

Coordination of aid agencies and relief delivery to Nargis victims questioned by an alternative assessment report

July 25, 2008 – Bangkok. A new report "An Alternative Assessment of the Humanitarian In The Irrawaddy Delta: Situation after 60 days" released by an independent researcher from the Burmese community says that many victims of Cyclone Nargis are still not getting adequate relief material being disbursed by international aid groups including the United Nations agencies. This Report highlights the gaps in the distribution of humanitarian aid that raises issues of accountability, coordination, effectiveness and transparency. Conversely, such gaps are not covered in the post-Nargis Assessment (PONJA) Report released by ASEAN on July 21, 2008.

The independent researcher conducted a one month assessment in the Irrawaddy Delta between 7 June - 4 July. The assessment report identified the situation on the ground and exposes gaps in the distribution of humanitarian aid. The researcher conducted informal discussions and interviews with villagers, local leaders, and relief workers from social organizations and local NGOs. The report said there is lack of strategic coordination amongst UN agencies, international agencies and local groups (including local NGOs and social groups), in the delivery of relief, data collection, impact assessments and information sharing and there is an overlap in relief distribution. The researcher says "it is questionable how much aid is actually being delivered to the affected communities".

The report says that "In the light of the fact that the World Bank and Asian Development Bank have provided support to the ASEAN-led Post-Nargis Joint Assessment Team, it is critical that the World Bank and the ADB maintain maximum transparency and provide public information regarding their support for the ASEAN-led PONJA assessment, and also include community-based organizations which are advocating for genuine political reform in any decision-making process regarding direct or indirect support for reconstruction activities in Burma". The report also calls for ASEAN to work alongside local communities, local NGOs and social groups, not just through the government when developing their framework for relief and recovery efforts.

The new report recommends:

1. Ongoing consultations between the UN and international organizations with local NGOs and social organizations to ensure that information is shared and the delivery of aid is coordinated;
2. To have independent monitoring and evaluation of aid distribution (perhaps with the assistance of local NGOs and social organizations) to ensure that the assistance is being provided effectively.
3. To consult with local affected communities to identify needs and develop activities for the reconstruction phase.
4. UN agencies and international agencies should report on the real situation on the ground in areas that they are working and continually pressure the government for access to the wider affected areas in the delta. International humanitarian assistance must be provided in a way which respects and protects the fundamental rights to housing of those displaced.

For a new report, please see the attached file.

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