

Christians Assist Victims of Myanmar Cyclone

World Vision, the Christian humanitarian organization, has nearly 600 staff members on the ground assisting victims affected by Cyclone Nargis.



[] The day after Myanmar's isolationist government allowed one U.S. military cargo plane access to the cyclone-ravaged nation, World Vision already had nearly 600 staff members on the ground assisting victims.

Ever since Cyclone Nargis made landfall on May 3, the Christian humanitarian organization, which has had offices in Myanmar for the last 40 years, has helped nearly 80,000 victims of the natural disaster, providing \$175,000 worth of food, water and medicine from local vendors.

Though many have been assisted so far, World Vision said many more remain and with little time to spare.

"We have a very narrow window of opportunity to ensure people have access to potable drinking water and sanitation," said Samson Jeyakumar, a child development specialist with World Vision. "Disease outbreaks spread by dirty water, poor sanitation and mosquitoes are a major concern. Our priority will be to save children and their families from diseases that spread quickly, such as diarrhea, dysentery, malaria and others in the wake of disasters such as this."

In the Irrawaddy delta, one of the worst hit coastal areas, workers have been feverishly working to chlorinate wells, provide drinking tanks and disinfect camps to help offset diseases that could arise from the tens of thousands of people and animals living in close quarters.

Recent reports of the death toll from the country have risen to 32,000. At least 40,000 are still missing. Many in the

international community are chiding Myanmar's authoritarian regime for not allowing more trained aid workers into the country before the death toll rises higher.

"Unless more aid gets into the country—very quickly—we face an outbreak of infectious diseases that could dwarf today's crisis," said U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, according to the Associated Press. "I therefore call, in the most strenuous terms, on the government of Myanmar to put its people's lives first."