

Burma Cyclone

Greetings,

Once again, Burma is in the news, this time with a devastating cyclone killing unknown 10s of thousands of people and leaving a million homeless. Estimates of the dead range from over 20,000 to 100,000. I recently saw a quote from World Vision estimating the death toll at 80,000. Whatever the number, it is sure to grow as aid is just starting to come.

Solid information is hard to come by, but there are reports that some of the Baptist offices and facilities were badly damaged. While affecting people of many ethnic groups, much of the storm damaged area is populated by the Karen and we hear that whole villages have been wiped off the map.

Relief has been slow to come and since the storm came Saturday, the people have been left to fend largely for themselves. The government was being criticized for not sending troops in to help the people and for not allowing aid from foreign countries to enter. Aid is starting to come now, but the needs are huge. Food and water are scarce and people are already hungry. Building supplies are reported to be scarce as well so even those with money have little to buy.

Both International Ministries of the American Baptist Churches and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship are already sending financial aid to Burma to try and provide some relief and are trying to assess the needs and find the best way to help further. If you would like to contribute you can by following these links:

International Ministries: <http://www.abc-oghs.org/give>

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship: <https://www.thefellowship.info/Give/Donate.aspx?fund=RLF>

Some have asked me if the storm damage and desperate situation of the people will mean an influx of people to the refugee camps. This does not seem likely as the site of the cyclone is quite far from the camps and would involve a grueling trip (that could not be done openly) over very rugged terrain. Victims of the storm would not have the food, supplies or health to make such a trip even if they wanted to. So other than receiving heavy rain, I've not heard that the camps were heavily affected.

However, perhaps lost in the shadow of this tragedy is the continuing rice price crises that continues to face the Karen in the refugee camps. The most recent report I saw shows that the Thailand Burma Border Consortium that supplies all the food in the 9 camps still needs about \$7 million US to avoid having to severely cut the food ration. Already some cuts have been made. This could become a critical situation in a short time if funds aren't found in the next few weeks.

Contributions can be made to help provide food for the refugees through the TBBC website at www.tbbc.org. (Note though, that contributions through the web site are in British pounds and one pound is worth \$2.00 US). Contributions can also be made through CBF at the link above but with account number 17001.

So many of these affected by the cyclone and still in the camps are our Baptist brothers and sisters. So please continue to remember the people of Burma and the people in the camps in your prayers. There is a lot of suffering going on right now that will continue for a long time to come. They need our prayers and our help.

In Christ,

Duane & Marcia Binkley