

EMERGENCY TASK FORCE TELECONFERENCE
Note for the Record
Myanmar Cyclone Nargis – June 26, 2008

Chair: Anthony Banbury, Regional Director, OMB

Next Meeting: Tuesday, July 1, 2008 at 11:00 Rome/ 15:30 Yangon/ 16:00 Bangkok

Situation Report from Yangon

- In the TCG meeting on June 20 the “Guiding Principles” were reversed. WFP is therefore now working again with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for visas and the Ministry of Social Welfare for travel access to the field.
- Further to WFP’s letter to the Minister of Planning on arguments to restart the cash programme, government consent was obtained and the programme will recommence later this week.
- In a meeting on June 21 with the Ministry of Commerce, WFP was informed that we would not be able to procure rice locally.
- ASEAN roundtable meeting took place on June 24; meeting, which was well represented by ASEAN member states, reviewed lessons learned from other emergencies and gave clear and good messages to the Government of Myanmar (which will be documented).
 - CD noted that the role of ASEAN in the context of Cyclone Nargis has been excellent, and as such should continue; possibly playing a broader facilitating role over and beyond the current crisis.
 - Relationship between the UN and ASEAN has also been very good, with mutual confidence among the organizations, largely thanks to a UNDP staff member who has been seconded to ASEAN.
 - Noeleen Heyzer, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), has also been useful in cementing the broader political role between ASEAN and the UN system. Ms. Heyzer underlined the importance of leadership (from national governments) and building trust in order to move forward during the roundtable.

Logistics

Helicopters

- Five of the 10 helicopters will discontinue operations in Myanmar on June 30 when they fly to Bangkok for disassembly before returning to their places of origin.
- CD emphasized the importance of the remaining 5 helicopters and the need to ensure that they were not taken for granted. Helicopters have been of tremendous value playing an important role in the movement of both cargo and people. With a recent increase in requests being received from users these 5 helicopters may have to put in additional flying hours. Even when the remaining 5 helicopters are phased out, one may need to stay on for some time in Myanmar to shuttle people to and from the delta.
- Challenge will be in the messaging of the phase out of the first 5 helicopters and the importance of communicating the plan to all concerned (users, donors, UNCT and TCG), who should be aware that the decision to phase out was reached by the user group and is based on utilization rates and cost analysis. It was agreed that to protect WFP and safeguard against future criticism, the CO would send written notification to the UNCT/IASC and the Chair of the TCG; and hold a meeting to inform local donors on plans. Similarly, Donor Relations, Rome will reach out to major donors (Australia, Canada, UK, USA).

Staging Area

- Both aircraft operating the air bridge from Bangkok to Yangon have been extended until July 7; at the current rate of delivery (two rotations per day per aircraft), there is currently freight until the end of August.
- Given most of the cargo in the warehouse is light weight and volume metric a more economical plan for moving voluminous supplies would be developed, looking at road and sea options. A prioritization plan based on inventory and pipeline will be conveyed to partners and donors.
- A cut off date, in line with the close of the Special Operation on August 10, to receive transit cargo at the warehouse would also be announced to users, who will be encouraged to send cargo directly to Myanmar by sea.

Procurement/Pipeline

- In a meeting today in Bangkok with OMB, the Thai MOFA Permanent Secretary informed WFP that Thailand is willing to help with rice procurement; nevertheless, WFP will continue to explore regional purchase.

Programme Issues

Appeal/Budget Revision

- Flash Appeal will now be launched on July 10 in New York to ensure processing of data from the completion of the assessment.

- Budget revision to the EMOP is being drafted alongside the appeal. EMOP will be extended by 6 months (April 2009); draft document expected to be finalized by the CO over the weekend.
- There was concern on the late influx of plastic sheeting almost two months after the cyclone by different agencies, which would be raised with the shelter cluster.

Donor Relations

- No new pledges have been forthcoming however it is hoped that donors will react after the Flash Appeal is launched.
- DFID has not yet contributed but a donation is likely to be announced. Logistics discussing possible CERF funding for the SO today.

Public Information

- Good coverage on BBC today with footage from Edith Champagne. Possible IRIN story on the helicopters also today.
- Need to develop some talking points/Q&A in advance of helicopter phase out.
- Regarding recent OCHA press release issued from Yangon, CO will work on providing input to OCHA for future releases.

AOB

Finance

- CD reported a recent and very serious 20% loss on foreign exchange (changing US Dollars to Foreign Exchange Certificates [FEC] then to local currency, Kyats), which will be raised at the TCG meeting tomorrow.

Future of Task Force Meetings

- Following the recent decision to deactivate Myanmar as a Corporate Emergency, the need to continue the Task Force will be reviewed at the next meeting (Tuesday July 1, 2008).