



OFFICE OF THE RESIDENT & HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR, YANGON, REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR

## **RESILIENT COMMUNITIES OF MYANMAR FACE FLOOD RECOVERY WITH COURAGE AND DIGNITY**

(Yangon, 27 August 2015): Four weeks after devastating floods hit large swathes of Myanmar, many communities in the delta region are still under water. They can only be reached by boat, surviving on government and international support, as well as on donations that all walks of society have offered in a remarkable outpouring of solidarity and generosity.

During July and August, heavy flooding tragically took the lives of 121 people and caused more than 1.6 million people to flee their homes. According to the Government, the floods inundated over 1.4 million acres of farmland, damaging over 1 million acres of rice paddy and other crops. Twelve of Myanmar's 14 states and regions were impacted. Six are critically affected, of which four were declared natural disaster zones by the Government.

Visiting the flooded areas in the Ayeyarwaddy delta this week, the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General, UNDP Director of the Crisis Response Unit Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, was struck by the communities she visited. Families had ingeniously constructed multiple layers of bamboo flooring to lift themselves out of the water as it rose, and rescued their livestock either into their homes or other safe havens. Many have lost their livelihoods and do not know how they will recover. Yet despite the magnitude of their losses and the uncertainties of the future, their demeanor conveyed courage and poise. "I have seen the devastation caused by the flooding and yet these people have maintained their dignity and shown their resilience. They can be assured of the UN's continued support in recovery," she said.

Since the beginning of the floods, the UN and its partners have worked with the government-led response to provide emergency relief to affected households. More than 403,000 people were reached with over 2,500 metric tonnes of life-saving food; 10,000 emergency shelters and more than 15,000 family kits were distributed. The response from local civil society was also overwhelming, with the Myanmar Red Cross Society mobilizing 300,000 volunteers, and all walks of society -- from businesses, celebrities and artistes, to taxi drivers, trishawmen and local neighborhood groups -- mobilizing donations in solidarity with flood victims.

Lessons learned in the response to Cyclone Nargis saved many lives and government has responded well. As the country expands its flood recovery and reconstruction work, it is important to incorporate disaster risk reduction. Accompanying Ms. Nakamitsu was the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Ms. Renata Dessallien, who noted, "Our efforts to help households rebuild their livelihoods, repair infrastructure and restore services, must be accompanied by measures to reduce people's vulnerability to future disasters. Reforestation, embankment strengthening, water management and other disaster risk reducing measures need to be factored in now so that together we can help to build back better."

Rapid needs assessments led by the UN in six disaster zone areas -- Rakhine, Sagaing, Chin, Magway, Bago and Ayeyarwady have informed the formulation of an initial flood recovery plan. It highlights the continued need to support rural livelihoods, resume social services, rehabilitate community infrastructure and coordinate assistance. It will be updated after a month, as more assessment information comes in. The international community has mobilized US\$ 24.4 million for the flood response to date, of which US\$11.8 million is from UN managed funds.

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