

Tropical Cyclone 'Nargis': The Worst Natural Disaster to Strike the Southern Ayeyarwady River Delta of Myanmar in Early May 2008

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The 'Severe Cyclonic Storm-Nargis' struck Myanmar in early May 2008, making landfall in the Ayeyarwady Division, approximately 250 km southwest of Yangon. With wind speeds of up to 210 kmh accompanied by 600 mm of heavy rain, the damage was most severe in the Ayeyarwady Delta region, where the effects of the extreme winds were compounded by a ~3.7 meter storm surge. The destruction of mangrove forests in Myanmar left coastal areas exposed to the devastating force of Nargis. The final death toll was at least 146,000, and some 2.4 million people were severely affected by the cyclone. Nargis highlighted Myanmar's extreme vulnerability, in particular of the country's coastal regions, to such low-frequency but high-impact natural hazards, and also the need for the country to undertake a range of actions for reducing, mitigating and managing disaster risks in the future to avoid similar catastrophes. The core underlying principle, however, remains that both loss of life and the economic impact of disasters can be reduced through advanced planning and investment.



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