FOREWORD

In early May, Myanmar was hit by the worst ever natural disaster experienced in the country’s history, the Cyclone Nargis. The cyclone caused death, devastation, damage and loss of an unprecedented scale. Myanmar will need to continue investing resources, policies and efforts to overcome the impact of the cyclone for some time to come. UNICEF was among the first to reach the affected areas with response and support, which was further strengthened over time. UNICEF will continue to assist in the recovery of the affected people, especially children, as long as there is a need.

The Cylone Nargis has taken a toll on children’s life, safety and well being. UNICEF is addressing affected children’s health, nutrition, education and protection needs to ensure that the children of Myanmar continue to get the help they deserve. We can not afford to let the plight of children go unaddressed and forgotten.

The current issue of UNICEF newsletter is dedicated to the cyclone affected people. During the relief operation UNICEF witnessed many actions and evidence of courage, resilience, and initiatives taken by the people to overcome the adversities. UNICEF concedes the loss suffered by the people, and at the same time acknowledges and honours the extraordinary efforts invested by all to rebuild life in the aftermath of the massive devastation. UNICEF feels proud and encouraged to be a part of Myanmar’s national rebuilding effort following the Cyclone Nargis.

Ramesh Shrestha
Representative
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HEALTH

One of the first and utmost needs in the aftermath of the cyclone was to provide health and medical care to the injured and affected people. As the cyclone destroyed health infrastructures, UNICEF is one of the agencies that took first action to address the issues.

The organisation promptly mobilised pre-positioned emergency supplies and assisted the government and NGOs, both national and international in addressing health issues in the affected areas.

UNICEF dispatched emergency drugs and medical supplies including ORS, antibiotics, infusion, vaccines and vitamin A in quantities large enough to prevent and treat 600,000 children from possible outbreaks of severe diarrhoea, malaria and dengue haemorrhagic fever.

Not just to put children and families under sound sleep but as an effort to prevent malaria which is a big killer of children under five, UNICEF delivered nearly 200,000 Insecticide Treated Bed Nets to more than 300,000 people which is equivalent to 60 percent coverage of affected children and pregnant women.

As UNICEF puts its focus on the health and wellbeing of children and women, 21,283 clean delivery kits were also distributed to ensure clean and safe delivery for mothers and babies when health facilities are outreached during such hardships.

The challenge now facing the Health Sector is the destruction of Health Centres and reduction of health workers serving in the affected areas at a time while the demands for health services are on sharp increase. UNICEF is collaborating with the Ministry of Health and professional associations such as the Myanmar Medical Association, Myanmar Health Assistants Association and the Myanmar Nurses and Midwives Association to ease the situation. Up to date over 100 health workers, nurses and midwives have been deployed in Labutta, Bogale and Pyapon to address enormous needs of health care after the disaster.

EPI

More than 25,000 children up to 15 years in affected townships in Yangon and Ayeyarwaddy divisions were immunised against measles as a preventive measure by the
Ministry of Health with the help of UNICEF. Along with the measles immunisation, tetanus toxoid immunization was also given to 2500 pregnant women and injury cases. UNICEF assisted the process of revitalization of routine immunization activities by the provision of cold chain equipments, health education materials, immunization cards and registers. Cash assistance was provided for EPI plus activities which integrate pregnancy care, distribution of vitamins and micronutrients, case management of diarrhoea and pneumonia, deworming and other feasible interventions that targeted to women and children.

**NUTRITION**

Hundreds of thousands of families lost all their personal possessions and livelihoods due to the devastation of Cyclone Nargis. This situation places children at a much higher risk of malnutrition.

Various post-cyclone assessments estimated that up to 60,000 children in various affected areas may be “at risk”. Improving the food basket or provision of blended fortified foods for young children would prevent those at risk from dropping into acute malnutrition.

UNICEF supported a vitamin-A supplementation campaign to help prevent possible deterioration in the children’s nutritional status within the various camps. In collaboration with the National Nutrition Centre (NNC) and NGOs, UNICEF distributed 5,500 cartons of plumpy nut to aid children 6-59 months old with severe acute malnutrition. Additionally, F-75 and F-100 therapeutic milk and Resomal oral rehydration solution for the severe malnourished) were distributed to 12 hospitals with nutrition units to treat 1,000 severely malnourished children with complications. Eight of these units have been established after the cyclone. Furthermore, to improve the nutrition status of 14,800 moderately malnourished children aged 5 years or under, 7,400 cartons of BP5 were distributed.

UNICEF, in collaboration with NNC, trained local health personnel in the nuances of managing severely malnourished children in a clinical setting at several locations. UNICEF also conducted trainings for local and international NGOs such as Merlin, PSI and Myanmar Health Assistant Association to conduct community-based management of acute malnutrition in the affected areas.
Closely linked to the health situation is the importance of providing safe water and sanitary latrines and safe disposal of excreta and management of solid waste to prevent outbreaks of waterborne diseases. UNICEF took immediate actions in provision of safe water, water treatment options along with assisting in building latrines and necessary hygiene supplies in the eight most affected townships.

In coordination with the partners, UNICEF has provided technical assistance, along with supplies such as water storage tanks, pipes, fuel for operation of pumps and labour costs, to supply water in the temporary settlements.

UNICEF, working together with the Health Ministry’s Environmental Sanitation Division, constructed nearly 300 latrines in temporary settlements and 36,000 sets of latrine pans and pipes were distributed to assist communities in building latrines. Water purification materials supplied include water-guard and water purification tablets to families, with instruction leaflets for safe usage and storage.

UNICEF has distributed almost 100,000 jerry cans and plastic buckets, 645 drums of bleaching powder, 22,000 bottles of water guard (250ml), 380 cans of water guard (20 litre) and 4,667,608 water purification tablets. The materials provided so far are sufficient to produce 30.1 million litres of safe and clean water. After providing safe drinking water to people in the temporary settlements, UNICEF is now focusing on reaching the affected villages where people are returning.

UNICEF has also begun to repair, rehabilitate and cleaning of water sources such as ponds and dug wells, in the villages and in some urban areas. UNICEF aims to provide 400 tube-wells in appropriate locations as part of the longer term recovery effort. The current target is to reach 25 to 30 per cent of the affected people in the eight affected townships.
EDUCATION

In order to facilitate children’s return to schools and to minimize delays in their schooling, UNICEF has been supporting the repair of damaged schools through provision of roofing sheets, and has been supporting establishment of temporary safe learning spaces through contractors and provision of resources to communities to build their own temporary safe learning spaces and through setting up more than 120 school tents.

UNICEF provided essential learning package benefiting more than 130,000 primary school children, and school furniture for the tent schools as well. To date, more than 1,500 primary schools in Ayeyawady and Yangon Divisions have benefited from UNICEF education support. In addition to these, UNICEF has distributed 817 school-in-a-boxes, each with enough school supplies for teachers in a classroom and 80 pupils. Distribution of student text books have also started. UNICEF has also been supporting early childhood centres that were damaged by the cyclone through provision of roofing sheets and ECD Kits.

Not only the physical materials to bring children back to normalcy and continue learning were provided but also “Tips-for-Teachers” in local language was developed by UNICEF, which include simple yet key information for teachers in addressing the psychosocial needs of affected children through appropriate activities.

Teachers who have been affected by the cyclone and lost their personal belongings are now receiving family kits and are provided with roofing sheets to help them repair their own homes. A teacher’s kit will also soon be distributed to more than 6,000 teachers.

UNICEF has advocated for building back better, safer and more child-friendly schools and was asked by the Ministry of Education to build seven ‘model’ schools in seven townships of the Ayeyawady division. UNICEF has contracted an international architect to work with MoE Engineers on developing improved school designs prior to constructions.

“I want to become a teacher and I’m happy to be back in class,” said Nandar Hlaing, five years old student who enjoys learning as a first grader at the Kyein-chaung village primary school in Labutta.
Since the cyclone hit, one of the priority areas of UNICEF is to ensure the protection for the children who have been unfortunately separated from their families and unaccompanied children (without a known relative).

UNICEF is closely working with the Department of Social Welfare, INGOs and local NGO partners in conducting joint assessments and in implementing activities focusing on the protection needs of children and women in the Ayeyarwady and Yangon Divisions. In 17 townships, UNICEF and partners are working to establish, manage and support a comprehensive case management system to identify, track and support separated and unaccompanied children. Cluster members use the interagency forms and share information systematically with key partners for child registration, interim care, family tracing and reunification. As end of July, a total of 613 separated and unaccompanied children have been registered and provided follow up support. This includes monitoring visits to the families in which children are placed for interim care purposes, coordination and provision of appropriate relief supplies and basic needs, school/vocational training and medical support. 18 children have been reunified with their families.

To provide children and families with community-based psychosocial care and support, UNICEF set up child-friendly spaces (CFS). CFS help children return to normal lives through the participation in recreational and educational activities. As end of July, a total of 254 UNICEF-supported child-friendly spaces have been established, 110 of these are in Yangon Division, and 141 in Ayeyarwady Division.

Most CFS are integrated within community activities and are used by community support/watch groups to undertake briefings and meeting on protection issues. Plans are underway to set up more than 100 CFS. UNICEF has so far distributed 398 Early Childhood Development (ECD) kits for child-friendly spaces and nearly 4000 child protection kits to affected, separated and other vulnerable children. CFS also serves as springboard for preventative and outreach child protection work. A total of 51 UNICEF-supported community support/watch groups have been established to support the monitoring and reporting of child rights violations as well as act the coordination/referral mechanism for addressing children’s/families needs at the community and the township level.

The Department for Social Welfare has developed a National Plan of Action for Child Protection in Emergencies with UNICEF assistance. Various workshops and trainings focusing on capacity building on children and women’s protection have been carried out.

“I love to come here and play. Here, many toys and games. All my toys back in my village were gone” said Min Thu* while playing at one of the UNICEF supported CFS in delta.
FIELD OPERATION

To contribute to the Nargis relief operation, UNICEF field staffs were transported from across the country within the first week of the crisis to be redeployed to Ayeyarwaddy. They brought vehicles and locally prepositioned emergency supplies from as far as Myitkyina in the country’s northern State, Kachin and Kengtung, Shan State. The field staff played a critical role particularly in the first few weeks of the crisis to establish offices, make initial assessments and quickly build relationships with the local technical counterparts, in addition to the local authorities and partners to begin a relief operation. In the absence of emergency teams yet to be recruited, the seasoned, multi-sector oriented UNICEF field staff, along with technical staff from Yangon, played a wide range of functions, from working with Township Medical Officers for measles vaccination to distributing NFI (Non-food items) in villages and supervising the logistics. All UNICEF-deployed staff in the Ayeyarwaddy and Yangon field locations demonstrated versatility and adaptability, with a single aim of delivering the relief assistance to the affected women and children. The field staff continues to support the emergency operation in Ayeyarwaddy and are playing an essential role in the induction of newly recruited emergency staff as they go through on-the-job orientation.

SUPPLY & LOGISTICS

As often happens in emergency situation, Supply & Logistics played a very prominent role. From the day one since the cyclone hit, UNICEF supply strategy has been effective. First of all, the emergency stocks pre-positioned in Myanmar were quickly mobilized to be distributed through the teams who went on assessment mission. Simultaneously, regular and new local suppliers were tracked down from their homes due to destruction caused to main commercial city Yangon) to start supplying large quantities of key relief (NFI) materials such as Tarpaulins, Family Kits, Bleaching powder, Lime powder, Latrine pans and pipes, Fibreglass Water tanks, Water buckets, Soap, Clothing, Basic drugs, Roofing sheets and Life jackets etc. By then offshore supplies disembarked through the routine (pre-cyclone) channels using commercial flights. These supplies once arrived in affected regions were initially warehoused in temporary warehouses and later on in United Nations Joint Logistic Cluster warehouses.

The supplies were distributed to affected communities through NGOs, INGOs, and government counterparts by using any means of transports available in ground such as trucks, boats, bullock carts, and helicopters. UNICEF has also been monitoring to ensure the supplies reached to children and affected people in need.
COMMUNICATION

Programme communication or behaviour change communication in emergency is catered for essential and urgent communication needs to ensure the most vulnerable children and families have access to accurate and helpful information about practices that to maintain, re-establish or adopt which are critical to their survival and wellbeing and available services that prevent disease, harm, abuse and exploitation.

The communication team, working closely with programmes, has been organising workshops on communication skills and effective use of materials for frontline communicators such as basic health staff, local NGOs, and other partners. As a result, these aid workers are able to communicate more effectively with the affected community and help families by promoting proper behaviours.

An emergency booklet, Protect and Survive was also adapted and distributed to the affected families with the additional incentives of soap and buckets. Moreover the messages from the pamphlet were also disseminated to the affected communities through health talks held with the collaboration of Township Education Officers and Township Medical Officers and UNICEF. Making and radio spots on hygiene, diarrhoea, breastfeeding, immunization, vector borne diseases, child protection were also produced with expanded topics.

As there is a growing need of IEC materials among aid agencies aftermath of the cyclone, UNICEF communication section organised a fair in July displaying all IEC materials produced by UNICEF and its partners. It was held to share available materials for effective and wide use in cyclone affected areas.

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