



## Second Step for the Trauma Recovery Support Program

Pyone (Communication, SF)  
3<sup>rd</sup> June 2008  
Phyar Pone, Ayeyarwaddy

The initial assessment team went to Phyar Pone where the MAS fellows and the project manager of Shalom Foundation have been based and have been cooperating with the local implementing partner; Myanmar Egress. It has been three weeks since the fellows have arrived in Phyar Pone basically assisting Myanmar Egress's strategy in the operational process in 42+ villages. The team has implemented the community operation strategy such as facilitating the communities to form and strengthen the village level committees which are composed of the influential and guardians of the communities. Now, the village committees are now handling their own small warehouses in their communities.

The assessment team for trauma recovery support program met the MAS fellows' team and got the required information about the situation in the targeted areas in 42 villages where the Myanmar Egress has been involved. As the initial team went to Phyar pone only one day trip, the fellows gave us some important information about the villages where they have been assigned to stay. The hardest hit village was Nyi Nyaung Village where 100 villagers died out of 300.

### Overall Situation in villages in Phyar Pone

The worst affected people are the middle class people such as the owners of the fishing boats and the owners of the farms. As they can't start their business because of the damages, the poor daily wagers also lost their jobs. However, daily wagers are now in a good situation because of the relief items delivered by the individual donors and the organizations. However, when we spoke with the village committee leaders in Ma Nge Gyi Village Group, he said that they are worried about their long term livelihood because this is the time for the farmers to start the cultivation process. If they don't start the process one month from now, the food crisis will definitely be a negative consequence. The committee leader also confirmed that most of the villages in Phyar Pone are mostly farmers whose

livelihood is just rice production because Phyar Pone's rice is very famous for its tremendous quality. It is estimated by the village committee leader that 98% of the total population's business is rice production and mere 2% is trading business. There are still 60~ 70 % of the total populations of the villagers who still cannot afford to start work because of the damages to their fields and the lost of the farm animals. The villagers are eager to know about the organizations' plan whether there will be possibilities that the organizations will be involved in the rehabilitation process.

*"The villagers welcome any help that will relate to both physical and psychological needs. Even though the society is helping as much as they can for those who got affected psychologically, there is still professional support needed."*

There were *three basic education schools* in Ma Nge Gyi village group. However, all of those schools were severely damaged by Nargis and now the big challenge for

the villagers is that there is no building for the young children to send to school. There are teachers ready to get to school but no school building. We saw one of the school buildings in a total collapse and the villagers are also cautious about rebuilding the schools on their own without the approval or acknowledgement from the authorities though there are some educational programs running by World Vision.

However, the education for the young children is a greatest concern. Now that based on the willingness of the community, there is a Kindergarten school running in a local Meditation Center. Even though there are field data collections from Eden Construction Company, no feedback has been heard so far.



**There used to be a school but now the school is gone with the Nargis**



**Feasibility for Trauma Recovery Support Program in Phyar Pone areas**

Although there are cases where the people suffered from the depression and psychological health issue, they encourage themselves that the disaster struck not a single family or an individual but the whole region. Based on that feeling that "I am not the only one suffering", the people hide their feeling of trauma and depression and their grief. However, it is very obvious that the survivors are severely traumatized by the sudden disaster which is the worst they have faced in the past 60 years though there have been floods and weak storms came to the Delta region occasionally.



**This young girl said she was so scared running to a big house while the water level was so high up to her mother's chest.**

The village committee leader of Ma Nge Gyi Villages group said, "It was very sudden that we couldn't even believe it happened that quickly and it would be that worst. People were more shocked because of the quickness of the cyclone. They (victims) of course traumatized and especially women are the most affected because of the lost of the children and their family". He continued and gave an example of a young lady in one of the villages, "A lady from Kan Su Village lost all her family members, children and then couldn't manage herself that she walked along the Village main road asking the people to give her children back. She

was so sorrowful that she was not aware that she has no cover on her body but just crying for their children and the family. Her family and all of her children were carried away by the wind and the wave.

A young girl was also telling us how she was terrified during that night. She was carried away by her aunt and she survived by running into a brick storied building in the village.

One man mentioned that a young boy who survived in the filed and lost his all family members is so terrified when people ask him whether he wants to

go to the field. He is now so scared of going into water and he is also afraid of rain.

As of now, the village could establish a free care clinic. The medicines and a midwife were donated and arranged by World Vision for the physical health need of the villagers. *The village committee leader said the villagers welcome any help that will relate physically or psychologically. Even though the society is helping as much as they can for those who got psychologically affected, there is still professional support needed.*

## Achievement or Failure?

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Followed by a couple of week operation in five villages in Phyar Pone Township, a sharing workshop was held at YMCA with the help of fourteen trauma healers. Saya Saw Alan from Christian Aid and John McConnell who is one of the Fear Treatment Trainers of Shalom Foundation joined the workshop. The reason why the two guests came over was to observe the challenges and achievements of the program.

A few days after the assessment team visited some of the targeted villages in Phyar Pone, the second

operation of Trauma Recovery Support program was started from 10<sup>th</sup> until 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2008 (two weeks). Five villages were targeted; Kan Chaung, Kadar, Hmyaw Sin, Swe Daw Kone and Nyi Nyaung villages. The healers started their operation with the help of the MAS fellows.



**Trauma healers shared their experiences and feelings at the workshop at YMCA.**

According to the healers, most of public buildings such as schools and monasteries were seriously damaged. In one village, the whole monastery was



raised down to the ground and the most respected venerable head of the monk (Sayadaw) also died during the Nargis. In some villages, there was nothing left as proper schools and now children are faced with the space crisis to study.

"Villagers were suspicious and confused when we explained that we are from NGO and telling them the meaning of NGO (not from the government services). Then they think that we are from opposition side. A few days later, we realized why that happened; it's because the villagers never familiar with that term and never had training with NGOs", said one of the healers.

**"You know Sayama (teacher in Burmese), this is the very first time for our village to get together in an activity and laugh together. We are very happy and satisfied when we see our kids are singing and drawing happily. Thank you very much, Sayama"**

his hut every night and tried to use the healing methods. Later on, the old man admitted that he felt better because of the healing methods and activities.

In Kadar village, an old woman usually mourned and cried whenever she saw the healers and the children heading to the school building for activities

because she missed her grandsons and daughters who were carried away by the Nargis. Then, one healer targeted that house and she visited the old lady every night trying to chat with her and listen to her. A few days later, she admitted that she could now bear the grief and feel better slowly.

One big challenge for the healers was that the communities were confused why the healers were doing that kind of work in the affected areas. The people would say, "We don't have mad people in our village!"

Space for healing activities is also a challenge for the trauma healers as the public building such as schools and monasteries. In some villages, the healers had to make use of the video houses as healing places. Sanitation is the one of the challenges in the villages. In some of the villages, the assistance from outside is hardly seen yet. The healers have requested to bring necessary medicines for the villagers.



**Parents are happy when they see their kids are happy**

The main achievement that the healers think was the satisfaction of the community over the activities that the healers have done such as mobilizing the children, singing activities, drawings and some healing activities with the traumatized children. The villagers from Kan Chaung village told the healers, "You know Sayama (refer to teacher in Burmese), this is the very first time for our village to get together in an activity and laugh together. We are very happy and satisfied when we see our kids are singing and drawing happily. Thank you very much, Sayama".

Active listening to the survivors is necessary because they don't have anyone to listen to them especially elderly people because the whole village was affected and trying to establish themselves. In one of the villages, an old man cries every night because he is in grief because of the lost of 17 relatives in his family. Not anyone is taking seriously of the old man grief. The healer went to

Despite the challenges that they were satisfied with what they have done in the communities. The healers rated the success of the works they have done from 70% ~ 99%. "I think although the physical support is seriously needed for the survivors, the social and psychological support is something people are longing too", said one of the healers.

**The only way to commute is by boat**



**Note:** Healers' names and the patients' names were kept anonymous because of the request from the healers.