




## ELCA NEWS SERVICE

May 8, 2008

**Lutherans Work to Meet the Needs of People in Myanmar**08-062-MRC 

CHICAGO (ELCA) -- International Disaster Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) provided \$100,000 as an initial response to help meet the basic needs of survivors in Myanmar after Cyclone Nargis battered the Southeast Asian country May 3.



"The Myanmar government reported that nearly 22,500 people died and close to 41,000 are missing," said Dr. Belletech Deressa, director for international development and disaster response, ELCA Global Mission. These figures are only an estimate, since access to the areas most affected is limited, she said.

"United Nations officials have reported that close to 1 million people are homeless" and "that, while the greatest needs are for food and shelter, the price of food and other essential items are skyrocketing. The full extent of the destruction is still being ascertained as information on damage and need-assessments is slow coming," Deressa said.

"There are very few nongovernmental organizations or humanitarian agencies in the country due to government restrictions," said Deressa.

The ELCA sent the funds to Church World Service (CWS), an international humanitarian agency with a license to work in Myanmar, said Deressa. The ELCA participates in and supports the work of CWS.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is offering experienced personnel to assist with disaster response operations, said Deressa, adding that Action by Churches Together (ACT) is working on an appeal for funds.

Coordinated by ELCA Global Mission, International Disaster Response channels its funds through international church organizations and relief agencies. Funds provide for food, medicine, drinking water, emergency shelter and other materials for survivors of disasters.

ACT is a global alliance of churches and related agencies working to save lives and support communities in emergency situations worldwide. It is based with the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the LWF, both in Geneva. The ELCA is a member of the WCC and LWF.

**INTERNATIONAL DISASTERS:**

**Editors:** When listing organizations receiving funds for aid to survivors of major disasters outside the United States, Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands, please include:

ELCA International Disaster Response, PO Box 71764, Chicago, IL 60694-1764, 1-800-638-3522 and <http://www.ELCA.org/disaster/idrgive> on the Internet.

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