

Myanmar: OCHA Flash Update No 1: Myanmar Floods Emergency, 01 August 2015

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Heavy monsoon rains during the month of July, have caused flooding, flash floods and landslides in several parts of Myanmar, including in the Sagaing Region and Kachin State. Cyclone Komen, that made landfall in Bangladesh on 30 July, brought strong winds and heavy rains resulting in further floods, landslides and wind damage in several states and regions across the country. On 31 July, President U Thein Sein issued a statement declaring natural disaster zones in Chin and Rakhine states and in the Sagaing and Magway regions.

According to initial figures from the Government's Relief and Resettlement Department (RRD), over 156,000 people have been affected across Sagaing, Kachin, Shan, Mandalay, Chin, Rakhine, Kayin, Mon, Bago, Magway, Ayeyarwady and Yangon as of 1 August. However, there are many areas that have still not been reached or reported on by assessment teams and information that is still coming in from the Government indicates that the total figure may be significantly higher. According to Government sources, at least 27 people have been killed by floods in July. As further information becomes available, this figure is also expected to increase.

In Rakhine, eight townships across the state are reported to be affected by floods and wind damage: Minbya, Mrauk U, Kyauk Taw, Myebon, Ann, Paletwa, Buthidaung and Maungdaw. Floods and damage are reported to be particularly bad in Mrauk-U, Kyaktaw, Minbya and Buthidaung. Initial reports indicate that there is extensive damage to shelters and other infrastructure in camps around Sittwe, where some 100,000 displaced people are staying. Villages in the area are also reported to have been affected. Reports of damage to camps and villages in other areas, including in Pauktaw Township, are also coming in. No overall figure for the number of people affected across Rakhine State is yet available and some areas, including Mrauk-U and Kyaktaw, are not yet accessible except for via air, due to disruption of transportation systems. The Rakhine State Government and international organizations are carrying out assessments in affected areas and more information will become available in the coming days.

Limited information is available at this stage on the situation in Magway Region and Chin States. In Magway, two of the worst affected townships are Pwintbyu and Sidoktaya, according to humanitarian organizations in the area. In Pwintbyu Township alone, around 70 villages are reported to be affected by floods and people in the area being relocated to schools, monasteries and other safe locations.

In Chin State, heavy rains and landslides are reported to have occurred in Haka town, with at least 100 houses reported have been destroyed by landslides. Haka Town is reportedly inaccessible at the moment due to roads washed away.

The Sagaing Region was severely affected by floods throughout the last two weeks of July, with 13 townships affected. Initial reports indicate that Kalay Town has been critically affected by the strong winds and heavy rainfall in the wake of Cyclone Komen and is reportedly reachable only via air at the moment.

Local authorities, the Union Government, the military, as well as the Myanmar Red Cross Society and local civil society organizations, with support from the UN and international organizations, are responding to the floods in different parts of the country, carrying out rescue operations and providing food, water, blankets, medical and other basic necessities to those affected.

According to the Myanmar Department of Meteorology and Hydrology update on 1 August, rain or thundershowers will be widespread in Kachin State with likelihood of heavy rainfall in Bago, Magway Sagaingm Taninthayi and Yangon regions, and Chin, Rakhine and Mon states the next two days.

On 1 August, the Global New Light of Myanmar reported that national disaster preparedness committees are making evacuation and resettlement efforts in Ayeyawady and Bago regions, as well as Kayin and Mon states, which are also experiencing floods.

The next OCHA Flash Update on the floods emergency will be issued on or around 3 August.

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