by the government, international medical groups and local NGOs to provide healthcare, however there are still many efforts who lack basic healthcare.

iv) Orphans and Children

- Many orphans and children have been traumatized by the cyclone. There are many children orphaned by the cyclone who are staying with family and friends. Young people have also dropped out of school and moved to other towns to look for work.

v) Education

- Some schools are re-opening, however there is limited support from the government and no plan to support children who have lost their families. Some social groups and local NGOs are supporting children to go to school.

vi) Cross border restrictions

- Many people from the delta have tried to cross the border into Thailand, however have failed due to travel restrictions imposed by the government along the common route to Thailand.

vii) Opportunists involvement and young women at risk

- pro-government ethnic armed groups have visited affected areas and offered relief to victims if they return to live in their areas, however victims have not accepted the offers.
- A group of Rangoon businesses are offering job opportunities to young people, however there are concerns by local social groups that this will lead to human trafficking and other forms of exploitation.
- Some girls and women in the camps set up by the government are offering sex in exchange for money to passers-by, raising concerns of personal safety and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

viii) Housing and reconstruction

- The government has given contracts to national companies to start building houses in the delta, however it is unclear who these houses will be provided for.
- The majority of people in Laputta are building their own houses from locally available resources.

II. ASSESSMENT

1. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE CYCLONE

1.1 Forced Relocation

After Cyclone Nargis hit the Irrawaddy delta on the 2nd and 3rd of May, it left hundreds of thousands of people homeless and people took refuge in several townships such as Rangoon, Myawmya and Pa Thein and other nearby townships. One month after Cyclone Nargis hit on 24th May, the government stated that people must restart their own traditional way of living and return their original villages. They state that people cannot continually be dependent on relief from outside as it would result in people not being able to stand on their own two feet any more. 380 people in Rangoon, more than 2000 in Myawmya and 700 in Pathein were forced to go back their villages. In Rangoon, when the villagers refused to go back, soldiers threatened to shoot them.

The government has also asked villages to restart their farming activities and threatened to take over their land if they do not farm this year. This is impossible for many farmers as they have no access to rice seed or farming equipment and the planting season is nearly over (see section 1.5 Land and Ownership for more information).

1.2 Temporary camps

Due to pressure from the international community and humanitarian agencies, the government has set up 45 temporary camps for cyclone Nargis victims (Irrawaddy online news, www.irrawaddy.org 10/07/08). Repeatedly, government officers, General Than Shwe, General Maung Aye, General Thein Sein and other higher ranking officers have visited the camps they set up, showing on Myanmar Television (MRTV) to the people of Burma and to the international community that they are active in providing support to the Nargis victims. They claim that the relief phase is over and that they have already started the recovery and reconstruction process. However, in reality the government has just provided support to the people in the camps that they set up as a showcase to the international community. Even though the government provides food to the camps the quality of the food is very poor (see section 1.4 Relief Supplies and Corruption). An estimated one third of the victim population is in these camps.

Everyday MRTV4 shows different high ranking officers visiting the affected communities in the camps. However, on the ground when the officers are due to visit, the local authorities build temporary tents and ask the villagers nearby to come and stay in the tents. When the officers have left, they take down all the temporary tents and ask the villagers to go back to the temporary shelters which have been built by the villagers themselves. People in the camps have received enough support from the government, but the government has failed to provide support to the wider affected population in the delta areas.

1.3 Discriminatory Distribution of Relief

Most of the assistance that the government has provided outside the camps has been distributed to villages in and nearby military and marine force bases such as Hai Gyi Island, Kwin Pout, Taung Ka Lay, Ah Ya Daw, Salu Sait, Poe Laoung Pyinsalu, Laypyan Kwin, Yin Dwin Sait, Titut, Thein Nga Island, Pa Dan Kaw, Thein Nga Gyi, Bo Gon, Zin Mee Gon, and Ou Island. One of the villagers said, "everyday, you will hear and see helicopters go the those villages and providing assistance." In Laputta Township, Karen villages such as Ah Mart Ka Lay, Ah Mart Gyi, Aing Ma, Thin Baw Kwin, Way Bon Gon, Kwin Ya, Sait Gyi, Chaung Gyi, Kwa Kaw and other Karen villages have not received enough support to meet their basic needs. Currently those villages are help by Christian groups and other local NGOs but with very limited support.

Support is also being provided to villages where the generals were born. For example, in Ngeputaw township in Burma's Prime Minster Thein Sein's village, Kyone Kuu, the school and hospital are being rebuilt and other assistance is provided. However, close by villages such as Kyaut Pon, Kanma La, Htin Dan, Swain Pa Doh, Ta Ron Dan have not received enough or any support from the government. In every village in Ngeputaw villagers say that they have only received 3 or 4 potatoes, a small package of dried fish, 3-4 onions and 3-4 cloves of garlic and 2-3 small baskets of rice from the government for each family. In The Yet Pin Kwin village, villagers have so far only received 4 potatoes and a small carton of milk for each family. Christian groups support families in this area with other needs.

1.4 Relief Supplies and Corruption

A lot of aid that is intended for Nargis victims has not been actually distributed. The government, together with some companies are hoarding supplies and exchanging or switching them with products produced in Burma which are then distributed to the Nargis victims. Quite alot of relief supplies have labels such as "Donated by Htoo Company" and other Burmese high ranking officials' names.

Many of the original relief items can be seen for sale in the markets in Laputta, Pathein, Rangoon and Myawmya townships for a cheap price. Items such as mosquito nets, blankets, clothes, rain coats, rolls of tarpaulin, plastic sheets and other edible items. One person from Rangoon went to a market found a clothes shop selling clothes for a very cheap price. He said, "the clothes that I bought were very cheap, only 500 Kyat. I have never found good quality clothes for that price here". Tshirts are normally priced for 1000 Kyat or more. In Laputta Township, in the markets, you can purchase roles of tarpaulin with the price of 1200 Kyat.

1.5 Land and Ownership Issues

According to a report by the Emergency Assistance Team 'EAT' (a network of local organizations and concerned individuals working at the grassroots level to provide aid and assistance to affected people) many land markers were washed away and land documents were lost during the cyclone (EAT report, July 2008). These documents are registration documents as officially in the Irrawaddy delta area, all the farmland

belongs to the government. Since independence the Constitutions and legislation in Burma have provided for State ownership of land. According to the new Constitution 'the State is the ultimate owner of all the land, and natural resources above and below the ground, above and beneath the water and in the atmosphere within its territorial boundary'.

Farmers have to pay land tax on land that they are farming to the local authorities, and the central government holds central records of land registration. However in some instances, farmers land and even whole villages are not registered at the central level as local authorities do not pass on the information.

There are also many farmers who returned to their original villages even though they did not have enough food as they were concerned about losing their land through land confiscation or false claims. For example, a family that took refuge in Ngeputaw sent one family member to check whether the land had been falsely claimed or confiscated.

Farmers are worried about their survival for this year as the rainy season is almost over and they have not yet been able to plant rice. One month after Cyclone Nargis hit, the government asked the victims who returned to their original villages to restart farming activities. However, after the villagers followed government orders to return to their original villages they have not been provided with enough resources to resume their normal livelihoods. Equipment that is being provided has to be paid for and is not affordable for most people. Some villagers have returned to their places of refuge to look for work.

In some villages, the farming tractors that the government has given to the farmers have to be fixed for 200,000 - 300,000 kyat per tractor before it is useable. The government also offers loans to farmers who want to restart their farming activities. In Laputta, the government offers any farmer whose farming land has more than 100 acres to take out a loan on a farming tractor for a deposit of 200,000 Kyat and pay the rest later (a tractor costs approximately 1,500,000 - 1,800,000 Kyat). However, this is unaffordable for most farmers and they are unable to resume farming activities.

The government has also announced that any farmers who cannot restart their farming activities as they have done in the past, will be taken over by the government. For instance, if a farmer has 80 acres of farmland and can only harvest 20 acres this year, then the rest of the land will be taken over by the government to start farming activities.

The government has allowed local companies to start reconstruction work in the delta area for infrastructure development such as roads, schools and hospitals. The government is likely to give permission to local companies who have been involved in reconstruction work in the Irrawaddy delta to do large scale agriculture on arable land that small farmers have not been able to farm. There is a risk that in the future the delta area will be further monopolized by agribusiness.

2. RELIEF EFFORTS

2.1 Lack of Strategic Co-ordination

After 60 days, the UN, international agencies and local NGOs and social organizations have reached quite a lot of areas in the delta and provided assistance to the Nargis victims. However, during my trip to the delta and in talking to the victims and relief volunteers, I found that, there is very little negotiation/coordination between groups that have been providing humanitarian assistance. The UN, INGOs and other groups do have a meeting in Rangoon every week at which they talk and discuss about what they should be doing for the next stages of relief and reconstruction. However INGOs, local NGOs and social organizations do not co-ordinate the delivery of relief and there is no systematic data collection or information sharing nor has there been a co-ordinated impact assessment. Due to lack of negotiation and information sharing there is a lot of overlapping in relief distribution and other support that is being provided. Some people have received the same items two or three times, but in some villages, some people have not received any of the support that is being provided. One of the villagers in Laputta said, "different groups have come to us and asked us the same information. We are repeatedly being asked and give the same information however we do not get enough support from them based on what we have told them."

2.2 Questions of Aid Effectiveness

There are reports such as the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Situation report no. 38 on the humanitarian response by national and international NGOs, the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement and UN agencies, on relief efforts such as nutrition; agriculture; emergency shelter; water, sanitation and hygiene; protection of children and women; health and education. This report outlines what has been provided so far and in which areas. It does not provide information on how delivery of the relief has been co-ordinated. A local NGO worker commented that international aid groups have not done enough consultation/coordination with local groups that have been working with the communities there for a long time and have a good understanding of the situation in these areas.

Relief is often distributed in co-ordination with the USDA - a government affiliated organization. In most villages in the Laputta area the government has sent the USDA to look after the relief activities that are being carried by different groups. In villages where USDA teams are based, any agencies must go through the USDA or the village tract leaders or alternatively relief supplies have to be given to them to distribute later on.

This raises questions of accountability, transparency and how much aid is actually delivered to the affected communities. The UN agencies and international agencies have their own record on what and how much they have provided, but the question is "How do they monitor and evaluate whether the assistance that they have provided effectively reached areas outside the camps to the wider population of affected communities."

2.3 Government regulations

A "Briefing on the Guiding Principles to be followed by UN Agencies, Inter-Governmental Organizations, INGOs and NGOs in carrying out aid and assistance activities for the cyclone victims" by the government on the 10 June 2008 stated that 'the work program for the aid/assistance to be provided to the cyclone victims has to be informed in advance in detail to be able to obtain the approval from the respective focal Ministry and the Tripartite Core Group (TCG) (a group consisting of ASEAN, UN agencies and Myanmar government)".

A social worker said, "if a local organization wants to invite any foreigner to the delta area they have to apply for permission from government officers. It takes at least 3 days to get permission." Any foreigner who wants to go to the Cyclone Nargis hit areas, has to provide an itinerary and detailed list of what they will be providing to the victims.

The government officially allowed any registered local and national NGOs supporting Nargis victims to order any materials they need for the relief operation from abroad. However, in reality relief items are often confiscated at the airport.

In early June, a government minister from the Rescue Department Committee officially held a meeting with local NGOs and social groups who are providing help to the victims and officially announced that any person or any group can come into the country with the recommendation of registered NGO or social groups. They can come and visit the affected communities under two conditions: one is that those visiting people or groups should not be affiliated with any political activities (if they are, the recommended NGO or group or person will be held responsible); the second is that any person or group that visited the affected areas must report back to the government about how much money they have donated, what kind of materials they have given and other detailed information (if they do not comply, the recommended groups or person will be held responsible).

UN agencies and international agencies can only access areas that the government permits. A "Briefing on the Guiding Principles" by the government states that "UN agencies, IGOs, INGOs and NGOs are required to obtain the approval from focal Ministry, with the recommendation from the TCG for field visits to cyclone-hit areas. There are a list of 10 guiding principles for the implementation of assistance programs relating the cyclone (see Appendix).

Some INGOs and registered local NGOs are limited to areas that they can provide relief by previous MOUs with the government.

2.4 Victims lack access to international agency support

In the relief distribution effort, there are many villages that have been left out or have not received enough support.

For instance, there are still a large number of people who did not follow the order to return to their original village and have continued to stay in the villages where they took refuge after the cyclone.

These places of refuge are out of the directly affected areas and consequently people who decided to continue to settle in these villages do not often have access to assistance from the UN and international agencies. These people do not have access to international agency food supply registration lists however they receive some support from Christian agencies. Currently, they are being supported by churches that are based in the villages. However, the churches will not be able to support them for a long period of time as they have to collect rice every month from the church members. One of the pastors said, "we cannot provide food for them for a long period of time".

People decided not to go back to their villages for many reasons. One of the main reasons that was given was that if they went back it would be very difficult for them to restart their livelihoods as there are a lack of resources in the village. There are more than 230 people from Laputta Township who took refuge in 5 villages in Ngeputaw Township. There are hundreds of Cyclone Nargis refugees who took refuge in their relatives' villages and towns. Some people that were interviewed are looking for daily jobs to be able to feed their family and they do not have any intention of going back to their own villages.

3. WATER, SANITATION AND DISEASE

3.1 Lack of access to clean water

Most villages in the Laputta area have not received clean water. They use rainwater for their daily use. However, as the only way to get drinking and cooking water is from the rain, they don't have enough containers to store the water when it rains. On days when there is no rain, they have to order and take water from other villages. Pro-government's MRTV4, broadcasts daily images of government officials distributing water to the villagers. However it is not clear how many villages have been provided with clean water. After the rainy season is over it will be increasingly difficult for people to have access to clean water.

The people in the Irrawaddy delta areas use water from ponds and lakes for their daily use. However, after the storm hit, most lakes and ponds were filled with salty water from the sea and dead bodies of people and animals. Villagers who have returned to villages in Laputta have removed the corpses from most of their lakes however the water is still polluted and they can't use it for drinking and cooking.

3.2 Inadequate health care services

Diarrhea, dysentery and other water borne diseases have broken out in some places as the water that they have to use is still not clean and healthcare is unavailable. Despite efforts by the government, international medical groups and local NGOs (who access areas that other groups don't reach) there are still many villages that lack basic health care. In early June, there was a report in the Laputta area, that 100 people had dengue

fever, but there is no report on how serious the situation is and how many people have died so far from the disease. Recently the government has sent three medical groups to treat the disease-affected people. The current problem that the people face is mosquitoes. Not enough mosquito nets have been provided for the victims.

4. ORPHANS AND CHILDREN

According to a survey conducted from 8 - 25 June of 12 villages in Laputta township, there are more than 72 orphan children under 15 years old who have lost both their parents. Even though the government has set up orphanages, access is limited and most children do not want to go and live there as they would prefer to stay with their extended family and friends.

Many children are traumatized by their experience. The writer spoke to a twelve year old who lost both of his parents. The writer asked "how did you escape from the cyclone". He replied "I was holding a tree", and the writer continued to ask "how did you become separated from your parents?". The boy stared blankly at the writer's face and didn't say anything. Later the writer found out that his mother and two of his brothers and sisters disappeared in front of his eyes.

According to the EAT report the SPDC government took 50-100 orphans to Rangoon and then later sent them back to their villages, however people from the villages have been unable to find out where they have been relocated to (EAT report, July 2008).

In general a lot of young people have moved in with their relatives and friends, or moved away to look for work. Many of them were in the middle of studying before Cyclone Nargis hit, but now they are not able to continue their study and have had to drop out of school.

5. EDUCATION

5.1 Unsystematic access to education opportunities

Many people have taken refuge in schools and had to be relocated so that children could start school. Schools were due to open at the beginning of June (EAT report, July 2008). The government claims on the daily MRTV 4 broadcast, that they have started rebuilding schools for children to start school. However it is unclear what the percentage is of children that have actually gone back to the school.

There is no plan for children who have lost their parents and relatives, and these children cannot go to school without any support. Most parents cannot or do not have time to take care of children as they have to focus on their family's daily survival. There are many children who have dropped out of school due to the hardships faced after the cyclone and the need to focus on the family's survival.

Some social groups and local NGOs are supporting children to go to school. One of the groups that the writer interviewed said, "The group has supported around 200

children in only 5 villages in the Laputta area. As they have very limited funding, they cannot support as many as they wanted to.”

In Ngeputaw, an estimated 40% of the schools cannot restart because the villagers could not rebuild the schools. Schools have restarted due to orders by the government. Schools that have roofing damage are being currently supported by UNICEF. However, the government is not currently providing any support to rebuild the school or school materials even they visited the schools after the cyclone hit.

6. CROSS BORDER RESTRICTIONS

After Cyclone Nargis hit in May 2-3, people from Irrawaddy delta area have been trying to cross the border into Thailand. People have managed to cross the border , however many people have failed to cross due to restrictions at the border areas. Whether they have an identity card or not, anyone from cyclone affected areas cannot cross the Thalwin bridge that goes to Mawlamyain and Pa-An township from which it is possible to cross to the Thai side without any proper documents or recommendation from a registered organization or authorities.

7. OTHER GROUPS' INVOLVEMENT

7.1 Politically motivated relief offers

General Htaing Maung the chairman of the KNU/KNLA Peace Council which recently split from the Karen National Union 'KNU' (the strongest armed opposition group fighting against the Burmese military government) has visited the Nargis victims in Laputta two times and talked about taking the affected family/people to KNU/KNLA Peace Council areas.

On the 1 June, a group of DKBA (another splinter group from the KNU) together with government representatives went to the Irrawaddy delta to provide assistance to the Nargis victims. In the last week of May, a high ranking person from the DKBA came to see some of the NGOs that are helping to provide support to the victims and asked whether it would be okay for them to go to delta areas where the government does not provide support. He also wanted to take victims' family members or any others to DKBA areas and provide them with food, shelter and other needs.

However, villagers that have been approached have not accepted the offers from the splinter groups as they are aware that these areas are in the midst of conflict.

7.2 Concerns of Human Trafficking and Young Women at Risk

A group of businesses in Rangoon has approached the local NGOs and social groups involved in relief efforts, asking them to identify young people aged between 18-35 and are offering to provide job opportunities for them. This might take young people from their communities to other places which could lead to a negative consequences. There are concerns of human security issues such as human trafficking and other forms of exploitation that might eventuate as a result of these offers.

In three of the camps set up in Laputta (named '3 miles', '5 miles' and '7 miles'), young girls aged between 15-25 were orphaned in the cyclone and are offering sex in exchange for money. One person who visited 3 miles camp, said that "I went to the '3 miles' camp and one of the young girls asked me to drop her 500 or 1000 Kyat and said i could do anything i wanted with her." Some girls and women in the camps set up by the government have become sex-workers offering services to passers-by, raising concerns of personal safety and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

8. HOUSING AND RECONSTRUCTION

The "Htoo Company" is the top leading company that has been given contracts by the government to start reconstruction work in Irrawaddy Delta. According to Burma Partnership's Briefer 30th June – 6th July, People Still Await Promised Signs of Progress, the government promises to rebuild 6000 houses. But there are questions, "Who will be more likely to get their house rebuilt? Will it be people that have a close relationship with local authorities?"

Currently an estimated 90% of the people who have gone back to their own villages in Laputta have to build their temporary shelter by themselves. Tarpaulins are provided by social organizations. One villager who returned to his original village stated that "we have to build our own little house with bamboo, Daneet trees, Attlea (a type of trees that grow next to the beach). When the generals come, the local authorities put up temporary tents, and they ask use to go and stay there. After the generals go back, they take down the tents and ask us to back to our own shelters." Mostly this happens in villages where majority of the Karen people are staying.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

To the UN and international agencies -

1. Ongoing consultations between UN and international organizations with local NGOs and social organizations to ensure that information is shared and the delivery of aid is coordinated.
2. To have independent monitoring and evaluation of aid distribution (perhaps with the assistance of local NGOs and social organizations) to ensure that the assistance is being provided effectively.
3. To consult with local affected communities to identify needs and develop activities for the reconstruction phase.
4. UN agencies and international agencies should report on the real situation on the ground in areas that they are working and continually pressure the government for access to the wider affected areas in the delta.
5. International humanitarian assistance must be provided in a way which respects and protects the fundamental rights to housing of those displaced. Under

international law, displaced people have the right to return to their original houses and land, unless return is factually impossible. If going home is genuinely impossible, then people have the right to adequate alternative housing—close to their livelihoods, and education and health facilities, with access to clean water and sanitation. The international community must influence the reconstruction policy in Burma to reflect these rights wherever possible (Centre of Housing Rights and Evictions, Irrawaddy online 14/05/08).

To local NGOs and social groups -

- see Recommendations 1, 2 and 3.
- To have independent monitoring and evaluation of aid distributed by local NGOs and social groups to ensure aid is delivered effectively
- To assess and report on which specific areas can and cannot be accessed by UN agencies and international agencies
- To meet monthly with other local NGOs and social groups to network, share information, report on and co-ordinate relief activities

To potential donors -

- It can be seen that UN agencies and international agencies have limited access to affected areas. These areas can however be reached by some local NGOs and social groups, some of which specialize in aid distribution to certain groups (ie. Christian groups distribute to Christian target groups). Therefore a multi-partner approach of funding local NGOs and social groups is recommended to ensure aid is distributed the population in the wider affected areas that are inaccessible by official channels.

IV. FUNDING GAPS

These were the funding gaps identified in Laputta and Ngeputaw:

In Laputta, people who have been forced to go back to their own areas urgently need to rebuild their livelihoods.

1. **Housing materials** - There is an urgent need for housing materials. Several NGO groups have provided housing construction materials but it is not enough for the majority of the population. Some local NGOs and social groups have to prioritize their support according to the people's religious beliefs due to funding limitations. Therefore in some areas only a certain group of people can receive support based on their religion.
2. **Rice seed** - As the rainy season starts, farmers urgently need to restart planting rice. If planted more than a month late, the crop might fail. They currently need farming tractors and other farming materials. Rice seeds are urgently needed for farmers to be able to start their farming activities.
3. **School rebuilding and educational materials** - In some places, there are no schools being rebuilt, and there is no support for teachers, uniforms, school bags, books and other educational materials

4. **Water and sanitation** - Water supplies and sanitation are urgently needed in these areas.
5. **Health care and medical supplies** - Water-borne diseases and other common diseases need to be treated by professional medics/doctors. There are not enough doctors and medical supplies available in Laputta and through the affected communities in the delta. Mosquito nets are also urgently needed.

Villages of refuge in Ngeputaw township are out of the directly affected areas and consequently people who decided to continue to settle in these villages do not often have access to assistance from the UN and international agencies.

1. **Food, Housing materials, Health care and Education** - villagers require food assistance for at least six months. Church based groups are currently providing food, however at this stage do not have the resources to provide food for the long term. Villagers also urgently require housing materials, health care and medical supplies, and support to attend school.

V. FURTHER COMMENTS

World Bank, ADB and ASEAN Involvement

In the light of the fact that the World Bank and Asian Development Bank have provided support to the ASEAN-led Post-Nargis Joint Assessment Team it is critical that the World Bank and the ADB maintain maximum transparency and provide public information regarding their support for the ASEAN led PONJA assessment, and also include community-based organizations which are advocating for genuine political reform in any decision-making process regarding direct or indirect support for reconstruction activities in Burma. It is also important that in post-assessment activities that ASEAN works alongside local communities, local NGOs and social groups, not just through the government.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to give my special thanks to the villagers, social workers and NGO workers in Laputta, Ngeputaw, Pathein and Myawmya townships who took their time to tell their stories and give informal interviews for the research.

I would also like to thank Katrina Winters for helping me to edit the report.

REFERENCES

Burma Partnership's Briefer 30th June – 6th July, "People Still Await Promised Signs of Progress"

"Briefing on the Guiding Principles to be followed by UN Agencies, Inter-Governmental Organizations, INGOs and NGOs in carrying out aid and assistance activities for the cyclone victims", 10 June 2008.

Centre of Housing Rights and Evictions, "Burma's Displaced People a Long-term Problem", http://www.irrawaddy.org/opinion_story.php?art_id=12017, 14/05/08.

Emergency Assistance Team (Burma) report, Provision of Emergency Assistance for People Affected by Cyclone Nargis, July 2008.

Irrawaddy online news, www.irrawaddy.org 10/07/08

Office For The Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Myanmar Situation Nargis OCHA Situation Report No. 38, July 2008.

APPENDIX: Guiding Principles for Implementation of Assistance Programs
("Briefing on the Guiding Principles to be followed by UN Agencies, Inter-Governmental Organizations, INGOs and NGOs in carrying out aid and assistance activities for the cyclone victims")

There must be a systematic coordination in all storm-hit areas. The needs of the survivors should be effectively and urgently provided and there should be no duplication of the distribution works.

In principle, the UN Agencies, IGOs, INGOs and NGOs shall closely contact and cooperate with the above-mentioned 2 main bodies i.e. the focal Ministry and the Tripartite Core Group in carrying out aid and assistance activities for the cyclone victims in Myanmar.

The following is the guiding principles for implementation of assistance programs relating to Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar:

- (1) The work program is to be informed to the focal Ministry and TCG;
- (2) The work program is to be coordinated with the Ministry concerned and approved by that Ministry;
- (3) Approval for visas for necessary personnel and importation of supplies is to be done by the focal Ministry and TCG;
- (4) The items of the relief supplies have to be described in-kind, in quantity and value, including the identification of lists that are to be provided to the storm survivors and those to be used for their agency/organization;
- (5) The arrangement of supplies to be temporarily kept in Yangon;
- (6) The list of township-wise distribution of supplies including the quantity, their value and prior consent from the focal Ministry for the distribution arrangement;
- (7) The distribution arrangement including the list is to be informed to the Township Coordination Committee;
- (8) The distribution arrangement within the townships is to be coordinated between the local coordinating committees and responsible personnel from the respective UN Agencies, IGOs, INGOs and NGOs at the respective areas and distributed according to the arrangement;
- (9) The domestic travel arrangement for the expatriate personnel is to be informed to the focal Ministry and to be made after getting approval from that Ministry;
- (10) The UN Agencies, IGOs, INGOs and NGOs should notify the Township Coordination Committee their arrival at and departure from the respective areas.