

## Heavy rain 'worst scenario' for cyclone survivors

Heavy rain forecast for the disaster-struck Irrawaddy delta in Myanmar represented 'the worst scenario imaginable', said a spokesman for the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

The International Research Institute (IRI) for Climate and Society, based at Columbia University in New York has predicted 12 cm of rain during the next six days for the area worst affected by Cyclone Nargis.

Peter Rees, head of International Federation operations support in Geneva, Wednesday said: 'With large areas already flooded and with communities already pushed to their capacities, this rain could represent the worst scenario imaginable.'

With the soil saturated there was a real risk of further severe flooding. He warned that this could force people to leave areas that they thought were safe in search of new dry land, which could complicate the relief efforts already underway.

The new rain and potential flooding could also have a severe impact on the health of affected communities.

Uli Jaspers, who is coordinating IFRC efforts to get clean water to cyclone survivors, said: 'We could also see more unsafe water being forced out of sanitation facilities, which obviously increases the already very real risk of water borne diseases such as diarrhoea and dysentery.'

Hundreds of thousands of people were without even basic shelter.

The deteriorating weather could lead to a sharp increase in respiratory infections such as pneumonia, especially among children, he warned.

Heavy rain would also make access even more difficult to the worst affected regions.

IFRC is concentrating on getting supplies into the delta region where few international humanitarian workers have been granted access.

On Wednesday, family kits for 10,000 people left Yangon, including tarpaulins, pots, mosquito nets, water purification tablets and soap to be distributed by Myanmar Red Cross volunteers.

Flights from the Red Cross Red Crescent logistical hub in Kuala Lumpur were landing every day in Yangon, carrying additional shelter supplies and other basic but vital relief items.

( © IANS / India eNews)