

OXFAM IN MYANMAR

In Myanmar Oxfam focuses on supporting communities, civil society organisations and local administrations, and influencing people in power to deliver better food security, livelihoods and public health work.



THE SITUATION

Myanmar is made up of a rich mix of ethnicities, cultures, languages and religions. More than 25% (approximately 13 million people) of the population lives below the poverty line. The majority of people living in poverty are in rural areas and lack access to clean water or adequate sanitation.

Women earn markedly less than men in comparable roles, and have fewer oppor-

tunities to take part in decision-making. Myanmar is prone to a range of natural disasters. The highest frequency of risk comes from flooding. Parts of Myanmar are also exposed to low-frequency, high-impact events such as cyclones, as shown by Cyclone Nargis in May 2008, which seriously affected more than 2.4 million people, and more recently Cyclone Giri, which struck in October 2010 and affected at least 200,000 people.

IN NUMBERS*

150,000
total people helped



Photo: Jane Beesley

HOW OXFAM IS HELPING

We work to improve production and income for poor rural producers, in a way that empowers communities to better understand the constraints they live in and link more effectively to government and private sector service providers. This centres on the people most marginalised, and with the least opportunities, in particular looking to promote poor women's economic leadership and participation.

Working with young and inexperienced local organisations, we also set out to address the structural barriers to development, and support partners to analyse and address these systematically rather than provide short term assistance.

Left: Pyone Pyone and her daughter received materials from Oxfam to build a new home in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis which hit Myanmar in May 2008.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

We started implementing our humanitarian response programme in 2008 for people affected by Cyclone Nargis – delivering food security assistance; supporting the replacement of assets in fisheries, livestock and farming livelihoods; and rehabilitating, improving and extending essential infrastructure and community resources (such as water resources, access routes, schools and sanitation). We reached more than 250,000 people in more than 600 villages. Building on this work, from 2009 we supported almost 50,000 people in 83 communities to improve their

livelihoods. We worked to establish community structures to improve farming practices, facilitated access to tools such as tractors, fertiliser and seeds through the market (and supporting longer term relationships with traders), opened up new opportunities for business and production for landless labourers, and improved village infrastructure to increase market access and communities' abilities to cope with the impacts of future disasters.



Photo: Jane Beesley

Oxfam engineer Thant Zin Win explains latrine construction to a group of volunteers as part of our Cyclone Nargis response.



Photo: Aye Zaw Myo

Villagers carrying water collected from a pond in new containers provided by Oxfam.

DEVELOPMENT

While we are scaling down our emergency work, we are moving forward with a greater emphasis on development and building marginalised poor communities' capacities to strengthen livelihoods in the longer term. For example, we are working with 45 fishing communities to enable them to secure their rights to access communal fishing grounds, and supporting them to secure meaningful and sustainable incomes from their livelihoods. This includes working with women to improve their role in the market and access to income by adding value to fishing production.

HELPING COMMUNITIES WORK TOGETHER

In Myanmar's central, environmentally fragile dry zone, we are scaling up our work with partners and communities in 84 villages across three townships. Our focus is on developing communities' ability to work together, and with the local authorities and the private sector, to improve long term productive potential and

manage a range of social, economic and environmental risks. This means establishing networks to help small producers learn from each other, work together, and work with authorities to influence planning decisions made on their behalf.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

We integrate disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and humanitarian preparedness into our work in Myanmar. We're also working to support local organisations to be well-prepared to respond to acute disasters.