

Relief Fund Update April-September 2008

The Mothers' Union Relief Fund offers emergency support to families all over the world who have been affected by natural or man-made disaster. The Mothers' Union is well placed within local communities to be able to offer assistance quickly to families whose lives have met with adversity. Emergency supplies of food, medicine, blankets and other essential items can be purchased locally and distributed swiftly to those most in need.

Supporting displaced families in Kenya

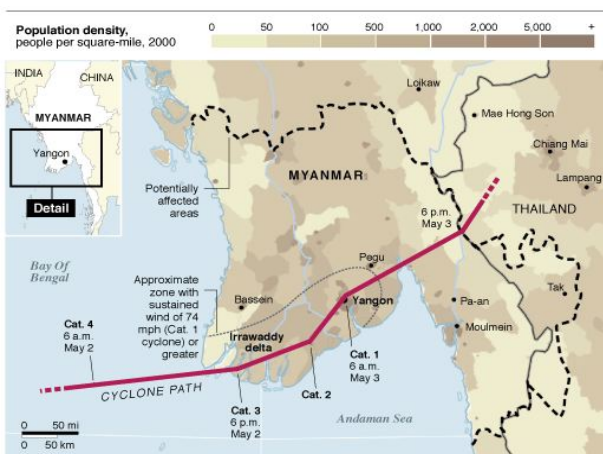


Elections in Kenya in January this year sparked tribal and political tensions into unexpected and staggering violence across the country. Thousands fled their homes in terror. Mothers' Union members in Kenya contacted Mary Sumner House, concerned for the many displaced women and children flocking to emergency camps. Amongst feedback were stories of brutal killings and the rape of women and girls bringing with it new fears of increased HIV/AIDS rates.

Mothers' Union's Relief Fund assisted members in three dioceses to distribute emergency supplies of porridge flour, maize, beans and sanitary towels to displaced families.

Mothers' Union members across the province are also involved in the ongoing peace and reconciliation process, especially working with families who are returning home from the camps.

Relief to Myanmar after Nargis Cyclone



SOURCES: United Nations; Penn State University; University of Georgia-ITOS; Center for International Earth Science Information Network.

In May 2008 Myanmar was hit by a powerful cyclone that devastated the south coast of the country. Over 100,000 people are feared to have died with many thousands more left homeless and vulnerable. Initially communication with the Mothers' Union in Myanmar was near impossible and getting relief fund into the country was even harder.

After days waiting for a reply, our first news of the disaster came through the church coordinator Saw Edwards. He reported more than 70 villages over ten different parishes had been affected.

The church of the Province of Myanmar formed an immediate relief committee with 19 members including the current and previous Archbishop. The committee divided into three groups covering the worst hit areas of the province and were asked to report back within a week with news of the exact situation on the ground.

Almost two weeks later more news arrived from Saw Edwards who revealed that

“Up till today, foreign relief workers (even experts) are still not allowed to go into the Nargis Cyclone destructed areas in delta, Myanmar. Many victims are still without medical care or support.”

With no outside assistance allowed, the church sent out a plea for Myanmar Nationals living abroad who had medical backgrounds to return to help with the relief effort. They established ‘Nargis Cyclone Medical Relief Team’.

Within a week of news reaching us, Mothers’ Union had managed to find a way to send money into Myanmar so that emergency supplies of blankets, mosquito nets and food could be purchased.



Further assistance sent to Iraq



Distribution of emergency supplies in Iraq

In March 2008 a Relief Fund grant was sent to the Mothers’ Union in Iraq, to help in the ongoing relief effort there. With these funds Mothers' Union in Iraq was able to purchase essential and desperately needed items including food, blankets and medicine.

In May 2008 updates were received from Canon Andrew White highlighting the continuing great need and immense challenges faced by families in this troubled area on a daily basis.

After a meeting with Canon Andrew White in London in May, Mothers' Union Worldwide President Rosemary Kempzell summarised the situation in Iraq as follows:

“Things seem pretty bad with little improvement. The Mothers’ Union is now 1,000 strong and growing by 100 a month. There are 1,500 in the congregation of whom 1,000 are women, 500 are children and 8 men. All the men have been killed. There are constant rocket attacks and the reaction is for everyone to get down onto the floor but remarkably they continue their worship singing and playing instruments while on the floor. Mothers’ Union is

the Church. It is unique in Iraq among Muslims as well as Christians. Canon Andrew says that Mothers’ Union is the most important organisation in Baghdad”.

A further Relief Fund grant was sent in May 2008 to enable the Mothers’ Union to continue their relief effort on the ground.

Mothers' Union Response to the Food Crisis

Earlier in 2008 the Mothers' Union responded to severe weather conditions in Mozambique and Malawi that lead to crop failure. Mrs Agnes Mkoko, Mothers' Union Worker for Upper Shire, Malawi relayed how

"In some parts there was too much rain so that it even swept some of the crops and some weak houses fell down. While in other parts... the rains stopped and the crops withered and dried - those parts will now experience hunger problems."



Again in September 2008 we received reports of poor rains that resulted in famine in Kenya from our Provincial Worker.

"Currently, many parts of especially North Eastern Province are facing severe famine following prolonged drought that has led to massive crop failure. In some areas, the situation is so severe that people are going for days without meals, while others are depending on wild fruits for survival."



Although the Kenyan government have now stepped in by providing food handouts, with another crisis facing Kenya so soon after the post election violence, fears are heightened and communities less prepared for such occurrences.

A Relief Fund grant has been sent this September to provide emergency food supplies to the seven most severely affected dioceses.

With increasingly more extreme climate conditions and a severe food shortage world wide, the Mothers' Union are expecting to see an increase in requests for Relief Fund grants. We are therefore working with Mothers' Union Workers and Leaders worldwide on researching and introducing new farming and irrigation initiatives that can be used to provide long-term food security for those countries that are continually threatened by drought and flood.

How you can help...

Through prayer

Please pray for all the families that have been affected by these disasters, especially for families who are grieving for lost friends and relatives. Please pray also for all those who are working tirelessly to bring aid and relief to these families.

By giving

The Relief Fund supports vital Mothers' Union work where it is most needed. This relief work is only possible through the continued enthusiasm, financial and prayer support of our members and friends around the world. By making a donation to Mothers' Union Relief Fund you can make a real difference to vulnerable communities across the world by enabling us to send help immediately as an emergency arises.

Call 020 7222 5533 now to make a donation over the telephone using a credit or debit card, or send a cheque made payable to "Mothers' Union Relief Fund" to: Mothers' Union, 24 Tufton Street, London, SW1P 3RB.

For more information about the Mothers' Union Relief Fund, please visit the Mothers' Union website www.themothersunion.org or e-mail worldwide@themothersunion.org