

# Learning with The Irrawaddy, No. 43

To accompany the February 2010 issue of The Irrawaddy magazine.

Selected article: *Photo Essay: A Fragile Peace*

## A. Activities before reading

### Activity 1 What do you know?

The title of this photo essay is *A Fragile Peace*. What is 'a fragile peace'? Using a dictionary if necessary, write a definition.

### Activity 2 Discussion

- Which Burmese armed groups have signed ceasefire agreements with the SPDC?
- Which armed groups haven't signed ceasefire agreements?
- Do both sides always keep their promises?
- Do Burmese people who live in areas where there are ceasefire agreements have better or worse lives than those who don't? Why?

### Activity 3 Whose struggle?

- Look at the pictures below and decide which Burmese ethnic group this photo essay is about.
- Explain to a partner the reasons why you think this.



a.



b.



c.

## B. Activities during reading

### Activity 4 Match the vocabulary

Look at the meanings below, and match them with the underlined words in the article. Write the correct letter next to the underlined word.

- |    |  |    |   |
|----|--|----|---|
| a. | at the same time as ( <i>adv</i> )                                   | h. | every year ( <i>adv</i> )   |
| b. | to talk with others to come to an agreement ( <i>v</i> )             | i. | to buy or collect quickly ( <i>phr. v</i> )                             |
| c. | celebrations and special events ( <i>n</i> )                         | j. | a feeling that something may be wrong ( <i>n</i> )                      |
| d. | the feeling that someone or something cannot be trusted ( <i>n</i> ) | k. | independent, under own control ( <i>adj</i> )                           |
| e. | as well as, also ( <i>adv</i> )                                      | l. | violence, fighting ( <i>n</i> )   |
| f. | a group that has lots of smaller groups beneath it ( <i>n</i> )      | m. | keeps, still has ( <i>v</i> )   |
| g. | quit or left a job ( <i>v</i> )                                      | n. | famous for negative reasons, infamous ( <i>adj</i> )                    |
|    |  | o. | documents allowing someone to buy, sell or trade something ( <i>n</i> ) |

### Activity 5 Comprehension questions

- What were KIA soldiers not allowed to do at the Manau dance this year?
- How many soldiers fewer than last year did the KIA send to the Manau dance?
- Which armed groups has the KIA recently allied itself with?
- About how many soldiers are there in total in the new military alliance?
- Why do Kachin leaders believe that the Kachin must have a political party?
- Who is making the most money from Kachin State's natural resources, and how are they making it?
- What community projects are the KIO involved in in Kachin and Shan States?

## C. Activities after reading

### Activity 6 Grammar review: Practice with *there+be*

We use *there+be* to talk about places and what is in them.



- Put the correct form of the verb *to be* in the sentences below.
  - There \_\_\_\_\_ a classroom in Picture A. In the classroom, there \_\_\_\_\_ lots of children, desks and books. There \_\_\_\_\_ two children at the front of the class. One of them \_\_\_\_\_ smiling.
  - In Picture B, there \_\_\_\_\_ a father with his daughter. They \_\_\_\_\_ both wearing modern clothes. They \_\_\_\_\_ standing together. He \_\_\_\_\_ touching her head. It \_\_\_\_\_ a sunny day; there \_\_\_\_\_ any clouds in the sky.
- Write down five questions you would ask somebody about their home town. Some should use the question forms of *there+be*.
- Once you know the questions are correct, go round the room and interview three different people about their home town.

## Activity 7 Match text and pictures, and gap-fill

Match the descriptions below to the pictures on the walls around the classroom. Work in pairs. Write the appropriate letter next to each sentence. Each sentence has one word missing. Choose the correct word from the box below.

staring (v)	female (adj)	uniforms (n)	tiny (adj)
coffin (n)	baptism (n)	logs (n)	
above (adv)	hymn books (n)	traditional (adj)	

1. \_\_\_ There's a military parade happening. There are lots of Kachin soldiers facing a stage. The picture is taken from \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_ There's a young KIA soldier with a gun. He's jumping over \_\_\_\_\_ during training.
3. \_\_\_ It's a picture of a \_\_\_\_\_ pastor. Three people dressed in Kachin clothes are standing beside her. They are in a church.
4. \_\_\_ It's a picture of a church service. There are lots of people holding \_\_\_\_\_ and singing.
5. \_\_\_ It looks like a \_\_\_\_\_. There is a man and a woman. They are in a cross-shaped pool outside a church.
6. \_\_\_ There are two KIA soldiers. They are both \_\_\_\_\_ at something on the left that we can't see.
7. \_\_\_ There's a KIA soldier holding a gun and looking down at a \_\_\_\_\_. It has a large cross on it.
8. \_\_\_ There are lots of soldiers are facing the camera. The \_\_\_\_\_ they are wearing aren't all the same. They are all wearing caps.
9. \_\_\_ There are two people standing outside a church. One is a man and one is a woman. They are holding two \_\_\_\_\_ babies.
10. \_\_\_ It's a picture of a Kachin festival. We can see people wearing \_\_\_\_\_ costumes. They are walking in front of a stage.

## Activity 8 Comparing pictures

Work in pairs. Student A, turn to page 4; Student B, turn to page 5. You both have similar pictures. Do not show your partner your picture! Work together to find out what is happening in each other's pictures, and what differences there are. Ask and answer questions to get the information.

## Activity 9 One-minute pictures

Your teacher will give you a photograph from the photo essay. Find a partner and take turns talking for one minute about your pictures. Use the structures and vocabulary from the activities above. Describe what you can see, what is happening, and why. Your teacher will time you. After you have both talked, swap pictures, find a new partner, and repeat until your teacher tells you to stop.

**Activity 8** Comparing pictures – Student A



1

**In my partner's picture...**

**It's also a parade.  
There are more soldiers.  
You can't see their faces.**



2

**In my partner's picture...**



3

**In my partner's picture...**

**Activity 8** Comparing pictures – Student B



1

**In my partner's picture...**

**It's also a parade.  
There are fewer soldiers.  
You can see their faces.**



2

**In my partner's picture...**



3

**In my partner's picture...**

# A Fragile Peace

Photographs by Ryan Libre, Text by Yeni

1. **The Kachin negotiate with the regime on the border guard force issue, while recruiting and training more soldiers.**
2. **At the traditional Manau dance this year—held in Myitkyina, the capital of Burma’s northern Kachin State—Kachin soldiers were not allowed to dance in military uniforms. Earlier, the Burmese regime sent three members of the notorious Press Scrutiny and Registration Division to censor stories in the Kachin language newspaper that published articles about the festival, held annually on Kachin State Day, Jan. 10.**
3. **To show their unhappiness, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), which signed a cease-fire agreement with the junta in 1994, sent only 200 soldiers to the festival. Last year, about 2,000 KIA personnel joined the festivities.**
4. **Within the KIA, which now has 4,000 to 5,000 soldiers in five brigades and one infantry division, there is growing suspicion and distrust of the Burma regime. The Kachin, who fought against Burma’s central government for near 40 years, have already rejected the regime’s demand to transform the KIA into a border guard force.**
5. **Instead, the KIA is recruiting and training more soldiers and preparing for resumed hostilities with the Burmese army. Additionally, it formed a military alliance with the United Wa State Army (UWSA), the largest ethnic army with 20,000 soldiers, and the National Democratic Alliance Army-Eastern Shan State (NDAA-ESS), aka the Mongla group, with an army of about 3,000 soldiers.**
6. **Five Kachin leaders, including Dr. Tuja, the vice chairman of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), its political wing, have resigned to focus on building up the Kachin State Progressive Party, jointly founded in March 2009 with three Kachin cease-fire groups and the Kachin National Consultative Assembly, the largest political umbrella organization, to contest the junta’s general election this**

year. “The Kachin must have a political party,” said a Kachin leader. “If not, they will lose their identity.”

7.

**Engaging in electoral politics is part of the Kachin strategy to prepare for its political and military future. In the meantime, the KIO/KIA control their autonomous zones, building hospitals, teacher training colleges and Christian churches in both Kachin State and northern Shan State, in the remote northern reaches of the country.**

8.

**Simultaneously, the military government is busy selling off the natural resources of Kachin State to foreign investors who snap up the rights to mining, logging, farming and hydro power dam projects. Chinese laborers are used for much of the work, the regime takes most of the wealth and the Kachin people get the leftovers. Still—at least for now—the land of the Kachin, also known as “Jade Land,” retains a fragile peace.**