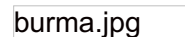


Burma: you know it's happening

 blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2008/05/07/burma-you-know-its-happening/

2008-5-7

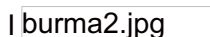
 My conversation about humanitarian communication with the World Food Programme's [Greg Barrow](#) was cut short because he had to get on with dealing with the [Burma cyclone](#) crisis. We had been talking about the state of media coverage of disasters and emergencies. One thing we thought is certain. With new media technology there is no excuse for ignorance. The Internet and other new technologies mean you can report from anywhere, anytime, to a global audience. The question for aid agencies and the correspondents is not how to get coverage but how to get people to listen – and what do you want them to do if they hear?

Take Burma. Great coverage on all the mainstream media outlets and in the blogosphere an endless stream of UGC imagery and eye-witnesses. It's all linked to via the [BBC](#) but [Global Voices](#) has a particularly good selection, too:

“My flat was in the top floor, so I was quite worried. There are two or three roofs blown away, and all the satellite dishes destroyed, but apart from that, the building is intact. Water was pouring into the house and my family had to move things into the rooms where it was dry.”

And you get a [sense](#) of how this is a big political story:

“On Wednesday night NASA predicted that Typhoon Nargis would hit Burma, yet the regime did nothing...It is criminal that the regime didn't warn the people that the typhoon was coming.”

I  it is interesting to see how the Burmese authorities are aware of the media impact. They have been careful to have their troops in action moving aid in front of the cameras. So far, few journalists are operating inside the country (Although [Channel 4 News](#) had an undercover reporter in situ) but as the Western media come in they will be looking to see if the cyclone will blow away the repressive military junta. And it will be interesting to see if the public make the same link. Of course, whether that kind of media coverage will actually make any difference is another question.

Polis is launching a programme of work on humanitarian communications next autumn – get in touch if you want to be involved at polis@lse.ac.uk

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