

Internal Displacement and Vulnerability in Eastern Burma

Thailand Burma Border Consortium

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**With Field Research by :
Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People
Karen Office of Relief and Development
Karenni Social Welfare Center
Mon Relief and Development Committee
Shan Relief and Development Committee**

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ACRONYMS

CIDKP	Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People
CSO	Central Statistical Organisation
DKBA	Democratic Karen Buddhist Army
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	internally displaced person
FSAU	Food Security Assessment Unit for Somalia
KNLP	Kayan New Lands Party
KNPLF	Karenni National People's Liberation Front
KNPP	Karenni National Progressive Party
KnSO	Karenni Solidarity Organisation
KNU	Karen National Union
KORD	Karen Office of Relief and Development
KPA	Karen Peace Army
KSWC	Karenni Social Welfare Center
MIP	Ministry of Immigration and Population
MoH	Ministry of Health
MRDC	Mon Relief and Development Committee
MSF-H	Medicins Sana Frontiers - Holland
MSF-S	Medicins Sans Frontiers - Spain
MUAC	mid upper arm circumference
NMSP	New Mon State Party
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PNO	Pao National Organisation
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
SSA-S	Shan State Army - South
SSNPLO	Shan State Nationalities People's Liberation Organisation
SSPC	Shan State Peace Council
SRDC	Shan Relief and Development Committee
TBBC	Thailand Burma Border Consortium
UN	United Nations
UNS	United Nations System
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UWSA	United Wa State Army
WFH	weight for height
WHO	World Health Organisation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In September 2002 the Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC), formerly the Burmese Border Consortium, compiled a report “Internally Displaced People and Relocation Sites in Eastern Burma”. The report was written because although the Royal Thai Government was reluctant to accept more refugees and believed repatriation should occur as soon as conditions were judged suitable, new refugees were still arriving in Thailand. Since most of the new arrivals reported that they had formerly been living as internally displaced persons, TBBC considered that it was important to understand what was happening in the border areas before any planning for repatriation could begin.

Since that time, the nature and scale of internal displacement in eastern Burma has been generally acknowledged, and humanitarian agencies based in Burma have been increasingly requesting and gaining access to some border areas. In particular, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Myanmar has negotiated roving access to a number of townships of ‘potential refugee return’. UNHCR Thailand has also been engaging the Royal Thai Government, donors and non governmental organisations (NGOs) in a conceptual planning exercise for the eventual repatriation of the refugees.

Much of Eastern Burma is, however, still inaccessible to international observers from inside the country and the initial steps being taken towards planning for repatriation make it even more important to understand what is happening in these areas. This report draws together the results of new surveys carried out by local community organisations who collectively have broad access to the border areas.

Community organizations conducted field surveys across eastern Burma between April and July 2004.¹ Population estimates have been gathered from key informants in 36 significant townships and cross-checked with estimates from other local humanitarian and human rights agencies wherever possible. Vulnerability indicators were also developed from a multi-stage cluster survey of 6,070 people and 1,071 households in 60 areas spread over six states and divisions. The sample population for this quantitative survey was distributed between internally displaced persons in free-fire areas, government relocation sites, ethnic ceasefire areas and mixed administration areas.

Estimates recorded during this survey in 2004 indicate at least another 157,000 civilians have been displaced by war or human rights abuses since the end of 2002. This includes people from at least 240 villages which have been documented as completely destroyed, relocated or abandoned during the past two years. The current status of villages forcibly relocated prior to 2002 has not been comprehensively assessed, but attempts to return and re-establish more than 100 such villages in Tenasserim Division have been documented as thwarted by further displacement. Civilian displacement has continued at a high rate even though there has been a

¹ Specifically, the Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People (CIDKP), Karen Office of Relief and Development (KORD), Karenni Social Welfare Center (KSWC), Mon Relief and Development Committee (MRDC) and the Shan Relief and Development Committee (SRDC).

significant decrease in the number of villages forcibly relocated since the mid-late 1990s. This trend is indicative of the extent to which government troops had been deployed and villages forcibly evicted prior to 2002. Since then, the military government has been consolidating, rather than expanding, areas of control. High rates of civilian displacement in areas where forced village relocations have decreased are attributed to the harassment of people who had already deserted SPDC relocation sites to attempt returning to their village or resettlement nearby.

States and Divisions	IDPs in Hiding or Temporary Settlements			IDPs in relocation sites (& no. of sites)		Total IDPs	
	2002	2004		2002	2004	2002	2004
		Free-fire areas	Cease-fire areas				
Southern Shan	75,000	9,300	185,000	200,000 (40)	21,800 (37)	275,000	216,100
Karenni	50,000	7,000	75,000	7,000 (9)	6,400 (14)	57,000	88,400
Eastern Pegu	10,500	13,500	0	18,000 (18)	4,500 (25)	28,500	18,000
Karen	75,500	46,900	75,000	54,000 (42)	13,400 (37)	129,500	135,300
Mon	50,500	2,300	25,000	28,000 (28)	3,800 (16)	78,500	31,100
Tenasserim	6,500	5,000	5,000	58,000 (39)	27,100 (38)	64,500	37,100
Overall	268,000	84,000	365,000	365,000 (176)	77,000 (167)	633,000	526,000

The total number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) who have been forced or obliged to leave their homes and have not been able to return or resettle and reintegrate into society as of late 2004 is estimated to be at least 526,000 people. The population consists of 365,000 people in the temporary settlements of ceasefire areas administered by ethnic nationalities, while 84,000 civilians are estimated to be hiding from the military-government in free-fire areas and approximately 77,000 villagers still remain in designated relocation sites after having been forcibly evicted from their homes. This represents a decrease since 2002 when 633,000 people were estimated to be internally displaced in hiding sites, temporary shelters and relocation sites. This decrease can be attributed to a mix of sustainable return or resettlement, forced migration into the fringes of urban and rural communities, flight into refugee and migrant populations in Thailand and methodological differences in data collection. Speculation remains as to how many people on the fringes of rural and urban communities have been obliged to leave their homes and are unable to resettle and reintegrate, but whose status as internally displaced persons can not be verified.

Indicators of vulnerability for the internally displaced population reflect a critical situation. The survey found that more than half of internally displaced households have been forced to work without compensation and have been extorted of cash or property during the past year. While these and other human rights abuses were widespread and a lack of protection was common in all areas, people in relocation sites have reportedly been affected the most.

Livelihoods in free-fire areas are demonstrated as largely dependent on subsistence-oriented slash and burn agriculture, yet still they are undermined by government patrols searching for and destroying crops. Conversely, less households were documented in relocation sites than elsewhere as being involved in any type of rice farming, indicating a lack of access to land and greater restrictions on movement. Yet the survey also found the highest rates of hunting and gathering were in densely populated ceasefire areas, which is indicative of the livelihood constraints of resettlement into these areas.

This report presents indicators which suggest there is a public health emergency amongst internally displaced persons in eastern Burma. A third of households surveyed had not been able to access any health services during the past year, contributing to high mortality rates from infectious diseases which can be prevented and treated, such as malaria. Child mortality and malnutrition rates are double Burma's national baseline rate and comparable to those recorded amongst internally displaced populations in the Horn of Africa.

The population structure shows significantly more children dependent on a smaller proportion of working age adults compared to official data sources for Burma. This working age adult population consists of a high proportion of women representing greater rates of mortality, economic migration, flight from abuse and military conscription amongst young adult men. Low levels of access to durable shelter are recorded and associated not only with limited protection from the climate but also adverse impacts on health and human dignity. Similarly, low levels of educational attainment are likely to restrict the capacity of internally displaced persons to cope and recover from all of these aspects of vulnerability.

The surveys demonstrate that the problem of forced migration in Eastern Burma remains large and complex and that internally displaced populations are extremely vulnerable. As in 2002, TBBC presents this compilation of data without making any recommendations. The intention is that policy makers and humanitarian organisations might be better informed in terms of preparing for refugee repatriation and addressing the situation of internal displacement itself.

SUMMARY OF INDICATORS

Sector	Indicator (and definition)	IDPs, Eastern Burma (TBBC, 2004)	national average, Burma (and sources)
Population Structure	Child Dependency (% population under 15 years)	40%	30% (MIP,2001)
	Elderly Dependency (% population over 60 years)	5%	8% (MIP,2001)
	Crude Birth Rate (annually, per 1,000 population)	40%	26% (CSO,2000)
	Female Population Rates (% population female)	52%	not available
	Extremely Vulnerable Individuals (% population who are widows, orphans or disabled)	5.1%	not available
Protection	Human Rights Abuse Rates (% households forced to provide labour for authorities in past year)	57%	not available
	(% households ordered to pay arbitrary taxes / extortion levies in past year)	52%	
	(% households with travel outside of village restricted by authorities in past year)	23%	
	(% households with crops or food stocks damaged / destroyed by authorities in past year)	17%	
	(% households with a member arbitrarily detained without cause in past year)	14%	
	(% households forcibly evicted in past year)	12%	
	Civilian Casualties of War (% population wounded or killed by military assault in past two years)	1.2%	
	Displacement Frequency (average number of involuntary residential moves per household in past year)	0.7	
Livelihood	Major Livelihood Sources (% households using slash and burn farming)	64%	not available
	(% households breeding small animals)	38%	
	(% households providing labour for wages)	34%	
	(% households with irrigated paddy farms)	30%	
	(% households with fruit gardens)	22%	
	(% households foraging for forest products)	18%	
	Access to Farm tools (average number of tools per household)	3.4	
	Prevalence of Coping Strategies (% households accessing loans to survive disruptions to livelihoods)	71%	
	(% households accessing aid to survive disruptions to livelihoods)	30%	
	(% households migrating for work to survive disruptions to livelihoods)	17%	
	(% households selling assets to survive disruptions to livelihoods)	22%	

Sector	Indicator (and definition)	IDPs, Eastern Burma (TBBC, 2004)	national average, Burma (and sources)
Health, Nutrition and Sanitation	Child Mortality (U5 deaths / 10,000 population under 5 / day)	2.4	0.7 (UNICEF2004)
	Child Mortality (prospective) (U5 deaths / 1,000 live births / year)	286	100 (MIP,2001)
	Acute Malnutrition Amongst Children (moderate plus severe wasting for under 5 year olds, ie < -2 Z scores WFH or <12.5cm MUAC)	16%	9% (MoH,2000)
	Access to Food (% households with 2 meals / day for every month in the past year)	23%	not available
	Access to Sanitary Waste Disposal (% households with sewers, septic tanks, pour/flush latrines or covered pits)	16%	63% (MoH,2000)
	Access to Safe Drinking Water (% households with pipes, rain water tanks or protected wells)	13%	72% (MoH,2000)
	Restrictions on Health Care (% households with no access to government or private clinics, community health workers, or traditional healers in past year)	34%	not available
Education	Adult Literacy (% persons over 15 years who read and write any language)	69%	90% (MoH,2000)
	Access to Primary Education (% households with unrestricted access to primary schools in past year)	53%	not available
Shelter, Clothing and Basic Goods	Access to Durable Shelter (% households with wooden pillars or stronger)	63%	not available
	(% household with wooden floors or stronger)	26%	
	(% households with wooden walls or stronger)	12%	
	(% households with tin roofing or stronger)	10%	
	Access to Domestic Utensils (average number of blankets per household)	5.4	
	(average number of mosquito nets / household)	0.8	
	(average number of pots and pans / household)	3.7	
	(average number of plates & bowls / household)	8.2	
	Access to Clothing (average sets of clothing per person, covering knees to shoulders)	2.9	

Sources for national data

Ministry of Immigration and Population, 2003, *Myanmar Fertility and Reproductive Health Survey 2001*, with UNFPA, Rangoon,

Central Statistical Organisation, 2000, *Statistical Yearbook*, Rangoon

Ministry of Health, 2000, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, Department of Health Planning, with collaboration of UNICEF, Rangoon,

UNICEF, 2004, *The State of the World's Children*, New York,

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1. 'Coming out from hiding in free-fire area', Karen State, 2004, CIDKP
2. 'Introductions in mixed administration area', Pegu Division, 2004, CIDKP

1



INTRODUCTION



1.1 PROTRACTED CONFLICT IN BURMA

Burma's post-independence history has been dominated by civil war between the central government and a plethora of armed opposition groups.² Political instability has been partly rooted in ideological conflict between a socialist State and communist resistance, and more recently between military rule and democratic opposition. However, the most protracted armed conflict has been between the Burman controlled State and a loose alliance of non-Burman ethnic nationalities who are fighting for self determination.³

Through these decades of low-intensity conflict, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and its predecessors have based their counter insurgency strategy on targeting the civilian population. The "Four Cuts" policy aims to undermine the armed opposition's access to recruits, information, supplies and finances by forcibly relocating villagers from contested areas into government controlled areas. The policy has aimed to turn "black" opposition controlled areas into "brown" free-fire areas of contested administration and ultimately into "white" areas controlled by Rangoon. Villagers who do not comply with forced relocation orders are considered "rebels" and are liable to be arbitrarily executed if found hiding in free-fire zones.

The Burma Army's negotiation of seventeen ceasefire agreements with various ethnic-nationalist forces reduced the scale of armed conflict in the 1990's. While these ceasefires have led to the establishment of special regions with some degree of administrative autonomy, broader political grievances and human rights abuses are yet to be addressed. Negotiating a ceasefire has proved easier than building peace and conditions in special administrative areas generally remain unsuitable for the return and resettlement of internally displaced persons. In the mid-1990's, Rangoon's ceasefire with the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) lasted only a few months while Khun Sa's surrender of the Mong Tai Army in exchange for an amnesty against drug-related charges led to the Shan States Army reforming around a more genuinely ethnic nationalist cause. The New Mon State Party's (NMSP's) ceasefire has been maintained, but over the past three years its authority has been challenged by Mon splinter groups forming to continue armed resistance.



² The Union of Burma was officially renamed the Union of Myanmar by military decree after a coup in 1988. A number of states and divisions were also renamed, including Karen state (now Kayah), Karenni state (now Kayah) and Pegu Division (now Bago). This report uses historical and colloquial titles.

³ The Arakan, Chin, Kachin, Karen, Karenni, Mon, Shan and others are often described as ethnic minorities or indigenous people, but generally prefer the term "ethnic nationalities".

The international community was cautiously optimistic about prospects for national reconciliation at the beginning of 2004 due to an informal ceasefire between SPDC and the Karen National Union (KNU), and plans for the resumption of a National Convention. However hopes have been dampened by the autocratic nature of SPDC's Convention, the ongoing detention of democratic opposition leaders including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and ongoing violence and abuse in Karen areas. A legitimate process of national reconciliation, incorporating transition to civilian rule and a political settlement about relations between the Burman and non-Burman constituent nations in the Union of Burma, remains elusive.

1.2 MEASURING INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT AND VULNERABILITY

International standards define internally displaced persons as :

*"persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border."*⁴

While there is no specific cessation clause defining the end of internal displacement in international standards, potential solutions are identified as incorporating either return to former areas of residence or resettlement into another part of the country voluntarily, in safety and with dignity. National authorities are obliged to support reintegration by ensuring that internally displaced persons are protected against discrimination, able to participate fully in public affairs and enjoy access to public services. It is stipulated that national authorities' responsibilities include facilitating the recovery or compensation of property which was dispossessed as a result of displacement. Further, international humanitarian agencies are to be granted unimpeded access to assist internally displaced persons during all phases of return or resettlement and reintegration.⁵ These caveats are significant not only for ensuring a sustainable solution, but also for determining who should be counted in population surveys of the internally displaced.

Guided by these standards, this survey has identified three types of internally displaced persons in eastern Burma. Population estimates have been determined for people who :

- have fled from SPDC patrols and hide in free-fire areas
- were evicted and obliged to move into SPDC relocation sites
- were forcibly relocated by non-state actors, OR fled from human rights abuses or the effects of war, OR were formerly refugees in Thailand, and now reside in ethnic administered ceasefire areas.

However, it has not been possible to estimate the number of internally displaced persons who have migrated to the fringes of urban and rural communities. Speculation

⁴ Para 2, Introduction, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, 1998,

⁵ Principles 28-30, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, 1998

remains as to whether there are tens or hundreds of thousands of people in these environments who remain in a *state* of internal displacement unable to resettle and reintegrate into society, even if their *status* as internally displaced persons can not be verified. While it is acknowledged that a small number of customary landowners in ceasefire areas may have been inadvertently counted as internally displaced persons, the population estimates in this survey are considered conservative due to perceptions that a greater number of internally displaced persons elsewhere have been excluded.

While estimating the scale of internal displacement is complicated, surveying degrees of vulnerability is even more problematic. The humanitarian imperative to alleviate suffering is increasingly being understood as a call to respond not only to basic material needs but also to vulnerability where there is a lack of human security. Vulnerability is an outcome of political, economic and social processes that neglect, exclude or exploit the livelihoods and human rights of marginalized communities. So while a lack of access to social services is one aspect of vulnerability, a humanitarian protection perspective is also concerned with proximity to a violent environment and the effects of a specific pattern of abuse. An analysis of livelihoods supplements this with the recognition that vulnerability is a limited capacity to cope and recover from stresses and shocks on assets, activities and capabilities related to survival and development.⁶ Further, while sovereign states have the responsibility to respect, protect and promote the human rights of citizens, the reality in many civil wars is that the sovereign power and other belligerent forces ignore humanitarian principles and cause vulnerability.⁷

Given the dynamic complexity of local realities and the difficulty in quantifying powerlessness, qualitative methods have mostly been used to measure vulnerability. UNDP in Burma, however, are establishing a Vulnerability Monitoring and Mapping System which is attempting to integrate quantitative assessment of basic physiological and human needs together with a more qualitative survey of the structural context within which people seek to secure those needs. Given that assessments of vulnerability amongst internally displaced populations are dependent on the capacities of staff from local community organisations and that qualitative assessments are generally more difficult to conduct, this survey of vulnerability has focused on quantitative indicators of vulnerability. Specifically, this survey has assessed indicators of demographic stress; protection; livelihoods; health; education; and shelter.

1.3 SURVEY RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES

A report compiled by BBC in 2002 assessed villages disbanded since 1996, as well as the scale and distribution of internally displaced persons and relocation sites.⁸ Since then, new groups have been displaced while others have attempted to return to their villages or resettle elsewhere in Burma, and others still have continued their journey

⁶ Narbeth and McLean, 2003, *Livelihoods and Protection : Displacement and Vulnerable Communities in Kismaayo, Southern Somalia*, Humanitarian Practice Network Paper 44, ODI, London, www.odihpn.org

⁷ Collinson (ed), 2003, *Power, Livelihoods and Conflict: Case Studies in Political Economy Analysis for Humanitarian Action*, Humanitarian Policy Group Report 13, ODI, London. www.odi.org.uk/hpg

⁸ Burmese Border Consortium, "Internally Displaced Persons and Relocation Sites in Eastern Burma", Bangkok, 2002. [www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/BBC_Relocation_Site_Report_\(11-9-02\).htm](http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/BBC_Relocation_Site_Report_(11-9-02).htm)

of displacement across the border into Thailand to become refugees or migrant workers. Previous estimates of the scale and distribution of internal displacement have become out of date. At the same time, UNDP's vulnerability assessment in Burma noted a scarcity of indicators describing the characteristics of internal displacement.

Working objectives for the survey adopted by the community organisations were therefore defined to :

- 1) Estimate the scale and distribution of internal displacement in eastern Burma since 2002 by surveying key informants from at least 30 townships.
- 2) Assess the vulnerability of internally displaced persons through a multi-stage cluster survey of 1,200 households.

1.4 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This survey consisted of two questionnaires and a series of semi-structured interviews. One of the questionnaires was related to the objective of estimating the scale and distribution of internally displaced persons, while the other collected information about the characteristics of vulnerability to serve the second survey objective.⁹ Semi-structured interviews were conducted by community-based organisations with key informants in regards to both aspects of the survey. Findings are based upon this primary data, while secondary sources were used for comparison and verification.

The questionnaire for collecting population estimates of internally displaced persons was designed for key informants at the township level. Information about large scale changes in communities, such as forced relocation or destruction of villages, and the availability of public facilities such as schools and clinics was also solicited. Data was accessed from thirty six townships spread across six states and divisions, with the main gaps due to security and logistical constraints being in southern and eastern Shan state and central Mon state. Interviewers verified each key informant's estimates with other local sources.

The other questionnaire was intended to solicit information related to vulnerability at the household level. Indicators were grouped into sub-categories related to household structure; shelter, water and sanitation; social services; livelihoods; and child health. A multi-stage cluster sampling method was employed to select households for interviews. Firstly, 200 households from each state and division in eastern Burma were designated for sampling. Secondly, 50 households to be interviewed in each state and division were allocated to be in free-fire areas, SPDC relocation sites, ethnic ceasefire areas and mixed administration areas respectively. Thirdly, within the constraints of ensuring relatively secure access, at least two areas for separate household clusters were randomly selected for each type of location in each state and division. Upon arrival at these areas, surveyors applied interval sampling methods and interviewed no more than 25 households in each cluster.

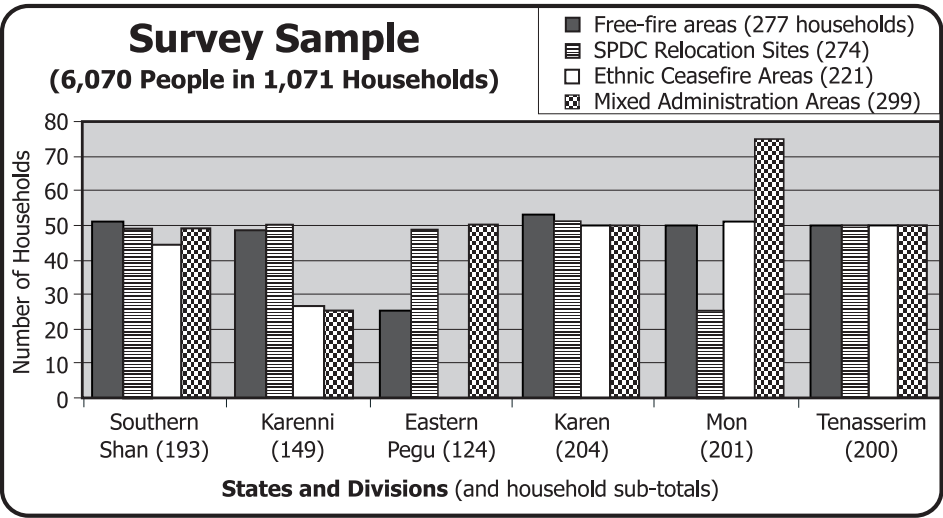
⁹ Appendix 1 contains both questionnaires.

The second stage of the cluster survey required some clarification to ensure a consistent understanding of the different types of locations. Working definitions were agreed to and are reproduced below.

- Free-fire areas were understood as conflict-affected forests or fields where people hide from, or at least do not expose themselves to, SPDC patrols.
- Relocation sites were identified as consolidated villages people where had been ordered to move by SPDC after having been forcibly evicted.
- Ceasefire areas were recognized as special regions with some autonomy for ethnic nationality authorities and provisional guarantees against SPDC attack.
- Mixed administration areas were accepted as rural fringes nominally under SPDC control, but still within the sphere of influence of the armed opposition.

With regards to mixed administration areas, it was accepted that screening internally displaced persons from war-affected residents would be difficult but that responses would be useful for comparisons anyway. While the vulnerability of a sample of internally displaced persons in mixed administration areas has been surveyed, a comprehensive estimate of the overall displaced population in such areas on the fringes of rural communities has not been possible. This report thus only refers to mixed administration areas in the vulnerability assessment and not in the sections on the scale and distribution of internally displaced persons.

The vulnerability indicators have ultimately been derived from a sample of 6,070 people and 1,071 households in 60 clusters evenly spread out over the six states and divisions of eastern Burma. This represents a small discrepancy from the initial plan of interviewing 1,200 households. Less data was collected in Pegu Division due to the absence of ceasefire areas to survey and confusion regarding the demarcation of the border with Karen State. Security constraints were the reason more data could not be collected in the ceasefire and mixed administration areas of Karenni state. Similarly in Mon state, security concerns restricted access into relocation sites which was compensated for by interviewing more people in mixed administration areas.



1.5 COMPARATIVE INDICATORS

Demographic indicators derived from this multi-stage cluster survey have been compared with both national and international data sets to illustrate the vulnerability of internally displaced persons in eastern Burma. The comparability of different data sets is dependent on the relative quality and reliability of concepts and definitions, sampling methods and methods of measurement amongst other variables. Given these variables, some qualifying comments on the comparative indicators are necessary.

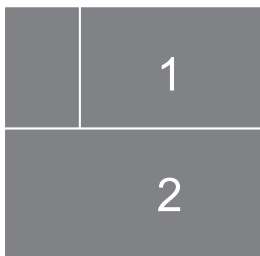
Official demographic data sources for the general population in Burma are generally criticized for relying on unrepresentative sample sizes and lacking a systematic approach to data management. The reliability and quality of government statistics in Burma is thus debatable, even though reasonably comprehensive data sets exist.¹⁰

Health indicators in this report have been compared with statistics derived from surveys amongst internally displaced populations in the Horn of Africa. While these comparisons are considered valid, it should be noted that this survey of the internally displaced in Burma has used a longer recall period and a slightly smaller sample population of children under five than standard practice. Similarly in measuring acute malnutrition, mid-upper-arm-circumference (MUAC) tests were used rather than Weight-for-Height indicators due to logistical constraints in transporting scales.

Estimates for the scale of internal displacement in eastern Burma have primarily been compared to TBBC's approximations from 2002. While TBBC's estimates in 2002 were collated from a mix of recent fieldwork and published data, this report has been based on field research. The only exception is in the UWSA ceasefire areas where estimates are based on the same report as previously cited.¹¹ Religious groups based in Rangoon have also surveyed local leaders to estimate population sizes in the relocation sites of eastern Burma during 2004, and a brief summary of those findings is also mentioned for comparison.

¹⁰ Technologies Development Group, 2000, *Data for CCA Exercise*, with the UN Country Team, Rangoon.

¹¹ Lahu National Development Organisation, 2002, *Unsettling Moves: Tha Wa Forced Resettlement Programme in Eastern Shan State*, Chiang Mai.



1. 'Burnt house in free-fire area', Karen State, 2004, KORD
2. 'Resting from flight', Karen State, 2004, CIDKP

2



SCALE OF DISPLACEMENT



2.1 DISPLACEMENT BETWEEN 1996 AND 2004

In 2002, best available data collated from indigenous humanitarian and human rights groups suggested that more than 2,500 villages had been destroyed, relocated or otherwise abandoned in eastern Burma since 1996.¹² When the population of these villages was combined with smaller groups of people who had also fled from war and human rights abuses, approximately one million people were estimated to have been forcibly displaced during that period. Approximately 633,000 were estimated to be internally displaced in eastern Burma, while another 45,000 had entered refugee camps in Thailand and an estimated 150,000 had fled into Thailand as migrant workers seeking refugee outside of camps. An additional unknown number of people had attempted to resettle elsewhere in Burma.

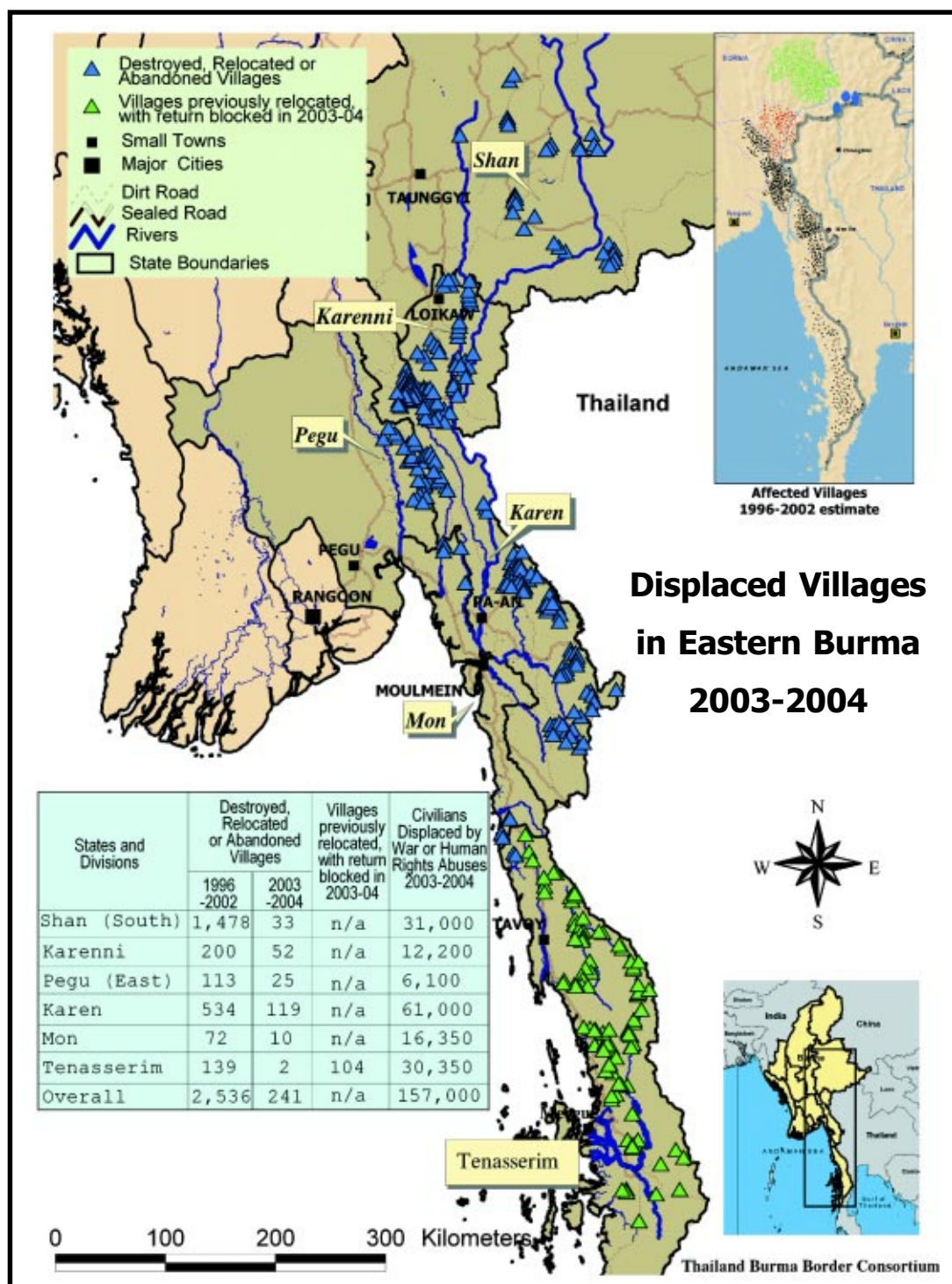
Civilian displacement has continued at a high rate even though there has been a significant decrease in the number of villages forcibly relocated since the mid-late 1990s. Estimates recorded during this survey in 2004 indicate at least another 157,000 civilians have been displaced by war or human rights abuses since the end of 2002. This includes people from at least 240 villages which have been documented as completely destroyed, relocated or abandoned during the past two years.

Systematic displacement has continued to be related to military strategy for control of conflict affected areas. This is reflected in documentation of more villages having been forcibly evicted during the past two years in the conflict-affected areas of the Karen and Karenni States than elsewhere. The subsequent flight of entire villages of villages is directly related to the high rates of recent civilian displacement recorded in these States.

Yet reports of civilians displaced by war or human rights abuses are evenly distributed across eastern Burma, and not only related to forced relocations. Displacement in Mon areas has largely been characterised by the flight of the most vulnerable households rather than the relocation of whole villages. Apart from villages completely dislocated, around half the population in over 20 Mon villages have been displaced as a result of land confiscation, forced labour, arbitrary taxation, restrictions on access to fields and arbitrary arrests during the past two years.

Decreased rates of forced village relocations are indicative of the extent to which government troops had been deployed and villages forcibly relocated throughout these areas prior to 2002. Since then, the military government has been consolidating, rather than expanding, areas of control. However, even though the eviction and relocation of villages has decreased the most in Shan State and Tenasserim Division, both of these areas continue to record high rates of civilian displacement. This can largely be attributed to the harassment of people who had already deserted SPDC relocation sites either to attempt returning to their village or resettlement nearby. The current status of villages forcibly relocated prior to 2002 has not been comprehensively assessed, but attempts to return and re-establish more than 100 such villages in Tenasserim Division have been documented as having been thwarted by further displacement.

¹² Burmese Border Consortium, "Internally Displaced Persons and Relocation Sites in Eastern Burma", Bangkok, 2002. [www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/BBC_Relocation_Site_Report_\(11-9-02\).htm](http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/BBC_Relocation_Site_Report_(11-9-02).htm)



¹³ Appendix 2 disaggregates 2004 data for displaced civilians and villages into townships. Appendix 3 identifies the names of all villages referenced on this map.

2.2 INTERNALLY DISPLACED POPULATION ESTIMATES IN 2004

The total number of internally displaced persons who have been forced or obliged to leave their homes and have not been able to return or resettle and reintegrate into society as of late 2004 is estimated to be at least 526,000 people. The population is comprised of 365,000 people currently in the temporary settlements of ceasefire areas administered by ethnic nationalities, while 84,000 civilians are estimated to be hiding from the SPDC in free-fire areas and approximately 77,000 villagers have followed SPDC eviction orders and moved into designated relocation sites.

This represents a decrease of approximately 100,000 internally displaced persons since the last border-wide estimates were made in 2002. This decrease can be attributed to a mix of sustainable return or resettlement, forced migration into the fringes of urban and rural communities, flight into refugee and migrant populations in Thailand and methodological differences in data collection.

DISTRIBUTION OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN 2002 AND 2004¹⁴

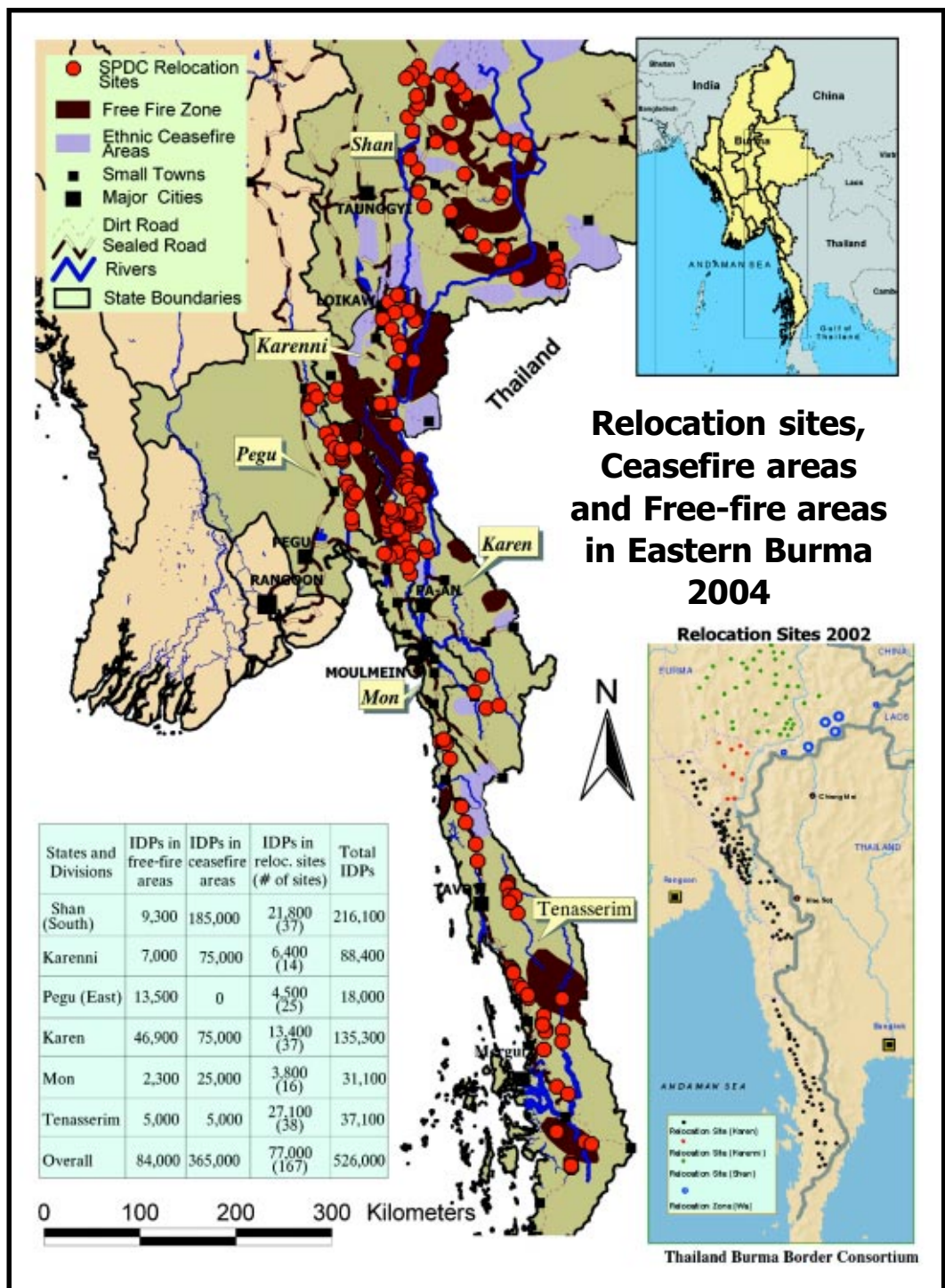
States and Divisions	IDPs in Hiding or Temporary Settlements			IDPs in relocation sites (& no. of sites)		Total IDPs	
	2002	2004		2002	2004	2002	2004
		Free-fire areas	Cease-fire areas				
Southern Shan	75,000	9,300	185,000	200,000 (40)	21,800 (37)	275,000	216,100
Karenni	50,000	7,000	75,000	7,000 (9)	6,400 (14)	57,000	88,400
Eastern Pegu	10,500	13,500	0	18,000 (18)	4,500 (25)	28,500	18,000
Karen	75,500	46,900	75,000	54,000 (42)	13,400 (37)	129,500	135,300
Mon	50,500	2,300	25,000	28,000 (28)	3,800 (16)	78,500	31,100
Tenasserim	6,500	5,000	5,000	58,000 (39)	27,100 (38)	64,500	37,100
Overall	268,000	84,000	365,000	365,000 (176)	77,000 (167)	633,000	526,000

¹⁴ * Appendix 2 disaggregates data for 2004 into townships.

* The 2002 survey combined estimates for IDPs in hiding or temporary settlements whereas the 2004 survey has disaggregated these into IDPs in free-fire areas and cease-fire areas.

* 2002 estimates were originally disaggregated according to KNU boundaries for Karen State, but have been re-allocated according to official demarcations of state and division boundaries for comparison with estimates for 2003-04.

* 2002 population estimates for relocation sites included SPDC and non-State sites, whereas the 2004 survey has counted IDPs in non-State relocation sites in the ethnic administered ceasefire areas category. 120,000 IDPs in UWSA areas of Southern Shan State have thus been reclassified out of the population estimates for relocation sites and into the estimates for ceasefire areas for 2004.



¹⁵ Appendix 2 disaggregates data into townships.
Appendix 3 identifies names of all relocation sites referenced on this map.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN ETHNIC CEASEFIRE AREAS

People in ethnic administered ceasefire areas represent the largest category of internally displaced persons in eastern Burma. 365,000 people are distributed between areas specially administered by ten ceasefire groups in eastern Burma who have each been granted a relative degree of autonomy by the Burma Army. These authorities can generally be divided into three types. There are former members or allies of the Communist Party of Burma,¹⁶ militias who split from the main political party representing their ethnic group¹⁷ and former members of the armed opposition's National Democratic Front.¹⁸

Over 120,000 people are ruled by the United Wa State Army (UWSA), while the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and the Kayah National People's Liberation Front (KNPLF) each govern 60,000 people and the Shan State Peace Council (SSPC) administer areas for 45,000 people in Southern Shan state alone. Smaller populations are also in other special administration areas governed by Pao, Karen and Karenni leaders. Internally displaced persons in ceasefire areas can be characterised in relation to the causes of their most recent displacement : forced relocation, flight from other human rights abuses, and return from refugee camps.

- **Forced relocation :** The first sub-group is exemplified by conditions under UWSA administration, where people have suffered from mass evictions in northern Shan state and been forced to relocate into southern Shan State for strategic and supposedly drug eradication purposes. Autocratic rule and the ongoing suppression of rights by the UWSA has obstructed opportunities for people forcibly relocated to re-establish their livelihoods. At the same time, further displacement has been induced amongst former land owners whose property has been seized to accommodate the new arrivals. Forced relocations have also been recorded into DKBA and U Goeri's ceasefire areas in Karen and Karenni states respectively. While having a non-state authority in charge is the prime factor differentiating this type of population from those in SPDC relocation sites, the displaced are also generally allowed relatively more freedom of movement.
- **Flight from other human rights abuses :** People who have fled from human rights abuses in SPDC controlled areas or from conflict in free-fire areas to seek temporary refuge comprise the second sub-group of internally displaced persons in ceasefire areas. This population is spread through special administration areas where the ethnic nationality authorities are relatively more respectful of human rights. However these areas can not provide a sustainable solution for the internally displaced due to population density with limited access to suitable agricultural land, SPDC restrictions on travel

¹⁶ United Wa State Army (UWSA), Karenni National People's Liberation Front (KNPLF), and Shan State Nationalities People's Liberation Organisation (SSNPLO)

¹⁷ Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), the Karen Peace Army (KPA), the Karenni Solidarity Organisation (KnSO), and U Goeri's splinter group from KNPP

¹⁸ New Mon State Party (NMSP), the Shan State Peace Council (SSPC) and the Pao National Organisation (PNO)

outside of ceasefire areas, and the inability of ethnic nationality authorities to support resettlement or compensate for livelihood assets lost.

- Return from refugee camps : A third sub-group of internally displaced persons in ceasefire areas covers over 10,000 people who have returned from being refugees in Thailand but have not been able to reintegrate into society in Burma. This sub-population primarily relates to people in NMSP areas of Tenasserim Division, Mon State and Karen State but is also relevant for much smaller populations in Karen and Karenni states. Although refugee status has been removed by the movement back into Burma, the causes of displacement remain and opportunities for reintegration are restricted. An ongoing lack of protection from violence and abuse, limited access to public services and property restitution plus the denial of international humanitarian assistance has resulted in these former refugees becoming internally displaced persons.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN FREE-FIRE AREAS

An estimated 84,000 civilians are hiding from the SPDC in free-fire areas, which are generally located in remote areas with a healthy forest cover or broadly vegetated fields. This type of geography strengthens the ability of the armed opposition forces to move undetected and weakens the logistical advantage of the government forces. Natural growth also provides shelter for the internally displaced and war-affected populations to hide their temporary settlements under.

This population has fled from their homes to avoid contact with SPDC military patrols due to fear of harassment under the pretence of counter insurgency activities. People in this group may not move far from their homes, which is a key motivating factor to remain in free-fire areas despite the risks of being detected by SPDC or paramilitary patrols. These risks range from forced relocation, arbitrary detention or even execution if people are found, to the destruction of shelters and crops or theft of food stocks if settlements are discovered uninhabited. While there may be opportunities for people to return periodically to nearby villages and fields, these dangers prohibit the possibility of a more sustainable return or resettlement.

The civilian population in opposition administered areas has decreased significantly as SPDC has gained territory over the past decade. Proximity to the armed opposition forces leaves internally displaced persons subject to the discretionary authority of local military commanders and possible attack from the SPDC. However, it also provides a greater degree of protection as the armed opposition are obliged by their own needs for survival to defend their constituents. One of the main ways this protection is offered is by supporting early warning systems to monitor the risks of attack. Monitoring systems can be as simple as a rotating network of villagers taking up strategic look-out positions and sending runners to inform neighbours if troops are approaching. However, more advanced early warning systems utilise the radio transmitters of the armed opposition forces to inform villagers to prepare for evacuation.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN SPDC RELOCATION SITES

The third category of internal displaced persons in eastern Burma consists of approximately 77,000 villagers who currently reside in designated relocation sites after having been evicted from their homes. Government relocation sites are generally situated on barren land near a town or village and in close proximity to roads and SPDC army bases. Relocation sites can result from either the forced transfer of villages from one area to another, of the forced consolidation of dispersed villages into a more densely populated location in the same vicinity.

Residents of relocation sites were generally obliged to dismantle their houses and carry whatever property and food stocks were transportable to the designated area within a few days notice. There is commonly no assistance provided for the reconstruction of shelters and tenancy is usually not officially registered. Restrictions on movement outside of relocation sites vary, with travel passes for between a day to a week generally available for purchase. These passes guarantee passage through checkpoints and into markets but single day passes are often not long enough to enable people to return to their homes and fields.

Apart from the fundamentally coercive nature of population movements into SPDC relocation sites and the loss of property as a result of displacement, possibilities for resettlement and reintegration are also restricted by limited livelihood options. Limited access to suitable agricultural land results either from relocation sites being located close to towns and adjacent to SPDC army bases where lands have been confiscated to support the livelihoods of soldiers, or due to population density and barren soil. Proximity to SPDC bases results in orders to work without compensation, taking time away from earning an income, as well as demands for payment of arbitrary taxes at irregular and short notice.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF POPULATION ESTIMATES

While it has not been possible to disaggregate changes in the number of IDPs in free-fire areas as distinct from those in ceasefire areas over the past two years, anecdotal evidence suggests a slight decline in the population hiding in free-fire areas. The combined population hiding in free-fire areas and sheltering in ethnic ceasefire areas is estimated to have increased by approximately 20% since 268,000 people were recorded in these conditions in 2002.¹⁹ The implication of these population estimates and anecdotal evidence is that the internally displaced population in ceasefire areas has increased by between 20-30% during the past two years.

While the number of relocation sites has remained stable, the total population in relocation sites has reportedly reduced by over 60% since 2002.²⁰ This decrease is attributed to the unsustainable nature of relocation sites where population density, limited access to fertile land, restrictions on movement, forced labour and arbitrary

¹⁹ This calculation compensates for the re-classification of over 120,000 IDPs from UWSA controlled areas in southern Shan state away from TBBC's population estimate for relocation sites in 2002 and into the estimates for ceasefire areas in 2004.

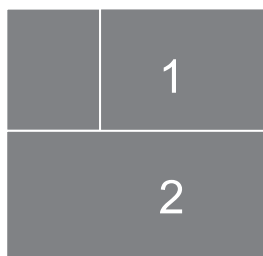
²⁰ This comparison also takes into account the reclassification of UWSA areas from relocation sites in TBBC's 2002 estimates into ethnic ceasefire areas in 2004.

taxes have obliged villagers to attempt resettlement elsewhere. The exodus has been greater than the inflow of new arrivals due to the decreased rate of forced relocations.

However, a survey of local church leaders in 2004 estimated that 120,000 people remain in relocation sites in eastern Burma.²¹ This approximation is for the total population in relocation sites, and not only church members, but does not include any estimates from Shan state. Given that religious organisations with affiliations in Rangoon are likely to have better access to relocation sites than community organisations based along the border, the desertion of relocation sites may not be as significant as the estimates in this report suggest.

Estimates of internal displacement in this report are also likely to be conservative because villagers who have been obliged to drift into the fringes of urban and rural communities have not been included. Possibly tens or even hundreds of thousands of people may have been forced to migrate to the fringes of rural and urban communities. Yet it has been possible to verify how many have resettled and reintegrated into society, nor how many remain in a state of internal displacement.

²¹ source withheld, 2004, Rangoon.



1. 'Temporary shelters in ceasefire area', Tenasserim Division, 2004
2. 'Settlement in free-fire area', Karenni State, 2004, KSWC

3



DISTRIBUTION

OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS



3.1 SOUTHERN SHAN STATE

Northern and eastern Shan state has been under the nominal control of Rangoon since soon after the Communist Party of Burma collapsed in 1989, even though that power has partly been administered by a plethora of ethnic ceasefire groups. However despite Khun Sa's surrender of his Mong Tai Army in 1996, the Shan State Army-South (SSA-S) soon reformed and armed conflict has continued in the southern part of the state. This area was thus targeted by the SPDC's forced relocation campaigns during the mid-late 1990's and also includes the areas that UWSA's civilian constituents have been forced to relocate into since 1999.²² Given the vast size of Shan State, estimates of the internally displaced population were only collected from eleven southern townships subjected to ongoing conflict.²³

The largest concentration of internally displaced persons in Shan State is east of the Salween River in the UWSA ceasefire areas of Mong Hsat and Mong Ton townships. It has not been possible to update population estimates for the UWSA ceasefire areas to quantify how many people have sneaked out, but over 120,000 people were relocated into these areas prior to 2002.²⁴ This is also a highly contested area with a major supply route for SSA-S juxtaposed with a strong SPDC army presence and numerous relocation sites along the road leading to the border, not to mention the reported proliferation of methamphetamine and heroin production facilities in UWSA administered areas.²⁵ Eight villages have been destroyed, relocated or abandoned in Mong Ton township during the past two years, resulting in almost 3,000 people residing in SPDC relocation sites while at least 2,000 others are hiding in free-fire areas. On average, 1,400 refugees per month have been reported as fleeing through this area and crossing into Thailand during 2004.²⁶

West of the Salween River, the highest rates of civilian displacement caused by war and human rights abuses as well as the largest populations hiding in free-fire areas were located in Kun Hing, Mong Nai, Laikha and Ke Hsi townships. This can largely be attributed to counter-insurgency activities, as a relatively healthy spread of forest cover in these townships facilitates the movement of SSA-S soldiers which leads to SPDC's punishment of local villagers. Conflict induced displacement in Kun Hing, and even more so to the north in Keh Si, is particularly focused on breaking communication links between SSA-S and its ceasefire counterpart the Shan State Peace Council (SSPC) who have significant special administration areas in these townships. Development-induced displacement is more prevalent in Mong Nai and Mong Pan where SPDC has forcibly relocated at least nine villages in the past two years in an attempt to secure the road access from Taunggyi to Ta Hsang. This is the proposed site for an estimated US\$3 billion project to construct a 3,600 megawatt hydro-electric power station on the Salween River.²⁷

²² For background: Risser et al, 2003, *Running the Gauntlet: The Impact of Internal Displacement in Southern Shan State*, ARCM, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.

Shan Human Rights Foundation, 1998, *Dispossessed: A Report on Forced Relocation and Extrajudicial Killings in Shan State*, www.shanland.org/HR/Publication/

²³ It has not been possible to estimate the number of IDPs (including people from Karenni state) who have fled into the Pao ceasefire areas of Hsi Hseng and the Kayan ceasefire areas of Pekon.

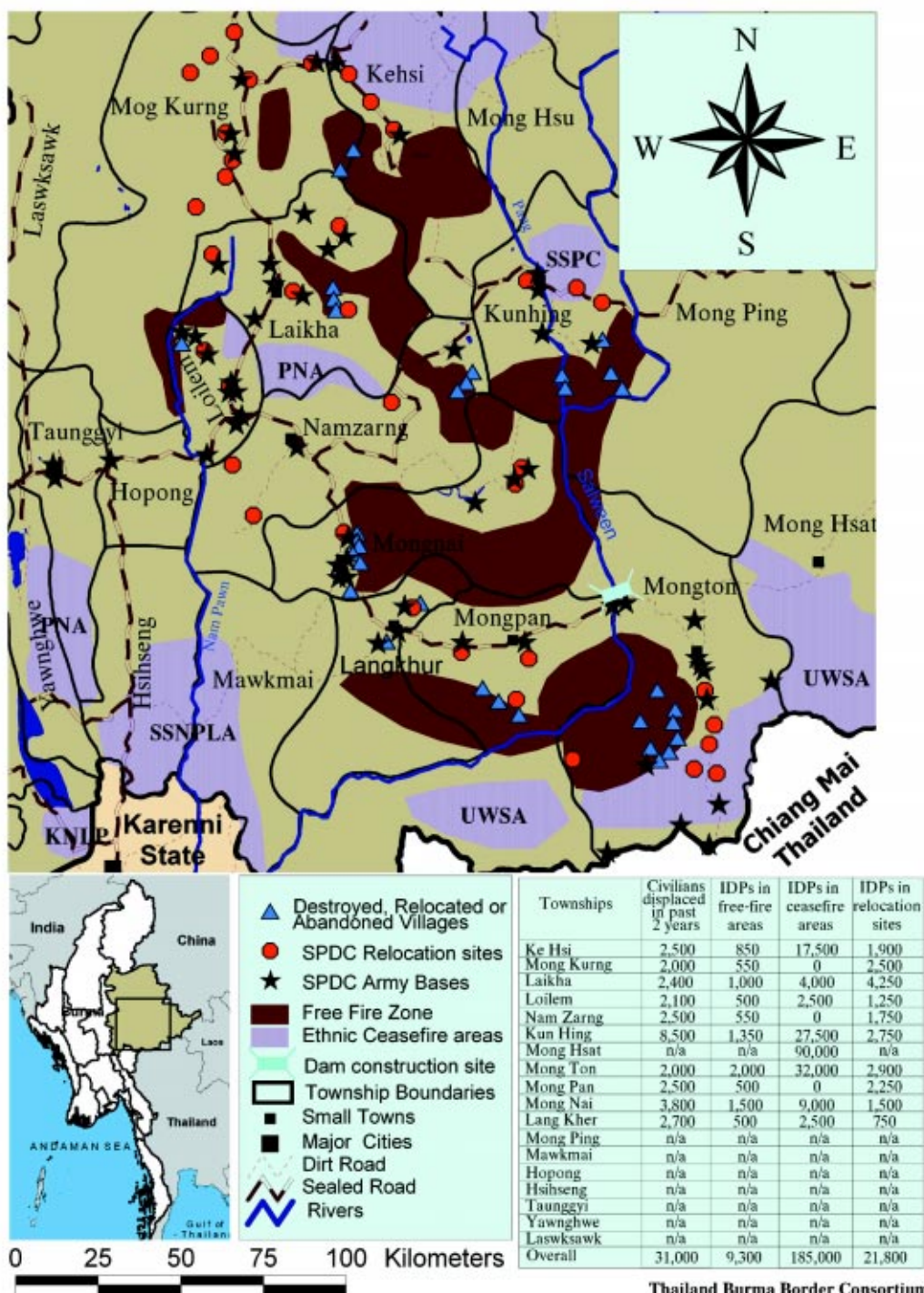
²⁴ Lahu National Development Organisation, 2002, *Unsettling Moves : The Wa Forced Resettlement Program in Eastern Shan State*, www.shanland.org/HR/Publication/

²⁵ Shan Herald Agency for News, 2003, *Show Business : Rangoon's War on Drugs in Shan State*, www.shanland.org

²⁶ BBC, 2004, *Relief Programme : January to June 2004*, Bangkok, August

²⁷ "MDX Plans Dam on Salween", Bangkok Post, 13/12/02. See also www.salweenwatch.org

Internal Displacement in Southern Shan State, 2004



3.2 Karenni State

Karenni State was never formally incorporated into colonial Burma. This remains a source of pride and justification in the struggle for self-determination which has resulted in armed conflict and displacement for half a century. Although ceasefire agreements were signed in 1994 with three factions previously aligned with the Communist Party of Burma, only the Karenni National People's Liberation Front (KNPLF) established special administration areas in Karenni State.²⁸ While the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) also agreed to a ceasefire in 1995, this soon broke down after the Burma Army deployed troops into areas east of the Salween River. This led to the Burma Army enforcing a campaign of forced relocations to separate villagers from KNPP forces, which reportedly displaced over 25,000 people across the state in 1996 alone.²⁹ Since then, the KNPP has been further fragmented by defections in 1999 by a group led by U Goeri in Pruso township and then in 2002 by a splinter calling itself the Karenni Solidarity Organisation (KnSO) in Pasaung township.

Prior to the deployment of Burma Army troops during the ceasefire period of 1996, areas east of the Salween River in Shadaw township had been strongholds of the KNPP. However these forests have been depopulated since the late 1990's due to armed conflict and intense militarization, including the proliferation of landmines. So while the largest free-fire area in Karenni state is east of the Salween River, there are very few internally displaced persons hiding in this area.

Internal displacement in Karenni state has recently been most intense in the south-western township of Pasaung, which borders Karen State. Since the surrender of KnSO, SPDC has initiated another round of troop deployments and forced relocations to clear these mountainous areas which have never been controlled by Rangoon and are strategically important for road access from central Burma through Taungoo and Pasaung to the Thailand border. Approximately 7,000 people have been displaced by war or human rights abuses during the past two years and 4,000 people are estimated to remain hiding in free-fire areas along the Karen-Karenni state border. There has been a high rate of non-compliance against relocation orders, with only 500 people estimated to reside in relocation sites in Pasaung township.

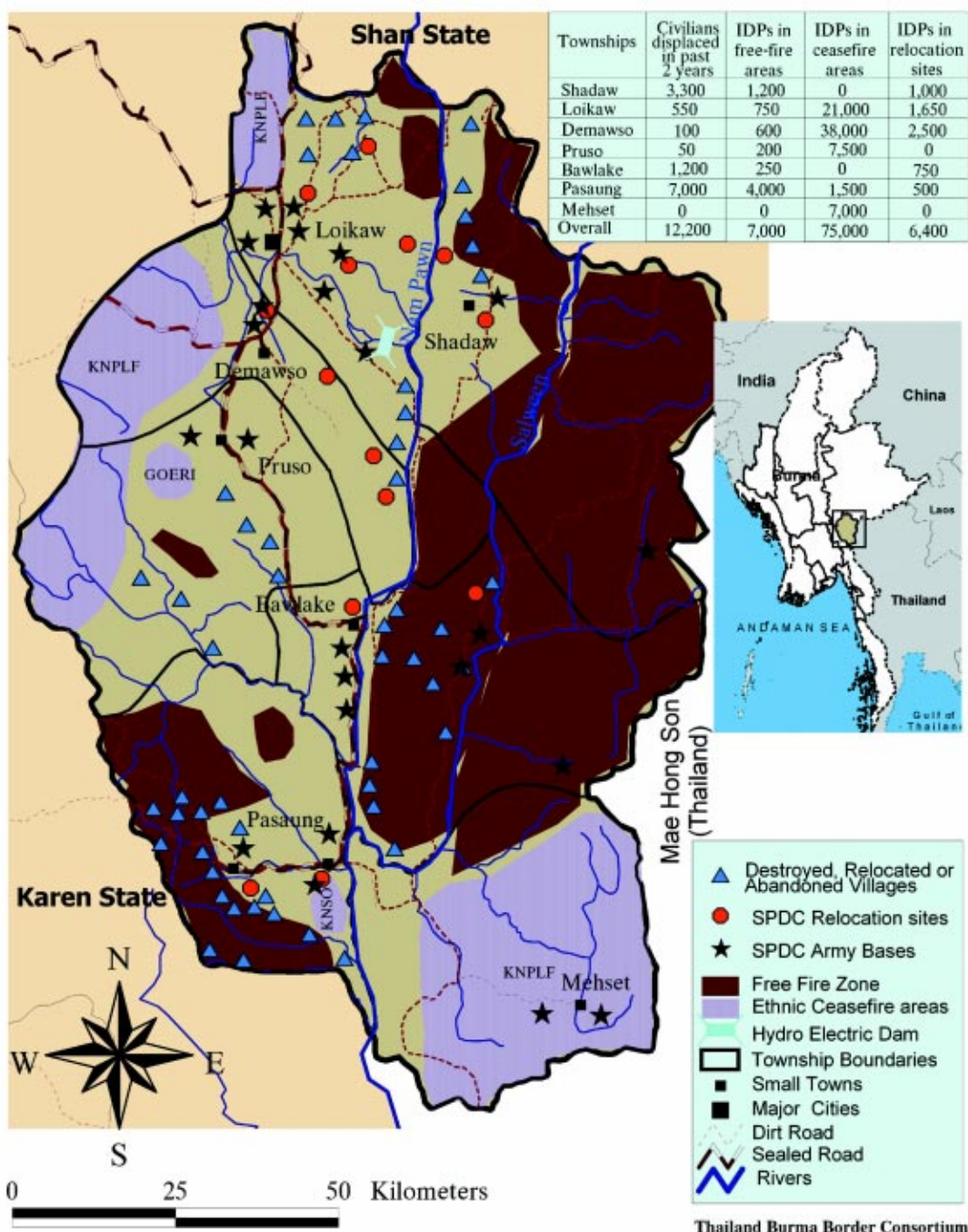
The unsustainable nature of, and population turnover rate in, relocation sites is exemplified by Daw Tama Gyi and Htee Poh Kloh in Demawso township which were established in 1996, abandoned by 2000 and re-populated again in 2004. Reports from Pasaung also suggest that people are increasingly attempting to resettle in KNPLF ceasefire areas in other townships rather than following orders to move to, or remain in, SPDC relocation sites which are not economically viable.³⁰ However the extent to which people have been forcibly relocated by non-state actors into ceasefire areas can not be discounted, especially given that KNPLF and KnSO soldiers reportedly continue to escort SPDC "search and destroy" patrols in the free-fire areas outside of Loikaw and Pasaung respectively.

²⁸ Pao (SSNPLO) and Kayan (KNLP) nationalist groups based themselves in Shan State in Hsi Hseng and Pekon townships respectively. Although it is reported that people continue to flee into these areas seeking refugee from violence and abuse in Karenni state, it has not been possible to estimate the internally displaced population there.

²⁹ Burma Ethnic Research Group, 2000, *Conflict and Displacement in Karenni: The Need for Considered Responses*, Chiang Mai, Nopburee Press, p50

³⁰ Vicary, 2003, "Economic Non-Viability, Hunger and Migration: The Case of Mawchi Township", Burma Economic Watch, www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/BEW-Mawchi.htm

Internal Displacement in Karenni State, 2004



3.3 Eastern Pegu Division

Since retreating from the Irrawaddy Delta and Pegu hills in central Burma in 1970, KNU's administrative claims have only spread as far as eastern Pegu Division. SPDC has maintained authority over the major towns and armed conflict has predominately been in rural areas. As the conflict-affected area most accessible from Rangoon, villages in eastern Pegu Division have been targeted for forced relocation since the mid 1970's. Forested hills to the east of the Sittaung River generally provided sufficient cover for KNU to maintain administrative structures and for civilians to resist displacement. However, since the fall of KNU headquarters in 1995, SPDC has been able to establish military bases along roads extending towards the Thailand border and relocation sites adjacent to the Sittaung River. Over 6,000 people are estimated to have been displaced during the past two years, contributing to an internally displaced population of over 17,000 people in this Division.

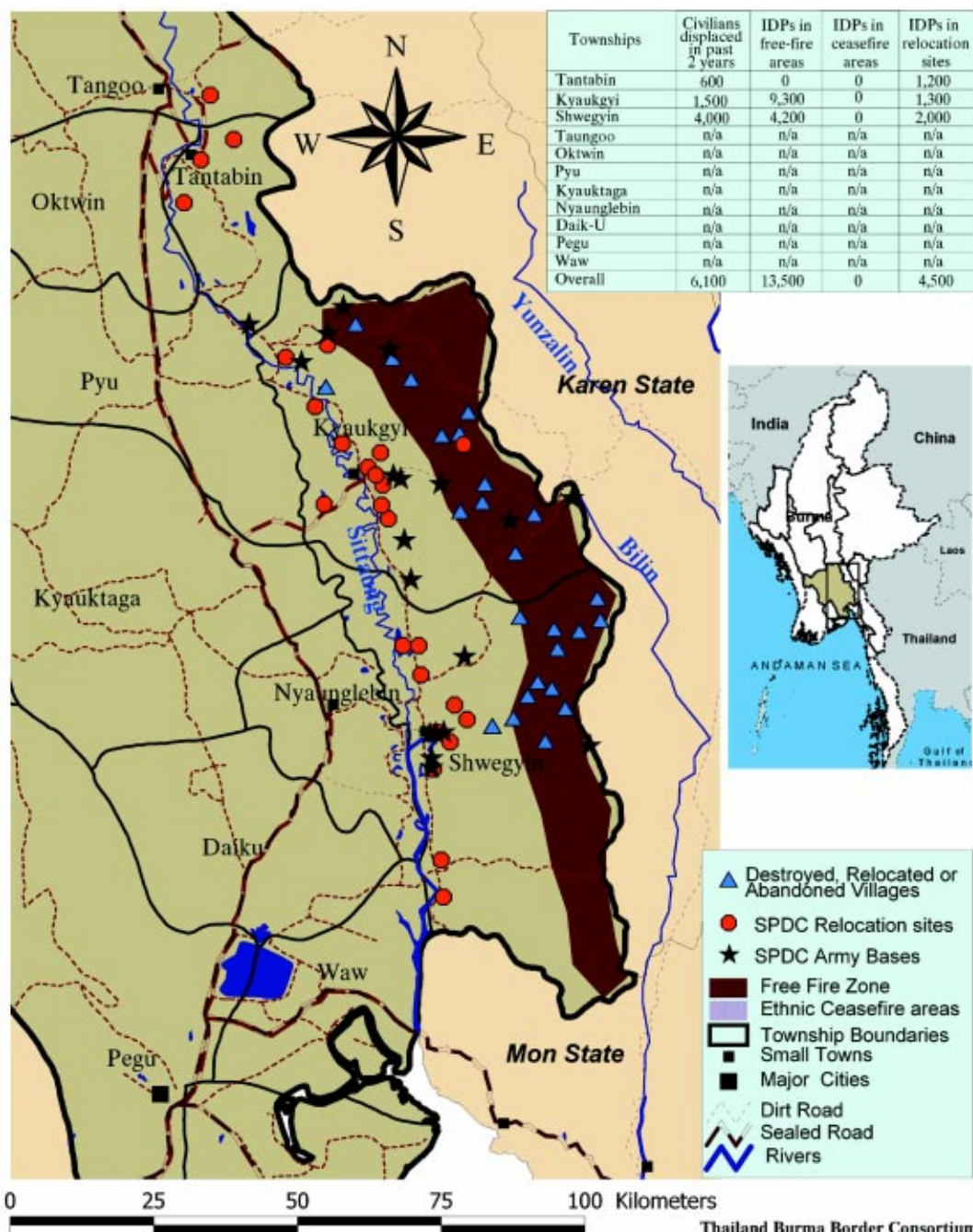
More than 9,000 people are estimated to be hiding east of Kyaukgyi and a further 4,000 are reportedly in free-fire areas east of Shwegyin. The harassment of internally displaced persons hiding in these townships has largely been attributed to a particular government sponsored para-military group, referred to either in regards to their dress as the "short pants" or by their acronym, *Sa Thon Lon*. While such "auxiliary national defence forces" are widespread throughout Burma, their activities in conflict-affected areas have been most prominent in eastern Pegu Division.³¹ While SPDC generally patrol relocation sites and the immediate environs in the plains, *Sa Thon Lon* forces are reported to more commonly patrol upland areas to search for internally displaced persons hiding in free-fire areas and to destroy any crops found along their path.

The displacement of a further 25 villages in this area during the past two years was due in part to *Sa Thon Lon* forces. However, the deployment of SPDC troops to secure two dirt roads reaching out across the north of Papun in Karen State towards the Thailand border has also been a significant factor. Villages in areas deemed beyond SPDC's control have been forcibly relocated along the Shwegyin-Kyaukgyi-Tantabin road. Conversely, villages within close proximity to SPDC bases have been forced to clear and repair bullock cart tracks and subjected to arbitrary taxes. Populations relocated to sites close to Kyaukgyi in 2004 have purportedly not been allowed to transport possessions or construction materials, which represents a degree of harassment not generally associated forced relocations.

Over 4,000 people are estimated to be residing in SPDC relocation sites in eastern Pegu Division, which accounts for only a quarter of the estimated population two years ago. In some cases, the relocation sites have been completely disbanded. However reports suggest there generally remain populations of 30-40 families in each makeshift site which is smaller than elsewhere in eastern Burma. The outflow from relocation sites has been partly induced by close proximity to major towns where agricultural land is scarce and villagers must depend on selling their labour for wages. Increased restrictions on travel back to paddy fields and orchards has also undermined villagers' livelihoods and the sustainability of relocation sites.

³¹ Karen Human Rights Group, 2003, "Expansion of Guerilla Retaliation Units and Food Shoptages in Toungoo District of Northern Karen State", Information Update 2003 #1, www.khrg.org

Internal Displacement in Eastern Pegu Division, 2004



3.4 Karen State

While the Burma Army's offensives have penetrated into Karen state since the 1970's, the mutiny of the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) was key to the fall of the Karen National Union (KNU) headquarters in 1995.³² Conflict-induced displacement has been widespread across Karen state since that time, but has stabilised in the past couple of years. An informal ceasefire between SPDC and KNU has even been established in 2004, with a series of high level meetings held to specify rules for troop locations and deployment and to plan for the return and resettlement of internally displaced persons. However, over 200 skirmishes still occurred in the first six months after the ceasefire was announced.³³ Over 60,000 people are estimated to have been displaced by war and human rights abuses during the past two years and approximately 47,000 internally displaced persons are reportedly hiding in areas that remain de facto free-fire areas.

Recent displacement is most pervasive in the northern townships of Papun and Thandaung adjacent to the Karenni State border. This mountainous area is the largest and most populated area affected by conflict in eastern Burma, with thick forest cover protecting supply routes for the armed opposition and dirt roads restricting the rapid deployment of SPDC troops. Counter-insurgency operations are predominately marked by the destruction of shelters, crops and food stocks, forced relocations into road-side villages, and forced labour to upgrade bullock cart tracks into sealed roads crossing from Pegu Division to the Thailand border. Over 26,000 people are estimated to have been displaced by war and human rights abuses in the past two years, and a comparable number are believed hiding from SPDC forces in free-fire areas, while approximately 10,000 are in SPDC relocation sites.

Further south, population displacement has been more associated with the counter-insurgency efforts of combined SPDC and DKBA forces and development-induced displacement. The complicity of DKBA is most evident in Hlaing Bwe and Myawaddy townships where mortar shells have reportedly been launched onto villages and landmines laid to restrict access to fields during the past year. These attacks have contributed to the displacement of over 20,000 people in the past two years, with approximately 13,000 people estimated to still be hiding in free-fire areas.

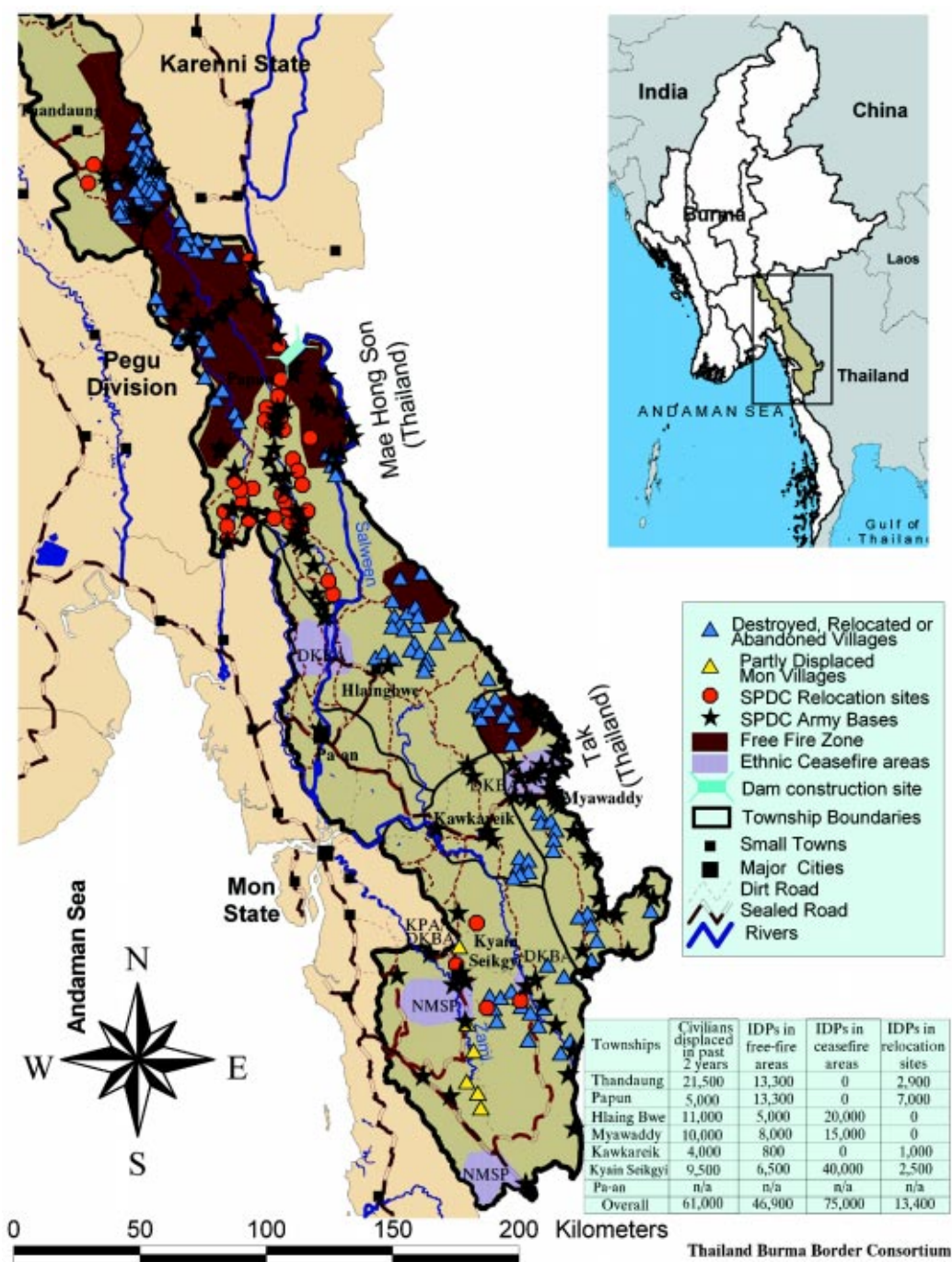
Forced labour and arbitrary taxation have been more prominent causes of displacement in Kawkareik and Kyain Seikkgyi townships. This has been associated with road construction on dirt tracks connecting Kawkareik to Kyain Seikkgyi to Three Pagodas Pass, although the harassment of villagers between the Zami River and Thailand border has also contributed to the displacement of over 13,000 Mon and Karen people in these townships during in the past two years.

New Mon State Party (NMSP) has two ceasefire areas in southern Karen State and both continue to report a steady influx of new arrivals fleeing from human rights abuses in SPDC controlled areas and conflict-affected areas. The southern ceasefire area is based around people who were formerly refugees in Thailand, while the core population of the northern area was originally people who had fled from Mon state. 30,000 people in these areas are still denied humanitarian assistance for their resettlement and reintegration.

³² For background: Burma Ethnic Research Group et al, 1998, *Forgotten Victims of a Hidden War: Internally Displaced Karen in Burma*, Chiang Mai, Nopburee Press

³³ Karen Information Center, 29/7/04, cited in The Irrawaddy, "KNU to Resume Ceasefire Talks with Junta",

Internal Displacement in Karen State, 2004



3.5 Mon State

In the years immediately following the 1995 ceasefire agreement between the NMSP and the Burma Army, conflict induced displacement decreased significantly in southern Mon State. Without a political settlement, development-induced displacement continued with forced labour particularly prominent during the construction of the Ye-Tavoy railway. 10,000 refugees were returned to unfamiliar lands in NMSP ceasefire areas along the border, and did not dare to continue on home. By the late 1990's, grievances about SPDC militarisation in areas formerly controlled by the Mon had led to splinter groups breaking away from NMSP to reclaim their arms. This resulted in a new wave of conflict-induced displacement emerging again in southern Mon State.

The reformed armed resistance in southern Mon State is only small-scale with an estimated fighting force of less than one hundred soldiers. Yet SPDC has reportedly resumed its forced relocation program for villages outside of NMSP ceasefire areas, restricted the travel of farmers to fields, and pursued the splinter groups in ceasefire areas. The impact on villagers has been heightened by human rights abuses committed by the splinter groups, with extortion of cash and food supplies the main act of banditry.³⁴ This conflict-induced displacement has only exacerbated the more fundamental instability caused by the government's land confiscation programme. Over 8,000 acres of land paddy, rubber, betel nut and orchards have been confiscated by SPDC in southern Mon State since 1998. Apart from not being compensated, farmers have often been forced to work on their former properties and construct military barracks to support the resettlement of newly deployed SPDC soldiers and their families.³⁵ The combined effect has contributed to the displacement of approximately 16,000 people in Ye township during the past two years.

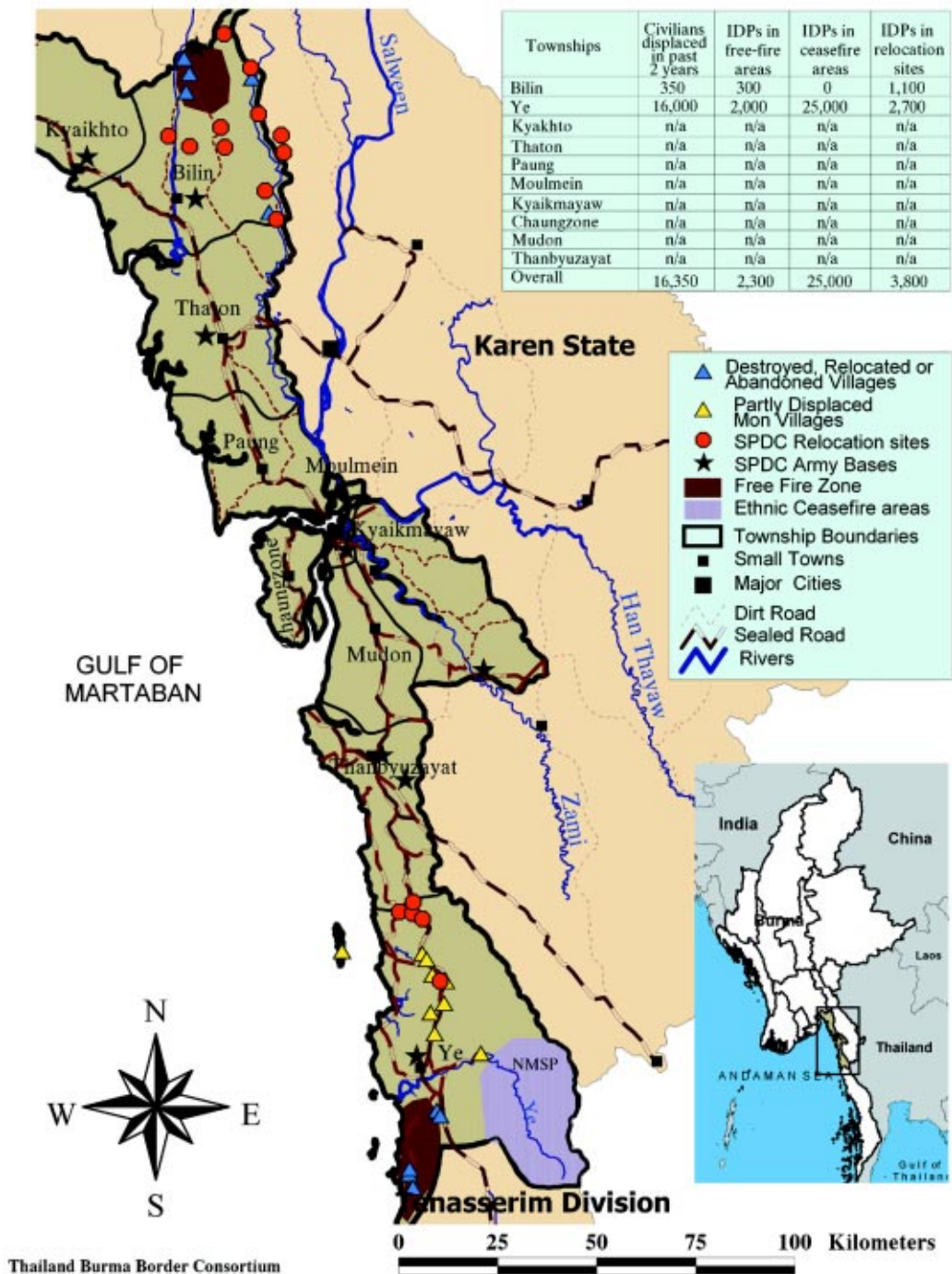
NMSP's ceasefire areas in Mon state can be characterised as offering either greater security in the mountains east of the Ye River or more livelihood opportunities in the fertile low lands west of the Ye river. It is the inability of NMSP to offer both a protective and enabling environment which restricts the sustainability of resettlement in the ceasefire areas. Upland ceasefire areas are not suitable for low land farmers such as the Mon, but SPDC's counter-insurgency campaign restricts the option of searching for fertile fields away from home. Yet without the restoration of rights, people do not feel safe to return to their villages or resettle elsewhere in Burma. Eight years after the refugees returned from Thailand, international humanitarian assistance has still not been able to reach these ceasefire areas via Rangoon. Relief aid from Thailand prolongs the viability of the ceasefire areas as temporary sanctuaries, but there has not been an end to displacement for 25,000 people currently residing there.

Counter-insurgency activities have continued, and even intensified, throughout this time in northern Mon State where there is a large Karen community and KNU remain active. However, the population density in relocation sites diminished as people instead attempted to resettle in villages acceptable to SPDC, but still within KNU's sphere of influence.

³⁴ Human Rights Foundation of Monland, 2003 "Population Displacement is Humanitarian Crisis in Burma", *Mon Forum*, www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/MF2003-05B.htm

³⁵ Human Rights Foundation of Monland, 2003, "No Land to Farm: A Comprehensive Report on Land, Real Estate and Properties' Confiscation in Mon Areas, Burma (1998-2003)", Bangkok. www.rehmonnya.org/landreport.php

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3.6 Tenasserim Division

Investment interests in Tenasserim Division had gained sufficient momentum by 1996 for the Burma Army to establish a regional military command headquarters in Mergui. This was related to securing construction sites and environs for the Yadana gas pipeline, the Ye-Tavoy railway and the proposed Bangkao-Tavoy highway which is to link Thailand with a deep sea port. Troop deployment was followed by a concerted offensive into KNU controlled areas complemented with a campaign of forcibly relocating villages beginning in 1997.³⁶ While over 140 villages have been displaced since 1996, and nominal SPDC control now extends through much of the area, recent attempts to return and re-establish more than 100 such villages have been thwarted by further displacement. In total, 30,000 people have been obliged to leave their homes due to war or human rights abuses in the past two years alone.

NMSP's ceasefire area in the north of Tenasserim Division has seen an influx of new arrivals in 2004 due to hostilities between SPDC and the Mon splinter group. Even in the ceasefire areas people have not been safe from the repercussions of this conflict, with the splinter group trying to destabilise NMSP's authority and SPDC harassing villages as part of counter insurgency efforts. Houses have recently been burnt, food stocks stolen, cash extorted, movements restricted and civilians killed by both the splinter group and SPDC in this ceasefire area.

KNU controlled the fertile valleys and river banks around Mount Kaserdoh in Tavoy and Palaw townships until villages were forcibly evicted in 1997. Over 12,000 people are estimated to remain in relocation sites further to the west in barren plains, while another 2,000 people are estimated to remain in hiding from SPDC in the foothills. In cases where widespread villages were consolidated rather than completely relocated, farmers have been better able to cope with displacement because they have still had access to their betel nut plantations or rice fields. However, people from over 50 villages have attempted to return to their villages or surrounding areas during the past two years, only to again be displaced upon arrival.

Further south, SPDC has established military base camps along the Tenasserim River and fortified both Bokpyin and Kawthaung. 10,000 people are estimated to have been displaced by ongoing counter-insurgency efforts and demands for forced labour during the past two years. 6,000 people are estimated to remain in SPDC relocation sites along the Tenasserim-Bokpyin road and Tenasserim river, while approximately 2,000 people are hiding in free-fire areas to the west. Reports from relocation sites suggest that after forced eviction in the late 1990's, villagers were not allowed to return to their villages until 2002 when travel passes were introduced with a week long permit costing 1,000 kyat. However leaders of some relocation sites have purportedly been ordered to only issue travel passes for a single day since the end of 2003, which has decreased the opportunities for villages to return to their fields and plantations. Relocation sites can not be sustained without SPDC allowing this access to livelihoods, but the counter-insurgency strategy of separating villagers from the armed opposition remains in force.

³⁶ For background see Burma Issues, 2003, *After the Offensives: The Burma Army's relocation program : Kamoethway Area, Tenasserim Division*, Bangkok, www.burmaissues.org/En/Reports/After1997.pdf
 Pah Paw Klo, 2003, "Survival Within Division", in Burma Issues, *IDPs in Burma*, Bangkok, www.burmaissues.org/En/IDPCampaign/Infobooklet.pdf
 Burma Ethnic Research Group et al, 1998, *Forgotten Victims of a Hidden War: Internally Displaced Karen in Burma*, Chiang Mai, Nopburee Press

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