



Myanmar Cyclone: Women and Children Make up More than Half of Victims – UNICEF

*Hundreds of thousands more at risk because of
lack of shelter and unsafe drinking water*

New York, May 5, 2008 – Powerful Cyclone Nargis, which slammed into the Southeast Asian country of Myanmar over the weekend, killed and injured many women and children in its wake. However, in a country where more than 60 percent are women and children, hundreds of thousands more lives are at risk due to lack of shelter and unsafe drinking water.

“Our biggest fear is that the aftermath could be more lethal than the storm itself,” said Caryl Stern, President and CEO, U.S. Fund for UNICEF.

Preliminary reports suggest that 10,000 people have been killed and almost 3,000 more are missing. This would make it the world's deadliest storm since a 1999 cyclone in India. About 100,000 are homeless in the wake of the Myanmar cyclone.

UNICEF is moving quickly to respond - today deploying five assessment teams. UNICEF will also take the lead in water and sanitation and hygiene, child protection, and education. Immediate needs include: water purification tablets, plastic sheeting, cooking sets, bed nets, emergency health kits, and food. A major priority is ensuring safe water supplies, especially to vulnerable children.

Detailed information on the impact is not yet available due to downed communications and blocked roads. The southwest of the delta region 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.

Electrical lines are down, affecting delivery of service, blocking roads and access to rescue vehicles.

“This is clearly a disaster of immense proportions and as is frequently the case children will bear the brunt of it – in terms of loss of life, injuries, displacement and interruption to schooling,” said Stern. “As with any disaster, UNICEF will do whatever it takes to save children’s lives. With an on the ground presence since 1950 in Myanmar we are well positioned to respond to this tragedy.”

UNICEF has had a presence on the ground in Myanmar since 1950, with nine zonal offices and a head office in Yangon. Prior to the disaster, UNICEF had stockpiled crucial supplies.

To donate to the Cyclone Nargis disaster, please go to: www.unicefusa.org

About UNICEF

For more than 60 years, UNICEF has been the world’s leading international children’s organization, working in over 150 countries to address the ongoing issues that affect why kids are dying. UNICEF provides lifesaving nutrition, clean water, education, protection and emergency response saving more young lives than any other humanitarian organization in the world. While millions of children die every year of preventable causes like dehydration, upper respiratory infections and measles, UNICEF, with the support of partnering organizations and donors alike, has the global experience, resources and reach to give children the best hope of survival. For more information about UNICEF, please visit www.unicefusa.org.

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