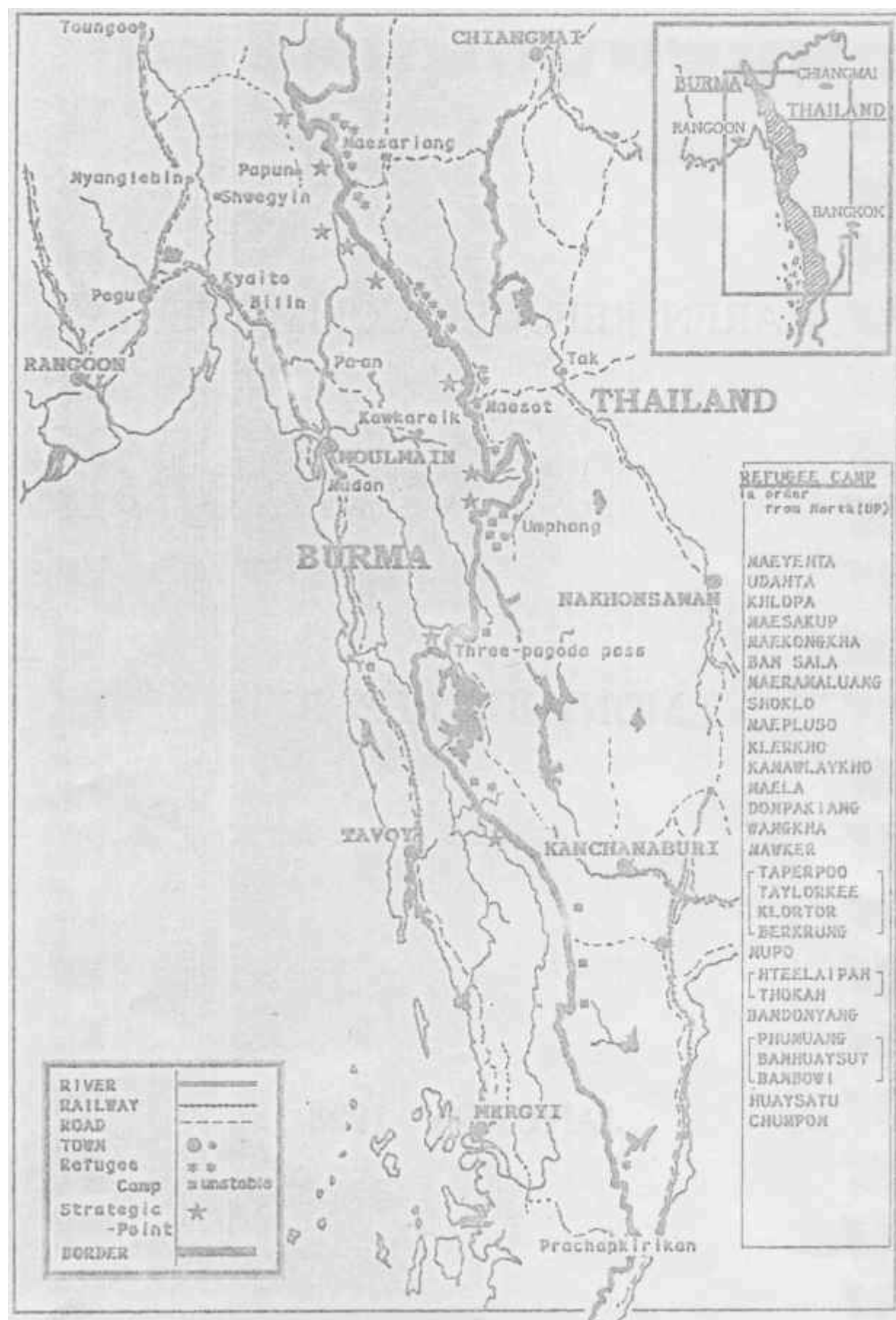


A decorative border of small, stylized butterflies surrounds the text. The butterflies are arranged in a continuous line along the top, bottom, and sides of the page.

# KAREN REFUGEE COMMITTEE

## MONTHLY REPORT

JANUARY 1998



# KAREN REFUGE COMMITTEE MONTHLY REPORT JANUARY 1998

With January, we are entering a New Year.

So, in this New Year, we wish all the best to the people and the Government of this Great Host Nation, Thailand.

We also wish all the best to the NGOs, aid groups and individual friends for their great services in helping support the refugees, who are in dire need of help.

The past year 1997, was not a good year for people in refugee camps as well as for those living in the border areas. All refugee camps along the border are being threatened by SLORC and DKBA troops from across the border and camp people had to live in constant fear under these threats. The reality of the threats was to be evidenced in January of 1997. In that month, two refugee camps were attacked and burnt down by enemy troops. There were also attempts to attack other camps, though these were foiled by the security forces.

In February 1997, SLORC troops launched a major offensive in the Kawkareik-Kyar Inn-Seik Kyi area and in the Tavoy-Mergui area, resulting in the influx of refugees escaping into Thailand to seek refuge.

To accommodate these new refugees, new camps had to be established. But still more displaced people are staying in the forests along the border, not knowing where to go.

Back inside the border, ever increasing repressive measures are being meted out on the population as a whole, that more and more people are trying to cross into Thailand. The end result is that, in addition to increase in the number of refugees in camps, there is great increase in the number of people outside of camps trying to fare for themselves in whatever way they can. This has posed a big problem for the host country. The illegal workers would never have argued with the kind of work or salary. In fact, there are instances where displaced people would work for free meals and accommodations only. Native workers were thus deprived of many job opportunities. The problem becomes acute, with deterioration of the overall economy and illegal workers are being targeted as one of the causes of this deterioration. One probable implication is that refugees in camps are being restricted from going out of camps. This would be one way of preventing these people from seeking jobs outside. The consequences are unforeseeable.

So, the year 1997 ended with little in encouragement for the refugee community. Life for the refugees in camps can only be called the easy-worrisome process with little cognisance of the future. What is certain is that camp life provides for an abundance of spare time, and with meticulous health and medical care by the medical NGOs and interest groups, new born babies are being added regularly to the camp population. We do not know what contentious problems these new born may present for being born in a foreign country under unusual circumstances.

Still there is another head-ache looming for the refugees. This head-ache will also involve the regional Authorities, the NGOs and support groups and not least the KRC. For some refugee camps in this border region are to be relocated, and relocation processes are undeniably troublesome, as thousands of people will be involved, with stress on people and disruptions of families. Sho Klo refugee camp will be relocated to Mae La, beginning the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 1998, and some camps in the North region are to be relocated to Mae Rama Luang, beginning mid-February.

The regional authorities, the NGOs, support group and the KRC will have to face the task which is expected to take a considerable amount of time and energy. The KRC in particular, sandwiched in between diverse reasoning, would count itself fortunate if it survives at all.

To be optimistic, meetings are being held, supervising committees are being formed and detailed plans are being made for implementing the relocation process. Talks are being made with camp leaders and responsible persons for informing, organising and guiding camp people. Measures were taken to get necessary data and information, for site locations and allocation of sites to new arrivals. Transport vehicles are to be provided by the Authorities, transport fuel, lunch for drivers and shelter materials for new shelters to be supplied by the BBC, and water supply facilities to be set up by MSF. MSF will also be concerned with medical aspects at both ends and along the route. But from past experiences, it would be prudent to be forewarned that in many instances, planning and implementing does not follow suit. As to the future of the refugee population, it would be just a game of wait-and-see being played out.

For, with Burma under the rigid control of the Military, safe return for the refugees would still be a far off dream. But, to be sure, all refugees would very much like to return to their homes, for, there is no place like home.

For the present, we can consider ourselves fortunate, for the understanding, tolerance and sympathy of this Host Nation, to which we shall always be indebted.

Our gratitude and appreciation goes out to the NGOs, support groups and individuals for their compassion and support in this time of distress and need.

Sincerely,



(Robert Htwe)  
Chairman  
Karen Refugee Committee.

### NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE CAMPS.

MAE SOT AREA	CAMP	No.of families	Over 12 YRS		5-12 YRS		Under 5 YRS		Total
			M	F	M	F	M	F	
	Wang Kha (Hnay Ka Lok)	1616	3062	2793	960	899	577	462	8753
	Mae La	4105	8480	7702	3476	3163	1313	1415	25549
	Mae La T.B (CLINIC)								104
	Sho Klo ( Mae Song)	1034	2075	2044	945	917	394	390	6765
	Maw Ker	1363	3038	2631	772	689	680	611	8421
		<b>8118</b>	<b>16655</b>	<b>15170</b>	<b>6153</b>	<b>5668</b>	<b>2964</b>	<b>2878</b>	<b>49488</b>
N O R T H	Mae Ra Ma Luang	788	1567	1464	652	495	352	335	4885
	Khun Mae Kong Kha	553	897	1006	399	402	272	302	3278
	Sa La	471	968	858	351	353	129	114	2773
	Mae Sa Kup	415	800	801	292	259	121	176	2449
	Khlo Pa	442	838	823	319	275	199	216	2670
	U Da Hta	545	1221	1003	381	362	214	224	3405
	Mae Ye Hta	297	635	533	259	203	86	81	1797
		<b>3511</b>	<b>6946</b>	<b>6488</b>	<b>2653</b>	<b>2349</b>	<b>1373</b>	<b>1448</b>	<b>21257</b>
S O U T H	Noh Po	1860	3442	2886	1087	1017	893	887	10212
	Ban Don Yang	317	348	389	271	234	129	117	1488
	Tham Him	1624	2231	2332	1020	996	640	723	7942
	Hti Yo Ki	204	264	291	106	73	93	101	928
	Kho Thay Lu	70	77	85	22	16	36	44	280
		<b>4075</b>	<b>6362</b>	<b>5983</b>	<b>2506</b>	<b>2336</b>	<b>1791</b>	<b>1872</b>	<b>20850</b>
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>15704</b>	<b>29963</b>	<b>27641</b>	<b>11312</b>	<b>10353</b>	<b>6128</b>	<b>6198</b>	<b>91595</b>

### RICE AND OTHER ITEMS RECEIVED DURING THE MONTH.

FROM	RICE 100kg sacks	Salt Kilos	F-paste 16kg tins	Yellow Bean 60 kg./ sacks	Tomato Sauce 24 bot/box	Chillies kilos	Cooking Oil 13.75 litre tins	Bamboo charcoal Kg	Sawdust Logs Bundles
BBC	9193	24100	3966	1426	-	1470	710	50310	41526
COERR	350	.			*476			-	

\* 296 boxes to North and 180 to South.

### DISTRIBUTION OF RICE AND OTHER ITEMS RECEIVED.

Camp	ITEMS						
	Rice	Salt	Fish paste	Yellow Bean	Chillies	Cooking Oil	Sawdust Logs
Wang Kha	1369	3550	587	206	-	-	*
Mae La		10300	1716	600	-	-	25778
Sho Klo		2,800	461	162	-	-	6910
Maw Ker	1350	3550	594	208	-	-	8908
Noh Poe		3900	608	250	1470	710	# 4850
KRC/MSF	20	-	-	-	-	-	-

\*Wang Ka receives bamboo charcoal @30kg/family/month, instead of pressed Sawdust logs  
#20 Kg. Sacks.