



## **A Comparative Analysis of the Post-Cyclone Scenarios of Mocha and Nargis in Myanmar**



Center for Arakan Studies

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## Lists of Abbreviations

1. Association of Southeast Asian Nations	ASEAN
2. Ashio Chin Defense Force	ACDF
3. ASEAN Emergency Rapid Assessment Team	ERAT
4. ASEAN Coordination Center for Humanitarian Assistance	AHA
5. Arakan Youth Organization Network	AAYON
6. Arakan Responders for Emergency	ARE
7. Burma News International	BNI
8. Cyclone Mocha Emergency Rescue and Rehabilitation Committee for Arakan	ERRC
9. Cyclone Mocha Emergency Response and Rescue Committee for Arakan	EMERRCA
10. Civil Society Organizations	CSOs
11. Community Based Organizations	CBOs
12. Disaster Assistance Response Team	DART
13. US' Department of Defense	DOD
14. Emergency Assistance Team-Burma	EAT-Burma
15. European Union	EU
16. Food and Agricultural Organization of United Nation	FAO
17. Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee	FPNCC
18. OCHA's Financial Tracking Service	FTS
19. Humanitarian and Development Coordination Office	HDCO
20. World Meteorological Organization	WMO
21. Human Rights Watch	HRW
22. Inter-Agency Standing Committee	IASC
23. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies	IFRC
24. International Committee of the Red Cross	ICRC
25. Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army	MNDAA
26. Myanmar National Truth and Justice Party	MNTJP
27. National Natural Disaster Preparedness Central Committee	NDPCC
28. Non-governmental Organizations	NGOs
29. Presidential Office of the National Reconstruction and Emergency Preparedness Plan	PONREPP
30. People's Defense Forces	PDFs
31. State Peace and Development Council	SPDC
32. State and Administration Council	SAC
33. Township Coordination Committees	TCCs
34. Travel Authorizations	TAs
35. Tripartite Core Group	TCG
36. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	UNOCHA
37. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	UNHCR
38. United League of Arakan/ Arakan Army	ULA/AA
39. National Unity Government	NUG
40. United Wa State Army	UWSA
41. United States Agency for International Development	USAID
42. United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund	UNICEF

## Executive Summary

- In comparison between Cyclone Nargis and Mocha, the military regimes' responses, and actions towards the cyclones' management in short and long-term perspectives can be seen as not too different. Their own actions for emergency responses and rehabilitation processes remain insufficient in certain factors that lead the affected communities to be more harmful.
- In both cases, especially for Nargis, in early warning stages, the responsibility of state authorities failed to do enough warnings and preparedness like helping the people in evacuation to safe places and supporting required or enough food to the people who are moving to temporary safe zones. Related to aid supplies in both cases, there is mishandling of assistance through their respective authorized or assigned ministries in state level, township level and village or tract level. These include stealing and abuse of aids for their own profits in different ways such as re-selling and keeping their pockets.
- During the cyclone responses, there were significant concerns about the mishandling of aid supplies by certain individuals within the regime authorities. In Nargis, reports emerged of aid being diverted for personal gain, donated items being sold in local markets instead of reaching to those in need, and the obstruction of private relief efforts. Likewise, in Mocha, voluntary groups spoke out loud that they face similar situations of being abused of aid distributions.
- In both cases of Nargis and Mocha, the people were dying due to the lack of required food stuffs, water, or health care after cyclone-hit to their areas, but the urgent access of helps are blocked by junta even if the civil society organizations, NGOs or INGOs are ready by halting the travel authorizations. This includes a clear human rights violation.
- The role of the non-state actor ULA/AA, a de facto authority on the ground, becomes more prominent in the response of Cyclone Mocha. The group also possesses more trust and legitimacy from the local people while the affected population is under dire need of urgent assistance.
- It seems like Mocha gets less attention than Nargis at the international eye. In terms of numbers, more countries were interested in the case of Nargis and had more actions for helping the vulnerable population in the Nargis-affected areas. Even though the regimes did the same as the situations of Nargis in the case of Mocha including reluctance to accept the international aids and blockages of travel allowance, there is no effective international pressure or efforts in condemning the junta.
- Unfortunately, the roles of the United Nations and ASEAN communities in the case of Mocha are less prominent compared to the Nargis. Besides, the neighboring countries such as China, India and Thailand are also more committed to the Nargis response in terms of financial contributions and action plans.
- Western counties especially Europe, United States, and Australia in the case of Mocha contributed a smaller amount for both financial and diplomatic sectors, which is much less amount of Nargis. It can be mainly their unhappy relations with the existing military regime as they wanted not to engage by avoiding giving legitimacy. Otherwise, the roles of community based, and civil society organizations should also be worth noting.
- The natural disaster events in Myanmar are highly political especially when it happened under the military rules. Both the state and non-state actors are in competition and conflict rather than in collaboration in a search for the common platform and solution. It can also be seen in both cases of Nargis and Mocha.
- Myanmar, one of the most environmentally risky countries in the world, is in a state of emergency with increasing frequency and intensity of natural hazard arrival. Yet, and even at the national level, what if the rehabilitation or emergency responses are out of national capability, so that it is important to give easy access for international or regional humanitarian support from global organizations or countries to help to reduce the hazards.



▪ Map of Myanmar's regions and states



## 1. Introduction: Why Disaster Management Becomes National security?

Security issues, encompassing both traditional and non-traditional threats, continue to impact global human security. Efforts to address these challenges are being undertaken by various stakeholders at national, regional, and global levels. One particularly critical security concern that demands immediate attention is natural disasters. To effectively tackle these issues, it is imperative to prioritize securitization not only at the national level but also through cooperative endeavors at the regional and international levels. This collaborative approach is crucial for devising impactful solutions, especially in the areas of disaster management and prevention. However, developing nations such as Myanmar face unique obstacles when dealing with the adverse effects of natural disasters. Weaknesses in governmental and non-governmental actions further compound the challenges faced.

Considering the vulnerability of Myanmar as one of the least developed countries, the importance of environmental security in the region becomes a crucial topic bringing to a discussion table. Myanmar faces various natural disasters such as cyclones, storm surges, floods, landslides, earthquakes, tsunamis, droughts, fires, and forest fires. It ranks among the most vulnerable nations to the impacts of climate change, and it is expected that the severity of natural disasters would increase in the near future. Analysis of data from 1998 to 2007 reveals that approximately 71% of reported disaster events in Myanmar were attributed to fires, followed by 10% attributed to floods, 11% to storms, and 8% to other events including earthquakes, tsunamis, and landslides.<sup>1</sup> Rainfall-induced flooding is a recurring occurrence throughout Myanmar, while specific regions face risks of landslides and drought.

Along its history, Myanmar has experienced a diverse array of hazards, each varying in frequency and impact. Among these hazards, urban fires are the most prevalent, accounting for approximately 70 percent of all recorded disaster events. Flooding follows closely behind, constituting approximately 11 percent, with storms accounting for 10 percent. Other types of disasters, including earthquakes, tsunamis, and landslides, make up around 9 percent of the total occurrences.<sup>2</sup> So, the loss and effects are worth securitizing as the impacts are deeply harmed by the society of Myanmar. The aftermath of those disasters, the lack of food, resources, and energy, the outbreak of diseases, violence was followed, and the long-term rebuilding is required. Added, according to the report of FAO, in the developing countries, the agricultural absorbs 22 percent of the total damage by the impacts of disaster outbreak<sup>3</sup>. Consequently, the effects of the natural disaster can cause another securitization process in a way.

This paper, therefore, aims to explore the actions taken by various local stakeholders in all local, national, regional, and international levels in the post-Cyclone periods, with a specific focus on the highly affected cases of the 2008 Nargis and the 2023 Mocha, both occurred under military regimes. The report will firstly introduce the background information of the cyclones and consequences, then address the policies and strategies of the junta authorities and de facto quasi-state actor the ULA/AA. Moreover, the report will also focus on the approaches of the neighboring countries and regional organizations like the ASEAN as well as that of the UN and other Western countries. The study then has also highlighted response actions of the local CSO and community organizations including the community voices concerning the two cyclone storms. In the conclusion, the paper will analyze why and how the approaches and responses of the various stakeholders toward the two cyclones are similar and different, and their implications for the local disaster-affected

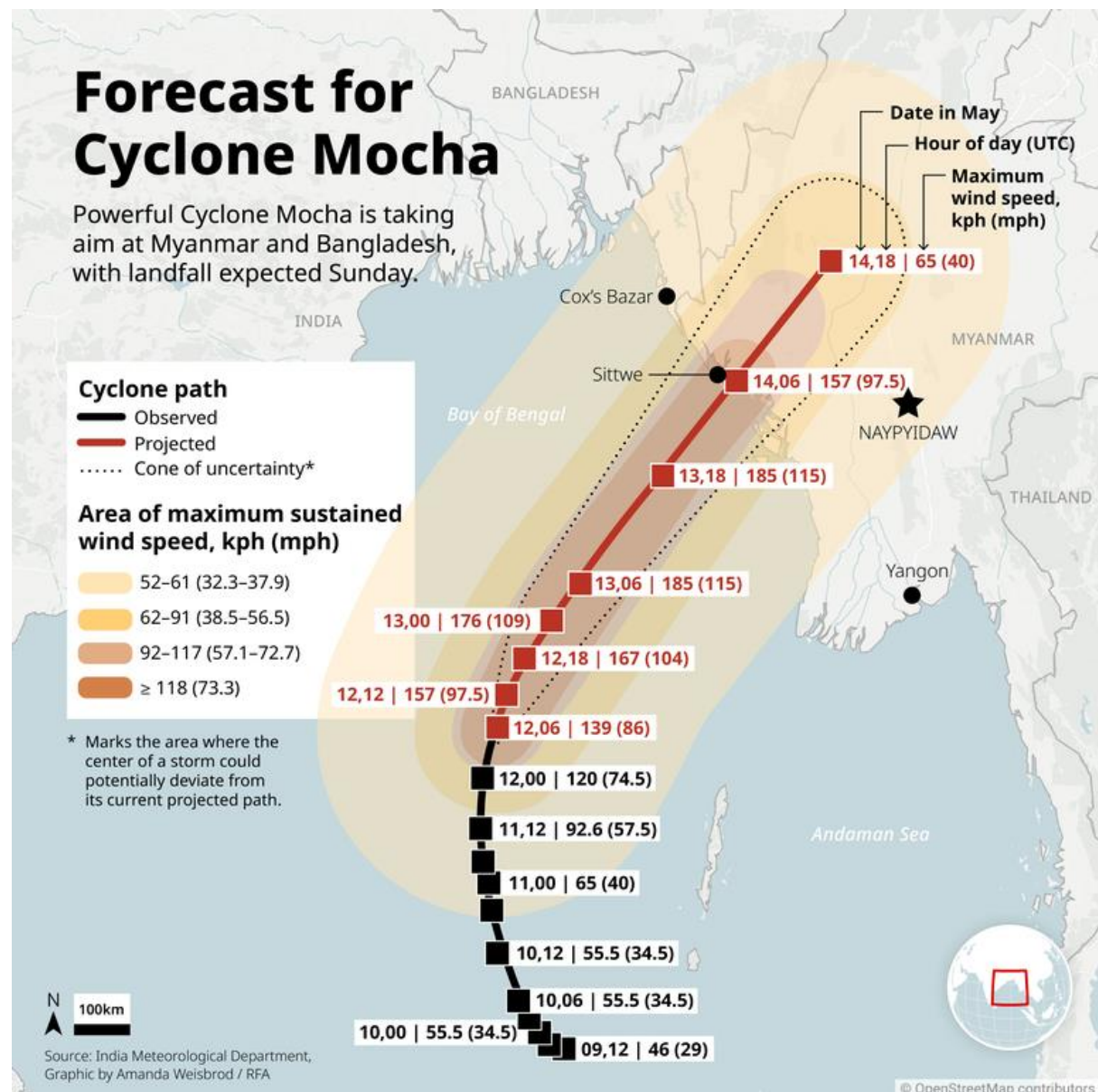
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<sup>1</sup> Reconstructing Houses: Rebuilding Lives - CARE, Australia, [www.care.org.au/wpcontent/uploads/2014/12/Myanmar-Cyclone-Giri-report.pdf](http://www.care.org.au/wpcontent/uploads/2014/12/Myanmar-Cyclone-Giri-report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> IRP, "Cyclone Nargis 2008: rehabilitation in Myanmar" 2010. Accessed: [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/16776\\_cyclonenargis2008.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/16776_cyclonenargis2008.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Food and Agricultural Organization, "The impact of natural hazards and disasters on agriculture, food security and nutrition", 2015, ISBN 978-92-5-108962-0. Accessed: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5128e.pdf>.

populations. In sum, this study endeavors to summarize the two cases from the comparative perspective and conceptualize the burden of the climate change and natural disaster for the people in Myanmar.



## 1.1 Background Information: Nargis Versus Mocha Cyclones

Nowadays, natural disasters are highly alarming the government for environmental securitization as the first most important issue at the national level. For that reason, various governments set out different ways of policy awareness for solutions. The worst case of Cyclone Nargis in 2008 gave a big lesson for Myanmar and the rest of world in general, where both the government and the community got shocked.

To trace the background history, Cyclone Nargis on May 2, 2008, made landfall near Haigyigyun in Ayeyarwaddy Division, Myanmar. And one day later, it strikes along the delta areas on 3 May, bringing with it winds reaching speeds of up to 200 km/h, accompanied by heavy rainfall and a storm surge of 12m in certain areas, marked as category 4 stage.<sup>4</sup> After around 15 years, history brings a return of another natural

<sup>4</sup> IRP, "Cyclone Nargis 2008: rehabilitation in Myanmar", 2010. Accessed: [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/16776\\_cyclonenargis2008.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/16776_cyclonenargis2008.pdf)



disaster with the name of Mocha which directly hit western Myanmar, Rakhine State and some other areas in Southwest Myanmar on May 14, 2023. It also made landfall in Myanmar as a powerful category 5 storm (more intensive like Nargis) with maximum sustained winds of 155 mph (249.448 km/h). Although its winds have since weakened, the storm's intensity was about Category 5 level. Reports on social media platforms such as Twitter and Telegram showed homes being destroyed by strong winds and storm surge flooding moving inland in Sittwe, the capital city of Rakhine State. Similar severe weather conditions were observed in southeastern Bangladesh.<sup>5</sup>

Given the low-lying nature of the region, the storm surge was estimated to push far inland, potentially covering a significant distance. As the storm progressed further inland and its winds subsided, the main threats had shifted to flooding and mudslides caused by heavy rainfall. Mocha also had the potential to unleash up to 2 feet of rain within a span of 24 to 36 hours, exacerbating the risk of dangerous flooding and landslides.<sup>6</sup> Both Nargis and Mocha are regarded as the 'extremely severe cyclonic storms' that caused huge destruction of lives and properties along their paths.

## 1.2 Cyclone Scenarios and Destruction

During Nargis, the lack of enough warnings from the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) regime and lack of trust in the message by both the community and the responsible authorities about the possibility of the serious storm made the worst devastation killing close to 140,000 and destroying or damaging more than 700,000 homes<sup>7</sup>. Among the 7.35 million people residing in the affected townships in Ayeyarwady and Yangon Divisions, an estimated 2.4 million individuals were severely affected. The displacement of approximately 800,000 people further compounded the crisis.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the Ayeyarwady Delta, known for its vital role in rice production, suffered immense damage to its paddy fields. The combination of extreme winds and a 3.7-meter tidal wave caused significant destruction. The FAO estimated that around 63% of Myanmar's paddy fields were impacted, causing harm to the livelihoods of farmers who were in the final stages of the dry season harvest, accounting for 25% of the annual production.<sup>9</sup> The cyclone also inflicted widespread destruction on homes, infrastructure, and essential systems such as roads, jetties, water and sanitation facilities, fuel supplies, and electricity networks. Contamination of water sources and damage to food stocks added to the overall devastation. The economic losses resulting from Cyclone Nargis were estimated to be around USD 4 billion.<sup>10</sup>

Likewise the cyclone Nargis, Mocha was also one of the most impactful storms in the history of Myanmar's disasters and therefore, the immersive damages also happened after the cyclone. The extent of damage and existing vulnerabilities are emerging as the crucial factors determining the severity of the impact and the requirements. Almost every house and resident throughout the path of the storm, such as the townships of Sittwe and Rethedaung, was hugely impacted and damaged. It is estimated that around 85 percent of the shelters in IDP camps in these townships have been destroyed. Many of those severely affected are currently

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<sup>5</sup>Andrew Freedman, Laurin-Whitney Gottbrath, "Powerful Cyclone Mocha strikes Myanmar, Bangladesh", AXIOS, May 14, 2023 - Energy & Environment. Accessed: <https://www.axios.com/2023/05/13/tropical-cyclone-mocha-hits-myanmar-bangladesh>.

<sup>6</sup>Andrew Freedman, Laurin-Whitney Gottbrath, "Powerful Cyclone Mocha strikes Myanmar, Bangladesh", AXIOS, May 14, 2023 - Energy & Environment. Accessed: <https://www.axios.com/2023/05/13/tropical-cyclone-mocha-hits-myanmar-bangladesh>.

<sup>7</sup> International Recovery Platform, Cyclone Nargis 2008: Rehabilitation in Myanmar, Recovery Status report, 2010. Accessed: <https://recovery.preventionweb.net/publication/cyclone-nargis-2008-rehabilitation-myanmar>

<sup>8</sup> "After the storm: recovery, resilience reinforced - Final evaluation of the Cyclone Nargis operation in Myanmar, 2008 - 2011", 1 Nov 2011.

Accessed: <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/after-storm-recovery-resilience-reinforced-final-evaluation-cyclone-nargis-operation>.

<sup>9</sup> "After the storm: recovery, resilience reinforced - Final evaluation of the Cyclone Nargis operation in Myanmar, 2008 - 2011", 1 Nov 2011.

Accessed: <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/after-storm-recovery-resilience-reinforced-final-evaluation-cyclone-nargis-operation>.

<sup>10</sup> "After the storm: recovery, resilience reinforced - Final evaluation of the Cyclone Nargis operation in Myanmar, 2008 - 2011", 1 Nov 2011.

Accessed: <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/after-storm-recovery-resilience-reinforced-final-evaluation-cyclone-nargis-operation>.

residing in temporary sites, monasteries, or exposed areas.<sup>11</sup> In line with a statement by the United League of Arakan (ULA), a political wing of Arakan Army (AA) on May 16, around 1.5 million people are said to be affected by the cyclone. According to the statement made by a branch of the ULA/AA, the ERRC on 14th June 2023, one month after the cyclone, it is said that 164 people were dead while 288,530 houses and 2,068 villages were destroyed. In terms of the townships, Sittwe, Rathedaung, Ponnagyun, Pauktaw, Buthidaung, Kyauk Taw and Mrauk Oo were the most cyclone affected areas with 60-95% impacts, the statement added.<sup>12</sup> Earlier to this statement, in line with the ISP report on July 21, the junta authority is said to released that around 148 people died while the economic loss is around 522 billion MMK.<sup>13</sup>



*Myanmar appears to have borne more direct impact from the cyclone. Photo/BBC*

Although the storms' strengths are nearly the same between Mocha and Nargis, the amount of the affected areas and affected populations are quite different due to various reasons such as technical and political. During Nargis, basing on WMO, Myanmar's meteorology department sent warnings six days before the storm struck but authorities lacked radar to predict the high tidal waves that resulted in the loss of many more lives<sup>14</sup>. The lack of radar systems to predict the significant tidal waves caught many residents off guard, leading to the unfortunate loss of life. Despite the efforts made to provide advance notice, the absence of adequate forecasting tools proved detrimental in anticipating the severity of the storm and its devastating impact.<sup>15</sup>

Name	Nargis Cyclone	Mocha Cyclone
Dissipated Date	3 May 2008	15 May 2023
Strength	Category-4 (Extremely Severe Cyclonic Storm)	Category-5 (Extremely Severe Cyclonic Storm)
Key Areas of Destruction	Ayeyarwady Region	Rakhine State

<sup>11</sup> OCHA, "Myanmar: Cyclone Mocha Situation Report No.1", 27 May 2023. Accessed: <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-cyclone-mocha-situation-report-no1-1400-25-may-2023-enmy>

<sup>12</sup> [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=129080720198102&id=100092885225765&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=129080720198102&id=100092885225765&mibextid=Nif5oz)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.tni.org/en/article/assessing-what-is-happening-in-arakan>

<sup>14</sup> The Guardian, "Disaster preparedness: lessons from cyclone Nargis", Jul 16, 2013, Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2013/jul/16/cyclone-nargis-burma-disaster-relief-aid>.

<sup>15</sup> UNDRR, "Myanmar storm warnings get better", 5 May 2014. Accessed: <https://www.preventionweb.net/news/myanmar-storm-warnings-get-better>.

Fatalities	140,000	164
Estimated Cost of Damage	USD 4 billion	USD 2.24 billion
Impacted Population	2.4 million people (estimated)	1.5 million people (estimated)

At the time of Mocha, there were well-enough announcements and early warnings both from the junta and the ULA authorities including various social media platforms. In line with the weather forecast, two days ahead of Mocha entering, they predicted that tropical Cyclone Mocha, a powerful storm, was expected to hit Myanmar and Bangladesh on 14th May. The cyclone has been rapidly intensifying, and satellite imagery shows the formation of the storm eye, indicating further intensification. Therefore, the access to information and communication at the time of Mocha caused the reduction of the negative impacts compared to Nargis. Moreover, people also had awareness of disaster as they saw and experienced Nargis in the case of Mocha. Since the time of Nargis, some have also remarked that Myanmar has started active and significant disaster management policies, plans and procedures.<sup>16</sup>

## 2. How the Two Political Authorities Handled the Disaster

As most of the reports mentioned that Myanmar became improved for the disaster-released and alarmed actions, it is an interesting factor to compare how the situations change between Nargis and Mocha cyclones' preparedness and emergency & rehabilitation actions. After the hit of Mocha cyclone, the junta authority released intensive actions regarding their actions of emergency responses by releasing the statements, photos, and videos, and constituting a committee as the cyclone response.

### 2.1 Cyclones Preparation and Response

Prior to the occurrence of the Nargis Cyclone, there was insufficient preparedness due to a lack of adequate government warnings and limited access to social media, which could have provided direct information about the cyclone's impact. There has been extensive backlash regarding the military junta's handling of the catastrophe. The Burma Campaign-UK revealed widespread condemnation of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) for failing to issue a timely warning to residents residing in the path of Cyclone Nargis.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, the cyclone had a devastating effect, resulting in numerous casualties and extensive damage. Subsequently, the local authorities attempted to manage response plans, but their preparedness procedures were found to be hugely insufficient. However, in an article expressed in the back pages of The New Light of Myanmar, a newspaper controlled by the junta, it was briefly mentioned that a "severe cyclonic storm" was predicted to approach the shores of Burma within the next 36 hours. The article also noted that because of this storm, rainfall and thunderstorms would be widespread.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the SPDC-controlled television network also released a statement asserting that they had diligently broadcasted timely weather reports via television and radio to ensure the safety and well-being of the entire nation<sup>19</sup>. However, numerous individuals in the country asserted that the state media notifications failed to adequately convey the gravity of the impending storm or provide comprehensive instructions on how to brace for the cyclone's imminent arrival.<sup>20</sup> For example, Min Min Choe, a farmer on Hainggyi Island, said that he underestimated Cyclone Nargis's severity, believing it was a regular storm. He mentioned in an interview with Human Rights Watch (HRW) that the radio news lacked alarming details. If the authorities communicated

<sup>16</sup> International Recovery Platform, Cyclone Nargis 2008: Rehabilitation in Myanmar, Recovery Status report, 2010.

Accessed: <https://recovery.preventionweb.net/publication/cyclone-nargis-2008-rehabilitation-myanmar>

<sup>17</sup> Congressional Research Service, CRS Report, "Cyclone Nargis and Burma's Constitutional Referendum", June 30, 2008. Accessed: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL34481/7>.

<sup>18</sup> "Storm News," The New Light of Myanmar, May 5, 2008, p. 15.

<sup>19</sup> Steve Jackson, "Was Burma's Cyclone Predicted?," BBC, May 6, 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Congressional Research Service, CRS Report, "Cyclone Nargis and Burma's Constitutional Referendum", June 30, 2008. Accessed: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL34481/7>.



the storm's seriousness and potential destruction more effectively, losses could have been reduced. However, crucial information about the storm's time and location was not provided to the community. As a result, when they were eventually informed about the storm's severity, it was already causing significant damage in their area. This highlights the importance of timely and accurate communication during disasters to enhance preparedness and minimize the impact on vulnerable communities.<sup>21</sup>



*Arakan Army Soldiers help evacuate villages, including Rohingya and other minorities, from areas in the path of Cyclone Mocha. (Photo/The Diplomat)*

Compared to Nargis, one important thing that the junta did during the Mocha cyclone is releasing the required announcement before it happens. On May 12th, the military junta made an announcement regarding the potential prosecution of individuals who chose to stay in regions marked as red alert zones for Cyclone Mocha.<sup>22</sup> U Hla Thein, the spokesperson of the junta authority in Rakhine State said that failure to follow the authorities' instructions would face legal consequences under the 'Natural Disaster Management Law'. He emphasized the importance of people keeping updated with weather news from MRTV and MWD and strictly adhering to the instructions provided by the authorities.<sup>23</sup> However, as the junta announcement was too close to the Mocha-hitting time for the people in alert zones, that announcement instead made people more anxious and afraid without help. That was also another mismanagement by the government as it needed to help the people move in time or announce the news in a more effective manner.

<sup>21</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Min Min Choe, Haingyi, January 2010. <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/i-want-help-my-own-people-state-control-and-civil-society-burma-after-cyclone-nargis>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/102405104899336/posts/pfbid0HY2FGFCgR2KCRSop1mxbWitKWHBSSpcEeUvsn4xK66WwRYGCbwzcophd3EBuo8VWl/?mibextid=Nif5oz>

<sup>23</sup> <https://arakanstudies.org/mr/23/05/ArakanStudiesMonthlyReportMay.pdf>.



Regrettably, the military junta failed to carry out the necessary evacuation of the Rohingya population residing in vulnerable low-lying villages near Sittwe, the capital city of Rakhine State. Tragically, this failure led to a devastating loss of many lives numbering in the hundreds. The victims primarily consisted of women and children who were tragically swept away by the floods.<sup>24</sup> After the cyclone, the junta authority released the statement that they had done enough to relocate the people, but the local community failed to follow it.<sup>25</sup> A statement issued by the junta authority four days after the cyclone struck on May 18th revealed their decision to deploy 18 military officers to various townships with the aim of conducting rehabilitation efforts.<sup>26</sup> In a subsequent statement released one day later, the junta announced that they had successfully evacuated 63,302 individuals out of a total of 125,789 from the IDP camps and other vulnerable areas in Sittwe township, as a precautionary measure in anticipation of the storm.<sup>27</sup> In most of the local media, however, it is expressed that people are in need of help and emergency reliefs seriously and they still do not get almost any care from the authorities during the relocation.

In recalling memories of post-cyclone actions by the junta authority during Nargis, Township Coordination Committees (TCCs) were established by the authority in the affected areas to coordinate the humanitarian response. These TCCs are expected to continue functioning during the recovery phase. The PONREPP (Presidential Office of the National Reconstruction and Emergency Preparedness Plan) proposed three-year recovery plans in December 2008, involving joint efforts from the junta authority, ASEAN, and UN. These plans aimed to provide detailed recovery initiatives for voluntary groups, including emergency relief distribution, support for farming and fishing activities through essential equipment, and the implementation of programs to rebuild the Delta region's physical infrastructure.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, in August, 2008, the National Natural Disaster Preparedness Central Committee (NDPCC) issued the junta's reconstruction plan, which has been implemented by various ministries responsible for different sectors<sup>29</sup>.

The junta authority also assumed responsibility for coordinating national endeavors by forming an Emergency Committee. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) country team provided support by coordinating the establishment of eleven clusters (with the emergency shelter cluster convened by the IFRC). However, the initial assessment and response were hindered due to challenging access conditions. The affected areas, primarily consisting of sea and small inhabited islands, posed difficulties in identifying those in need and delivering assistance effectively. Furthermore, the government displayed reluctance in granting access to international aid workers.<sup>30</sup> There were cases of condemnation by the international community as the junta authority did not respond urgently to the relief and assistance towards the cyclone affected areas. In a rare public defense, Deputy Defense Minister Aye Myint claimed that they responded swiftly to Cyclone Nargis and expressed openness to foreign aid without any conditions. During a security conference in

<sup>24</sup>Mizzima, "Lessons from deadly Cyclone Nargis as Cyclone Mocha mop-up gets underway", 18 May 2023.

Accessed: <https://mizzima.com/article/lessons-deadly-cyclone-nargis-cyclone-mocha-mop-gets-underway>.

<sup>25</sup><https://www.tni.org/en/article/the-strike-of-cyclone-mocha-and-the-fate-of-arakan-people#:~:text=In%20line%20with%20UNOCHA%20data%20of%2016%20May%2C,vulnerable%20with%20a%20likely%20scenario%20of%20humanitarian%20needs>.

<sup>26</sup> <https://arakanstudies.org/mr/23/05/ArakanStudiesMonthlyReportMay.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.narinjara.com/news/detail/64670639b67e0c1998298d93>.

<sup>28</sup> "Post Nargis Recovery and Preparedness Plan 2008", UNFPA, 2008. <https://myanmar.unfpa.org/en/publications/post-nargis-recovery-and-preparedness-plan-2008#:~:text=The%20Post%2DNargis%20Recovery%20and,healthy%20lives%2C%20and%20protected%20lives.> (<https://myanmar.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/PONREPP.pdf>)

<sup>29</sup> "Post Nargis Recovery and Preparedness Plan 2008", UNFPA, 2008. <https://myanmar.unfpa.org/en/publications/post-nargis-recovery-and-preparedness-plan-2008#:~:text=The%20Post%2DNargis%20Recovery%20and,healthy%20lives%2C%20and%20protected%20lives.> (<https://myanmar.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/PONREPP.pdf>)

<sup>30</sup> "After the storm: recovery, resilience reinforced - Final evaluation of the Cyclone Nargis operation in Myanmar, 2008 - 2011", 1 Nov 2011.

(Accessed: <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/after-storm-recovery-resilience-reinforced-final-evaluation-cyclone-nargis-operation>)

Singapore, he stated that state media had provided ample warning about the cyclone, which caused the deaths or disappearance of 134,000 people and left up to 2.4 million others in destitution.<sup>31</sup>

Three days later, this defense was followed by criticism towards the junta's relief efforts, including a rebuke from the U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who accused the junta authority of obstructing foreign aid and causing additional deaths. Western governments and international aid organizations have expressed dissatisfaction with the junta's slow and unresponsive handling of the crisis, a sentiment shared by many cyclone survivors in the severely affected Irrawaddy delta region.<sup>32</sup> In response to these criticisms, Aye Myint asserted that Senior General Than Shwe, the junta leader, had swiftly convened an emergency cabinet meeting and dispatched ministers to monitor relief efforts within a day after the cyclone. He emphasized that through the effective supervision of the central body led by the prime minister and its ministerial members, relief camps and hospitals were established, debris was cleared, and emergency power and water supply were restored.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, he claimed that the situation in 33 townships in Yangon had stabilized within three days, and areas outside the former capital had returned to normalcy within one week.<sup>34</sup> However, in reality, in late May, 2008, there were some conditions of coercive actions from the military authorities to return the displaced people to their original villages where conditions remained poor (like with inadequate shelter and lack of water and food supplies)<sup>35</sup>. But the junta authority denied that situation too<sup>36</sup> while WFP mentioned that their staff found out the cyclone-affected people had been involuntarily returned to their own villages with unstable situations and moved to larger villages where they could get more chances of getting assistance.

Additionally, a significant number of individuals are dealing with emotional distress due to the devastating loss of people in their communities, leading them to opt for relocation to different areas.<sup>37</sup> In line with a state-owned news, "*Myanmar A-Lin*", on 3rd May, a day after the cyclone, Prime Minister U Thein Sein and National Disaster Management Committee members were said to have the cooperation meeting in the morning and went towards the affected areas in Yangon for doing the necessary actions like cleaning the damaged areas, electricity attaining, water sanitation and other facts<sup>38</sup>. Moreover, in the meeting made by the junta authority for clarification about the situations towards the UN agencies and ambassadors, the junta foreign minister stated that on 3rd May, his Prime Minister made an urgent response to the cyclone, allocating 5 billion MMK for relief. On the same day, the respective responsible members went to the affected areas to proceed with the emergency processes. They stated that urgent responses were done not only with the effort of the military but also with the help of the NGOs and CSOs.<sup>39</sup>

Likewise in the case of Mocha, the junta authority also showed its urgent responses to the cyclone Mocha and revealed continuous actions via its state-owned news agencies which described how the junta leaders and its administrative members are performing the after-cyclone reliefs and rehabilitation processes. A local media claimed the fact that the junta and its affiliated ministries made minimal to no efforts in establishing temporary shelters, raising concerns regarding the legitimacy of the humanitarian funding they claimed to have publicized. The junta authority declared that they had collected over MMK 100,000 lakhs and later

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<sup>31</sup> Melanie Lee, Myanmar rejects criticism of junta cyclone response", JUNE 1, 2008. Accessed: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-cyclone-response-idUSSIN2703120080601>

<sup>32</sup> Melanie Lee, Myanmar rejects criticism of junta cyclone response", JUNE 1, 2008. Accessed: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-cyclone-response-idUSSIN2703120080601>

<sup>33</sup> Melanie Lee, Myanmar rejects criticism of junta cyclone response", JUNE 1, 2008. Accessed: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-cyclone-response-idUSSIN2703120080601>

<sup>34</sup> Melanie Lee, Myanmar rejects criticism of junta cyclone response", JUNE 1, 2008. Accessed: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-cyclone-response-idUSSIN2703120080601>

<sup>35</sup> "Burma: Stop Forced Evictions," Human Rights Watch news release, May 30, 2008, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/05/29/burma-stop-forced-evictions>.

<sup>36</sup> Office Coordinating Humanitarian Affairs, "Cyclone Nargis: Myanmar," OCHA Situation Report No.29, June 9, 2008, p.2.

<sup>37</sup> World Food Program (WFP), "Cyclone Nargis: A Diary of Humanitarian Response," 2009, p.42

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.burmalibrary.org/sites/burmalibrary.org/files/obl/docsMA2008/MA2008-05-05.pdf>.

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.burmalibrary.org/sites/burmalibrary.org/files/obl/docsMA2008/MA2008-05-06.pdf>.

allocated MMK 70,000 lakhs to support their own Rakhine State government. However, the origins of this funding and the transparency regarding it remained questionable. There are also legitimate concerns about who contributed this money and uncertainties persist about how it will be utilized and who will truly benefit from it. Given the prevailing patterns of corruption and discrimination, it is reasonable to anticipate that the funds may be appropriated for the junta's own political and military purposes in Rakhine and other regions.<sup>40</sup>

Name	Nargis	Mocha
Early Warning	The junta authority did very insufficient early warning and awareness raising activities.	The junta authority conducted some early warning and information sharing actions but was very procedural.
Relocation	No visible relocation action was carried out.	Relocation of around 0.6 lakh people was performed but widely criticized due to the failure to relocate low-land Rohingya communities near Sittwe city.
Management	Township Coordination Committees and some national level committees were formed.	A Committee of 18 active military officers was formed assigned for each township in Rakhine State
Financial Allocation	MMK 5 billion	MMK 1 billion but 70 percent for Rakhine State

Under the urgent responses against the Mocha, the junta shows its actions for emergency responses and rehabilitation processes like providing healthcare services, distributing foodstuffs, and participating in rehabilitation efforts in various locations such as Ponnagyun, Buthidaung, Kyaukpyu, Kyauktaw, and Sittwe, and other affected areas in the state after the cyclone. For effective implementation of those, the junta decided to form a committee for the rehabilitation committee through a statement on May 18th, highlighting their decision to assign 18 active military officers to various townships with the objective of conducting rehabilitation activities<sup>41</sup>.

According to a news article on 1st June, it is said that a total of 42,807 patients — 37,792 people suffering from common illnesses, 4,224 pregnant women and 791 people suffering from common diarrhea — received treatment at temporary clinics of rapid response teams at public hospitals and clinics from 16 to 31 May.<sup>42</sup> A total of 2,946 wells in the townships are purified and 236,975 water purification tablets are distributed in townships. Health awareness activities are undertaken for the public to be able to prevent the occurrence of other infectious diseases including diarrhea in the aftermath of Mocha. On 26th June 2023, a pro-junta news article described that a total of 1,229 mobile phone stations have been repaired, resulting in a 99.68 percent recovery of mobile communication for public convenience.<sup>43</sup> In the news of June 30, the Junta Traveling Medical Team was said to be providing free health care services on that morning. They provided free health care services to 626 residents from Kyauk Phyu, Sittwe, Ponnagyun, Kyauk Taw and Rathedaung townships. However, in the real ground situations, some local news described that there are still a lot of demands from the local affected people who are still out of touch with the junta's assistance program.

*"We received relief items from the World Food Programme, but nothing from the military regime. The storm victims whose household registration cards were collected by the ward administrator for the election are*

<sup>40</sup>"Lessons from deadly Cyclone Nargis as Cyclone Mocha mop-up gets underway", 18 May

2023. Accessed: <https://mizzima.com/article/lessons-deadly-cyclone-nargis-cyclone-mocha-mop-gets-underway>.

<sup>41</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid027o5ZioFsj4Zb6zAJGMSKr2AEAesawbhRqSNg7fFzDtUySF1LJkeSXmn8EmG7W66fl&id=100064714144852&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid027o5ZioFsj4Zb6zAJGMSKr2AEAesawbhRqSNg7fFzDtUySF1LJkeSXmn8EmG7W66fl&id=100064714144852&mibextid=Nif5oz).

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.gnlm.com.mm/healthcare-services-provided-in-cyclone-affected-townships/>.

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.gnlm.com.mm/rehabilitation-undertakings-gaining-momentum/>.

*reportedly being provided with relief items. I don't know which criteria are used to provide the storm victims with relief items,"* said a local woman from Mingan Ward's Block 11, Sittwe city.<sup>44</sup>

## 2.2 Dealing with the Humanitarian Actors

From another perspective, in regard to the issue of aid and relief, the scale of the disaster in the country has overwhelmed the capacity of authorities requiring a substantial relief effort. Given the urgent need for emergency responses and support for the affected population, it was understandable that the government would be open to accepting assistance from any country.

To clarify this stance, for example, in the case of Nargis, the government's official news outlet expressed and announced that they would accept all forms of help and aid from any nation without discrimination. On the 10th of May 2008, the Deputy Foreign Minister held a meeting with the Charge d'Affaires of the US Embassy, during which he emphasized that there were unfounded rumors circulating regarding the government's selective acceptance of aid from specific countries. In reality, he then clarified that Myanmar had welcomed and accepted all forms of assistance but required coordination through the Myanmar Embassy for proper communication and coordination.<sup>45</sup>

Also, in an official statement issued on May 16, the junta authority acknowledged the challenges it was confronting in the aftermath of the cyclone. Consequently, they expressed their inability to accommodate all visa requests from various agencies and organizations at that time. However, it mentioned that specific exemptions were made for experts from organizations such as OCHA, WFP, WMO, UNHCR, ICRC, EU, and Medecins Sans Frontieres, whose visas were duly authorized. Additionally, the government extended invitations to medical doctors and nurses from Myanmar's neighboring countries, including Bangladesh, China, India, Laos, and Thailand, with the aim of bolstering healthcare activities in the affected areas.<sup>46</sup>

Although the junta leaders eventually agreed to accept international assistance, the process was hindered by challenges in obtaining visas for relief workers, impeding the immediate and comprehensive relief operations. The combination of a catastrophic natural disaster, limited access for humanitarian organizations, ongoing controversies surrounding the constitutional referendum, and the extension of Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest for the sixth consecutive year creates an environment that could potentially bring about significant political changes in Burma. As the US Congress addressed the direct impact of Cyclone Nargis and its potential indirect consequences on Burmese politics, various issues came into play.<sup>47</sup> In this regard, it is undeniable that the military government demonstrated a significant lack of humanitarian actions towards its people during the tragic event of Cyclone Nargis.

Similar patterns also happened in the case of the Mocha. On May 20, the junta authority released a statement indicating that Cyclone Mocha resulted in the tragic loss of approximately 145 lives in Arakan State. The same report disclosed that as of noon on May 19, a significant number of structures had been destroyed in various regions and states, including Rakhine State. The tally included 183,024 houses, 1,711 religious' buildings, 59 monasteries, 1,397 schools, 227 hospitals and clinics, 11 telecom towers, 119 lamp posts, five transformers, one market, two airport buildings, and 340 departmental buildings.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=2602059563279772&id=466648543487562&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2602059563279772&id=466648543487562&mibextid=Nif5oz).

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.burmalibrary.org/sites/burmalibrary.org/files/obl/docsMA2008/MA2008-05-11.pdf>.

<sup>46</sup> "Briefing by His Excellency U Wunna Maung Lwin, Ambassador/Permanent Representative of the Union of Myanmar on the humanitarian situation in Myanmar following the Tropical Cyclone Nargis," Geneva, May 16, 2008.

<sup>47</sup> Congressional Research Service, CRS Report, "Cyclone Nargis and Burma's Constitutional Referendum", June 30, 2008. Accessed: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL34481/7>.

<sup>48</sup><https://www.facebook.com/466648543487562/posts/pfbid0iibetj2YRrbkQrpg05h3hJx1MVvQWnRoVT4BAzkswsRU>



Name	Nargis Cyclone	Mocha Cyclone
How the junta authorities blocked the aids assistance	<p>The acceptance of international assistance by the junta leaders was delayed due to challenges in obtaining visas for relief workers, resulting in hindrances to the prompt and comprehensive relief operations.</p> <p>However, the junta reclaimed all the condemnations raised related to aids assistance acceptance.</p> <p>Also, in an official statement issued on May 16, the junta authority acknowledged the challenges it was confronting in the aftermath of the cyclone. Consequently, they expressed their inability to accommodate all visa requests from various agencies and organizations at that time.</p>	<p>On June 8, 2023, the government announced the suspension of emergency humanitarian assistance and Travel Authorizations (TAs) for Mocha's affected areas.</p> <p>Junta authorities have refused to authorize travel and visas for aid workers, hindering urgent supplies from customs and warehouses, and imposing unnecessary restrictions on life-saving assistance.</p>
The key reasons why they do so	<p>After cyclone Nargis, the political situation of Myanmar was unstable due to the conditions for constitutional referendum.</p> <p>Before Nargis, there were also activist movements for democratic transition. Therefore, the junta did not want the country to keep in touch with the international community as well as allowing many foreigners to enter into the state.</p>	<p>Before and after Mocha, the junta tried to attain its power stability and maintenance while many of the areas were against its existence.</p> <p>Therefore, the junta is likely to use the Mocha cyclone and aids as its tool for power.</p> <p>The junta's actions appear to exploit the cyclone response to consolidate its power and legitimacy.</p>
Travel Allowance Issue	<p>TAs were also blocked during Nargis. There were no official statements of blockages like cyclone Mocha, but there were a lot of checkpoints along the roads towards the affected areas of the Delta region.</p> <p>The humanitarian groups had been checked and blocked, delaying the humanitarian assistance processes.</p> <p>The groups comprised of the activists were blocked or arrested too.</p>	<p>Initially, the junta announced blockages on travel authorizations and aid to both international and local groups, causing delays in relief efforts and impacting the affected populations in Rakhine State.</p> <p>Subsequently, the junta changed its approach, allowing local groups to offer aid, but the initial blockages and arrests of some humanitarian workers had already caused setbacks for relief efforts.</p>

However, even after 11 days since the cyclone struck, a news report on May 25 revealed that the junta authority remained continue to restrict international aid access to the cyclone-devastated areas in Rakhine State. Testimonies from affected residents underscored their reliance on support from individual donors, as the junta authority had not provided any assistance in rebuilding their homes or ensuring food security. In the absence of effective involvement from international organizations, local social aid groups were exerting

additional efforts to offer support, leading to challenging circumstances.<sup>49</sup>In Kyaukphyu township, a similar situation unfolded on the same day, where authorities rejected requests for public donation due to the area's classification as a red-level zone impacted by the cyclone. The authorities cited a comprehensive list detailing the extent of the damage caused by Cyclone Mocha in Kyaukphyu as the reason for their inability to permit such donation initiatives.<sup>50</sup>

The military regime continued to implement similar restrictive measures as seen during the Nargis cyclone, albeit without explicitly mentioning any aid-related regulations until the 8th of June, 2023. After this date, the junta officially issued a statement imposing a ban on aid groups, preventing them from providing assistance to the victims in the Rakhine State.<sup>51</sup>It can be said that the military government uses the same techniques for the Mocha to show or maintain its power in order to get the attention from the local population and from the international community. Moreover, [Mizzima](#) news criticized the junta action that the military leaders are inclined to exploit any situation or pretext to manipulate circumstances in their own favor. They may employ tactics such as leveraging aid as a means of control or making self-congratulatory statements in a pro-junta newspaper Op-Ed, proclaiming that *"Mocha practically proves their legitimacy as the true government in the country"*.<sup>52</sup> But, against that pro-junta news, an anonymous local CSOs leader said to the Western News (a local news agency) that.

*"The consequence of the military council's banning of the access of international organizations and social relief groups from Arakan may cause a lot of suffering to the people in Arakan. The banning of such travel rights by the military council is a double trouble for Arakan. On the one hand, there is enough food to donate to the people. It is raining now and there are not enough shelters. The food is not there yet. Now, asking to stop all humanitarian assistance means that the people may completely lose their trust in the government. Actually, there was not any trust from the beginning".*

The same phenomena happened during the time of Nargis, the military government blocked large-scale international relief efforts by delaying the issuance of visas to aid workers, prohibiting foreign helicopters and boats from making deliveries to support the relief operation, obstructing travel by aid agencies to affected areas, and preventing local and international media from freely reporting from the disaster area. Rather than prioritizing the lives and well-being of the affected population, the military government's actions were dictated by hostility to the international community, participation in the diversion of aid, and an obsession with holding a manipulated referendum on a long-delayed constitution.<sup>53</sup>

## 2.3 The ULA Responses toward the Mocha Cyclone

Interestingly, after a span of 15 years, Myanmar found itself once again under the governance of the State and Administration Council (SAC) when a severe and powerful cyclone named Mocha made its way into the country. However, this time, the ground political and administrative situations are different as there is another political authority in the case of Mocha known as the United League of Arakan/ Arakan Army (ULA/AA) in Rakhine State. This de facto authority claims to control over two-third of the state's population and territory mostly in the rural areas. The strike of the Mocha cyclone also tests the role of this

<sup>49</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid0EJQEnEmNg5HJVtjs7aPQ5X2i6mgtKovS2eL8jyUqeCkfqrcamS4T99zUtG76SJQtI&id=100064714144852&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0EJQEnEmNg5HJVtjs7aPQ5X2i6mgtKovS2eL8jyUqeCkfqrcamS4T99zUtG76SJQtI&id=100064714144852&mibextid=Nif5oz)

<sup>50</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid02pk7RcDNC9nucUc4SumDWAUVuKoi4K4BpJ5PidwNvvZnnMZCNgKpyCgDry5bqcRZHl&id=100064714144852&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02pk7RcDNC9nucUc4SumDWAUVuKoi4K4BpJ5PidwNvvZnnMZCNgKpyCgDry5bqcRZHl&id=100064714144852&mibextid=Nif5oz)

<sup>51</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=775609674245539&id=102405104899336&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=775609674245539&id=102405104899336&mibextid=Nif5oz)

<sup>52</sup> Mizzima, " Myanmar junta uses aid as a weapon of war", 22 May 2023.

Accessed: <https://mizzima.com/article/myanmar-junta-uses-aid-weapon-war>.

<sup>53</sup> OCHA, " I Want to Help My Own People - State Control and Civil Society in Burma after Cyclone Nargis", 28 April, 2010.

Accessed: <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/i-want-help-my-own-people-state-control-and-civil-society-burma-after-cyclone-nargis>.

authority as the key areas that the cyclones strike are also ones under their control. The following paragraphs will discuss the pre- and post-cyclone actions of this political authority.

The ULA authority made essential and pro-active actions before the Mocha strike. As mentioned in the [monthly report](#) by the CAS team, on May 7th before a week of the cyclone, the ULA issued a warning statement regarding cyclone Mocha. The statement specifically advised individuals whose livelihoods relied on rivers, including those engaged in fishing and marine activities, to exercise caution from May 10th to May 13th. The statement also called upon international organizations to closely monitor the situation and prepare for providing humanitarian assistance. In addition, it demanded effective cooperation with the Humanitarian and Development Coordination Office (HDCO), a branch of the ULA built to facilitate the processes and activities in the humanitarian and development issues in the region. Subsequently, on May 12th, the ULA successfully evacuated approximately 10,000 individuals from 21 villages. The natural disaster management team of the ULA acted by relocating residents from several villages in Buthidaung Township to monasteries and government schools as a precautionary measure. The following day, the ULA announced that they had already relocated approximately 102,000 individuals from multiple townships situated in the path of the cyclone storm.<sup>54</sup> Because of those actions before the cyclone, it could reduce the damage towards the people in the areas and prevent a similar immersive loss that happened during Nargis.

After the strike of Mocha, the ULA also established a new committee named the "Cyclone Mocha Emergency Response and Rescue Committee for Arakan" (EMERRCA) on 17th May with Deputy Commander Dr. Nyo Twan Awng serving as the chairperson, along with other seven members<sup>55</sup>. Certainly, most of the population, particularly in heavily affected regions like Rakhine State, expected no effective assistance from the military regime, given their historical experiences. Instead, they relied on their own resilience and sought support from the local de facto and legitimate authority such as the ULA in Rakhine State and for other disaster-affected areas, it is the National Unity Government (NUG) and People's Defense Forces (PDFs). These alternative sources played a crucial role in providing aid and support during the cyclone's aftermath.<sup>56</sup> As people expected ULA/AA maintained its status and served for the people affected in Arakan State. On May 20, the ULA announced a generous donation of approximately MMK 550 million to support the residents of the cyclone-affected regions in Rakhine State. According to a local interviewee in the news, these monetary contributions hold significant potential in aiding the Arakanese people and assisting the ULA's rehabilitation efforts. It was observed that the ULA actively engaged on the ground to aid the victims of Cyclone Mocha, further enhancing the impact of these donations for the benefit of the Arakanese population.<sup>57</sup>

While addressing the urgency of emergency responses and rehabilitation processes, ULA/AA has demonstrated impactful actions that align with local beliefs. This underscores their commitment to addressing the cyclone's aftermath in Rakhine State. The other armed organizations cheerfully supported the donations towards the hand of ULA/AA which showed the cooperative and collaborative actions of armed organizations. Between the 15th and 18th of May 2023, ULA/AA received substantial donations from different ethnic armed organizations. On the 15th of May, they obtained 1000 lakhs from NUG<sup>58</sup>, followed

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<sup>54</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid02MYCjwbngDchQ9vW1jJvxbKHFB3KV9ugYqmuZndUngY2vmwktDoAfH9J7vMAhMEj5l&id=100064714144852&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02MYCjwbngDchQ9vW1jJvxbKHFB3KV9ugYqmuZndUngY2vmwktDoAfH9J7vMAhMEj5l&id=100064714144852&mibextid=Nif5oz).

<sup>55</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid02ssaAGXFclUiRZewRXVZeXqwgrrbQTqa8ng1CP4YUhrpkJ36PtTd7](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02ssaAGXFclUiRZewRXVZeXqwgrrbQTqa8ng1CP4YUhrpkJ36PtTd7).

<sup>56</sup> "Lessons from deadly Cyclone Nargis as Cyclone Mocha mop-up gets underway", 18 May 2023.

Accessed: <https://mizzima.com/article/lessons-deadly-cyclone-nargis-cyclone-mocha-mop-gets-underway>.

<sup>57</sup><https://www.facebook.com/466648543487562/posts/pfbid0iibetj2YRrbkQrpg05h3hJx1MVvQWnRoVT4BAzkswsRU1fSfkwctDG1kHMmP1umbI/?mibextid=Nif5oz>

<sup>58</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid0s5VAkz1nA7joXxeS4G9XvNNzF3K5XwSebmRT8cDAP7yLB3xekS4C](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0s5VAkz1nA7joXxeS4G9XvNNzF3K5XwSebmRT8cDAP7yLB3xekS4C).

by 1000 lakhs from MNTJP/MNDAA<sup>59</sup> and 3000 lakhs from KIO on the 18th of May<sup>60</sup>. Furthermore, on the 19th of May 2023, TLNA and SSPP/SSA contributed 500 lakhs<sup>61</sup> and 1000 lakhs<sup>62</sup>, respectively. This collective support from various ethnic armed organizations has added to ULA/AA's efforts in aiding the cyclone-affected population in the region. As of May 25, the cumulative amount of specific donations received by ULA/AA from these diverse ethnic armed organizations, along with NUG, has reached an approximate total of MMK 950 million.<sup>63</sup>



*Dr. Nyo Twan Awng is receiving the donation from members of FPNCC and UWSA for Mocha-affected people on June 10, 2023. Photo/ EMERRCA.*

Continuously in June 2023, a series of significant donations were made by various local armed organizations to support the rehabilitation efforts undertaken by the ERRCA, which was established by ULA/AA in response to the Cyclone Mocha disaster in Rakhine State. Specifically, on the 2nd of June, the Ashio Chin Defense Force (ACDF) contributed a substantial amount of 3,000,000 MMK<sup>64</sup> and on the 10th of June, the Federal Political Negotiation And Consultative Committee (FPNCC) and the United Wa State Army (UWSA) demonstrated their commitment by donating an impressive 1 billion MMK towards the cause.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>59</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid0J4NuLEd27ALkVUfSYfPM1fsXghMJgUizJhs3aAS8tjCDeHyc2Q4](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0J4NuLEd27ALkVUfSYfPM1fsXghMJgUizJhs3aAS8tjCDeHyc2Q4).

<sup>60</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid0J4NuLEd27ALkVUfSYfPM1fsXghMJgUizJhs3aAS8tjCDeHyc2Q4](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0J4NuLEd27ALkVUfSYfPM1fsXghMJgUizJhs3aAS8tjCDeHyc2Q4).

<sup>61</sup><https://www.arakanarmy.net/post/%E1%80%99-%E1%80%94-%E1%80%90-%E1%80%84-%E1%80%80%E1%80%9A-%E1%80%86%E1%80%9A-%E1%80%9B-%E1%80%A1%E1%80%9C-%E1%80%84-%E1%80%95-%E1%80%A1%E1%80%95-%E1%80%99-%E1%80%A1%E1%80%90-%E1%80%80-pslf-tnla-%E1%80%9E-%E1%80%80-%E1%80%87-%E1%80%90%E1%80%84-%E1%80%9C>.

<sup>62</sup>AA Info Desk,

[https://vk.com/arakanarmyinfodesk?z=photo-171407235\\_457242068%2Falbum-171407235\\_00%2Frev](https://vk.com/arakanarmyinfodesk?z=photo-171407235_457242068%2Falbum-171407235_00%2Frev).

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.arakanarmy.net/post/ula-aa>

<sup>64</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=119410921165082&id=100092885225765&mibextid=Nif5z](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=119410921165082&id=100092885225765&mibextid=Nif5z)

<sup>65</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=125724307200410&id=100092885225765&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=125724307200410&id=100092885225765&mibextid=Nif5oz)



On the 1st of June, the Maraland Territorial Council generously donated 10,120,000 MMK.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, humanitarian donations from various entities around the world increased day by day. In addition to local contributions, international support also played a significant role in bolstering ERRCA's resources. These substantial contributions from both local and international sources have fortified ERRCA's ability to implement vital rehabilitation processes and provide much-needed support to the affected communities in Rakhine State.

The ULA/AA continue to make the emergency response and rehabilitation processes in different sectors (food, shelter, water, healthcare, education, etc) throughout the whole state. It also opened Arakha Emergency Rescue and Rehabilitation Centers in the most affected areas or villages in different townships for accelerating the rehabilitation processes.<sup>67</sup> According to a news from Burma News International (BNI) on 13th June, 2023, the ULA/AA is aiding cyclone-affected Muslim villages in Rakhine state by providing food assistance and helping with home repairs in various townships, including Mrauk-U, Kyauktaw, Rathedaung, and Buthidaung. The Cyclone Mocha ERRCA announced that members of ULA/AA are distributing essential supplies like rice to the severely affected people in Rakhine, regardless of their race or religion. The committee is also engaged in building houses for Muslims and providing healthcare services to the affected communities.<sup>68</sup>

Name	ULA Approach to the Mocha Cyclone
Early Warning	On May 7th before a week of the cyclone, the ULA issued a warning statement regarding cyclone Mocha
Relocation	On May 13th, the ULA successfully evacuated approximately 102,000 individuals from multiple townships situated in the path of the cyclone storm
Management	The ULA also established a new committee named the "Cyclone Mocha Emergency Response and Rescue Committee for Arakan" (EMERRCA) on 17th May with Deputy Commander Dr. Nyo Twan Awng serving as the chairperson, along with other seven members
Financial Allocation	On May 20, the ULA announced a generous donation of approximately MMK 550 million to support the residents of the cyclone-affected regions in Rakhine State.
Donation Received	As of May 25, the cumulative amount of specific donations received by ULA/AA from the diverse ethnic armed organizations, along with NUG, has reached an approximate total of MMK 950 million. On 10th of June, the FPNCC and UWSA demonstrated their commitment by donating an impressive MMK 1 billion and additional donations continued.
Emergency Response	On June 12nd, the statement also revealed that only about 30% of the affected population has received emergency relief assistance.
Recovery Actions	On July 14, 2023, the ERRCA again released another update mentioning that more than 75 percent of the disaster affected population has been re-sheltered

On the 14th of June, Cyclone Mocha ERRCA issued a statement outlining its actions and the ongoing rehabilitation processes for the Mocha disaster mentioning that it is trying to manage all the donations to reach out to the affected areas, but they are still left uncovered. The statement provided valuable insights into the situation and the assistance required by the affected population. Since the onset of the Mocha disaster until the 12nd of June, ERRCA has been diligently working to provide aid and support to those in need.

<sup>66</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=119410921165082&id=100092885225765&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=119410921165082&id=100092885225765&mibextid=Nif5oz).

<sup>67</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=119983954441112&id=100092885225765&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=119983954441112&id=100092885225765&mibextid=Nif5oz).

<sup>68</sup>"AA Provides Humanitarian Aid to Cyclone-Affected Muslims", June 13, 2023.

Accessed: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/aa-provides-humanitarian-aid-cyclone-affected-muslims>

According to their report, by the assistance and aid from all UN/NGOs/CSOs/CBOs and other humanitarian supports, approximately 21,164 households have received essential food assistance during this period. However, there remains a significant demand for support, as 199,609 households still require urgent food aid. Regarding shelter assistance, 51,924 households were provided but a substantial number of 169,206 households are still in dire need of shelter assistance. The statement also revealed that only about 30% of the affected population has received emergency relief assistance so far, indicating the magnitude of the ongoing challenges. The remaining 70% are still in urgent need of help and support.<sup>69</sup> Then, two months after the Mocha, on July 14, 2023, the ERRCA again released another update mentioning that more than 75 percent of the disaster affected population has been re-sheltered while they are also constantly trying to shelter the rest as fast as possible. The same statement has also demanded more humanitarian assistance from both domestic and international communities.<sup>70</sup>

### 3. Regional Approaches including ASEAN, China, and India

It is essential to analyze and compare the regional responses and assistance provided during cyclones Nargis and Mocha. This will help us understand whether the approaches taken were similar in both cases or if there are any other differences.

#### 3.1 Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN)

In accessing the role of ASEAN from a comparative perspective, it has played a more important and crucial role in the case of Nargis in establishing diplomatic connections and providing access to Myanmar, a fellow member of ASEAN<sup>71</sup>. A significant development during the response to the cyclone Nargis was the establishment of the Humanitarian Task Force within ASEAN. This task force took on the responsibility of leading and facilitating international efforts to address the crises.<sup>72</sup> Assisting this task force on the ground was the Tripartite Core Group (TCG), which included high-level representatives from the junta government, the United Nations, and ASEAN<sup>73</sup>. This collaborative mechanism, led by ASEAN, served as a platform to promote cooperation and tackle challenges related to the effective distribution of aid.<sup>74</sup>

In collaboration with other international institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank, ASEAN has been actively engaged in the response efforts. Notably, on June 1, 2008, ASEAN deployed an Emergency Rapid Assessment Team (ERAT) to conduct field assessments, marking the first time such an initiative was undertaken. To bolster the humanitarian operations in response to Cyclone Nargis, the Coalition of Mercy, an ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force, has set up an ASEAN field office in Yangon. This task force comprises senior officials and experts from ASEAN countries, with Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, the Secretary-General of ASEAN, serving as its chairperson. The coordination, facilitation, and monitoring of international aid flowing into the country had demonstrated effective results. Moreover, ASEAN has extended its assistance through the Disaster Management and Emergency Response, providing both cash and

<sup>69</sup> [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=129080720198102&id=100092885225765&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=129080720198102&id=100092885225765&mibextid=Nif5oz).

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/cyclonemochaerrca/posts/pfbid0J1MtwuFtsaHNz13sXvu3g6XRQxLxWR8GTGWHpojRPF4FXeDK6oeWT1HjeBPYPquj>

<sup>71</sup> Congressional Research Service, CRS Report, "Cyclone Nargis and Burma's Constitutional Referendum", June 30, 2008. Accessed: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL34481/7>

<sup>72</sup> "Lessons from deadly Cyclone Nargis as Cyclone Mocha mop-up gets underway", 18 May 2023. Accessed: <https://mizzima.com/article/lessons-deadly-cyclone-nargis-cyclone-mocha-mop-gets-underway>

<sup>73</sup> Congressional Research Service, CRS Report, "Cyclone Nargis and Burma's Constitutional Referendum", June 30, 2008. Accessed: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL34481/7>

<sup>74</sup> "Lessons from deadly Cyclone Nargis as Cyclone Mocha mop-up gets underway", 18 May 2023. Accessed: <https://mizzima.com/article/lessons-deadly-cyclone-nargis-cyclone-mocha-mop-gets-underway>

in-kind aid supplies. To further strengthen their disaster response capabilities, ASEAN established the ASEAN Cooperation Fund for Disaster Assistance.<sup>75</sup>

In the case of Mocha, the participation of the ASEAN is less active in taking responsive actions for the aftermath of the cyclone. On May 21, the ASEAN Coordination Center for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA) made a significant announcement mobilizing the emergency relief amounting to approximately USD 0.1 million, marking the initiation of the first phase of aid deployment.<sup>76</sup> The AHA has issued an announcement to provide humanitarian aid valued at approximately USD 60,000. In a statement released on 6th June 2023, the ASEAN Chairman on ASEAN's Humanitarian Response to Cyclone Mocha mentioned that ASEAN has taken swift action in mobilizing a humanitarian response to address the urgent needs arising from the devastating impact of Cyclone Mocha in Myanmar. As of June 2, 2023, the AHA center for disaster management has already delivered relief items to the affected communities in the townships of Sittwe, Rathedaung, Kyauktaw, and Ponnagyun. Looking ahead, for the recovery phase, ASEAN endeavored to engage in internal discussions concerning potential support during the recovery phase. These decisions will be based on the comprehensive assessment conducted by the ASEAN's ERAT. By taking this approach, ASEAN is said to aim to provide sustained assistance to Myanmar during the crucial phase of recovery and reconstruction.<sup>77</sup>

<b>Roles of the ASEAN</b>	<b>Nargis</b>	<b>Mocha</b>
Platform	The establishment of the Humanitarian Task Force within ASEAN_Tripartite Core Group (TCG), which included high-level representatives from the junta government, the United Nations, and ASEAN.  On June 1, 2008, ASEAN deployed an Emergency Rapid Assessment Team (ERAT) to conduct field assessments.	On May 21, the ASEAN Coordination Center for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA) made a significant announcement mobilizing emergency relief.
Material and Financial Contribution	The exact amount for Nargis was not specified but the estimated financial investment for the Nargis could be more than Mocha.	On May 21, the AHA contributed amounting to approximately USD 0.1 million, marking the initiation of the first phase of aid deployment.  The AHA has issued an announcement to provide humanitarian aid valued at approximately USD 60,000.
Policy and Perspectives	The ASEAN established the Coalition of Mercy and set up an ASEAN field office in Yangon, showcasing a more extensive infrastructure and coordination effort in the case of Nargis	In a statement released on 6th June 2023, the ASEAN Chairman said that the organization has taken swift action in mobilizing a humanitarian response to address the urgent needs arising from the devastating impact of Cyclone Mocha.

<sup>75</sup> Congressional Research Service, CRS Report, "Cyclone Nargis and Burma's Constitutional Referendum", June 30, 2008. Accessed: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL34481/7>

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.ruetir.com/2023/05/asean-distributes-aid-to-victims-of-cyclone-mocha-in-myanmar/#:~:text=Quoted%20from%20the%20website%20of%20the%20Ministry%20of,on%20the%20ground%20and%20facilitating%20rapid%20needs%20assessment.>

<sup>77</sup> [https://asean.org/asean-chairmans-statement-on-aseans-humanitarian-response-to-cyclone-mocha-in-myanmar/.](https://asean.org/asean-chairmans-statement-on-aseans-humanitarian-response-to-cyclone-mocha-in-myanmar/)

		The decisions for the recovery phase is said to be based on the comprehensive assessment conducted by the ASEAN's ERAT.
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Among the two cyclones' scenarios, the ASEAN established the Coalition of Mercy and set up an ASEAN field office in Yangon, showcasing a more extensive infrastructure and coordination effort in the case of Nargis but it did not happen for Mocha. On the other hand, the specific financial assistance provided for Mocha, approximately USD 0.1 million and USD 60,000, was explicitly mentioned, whereas the exact amount for Nargis was not specified but the estimated financial investment for the Nargis could be more. And then, there is no mediation effort something resembling like TCG for the Mocha response to get international support while the junta authority acts the similar kind of blocking humanitarian assistance in both cases.

### 3.2. Neighboring Countries

In both cases, there are also instances that the individual neighboring countries try to help in the emergency, recovery, and rehabilitation activities of Nargis and Mocha. In the case of Nargis, on 8th May 2008, the Bangladesh Army orchestrated the dispatch of two planes laden with emergency relief supplies. These aircraft carried essential aid items and a contingent of experienced aid workers well-versed in handling the aftermath of cyclones.<sup>78</sup> On May 21, 2008, Malaysia reported that a total of RM 1.8 million was raised for the victims of Myanmar's cyclone through the '*Star Myanmar Relief Fund*'. The funds were subsequently handed over to Dr. Ahmad Faizal Perdaus, an executive council member of Mercy Malaysia.<sup>79</sup> On May 24, 2008, the Chinese government made a commitment to provide approximately US\$10 million in aid and relief materials specifically for Cyclone Nargis. This included the transportation of aid through three Jade Cargo flights, each carrying 60 tonnes of essential supplies.<sup>80</sup> Another immediate neighbor, Thailand, raised its kindness for support on 6th June, 2008, the overall assistance provided including both in-kind and cash contributions (inclusive of transportation cost), is recorded to be approximately 12.32 million USD (382 million baht).<sup>81</sup> Although the total worth of aid is difficult to mention, all ASEAN member states and other regional countries including China and India are actively involved in assisting and supporting the aftermath of Nargis relatively.

Regarding Cyclone Mocha, according to a press release from the Indian Embassy on 18th May, India launched Operation Karuna, as the first responder to Cyclone Mocha's impact in Myanmar, providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief materials. Four Indian ships carried around 40 tonnes of materials, including medical supplies and essential items, handed over to Yangon authorities on 18th and 19th May 2023. The relief materials, such as food items, medical aid, tents, and hygiene kits, were airlifted for distribution among the affected communities in Rakhine State, and India is prepared to offer further support as needed for the cyclone-affected people's relief and rehabilitation.<sup>82</sup> On 21st May, the Yunnan Province Government in China pledged a donation of approximately USD 70,000 worth of assistance to aid the communities affected by the disaster. On the next day, the news said that the Thailand government expressed

<sup>78</sup> "Bangladesh aid arrives in Burma". BBC News. 8 May 2008. Archived from the original on 28 December 2016. Retrieved 16 March 2010.

<sup>79</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20080526211429/http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2008/5/21/nation/21312450&sec=nation>.

<sup>80</sup> "Tents 'still lacking' for quake survivors, says Chinese premier", CBC News, May 24, 2008. Accessed: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/tents-still-lacking-for-quake-survivors-says-chinese-premier-1.712836>.

<sup>81</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/summary-thailands-assistance-myanmar-after-cyclone-nargis>.

<sup>82</sup> Mizzima, India's Operation Karuna provides humanitarian aid to Cyclone Mocha victims in Myanmar, May 20, 2023. Accessed: <https://www.mizzima.com/article/indias-operation-karuna-provides-humanitarian-aid-cyclone-mocha-victims-myanmar#:~:text=In%20keeping%20with%20its%20tradition,a%20press%20release%20from%20the>



its commitment to supporting humanitarian assistance for Myanmar, although the specific amount of aid was not disclosed.<sup>83</sup>

On May 23, the Red Cross Society (Thailand) and other private donations were transported by the Royal Thai Air Forces to assist the affected areas. The following day, the Red Cross Society (China) extended support worth approximately USD 0.1 million in emergency relief. On June 1, 2023, Thailand again planned to extend further humanitarian assistance to the people of Myanmar impacted by Cyclone Mocha. The aid includes essential supplies such as dried foods and other necessary items. This valuable support comes from both the public and private sectors of Thailand. The delivery of the aid is said to be carried out overland, starting from Bangkok to Yangon. This initiative is made possible through the collaborative efforts between the Myanmar Embassy in Bangkok and the Thai-Myanmar Association for Friendship, which are providing crucial support to facilitate the transportation and distribution of humanitarian relief.<sup>84</sup> On June 3, the news said that Bangladesh has sent relief goods as humanitarian aid to the people of Myanmar's Rakhine State affected by Cyclone Mocha, but the exact amount was not mentioned. Then, on 27th June 2023, Indonesia contributed over USD 500,000 dollars in aid to assist the individuals impacted by cyclone Mocha.<sup>85</sup>

Neighboring Countries	Nargis	Mocha
China	On May 24, 2008, the Chinese government made a commitment to provide approximately US\$10 million in aid and relief materials specifically for Cyclone Nargis.	On 21st May, the Yunnan Province Government in China pledged a donation of approximately USD 70,000 worth of assistance to aid the communities affected by the disaster.  On May 24, the Red Cross Society (China) extended support worth approximately USD 0.1 million in emergency relief
India	On 5th May, according to the news posted from the Government of India, Indian Naval Ships Rana and Kirpan, previously positioned at Port Blair, were assigned to proceed to Myanmar to provide disaster relief.  Both ships have been on high alert since the first day of May and were carrying essential relief supplies, including food, tents, clothes, medicine, and blankets, to reach Yangon by 7th May 2008. <sup>86</sup>	According to a press release from the Indian Embassy on 18th May, India launched Operation Karuna, as the first responder to Cyclone Mocha's impact in Myanmar, providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief materials.  Four Indian ships carried around 40 tonnes of materials, including medical supplies and essential items, handed over to Yangon authorities on 18th and 19th May 2023.
Thailand	Thailand, raised its kindness for support on 6th June 2008, the overall assistance provided including both in-kind and cash contributions	On May 22, the Thailand government expressed its commitment to supporting humanitarian assistance for Myanmar,

<sup>83</sup><https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.ispmyanmar.com/&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1686158649269820&usg=AOvVaw3ctbICvRBiB-ano4pCr6l>

<sup>84</sup><https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/thailand-delivers-additional-humanitarian-aid-assist-myanmar-people-affected-cyclone-mocha>

<sup>85</sup><https://www.facebook.com/westernnewsagency/posts/pfbid02STb2vHR79Z5wxDP7vxezXZ7raFMWVK5UL3N3atAspUpCiuroEDiB1yY7ni6W2Hqhl>

<sup>86</sup><https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/indian-navy-ships-dispatched-disaster-relief-operations-myanmar>

	(inclusive of transportation cost), is recorded to be approximately 12.32 million USD (382 million baht).	<p>although the specific amount of aid was not disclosed.<sup>87</sup></p> <p>On May 23, the Red Cross Society (Thailand) and other private donations were transported by the Royal Thai Air Forces to assist the affected areas.</p> <p>On June 1, 2023, Thailand again planned to extend further humanitarian assistance to the people of Myanmar impacted by Cyclone Mocha.</p>
Bangladesh	<p>On 8th May 2008, the Bangladesh Army orchestrated the dispatch of two planes laden with emergency relief supplies.</p> <p>These aircraft carried essential aid items and a contingent of experienced aid workers well-versed in handling the aftermath of cyclones.</p>	On June 3, the news said that Bangladesh has sent relief goods as humanitarian aid to the people of Myanmar's Rakhine State affected by Cyclone Mocha, but the exact amount was not mentioned. <sup>88</sup>
Malaysia	On May 21, 2008, Malaysia reported that a total of RM 1.8 million was raised for the victims of Myanmar's cyclone through the <i>'Star Myanmar Relief Fund'</i>	During the Mocha cyclone, there is no single action from Malaysia, but it serves under the cooperative actions of <i>ASEAN</i> .
Indonesia	<p>On 1st June 2008, the Indonesian government dispatched medical assistance to Myanmar to aid the victims of Cyclone Nargis. The aid included 20 specialists, 10 medical personnel, a field hospital, and various medical equipment, including physiotherapists and nurses.</p> <p>Prior to this, Indonesia had also sent USD 1 million and logistical support to Myanmar.<sup>89</sup></p>	Then, on 27th June 2023, Indonesia contributed over USD 500,000 dollars in aid to assist the individuals impacted by cyclone Mocha. <sup>90</sup>

However, all these supports and aids are not directly in the hands of affected areas as the government announced to block travel allowance and officially announced to hinder international aid to the affected people. We can see that even regionally; we can see less attention to active and collaborative supportive actions at Mocha compared to Nargis.

#### 4. Responses of the International Community including the UN and Western Countries

In this part, the post-cyclone responses and approaches by the international community including the UN and Western countries would be addressed for both cases of Nargis and Mocha. Firstly, the study will address the issues related to the post-Nargis situation and then, to Mocha. In the case of Nargis, the initial response

<sup>87</sup><https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.ispmyanmar.com/&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1686158649269820&usg=AOvVaw3ctbICvRBI B- ano4pCr6l>

<sup>88</sup><https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/bangladesh-sends-relief-items-rakhines-people-affected-cyclone-mocha-643422>

<sup>89</sup><https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/indonesia-sends-medical-assistance-myanmar>

<sup>90</sup><https://www.facebook.com/westernnewsagency/posts/pfbid02STb2vHR79Z5wxDP7vxezXZ7raFMWVK5UL3N3atAspUpCiuroEDiB1yY7ni 6W2Hqhl>

of the junta authority to the cyclone was highly surprising and drew worldwide criticism. Unlike countries affected by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which quickly accepted international humanitarian assistance, the ruling junta authority in Myanmar blocked foreign disaster relief workers and crucial relief supplies from entering the delta during the critical first weeks after the cyclone. This decision raised significant concerns and hindered timely aid delivery to the cyclone survivors.<sup>91</sup> International support during Cyclone Nargis was crucial in providing relief and assistance to the storm-hit regions of Myanmar.

Despite initial resistance from the military junta, around three weeks after the storm, several countries and organizations stepped in to offer aid and support. The United Nations sent the first seven tons of relief supplies on May 8, 2008, after facing days of excruciating delay during which the insular military junta resisted international offers of large-scale aid.<sup>92</sup> On May 15, 2008, the United Kingdom pledged an additional £12 million to support the aid efforts bringing the total government assistance to £17 million.<sup>93</sup> The government eventually permitted the United Nations deliveries, marking a first crack in its reluctance to accept large-scale foreign involvement. The European Union emerged as the largest single donor, providing 39 million euros (51.54 million dollars) in aid for Nargis relief efforts. Additionally, the EU committed 33 million euros to a trust fund aimed at helping people in the Irrawaddy Delta rebuild their livelihoods and income-generating activities after the cyclone.<sup>94</sup>

On May 5, the USAID swiftly responded to the disaster declaration in Burma, deploying the USAID/DART team and allocating \$250,000 to UNICEF, WFP, and UNHCR for emergency food, water, and shelter aid. An additional \$3 million was later allocated, including \$1 million to the American Red Cross and \$2 million for NGO partners. The USAID Administrator Henrietta H. Fore announced \$13 million in food aid and logistics assistance through WFP on May 12. Over the next ten days, the US Agency for International Development (USAID)/Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) and the US Department of Defense (DOD) collaborated, delivering over \$1.2 millions of relief supplies on 45 DOD C-130 flights, benefiting 123,800 beneficiaries.<sup>95</sup>

Thailand-based WFP donated 46,633 tons of relief supplies, which arrived at Yangon International Airport on July 31. According to the OCHA Financial Tracking Service (FTS) as of December 1, 2008, the combined Revised Appeal, and other Humanitarian Funding, which includes contributions, commitments, and carry-over, amounted to US\$ 466 million. This funding represented approximately 63% of the funds requested under the 'Revised Appeal'. As the appeal window extended until the end of April 2009, additional contributions were anticipated to further support the relief and recovery efforts in the region.<sup>96</sup> Besides these supports, there were overall more than 30 countries which helped and gave aid to Myanmar under government's constraints' rules.

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<sup>91</sup> OCHA, "I Want to Help My Own People - State Control and Civil Society in Burma after Cyclone Nargis", 28 April, 2010.

Accessed: <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/i-want-help-my-own-people-state-control-and-civil-society-burma-after-cyclone-nargis>.

<sup>92</sup> Seth Mydans, "UN relief supplies arrive in Myanmar", The New York Times, May 8, 2008.

Accessed: <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/08/world/asia/08iht-09cyclone.2.12694062.html>.

<sup>93</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7403324.stm>.

<sup>94</sup> OCHA, "Aid for Myanmar's Cyclone Nargis only a fraction of aid for tsunami", 30 Apr 2009.

Accessed: <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/aid-myanmars-cyclone-nargis-only-fraction-aid-tsunami>

<sup>95</sup> "Burma - Cyclone Fact Sheet #13, Fiscal Year (FY) 2008", 22 May 2008.

Accessed: <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/burma-cyclone-fact-sheet-13-fiscal-year-fy-2008>.

<sup>96</sup> "Post Nargis Recovery and Preparedness Plan 2008", UNFPA, 2008. [https://myanmar.unfpa.org/en/publications/post-nargis-recovery-and-preparedness-plan-2008#:~:text=The%20Post%2DNargis%20Recovery%20and,healthy%20lives%2C%20and%20protected%20lives.,\(https://myanmar.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/PONREPP.pdf](https://myanmar.unfpa.org/en/publications/post-nargis-recovery-and-preparedness-plan-2008#:~:text=The%20Post%2DNargis%20Recovery%20and,healthy%20lives%2C%20and%20protected%20lives.,(https://myanmar.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/PONREPP.pdf)

Because of the delays in accepting international aid, there was a raising criticism toward the junta from both domestic and international spheres. As reported in the Irrawaddy News, the SPDC perceived international relief agencies as "neocolonialist tools."<sup>97</sup> In April 2008, the SPDC-controlled newspapers made accusations against the ICRC claiming support for rebel groups in Burma's Karen state. Additionally, Burmese political analyst Aung Naing Oo believes that the military junta had reservations about allowing a significant influx of international aid workers into the country, especially with the constitutional referendum vote looming close.<sup>98</sup>

In the case of Mocha, on May 23, the UNOCHA announced the requirement of US\$333 million to assist Cyclone Mocha victims in Myanmar. On the same day, the US pledged an additional \$17 million to support the restoration efforts.<sup>99</sup> However, concerns were raised about the danger of landmines in the affected areas. UNICEF warned about the potential movement of landmines and explosive ordnance due to heavy rain and flooding during the cyclone.<sup>100</sup> On May 29, the UNHCR declared an internal Level-2 emergency for Myanmar and Bangladesh to enhance their capacity to respond to the situation. For the UNOCHA, on May 31, funding was secured for 270 out of 550 IDP households in Rakhine that urgently needed reconstruction<sup>101</sup>. And, in the 9th June report, it expressed that nearly 267,000 individuals have benefited from food assistance, and approximately 3,380 metric tons of rice and high-energy biscuits have been distributed to those affected by the cyclone in the Rakhine region.<sup>102</sup> On 19th May, 2023, the UK government announced an extra £2 million (\$2.4 million) in humanitarian aid to assist the communities impacted by Cyclone Mocha in Myanmar. The funding will be used to provide clean water and shelter for up to 175,000 people, addressing the threat of disease. The cyclone has severely affected vulnerable communities in north-west Myanmar, with reports of significant casualties among the Rohingya.<sup>103</sup> The Australian Government will allocate an additional \$12.5 million to address urgent humanitarian needs in Bangladesh and Myanmar after Tropical Cyclone Mocha caused widespread damage, impacting around 2.4 million people. In Myanmar, \$10.5 million will be channeled through the United Nations-led response plan to support 1.6 million affected individuals without directly benefiting the military regime. Meanwhile, \$2 million will be provided to humanitarian partners in Bangladesh to aid communities in the most severely affected regions. This raises Australia's total contribution for Tropical Cyclone Mocha relief efforts to \$13.5 million, building upon their initial \$1 million support for rapid humanitarian supplies delivery and impact assessments.<sup>104</sup>

Name	Nargis Cyclone	Mocha Cyclone
UN	The United Nations sent the first seven tons of relief supplies on May 8, 2008, after facing days of excruciating delay during which the	On May 23, the UNOCHA announced the requirement of US\$333 million to assist Cyclone Mocha victims in Myanmar.

<sup>97</sup> Congressional Research Service, CRS Report, "Cyclone Nargis and Burma's Constitutional Referendum", June 30, 2008. Accessed: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL34481/7>

<sup>98</sup> Congressional Research Service, CRS Report, "Cyclone Nargis and Burma's Constitutional Referendum", June 30, 2008. Accessed: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL34481/7>

<sup>99</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/may-23-2023-united-states-providing-nearly-17-million-additional-humanitarian-assistance-response-tropical-cyclone-mocha-burma>  
<sup>100</sup> [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid0FK3hM54MDCvqAz2Wfy9UGDDqB9Z22a2xYGyhKRY8AnD5ehiCsruJXNLqGvc2hb6DI&id=100064714144852&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0FK3hM54MDCvqAz2Wfy9UGDDqB9Z22a2xYGyhKRY8AnD5ehiCsruJXNLqGvc2hb6DI&id=100064714144852&mibextid=Nif5oz).

<sup>101</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/466648543487562/posts/pfbid02khGcYUoEz1utU3CN944rrSLXBfK1YrkBJfEuWdMNoPDqymzcDKhvEWGJ7W9Tdqeal/?mibextid=Nif5oz>

<sup>102</sup> "Cyclone Mocha Situation Report No.3", UNOCHA, 2nd, Jun-23 Accessed: <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-cyclone-mocha-situation-report-no3-1400-1-june-2023>.

<sup>103</sup> Soraya Ebrahimi, "UK provides £2m in aid for victims of Cyclone Mocha in Myanmar", May 19, 2023.

Accessed: <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/uk-news/2023/05/18/uk-provides-2m-in-aid-for-victims-of-cyclone-mocha-in-myanmar/>

<sup>104</sup> Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon Penny Wong, "Humanitarian support to Myanmar and Bangladesh", 25 June 2023. Accessed: <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/penny-wong/media-release/humanitarian-support-myanmar-and-bangladesh-0>

	<p>insular military junta resisted international offers of large-scale aid.</p> <p>Thailand-based World Food Programme (WFP) donated 46,633 tons of relief supplies, which arrived at Yangon International Airport on July 31.</p> <p>According to the OCHA on December 1, 2008, the combined Revised Appeal, and other Humanitarian Funding, which includes contributions, commitments, and carry-over, amounted to US\$ 466 million.</p>	<p>UNICEF warned about the potential movement of landmines and explosive ordnance due to heavy rain and flooding during the cyclone.</p>
INGO	<p>In the case of the Nargis disaster response, the role of the International non-governmental humanitarian organizations was quite minimal. The role of UN and ASEAN was also quite prominent and there was very less presence of the INGOs in Myanmar before the cyclone period.</p>	<p>Before the stroke of the Mocha cyclone, the international non-governmental humanitarian organizations were frequently blocked in their humanitarian deliveries to the IDP community in the rural area based on the security reason. After the Mocha, however, the additional blockage on the humanitarian delivery pushed the INGOs into a difficult situation.</p>
US	<p>On May 5, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) swiftly responded to the disaster declaration in Burma, deploying the USAID/DART team and allocating \$250,000.</p> <p>An additional \$3 million was later allocated, including \$1 million to the American Red Cross and \$2 million for NGO partners.</p> <p>The USAID Administrator announced \$13 million in food aid and logistics assistance on May 12.</p>	<p>On May 23, the US pledged an additional \$17 million to support the restoration efforts.</p>
UK	<p>On May 15, 2008, the United Kingdom pledged an additional £12 million to support the aid efforts bringing the total government assistance to £17 million.</p>	<p>On 19th May, 2023, the UK government announced an extra £2 million (\$2.4 million) in humanitarian aid to assist the communities impacted by Cyclone Mocha in Myanmar.</p>
EU	<p>The European Union emerged as the largest single donor, providing 39 million euros (51.54 million dollars) in aid for Nargis relief efforts.</p> <p>Additionally, the EU committed 33 million euros to a trust fund aimed at helping people in the Irrawaddy Delta rebuild their</p>	<p>By the official website of the EU commission on 25th May 2023, it is said that the Commission has swiftly allocated €2.5 million in emergency humanitarian aid to address the critical needs of the affected population.<sup>105</sup></p> <p>On 14th June, the EU again released an additional €100,000 (over 220 million Myanmar kyats) to</p>

<sup>105</sup>[https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/news/myanmar-and-bangladesh-eu-releases-eu25-million-support-those-affected-devastating-cyclone-mocha-2023-05-25\\_en](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/news/myanmar-and-bangladesh-eu-releases-eu25-million-support-those-affected-devastating-cyclone-mocha-2023-05-25_en)



	livelihoods and income-generating activities after the cyclone.	offer urgent humanitarian assistance to families impacted by Cyclone Mocha. <sup>106</sup>
Australia	<p>According to the press release of the Government of Australia, on 23rd July, Australia is said to increase its humanitarian assistance to Cyclone Nargis-affected people with an additional \$30 million, targeting those in the most vulnerable situations, including women, children, and displaced individuals.</p> <p>This brought Australia's total contribution to \$55 million, making it one of the largest individual donors.<sup>107</sup></p>	<p>The Australian Government is reported to allocate an additional \$12.5 million to address urgent humanitarian needs in Bangladesh and Myanmar.</p> <p>This led the total of the Australian contribution for the Cyclone Mocha relief efforts to \$13.5 million, building upon their initial \$1 million support for rapid humanitarian supplies delivery and impact assessments</p>
Japan	<p>Japan said it will give 10 million dollars to help victims of the devastating cyclone in Myanmar on September 5, 2008.</p> <p>Japan will channel the 10 million dollars through international organizations including the UN World Food Program, a foreign ministry statement said.<sup>108</sup></p>	<p>On 6th May 2023, the Japanese government decided to extend Emergency Grant Aid of USD 2 million to Myanmar and Bangladesh, which were affected by Cyclone Mocha on May 14, 2023.</p> <p>For Myanmar, the breakdown of the Emergency Grant Aid includes USD 1 million for food assistance through World Food Programme (WFP), and USD 500,000 for water and sanitation, as well as shelter support through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).<sup>109</sup></p>
Russia	<p>On May 10, 2023, 30 tons of essentials - tents and blankets - were delivered on board. The second special flight, which was scheduled to arrive in Yangon on May 12, will deliver another 50 tons of humanitarian aid - mobile power plants, food, disinfectants, and medicines<sup>110</sup></p>	<p>The Fund RC-Investment of the Russian Federation has generously donated 150,000 Rubles to support rehabilitation and resettlement programs.</p> <p>The donation was made by the Director of the Fund RC-Investment, who handed over the funds to Myanmar Ambassador to Russia, Lwin Oo, at the Myanmar Embassy in Moscow on May 22nd.<sup>111</sup></p>

After a month of Mocha on the 8th of June 2023, there was an official announcement of the government to stop emergency humanitarian assistance for Mocha's affected areas. However, before that announcement, there was international support for Mocha from international organizations and foreign countries. Related to suspension of Travel Authorizations (TAs) in Rakhine State, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator a.i Ramanathan Balakrishnan expressed a press release on 12th June, mentioning that.

<sup>106</sup>[https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/myanmar-burma/european-union-brings-relief-victims-cyclone-mocha-myanmar\\_en?s=172](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/myanmar-burma/european-union-brings-relief-victims-cyclone-mocha-myanmar_en?s=172)

<sup>107</sup><https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/australia-provide-30-million-further-assistance-victims-cyclone-nargis>

<sup>108</sup><https://web.archive.org/web/20140103115742/http://rp4.abs-cbnnews.com/world/05/09/08/japan-gives-10-m-aid-myanmar>

<sup>109</sup>[https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press1e\\_000436.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press1e_000436.html)

<sup>110</sup><https://rb.ru/article/samolet-mchs-rf-dostavil-gumanitarnuyu-pomoshh-v-myanmu/5237787.html>

<sup>111</sup><https://npnewsmm.com/news/646d9da175876f29e2749034>

*“This denial of access unnecessarily prolongs the suffering of those without food to eat or a roof over their head. On behalf of humanitarian actors, I urge the State Administration Council to urgently reconsider this decision and reinstate the initial approval that was granted for distributions which will allow aid that is ready and waiting to flow to people who desperately need it.”<sup>112</sup>*

Interestingly, although there are still blockages from the military government for TAs in Rakhine State, starting from 20th June<sup>113</sup> to 28th June, the Myanmar Red Cross Society is dedicated to distributing drinking water to areas in Rakhine state facing water scarcity. They have provided substantial amounts of water to different locations and communities, including Sittwe, Kyauktaw Township, Done Pyin village, and Thet Kay Pyin camp. <sup>114</sup>Furthermore, the organization has also supplied essential family items and shared information about hygiene and the Red Cross. Their ongoing efforts aim to reach as many locations as possible and secure a sustainable water source for those in need. <sup>115</sup>However, according to the CAS study, Myanmar Red Cross Society, a well-known national humanitarian organization is also said to receive an allowance and maintains continuous engagement with the community even after releasing their statements of the TAs from the military government.

There was also an increased amount of demand from United Nations officials, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) to reconsider the military council for its decision imposing a travel ban within Rakhine State. A civilian organization from Rathedaung Township, who did not want to be named said

*“The military council should allow international organizations including the UN to provide humanitarian aid in Rakhine State. If the military council also supports and the international community provides assistance, the storm-affected people will be helped a lot. Now, the storm-affected people are facing hunger because there are people who do not have relief assistance. We request the military council to be generous.”<sup>116</sup>*

On 19th June, UNOCHA announced that the temporary suspension of TAs for humanitarian organizations is affecting the humanitarian response across Rakhine State. In order to provide humanitarian assistance in Rakhine State, travel permits have been submitted to the State Military Council, but the delays in obtaining permits are causing difficulties for NGOs. There is still a lack of food and relief supplies in the rural areas and IDPs camps in the Mocha storm affected townships. Ma May Su Hlaing, a woman from Zayti Pyin IDP Camp said

*“There is no toilet in the camp. Not good for girls. Our livelihood situation has become more difficult because the military council has banned humanitarian aid groups.”<sup>117</sup>*

In the Mizzima news, on 22 May 2023, Wai Wai Nu, an advocate for the Women's Peace Network said to the UN that,

*“Aid must be distributed directly to the communities in need without being subject to the control of the generals. She emphasizes that the same generals were responsible for overseeing the problematic aid distribution during*

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<sup>112</sup><https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/humanitarian-access-suspended-cyclone-ravaged-rakhine-state-enmm>

<sup>113</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=842936310736972&id=100050618313560&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=842936310736972&id=100050618313560&mibextid=Nif5oz)

<sup>114</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=843939050636698&id=100050618313560&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=843939050636698&id=100050618313560&mibextid=Nif5oz)

<sup>115</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=846809037016366&id=100050618313560&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=846809037016366&id=100050618313560&mibextid=Nif5oz)

<sup>116</sup> Western News, “UN officials are urging the military council to review the travel ban”, 14th June, 2023.

Accessed: [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=779056370567536&id=102405104899336&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=779056370567536&id=102405104899336&mibextid=Nif5oz)

<sup>117</sup> Development Media Group, “The UN announced that the Military Council has temporarily suspended travel permits for aid and rescue in Rakhine”, 19 June, 2023. Accessed:

[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=649722850534648&id=100064908151155&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=649722850534648&id=100064908151155&mibextid=Nif5oz)

*Cyclone Nargis, highlighting the need for a more transparent and accountable approach to ensure effective assistance.”<sup>118</sup>*

In comparing international responses to both cyclone cases and the government's acceptance of assistance, similarities emerge in the approach taken by the military junta. The junta's tactics in handling Cyclone Mocha mirrored those during Cyclone Nargis. In the Nargis aftermath, the junta's refusal to accept international aid was driven by various factors. They aimed to maintain strict control over the country, resist international influence, and uphold their authority. Political considerations, including avoiding dependency on Western nations and safeguarding their image, also played a role. Concerns over transparency and sovereignty contributed to their reluctance in allowing foreign aid organizations to operate freely.

Similarly, during Cyclone Mocha, the junta's approach toward humanitarian assistance from civil society organizations aligned with their previous stance. In contrast, the international community's response to Nargis was more robust, involving negotiations and efforts to address blockages through initiatives like the TCG via ASEAN mediation. However, there has been comparatively less international activity regarding the junta's actions during Mocha, despite the urgent need for assistance to affected populations. While the death toll in Mocha does not match Nargis, timely support remains essential. While Nargis saw a multitude of actions from various countries, the Mocha situation primarily involved UN and NGO/CSO statements. Nonetheless, the imperative remains to provide aid swiftly to those affected by Cyclone Mocha.

## **5. Actions of the Local Community and Civil Society Organizations**

In the cases of both Nargis and Mocha cyclones, the response of the local community and local civil society played a significant role, particularly in situations where the government's negligence was evident in both cases. The military government hindered significant international relief efforts by deliberately delaying the issuance of visas to aid workers, restricting foreign helicopters and boats from delivering support to the affected areas, impeding travel by aid agencies to the disaster-affected regions, and limiting the freedom of local and international media to report from the disaster area.<sup>119</sup> As the junta reacted slowly and hinderingly to the international request to help the affected communities after the Nargis cyclone, the local community tried hard to help the community by themselves as much as possible they could amidst many challenges including security concerns.

In the case of Nargis, despite being under the authority's immersive restrictions, the civil society groups and individuals took it upon themselves to raise funds, gather essential supplies, and journey to the severely affected areas of the Irrawaddy Delta and Yangon to aid survivors in devastated villages. People from various backgrounds, including monks, business circle, local activists, doctors, farmers, and laborers, spontaneously collected food, clothes, and housing materials from their communities and journeyed to the delta to provide relief assistance. Ad hoc groups were formed to coordinate these efforts. While many of these efforts were spontaneous, as relief and recovery operations intensified, numerous community-based organizations and civil society groups mobilized and gained valuable experience in providing humanitarian assistance and implementing projects.<sup>120</sup> Simultaneously, international humanitarian groups discreetly deployed their local staff to establish a presence in the affected region and initiate the delivery of relief aid. This initial groundwork laid the foundation for the subsequent development of a larger-scale humanitarian effort.

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<sup>118</sup> Mizzima, “ Myanmar junta uses aid as a weapon of war”, 22 May 2023.

Accessed: <https://mizzima.com/article/myanmar-junta-uses-aid-weapon-war>.

<sup>119</sup> Human Right Watch, “I Want to Help My Own People - State Control and Civil Society in Burma after Cyclone Nargis”,

<sup>120</sup> OCHA, “I Want to Help My Own People - State Control and Civil Society in Burma after Cyclone Nargis”, 28 April, 2010.

Accessed: <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/i-want-help-my-own-people-state-control-and-civil-society-burma-after-cyclone-nargis>



*People arrive to take shelter at a monastery in Sittue town in Myanmar's Rakhine state on Friday, May 12, 2023, ahead of the expected landfall of Cyclone Mocha. (Photo/Radio Free Asia)*

In the aftermath of the cyclone, thousands of people across the country spontaneously became humanitarian aid workers. U Myo Nyunt (pseudo-name), the director of a relief organization in Delta Region (2010) revealed that prior to Cyclone Nargis, their group had no experience working together due to authorities' suspicion and restrictions. While they had offered educational programs and training, they were not permitted to engage in humanitarian work. However, the Cyclone Nargis presented an opportunity for them to participate in humanitarian efforts, not because of the government's support but due to the space created by the disaster.<sup>121</sup>

Likewise, after Mocha, prior to the arrival of the international reliefs, the very first responses came out from the local community and CSO groups. All Arakan Youth Organization Network (AAYON) have swiftly responded to the potential impact of Cyclone Mocha by collecting data on destruction, property damage, and ground conditions in affected areas. Additionally, some CSOs like Arakan CSO Network and Arakan Responders for Emergency (ARE) have initiated fundraising campaigns to provide emergency aid. However, similar to what they did in the past, the junta authority makes some hindrances to the local community response in their controlled areas. Some local NGOs and INGOs have faced delays in their response efforts due to discrepancies with donor-regulated policies related to data and detailed procedures. An interview of the CAS team with an INGO staff member working in emergency relief revealed that they could only aid areas covered by their previous projects and IDP camps, which were not directly impacted by Cyclone Mocha. To reach the affected areas, they need to collect data and propose adjustments, a process that takes a long time.<sup>122</sup> Therefore, it can be found that the junta authority still does not change their techniques for

<sup>121</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with 'Myo Nyunt', Rangoon, March 2010. <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/i-want-help-my-own-people-state-control-and-civil-society-burma-after-cyclone-nargis>

<sup>122</sup> Interview with a Communication Officer of an INGO on June 1, 2023.



cyclones-response actions as they want to show their power throughout the country at the local and international level too.

Beyond the support of the community organizations and individuals in the case of Nargis, the role of monk (Sangha) was too prominent for Nargis-response although they had been oppressed seriously at 2007 Saffron Revolution. The 2007 monk's uprising also played a role as it had a significant impact on the government, providing additional motivation for their involvement in humanitarian work.<sup>123</sup> In the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis, a Buddhist monk, previously a leader of the 2007 demonstrations, found his home village severely affected by the cyclone. He said to HRW on 28th October 2008, about his experience that despite the government's lack of response, the local monks rallied survivors and organized food and shelter, taking matters into their own hands. The monk and his community organized the cremation of 150 bodies, emphasizing the crucial role played by local communities in providing relief when government assistance was absent.<sup>124</sup>

Moreover, after Cyclone Nargis, expatriate Burmese nationals returned to the country, offering private donations and expertise to help communities. They live in various regions, including those living in neighboring countries and abroad, sending financial aid and supplies, irrespective of their connection to the affected areas. In Thailand, ethnic Karen and Burman aid workers formed Emergency Assistance Team-Burma (EAT-Burma) and organized medics and community health workers. Despite facing restrictions, they managed to raise funds and transport supplies and personnel from the Thai-Burma border to provide assistance in the Irrawaddy Delta (EAT-Burma, as cited in the report). The cyclone's impact triggered a global response from the Burmese diaspora and neighboring communities, showing solidarity and support for their fellow citizens during the disaster.<sup>125</sup> The international community and local civil societies became more related and developed their relationship as the INGO understood that their local partners were really important for sending the reliefs to the voluntary groups.

Name	Nargis Cyclone	Mocha Cyclone
Key CSO Actors	<p>People from various backgrounds, including monks, business circle, local activists, doctors, farmers, and laborers, spontaneously collected food, clothes, and housing materials from their communities and journeyed to the delta to provide relief assistance.</p> <p>In the case of Nargis, the role of monk (Sangha) was too prominent for Nargis-response although they had been oppressed seriously at 2007 Saffron Revolution.</p>	<p>In the initial period during a month after Cyclone's hitting, there were the CBOs which were trying to do aid and emergency reliefs based on the requirements.</p> <p>Some local celebrities were also coming to the areas for emergency assistance.</p> <p>However, the roles of those organizations and people from other areas (except those from Rakhine State) are not prominent during Mocha like Nargis.</p> <p>Some prominent organizations which are actively doing the cyclone-related</p>

<sup>123</sup> Christian leader interviewed for, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS), "Listening to Voices from Inside: Myanmar Civil Society's Response to Cyclone Nargis," May 2009, p.164.

<sup>124</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with U Eitthariya, Mae Sot, Thailand, October 28, 2008.

<sup>125</sup> For a human rights analysis of the cyclone collected by EAT-Burma relief teams in the Irrawaddy Delta and around Rangoon, see Voravit Suwanvanichkij et al, "Community-Based Assessment of Human Rights in a Complex Humanitarian Emergency: The Emergency Assistance Teams-Burma and Cyclone Nargis," Conflict and Health, 4, (8), April, 2010; Emergency Assistance Team-Burma and John Hopkins University Center for Public Health and Human Rights, "After the Storm: Voices from the Delta," March 2009.

	In Thailand, ethnic Karen and Burman aid workers formed Emergency Assistance Team-Burma (EAT-Burma) and organized medics and community health workers.	requirements are All Arakan Youth Organization Network (AAYON), Arakan CSO Network, Arakan Responders for Emergency (ARE).
Main Challenges	<p>In an interview of John Hopkin University with relief workers working in Dedaye and Pyapon Townships on June 25, 2008, he mentioned that “on our first trip to Dedaye [Township], we had to smuggle medicines in our backpacks to get to the relief area.</p> <p>After two weeks, it was better, now they don’t stop us. But the first week was very difficult, they arrested people, stopped cars. We had to smuggle in supplies.</p> <p>Later, some relief groups had to pay 30,000 kyat [\$25USD] at the checkpoint to pass. We avoid this; negotiations or smuggling is okay, but we won’t go this way, we won’t give money to the military.”<sup>126</sup></p>	<p>An interview of the CAS team with an INGO staff member working in emergency relief revealed that they could only provide assistance to areas covered by their previous projects and IDP camps, which were not directly impacted by Cyclone Mocha.</p> <p>During the observations from the CAS team, the local CSOs, NGOs and CBOs cannot afford to cover every affected situation in the meantime as the junta blocks the international activities and directly assists the affected areas.</p>
Response of the Authority	<p>The junta authority kept the immersive restrictions on the funds’ raising and relief support groups made by the community with the intensive and strict checking points along the roads towards the cyclone-affected areas.</p> <p>Some were not allowed, or some were under detention during their work for reliefs of aids to the cyclone-affected populations.</p>	<p>Firstly, the junta authority made any blockages towards the aid reliefs actions from various backgrounds. However, later, it announced the restrictions over Travel Authorizations (TAs) to all activities of support in the cyclone-affected areas.</p> <p>After that, the authority again announced and released rules for the local organizations to be followed but still did not allow the international organizations.</p>

Although the individual societies beside the NGO, CSOs and CBOs are trying to help the affected communities in the scenarios of Mocha, the activities are almost totally halted after the junta’s announcement for banning all those relief actions on 8th June 2023. That action from the military government can be said to be more sensitive than Nargis-intensive responses because in the case of Nargis, the junta authority did not officially announce the blockages apart from hindering the relief actions for local and international support. But, in the case of Mocha, it officially announced the suspension of all activities in the Northern Rakhine State.

U Myat Tun, Director of a local Human Rights Organization said in the Western News on 9th June, 2023 that

<sup>126</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-after-storm-voices-delta>

*"I would like to say that the military council is reckless. I am also very disappointed with this statement. I also want to say that they have deliberately oppressed the people of Rakhine in the midst of suffering from such a storm. They are also blocking the rights of a nation. By blocking this, human rights are being severely violated. This is a serious violation of human ethics,"*

At the same news, *"It is inhumane for the military council to do this. They are killing us. Because of the storm, the people have no food, no shelter, and are starving. Even though they are banned from humanitarian aid. It is not even worthy to be called a terrorist. I would like to say they are not human"* said Ko Kyaw Hlaing Myint from Rakhine State.

To compare with Nargis, one of the individual-raised donor groups' members (Myint Nu) said to HRW about Nargis-response actions that.

*"On May 18, I saw the beginning of the authorities clearing refugees off the motorways. On May 25, we were interrogated at Hlaingtharyar Bridge by the authorities, with questions such as where we were going, what we were distributing. We also got letters with instructions not to drop food or anything on the motorway for the refugees. But, we didn't face further hard checking and interrogation."*<sup>127</sup>

He continued that although his group did not encounter official obstructions after May 25, they were fully aware of the crackdown on prominent activists in the region. He speculated that the arrest of popular volunteers like Zargana, a well-known comedian and activist, might be linked to their political backgrounds. The authorities possibly feared that activist-oriented volunteers could wield influence over the local population and decided to arrest them. Here, Zargana claimed in an interview with HRW,

*"I want to save my own people. That's why we go with any donations we can get. But the government doesn't like our work. It is not interested in helping people. It just wants to tell the world and the rest of the country that everything is under control and that it has already saved its people."*<sup>128</sup>

In essence, this issue was also one of the same things as Mocha. Although there are a lot of humanitarian response from different groups and societies after Mocha before SAC's blockages, Wai Hun Aung, a renowned charity worker, along with his daughter and others, were arrested and questioned at the No.10 Military Affairs Security Force office in Sittwe on May 23rd, 2023, on their way to provide humanitarian responses for Mocha-affected areas. The arrest took place while they were delivering emergency food to affected people in Ponnagyun Township. After spending a day at the interrogation center, Wai Hun Aung and his daughter were eventually released, but two other individuals were held as suspects (as reported, source)<sup>129</sup> That detention shows that SAC will do whatever it wants and thinks right. After that detention, all CSOs, NGOs and CBOs feel unsafe for their activities too. Therefore, on May 29, the Arakan CSOs made a plea for unrestricted access to the areas impacted by the storm. The spokesperson emphasized the need for increased caution, especially after the detention of social activist Ko Wai Hin Aung. The situation has led to concerns for the safety of individuals both physically and mentally, prompting them to exercise extra caution when transporting relief supplies.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Myint Nu, Rangoon, December 2009.

<sup>128</sup> OCHA, "I Want to Help My Own People - State Control and Civil Society in Burma after Cyclone Nargis", 28 April, 2010.

Accessed: <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/i-want-help-my-own-people-state-control-and-civil-society-burma-after-cyclone-nargis>.

<sup>129</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/102405104899336/posts/pfbid0HY2FGFCgR2KCRSop1mxbWitKWHBSpcEeUvsn4xK66VwvRYGCbwzcophd3EBuo8VWl/?mibextid=Nif5oz>

<sup>130</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/466648543487562/posts/pfbid02khGcYUoEz1utU3CN944rrSLXBfK1YrkBJfEuWdMNOpDqymzcDKhvEWGJ7W9Tdqeal/?mibextid=Nif5oz>

On 27th June 2023, a local woman from Sittwe, expressed her dedication to helping storm victims, saying,

*"We went to some villages in Pauktaw Township to donate relief items to the storm victims. We provided a total of 1,057 people from three villages with rice and cooking oil. As we are young people, we donated with the belief that if we don't help each other, who will come and help us in Arakan State. We went to Pauktaw with the intention that our donation would be beneficial to the villagers."*

In the same news, Ko Win Hlaing from Mrauk-U Youths Association also spoke about their efforts to support those affected by the cyclone,

*"We make field trips to donate relief items to the storm victims. We also donate drinking water to people in some villages. Our main difficulty is money. People in storm-hit areas are in need of shelters, drinking water, and food supplies. Every village has its own difficulty. To solve these difficulties, it will take time and we will need financial resources as well as human resources. I don't think it can be solved immediately when the losses are so large. Currently, the junta is not doing anything carefully or effectively."*

A resident from Arakan Youth Organizations Network in Sittwe shared the challenges they face during rescue operations,

*"When we go to rescue areas affected by the current storm, the difficulty is that we can't get enough relief items. When buying food, the prices are rising, and when it comes to transporting things, there are inconveniences like travel expenses. Another thing is that everyone was affected by the impacts of Cyclone Mocha, but when we give food aid, we are not able to give it to everyone. All the storm victims wanted relief items, but we were really sad when we couldn't give them to everyone. The first needs of the locals are food, shelter, and drinking water."*<sup>131</sup>

Overall, both cyclones demonstrated the resilience and determination of local communities and civil society in providing aid and support during times of crisis. Despite initial resistance from the government, the international community and neighboring countries also played a crucial role in extending assistance. However, the challenges faced in delivering aid during Cyclone Mocha underscore the importance of facilitating humanitarian efforts without hindrances and restrictions.

## **6. Public Voices on the Ground Situations**

In both Cyclone Nargis and Mocha, the responses from the government, local communities, and international support differed in certain aspects, but also showed some similarities. It is essential to understand the ground realities of these disasters to comprehend the emergency responses, rescue, and recovery activities. The voices and needs of the local affected people in both situations should be carefully examined to grasp the true impacts and sentiments during these periods.

### **6.1 Effectiveness of the Emergency Relief**

The junta authority failed to adequately provide essential necessities such as food, shelter, and water to the cyclone survivors. The destructive combination of a storm surge and powerful winds resulted in the destruction of homes, fields, livestock, and rice stores, leaving survivors with little to nothing. Despite the magnitude of the disaster, the military regime, which was in the midst of preparations for a national

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<sup>131</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=728147279315615&id=100063610492275&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=728147279315615&id=100063610492275&mibextid=Nif5oz)



referendum in May 10, 2008 and upcoming elections in 2010, claimed it could handle the situation on its own and rejected most international assistance for several weeks. In the Guardian news, insights into the aftermath of the cyclone were expressed by the researchers from Johns Hopkins University and Burmese volunteers from the Emergency Assistance Team (Eat-Burma) who conducted extensive interviews with survivors and relief workers over the course of several months.<sup>132</sup> *A former Burmese soldier who fled to Mae Sot in Thailand recalled witnessing donated supplies being sold in markets run by the military and authorities. These supplies were originally intended for the cyclone victims but ended up being sold in the market instead. The researchers also uncovered accounts of survivors, including men, women, and children, being forced into labor on military-led reconstruction projects.*<sup>133</sup>

According to Khin Mar Wai who spoke to the HRW, the aftermath of the cyclone had devastating consequences on vulnerable populations, particularly the elderly, young, and injured and the lack of food, clean water, and proper shelter, compounded by continuous rainfall, resulted in tragic outcomes. Khin Mar Wai witnessed,

*"The unfortunate deaths of some elderly people and children, unable to offer assistance as she had to travel long distances to beg for food. Many others fell ill and passed away during this difficult time. Shockingly, there was no help or aid provided to their village for over a month following Cyclone Nargis. The much-needed assistance finally arrived when a group of donors led by monks came to their area."*<sup>134</sup>

Again, 15 years later, it is not too different from the Mocha situation as the lack of required aids are not arriving enough in the hands of mainly affected populations although the post-Mocha disaster is immersive. A CSO leader gathering data on the ground situation expressed his experiences as;

*"We can't settle for mere talk; action is needed on the ground. The current efforts seem focused on showcasing military and government facilities, but they fail to address the real issues faced by the suffering population. The aid they display, like ships, iron, and zinc, doesn't reach those who are truly in distress. It's all just talk"*<sup>135</sup>.

Quite similarly, in the case of Nargis, the study also revealed that the junta military actively obstructed private attempts to assist cyclone victims, targeting both concerned citizens and relief efforts through the use of checkpoints and arrests. Furthermore, when relief supplies from abroad were permitted into the country, the military seized them and sold them in identifiable packaging at local markets.<sup>136</sup> Survivors shared their experiences, with one individual from Labutta township recounting how the army not only failed to provide assistance but also imposed forced labor on the community. Men, women, and even children were compelled to work without compensation, leading to tragic consequences such as the death of a young boy who was injured during labor.<sup>137</sup>

<sup>132</sup> Ian MacKinnon, South-east Asia correspondent

"Burmese regime blocked international aid to cyclone victims, report says", Fri 27 Feb 2009.

Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/feb/27/regime-blocked-aid-to-burma-cyclone-victims>.

<sup>133</sup> Ian MacKinnon, South-east Asia correspondent

"Burmese regime blocked international aid to cyclone victims, report says", Fri 27 Feb 2009.

Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/feb/27/regime-blocked-aid-to-burma-cyclone-victims>.

<sup>134</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Burmese villager Khin Mar Wai, Laputta township, December

2009. Accessed: <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/i-want-help-my-own-people-state-control-and-civil-society-burma-after-cyclone-nargis>

<sup>135</sup> [https://m.facebook.com/westernnewsagency/photos/a.119286173211229/779617857178054/?type=3&locale=en\\_GB](https://m.facebook.com/westernnewsagency/photos/a.119286173211229/779617857178054/?type=3&locale=en_GB)

<sup>136</sup> Ian MacKinnon, South-east Asia correspondent, "Burmese regime blocked international aid to cyclone victims, report says", Fri 27 Feb 2009.

Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/feb/27/regime-blocked-aid-to-burma-cyclone-victims>.

<sup>137</sup> Ian MacKinnon, South-east Asia correspondent, "Burmese regime blocked international aid to cyclone victims, report says", Fri 27 Feb 2009.

Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/feb/27/regime-blocked-aid-to-burma-cyclone-victims>.

For the Mocha-affected refugees' camps and local residents, although there are a lot of news from the government-controlled media mentioning that they are planning well and providing the emergency reliefs and required things to the voluntary people in the affected areas, the real situations on the ground show that huge and immediate demands are constantly increasing that there are still lack of required activities from the government. In the Border News Agency (BNA), a local media from Rakhine State, it is expressed that on 29th May, 2023, one of the affected community members raised out his experience that,

*"We have lost all our houses, and we haven't received any assistance yet. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has provided a small amount of money, but it's not enough. There is no proper shelter, and whatever is left, we use it to protect ourselves from the rain. It's a dire situation, and buying 100 bamboos for 80,000 kyats is beyond our means. The situation is particularly challenging for the Tim Nyo Refugee Camp in Mrauk-U Township, where all the huts were destroyed by the storm. Rebuilding the huts is proving to be a difficult task."*

Moreover, a similar situation also took place during Nargis where the real situations were different related to the relief and aid distribution by the government. According to *Naw Ley Ley (a Nargis-affected citizen)*, a young Karen woman from a village near Bogale, located just a 20-minute walk from the coastline where many residents were missing and presumed dead, they had hoped for assistance but none arrived. They waited for help, but after a week with no aid assistance, they were compelled to search for food and water on their own. She mentioned that there were many survivors who were also on the move, but they never witnessed any aid distribution during that time. The only evidence of aid distribution they saw was later shown on the State-run television.<sup>138</sup>

Likewise, a Mocha-affected woman described her experience of delivering relief items from the side of the government but with mismanagement that led to leaving all required people. *A local woman residing in Mingan Ward's Block 11, Sittwe*, expressed her experience regarding relief assistance in the aftermath of the storm. She said that she received relief items from the WFP but did not receive any assistance from the junta authority. She mentioned that storm victims whose household registration cards were collected by the ward administrator for the election seemed to be receiving relief items, but she was unsure about the criteria used for aiding storm victims.<sup>139</sup>

## 6.2 Psychological Damage Was Largely Ignored

In the Nargis scenarios, the junta authority not only did not care about voluntary people's recovery and emergency needs but also neglected their emotional damages after the disaster. The military forced the people residing at schools, monasteries, and small camps to return to their original villages, even if these locations were not habitable or suitable for their safety and well-being and the voluntary people felt so bad seeing the dead bodies of their families scattered at the village and some missing.<sup>140</sup>

Regarding the Mocha, there is also no visible support from the junta authority for the emotional trauma release for affected populations. Organizations focused on children's mental health have reported that rural children in Rakhine State are experiencing emotional trauma due to the devastation caused by Cyclone Mocha. The post-storm situation has led to psychological and physical harm in children due to inadequate

<sup>138</sup> 30 Human Rights Watch interview with Naw Ley Ley, Thailand, June 2008. Accessed: <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/i-want-help-my-own-people-state-control-and-civil-society-burma-after-cyclone-nargis>

<sup>139</sup> [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=2602059563279772&id=466648543487562&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2602059563279772&id=466648543487562&mibextid=Nif5oz)

<sup>140</sup> Amnesty International, "Myanmar Briefing: Human rights concerns a month after Cyclone Nargis," AI Index: ASA 16/013/2008, June 5, 2008.

parental care, unmet basic needs, food shortages, and environmental instability, as highlighted by civil society groups. In the wake of such a mass trauma event like Cyclone Mocha, children's health experts emphasize the pressing need for international organizations, governmental bodies, philanthropic groups, and parents to create nurturing and healing environments to support the children's recovery and well-being.<sup>141</sup>



*People shelter at a monastery in Sittwe town in Myanmar's Rakhine state on Friday, May 12, 2023. (Photo/ AFP)*

### **6.3 Education, Inflation and Abuse of Aid Distribution**

Another worth-noticing situation that should be mentioned is the education sector. As schools begin to reopen amidst the extensive devastation caused by Cyclone Mocha, the education sector is facing significant challenges. Over 300,000 students are in dire need of educational support, and approximately 1,246 schools have suffered severe damage in Rakhine and the Northwest regions. Unfortunately, travel authorization issues have emerged as a major obstacle for cluster partners, leading to significant delays in the delivery of necessary tools and instruments. In Kyauktaw township, the urgency of providing education services during emergencies further complicates the delivery of education in critical situations. Moreover, the cyclone-affected areas in the country are grappling with uncleared debris, hindering the repair and reopening of schools. To exacerbate the situation, persistent aerial attacks on schools not only jeopardize the lives and well-being of students but also pose a threat to the overall stability of the education system.<sup>142</sup>

On 15th June 2023, a school headmaster in Sittwe Township expressed his concern about the disparity between talk and action in the aftermath of the cyclone. He pointed out that.

<sup>141</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=655331566640443&id=100064908151155&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=655331566640443&id=100064908151155&mibextid=Nif5oz)

<sup>142</sup> OCHA, UNICEF Myanmar Humanitarian Situation Report No. 4: 1 May - 30 June 2023, 3 Jul 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/unicef-myanmar-humanitarian-situation-report-no-4-1-may-30-june-2023>.

*“Both urban and rural areas were facing challenges, particularly in rebuilding and repairing school buildings and shelters. In Sittwe Township, numerous schools were damaged by the storm, and even after a month, the rehabilitation efforts have not been completed. The headmaster questioned the military council's claims of completion and emphasized the urgent need for more tangible progress in rebuilding schools to ensure that children can resume their education.”*<sup>143</sup>

In the initial aftermath of the cyclone Nargis, it seemed that the SPDC (State Peace and Development Council) either underestimated the extent of the cyclone's damage or intentionally downplayed its impact. The first edition of ‘The New Light of Myanmar’ published after the cyclone implied that life in Yangon was quickly returning to normal and minimized the cyclone's impact in Bago Division, Kayin State, and Mon State. There were allegations that the SPDC prioritized relief efforts in areas where officials and military personnel resided, neglecting the general population. Criticism was also directed at the SPDC for failing to prevent opportunistic practices by merchants selling essential items like food and fuel at exorbitant prices. Reports indicated that commodity prices, including vegetables and eggs, rose drastically (three or four times than original prices) by 100% following Cyclone Nargis. By May 6, 2008, food prices had escalated three to four times their pre-cyclone levels.<sup>144</sup>

According to the observations by the CAS team on the local residents for Mocha, the junta authority cannot control food prices and other home construction items and sims cards (communication) at the affected areas including Sittwe.<sup>145</sup> At Buthidaung, a local said to RFA on 18th May, 2023 that

*“In Buthidaung Township, there were only 300 kyats for one egg before the storm, but after the storm, there are about 500 kyats for one egg. The telephone lines were also cut off due to the storm, and since we can communicate with ATOM SIM cards in Buthidaung city, the price of a SIM card has gone from 5,000 kyat to 60,000 kyat now.”*<sup>146</sup>

However, after an announcement from ULA/AA to arrest and check the shops which sell the commodities at reasonable price, there are some impacts. The Western News media also mentioned on 21st May that After Cyclone Mocha hit Rakhine State, the prices of house construction materials like zinc plates and rivets have significantly been increased. Due to the scarcity of these construction materials in the market, this situation leads to the rise of prices even eight times higher than the normal price for some items.<sup>147</sup>

In addition, during Nargis, there were several news that the local officials who were assigned to allocate the relief and aid to the people stole the supplies which were used on their own or sold on the black market<sup>148</sup>. There are really similar situations here in Mocha as the observations of the CAS team found out at the ground situations and some voices from the local residents. The locals from affected areas in Rakhine State said that the village administrator took the aids more than his or her shares to get and the residents just got a few assistances. However, most of the voices describe that there is almost no support from the government side.

<sup>143</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/westernnewsagency/photos/a.119286173211229/779617857178054/?type=3&locale=en\\_GB](https://m.facebook.com/westernnewsagency/photos/a.119286173211229/779617857178054/?type=3&locale=en_GB)

<sup>144</sup> Congressional Research Service, CRS Report, “Cyclone Nargis and Burma's Constitutional Referendum”, June 30, 2008. Accessed: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL34481/7>

<sup>145</sup><https://www.facebook.com/102405104899336/posts/pfbid0S33Zpd9wEuRK8QAWdoSxc6RV1ZPbkr4coM8V1i2ht6GWo1oZwbHWntZd mTntYjgl/?mibextid=Nif5oz>

<sup>146</sup>RFA, 18th May, “မိုးခါ မုန်တိုင်းအပြီး ဘူးသီးတောင်မှာ အကူအညီတွေ လိုအပ်နေ”.

<sup>147</sup>“ULA/AA is investigating those who are selling at exorbitant profits when people are in trouble due to the storm.”, 21st May, 2023. Accessed:

<https://www.facebook.com/102405104899336/posts/pfbid03uZHMAERgGU59q5d1JUingTBWsiMANqtWfwGYiDC9vXtPtPvKxST5iSAbgvFgY9l/?mibextid=Nif5oz>

<sup>148</sup> Congressional Research Service, CRS Report, “Cyclone Nargis and Burma's Constitutional Referendum”, June 30, 2008. Accessed: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL34481/7>



Some who get aid reliefs from the government described that they just got only a very small amount “2 boxes of rice, 2 eggs, etc” which are really not even enough for a person’s meal.

Even though there are such allegations, no one dares to complain and tell the higher authorities because that is not impactful, and no action taken against the perpetrators. Instead, the one who claimed became discriminated against more than others and rather than in the past. In line with a local source, it is said that the government sent the electricity experts (civil servants) to repair the electricity to the houses of affected areas, but they asked for about 10000 kyats or 20000 kyats per house. If some house owners try to complain, the electricity staff would just leave their houses without repairing. The soldiers or police accompanied with those staffs also know these cases but neglected them. This is quite different from the propaganda of the authority and also causes double burden on the already vulnerable population due to the cyclone.

## 7. Conclusion

In comparison between cyclone Nargis and Mocha, the military government’s responses, and actions towards the cyclones’ management in short and long-term perspectives can be seen as not too different. Their own actions for emergency responses and rehabilitation processes are still insufficient in certain factors that lead the affected communities to be more harmful. In both cases, especially for Nargis, in early warning stages, the responsible authorities failed to do enough warnings and preparedness like helping the people in evacuation to safe places and supporting required or enough food to the people who are moving to temporary safe zones. Related to aid supplies in both cases of Nargis and Mocha, there is mishandling of assistance through their respective authorized or assigned ministries in state level, township level and village or tract level. There are still stealing or abuse of aids for their own profits in different ways.

During the cyclone response, there were significant concerns about the mishandling of aid supplies by certain individuals within the government sector. In Nargis, reports emerged of aid being diverted for personal gain, donated items being sold in local markets instead of reaching to those in need, and the obstruction of private relief efforts. Likewise, in Mocha, voluntary groups spoke out loud that they face similar situations of being abused of aid distributions and the suffering population is still in lack of receiving assistance from the government authority. These actions not only undermined the effectiveness of relief efforts but also exacerbated the suffering of cyclone survivors. As a result of this mismanagement, essential necessities such as food, shelter, and clean water were lacking for the affected population. Additionally, trust in the authorities and relief organizations was eroded, adding to the distress experienced by the already traumatized cyclone survivors. These actions not only fell short of meeting the humanitarian needs of the affected people but also raised serious concerns about potential human rights violations.

Even at the national level, if the rehabilitation or emergency responses are out of national capability, it is important to give easy access for international or regional humanitarian support from global organizations or countries that will help the voluntary people to reduce the hazards. Moreover, the government should also give chances to all communities (individuals or groups) to help the affected societies in order to become normalized as fast as it can because the affected communities will become more hurt if it takes more time. During Nargis, as the SPDC government neglected the ground situations and made delays in visas approvals and other authorizations to the international aids’ groups and also to some local aid reliefs based on the political issues, the affected communities felt worst, and some said that the people (old, young and sick) died due to the lack of timely aids or helps to their areas. Actually, the government should care about the people first than it cares about the sovereignty or power rivals.

In both Nargis and Mocha cases, the people are dying due to the lack of required food staffs, water or health care after cyclone-hit to their areas but the urgent access of helps or supports are blocked even if the civil society organizations, NGOs, or other CBOs or INGOs are ready to help, halting the travel authorizations break every hope to the affected people who are expecting helps with helplessness and starvation. This is also a clear human rights violation. Moreover, the deliberative obstruction and misuse of aid resources could be perceived as a disregard for the well-being and survival of cyclone survivors, potentially qualifying as crimes against humanity under international law. This situation underscores the vital importance of having transparent and accountable mechanisms in place for aid distribution during and after natural disasters.

More importantly, the role of the ULA/AA, a de facto authority on the ground, became more prominent in the Mocha's cyclone response. The group also possesses more trust and legitimacy from the local people while the affected population is under dire need of urgent assistance. It shows transparently about the cyclone-donations and where the sources come from and how it is used in each different sector for emergency response and rehabilitation processes. And, it also has timely reports about the impact and how many people have received relief and how many people are still lacking. Moreover, as the SAC government has announced to block the TAs, it is also interesting to see how the ULA/AA arranges and prepares the continuing efforts for cyclone reliefs as there are still many processes left to be done.

In comparing regional and international activities to Mocha and Nargis, it seems more likely that Nargis got more attention from both regional and international communities. In terms of numbers, more countries were interested in the case of Nargis and had more actions for helping the vulnerable population in the Nargis-affected areas. However, in Mocha, we could see only a few countries' movements and actions for giving aids and reliefs. Even though the government did the same as the situations of Nargis in the case of Mocha including reluctance to accept the international aids, blockages of travel allowance, there is no effective international pressure or efforts in condemning the junta. It seems like Mocha gets less attention at the international eye although there are still many hundreds of thousands of people in need of support.

Cyclone Mocha is a more strength storm than Cyclone Nargis, but the latter had more destructive and catastrophic impacts on the local infrastructure and population due to various reasons. As a popular formula for the 'disaster risk' has highlighted, the destructive consequence of the hazard also needs to do with the issues of 'vulnerability' and 'capacity to cope'. In the case of Nargis, both 'vulnerability' and 'capacity to cope' are very negative compared to the case of Mocha in which the 'early warning' and 'relocation' actions especially led by the ULA in many parts of the rural areas reduced the scale of vulnerability and increased the capacity to cope. More importantly, the rise of social media and information accessibility in the case of Mocha caused the local community to achieve more awareness.

There are both similarities and differences with regard to the junta responses in cases of Nargis and Mocha. To start with the similarities, the junta authorities in both cases tried to block the emergency humanitarian responses of the non-state actors such as the local CSO and community groups, and international non-governmental organizations. But there is a variant as they released official statement of restricting aid assistance in the case of Mocha. The first difference of the juntas' behaviors thus come out with the approaches toward the international community including the UN. In the Nargis scenario, for example, the tripartite cooperation among the junta authority, ASEAN and UN agencies paved the way for the smooth implementation of the aid delivery. But, for Mocha response, this kind of mechanism did not appear despite the junta's effort to create it as the UN and ASEAN are in odd relations with the junta due to the political crisis that started in early 2021. And, more importantly, the junta's response toward the Nargis' consequences was more instrumental and systematic when it comes to financial allocation and institutional structuring.

But, fortunately, the junta's limited permission for the local CSO groups in a later date gave a way for the emergency humanitarian assistance in addition to the alternative cyclone response channel led by the de facto authority on the ground, the ULA/AA. As the junta's unilateral cyclone response activities only have a minimal impact on the urban and peri-urban areas, a lion share of humanitarian responsibility in the rural areas demand intensive repose from the civil society groups and the non-state armed actors like the ULA/AA in any alternative way. There are still many requirements on the ground. Unfortunately, however, the roles of the UN and ASEAN communities in the case of Mocha are less prominent compared to the Nargis. Besides, the neighboring countries such as China, India and Thailand are also more committed to the Nargis response in terms of financial contributions and action plans. Moreover, in the case of Mocha, the delivery of their humanitarian provision through the junta channel is also still questionable when it comes to the effectiveness on the ground. It means the humanitarian response resources handed toward the junta authorities are prone to be manipulated for private purposes or lost in the processes.

Besides, the Western international community especially Europe, North America, and Australia in the case of Mocha also contributed a smaller amount for both financial and diplomatic sectors. It can be mainly their unhappy relations with the existing military regime as they wanted not to engage by avoiding giving legitimacy. Then, the roles of community based, and civil society organizations should also be worth noting. In the case of Nargis, an increasing social mobilization after the 2007 Saffern Uprising brought nationwide (including the groups in the neighboring countries) efforts to respond to the negative consequences of the Nargis cyclone. The response of the junta was also more flexible. But, for Mocha scenarios, the rising demand for the nationwide humanitarian response due to the armed conflicts and restricted security environment caused the civil society actors from other parts of the country to be less motivated and available.

The natural disaster events in Myanmar are highly political especially when it happened under the military rules. Both the state and non-state actors are in competition and conflict rather than in collaboration in a search for the common platform and solution. It can also be seen in both cases of Nargis and Mocha. Myanmar, one of the most environmentally risky countries in the world, is also in a state of emergency with increasing frequency and intensity of natural hazard arrival. Although climate change and natural disasters are global phenomena, the negative impacts of these climate aggressions have threatened more on the lives of people who live in the poor, unstable and weakly governed countries like Myanmar. Catastrophic climate change is regarded as one of the greatest threats to humanity in the 21st century but for the Myanmar authorities and general population, it is hardly on the top of their priorities.