



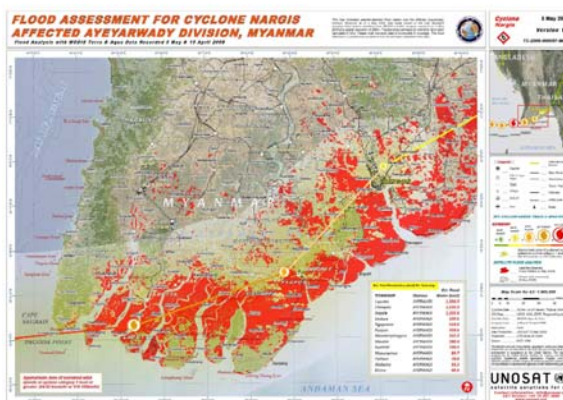
World Health Organization

Health Action in Crises

CYCLONE NARGIS MYANMAR

6 May 2008

Category 3 Cyclone Nargis struck the western coast of Myanmar on 2 May. The cyclone made landfall in the Irrawaddy delta region causing severe damage to the infrastructure of the region. Detailed information on the cyclone's impact is not yet available due to downed communications, impassable roads and damaged electricity and water supplies. Latest reports indicate that six areas have been affected: Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy), Yangon and Bago divisions, and Kayin, Kayah and Mon states. The cyclone has caused wide spread devastation in the former capital Yangon - population of over five million. According to OCHA, over 21,000 people have been killed, 41,000 are missing and close to one million are affected. Electricity and water supplies have been damaged and some lowlands have been flooded. The affected areas have been declared disaster zones.



Emergency teams continue to search for survivors, provide essential first-aid to injured victims, clear roads and organize supplies of food, blankets, shelter and essential medicines. Relief work is relying heavily on helicopters to distribute supplies but this is proving slow and relatively inefficient. Clearing roads is a high priority in order to move supplies urgently to the population in need.

WHO is working with the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination team and has activated the 'polio surveillance network' to conduct an initial assessment.

Health concerns and WHO's response

The main health concerns are the loss of access to health services in the affected areas, due to damage to health facilities and possible loss or displacement of health personnel. Displacement, overcrowding and loss of access to safe water can increase the risks of communicable diseases. Malaria and tuberculosis are two of the major public health hazards in the country.

WHO's office in Myanmar is working with the Ministry of Health, UNICEF and other partners to assess the damage and determine the needs. A crisis room has been activated in the WHO office in Yangon.

The Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC) Country Team has activated the Cluster approach, involving the health, logistics, protection, water and sanitation, food and nutrition clusters. WHO leads the Health Cluster.

WHO, with the support of the Italian Government, is dispatching emergency health supplies to cover the basic health needs of 240,000 people for one month. Chlorine powder, essential medicines, cholera kits, malaria drugs, impregnated bed nets, supplies for the management of dead bodies, and water purification units for hospitals and clinics are urgently needed. The epidemiological situation in the country is being monitored to ensure early detection and response to any communicable disease threat.

WHO is calling on donors to support the response to the disaster. Pending the results of the initial assessments and the issuing of a Flash Appeal, WHO will need \$1,000,000 to address the immediate health concerns in the coming days.

Updates on the situation are available on WHO's website: <http://www.who.int/disasters>

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