

# Learning with The Irrawaddy, No. 30

To accompany the **September 2008** issue of The Irrawaddy magazine

Selected article: *Spare the Child*, pages 12-13

## A. Activities before reading

### Activity 1 Title and subtitle

Look at the title and subtitle of the article.

- 1) What do you think 'Spare the child' means?
- 2) What does 'lip service' mean?
- 3) What do you think this article is about?

### Activity 2 Classroom rights

Imagine if there were no rules in your classroom and students could do whatever they wanted. What would it be like?

Work in small groups. Make a list of rules that are needed to make the classroom a good learning environment for every student.

When you have finished your list, rewrite each rule as a right that each student has by using:

'Every student has the right to ...'

'No student has the right to ...'

### Activity 3 Rights of the child

In the previous activity you thought about your rights as a student. In this activity, we will think about the rights of children. Read the rights listed in the table below, and ask your teacher if you don't understand any of the words or phrases.

All children have:	
the right to choose their religion and beliefs	
the right to a good education	
the right to play and relax	
the right to protection from dangerous work	
the right to protection from abuse	
the right to learn about their rights	
the right to an identity and nationality	
the right to express their own opinion	
the right to join groups and organisations	
the right to live with their parents if possible	
the right to good healthcare	
the right to healthy food and clean water	
the right to learn the language of their family	
the right to a safe place to live	

In small groups, discuss each of the rights. If your group thinks it is a right that **every** child should have it then tick the box. Leave the box blank if you don't.

## B. Activities during reading

### Activity 4 Vocabulary: opposites

In the left column below is a list of words or phrases from the text. In the right column is a list of words or phrases that have the *opposite* meaning to those on the left.

Match each word on the left with its opposite meaning on the right. (The paragraph in which it appears is in brackets.)

- |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1) ragged (2)             | a) to not quit, accept                 |
| 2) edible (3)             | b) smart                               |
| 3) putrid (3)             | c) to keep                             |
| 4) forsake (4)            | d) to take care of, support, stay with |
| 5) exploit (8)            | e) strict control                      |
| 6) menial (13)            | f) enough                              |
| 7) loose enforcement (14) | g) cannot be eaten                     |
| 8) inadequate (16)        | h) fresh                               |
| 9) abandon (23)           | i) important                           |
| 10) discard (23)          | j) treat fairly                        |

### Activity 5 Gap-fill

Each of the sentences below needs one of the words from Activity 5 to complete it. Read each sentence and write the correct word in the gap.

- 1) There was a \_\_\_\_\_ smell coming from the bathroom.
- 2) Everyday Thai people \_\_\_\_\_ thousands of plastic bags after using them once.
- 3) He hated doing boring, \_\_\_\_\_ tasks all day.
- 4) The teacher's \_\_\_\_\_ of classroom rules meant that the students' discipline was very poor.
- 5) The manager was annoyed with Steven's \_\_\_\_\_ appearance in the office.
- 6) Matthew had to \_\_\_\_\_ alcohol when he became a monk
- 7) 'Only fishpaste again,' moaned Katie. 'This food is \_\_\_\_\_ for a good diet.'
- 8) Cleo promised her boyfriend that she would never \_\_\_\_\_ him.
- 9) Derek was so hungry that even the mouldy bread looked \_\_\_\_\_.
- 10) Steven decided to demand his labour rights – he was tired of people in the office trying to \_\_\_\_\_ him.

### Activity 6 True or false?

Read the article again and decide if the following statements are true or false. Say which paragraph tells you the answer.

- 1) There were more children than adults looking for food to sell.
- 2) The people who sell vegetables discard their produce early in the afternoon.
- 3) There are exactly 125,560 children working in Burma.
- 4) There are comfortable places for children to sleep in every teashop
- 5) The workers at Win's teashop get 9 hours' rest every day.
- 6) The Burmese government is not trying very hard to give children their rights.
- 7) According to the UN, children have the right to share their ideas and opinions.
- 8) Stories about homeless children often appear in Burmese newspapers.
- 9) An opposition party member believes the number of exploited children will increase if nothing is changed.

**Activity 7** Paragraph summaries

- 1) A group of teenagers begin their working day very early.
- 2) We do many different tasks throughout the day before going to sleep late at night.
- 3) I used to employ both grown-ups and young people, but nowadays I don't.
- 4) It's possible to see young labourers all over Burma working in many different jobs.
- 5) The SPDC contributes to the child labour issue by forcing children to join the army.
- 6) Some homeless children were abandoned by their parents; others have no parents.

**A. Activities after reading**

**Activity 8** A letter home - Maung Thaw Kaung

The table below has two columns. In the first column write all the information that we already know about Maung Thaw Kaung from the article. In the second column write all the things that you can imagine about Maung Thaw Kaung – his feelings, his wants and how he wishes to change his situation.

What do you know?	What can you imagine?
- Maung Thaw Kaung is 12 years old	- He is tired all the time

When you have completed the table use it to write a letter from Maung Thaw Kaung to his family.

**Activity 9** Maung Thaw Kaung's rights

In Activity 3 you read a list of rights that the UN believes every child should have. Many of these rights are denied to children in Burma because of their situation.

Which of the rights in activity 3 is Maung Thaw Kaung being denied by working in the teashop? (Re-read paragraphs 9-13 if you need to).

**Activity 10** Three friends talking

In paragraph 11 Maung Thaw Kaung talks about himself and two other boys from the teashop, Poe Lone and Wae Htoo. In groups of 3 imagine you are these 3 boys having a conversation late at night after a long working day. Do you think it would be a happy conversation? What would you talk about?

Practise your conversation in groups, making notes if you need to. Your teacher will ask some groups to perform their conversation to the class.

**Activity 11** 10 years later – where is Maung Thaw Kaung?

Imagine you are an Irrawaddy journalist ten years in the future. The editor asks you to find Maung Thaw Kaung and interview about how his life has changed. Remember he was just 12 years old in the story, so he'll be 22 when you interview him.

Write a short article about Maung Thaw Kaung's life now. Did his situation improve? Did he get rich or is he still very poor? Is he married or single? Where is he living?