

## WHO releases \$350,000 to Myanmar for medical aid

The World Health Organization (WHO) has released \$350,000 from its emergency fund to meet the medical needs of tens of thousands of survivors of the devastating cyclone that ravaged Myanmar May 2.

While WHO's South-East Asia Regional Office has released the money from its regional health emergency fund, it is also monitoring outbreak of communicable disease in the wake of cyclone Nargis that has killed at least 24,000 people in Myanmar.

The money has been released for immediate health needs in the cyclone-affected areas, a statement issued here Tuesday said.

The WHO main headquarters in Geneva has already provided \$50,000 for assistance, it said.

'WHO continues to work closely with the Myanmar Ministry of Health during the cyclone Nargis crisis. Our staff are distributing relief supplies in the worst affected areas,' said Samlee Plianbangchang, WHO regional director for South-East Asia.

Additional funding is being mobilized through the UN flash appeal. 'WHO is leading the Health Cluster comprising 22 international NGOs and other UN agencies to respond to the emergency,' the statement said.

The deadly cyclone, which originated in the Bay of Bengal, hit Yangon, Bago, Irrawaddy, Kayin and Mon divisions.

After the devastation, diarrhoea and dysentery cases have been reported, but so far no cholera cases have been confirmed.

'Immediate efforts are focussed on ensuring care and treatment to the injured population and preventing communicable diseases such as diarrhoea, other waterborne diseases, acute respiratory infections, measles and dengue,' WHO said.

WHO staff are operating in Myanmar to help provide essential health care.

'Eight international emergency health kits containing essential medical supplies have arrived in Yangon and have immediately been delivered to the affected areas. Each kit can treat 10,000 people for a period of three months,' said Poonam Khetrapal Singh, WHO deputy regional director for South-East Asia.

Eric Laroche, WHO's assistant director-general for Health Action in Crisis, said: 'WHO is leading the health cluster collaborating closely with the Myanmar Ministry of Health to meet the immediate health needs of the tens of thousands affected by the cyclone and to re-establish a public health system.'

The organisation has also provided supplies containing bleaching powder and chlorine tablets for water treatment, antibiotics, saline solutions and oral rehydration salts to prevent and control diarrhoeal and other waterborne diseases.

They have also dispatched 30,000 surgical masks, 30,000 gloves and body bags to Bogale and Labutta, in Irrawaddy division, for the collection of dead bodies.

Also, they have mobilized the delivery of insecticide-treated bed nets to ward off malaria and provided guidelines for accepting donations of essential medicines.

Sixteen WHO national surveillance officers have been deployed to the affected areas in Irrawaddy and Yangon divisions to assist authorities in disease surveillance, response and monitoring and also to assist them in distribution of medical supplies and other health logistics.

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