



Background

In May 2008, Myanmar faced its most devastating natural disaster on record when Cyclone Nargis struck the Ayeyarwady Delta. The 200 km/hr winds, heavy rains and 12-foot storm surge caused shattering losses. More than 140 000 people died and 95 percent of homes in the Delta were destroyed. The storm displaced 800 000 people and severely affected 2.4 million. Although damage was widespread across all sectors, agriculture was hardest hit.

Nargis caused unprecedented damage to the country's main agricultural production area – known as Myanmar's rice granary and one of the most diversified fishing regions in the world. Fields were submerged and productive assets lost when farmers were at the final stages of harvesting their paddy and just prior to the main monsoon planting season. Food and seed stocks were destroyed, as were vital sources of food and income for landless families, such as fishing, livestock production, forestry resources, backyard gardening, as well as on-farm labour.

These losses were suffered by a great portion of the country's most vulnerable families. The Delta has the highest concentration of poor households engaged in agriculture and up to 89 percent of the population depends on the sector for its livelihood. Despite the substantial efforts made to-date, far too many families have not received the support they need to recover.

Agriculture remained one of the least funded sectors throughout the Nargis response, from the Myanmar Tropical Cyclone Nargis Flash Appeal of 9 May 2008 and its revision on 10 July 2009, to the needs underscored in the Post-Nargis Recovery and Preparedness Plan (PONREPP), a three-year strategy framework endorsed by the Tripartite Core Group (TCG) in December 2008.

In response to the gaps and outstanding critical needs impeding recovery in the Delta, the TCG further elaborated a Prioritized Action Plan within the framework of the PONREPP. The Plan, based on the findings of the July 2009 Post-Nargis Periodic Review II, identifies priority actions to be undertaken through to July 2010 in the sectors of Education, Health, Livelihoods, Shelter, and Water Sanitation and Hygiene, with funding requirements of USD 103.56 million.

Challenges facing livelihoods

The lack of agricultural inputs remains a key impediment to food security and livelihood recovery in the Delta. If critical recovery needs remain unaddressed, families will become increasingly vulnerable and hard-won gains may be lost. According to the Post-Nargis Periodic Review II, only 7 percent of affected households (out of 2 931 surveyed in May 2009) had received fisheries, crops or livestock inputs. The survey further revealed the following key findings:

- Nearly one-third of households continue to consider crop items or inputs as a pressing need.
- The monsoon paddy planted was 13 percent less than Pre-Nargis levels due to lack of seeds, fertilizer and land preparation inputs.
- Eight percent reported pigs or poultry as a critical need.
- Over 30 percent noted fishing gear/boats among most pressing needs.



Women-headed landless households receive poultry packages and training to boost their livelihoods.



FAO's response

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) set up an Emergency and Rehabilitation Coordination Unit in Yangon immediately following the cyclone. Even with critical funding shortages, FAO successfully built technical capacity, delivered inputs and provided coordination support as the lead of the Agriculture Cluster, then as the chair (with Pact as co-chair) of the Delta Livelihood Recovery Working Group to coordinate the livelihood response to Cyclone Nargis. In collaboration with the World Food Programme, FAO is also co-chairing the country-wide Thematic Group on Food Security and Agriculture.

FAO, together with Pact, led the formulation of the Livelihoods component of the PONREPP Prioritized Action Plan, for which funding needs amount to USD 40 million. Of this total, **FAO seeks an estimated USD 20.5 million** for immediate support to activities under the livelihood outcomes 1-4 to:

- provide critical inputs and promote technology transfer in time for the 2010 monsoon planting season;
- build better boats and replace fishing gear essential to Delta livelihoods;
- provide veterinary training, support mobile animal health clinics and restore the livestock population; and
- continue coordination support through livelihoods response mapping and improving synergies among partners to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure cost-effective assistance.



PONREPP PRIORITIZED ACTION PLAN: LIVELIHOODS SECTOR

TOTAL SECTORAL FUNDING REQUIREMENTS (FROM OCTOBER 2009 - JULY 2010): USD 40 MILLION

Outcome 1: Farming communities' crops sustainably restored and improved.	
Programme	Subsistence and medium-scale rice farmers (2-10 acres per farmer).
Activities	Provision of 5 779 tonnes of improved, locally adapted rice seed varieties for the 2010 monsoon season, 17 198 tonnes of fertilizers, 424 power tillers, 42 215 gallons of diesel and 4 242 lubricant kits; 2 300 tonnes of food distributed through food-for-work activities; technical assistance and training; and community-based awareness raising for improved agricultural practices.
Beneficiaries	24 763 households.
Funding subtotal	USD 17 319 000.



For many families, the timely provision of agricultural inputs means being able to secure a source of food and income.

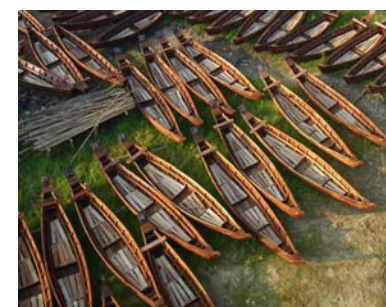
Outcome 2: Restoring fisheries and aquaculture production and re-establishing value chains.	
Programme	Recovery of fisheries and aquaculture production.
Activities	Provision of 3 068 boats, 41 408 subsistence fishing gear and 2 070 commercial fishing gear, 2 485 aquaculture kits and 5 524 packages of processing equipment; technical assistance, training and community-based awareness raising on improved fisheries and aquaculture, early warning systems and basic safety measures (life jackets, lifebuoys, emergency lights, etc.).
Beneficiaries	51 487 households.
Funding subtotal	USD 7 278 000.



Small livestock and poultry assistance packages distributed by FAO have helped thousands of landless households to restore their livelihoods.

Outcome 3: Productive capacity of farmers strengthened by replacing lost livestock, building livestock management capacity and protecting existing livestock.	
Programme	Livestock assets recovery, training and extension services.
Activities	Provision of 6 776 buffaloes, 64 800 chickens, 240 075 ducks, 30 000 pigs and animal feed; pilot demonstrations in areas of safe shelter for animals through the construction of earthen mounds and high rise lands; technical training and assistance; and mobile animal clinics.
Beneficiaries	40 873 households.
Funding subtotal	USD 9 017 000.

Outcome 4: Enhanced livelihoods of households dependent on forestry and reduced impact of future disasters through mangrove rehabilitation and plantation.	
Programme	(i) Production of seedlings, planting of mangrove and sustainable environmental management and extension services. (ii) Livelihoods Recovery through Community-Based Mangrove Rehabilitation Project in the Delta Areas.
Activities	(i) Provision of 500 000 tree seedlings and nursery establishment materials and equipment; training and community-based awareness-raising for sound environmental practices; and technical assistance and training. (ii) Capacity building (forest management, agroforestry, etc.); assessment of natural resources; reforestation through public tree planting, pre-emergency tree pruning and community forests, etc.; and forest-based and environmentally-friendly income generation and efficient energy use.
Beneficiaries	36 000 households.
Funding subtotal	USD 1 286 000.



Only an estimated 30 percent of boats destroyed by Nargis had been replaced as of 30 June 2009, according to the Agriculture Cluster database.

Outcome 5: Increased livelihoods opportunities through enhanced skills and employment.	
Programme	Capacity building and support services.
Activities	Cash-for-work; training in off-farm skills and business; and community-based organization training on disaster preparedness through a livelihoods approach.
Beneficiaries	70 125 households.
Funding subtotal	USD 5 100 000.

URGENT SUPPORT IS REQUIRED TO MEET PRE-MONSOON SEASON NEEDS

Urgent support is needed now as much as ever to ensure that progress continues and the gains achieved thus far are not lost to new challenges. **Timing is crucial** in livelihoods work. It is essential that inputs reach farmers together with training and extension services at the appropriate time in the cropping calendar. Even with a critical shortage of funding, the livelihood assistance provided to-date has made a **great difference in the lives of many**.

However, this **support cannot continue without renewed funding commitment**. With donor support, FAO and the partners of the Delta Livelihood Recovery Working Group can deliver on these critical needs and help assure the lasting recovery of Delta livelihoods.

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