HIGHLIGHTS

1. An ASEAN-UN International Pledging Conference on Cyclone Nargis was held on Sunday 25 May in Yangon. Fifty-one countries were represented at the meeting, where there was universal recognition of the unprecedented magnitude of the disaster for Myanmar. There was unanimous agreement on the need to scale up urgently and very significantly the current relief efforts to ensure that those in desperate need are reached quickly and with adequate life-saving relief supplies, and that an effective flow of these supplies is maintained for as long as necessary. There was strong agreement that a major extra effort would be needed from all quarters to achieve the immediate objective of preventing further unnecessary deaths.

There was strong support for the decision reached at the Special ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting held on 19 May 2008 in Singapore to establish an ASEAN-led coordinating mechanism. To realize this, an ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force for the Victims of Cyclone Nargis has been established, composed of senior officials and experts from ASEAN countries, and led by the Secretary General of ASEAN. There was a warm welcome for the proposed creation of a Yangon-based Tripartite Core Group comprising representatives from the Government of Myanmar, ASEAN and UN as a working mechanism for coordinating, facilitating, and monitoring the flow of international assistance into the country. This should begin its work immediately to ensure full information exchange, close coordination of relief and recovery efforts, and resolution of any problems that may arise.

For the longer term, the Government of Myanmar focused on the scale of rehabilitation, reconstruction and recovery efforts likely to be needed, and the immediate requirement to ensure that farming and fishing activities could be resumed as soon as possible. The international community was ready to consider helping the Government of Myanmar in these and other areas. For these purposes, a comprehensive rapid joint assessment of recovery needs, and development of a shared post-disaster recovery and reconstruction plan are indispensable steps.

2. The Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr John Holmes, reminded the conference that the crisis was still clearly in the emergency relief phase and that an effective relief supply operation will be needed for many months to come. Flights are currently arriving at the rate of around 10-15 per day, and these still need to be stepped up further to meet the need. The crucial question remains how many people of those in urgent need of major assistance have not been reached at all. It is clear that delivery needs to be scaled up at the far end of the chain as fast as possible in these areas to avert the risk of extra and unnecessary deaths due to diseases and nutritional deficiency. The critical danger remains of a potential second wave of deaths among those not so far reached or only reached with small amounts of assistance. Forced returns of any kind are completely unacceptable. He concluded by reiterating that the only test at the end of the day is whether lives have been saved, more unnecessary deaths have been avoided, and those still in desperate need have been helped.
3. Two interagency teams comprising UN, INGO and national NGOs returned from an assessment mission to Bogale and Labutta Districts, visiting a number of townships to assess the current status of coordination. The two groups presented their findings in Yangon today, including recommendations. These findings will feed into current planning to operationalize five coordination centres in Labutta, Bogale, Pyapon, Mawlamyinegyun, and Pathein. In the same vein, the Humanitarian Coordinator requested Cluster Leads to identify counterparts in these five locations, stressing that these counterparts need not be from the lead agency. The Humanitarian Coordinator advised leads to identify in particular national and international NGO counterparts with appropriate operational capacity in these locations.

4. Identifying the need to further strengthen the participation and information sharing with NGOs in the clusters, the Humanitarian Coordinator and Cluster Leads agreed to identify NGO focal points for each cluster.

5. The Humanitarian Coordinator advised Cluster Leads today that dedicated coordination and information management capacity for each cluster was a priority. The Humanitarian Coordinator agreed to request support from Global Cluster Leads where required.

6. There has been no update to the official figures for dead and missing since 16 May. 77,738 are reported dead and 55,917 missing.

I. NATIONAL RESPONSE

7. The Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) had reached 118,570 beneficiaries (as of 25 May) with support provided through the Red Cross movement alone. Around 30,000 beneficiaries are in Yangon Division and 87,000 are in Ayeyarwady Division. In addition to the support from the Red Cross movement, the MRCS distributes food and non-food items to beneficiaries on the behalf of several other agencies, including UNICEF and WFP, not captured in these figures.

II. INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Coordinated In-Country Response (For more detailed Situation Reports for each cluster please check the HIC website http://myanmar.humanitarianinfo.org/ )

WASH

8. The WASH cluster has finalised the recommended contents for hygiene kits, which are designed for a family of five persons for one month. Two versions of the kits are proposed, depending on whether they are to be supplied in a village setting or in more densely populated temporary settlements.

9. The WASH cluster issued a guidance note to ensure adequate, culturally acceptable sanitary provision for women and girls during the emergency response. The recommendations were developed through consultation with local groups and NGO workers with experience in the delta area.

Nutrition

10. The Nutrition cluster subgroup on Infant Feeding in Emergencies (IFE) met on 24 May, with the participation of WHO, UNICEF and Save the Children, to discuss the technical standardization of IFE messages and linkages with the Protection of Children and Women cluster.

Education

11. The UNICEF Regional Director met with the Minister of Education on Saturday to discuss the actions taken to date regarding the emergency and some future plans. The Minister reiterated the fact that many schools, especially in the delta region, have been damaged and/or destroyed and that support is much needed especially for repair and reconstruction of the affected schools. He was informed of the distribution plan for the roofing sheets and school supplies to the affected schools both in the Yangon and Ayeyarwady Divisions. The UNICEF Regional Director emphasized the importance of building back schools safer and more child-friendly, and the need to support families by reducing cost of schooling as much as possible, and the Minister agreed on both points. He also requested for a list of NGOs interested in supporting education efforts in emergency for his review.
Protection of Children and Women

12. Cluster lead UNICEF met with the Minister of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement today and the Minister expressed support for the efforts of Child Protection agencies, particularly their work in registering separated and unaccompanied children, family tracing and reunification.

13. Training for Department of Social Welfare staff on registration, family tracing and reunification will be held this Wednesday 28 May.


Emergency Shelter

15. An information manager for the Emergency Shelter cluster arrived in Yangon on Saturday 24 May.

16. Cluster partners have requested that NFIs be pre-packaged in Bangkok before being sent into Myanmar.

17. The cluster continues to target 40% of the affected population over the next four to six weeks, which will involve cluster partners delivering at maximum capacity.

Food

18. WFP and eight cluster NGO partners have now reached an estimated 460,000 beneficiaries with 3,150 MT of food. Cluster partners are operating in 11 townships in Ayeyarwady Division and 8 townships in Yangon Division.

Logistics

19. Air-bridge flights from Bangkok’s Don Muang Airport to Yangon are now underway daily, with the first two on Saturday 24 May. All flights transport inter-agency cargo. The Cluster Lead has reminded partners that a cargo movement request must be made 72 hours before goods can be moved into the country. Further information is available on the Logistics cluster website (http://www.logcluster.org/mm08a).

20. Bridges on the road to Labutta are reported to be in bad conditions and passable only for maximum 12 tons trucks.

21. The Logistics cluster summarized cluster movement in Yangon from 20 to 25 May as follows:
   - Food 793 MT
   - Health 0.253 MT
   - Logistics 40.025 MT
   - Nutrition 83.298 MT
   - Shelter 41.668 MT
   - Wash 24.805 MT
   - Grand Total 983.196 MT

22. Update on the status of in-country logistic hubs:
   - Mawlamyinegyun: location identified
   - Labutta: 4 MSUs in place and 3 more at location
   - Pathein: location identified and under negotiation
   - Pyapon: 2 MSUs up, 150 pallets received
   - Bogalay: 2 MSUs up (1 MSU dedicated to UNICEF) 3 MSUs will be erected by 28 May and operational as of 30 May 150 pallets received.

Emergency Telecommunications

23. WFP and UNICEF continue to provide technical support to the humanitarian community in Bangkok and Yangon, and in sub-offices and logistics centres in Labutta, Bogale and Pyapon. International staff has now been able to travel to Bogale to support operations.

Update on Security Situation

24. The UN is still in Phase 1, and no change to this is foreseen.
Update on Financial Pledges

25. As of 26 May 2008, a total of USD 132,698,157 has been committed to relief operations in Myanmar, with a further USD 100,223,288 pledged. Out of these total contributions, $74.6 million has been committed to projects and activities outlined in the UN Flash Appeal. An additional $43.8 million has been pledged. The UN Flash Appeal for Myanmar currently requests $201 million and is covered at 37%. More than 20 UN Agencies and NGOs have requested funding through the Appeal. The largest contributor thus far to the Flash Appeal is the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) with $22.4 million.

26. 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. The direct email address is: fts@reliefweb.int.

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