

# **Learning with the Irrawaddy 15**

## **To accompany November 2006 Issue of Irrawaddy Magazine**

### **Teacher's Notes**

Here's the fifteenth 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 on the Burma border.

With each issue of Irrawaddy magazine, we select one article and design some learning activities for it. We recommend that you use these exercises with students who have an Intermediate level of English. You don't need to use all activities suggested here – choose those that are most appropriate for your students.

In this issue we have included:

- this teacher's guide
- some copies of Irrawaddy magazine
- a class set of photocopies of the article
- a class set of worksheets.

Selected article: *The Backpacker Medics*, page 21-23

## Activities to do Before Reading

### Activity 1

- What do you know?
- What do you think you know?
- What do you want to know?

Tell students they are going to read an article about The Backpacker Medics. What do students know about her?

- *Things they know* are facts that they are quite sure about.
- *Things they think they know* are things they are unsure of.
- *Things they want to know* are things they are interested in finding out.

In groups, pairs, or individually, students fill in the chart.

There are no right or wrong answers in this activity.

### Activity 2

#### Prediction: True or False

Students guess the answers to the questions. They are given the chance to check their answers in Activity 5.

- a. The Backpacker Medics are all Karen.
- b. Dr. Cynthia started the Backpacker Medics.
- c. There is a relationship between human rights violations and healthcare.
- d. Burma's healthcare system is the worst in the world.
- e. There are less than 500,000 displaced people in Eastern Burma.

### Activity 3

#### Describing Personality

- a. Students make a list of traits that you need to be a backpack medic. They can do this in pairs, groups or as a class by calling out words.

**Possible suggestions include:**

*brave, strong, caring, living, generous, hard-working, kind, sensitive, practical, committed, creative, honest, fearless, intelligent, etc.*

- b. Students think of the opposite adjectives for the ones from a. Encourage them to use their dictionaries. Write class lists of adjectives on the board.

You could also ask the students which traits they think they have...

## Activities to do During Reading

### Activity 4

#### Words from context

Here are some sentences from the article. Find them in the text, and choose the best synonym or definition for the underlined words.

1. Living, 30, is one of the 300-strong Backpack Health Worker Team that roams on foot... (paragraph 2)
  - a. travels
  - b. hides
  - c. delivers
  - d. climbs
2. The idea of creating mobile health care teams evolved after she established the Mae Tao clinic in Mae Sot. (paragraph 5)
  - a. ended
  - b. was lost
  - c. grew
  - d. fled
3. The standard public health indicators such as infant mortality rates and child and mother mortality ratios in Burma's eastern conflict zones resemble Cambodia... (paragraph 13)
  - a. copy
  - b. consider
  - c. follow
  - d. are similar to
4. But Burma's health crisis is not confined to villages and rural areas; (paragraph 14)
  - a. limited
  - b. passed
  - c. taken
  - d. started
5. In recent weeks, there have been fresh reports of killing and plundering in Karen state by Burmese army units... (paragraph 22)
  - a. burning
  - b. stealing
  - c. shooting
  - d. mining
6. That will be some small comfort at least for the tens of thousands cowering from regime soldiers in the eastern forests. (paragraph 26)
  - a. stealing
  - b. receiving
  - c. running
  - d. hiding

#### Answers:

- 1.a. travels    2.c. grew    3.d. are similar to  
4.a. limited    5.b. stealing    6.d. hiding

**Activity 5****Check the predictions**

Students read the article quickly to check whether their predictions from **Activity 2** are right or wrong.

**Answers:**

- a. *False- paragraph 3 says 'The NGO volunteers, made up of people from many different ethnic regions,'*
- b. *True – paragraph 5 says 'So too is the founder of the Backpacker Health Worker Team, Dr Cynthia Maung.'*
- c. *True – paragraph 9 says 'The group recently produced a report that illustrates the sad relationship the quality of healthcare and human rights violations.'*
- d. *False - paragraph 15 says 'In 2000, Burma's healthcare system was ranked below every other country except Sierra Leone,'*
- e. *False – paragraph 19 says '...the number of displaced people in Burma's eastern regions was estimated to be at least 540,000.'*

**Activity 6****Comprehension**

Give students time to read the article more thoroughly, and answer the questions.

- a. Who is Dr. Cynthia compared with?
- b. How many Backpacker Medics have been arrested in the last 6 months?
- c. What do the Medics deliver in addition to medical supplies?
- d. What is the main reason for death in the areas mentioned?
- e. What do patients often have to do to receive treatment from state-run hospitals?
- f. Why don't international NGOs work in the Eastern conflict zones?
- g. How does the SPDC Information Minister describe the refugees?
- h. Who does Dr. Cynthia think will replace Health Workers who are resettled?

**Answers:**

- a. *Mother Teresa, paragraph 6.*
- b. *Three, paragraph 6.*
- c. *Educational material, paragraph 7.*
- d. *Malaria, paragraph 10.*
- e. *Bribe hospital workers, paragraph 17.*
- f. *As terrorists, paragraph 21.*
- g. *9,300, paragraph 23.*
- h. *a new generation of Burmese, paragraph 25.*

**Activity 7****Crossword****Answers:****Across:**

1. *backpack*   5. *chronic*   7. *bribe*   10. *India*   11. *NGO*   12. *drugs*  
14. *gap*   15. *third*   16. *patient*   18. *landmine*   19. *energy*   20. *Maung*

**Down:**

2. *conflict*   3. *border*   4. *villager*   6. *Living*   7. *bonfire*   8. *midwife*  
9. *volunteer*   13. *survey*   15. *Tatmadaw*   17. *junta*

## Activities to do After Reading

### Activity 8

#### Writing

Tell the students to imagine they are Backpacker Medics on a trip in Eastern Burma. Dr. Cynthia has asked them to keep a diary of their trip. Their task is to write a diary of their trip for one day. If they need some encouragement, elicit some class ideas about what they would write about.

#### **Ideas include:**

*places visited, people treated, SPDC attacks, emergency situations, ideas and requests for the next visit etc.*

### Activity 9

#### Presentation

Before starting this exercise split the class into groups of three and tell them they are going to give a presentation. As a group they have just returned from a trip inside Burma and struggled because they did not have enough resources. A group of potential funders is going to visit the Mae Tao clinic. Dr. Cynthia wants the group to give a presentation of their work to convince the funders to give lots of money.

Encourage the group to give each person a role in the presentation, so that everyone gets a chance to speak. Ideas for presentation topics include: health issues inside, resources needed, personal difficulties and maybe even some positive stuff such as lives saved, babies cured etc.