

Mercy Corps Responds to Myanmar Disaster

May 7, 2008

Portland, OR — The global relief and development agency Mercy Corps today announced that it is accepting donations to help survivors of Cyclone Nargis. Mercy Corps is working with partners on the ground to determine the most helpful response.

The needs in Myanmar are great. Myanmar's government has reported 23,000 deaths and a U.S. official in Myanmar's capital said Wednesday that indications are there could be more than 100,000 deaths. United Nations officials say several hundred thousand people are without shelter or drinking water and are at risk of disease.

"The reports we're hearing paint a grim picture. We've seen situations like this after other disasters—human suffering on a massive scale," said Randy Martin, Mercy Corps' director of global emergency operations. "People are in desperate and immediate need of the basics like food, water and shelter, and they may soon have to contend with cholera and other diseases caused by contaminated water."

Cyclone Nargis swept across Myanmar on May 2 and 3, uprooting trees and flattening buildings with 120-mile-per-hour winds and leaving huge casualties in its wake. The powerful cyclone smashed into the low-lying Irrawaddy delta, unleashing a storm surge as high as 12 feet, according to Reuters. It was the biggest cyclone to hit Asia since 1991.

Myanmar's government has accepted outside help. However, humanitarian access remains a challenge. Infrastructure has been badly damaged, making it challenging to get help to people in need.

Mercy Corps and other international aid organizations are finding it difficult to get permission to enter the country to help survivors. Adequate responses to disasters of this magnitude usually require external resources and expertise.

Mercy Corps is not registered to work in Myanmar, but has worked with organizations on the ground there in the past year.

HOW TO HELP:

Mercy Corps
Myanmar Cyclone Fund
Dept NR
PO Box 2669
Portland, OR 97208

www.mercycorps.org
1-800-852-2100