

# The Curriculum Project

## Learning with The Irrawaddy, No 47

To accompany the **September 2010** issue of The Irrawaddy magazine

Selected article: **The Unwelcoming Committee**

### TEACHER'S NOTES

Here is the 47th 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 **intermediate to upper-intermediate**.

**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.**

#### A. Activities before reading

##### 1. The Unwelcoming Committee

Discuss the questions as a class. Students can check their answers once they read the article.

##### 2. The Rohingya people

Check what students already know about Rohingya people.

*Sample answers:*

Rohingya people are a Muslim minority in the Arakan State. They face strong religious persecution that forces them to flee into Bangladesh, where they also face a lot of problems: lack of humanitarian assistance, extreme poverty, harassment by local people and by Bangladeshi authorities. The situation of Rohingya people is perhaps even more extreme than that of many other ethnic minorities in Burma mainly because they are a religious minority in an otherwise Buddhist dominant Arakan State.

##### 3. Predictions

Students make their own sentences individually or in pairs. Put some of them on board and discuss. You can look back at them after students read the article, to see if they have made accurate predictions.

##### 4. Discussion

*Sample answers:*

In Burma: religious persecution; in Bangladesh: extreme poverty, harassment by local people and authorities.

##### 5. Vocabulary

*Answers:* 1. b; 2. b; 3. c; 4. c; 5. c; 6. b; 7. a; 8. b; 9. c; 10. c; 11. c

#### B. Activities as you read

##### 6. Grammar: present perfect

*Answers:*

1. Two things have brought this group of men together.

2. Over the last year they have formed the Anti-Rohingya Resistance Committee.
3. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees have fled to Bangladesh over the last three decades to seek asylum.
4. Since then, the Bangladeshi government has allowed the UNHCR, to register 28,000 Rohingya who fled before 1992.
5. Kutupalong and Leda camps have evolved into slums of the official camps.
6. The attacks on refugees are becoming more frequent and this has created a climate of fear among the refugees.

## 7. Grammar: passive

You might need to help the students to identify the active subjects for the sentences since they are not always included in the passive form. They are underlined in the answers below:

*Answers:*

1. The Bangladeshi government does not allow new arrivals to receive humanitarian assistance.
2. Five local Bangladeshi men armed with knives ambushed him.
3. They took his meager earnings and he had no money left to feed his family.
4. When the Bangladeshi authorities send us back, the Burmese army tortures us.
5. The government postponed the elections because of allegations that some candidates had registered Rohingyas as voters.
6. The police can easily single out, target, and take advantage of undocumented people.

## 8. Who said this?

*Answers:*

1. One of the members of the 'Unwelcoming committee'.
2. Aatika, a refugee.
3. Hamil Chowdury
4. Chris Lewa, the coordinator of the Arakan Project, a group that advocates for Rohingya rights.
5. A refugee leader

## 9. Opposing positions

*Answers:*

Arguments made by the anti-Rohingya group	Arguments made by Rohingya people or their advocates.
Rohingya refugees sell drugs and are involved in crime The local area is already overpopulated Rohingyas take jobs from local people The local area is too poor to support other people Rohingya refugees cause trouble	Rohingya people are not welcome either in Burma or in Bangladesh and they face persecution and harassment in both places In Bangladesh they face extreme poverty because they don't receive any assistance Local people attack them and take their earnings away so they can't feed their families

## 10. True or false

*Answers:* 1. T; 2. F; 3. F; 4. T; 5. F; 6. F; 7. T; 8. T.

## 11. Questions

Students make up questions individually or in pairs. These can be either comprehension questions (where the answer is directly stated in the article), or discussion questions. These can be discussed as a whole class, if there is time. Choose some of the students' questions to put on board, answer them together, correct any mistakes, if you want.

## 12. Comprehension

*Answers:*

1. To get rid of the Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar district in Bangladesh.

2. They face severe religious persecution.
3. Only about 28,000.
4. No, there are plenty more refugees.
5. Local people attack them and take away their money when they return to camps from work.
6. Overpopulation and poverty.
7. Drug trade, crime, destroying the environment
8. Rohingyas are portrayed as troublemakers and harmful to the local population, to persuade the voters to vote against their presence in Cox's Bazar.
9. Rohingya refugees will become very easy to identify and target for harassment as undocumented.

## C. Activities after reading

### 13. Summary

*Sample answers:*

*Background:*

Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya people from Burma have fled to Bangladesh in the past 30 years because of religious persecution. UNHCR only recognizes a small portion of these refugees, and only the registered refugees can get assistance. All the other Rohingya refugees have to support themselves in Bangladesh but are finding their situation extremely difficult.

*Current situation and difficulties:*

Rohingya refugees have severe difficulties providing themselves with food and shelter. The vast majority of them do not receive any assistance. They go out of camps to find work, but are often attacked by angry locals when they come back with their earnings. As a result, there is significant malnutrition in the camps and children and old people are particularly at risk. There is also lack of any health care. At the same time, prominent local groups call for the removal of all Rohingya refugees as 'undersirables'.

*Future outlook:*

The 'unwelcoming committee' is pushing the local government to get rid of the Rohingya refugees. So far, the Bangladeshi government has resisted forced repatriation, but it is not clear, how the situation might change after elections in Bangladesh.

### 14. Discussion

*Sample answer:*

The situation for Rohingya refugees is particularly bad, as they face religious persecution in their home in Arakan State as a Muslim minority, both from the Burmese authorities and from some local Arakanese, who don't want them there. So they are pushed out of Burma, but are very unwelcome in Bangladesh. Also conditions in Bangladesh are much harsher than in other places where migrants from Burma are likely to end up in, like Thailand, Malaysia, or even China. There is a lack of jobs and the local population is also very poor.

### 15. Role play

Have a role play debate between the Arakan Group and the Rohingya Resistance Committee. Students can use the arguments from activity 7.

### 16. Extension

Discuss: In your opinion, how will the elections in Burma affect the situation of Rohingya people?