

Child Labor Widespread in Delta

Saturday 24 January 2009, by [The Irrawaddy](#) (Date first published: 23 January 2009).

Child labor has become widespread throughout the cyclone-ravaged Irrawaddy delta, according to sources in the region.

A member of a non-governmental organization in the delta who requested anonymity said that children aged 10 to 15 are valued sources of labor for Burmese businessmen, fishermen and farmers, because they work for much lower wages than adults—between 300 and 1000 kyat (US \$0.25–0.85) per day for children, compared to wages of 1,500 to 3000 kyat (\$1.25–\$2.50) per day for adults.

A young boy works with a fisherman in the Delta region.

"Many fishing boat owners now prefer to hire children because of the difference in wages. Kids are willing to work for 300 kyat and meals," he said.

Sources said that businesspeople in the delta also see children are easier to control and hard-working. Nowadays, children as young as eight can be found working on fishing boats, in restaurants, construction sites and with agriculture.

Myo Min lost his mother when Cyclone Nargis slashed through southwestern Burma on May 2-3. He now lives with his brother and works full-time aboard a fishing vessel in the delta.

Speaking to The Irrawaddy, 10-year-old Myo Min said, *"I'm tired, but I'm just grateful to be able to survive."*

Mending nets instead of studying at the school.

Po Po, 11, lost his father and his elder brother in the cyclone. He then left school to work in a restaurant in Labutta Township. He washes dishes and earns about 5,000 kyat (\$4.20) per month.

He admitted that he cries every night because he misses his mother.

According to a schoolteacher in Konegyi village in Labutta Township, many children are unable to continue their education because they are orphans or live with families that are struggling economically.

An estimated 400,000 children did not return to school after the cyclone, according to leading relief agency Save the Children Fund. Of those, Save the Children said they helped about 100,000 children get back to school.

The INGO estimated that about 40 percent of the 140,000 people who were killed or disappeared in the cyclone disaster were children. Many who survived were orphaned or separated from their parents, the agency said.

P.S.

From The Irrawaddy.

http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=14983