REPORT

POST NARGIS FLUX OF DISPLACEMENT: SITUATION OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

I. Background of Cyclone Nargis Disaster

In May 2008, a large cyclone, dubbed “Cyclone Nargis,” devastated the Irrawaddy delta area in central Burma. The cyclone is estimated to have flooded twenty percent of Burma’s rice producing land, destroyed 500,000 households and displaced two million people. According to an assessment from the Post Nargis Joint Assessment (PONJA) team, the situation is briefed as below:

1. As of June 24, the official death toll stood at 84,537, with 53,836 people still missing and 19,359 injured.
2. Some 2.4 million people were severely affected by the cyclone, out of an estimated 7.35 million people living in the affected townships.
3. Assessments indicate that more men than women died, distorting post-cyclone social structures on the delta. Child deaths are also believed to have been substantial.
4. Estimates suggest that the number of people displaced by the cyclone may have been as high as 800,000 with some 260,000 people living in camps or settlements throughout the delta area.

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Message From Woman And Child Rights Project (Southern Part of Burma)

Woman and Child Right Project (WCRP) is a cooperative activity with Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) and its main activity is collecting information related to the human rights violations of women and children in southern part of Burma (Myanmar). It also aims to get world community’s awareness for the protection of the rights of women and children.

The Burma’s military regime, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), ratified the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1997 to guarantee the rights to women in Burma. Similarly the regime also ratified Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991 to guarantee the rights to children in Burma. However, the regime has failed in their implementation of the conventional rights and the human rights violations against women and children systematically.

WCRP is dedicated to inform the world community what happens to general women and children in Burma and plans to educate them to know about their rights as the following objectives.

1. To monitor and protect the woman and child rights, by collecting information about their real situation by referencing the CEDAW and CRC, and distribute information to world community.

2. To strengthen women and children community, by providing on their rights accordingly to CEDAW and CRC ratified by regime and encourage them to participate in the struggle in the protection of their own rights.

(5) Thirty seven townships were significantly affected by the cyclone in Irrawaddy Division and Rangoon Division. The affected area of Irrawaddy Delta covers 23,500 square kilometers, almost twice the size of Lebanon.

Although the aftermath of the cyclone meant there was enormous need for emergency assistance by both domestic and international relief agencies, the regime severely restricted access to the delta area. Many aid groups did not permit to help victims until days, even weeks, after the disaster. The needs of parentless and displaced children were especially acute, especially in areas cut off from outside assistance by road and bridge damage.

Similarly, many women lost their children, husbands and families, and often face serious mental health issues because of the trauma and loss. Only a few international organizations, like International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC), have trained volunteers or involved themselves in mental health care for female cyclone survivors.

Many women survivors and children left from their homes and migrated to other parts of Burma, especially Rangoon, Mon State, Karen State, the Thai-Burma border areas and into Thailand to seek jobs and a new life. Some single young women also relocated to Rangoon and entered into the sex trade or other hard labor professions. The Woman and Child Rights Project (WCRP) has had an opportunity to meet some of these displaced families and discuss the situation of women and children in the post-cyclone delta area. Based on observations of areas affected by Cyclone Nargis and interviews with survivors, the WCRP has found that there needs to be significantly more support to help women and children deal with the mental and physical requirements of recovering from the disaster. Without such support, more and more women, children and whole families will continue to leave their communities.

II. Post-Nargis flight of families headed by women

(a) Displacement to Burmese areas outside the delta

Accordingly to WCRP field workers, who arrived in the Nyaputaw Township area, south of Bassein, more men were victims of the cyclone than women. Many men were killed because they were at work in vulnerable areas, like shrimp farms, paddy fields, salt production sites or fishing huts. When the cyclone struck these workplaces, the mostly male workforces had no protection, for the areas were low and there were rarely trees to climb or hang on to. Even the strongest swimmers could not match the strength of the cyclone’s waves. In Pyin-khayaing Island alone, seventy men died at U Maung Win’s salt production site, fifty-four died in U Win Shwe’s shrimp farm and forty-seven died in U Mae Lone’s salt production site. As a result, many women who survived in the villages lost their husbands and sons who were working rice, paddy, and shrimp fields.

When the cyclone struck, families with no able-bodied men were also more vulnerable. Mothers alone could not keep all their children safe, and many had to watch their children drown or be washed
away as their strength failed them. Understandably, many female survivors suffer face severe mental health difficulties in addition to their physical struggle for survival.

According to an interview with a woman from Pyin-khayaing Island, many of her village’s survivors left after the cyclone. The woman, who lost her children, said that most people left because they lost their families and the means to earn a livelihood, like fishing boats and nets. She also said that the stench of rotting corpses, who were often not moved or buried because survivors were too busy, struggling to handle daily survival, drove many people away.

"The villagers did not want to go back to their home villages, because they did not want to think about their past tragedies or remember how their families died in front of their eyes. Many of them want to comfort themselves and tell themselves that nothing happened and their lives and families are how they’ve always been."

Many women left with their children in an attempt to forget their pasts. Many moved into the refugee camps set up by the government authorities, INGOs or UN agencies, where they hoped to get food and health care. Unfortunately, most received little help, as the levels of food and health assistance remained low. According to women who three of her children, after living at a refugee camp in Bassein city for three months, she and other refugees were given notice that they were to be evicted by SPDC authorities. Fears of eviction, plus the fact that she and her children could not get food and clothing, lead her to move out of the camp.

Women interviewed by WCRP field workers gave two primary reasons for leaving areas hit by the cyclone:

- They wanted to forget their pasts and the death of family members. Many of them tried to contact friends and relatives outside of the cyclone-hit area in an attempt to get support.
- Loss of male family members, who often earned significant portions of the family income, left many women struggling to earn enough to support their families. Recovery and reconstruction looked slow and unreliable to many, and the attendant specter of protracted unemployment caused many to leave in search of work.

Unfortunately, many families that left in search of work have struggled to find employment. The majority of women interviewed spoke of Rangoon as the primary place for female survivors to seek work. This, combined with the fact that residents of the old capital are themselves rebuilding after the storm, means that many women in the city have not actually been able to find work. Some women residents of Rangoon have also struggled after the cyclone, and have turned to self employment, selling groceries, making hand crafts or setting up small food shops. These businesses require capital to cover initial start up costs, which migrants from the delta rarely have. Instead, they have only been able to work as day laborers. In some cases, this unemployment has lead to work and exploitation in the sex industry.

Since employment is difficult to find in both the delta areas and Rangoon, other women have relocated to other states and divisions, often to places where they have friends or relatives. Many people from the delta area has already moved to Mon State and Tenasserim division to work in farming, fishing and other industries, giving some Nargis survivors points of connection to communities in southern Burma.

(b) Displacement to the border and Thailand

Over the last decade, economic hardship in the delta area and Rangoon Division has lead thousands of workers to migrate to towns on the Thai-Burma border, chiefly Three Pagoda Pass, Myawaddy and Tarchilake. With delta-to-border migration paths already paved, many Nargis survivors sought work along the border and in Thailand.

Local authorities were, however, instructed to closely monitor the movements of Nargis survivors and their families. Travelers were carefully checked by SPDC check-points at the entrance of Pegu, the capital of Pegu Division, the Thanlwin Bridge, which controls entrance into Moulmein, Mon State’s capital, and the entrance of Pa-an, the capital of Karen State. If travelers were found to be from the delta area, they were stopped and interrogated. Passengers would typically be required to show ID cards,
and tell authorities their final destination. If the authorities discovered they intended to leave the country for Thailand, they would not be permitted to continue and instead would be forced to turn around. A woman interviewed by a WCRP field worker explained:

After they stopped us at the Thanlwin Bridge, they made us show our ID Cards. When they found out we are from Delta, they went to driver and asked him where he was to bring us. Then they turned to me and asked me where I was going and for what purposes. As I knew they would stop me if I said to Three Pagoda Pass, I told them I planned to visit my relatives in Moulmein. They did not trust me and asked me more and more questions, but I kept saying I was visiting Moulmein and would not go farther. They still looked at me with suspicious eyes, but I don't care.

The woman and her children passed through Moulmein and into Karen State. There they crossed the southern end of Karen State via the Zemi River, and ended at Three Pagoda Pass on the Thai border. The woman said that the boat trip was frightening, because the river was running fast and high from the rainy season, and she was questioned and taxed by many armed ethnic groups.

Many other female cyclone survivors have made similar trips, and have arrived in border towns hoping to enter Thailand and find employment. Being on the border with Thailand and finding employment inside Thailand are, however, worlds apart, and many women have struggled to find work. Without contacts in Thailand and or money to pay an agent to find work for them, many of the women are stuck in the border towns. There, they work in farms, road construction or other manual labor.

III. The plight of Nargis’ child survivors

(a) Malnutrition and psychological distress

Aid agencies like the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and Save the Children estimate that forty percent of Nargis’s victims were children. Child survivors face serious trauma, as many had to watch family die, or struggle to understand why they survive and loved ones do not. Medical experts and INGOs working in the health care field agree that child survivors will suffer serious long-term mental health effects.

Villagers in areas hit by the cyclone also lost food stores, as well as the materials necessary to earn a livelihood. Most families faced serious food shortages for at least one or two weeks, until they received support from outside communities. Children suffered through these times, as did adults.

Mon humanitarian workers who traveled to Ngaputaw Township, near Bassein, also found orphaned children on Hein-gyi and Pyin-kha-yaing Islands. Although UNICEF set up over one hundred child-friendly spaces for the protection of orphaned and displaced children, many children were not receiving care. The humanitarian workers informed communities that they would largely be responsible for providing for the children on their own. The orphans encountered by the Mon relief workers, for instance, were receiving support only from the village headman and local monks.

A local monk from Ngaputaw Township, whose monastery is taking care of ten orphans, explained that:

A child suffering from malnutrition
When all people faced food-shortages, it was less a problem for adults but we were sorrowful when would see children going hungry and asking for food. The kids here asked where other children and their parents were. Some thought their parents would come back and bring food. No aid agencies providing food arrived in our area. Only one organization, USAid, provided us with a few shelters. Child related INGOs and aid agencies never reached our area. Fortunately, relatives and friends of these orphans are still alive in this community and they will get sufficient food and protection. But it is still very difficult to comfort them when they cry for their parents, brothers and sisters.

Children living with surviving parents were still vulnerable and faced food shortages, especially those living outside areas provided for by aid agencies. Some Mon relief workers reported that families could not even find rice, and were subsisting on coconut, banana leaves and fruit. Families also suffered from a lack of clean water and adequate sanitation. Some children were so weak they could not walk, and many suffered from diarrhea.

UNICEF and Save the Children also recognize that psychological stress is a serious concern and they have set up “children friendly spaces” in which children can be safe, play and try to lead the normal lives of children. Aid agencies have also tried to take psychological care of children and help them deal with the loss of their families and loved ones. Although the aid agencies tried to create over one hundred children friendly spaces, many children were left out of program. Besides the INGOs, local communities and Buddhist monks have been taking care of child survivors. But, in order to provide psychological care to the children, there remains an enormous need not only for infrastructures like nursery schools, children friendly spaces, playgrounds and others, but the warm care of living with families and relatives.

(b) Education

As communities attempted to rebuild amid the storms aftermath, local community leaders and parents were told that school should resume on June 24th, as it would throughout the rest of Burma. The deadline was more a publicity stunt than anything, and...
Stop Human Trafficking Campaign in Samut Sakhon

WCRP, 15.9.08

The Stop Human Trafficking Campaign, which began on September 15th in Mahachai, Samut Sakhon province, will show the true plight of Burmese migrant workers.

According to the Associated Press, one million Burmese workers are registered to work in Thailand, while at least another million are in the country illegally.

According to Amnesty International, most migrant workers in Thailand do work that Thais consider too dirty, and are employed in factories, the seafood industry or as cleaners. Workers in the country illegally face harassment, abuse, violence and exploitation, with no recourse because to go to the authorities is to risk deportation.

Women are especially vulnerable. “I am frightened when I am alone in Mahachai, because I have heard many stories of women being raped and killed,” said a nineteen year-old Burmese girl working illegally in Mahachai. “I feel like I have no security, but I have to work here so I can send money back to my family. I am afraid, but what can I do?”

Seventeen years old two girls faced trafficking

WCRP

Two seventeen year-old girls were recently victims of human trafficking on June 23rd, said a forty year-old woman from Three Pagoda Pass, on the Thai-Burma border.

The woman saw one of the girls crying on the street corner, and reported that “The trafficker sold her to a brothel in TPP, but she escaped. She didn’t have any money and didn’t know where to go.” The girl said that a trafficker brought her and a friend from Thanbyuzayat, and promised them good jobs in Thailand.

“The trafficker promised the girls would easily make enough money to pay back the transportation costs,” added the woman, “they said they were very happy because they believed what he said, and wanted to earn money to send home to their families. Now they are victims of trafficking, the other friend has been sold in Mae Sot and not heard from since. The girls did not...

News

Stop Human Trafficking campaign in Samut Sakhon

WCRP, 15.9.08

The Stop Human Trafficking Campaign, which began on September 15th in Mahachai, Samut Sakhon province, will show the true plight of Burmese migrant workers.

The campaign is being led by the Labor Rights Promotion Network (LPN), which focuses on migrant worker rights in Thailand, and has been joined by over four hundred Thai and Burmese workers in Samut Sakhon.

The campaign intends to raise awareness of workers’ position, and encourage the Thai government to change laws concerning the rights of migrant workers.

“We want the government to change the laws and policies to make migrant workers more safe. The government needs to protect people from employers or traffickers that abuse migrant workers or use child labor,” said LPN director Mr. Sompong Srakaew. “Right now, we have capacity building training for migrants to empower them. Many people don’t know their rights or how to negotiate with their employer, and face exploitation because they don’t know how to stand up for themselves.”

Eighty percent of schools in the delta area were also destroy or damaged

SPDC-owned media published many stories describing cyclone-hit schools as up and running. The media reports and June 2nd deadline do not, however, represent a realistic assessment of the abilities of communities to meet the educational needs of their children. According to the PONJA report, Cyclone Nargis had a significant impact on the education sector. Between fifty and sixty-five percent of schools in the delta area and Rangoon Division were damaged or destroyed, totaling 3,600 to 4,500 schools. Eighty percent of schools in the delta area were also destroy or damaged.
Some schools were rebuilt with the help of INGOs, UN Agencies and private companies. But most communities did not have sufficient time to repair their schools. Community leaders, however, under pressure from SPDC authorities, pushed children to attend classes in hastily built temporary buildings with unsafe walls and roofs. Many children also lost their teachers in addition to school buildings. Accordingly to villagers from Kyn-kaw and Ngaputtaw villages, the headmistress and a teacher from their

14 Year Old Girl Raped at Refugee Camp

Kaowao, September 12, 2008

Last Tuesday, September 9th, a 14 year old refugee girl was raped by a man at Umpiem Mai refugee camp, near the Thai-Burma border town of Mae Sot. A source told Kaowao the man was later arrested by a camp security guard.

The Mon refugee girl who lived with her parents in quarter-11, Zone-B of Umpiem Mai Refugee Camp, was raped by a 20 year old man on September 9th at approximately 9pm. He later admitted his act to camp authorities, according to a source at the scene.

In line with the Umpiem Mai camp law, a convicted rapist faces a 6 month jail sentence, to be served inside the camp, as well as a THB 2,000 fine. An anonymous source present at the court hearing told Kaowao that in this case however, and with the knowledge and agreement of the victim's parents, the convicted rapist will pay THB 20,000 and not serve a jail sentence.

She added, "In here (Umpiem camp), a large number of refugees are Karen. It is not good for a case like this to be heard in public, so that's why the parents of the victim agreed with the decision of the camp authorities. The rapist will be imprisoned until he pays the fine."

The same source told Kaowao that on the night of the incident, the young girl left her home to use the outdoor toilet, but was gone for over an hour. At that time her parents, with the help of neighbors, began searching for her before enlisting the help of the camp security guard. The victim was found near the house of the rapist, who was soon after arrested.

Women forced to repair army road in Khaw Zar Sub-township

HURFOM, September 18, 2008

HURFOM: On September 11th, Burmese Army Infantry Battalion No. 31 forced a group of women to rebuild the mile long road that connects Khaw Zar Sub-township with the battalion's headquarters, report HURFOM sources in the area.

"I saw a total of nine women including a seventy-five year-old lady being forced to repair the army's road. They were made to carry stone, sand and soil to fix the road. There were no male laborers in the group. A twenty-year-old girl who was forced to work said they worked for the day without pay," Mi Nyo, 28, a witness from Khaw Zar, in Ye Township, southern Mon State, told a HURFOM field reporter.

The road is not sealed, and made only with dirt and stones. Heavy rains during the wet season destroy it every year, and residents of Khaw Zar are forced to make annual repairs.

The incident occurred at that order of Commander Kyaw Myint, who has gained notoriety for subjecting local residents to forced labor. The potential for forced repairs on the road had been mentioned by the commander at the Khaw Zar Peace and Development Council's monthly meeting, but no official announcement had been made.

"Neither IB No. 31 nor township PDC officially released the announcement for calling forced labor. This group of ladies were forced to work only a day. Last year, we worked near a month repeatedly to finish the reparation," said Nai A-Not, 50, who worked on the road last year. The lack of official announcement does not, however, mean more forced labor is unlikely, and villagers expect to be conscripted as the rainy season draws to a close over the next few weeks.
Personal Account:

One of the lucky stories of a Cyclone Nargis Victim on Thailand-Burma Border

In August, a family of cyclone Nargis survivors from Paing-kyone village, Lutputta Township of Irrawaddy Division, arrived in Sangkhlaburi, just east of the Thai-Burma border. Their village was home to one hundred households, made up of ethnic Burman and Karen people. The villager’s main livelihood was agriculture, primarily rice farming. About thirty villagers, including nine children, were killed in the storm and only nine hoses avoided being totally destroyed.

A Woman and Child Rights Project (WCRP) Team met with the family and discussed how they suffered during Nargis and how they relocated to Thailand. The following are excerpts from the interview:

“When the cyclone hit our village it was about two in the evening. First, the storm was not so bad, and then it escalated with hard wind, rain and water from the sea. We watched the weather for a while. Then, when we knew that the situation was getting worse, all villagers in the whole village dispersed and fled to a higher area. Cattle also fled with the people.

“At the time, I had recently delivered my second son. He was just two months old. I took him and my husband took our elder son, who is two years old. One of our sisters accompanied us in the flight. While we were fleeing, she was killed after water pulled her under and away and she disappeared.

“We had to take a temporary refuge on a hill far from my village. We had no food. A few days after storm, the government authorities and actor Wei Luu Kyaw from Rangoon came and distributed some food to us. They gave us about three or four pyis [about seven or eight kilograms] each time. They came and donated twice. But the food was not enough.

“It was difficult for our family to stay in the village. We had no house, no job, no farm and two of our cattle died. My husband and me had to decide to leave the village and travel to lower Burma to find jobs. Five other families like us also left the village, and we met many many families facing the same problems like us. Our family had only five thousand kyat [less than four USD]. That was just for food. We could not pay ferry or car fees, but the drivers knew we were refugees and they did not ask any fees. Some people also gave us money.

“When we reached Moulmein, we met with a Mon man, who sympathized with us and told us to work in the border area. Then, without taking any fees, he brought to Three Pagoda Pass. When we passed many checkpoints [controlled by the Burmese Army and armed ethnic groups], they knew we were refugees and did not ask us to pay any taxes.

“Since we arrived in Sangkhlaburi, we have received a lot of assistance. The people are taking good care us. We have not found work, but we expect we will.”
An 11 year old boy, Maung Thein Naing (not his real name), was surprised to hear his father say he had to leave for school in early June, following orders from the village headmen. Soon after Cyclone Nargis ripped through his village and killed his mother and sister, he forgot he was a student. His school in the north of the village near the rice fields also disappeared in the storms of early May.

U Soe Thein (not his real name), the father of Maung Thein Naing, does not want to think about the past and his family. On the 2nd of May Cyclone Nargis combined with about 5 meters of fast moving high tides swept his wife and 7 year old daughter away; to this day he does not know how they died. He does not want to think about that tragic moment.

Maung Thein Naing remembered that his mother was making food in the morning for him and his sister. After they ate some breakfast, he took the hand of his sister and they went to school together. His sister was in Kindergarten class and he was in 3rd Grade (or 3rd Standard) in the primary level of his village school which was called, 'Kyin-kaw Primary School'. This school provided 100 students from Kyin-kaw village and the villagers were proud for this small school as they did not have to send their children to other villages. But when the students completed the primary school, they had to attend middle (secondary) school in other villages by passing rice fields.

The school was built with wooden floors and walls, and had a thatched roof. Everything from this school was blown away by the 150 miles per hour winds. No piece of the school remained.

"I should not have let my wife and my daughter die like this. I don’t want them to be gone. I am quite sorrowful as I could not save their life," U Soe Thein cries hard as he explains how his wife and daughter died, while his son sits weeping besides him. At the time Cyclone Nargis hit this fishing village killing half his family, he was away from home. He returned home to find only his son, desperately clinging to a tree.

Maung Thein Naing visited the site of his destroyed school and found pieces of the walls, floor and roof littering the ground in the area, while the former playground area was filled with waste and garbage. When he saw the destruction he sat and cried silently for a long time.

"I missed my mom and my sister. I don’t want to go to school. Where is my school? No. no. I don’t want to go to school without my sister," said Maung Thein Naing.

The education authorities from Ngaputaw Township, Bassein (Pathein) District, Irrawaddy Division, ordered the local village headmen and any surviving school teachers to re-construct schools and accept students. The order stated that all schools must be operational in the first week of June, which is the beginning of the school term in Burma.

After Cyclone Nargis hit, many schools were destroyed, aside from a few located far from the sea and southwestern part of Burma. Thousands of school-age children died and some of the local teachers, especially female teachers, who lived in the villages near the Sea were hit by the Cyclone and died.

The Cyclone caused great disturbance across the region, greatly unsettling the lives of survivors, distracted at the widespread destruction, devastation and the loss of loved ones. Most survivors had to re-construct temporary shelters for their remaining family members. They have to seek food for daily meals by fishing and digging through muddy swamps.
The local government authorities never cared for the victims’ feelings and pains. The local community people, village heads, teachers and students have been suffering from serial forcible instructions by authorities. They were forced to cast votes on the 24th of May for the Constitutional Referendum ballot before being forced to construct schools and find teachers to operate the schools, all the while dealing with their great losses.

"Everyday the people had to think about how to gain rice and food. They were still missing their dead families and crying. The authorities have failed to assist the people (cyclone victims), but they have been successful in practicing how to give orders," said U Tun Oo (not his real name), a village head from Chaung-wa village.

Because of the orders, Kyin-kaw village heads and their villagers had to build a new school. They could not build in the same location of old school as they could not clear up all garbage and the former school grounds are still flooded. Thus, they decided to build a temporary school in the new location of a nearby rice field.

Now, the village has only one teacher and she accepted the students in the rice field with a make-shift table. But she noticed that the number of students significantly decreased from 97 last academic year to 36 in this academic year. The teacher exactly knew what happened to her students. They will never come back to school again.

"I am missing friends. When I met my teacher, I knew that many of my friends disappeared. I don’t know where they are? Who took them?" said a 9 year old school girl, Ma Thein Da Oo.

Burmese military authorities never recognized the psychological pain of these children and did not set up any plan for a rehabilitation program to somehow relieve the mental anguish of Nargis’ kids. Although the community and teachers believed it was not an appropriate time to open schools in early June, just one month after the cyclone hit but they could not refuse the orders of the military dictators who rule Burma.

"Nobody came and are comforted us. Only the Abbot in the monastery stressed about Buddha’s teaching of life cycle. The Abbot told a truth that if people are born, they must die one day. Human beings must face death. But even so, most people felt their family should not face this type of sudden death”, said U Tun Oo.

Family members had no time to talk before death and mothers had no chance to kiss their children goodbye. Psychological pains and mental stresses are hard to treat, and they will take a long time to recover.

According to a Report from UNOCHA (United Nations Office for Coordinating Humanitarian Affairs), there were about 1.1 million children under 18 years old (among the 2.4 million of Cyclone Nargis victims) who faced food shortages, lack of education and health care at the beginning of cyclone hit. About 4,000 schools in both the Irrawaddy Division and Rangoon Division were partly or totally destroyed.

According to a village head from Ngaputaw Township, he said most schools in the Township were destroyed and villagers could not afford to build new schools like the old ones. He said 20 years ago, when they began building schools, the prices of building materials were not so high as now, where they face problems in building schools without the support of government or outside agencies. The simply cannot afford to build them.

"Now, if we build a primary school with 5 classes: 2 classes of Kindergarten Grade and each class from Grade 1 to Grade 4, we have to spend at least 10 Million Kyat. The price of almost all building materials is skyrocketing. How can we get a school like before?", the village head from Ngaputaw Township.

According to UNOCHA’s report, by the 3rd week of June, the regime authorities and UN Agencies completed repairs of 166 schools in 7 Townships in Rangoon Division (out of 40 Townships) and 256 primary schools in 7 Townships in Irrawaddy Division. This was 3 weeks after schools were ordered to re-open.

From these reports and observations made from the area, it is true that many schools were not repaired and the village communities have set up many temporary schools with buildings that are unsafe for children. After the forcible opening of schools, children of young ages who have been suffering greatly from psychosocial pains, have to go to schools along slippery roads and learn their lessons without textbooks, reading books, exercise books, desks and chairs. They have to sit on the wet earth and get wet when the rains come.

Maung Thein Naing said, “I’m not happy. I don’t want to go to there. It is not my school. I miss my sister and my friends".
Invitation for Feedback to Our Publication
“The Plight”
of Women and Children in Southern Burma

Dear Readers,

With objectives to monitor the situation of women and children in southern part of Burma and to empower them with the rights described in CEDAW and CRC, which are both ratified by the current military regime in Burma, our “Woman an Child Rights Project (Southern Burma)” came into existence since 2000.

Under this project, “The Plight” Newsletter is produced quarterly and this newsletter especially describe the general situation of women and children in Burma and how their human rights are violated by the ruling regime and its army.

In a plan to evaluate our publication, we wish to get the FEEDBACK of our readers. Hence, you can kindly send your feedback. If you know anyone who would like to receive the newsletter or if you wish to send your feedback, please feel free to contact the following mailing and e-mail address.

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With regards,

Project Coordinator
Woman and Child Rights Project - Southern Burma

local school were killed in storm; only one teacher remained. They area was forced to open a school built in the middle of rice fields. The surviving teacher, however, did not return to the village.

After pressure by authorities, villagers from Kwe-tauk village, Ngapuutaw Township also built a make-shift school in the middle of rice fields. This school also had no teachers, and the villagers did not know how to resume classes by the June 2nd deadline. Ultimately, they simply recruited two villagers who could read and write, but had no teaching experience, to work as substitutes until professional teachers could be found.

The aid responses to the education needs of the post-Nargis delta area have been limited and inaccessible for many parts of the Laputta, Ngapuutaw and Bogale Townships in the Irrawaddy delta area. As of July 4th, only 518 schools were repaired; nearly 4,000 schools were still left out.

Another glaring problem for students in post-cyclone areas is the need for school supplies like exercise books, pencils, erasers, rulers and school bags. The PONJA report indicates that the government and INGOs provided some supplies to 133,500 children in June. The Mon humanitarian workers did not, however, see these supplies in Laputta and Ngapuutaw Townships, where there is still great need. The workers explained that the students they saw went to school with supplies salvaged from the village or donated by the community.

IV. Conclusion

It is regrettable that no report has been done on the welfare of women and children in areas struggling from Cyclone Nargis. Work conducted by Mon relief workers in the area, as well as interviews conducted by WCRP workers, indicates that these demographics face a variety of difficulties, both physical and psychological. There is also a dearth of responses to the physical and mental needs of women and children recovering from the cyclone. Even with help, these survivors will face a long and difficult recovery process. Without support, this process will be even more difficult and people – even whole communities – will struggle to recover and rebuild.
Burmese migrant workers joining the Stop Human Trafficking campaign in Samut Sakhon
(Read News on Page 6)

State school students in a Nargis affected Area in Irrawaddy Delta
(Read Feature on Page 9)

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