



# TROPICAL CYCLONE MAHASSEN

FACT SHEET #1, FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2013

MAY 15, 2013

## NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

**8.2 million**

People in Bangladesh, Burma, and India who may be significantly affected by Tropical Cyclone Mahasen

U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) – May 14, 2013

**68,000**

IDPs in Burma's Rakhine State identified as particularly vulnerable to the storm due to their inadequate shelter

OCHA – April 2013

**140,000**

Estimated number of IDPs in Burma's Rakhine State

OCHA – April 2013

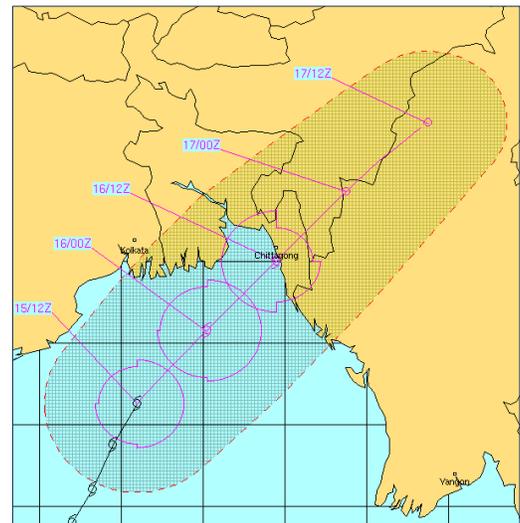
**150,000**

Estimated number of people living in areas of Bangladesh that are likely inaccessible during floods

OCHA – May 13, 2013

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Tropical Cyclone Mahasen is due to make landfall in Bangladesh, near the Burma border, on May 16 with winds of up to 63 miles per hour
- The storm has already caused 7 deaths and displaced 115,000 people in Sri Lanka as it tracked near the country
- Humanitarian preparedness activities are underway in Bangladesh and Burma, including pre-positioning of relief supplies and evacuation of populations residing in areas at high risk of severe storm impact
- USAID/OFDA staff have arrived on the ground in Bangladesh and Burma and stand ready to help coordinate a USG response to cyclone-related humanitarian needs if required



Tropical Cyclone Mahasen's trajectory as of 11:00 a.m. on May 15, 2013. (Source: U.S. Joint Typhoon Warning Center)

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- As of 11:00 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time on May 15, the center of Tropical Cyclone Mahasen was located some 283 miles south of Kolkata, India. The U.S. Joint Typhoon Warning Center anticipates that the storm will continue tracking northeastward and make landfall south of Chittagong city, southeast Bangladesh, on May 16. The system will likely bring heavy rains over Bangladesh, western Burma, and northeastern India.
- The U.N. has stated that the cyclone may significantly affect approximately 8.2 million people throughout parts of Bangladesh, Burma, and India. The international community is particularly concerned by the cyclone's possible impact on internally displaced persons (IDPs) in western Burma's Rakhine State, as well as refugees residing in camps in Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh.
- The Bangladeshi and Burmese governments, along with humanitarian organizations, have been working to prepare communities residing in low-lying coastal areas for the coming storm. Activities to date have included pre-positioning and distribution of relief supplies, as well as evacuation of residents from high-risk areas.
- In anticipation of potential increased humanitarian needs due to Tropical Cyclone Mahasen, USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) has deployed staff from its regional office in Bangkok, Thailand, to Bangladesh and Burma to monitor humanitarian conditions, support storm preparedness efforts, and as needed, coordinate a response.

## BURMA

- As Tropical Cyclone Mahasen nears land, the Burmese Department of Meteorology and Hydrology is reporting that heavy rains are expected in central and western Burma, with landslides and flash floods possible in mountainous areas.
  - In advance of the storm's arrival, Humanitarian agencies are supporting government-led preparedness efforts. Members of the humanitarian community are meeting daily to discuss contingency plans and coordinate emergency actions. According to U.N. reports, Burmese officials have worked proactively to warn all populations residing in the storm's path—both displaced and non-displaced persons—of the cyclone threat.
  - The Government of Burma has reportedly identified relocation sites for all populations living in coastal communities, although some sites may change following consultations with evacuees, the U.N. reports. In accordance with a three-stage disaster preparedness plan, authorities have begun evacuating people residing in high-risk areas of Rakhine State's Maungdaw, Myebon, Pauktaw, and Sittwe townships, according to the U.N. Pauktaw remains the area of most concern, as the island township has few shelters constructed of materials able to withstand strong winds and rains.
  - The U.N. is completing an assessment of the humanitarian community's pre-positioned emergency relief stocks, which will be used for planning purposes by cluster leads. Clusters—sectoral coordinating bodies for humanitarian activities—plan to immediately assess affected areas after the cyclone makes landfall.
  - In Rakhine State, USAID/OFDA partners Save the Children and Solidarités are providing hygiene kits, water tanks, and water purification tablets to populations along the storm's projected path, including in IDP camps in Pauktaw Township. The U.N. World Food Program (WFP) reports recently completing a regularly scheduled 30-day food ration distribution, leaving IDPs with sufficient food stocks at this time.
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## BANGLADESH

- On May 15, the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) heightened its warning for Tropical Cyclone Mahasen to Danger Signal 5 for five coastal districts and Danger Signal 7 for ten coastal districts, including Chittagong and Cox's Bazar, indicating that residents should pack their belongings and prepare for evacuation. The BMD had previously issued a general Local Warning Signal 4 for three area ports. The Chittagong and Cox's Bazar areas of Bangladesh are expected to experience the most severe effects of Tropical Cyclone Mahasen.
  - Implemented jointly by the Government of Bangladesh and the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, Bangladesh's Cyclone Preparedness Program (CPP) works with government authorities down to the lowest administrative level to ready populations for approaching storms. Activated by the BMD's Local Warning Signal 4 on May 13, the CPP has endeavored to identify and warn populations residing in high-risk areas. Disaster management councils at all levels are reviewing early warning procedures, identifying and readying relief items, and preparing cyclone shelters. Through community volunteers and mobile communications, government officials are urging populations in the storm's path to prepare by securing valuables and collecting non-perishable food and safe drinking water.
  - International non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have pre-positioned relief commodities, such as household kits, food stocks, and basic health care supplies, in areas that could be impacted by the storm, including Chittagong and Cox's Bazar. NGOs are also readying staff to conduct emergency assessments, ensuring rescue materials are ready for use, mobilizing field staff and volunteers trained on cyclone preparedness, and conducting other preparedness activities.
  - The U.N. reports that more than 150,000 people are residing in areas that are generally inaccessible during floods. The Logistics Cluster—the coordinating body for humanitarian logistics activities in Bangladesh—is working to identify these populations ahead of the storm, as providing assistance in these areas post-storm may pose a challenge.
  - At this time, the Government of Bangladesh reports no anticipated gaps in assistance if cyclone impacts are moderate; however, a shortage of safe drinking water may become a concern should the cyclone cause significant damage.
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## **USG PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE**

- In Fiscal Year 2013, USAID/OFDA has provided \$1.6 million to assist conflict-affected populations in Rakhine State. Some of this funding has been redirected to help scale up preparedness activities in areas that could be affected by Tropical Cyclone Mahasen.
  - USAID/OFDA also supports a number of disaster risk reduction programs in Bangladesh and Burma related to cyclone preparedness. In Bangladesh, the USAID/OFDA-funded Amrao Pari program is training and organizing vulnerable coastal communities in early warning systems, protective environmental resources, water management, and disaster preparedness, mitigation, and management. In Burma, USAID/OFDA is supporting two programs that reduce the impact of cyclones on coastal residents through the creation of village-level disaster and contingency plans and the rehabilitation of mangroves, as well as technical trainings on disaster-resilient construction and techniques to upgrade existing cyclone shelters.
  - USAID/OFDA maintains a warehouse in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, stocked with emergency relief commodities that can be transported to affected areas, including those in Bangladesh and Burma, if needed.
  - Additional USAID/OFDA response personnel remain on standby in Bangkok, Thailand, to deploy as needed.
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## **PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION**

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for response efforts in Bangladesh and Burma can be found at [www.interaction.org](http://www.interaction.org).
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietary, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
  - The Center for International Disaster Information: [www.cidi.org](http://www.cidi.org) or +1.202.821.1999.
  - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int).

USAID/OFDA bulletins appear on the USAID website at <http://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/working-crises-and-conflict/responding-times-crisis/where-we-work>