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

I. SITUATION IN MYANMAR

1. Cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar on 2 and 3 May 2008, sweeping through the Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) delta region and the country’s largest city, Yangon. The authorities have declared five states and divisions (Yangon, Ayeyarwady, Bago, Mon and Kayin) to be disaster zones.

2. It is quickly becoming clear that the cyclone has caused unprecedented devastation in the affected areas. Buildings and infrastructure have been severely damaged, and flooding is widespread. The low-lying delta region also suffered from the effects of a sizable storm surge, which is feared to have wiped out whole villages. Latest state media reports put the death toll at approximately 22,500 with 41,000 missing. There are unconfirmed reports that 10,000 are reported as having died in the Delta town of Bogalay alone.

3. Hundreds of thousands can be expected to be in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. The combined total population of the declared disaster areas is around 24 million. Damaged infrastructure and communications will pose major logistical problems for relief operations. Humanitarian partners in the country have begun the process of collecting information about the scale of the destruction, but access to many areas remains severely restricted. Certain parts of the delta can be reached only by boat, for example.

4. The UN Country Team considers critical needs to be plastic sheeting, water purification tablets, cooking sets, mosquito nets, emergency health kits and food. Reports of water and fuel shortages are already appearing in mainstream media. The food security situation in the country, which was already severe, looks set to become far more acute.

II. NATIONAL RESPONSE

5. Military and police units are carrying out rescue and cleanup operations. The Government has pledged approximately USD 5 million for relief.

III. INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

6. The Government has said it will receive international aid. The UN has been in close consultation with Government about the need for international support, which is available across all the key priority areas. Issuance of visas for critical humanitarian actors as soon will greatly enhance the international community’s ability to meet the needs identified by the Government. This is a critical moment for Myanmar’s vulnerable populations. In the next few days assessments must be provided or thousands more could die.
Coordinated In-Country Response

7. The RC/HC a.i. was aiming return to Yangon on 06 May. The Office of the acting RC/HC a.i. is in the process of strengthening its coordination capacity, by recruiting information management, NGO liaison, public information and reports staff locally. The IASC Country Team has met during the morning of 6 May to share initial assessment information, and to move the cluster response forward including by the development of a Flash Appeal.

8. UNICEF, IOM, IFRC and the Myanmar Red Cross are deploying assessment teams to affected areas. MRCS is carrying out assessments in some of the worst-hit areas, although their resources are likely to become stretched, given the considerable burden they are shouldering.

9. Water purification tablets are being distributed by assessment teams. Pre-positioned shelter and cooking supplies are also going out. WFP has been able to distribute food assistance in Yangon, in cooperation with MSF Holland. A flight carrying further WFP supplies is due to land in Myanmar tomorrow. Daily movement of small relief items from Yangon to UNDP offices in the delta has been established for areas reachable by road. UNDP is in contact with the Government about possible bolstering of currently limited transportation capacity.

10. Communications in the country are still limited. WFP has been procuring medium-term communications support, as lead of the telecommunications cluster. Landlines are still down, although at least some cell phones are functioning. In regards to Information Management, the Resident Coordinator a.i. has signaled that the Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU) will take the lead in IM activities. It is therefore understood that MIMU will cover OCHA's IM responsibilities outlined in the Operational Guidance on Responsibilities of Cluster/Sector Leads & OCHA in Information Management." OCHA will support the Resident Coordinator's office with IM capacity and guidance where requested and feasible. OCHA's IM activities and support will be coordinated through OCHA's Regional Office for Asia-Pacific in Bangkok.

11. The office of the RC/HC a.i. is preparing a Flash Appeal, in conjunction with IASC partners, though the process is being hampered by difficulties in gathering assessment data. The UN is prepared to make available, immediately, grants from the Central Emergency Response Fund.

12. There are as yet no clear answers about whether customs procedures may be expedited.

Coordination at the regional level

13. An UNDAC team is assembled in Bangkok, ready to deploy; while visa applications are pending, it is providing support for the IASC CT from Bangkok while visa applications have been submitted to the local Myanmar Embassy.

14. OCHA ROAP hosted a second meeting of regional cluster leads on Tuesday, 6 May. Participants exchanged information including items such as staff safety, planned activities, international appeals and visas. Cluster leads were urged to prepare to fully support their IASC CT counterparts and to seek to include NGO partners fully in the process.

15. The key updates relayed from the UN Country Team were that the clusters have been activated, that donors have expressed a clear willingness to support an appeal document, and that the Government is now seeking international assistance.

16. IFRC issued an emergency appeal for a preliminary figure of USD 1.3 million on 6 May. Shelter kits are the key priority. The appeal is in addition to USD 189,263 that has been allocated from the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund to support assessments and distribution of relief items by the Myanmar Red Cross. FACT and RDRT are on standby. IFRC's Regional Disaster Manager is now in Myanmar. The Federation has pre-positioned stocks in Kuala Lumpur and Dubai.

17. Given the variety of information management challenges in-country, discussions are ongoing on how to best strengthen the capacity of the Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU), including possibly by deploying a Humanitarian Information Centre (HIC).

Coordination at the global level
An IASC Senior Emergency Officers meeting was held on 6 May 2008 at UN Headquarters in New York. Discussed was the urgency to sort the priority issues of visas, access, custom clearance, the next steps in connection to the Flash Appeal/CERF and the capacity of the humanitarian community on the ground. Recommendations for IASC and ERC actions are to be generated.

Update on international assistance

OCHA ROAP met with Supreme Commander General Boonsang Niumpradit of the Royal Thai Armed Forces (RTAF) on 6 May to discuss potential Government of Thailand logistical support to the delivery of assistance.

The Secretary-General of ASEAN has called on Member States to provide urgent relief assistance to victims of the cyclone. Thailand announced USD 317,000 in in-kind assistance. Singapore announced on 6 May that it will provide USD 200,000 in humanitarian aid. According to a statement released by the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the package includes medical supplies, drinking water, water purifying tablets, tents, ground sheets, blankets, sleeping bags and emergency food. No details are yet available on how the aid will be delivered.

The Republic of Korea announced a cash contribution of USD 100,000 and Japan will provide USD 270,000 of in-kind assistance.

The European Commission announced on 5 May that it will provide € 2 million (approx USD 3.1 million) in fast-track humanitarian aid. The Netherlands has indicated that it will make € 1 million available. Canada will be providing just under $ 2 million. Denmark has indicated a donation of approximately USD 2.1 million and the UK will provide USD 10 million.

US announced today to make USD 3m available, but on the condition that US experts be granted access to the country and disaster struck areas. This would be on top of the initial announcement of USD 250,000.

Initial information received indicates that assistance has been offered by: India (2 naval vessels), Thailand (1 C-130).

For updated information on financial contributions, please refer to the OCHA Financial Tracking System website: http://reliefweb.int/fts/. Donors are encouraged to verify contributions and inform OCHA Financial Tracking System (FTS) of corrections/additions/values to this table. FTS’ direct e-mail address: fts@reliefweb.int

For more information please contact:

International relief focal point:
Mr. Winston Chang
Tel. +4179 469 8589
Email: changw@un.org

OCHA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
Mr. Norwin Schafferer
Tel. +66 81174 8335
Email: schafferer@un.org

OCHA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
Mr. Sebastian Rhodes Stampa
Tel. +66 89204 2721
Email: rhodesstampa@un.org

Asia and Pacific Desk
Agnes Asekenye-Oonyu
Mob: +1 917 476 6164
Tel: 212-963-1773
Email: asekenye-oonyu@un.org
(NY) Mr. Ivan Lupis  
Tel. +1 917 367 2056  
Email: lupis@un.org

(GVA) Mr. Jean Verheyden  
Tel. +41 79 509 8116  
Email: verheyden@un.org

Press contact:  
(NY) Ms. Stephanie Bunker  
Tel. +1 917 367 5126

(GVA) Ms. Elizabeth Byrs  
Tel. +41 22 917 2653