OCHA Situation Report: Cyclone Nargis

This situation report is based on information received from the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, Myanmar, UN agencies...and media sources.

Situation

1. Category 3 Cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar on 2 May. The cyclone made landfall in the Irrawaddy delta region, approximately 250 km southwest of Yangon, at around 16:00. The storm then tracked inland in an ENE direction, directly hitting the capital Yangon itself late the same night. Latest reports indicate that five areas have been affected: Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) Division, Yangon Division, Bago Division, Kayin (Karen) State, Kayah State and Mon State.

2. Detailed information on the impact has not been available due to downed communications and blocked roads. Information on the situation outside Yangon is even more limited, including in the southwest of the delta region, which is believed to be the worst-hit area and was affected both by strong winds and a sizable storm surge. The authorities have indicated that many villages in this area have been completely flattened. The intensity of the storm decreased significantly as it moved through Kayin State and towards the Thai border.

3. The cyclone has caused widespread devastation in Yangon. Winds of over 190 km/hr tore down trees and power lines, while accompanying rain caused flooding in many areas. Telecommunications lines were cut. Buildings have been badly damaged throughout the city, and it expected that significant numbers have been left without adequate shelter. Electricity is unlikely to be restored for several days. Water supplies are also likely to be a major problem. Many roads remain impassable, either due to flooding or fallen debris and the airport has been closed until further notice.

4. The authorities have reported a total of 138 confirmed deaths. The numbers in need of assistance are expected to be sizable.

5. Urgent needs are expected to be plastic sheeting, water purification tablets, cooking sets, mosquito nets, emergency health kits and food. Fuel shortages have also already been reported. Determining the impact in areas outside Yangon has been even more difficult, though it can be assumed to be critical, with shelter and safe water being the principal immediate needs.

National Response

6. The Government has established an Emergency Committee headed by the Prime Minister. Five central and southern regions – Yangon, Ayeyarwady, Bago, Mon and Kayin states – have all been declared disaster areas. The authorities inform to have deployed military and police units for rescue, rehabilitation and cleanup operations in Yangon.

7. No formal request has yet been issued for international assistance, though there are indications that such assistance may be welcomed. UN support was offered to the Ministry of Social Welfare by the RC ai last week. The acting RC/HC a.i. met today with the Deputy Minister for Social Welfare to discuss possible support by the IASC partners in-country. Another meeting is scheduled for tomorrow.

International Response
8. OCHA is looking into the possibility of deploying an UNDAC team. UNOSAT has been activated. CRD has been in contact with the Permanent Representative to the UN who has indicated that he would keep in contact with OCHA for any further developments on his side.

9. UNICEF will deploy five assessment teams tomorrow (to Yangon, Pathein and Bago). The Myanmar Red Cross Society will send out five teams tomorrow (to Yangon, Ayeyarwady, Bago East, Bago West, Mon and Kayin). IFRC in Yangon was due to assess damage in the city today (4 May) and national volunteers are already gathering information.

10. The UNDMT and IASC partners in the country have established a cluster system as part of an ongoing process of contingency planning. They shared information last week on preparedness levels. WFP has 500 metric tonnes of food in Yangon, and is hoping to move further supplies, as well as offices in a box and possibly generators stocked in Cambodia. UNICEF and WHO also have pre-positioned stocks in place.

11. The IASC partners are due to meet at 10:00 am tomorrow (5 May). A meeting with donors in country will take place directly afterwards.

12. The UNCT in Myanmar is examining the need for a Flash Appeal and for an application for CERF funds. The extent to which funds are required will become clearer as more detailed information on the cyclone's impact becomes available.

13. The Regional IASC cluster leads will meet in Bangkok to discuss next steps. Telecoms Sans Frontiers is prepared to deploy from Bangkok.

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