

# Learning with The Irrawaddy, No. 27

To accompany the **June 2008** issue of The Irrawaddy magazine.

Selected article: *Surviving the Storm*, pages 32-33.

## TEACHER'S NOTES

Here is the 27<sup>th</sup> issue of 'Learning with The Irrawaddy', a monthly educational supplement to The Irrawaddy magazine. It is designed for reading/writing, English or social studies classes in Post-10 schools and adult education classes on the Burma border. With each issue of The Irrawaddy, we select one article and design some learning activities for it. The language level in this month's article is slightly easier than usual.

**NOTE: YOU DO NOT HAVE TO DO ALL OF THE ACTIVITIES LISTED IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE. YOU CAN CHOOSE WHICH ACTIVITIES ARE MOST APPROPRIATE DEPENDING ON HOW MUCH TIME YOU HAVE, AND THE LEVEL OF ABILITY OF YOUR LEARNERS.**

In this issue we have included:

- ★ this teacher's guide
- ★ a copy of the student worksheet
- ★ some copies of The Irrawaddy magazine
- ★ a copy of the article from The Irrawaddy magazine

You can teach this to learners with good pre-intermediate English. The timings for each activity are suggestions only. They can be changed depending on the needs of your learners.

### A. Activities before reading

#### **Activity 1** Discussion

Elicit information from learners about Cyclone Nargis.

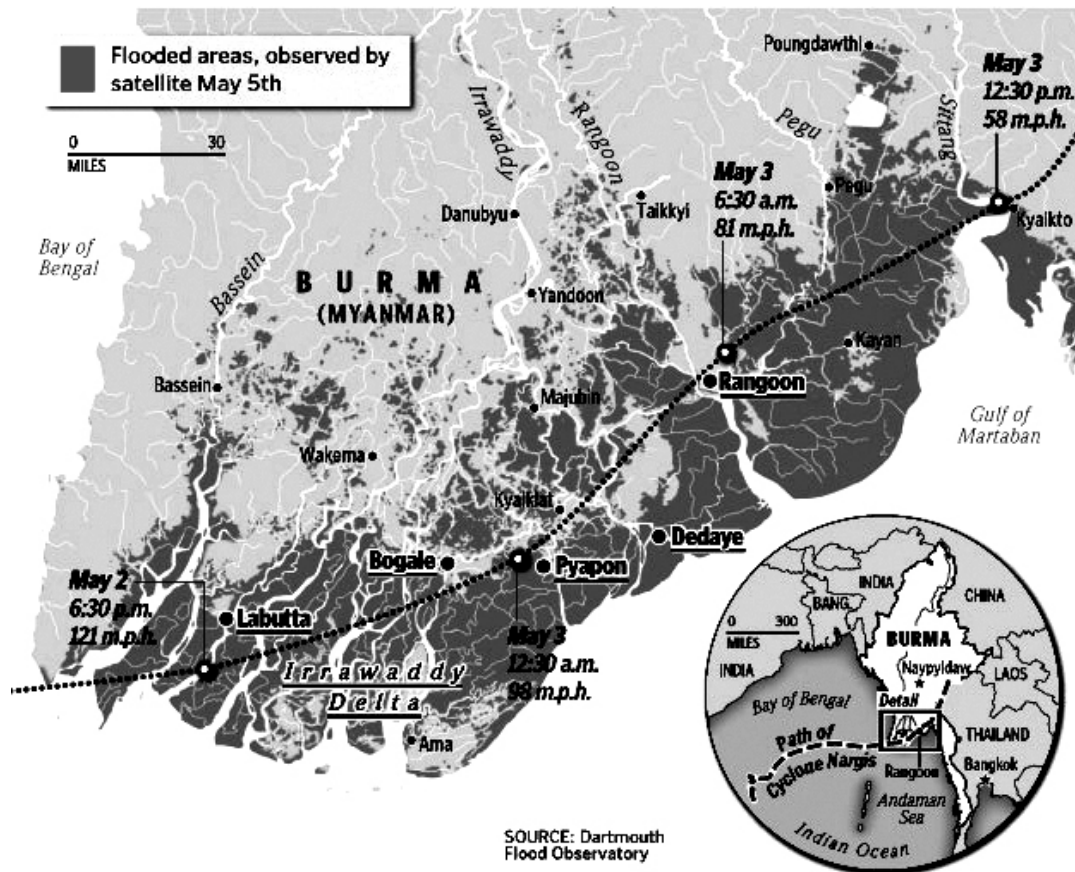
Definition of 'cyclone': *a storm or system of winds that rotates about a centre of low atmospheric pressure and often brings heavy rain and winds that can reach up to 300 kmh (180 mph).*

*Cyclone Nargis is Burma's worst natural disaster and the second most deadly cyclone in recorded history. It is estimated that the winds created by Cyclone Nargis reached speeds of up to 215kmh (135 mph). Although disputed, the death toll is believed to be around 100,000 with many people still missing. It is estimated that Nargis caused US\$10 billion of damage.*

## Activity 2 Mapwork

Put students into pairs. Ask them to mark their maps with what they think is the path of the cyclone, and ask them if they know which townships were most affected. Give them about 5 minutes to do this.

*The map above shows the path of the cyclone and the pattern of flooding. The townships/districts that were most severely affected include Labutta, Bogale, Pyapon, Dedaye and Yangon (Rangoon).*



## Activity 3 Imagination

Put learners into groups of 3-5. Give them 5-10 minutes to make a list of what they think are the problems faced by people in the areas affected by the cyclone. When they have finished, elicit one idea from each group in turn, and check agreement with the class. Continue until each group have give you at least two ideas.

## B. Activities during reading

### Activity 4 Match the vocabulary

- a) Give learners 10-15 minutes to read through the article and underline the words that they don't understand.
- b) Give learners 10 minutes to complete the matching exercise, using the context in the article to help them. Then elicit one answer from a different learner in turn and check agreement with the rest of the class. Here are the answers:

- |                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. swirl (v.)                   | k. to rotate, move quickly in a circle                |
| 2. swell (v.)                   | e. to get bigger, become more powerful                |
| 3. subside (v.)                 | l. to become less powerful, flow away                 |
| 4. collapse (v.)                | m. to fall down                                       |
| 5. carcass (n.)                 | f. a dead body (usually of an animal)                 |
| 6. debris (n.) (pron. 'debree') | a. remains of broken things, rubbish                  |
| 7. stagger (v.)                 | o. to walk unsteadily                                 |
| 8. trauma (n.)                  | u. mental stress caused by a terrible experience      |
| 9. abysmal (adj.)               | p. very bad   |
| 10. aftermath (n.)              | c. the period just after a terrible event             |
| 11. level (v.)                  | r. to flatten   |
| 12. inundate (v.)               | t. to flood   |
| 13. rubble (n.)                 | h. remains of a destroyed building                    |
| 14. stench (n.)                 | s. a bad smell  |
| 15. cram (v.)                   | d. to pack tightly                                    |
| 16. philanthropist (n.)         | i. someone who gives gifts and help to people in need |
| 17. horde (n.)                  | n. a large group                                      |
| 18. influx (n.)                 | j. coming in  |
| 19. evict (v.)                  | q. to force someone to leave a place where they live  |
| 20. wretched (adj.)             | b. miserable, pitiful                                 |

Note: The word 'debris' is pronounced 'debree'.

### Activity 5 Gap-fill

Give learners 10-15 minutes to complete the exercise on their own. Then put them into pairs and ask them to compare answers. Do they agree? Finally, elicit one answer from a different learner in turn and check agreement with the rest of the class. Here are the answers to the gap-fill exercise.

1. Your homework is **abysmal**. It's the worst I've ever seen.
2. The drunk man **staggered** (past simple tense) down the road.
3. Many soldiers suffer from **trauma** because of the terrible things they have seen.
4. Last month my landlord tried to **evict** me because I couldn't pay the rent. Luckily my friend lent me some money.
5. During the hot season the **stench** from the rubbish dump is disgusting. Some people wear masks over their mouth and nose because of it.
6. There was a huge earthquake in China in June. Many houses **collapsed** (past simple tense) and left piles of **rubble** in the streets.
7. In the morning the bus is very full. People **cram** into the back and it is very uncomfortable.
8. My uncle spends a lot of time helping people in need. He is a famous **philanthropist**.
9. The SPDC attacked many villages, creating a huge **influx** of refugees to the camp.
10. My brother killed the pig, cut up the **carcass** and gave everyone a piece of meat.

### Activity 6 Phrases in context

Put learners into pairs and give them 10 minutes or so to complete the exercise. When they have finished, put the pairs into groups of four and give them a few minutes to compare answers. Do they agree? Finally, elicit one answer from a different learner in turn and check agreement with the rest of the class. Here are the answers to the exercise:

1. Suddenly the roof was **blown clean off** the farmhouse. (paragraph 3)
  - b. completely removed from
2. While the junta **dragged its feet** on allowing in international aid... (paragraph 13)
  - d. moved slowly
3. ...However, the authorities **moved to impede** the efforts... (paragraph 16)
  - a. tried to slow down
4. ...Army trucks were filled with **wretched souls**... (paragraph 19)
  - b. miserable people

### Activity 7 True or False

Give learners about 15 minutes look through the statements below.

1. Kyin Hla knew that the storm was coming.  
*Answer: False. Kyin Hla didn't know the storm was coming.*
2. Kyin Hla didn't eat for four days after the cyclone.  
*Answer: False. Kyin Hla ate only coconut for four days after the cyclone.*
3. Many cyclone survivors took shelter in Buddhist monasteries, schools and public buildings.  
*Answer: True*
4. The military authorities helped private donors to give aid to cyclone victims.  
*Answer: False. The military authorities prevented private donors from entering the delta or ask for bribes at each checkpoint*
5. The government refugee camps only provided help for a small number of victims.  
*Answer: True*
6. Soon after the cyclone, the military authorities ordered rural survivors to return to the location of their villages.  
*Answer: True*
7. It is easy for Khin Mya to find shelter in Maubin.  
*Answer: False. Khin Mya gets very worried every evening because she has to find a place to sleep.*
8. There were only twelve cyclone survivors from Pain Nai Kone village.  
*Answer: True*

## **Activity 8** Comprehension

Give learners about 25-30 minutes to complete the questions below.

These are some suggested answers. The learners may use slightly different vocabulary.

**1. How did Kyin Hla survive the tidal wave?**

*Answer: She grabbed the branches of a tree and held on until the wave subsided.*

**2. After the cyclone, why did many farmers decide to leave their villages and go to the nearest town?**

*Answer: They went to the nearest town because their homes were leveled, their rice paddies inundated with seawater, their livestock dead and their villages reduced to rubble.*

**3. How did twelve year old Lei Lei try to get food?**

*Answer: She begged at the side of the highway for packages of food occasionally thrown from passing vehicles by private donors.*

**4. What did the military government mean when it said in the media that helping cyclone survivors would ‘make them lazy’?**

*Suggested answer: They meant that people would become dependent on aid, and would stop trying to help themselves.*

**5. What were the conditions like in the monasteries, schools and other buildings where the cyclone survivors sheltered?**

*Answer: There was seldom any electricity or medical help, or enough fresh water, food or sanitation.*

**6. What reason did the government give for evicting rural survivors from the towns?**

*Answer: The government argued that such towns as Laputta and Bogolay were overcrowded and could not support the influx of refugees from the countryside.*

**7. What did the authorities give cyclone victims in western Rangoon when they told them to leave the refugee camp?**

*Answer: The authorities gave them 10 pyi of rice and 7000 kyat*

**8. What is the situation like for people who have returned to their villages.**

*Suggested answer: Many of the buildings have been destroyed and they have no food, no water, no medicine and no livelihoods.*

## **Activity 9** Identifying problems and difficulties

Put students into pairs. Give them 10 minutes to write a list from the text of problems, and difficulties faced by cyclone survivors. Some ideas include:

*Many people dead, buildings destroyed, rice paddies flooded with seawater, livestock dead, debris and bodies of people and animals everywhere, disease, access to clean water, access to food, sanitation, grief and mental/emotional trauma, children orphaned, lack of aid/assistance, no livelihoods (i.e. for farmers if their fields are destroyed), monsoon season approaching.*

Then elicit one problem or difficulty from each pair in turn and discuss solutions, and how long it could take to resolve these problems or difficulties (if they are possible to resolve).

*NOTE: The idea of this activity is to give students an understanding of the long period of time it will take for communities affected by the cyclone to recover, and the huge challenges that they face in the coming months and years.*

## C. Activities after reading

### Activity 10 Discussion

Put students into groups of 3-5. Give them 10 minutes to consider the three arguments of the military government in Burma for refusing to accept a lot of international aid.

Then elicit a response to argument 1 from one group, including a reason, and check agreement with the rest of the class. Elicit responses from individual students. Then repeat the process with arguments 2 and 3.

### Activity 11 Roleplay

Put students into groups of 3-5. Give them 10 minutes to think about advice / recommendations to give to UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon.

When they have finished, elicit one idea from each group in turn. Ask the rest of the class if they think it is a good idea and whether they think it could happen. Write the ideas on the board until you have a good collection.

### Activity 12 Cartoon

Elicit ideas from students about what the cartoon is about.

*Suggested answer: The cartoon is about the way in which the military government of Burma has impeded the delivery of aid to the cyclone victims. The cartoon shows a race organized by the military government. The person running the race is waiting for permission from the soldier to start running. He is carrying a heavy sack of aid which is difficult to run with. Before he reaches the people in need, he must climb over many obstacles which the military government has put in his way.*

**Activity 13** Put the students into pairs. Ask each pair to produce a cartoon or a poster about Cyclone Nargis (it can include drawings and writing). Give them as much time as you think is appropriate / necessary. Make sure they understand that they don't have to be brilliant artists! The message of the cartoon is more important than artistic skill.

Ask each pair to present their cartoon to the class, and see if the class can guess what it is about. Have a vote on which pair produced the best.

# THE IRRAWADDY

Covering Burma and Southeast Asia

COVER STORY

## Surviving the Storm

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### ***Bloodied, traumatized and heartbroken, the survivors of Cyclone Nargis are now victimized and treated with contempt by the military authorities***

1 KYIN Hla suddenly stopped doing her household chores at 11:20 on the morning of May 2. The wind had started swirling fiercely and from her farmhouse window she saw the sea swell and turn black. The 65-year-old woman called to her grandchildren to stop playing and come indoors. She closed the windows.



2 A young girl waits for food in the rain on the outskirts of Rangoon.  
3 (Photo: AFP)

By midday the sky had turned “an angry red color” and dark clouds had gathered overhead. Instinctively alarmed, Kyin Hla drew her grandchildren closer and began praying.

The house began shaking violently. The noise outside grew louder and louder. Suddenly the roof was blown clean off the farmhouse, then the walls were pulled down one by one.

4 She managed to hold on until the tidal wave struck at 1 p.m. The force ripped her grandchildren from her arms. She remembers one child screaming “Grandmother!” as they were swept away.

5 The wave carried Kyin Hla into a tree. With the last of her strength she grabbed the branches and held on until the wave subsided. Then she collapsed.

6 When she woke up, she was surrounded by dead bodies, animal carcasses and debris. Her clothes had been ripped off, and she had to take a *longyi* from a dead woman to cover herself.

7 Her village had been destroyed. She staggered around until she met some other survivors who gave her some coconut. That was her only food for the next four days until she managed to get to a shelter in Laputta.

8 Kyin Hla was reunited with three of her sons, but 12 members of the family had died, including all her grandchildren.

9 Apart from the trauma of experiencing such a terrifying natural disaster and the heartbreak of losing their loved ones, Cyclone Nargis survivors have had to endure abysmal conditions in the aftermath of the storm. Thousands of children were orphaned and thousands of people were injured or have since died from disease.

10 The majority of the 2.4 million people in the Irrawaddy delta directly affected by the cyclone were farmers whose livelihoods depend on agriculture, especially rice cultivation, and livestock to work the fields.

11 With their homes leveled, their rice paddies inundated with seawater, their livestock dead and their villages reduced to rubble, most rural survivors had no choice but to leave behind the stench of death and walk or be carried to the nearest town.

12 Thousands gathered in Buddhist monasteries where monks fed and sheltered them. Others crammed into schoolhouses or public buildings. There was seldom any electricity or medical help, or enough fresh water, food or sanitation. Many families were lucky to receive a daily ration of one tin of rice.

13 While the junta dragged its feet on allowing in international aid, private Burmese philanthropists attempted to come to the rescue. Burmese celebrities, such as comedians Zarganar and the Moustache Brothers, and the actor Kyaw Thu joined local NGO efforts to deliver supplies to cyclone survivors.

14 Many private donors packed their vehicles with small makeshift aid packages and drove to the delta to hand them out.

15 In Bogalay, some three weeks after the cyclone had killed her father, 12-year-old Lei Lei was still begging for handouts at the side of the highway. She had her baby sister tied on her back in a *longyi* and was competing with hordes of other cyclone victims for packages of food occasionally thrown from of passing vehicles by private donors.

16 However, the authorities moved to impede the effort, preventing aid donors from entering the delta or asking them for bribes at each checkpoint. Through the media, the junta went so far as to warn the public against helping the survivors, saying it would “make them lazy.”

17 Apart from those refugees sheltering at a handful of showcase camps—set up methodically as photo-op backdrops for the Burmese generals, international dignitaries and the media—most survivors had still not received any aid three weeks after the disaster.

18 Then, when it seemed things couldn't get any worse, the military authorities ordered rural survivors to return to their villages. The government argued that towns such as Laputta and Bogalay were overcrowded and could not support the influx of refugees from the countryside.

Overnight, thousands of refuge-seekers were evicted from the monasteries, schools and shelters.



[19] Army trucks were filled with wretched souls who were driven to the approximate location where their villages once stood and dumped by the roadside.

In the cyclone-hit western suburbs of Rangoon, similar incidents took place. A cyclone victim [20] evicted from the Shwe Pauk Kan refugee camp told *The Irrawaddy*: “The authorities gave each refugee 10 *pyi* of rice (about 2.5 liters) and 7,000 kyat (US \$6.22). Then they took back the tents and told us to leave.”

In Maubin, homeless 93-year-old Khin Mya showed *The Irrawaddy* her only shelter—an [21] umbrella and a plastic bag. “I get very worried every evening because I have to find a place to sleep,” she told our reporter. “Maybe under a tree. Or I ask if I can share a hut with someone.”

Many of the cyclone survivors—who have suffered so much already—are back in the rubble of [22] their villages. With few exceptions, they have no food, no water, no medicine and no livelihoods. All they have are horrific memories of death and destruction, and the struggle to stay alive.

[23] As the monsoon season unleashes itself on the delta this month, and the survivors try to rebuild their broken lives, one wonders where they will find the strength to face the future.

[24] In a muddy rice paddy in Laputta, 12 people were crammed into a single tent. They were the only survivors from the village of Pain Nae Kone.

[25] “We are from the same place, so we are together,” said U Nyo, one of the survivors, his eyes red from tears and fatigue. “We are one family now.”

*Correspondents Aung Thet Wine, Min Khet Maung and Moe Aung Tin contributed to this story from Rangoon and the Irrawaddy delta.*

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