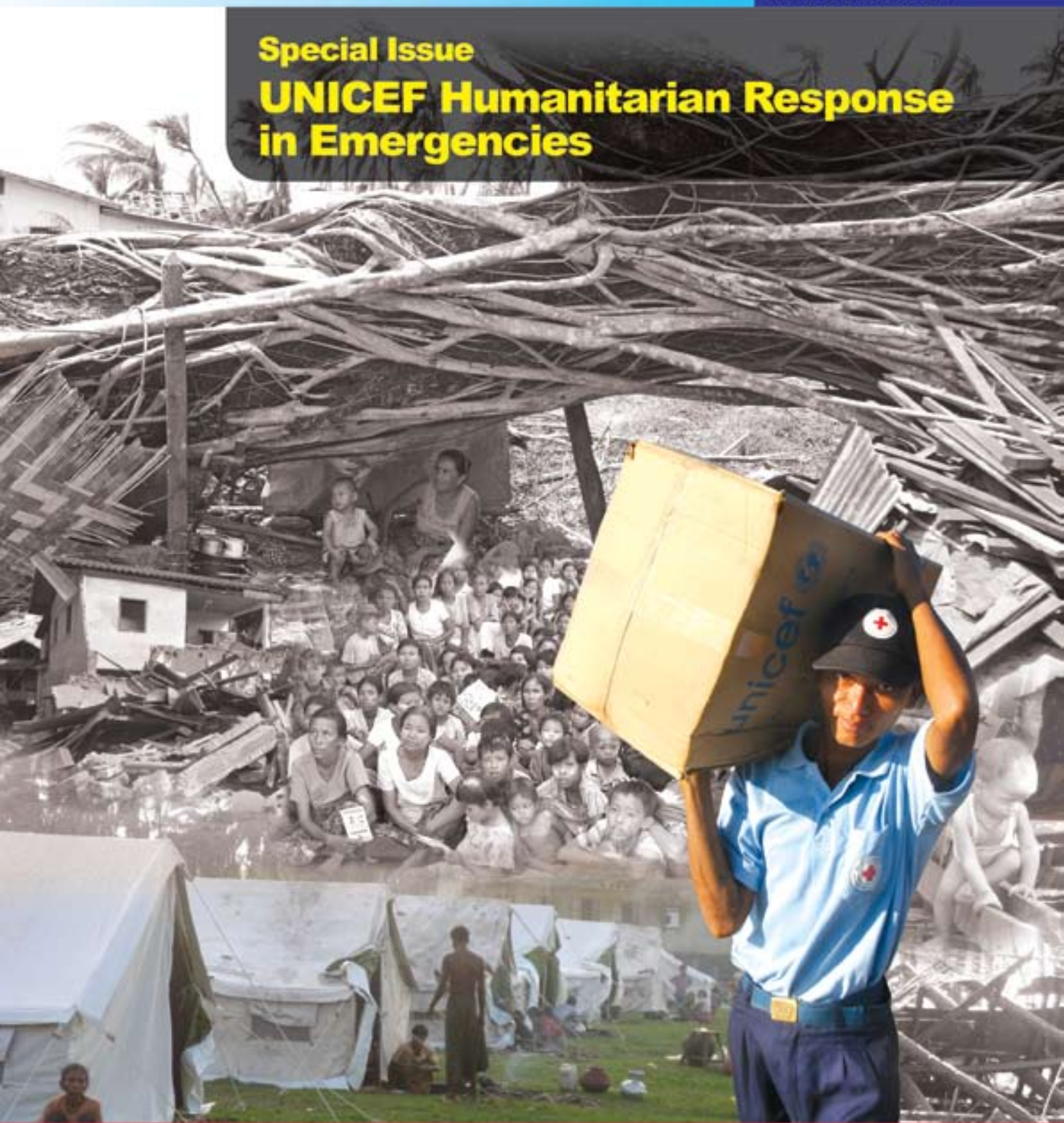


UNICEF Myanmar Newsletter

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Special Issue

**UNICEF Humanitarian Response
in Emergencies**



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Emergency and Humanitarian Response in Myanmar: Opportunities in Crises Evolves through Disaster Experiences

By Ramesh Shrestha
Representative, UNICEF Myanmar



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Bullock carts carrying the school tent boxes from UNICEF to Kyein Chaung Village, Laputta Township. Kyein Chaung village is not very far from Laputta but it is difficult to reach that village by vehicle. Bullock carts remain an essential means of transportation in rural Myanmar

Cyclone Nargis, by its magnitude and severity, is ranked as Myanmar's worst natural disaster in its recent history. The catastrophe claimed over 140,000 lives and many more people were displaced. The UN estimated 2.4 million people affected with massive destruction to infrastructure, property and livelihoods that left behind a long trail of woes for the affected population partially in Yangon and in the Ayeyawaddy Regions, commonly referred to as the Myanmar Delta.

The socio-economically disadvantaged and low lying Delta sits far away from the usual formation points for the cyclonic storms in the Bay of Bengal that frequents the shores of neighbouring Bangladesh and India. Even though part of the Delta was impacted by the South-East Asian Tsunami in 2004 and

the region experiences regular harsh seasonal storms, a disaster as big as the Cyclone Nargis had caught people completely off guard.

When the disaster struck, there was no evidence of an early warning or emergency plan in place. Failure in reaching people across the extended cyclone battered areas, particularly those furthest out on the peninsulas and islands, resulted in the worst possible loss of lives and destruction. The area struck by cyclone was almost the size of Austria.

The presence of the humanitarian community in Myanmar was at the time significantly less compared to what it is at present. With no experience in facing a major disaster in the recent past, preparedness and response mechanisms were weak and systematic interaction

with the national counterparts on relief assistance was rudimentary. Fortunately, there were several thematic groups established prior to the cyclone. An interagency standing committee was also formed in 2007 during the visit to Myanmar by UN Assistant Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Margaret Wahlstrom. With these pre-existing teams it was easy to trigger immediate activation of the clusters approach following the cyclone.

Three years on and after completion of the long recovery phase, the objective of this write-up is not to recount the damages and losses, but to analyse and consolidate some of the operational and programmatic lessons learnt in preparedness, response and recovery from responding to the direst humanitarian needs.

In retrospect, Cyclone Nargis is seen as a major event that taught the people, the Government of Myanmar as well as the humanitarian community long serving lessons in saving, salvaging and restoring lives and livelihood in the face of a major disaster. Subsequent disasters both small and big, which included floods, cyclones and an earthquake, some localised and some spanning across regions, have clearly demonstrated that the government as well as the humanitarian partners are now better prepared for delivering faster and more efficient aid and assistance.

There are distinct areas that merit greater analyses:

The strong sense of kinship and community, a hallmark of the Myanmar society, was manifested in the Cyclone Nargis. Support in the immediate aftermath of the cyclone came from the affected communities themselves, by individuals and families unaffected or less affected and those who were in a better position to offer help. The assistance came either as direct hand-out between people, or through local associations or by religious institutions. Many private businesses from local and outside the affected areas also contributed to the affected communities. Many local monasteries became the first line of support, arranging shelter and subsistence, health care and moral support in the difficult days and weeks after. The self-reliance and resilience of the Myanmar people served as a major force for recovery after the disasters.

Busses, trucks and private cars lined up in the narrow roads directly to the towns and villages in Delta with relief items (food, clothing, essential medicines etc.) from concerned well-wishers in different parts of the country. Scores of volunteer groups were formed almost overnight and carried out key tasks in the relief operation. Some voluntary groups later evolved into organizations, such as the Noble Compassionate Volunteers Group (NCV) that has since been operating as a full-fledged NGO carrying out humanitarian as well as development work.

Thinking on its feet in the wake of

the massive disaster, UNICEF had to strategically plan access to the Delta and launch relief operation. During the initial stage the access to the disaster struck areas was complex, limited and slow. UNICEF immediately deployed the Myanmar nationals, working both in and out of the country, in its first line of response. This proved as an effective mechanism and was repeated during other disasters including in the response to Cyclone Giri in 2010 and the earthquake in Eastern Shan in 2011.

An interagency standing committee was also formed in 2007 during the visit to Myanmar by UN Assistant Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Margaret Wahlstrom. With these pre-existing teams it was easy to trigger immediate activation of the clusters approach following the cyclone.

Strengthening of humanitarian partnership between various stakeholders is a positive fallout of their combined response operations launched after Cyclone Nargis. Overcoming initial hesitation, Cyclone Nargis prompted close collaboration between the humanitarian community and the national and local government counterparts through the elaborate Tripartite Core Group (TCG) arrangement (Government, ASEAN and UN). The TCG facilitated access for relief-recovery to be carried out in full power in the affected areas, as well as a multi-sector emergency needs assessment (PONJA), a series of follow up monitoring reviews (Periodic Reviews), and the development of a common recovery plan for the affected areas (Post Nargis Recovery and Preparedness Plan), including a detailed implementation structure to encourage strong partnership at the local level.

Only a few local NGOs were available to provide effective assistance directly at the community level before Nargis. With heightened humanitarian needs, demand for professional front line community actors for mounting urgent response became greater than ever. The emergency support funding received both from international and local donors, the number of NGOs, CBOs and community volunteer groups grew fast and so did the need for rapid development of their capacity. As a result partnership, collaboration and cooperation expanded among the humanitarian agencies and in the non-governmental organizations with a vigorous push toward capacity development of local actors.

UNICEF's close partnership with Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) and local civil society organisations added tremendous value in developing standard operating mechanisms in the following emergencies such as Cyclone Giri in 2010. This partnership also helped clarify partner capacity and suitability with regard to programmatic areas.

Operationally, prepositioning of UNICEF emergency supplies, a practice that started in 2007 following a flood in Rakhine State, has proven to be a critical strategy in responding to sudden onset of emergencies. Pre-positioning of emergency items is a key strategy in reaching affected population within the shortest possible time. UNICEF continues to preposition essential emergency supplies in strategically located sites across the country with a plan in place on how these would be mobilized in case of an emergency.

In the two and a half year long recovery process since Cyclone Nargis, UNICEF provided support to affected children and women through the government and local partners and NGOs. The support covered essential emergency care through mobile clinics, essential drug kits, non-food items, measles immunization, safe water and temporary latrines, school tents, reunification of separated children, therapeutic feeding etc. as well as long-term recovery needs such as including but not limited to, disaster resistant health and school facilities, digging and cleaning ponds and wells, school sanitation, nutri-



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Health Talks for the Cyclone Giri affected people

tion surveillance system, child friendly school support, and community based child protection system building.

In June 2010, Northern Rakhine State (NRS) experienced severe flooding and landslides in the early monsoon season, which damaged or destroyed 29,000 homes, affecting some 183,000 people, accentuating chronic vulnerabilities of a Muslim minority population already living in poverty, joblessness and with low access to basic social services.

At the very end of 2010 cyclone season, Cyclone Giri hit the western state of Rakhine, making landfall just below the state capital of Sittwe. The force of cyclone Giri was almost equal to Nargis' scale but the humanitarian impact was significantly less. Some 260,000 people saw their homes damaged or destroyed, while the confirmed number of casualties amounted to 42.

Among the many reasons that reduced the impact of Cyclone Giri compared to Nargis two and a half years ago was the swift actions taken by the Government in relocating the coastal population to temporary camps setup on higher grounds. Early warning messages were broadcast on radio days in advance. Familiarity of the Rakhine population with cyclonic storms also prompted timely mobilization to safer places. Furthermore, the government had alerted humanitarian agencies to

stand ready to offer emergency response in preparations for the cyclone.

The response to Cyclone Giri was organised with full reliance on national staff, and on the pre-positioned relief materials available in Sittwe and Yangon for rapid response. Although the spontaneous public assistance was much less than to the victims of Cyclone Nargis, in part due to the remoteness of the areas, reachable only by boat initially, the affected population proved extremely resourceful in building back their damaged or destroyed homes and community infrastructure.

Combined with the commitment of the authorities to build back essential education and health infrastructure, the speedy self-recovery prompted UNICEF to focus its intervention on the relief and early recovery stage. UNICEF provided support in revitalising the primary health care services (EPI Plus), nutrition surveillance, immediate shelter and hygiene needs, temporary learning spaces and community access to safewater. Many local NGOs still remain in Rakhine state to provide recovery assistance, particularly in rebuilding permanent houses and restoring the paddy fields to restore their longer-term livelihood prospects.

In March of 2011, an earthquake measuring 6.8 on the Richter scale struck the Eastern Shan State, close to the

town of Tachileik, bordering Thailand. The earthquake caused massive devastation to the Tarlay sub-township. The local authorities immediately organised an emergency intervention in close partnership with MRCS, World Vision, UNICEF and few other NGOs present in the area. UNICEF's support was provided through Myanmar Red Cross Society and Noble Compassionate Volunteers, and local health care workers. The relief supplies include shelter materials, woollen blankets, essential medicine and medical equipment for emergency care and water purification material, as many of the river streams were contaminated with sulphurous outpours from the ground.

Cyclone Nargis opened up opportunities to bring to the spotlight special needs and rights of children and women in emergencies. Relief assistance and recovery programme aimed at children and women helped to address immediate needs and revitalize health services, water and sanitation, education and child protection soon after the emergency.

The frequent emergencies have fostered close coordination between humanitarian partners and UNICEF. UNICEF led sector coordination groups for WASH, Nutrition and Education, involving local agencies, international NGOs and UN, and Government counterparts. These mechanisms have effectively assumed the functions of clusters.

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The Earthquake in Tarlay-Tachileik in Eastern Shan State



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(Upper left) A house destroyed by the earthquake in Tarlay
 (Left) A temporarily set up medical support group
 (Above) Children outside a Tarlay temporary shelter following the earthquake



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(Left) Daw Nan Wan, 55, who lost four family members in the earthquake with her 17-month old grandson in shelter
 (Above) Daw Nan Wan looks at the reconstruction site in her neighbourhood

The earthquake of 6.8 magnitude hit Tachileik Townships on 24 March 2011. The disaster left 74 dead and 18,000 affected in 90 villages. Multiple aftershocks caused more damage to life, property and infrastructure.

Daw Nan Wan's family was one of the worst affected of the disaster. They lived in Ma Ant Khan village of Mong Linn Village Tract when the devastating earthquake struck. Her life turned upside down in one ominous night. She lost four family members – her father, husband, grandchild and her 28 year old daughter, who was a member of the Myanmar Red Cross Society.

“The family was downstairs, watching television together and I was upstairs when I heard a loud thud and felt a massive shake. The room went completely dark, I couldn't see anything and I couldn't go out. All I remember is all the furniture falling down from upstairs to downstairs. Much later some villagers came to pull us out of the rubble. As I came out, I found my grandchild's mouth was stuffed with

sand. We managed to remove the sand and save his life. But others were already dead,” Daw Nan Wan told UNICEF photographer a week after the earthquake when living in a shelter.

UNICEF worked with other UN agencies and partners to provide family kits and blankets to families residing outside their house in fear of further collapses; essential medicine for the treatment of injuries and any outbreak of communicable disease; water purification material for the many wells and springs that had turbid waters in the first few days, due to the open cracks and stirred soil; installation of gravity flow systems; psychosocial support and child friendly kits to children; temporary learning spaces to avoid disruption to children's education. ■

UNICEF Staff Share Experience of Working in Tarlay Earthquake Emergency

Dr. Thet Wai Hlaing
UNICEF Resident Programme Officer, Mawlamyine



A day after the Tarlay earthquake, I was assigned to the affected area to conduct Initial Rapid Assessment (IRA). Following the IRA, we distributed 30 First Aid kits, 250 family kits and emergency health kits in the affected area through MRCS and local health staff.

Later, colleagues from the Yangon office joined us. We held the first coordination meeting with MRCS, UN agencies and INGOs such as World Vision, Save the Children and discussed how best to respond and coordinate among agencies.

According to official statistics, 74 people were killed by the earthquake and many more were injured. It was difficult for the affected people to rebuild their houses. Fortunately, livelihood and food security were not badly affected. But the earthquake destroyed water facilities in the area and contaminated the water from the wells. Sometimes this meant, they had to fetch water from five miles away. UNICEF supported in repairing gravity flow water system.

Some schools were totally collapsed and some were damaged. UNICEF supported child friendly space for vulnerable children - a place where children can be safe and reduce psychological stress. Not only children, most adults I met suffered from intense psychological stress. They lost family members, houses and properties. After the major earthquake, there were many more milder aftershocks felt almost every day which continued to terrify people.

In reflection I think, the UN agencies, INGOs, local NGOs and concerned government ministries should have a well-organized and uniform rapid assessment tool which is acceptable to all stakeholders in case of a natural disaster. Also, assessment teams should be technically trained prior to emergency.” ■

Dr. Nay Tun Kyaw
UNICEF Health Officer



I found only minorly injured people when I arrived in Tarlay following the earthquake. Local people, regardless of their houses affected or not, had built and moved to temporary shelters outside their dwellings. Due to the aftershock tremors felt every day, they dared not sleep inside. They caught cold due to the very cold weather.

UNICEF distributed 3,000 blankets to 1,000 affected and most vulnerable families. Diarrhoea is common in this season even in usual times. There was no other disease outbreak. Majority, however, had suffered severe stress and continued to live in anxiety and fear due to the recurring aftershocks every day. Most were sleeping on the ground and could hear the sound of trembling coming from the underground.

The expanded programme on immunization (EPI) was resumed in the affected area within the first two weeks. As cold chain system was destroyed and non-functioning, we had to bring in vaccine and ice blocks from Mandalay. We also managed to resume routine immunization activities with the help of Department of Health.

The hospital in Tarlay was destroyed and a temporary clinic was set up with tarpaulin sheets. This temporary clinic is not suitable for the rainy season as it could not withstand rain and wind. The reconstruction of Tarlay hospital could take up to several months to complete. During this period, a temporary prefabricated aluminium clinic is needed for inpatients with serious cases. ■



2010 Cyclone Giri in Pictures

The cyclone Giri hit coastal Townships of Myanmar's Rakhine State on 22 October 2010; 260,000 people were affected



© UNICEF Myanmar/2010
Scenes of destruction by Cyclone Giri in Myebon Township and Initial Rapid Assessment conducted by UNICEF and UN staff members



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Temporary Shelters set up in Myebon soon after the disaster



Gravity Flow System Brings Safe Drinking Water at the Doorstep of Villagers in Myanmar's Western Rakhine State

By Myat Thar

Myebon Township, Rakhine State, March 2011 – Gant Gaw village is home to nearly 800 Chin and Rakhine ethnic people and is a three-hour boat ride from Myebon Township, the worst affected area hit by category 4 Cyclone Giri in October last year.

Few buildings in Myebon were left untouched when the cyclone razed more than 80 per cent of the houses to the ground. Fortunately, villagers managed to escape to the mountains and no casualties were reported, as a result of early warning by local authorities.

In spite of lives saved, severely damaged houses and infrastructures left people's lives in shambles. Livelihood, including fishing and farming, was badly disrupted. To make matters worse, the spring on the hill, the only source of fresh water, was contaminated by debris. Cleaning was going to take long. Meanwhile no drinking water was available, except for the salty water of the nearby sea.

As an immediate response, UNICEF provided bleaching powder and water purification agents and hypochloride solution to the affected areas including Gant Gaw village, together with pumps and fuel to clean and protect the contaminated water source.

UNICEF's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene assessment found the area in dire need of water and immediately moved to install a gravity flow system near to the spring, three miles away from the village, to bring water within close reach of the villagers.

It took nearly two months to complete the project, including laying down a three mile long pipe connecting the water source down to the six water points installed in the village. The Township WASH steering committee supervised the installation.

"Look at our village today. Water points are a few yards away from our



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The gravity flow system brought water within easy reach of the the community in Pyae Chaung village of Myebon

homes. Our lives are now so much easier, we no longer need to spend half a day climbing up the hill to fetch water," said U Maung Thar, a father of four, who has been living all of his 57 years in the village.

According to U MaungThar, before Cyclone Giri he had to spend half a day every day to fetch 40 litres of water for drinking purposes and household use. Climbing up and down the steep hill with no proper road, and reaching the spring was extremely strenuous. The situation was even worse for the elderly in the village, who were unable to reach the spring on their own, and had to depend on neighbours for water for everyday use.

"When we spent all that time fetching water, we had to rely on our children for much of the chores at home. Children had too much responsibility at home to be able to focus on school and studies. School absenteeism had become common, causing frequent drop outs during the school years," said U MaungThar.

Thanks to the generous contributions from donors, children of Gant Gaw

village nowadays are allowed time they need for education, social activities and play, largely made possible by the now working gravity flow system.

The important role that safe drinking water plays not only for human health but to livelihood and economic growth is also demonstrated by the gravity flow system in Pyae Chaung village.

Directly facing the Pyae Chaung village is the Bay of Bengal, many fishing boats stop by on their way out and back in the village to collect drinking water from the spring.

"Business in the village is now thriving with restaurants and shops frequented by visiting fishermen as they now have the time, no longer needing to climb up the hill to bring water," said U Aung Thuang Shwe, 42, a resident of Pyae Chaung.

"The gravity flow system has not only provided a steady supply of water for drinking but has also contributed to the village's economy," U Aung Thuang Shwe said. "Fishermen also give some cash for the maintenance of the system for safe drinking water," he added. ■

Immunization Plus Helps Bring Health Care to the Flood Affected Communities in the Northern Rakhine State

By Dr. Tin Aung

Buthidaung Township, Northern Rakhine State, March 2011- Daw Hla Hla has been working for more than 20 years as a midwife in charge of 16 villages which can only be reached by the river. She is based in the sub rural health centre in Yinmazay village, about two-hour boat ride from Buthidaung township.

She lives in Nga Yant Chaung village where a majority of people are Bengali. Almost all the houses in the village were flooded, including her own, during the mid-June 2010 flooding and mudslide that resulted from several days of torrential rain in Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships.

“The flood water rose up to 6 feet and above. Fortunately my house is a double storey, so I could manage to save some important items including the midwifery kit by taking them upstairs. Some items still got lost and damaged by the water. After the floods I didn’t know how to resume my work,” said Daw Hla Hla.

Many midwives in the area were affected by the floods and found themselves in situation similar to Daw Hla Hla. Some lost all belongings including drugs and equipment for vaccination and things essential to carry on their work, posing challenges to routine functions such as immunization.

The items saved by Daw Hla Hla helped her to somehow manage to continue treating minor injuries and illnesses. At that point she received the UNICEF Child Survival Kit A which includes essential lifesaving drugs such as Paracetamol, Oral Rehydration Salt (ORS), Zinc tablet and Amoxicillin, along with vaccine carriers.

“UNICEF supported us to revitalise the routine immunization and curative care for children and the mothers. I also attended the EPI Plus training on



© UNICEF Myanmar/2010/Tin Aung

Immunization Plus activities in progress in Northern Rakhine State

15 July, a month after the floods, and started vaccination in the following week,” said Daw Hla Hla.

EPI Plus delivers routine immunization, along with other mother and child health interventions, in hard to reach or unreached areas in emergency situations. It is an integrated package of simple, effective interventions delivered by immunization teams.

Damage to the cold chain, supplies and disruption of basic health services led to a quick warning that routine monthly immunization for July onward could be jeopardized without special support.

For the areas such as Buthidaung, pre-flood immunization coverage rates already lagged behind the State and National average, with many villages constantly left behind due to difficult access as well as low acceptance by the community.

“There is a significant rise in the acceptance of EPI Plus activities by the community after the floods in comparison to the pre-floods situation. The credit



also goes to volunteers from Myanmar Health Assistant Association (MHAA) who helped midwives in EPI Plus activities,” said Dr. Than Tun Kyaw, Township Medical Officer at Buthidaung.

Daw Htay Htay, a midwife at the Doe Dan village agrees, “Due to cultural practices, women of these villages do not show up in community events and they are not even expected to come to immunize their children. The MHAA volunteers’ work with religious leaders after the floods helped, almost all women brought their children for vaccination and came to listen to my health talks.”

“The volunteers also helped me with registration of the children and pregnant women and measuring of mid-arm circumference (as a measure of growth and nutrition) of children during EPI Plus activities,” she added. ■



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Emergency response activities in the Northern Rakhine State following the floods in June 2010



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This rope pump was established after the NRS floods as a safe water source in Buthidaung Township



Water quality tester in use to gauge water safety



© UNICEF Myanmar/2010/Tin Aung

2008 Cyclone Nargis in Pictures



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Families amidst the wreckage of what used to be their home before Cyclone Nargis hit in Bogalae Township, Ayeyarwaddy Division. Many people were displaced due to the cyclone. There were ten relief camps in Bogale Township where affected victims took shelter. Some refused to stay at the camps for long in spite of not having homes to return to



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UNICEF delivered essential supplies including tarpaulins, ORS (oral rehydraton salts), water purification agents, First Aid Kit and Essential Drug Kit to Bogale township in Ayeyarwaddy Division in the days following the cyclone. Members Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) are seen loading supplies into cart to distribute to the relief camps. There were ten relief camps initially set up in Bogale Township

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Large vessels deliver water jars for villagers to carry home by smaller boats. UNICEF, with support from the Government of Japan, distributed earthen jars to the Ywar Thar Nyunt Village of Mawlamyinegyun Township following the emergency. Cyclone-Nargis contaminated the pond water and villagers faced severe shortage of drinking water





© UNICEF Myanmar/2008/Jim Holmes

Detected by growth monitoring methods as seriously malnourished, a mother in Laputta brought her 10 month old child to feed NRG5 for 7 days. Nutritionally fortified NRG5 was provided by UNICEF to emergency affected children to improve nutritional status over a short period of time



© UNICEF Myanmar/2008/Win Naing

In Koe Taung Village of Kawhmu Township, villagers use UNICEF-provided disinfectant powder to treat contaminated pond water. Many ponds across the cyclone affected Delta were contaminated beyond use



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UNICEF's local NGO partner Social Vision Services (SVS) distributed water in Kwin Pon (Thama Sanda) Village of Daunt Gyi Village Tract in Bogale Township to curb shortage of drinking water faced by the villagers during the summer



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Water is filled into tank before passing through the Treatment plant in Set San Village of Bogale Township. UNICEF had placed 8 water treatment plants across Delta in the Cyclone Nargis affected areas



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A child holding the blue package of insecticide-treated bed net provided by UNICEF across the Ayeyarwaddy Region. UNICEF distributed 276,000 insecticide-treated long lasting bed nets to the cyclone affected families to prevent malaria



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Children play joyfully in the playground of the new cyclone-resistant child-friendly school in Thit Kyar Gone Village of Kawhmu Township built with support from UNICEF. Virtually all schools were destroyed when cyclone Nargis hit Ayeyarwaddy Division on May 2, 2008

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The new child-friendly primary school built by UNICEF in cyclone Nargis-affected Kwin Kyar Taw Village of Kungyangone Township. This school has 3 units of school building. It is built on a higher ground so that it can withstand the tidal wave in case there is another cyclone



UNICEF Helps 60,000 Cyclone Nargis Affected Villagers to Access Safe Drinking Water

By Ye Lwin

Mawlamyinegyun, Myanmar, March 15: Since Cyclone Nargis devastated Myanmar Delta in May 2008, water sources and sanitation facilities in many villages had undergone massive destruction and resulted in acute scarcity. Aye Myo Khine, 35, and her family living in Bae Htone village in Mawlamyinegyun Township, was among the ones bearing the brunt.

“There were times we have to walk a long way to fetch fresh water from the river. It was really hard,” said Aye Myo Khine.

“Summer is the most difficult time for our villagers to fetch water as all three ponds in the village dried up. In April and May, we had to go to other villages with bigger ponds to fetch water;” said U Thein Aye, a member of Village Water Committee in Bae Htone village.

Since 2009, UNICEF implemented a project for the recovery and reconstruction for water, sanitation and hygiene with support from Australia Agency for International Development (AusAID) in the cyclone affected villages in the Delta, one



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A new well for community use

of which is Bae Htone, a new big pond was constructed in the village in 2010 to supply drinking water for 400 villagers.

“We no longer need to worry about shortage of drinking water in the coming dry seasons. The big new pond dug in our village last year with the help of UNICEF will supply enough water for everyone in the village,” said Ma Aye Myo Khine.

The construction of new ponds and hygiene facilities benefited and facilitated access to safe drinking water for approximately 60,000 rural people in the project area.

Noble Compassionate Volunteer Group (NCV) and Aung Yadana Association are two of the six local NGOs working with UNICEF as implementing partners in the pond construction project in Ayerwaddy Region in 2009 and 2010 with funding support from AusAID in Laputta township.

“Since 2009, we have built 60 new ponds in the villages in Laputta township that significantly increased access to drinking water;” said U Ye Min Aung, WASH Project Engineer from Noble Compassionate Volunteer Group (NCV).

“Having access to hygienic latrine and safe drinking water is a great benefit for our village. Thanks to UNICEF for the invaluable assistance;” said Ma Ywet Wah, 35 years old woman from Anan Chaung village in Mawlamyinegyun township.

U Thein Tun, project manager of Aung Yadana Association said, “Our project focused on construction of latrines for schools and health centres in the villages in Pyapon township since October 2009. We also distributed traditional earthen water jars that hold 50-gallon of water to households in my project area.”



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A UNICEF supported pond construction project in progress in Bae Htone village in Mawlamyinegyun Township. The pond was dug to supply safe drinking water for more than 700 villagers in. The village among the worst affected by Cyclone Nargis in May 2008

“These latrines are constructed with AusAID support in schools and health centres in the villages located in Dedaye and Pyapon township. The latrines have attached to them handwashing basins,” UThein Tun said.

Before the project started, open defecation was common in the project area and most of the primary schools in the villages in Pyapon had no proper latrine.

“The few latrines that existed in schools were not of proper condition for personal hygiene. Students were not in the habit of hand washing after using toilet either. We have set up hand washing basins attached to the latrines so that children can wash their hands easily,” said Ma Aye Myat Moe from Aung Yadana Association.

Daw Khin Win Kyi, a 60 years old woman from Anan Chaung village said, “Never before have I heard anyone coming to talk to us about how to wash hands properly after defecation and using the toilet. Recent hygiene talks help us realize the importance of hand washing practices at critical times.” ■



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A newly dug village pond

Acknowledgement to Our Donors in Emergency Relief

UNICEF Myanmar acknowledges the donors and UNICEF National Committees whose valuable contributions made it possible to carry on relief and recovery support for the affected population in the emergencies that hit Myanmar in the past years: Cyclone Nargis in 2008, Cyclone Giri and the floods in the Northern Rakhine State in 2010; and the earthquake in Tachileik, Eastern Shan State in 2011.

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- Government of Lithuania
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UNICEF 'Built Back Better' Child Friendly Schools in the Delta Replaces Schools Destroyed by the Cyclone Nargis



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The new child-friendly primary school built by UNICEF in cyclone Nargis-affected Kwin Kyar Taw Village of Kungyangone Township

Cyclone Nargis in May 2008 left a severe impact on the education infrastructure in Myanmar. About 1200 schools were destroyed beyond repair and in total over 4,000 or more than half of the total number schools in the region were damaged. Drawing from 2005 South Asian Tsunami and other emergency response experience globally, UNICEF promoted the 'Build Back Better' approach to rebuild 49 Child Friendly Model schools with emergency funding support from the governments of Denmark and Netherlands and resources raised by UNICEF National Committees in Japan, Canada and the United States.

Not only are the newly built Child Friendly Schools (CFS) model impressive colourful structures – they were carefully designed to create a child friendly and joyful learning environment. Unlike traditional classrooms in rural Myanmar, the innovative layout makes provision for adequate ventilation and lighting, and reduced noise and heat in the classroom to adjust to the tropical weather in remote locations where power supply is often unpredictable.

The spacious classrooms are fully furnished and with essential learning

package (text books, exercise books, stationery and school bags) for every student. Apart from an attractive playground, a covered porch area attached to the building allows recreational activities during Myanmar's prolonged rainy season.

Teachers receive training in child-centred teaching methodologies and to encourage active participation of children in learning activities. A manual 'Tip for Teacher' guides them to help children recover from the effects of the disaster.

An experienced international architect worked with the Ministry of Education on the designs. In a blend of international expertise with local conditions, materials and technology, the constructions were done through active participation of the community members, parents and teachers.

The Child Friendly Schools are built in two sizes corresponding to the number of primary school age children in an area, the larger schools accommodate up to 330 while the smaller ones up to 150 students. Each school is equipped with adequate safe water supply, sanitation facilities and water storage facilities to help students get

through dry seasons. Some include ramps to facilitate access for students with physical disability.

The school buildings are disaster resistant; they are sturdy enough to withstand possible future disasters such as cyclone and earthquake and are also meant to serve as shelters for communities during natural disasters. They are built on plinth between 4 to 11 feet above the ground. The height was determined by the recorded rise in floods in the area or the height of water surge experienced in Cyclone Nargis.

Reconstruction of the schools is seen as an important milestone in disaster recovery, encouraging people to return to their original places and in bringing a sense of progress. Reports indicate higher enrolment in the new schools compared to the pre-cyclone time.

A maintenance manual was developed, and teachers and PTA members were trained on how to maintain the school facilities with the involvement of the parents, communities and the school children for each school built.

With reliable facilities in place and introduction of child friendly teaching-learning approach, these schools have great potential in making a lasting impact on primary education in the remote and economically disadvantaged areas of Myanmar. The 49 CFS built by UNICEF, in three phases, was handed over to the Ministry of Education. More schools were built by other agencies and the Ministry of Education.

There still remains the need for more school facilities in some parts of the Delta. UNICEF is planning to build additional schools in the three Nargis affected townships, Bogale, Mawlamyine gyun and Laputta, in partnership with Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) with the funding support from the European Commission. ■

2004: Since the Tsunami, Myanmar battles repeat disasters



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Two girls sorting shrimps at Asin Gyine Village

Ngaputaw Township, Myanmar, 21 December 2009 – In spite of the battle for life and livelihood since the Tsunami hit in 2004, daily life continues in remote Phone Daw Pyae in Ngaputaw Township.

The impact left by the tsunami on Myanmar was less severe compared to some other neighbouring countries. Nevertheless, Ngaputaw Township – along with Rakhine State and some parts of the Ayeyarwaddy and Tanintharyi Regions – were hit hard.

Life in the communities was wrecked and major disruptions in livelihood occurred with lost boats and destroyed fishing nets.

Restoring livelihoods

Disaster response after the tsunami opened the door for humanitarian agencies to reach the remote fishing communities that are exposed to frequent wrath of nature.

UNICEF, along with local and international partners, supported a full range of activities to restore livelihood and transform young lives affected by the tsunami. Communities received assistance in getting back on their feet with new homes for affected people, a new school and a new rural health centre.

Essential drugs and insecticide treated bed nets were also supplied.

Repeat disasters

Unfortunately, some of the communities were battered by repeat and severe natural disasters that jeopardized these restoration efforts.

“When one disaster after another took away my loved ones and the basic essentials that we need to live on, such as a home, a small boat, a fishing net – life became infinitely harder,” said Hnin Hnin Ei, a 30 year old single parent and

a former resident of Phone Daw Pyae village.

The surviving families of the village now live in Government-funded new housing, built much farther away from the coast and on higher ground.

As tsunami interventions were phased out in 2008, massive emergency relief and recovery efforts had to be launched in the same year to get through the devastations caused by Cyclone Nargis, the worst natural disaster that the country has faced in its recent history.

“Everybody in the community had to work extraordinarily hard and we were there to support after the disasters,” said UNICEF Field Officer for Ayeyarwaddy Division Daw Khin Khin Pyone. “However, the way to recovery has been slow and hampered – as the chain of subsequent disasters broke the backbone of the community.” ■

Reuniting the Cyclone-Separated Children

By Zafrin Chowdhury



1

As the Cyclone Nargis ravaged communities rose to their feet out of the debris, humanitarian workers found a formidable task at hand: an increasing number of children separated from their parents by Cyclone Nargis, and left unaccompanied.

2

A passionate and prolonged search operation began that later became well known as Family Tracing & Reunification of Unaccompanied and Separated Children. Among the national and international agencies that joined hands in the effort were: Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS), Enfants du Monde-Droits de l'Homme (EMDH), Save the Children and UNICEF.



3

A year passed after the cyclone, but Aye Aye Soe (12), her younger sister Aye Myat Mon (8) and younger brother Ye Htet Kyaw (4) – remained as the last three children in the shelter home. The mother of the three was killed along with the father of the younger two.

Aye Aye lived with her mother and step father with the two siblings, and had no recent contacts with her biological father.





4

It took a few months to find Aye Aye Soe's father. He wanted to take her home to live with his wife and two children, but Aye Aye refused to leave behind her two younger siblings. On a test basis, all three went to live with the family, but getting along for the five children proved difficult, especially the younger ones.

5

So the children headed back to the shelter home escorted by their caregivers, MRCS volunteers. After living in the shelter home for a year, it became safe haven for the children. They developed deep bonds with their caregivers and vice versa. But the volunteers knew this could not be the solution in the longer run, even though they even considered chipping in their own resources to look after these children, in case no relatives were found.



6

Meanwhile relentless search continued and helped reunite over 2,000 separated and unaccompanied children to their own or extended families. Humanitarian workers left no stone unturned to reunify the last remaining children.



7

A lucky break came through when the search yielded result by way of an uncle of the younger two. On hearing about them, the traveling fish trader uncle came to the shelter home. He used to be in contact with their parents and knew the children. Through him another uncle was contacted, he lived in a village with his family and instantly offered to take the children under his care.

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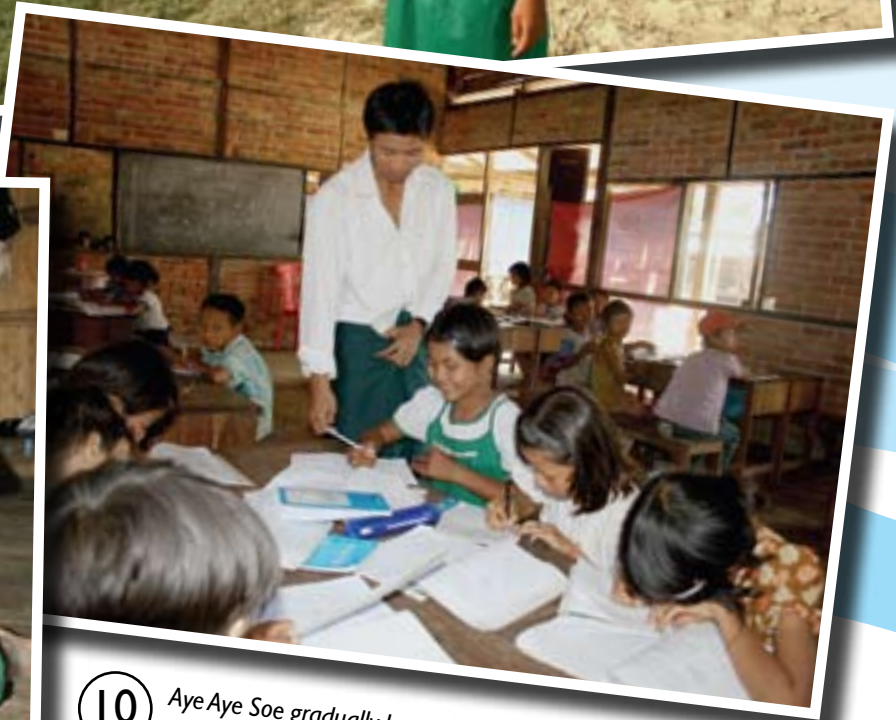
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To great relief of all, the search finally ended in autumn of 2009, more than a year after the disaster. All three siblings now have found families they could reunite with. A near perfect solution, but three now needed to part their ways.

Aye Aye Soe would live with her father and the younger two with their uncle's family. Volunteers would continue supervise through home visits on how they were adjusting to their new found families.

9

With UNICEF, Aye Aye Soe revisited the village where she used to live when the cyclone hit and recounted every detail on how the parents were lost and how the three of them ran for life with the rushing crowd.



10

Aye Aye Soe gradually became a part of her father's family, helping her step mother to look after her step brothers and sisters; also helping in her small business after school. She started going to the local school, with teachers and friends helping her catch up with the studies.

But she missed Aye Myat Mon and Ye Htet Kyaw.



11

It was difficult for the children to travel all the way by walking or by boat to meet each other. After the children lived for a few months with their respective families, in January 2010 UNICEF arranged a reunion for the three siblings – escorting Aye Aye Soe to travel to the new home of her younger sister and brother. What followed was an intensely emotional but joyful reunion.



12

The day passed all too quickly in catching up. And it was time to say goodbye.



13

Aye Soe was happy to see the wonderful family her siblings have found, who welcome her to visit again and even stay for a few days any time she wanted.

Even though they could no longer be together, all three children found safe and caring homes. ■

New Health Centres for Cyclone Affected Communities in the Myanmar Delta



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The number of women and children seeking health care services has significantly increased at the new Rural Health Centre in Nga Gyi Gayet Village of Maubin Township. UNICEF supported building of 24 such Rural and Subrural Health Centres across Ayeyarwaddy and Yangon Regions after Cyclone Nargis. Out of which 22 received support from the Government of Japan. These Centres are equipped with life-saving medical facilities infrastructure

“I have never seen such a crowd coming to the health centre,” said Daw Myint Myint Moe. She was in the middle of a busy day attending to mothers and babies who lined up for antenatal care, weight monitoring and immunizing children.

Daw Myint Myint Moe is a midwife at the Sub Rural Health Centre of Nga Kyi Ga Yat village in Maubin Township, Ayeyarwaddy Region. Through the Centre, her coverage area includes 12 villages and 5,000 population.

The sub rural health centre that she used to work in was an old small structure built in 1948. It had brick walls with thatched roof and earthen floor. The fragile building collapsed rather easily by the Cyclone Nargis.

“Before the cyclone, most people didn’t want to come because the centre did not have good facilities, not even a proper bed for delivery. The space was tight and to make things worse, it flooded whenever

there was heavy rain,” said Daw Myint Myint Moe who worked in the Centre for the past ten years.

Limited access and inadequate health service facilities posed a major obstacle for women to visit the health centre. The cost of ferry and the risks of travelling by boats during pregnancy discouraged women from seeking antenatal and postnatal care, resulting in most deliveries in Nga Kyi Ga Yat taking place at home. The community now see the services worth traveling for.

UNICEF built the new sub rural health centre as part of its longer term recovery support to Cyclone Nargis and to improve health services for children and women in the cyclone-torn and hard to reach areas in Delta. The Centre is equipped with a labour room and other essential medical amenities. It is appropriately furnished and includes a power generator to enable night-time deliveries and emergency treatment.

“We are receiving more patients in the new Centre. We have started successful child deliveries in the Centre, this is the first time children are born here. We see some major changes – for better,” said Daw Myint Myint Moe.

The Nga Kyi Gayet sub rural health centre stands as a sign of better health care and renewal of the feeling of well being for the community. The centre gives new and soon-to-be parents quality care, close to their homes.

“This is indeed a blessing for the community to own this new and fully equipped health centre where we can seek and receive health care. Before, it was not easy for mothers in this area to access health care, I can see this is now changing,” said a senior resident, 80 year old Daw Mya Shwe Yee.

Similar to this Centre, UNICEF built 24 well equipped rural health facilities. Three of these facilities are Rural Health Centres and 21 are Sub Rural Health Centres that are located across the Ayeyarwaddy Region.

The Rural Health Facilities offer a wide range of essential primary health care services for children and women including ante natal and post natal care, delivery and birth, nutrition and exclusive breast feeding support, immunization services and so on.

It’s an effort to ensure that these health facilities not only help in recovery from the impact of the cyclone but also to have a long term role in reducing disease and mortality among the communities in Delta. ■

Restoring Drinking Water Storage Capacity in the Cyclone Affected Communities

By Sandar Linn



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Yu Kay Khine, 16, use the newly received jars to store collected water for her family. The jars were distributed by UNICEF's local NGO partner SVS in her village in Bogale Township. Having safe water source closer to home and the jars for storage makes a positive difference in her daily life

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Villagers from Myay Sa Ngu village in Bogale Township take earthen jars from a vessel to a smaller boat to take them to their villages. UNICEF, with support from the Government of Japan, distributed earthen jars to the villagers in Cyclone Nargis affected areas to curb water shortage especially in the dry season. Jars have long been a traditional means of water storage in Myanmar villages, but they were largely destroyed by the Cyclone. The UNICEF supported jars helped rebuild household capacity for water storage in areas where water is scarce

It was around 10 am in the morning and time for Ma Yu Kay Khine to fetch water from the water tanks at the edge of the village. Her mother has long passed away, and her father is not well these days. Now 16, she had to stop going to school after grade five and take up the responsibility for cooking, cleaning, fetching water and taking care of her younger sister.

Ma Yu Kay Khine lives in Kwin Pon village of Bogale Township in Ayeyarwaddy Region that suffered widespread destruction by Cyclone Nargis in 2008. One of the worst consequences was contamination of all usable water sources.

"Four fresh water ponds that the village had to rely on for drinking were all destroyed. Immediately after Nargis, some donors brought water but we lost storage capacity," said Ma Yu Kay Khine.

It has been a traditional practice for villagers in the Delta area to store drinking water in large earthen jars to get through the summer months.

Cyclone Nargis also damaged and destroyed these containers. Water shortage became a critical need with pond water contaminated and storage jars wrecked.

UNICEF in partnership with a local NGO, Social Vision Services (SVS), delivered water by boat and distributed two earthen jars for each family to counter possible shortage of drinking water in the dry season. The emergency recovery support helped solve longer term water storage issues.

"Fortunately things have changed. Now we collect water from the water tank at the entrance of the village regularly provided by UNICEF's water boats. We have also received two large earthen jars where we can store water," said Ma Yu Kay Khine, smiling.

"My family only had one jar before Cyclone Nargis. We could not afford to buy one immediately after the cyclone as the prices went up and we did not have an income. With only one jar for the family of three, she had to walk about two to three miles every day to collect water.

These two jars received from UNICEF have helped me so much by reducing the amount of time I had to spend in fetching water every day," she said.

"Traditionally, earthen jars in my community mean more than water storage, it is also the household status symbol. I see this as a precious gift for children and women, it is mainly their duty to fetch and fill water for household use, while men are out working in the farm or for fishing. When I was young, I used to nag my father on why we had only one jar at home without realizing they were costly," she said.

U Tin Thein, 57, a fisherman at Myay Sa Ngu village of Mawlamyinegyun Township agrees with Ma Yu Kay Khine. He believes the earthen jars helped reduce the burden on the cyclone affected communities and makes them healthy and happy.

"Fresh water was scarce in the area even before cyclone, thus storage has always been an important part of life. Thanks to UNICEF and donors, the families who did not have any jar or had only one –now have two jars each," added U Tin Thein.

With support from donors, UNICEF helped produce and distributed more than 94,000 earthen jars to restore capacity for water storage at the household level. The jars are environment friendly and each has a storage capacity of 60 gallons. ■

UNICEF Emergency Experience *continued from page 4*

The experience of responding to Cyclone Nargis has changed the face of humanitarian and emergency work in Myanmar in the government and among the humanitarian agencies. UNICEF's emergency preparedness and response activities have been significantly influenced by the experience whereas our regular programmes became enriched by new insights and dimensions learned through emergencies.

Some of the noteworthy programmatic aspects include:

The EPI Plus campaign, which delivers an integrated package of essential maternal and child care services through the local Basic Health Staff in the wake of a disaster, is now a recognized approach in the National Strategy for Child Health Development, put forward by the Ministry of Health in 2010. Although resources cannot yet support its full implementation, the national plan aims to provide a package of high impact intervention through the local health care providers with a focus on hard-to-reach areas.

The Nutrition Surveillance System developed in the Delta has been replicated in the Northern Rakhine and Chin states after being piloted post-Nargis, and UNICEF plans to expand it further to other high risk areas prone to food insecurity. The sprinkles micronutrient supplementation will be expanded to 25 townships.

UNICEF supported reconstruction of 49 Child Friendly School facilities in the Delta that structurally and in content facilitated conducive and joyful teaching learning environment for primary school children. The schools integrated recreational as well as safe water and sanitation facilities for students. These schools are cyclone resistant and contributed toward disaster risk reduction by serving as community shelters in case of future disasters.



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Distribution of family kit to the Cyclone Giri affected people in Myebon Township

Built back better with active support and ownership by parents, teachers and the larger community, these schools symbolised to children the return to normalcy after a harrowing disaster, resilience and hope for the future.

UNICEF also reached out with livelihood grant as part of the Child Protection Programme in Laputta and Bogale to reduce child vulnerability in the severely affected families. About 4515 families received the livelihood support. Implemented in partnership with PACT Myanmar, a Micro-finance organization with experience in livelihood support, the scheme involved types of livelihood supports such as livestock breeding, fishing gears, vocational training for sewing, agricultural machines and capital for grocery shops.

UNICEF established a community-based child protection system with ties to township authorities, through local Child Rights Committees, which has since been expanded to townships outside the Delta. Emergency interventions in the Child Protection programme have ushered breakthroughs in reducing vulnerabilities and strengthening existing institutional protection mechanisms down to the community level. These measures were developed in partnership with the government and NGOs.

Cyclone Nargis opened up opportunities to bring to the spotlight special needs and rights of children and women in emergencies. Relief assistance and recovery programme aimed at children and women helped to address immediate needs

and revitalize health services, water and sanitation and education soon after the emergency. Experience from the emergency response also helped broaden understanding of child protection issues - facilitating both policy dialogue and implementation of child protection mechanisms at community and township levels.

To reduce the impact of disasters on the individual, community and the public system, efforts have been intensified since Cyclone Nargis to introduce Disaster Risk Reduction initiatives across public sectors programmes and amongst communities. While the application has so far been sketchy, primarily focused in and around the cyclone affected areas, adequate resources are not yet available, UNICEF recognises that these are the first steps in a long process to reduce the underlying vulnerabilities of the many children and women who are disproportionately at risk in times of disasters. ■

All contributions published in this newsletter are written by UNICEF Myanmar staff members

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