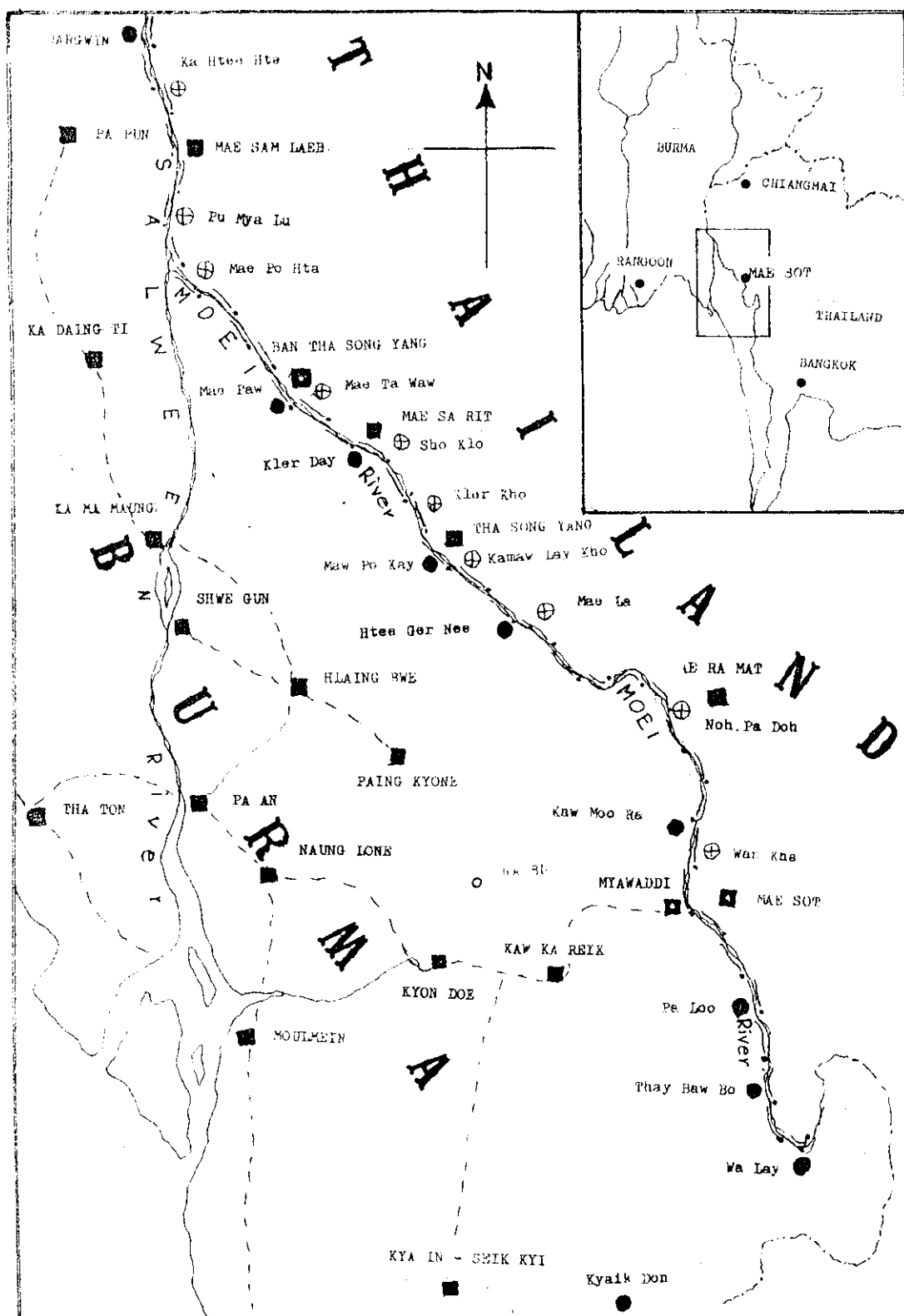


KAREN REFUGEE COMMITTEE MONTHLY REPORT

DECEMBER 1989



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On behalf of the Karen refugees and the entire Karen people, the Karen Refugee Committee tenders its profound gratitude to the Thai authorities and to the people of the Kingdom of Thailand for their kindness in granting refuge to the Karen refugees displaced by the fighting across the border and moreover, for the permission granted which has made it possible for the humanitarian agencies to provide the refugees with the most basic needs. This manifestation of kindness and goodwill is sincerely appreciated and will forever be remembered and cherished by the Karen people.

The committee also tenders its profound gratitude to the individuals and agencies who through the years have done so much for the refugees. The help and support provided have made life easier for the refugees in their time of trouble and need.

Through the support and cooperation of all parties concerned, the Karen refugees have come safely through the end of yet another year in thus sojourn here inside Thailand. We never anticipated that this refugee situation would drag on year after year. Beginning from 1975, temporary Karen refugee camps were opened on the Salween side according as the needs had been, for Karen civilians who fled into Thailand to escape the fighting back home. The number of refugees was small and each time the refugees were there for just a short period and were able to go back home. This time the refugees are less fortunate.

It was almost six years ago in January of 1984 when a refugee camp had to be opened in Tha Song Yang district of Tak province for Karen civilians who fled into Thailand because of the fierce fighting that broke out across the border. Other camps had to be opened in quick succession along the Moei river in Tha Song Yang district as well as in Mae Ra Mat and Mae Sot districts. Almost six years have passed away but the Karen refugees are still in Thailand. Their problem is still not over.

The month of December has seen another influx of refugees into Mae Ra Mat district thereby bringing the total number of refugees in the Karen refugee camps to over twenty thousands now. Nearly forty percent of this population comprises of children under twelve years old.

The committee would like to mention here the fact that those in the refugee camps represent only a very small percentage of Karen civilians who are uprooted and displaced by the fighting that rages on in Burma. They also represent but a certain percentage of the uprooted and displaced Karen civilians who have fled to the border areas. Not less than this number of uprooted and displaced Karen civilians are living in hardship and poverty in various places along the border where it is still relatively safe for them to stay and eke out a living. Any escalation of the fighting could easily affect them and force them to flee across the border.

With regard to the health situation in the refugee camps, Mediciens Sans Frontieres (MSF) is working closely with the refugees in the prevention and treatment of sickness. Malaria has been and will still be the biggest health problem in the camps here along the border where malaria is endemic. Another priority given by the medical team is the vaccination program for children against general child diseases. There is at least one dispensary in every camp and in Sho Klo camp which is the biggest camp, there is a small hospital and there is also a center there for the treatment of tuberculosis.

Another medical team affiliated with Mahidol University in the fight against malaria has a field hospital also there in Sho Klo camp especially for children and pregnant women.

Armed Forces Research Institute of Medical Science (APRIMS) is another medical team doing research work in two of the camps for the effective prevention of malaria.

Apart from the medical teams we also thank the individuals and agencies who have provided us with the medicines needed for Pu Mya Lu hospital which is catering to the medical need of refugees and displaced Karens on the Salween side.

Speaking of the educational situation in the camps, there is at least one primary school in each camp. In some bigger camps there are primary schools as well as elementary or secondary schools. The teachers are the refugees themselves working voluntarily for their communities without any salary apart from some small remuneration received occasionally from the respective communities they serve. We are very grateful to individuals and to agencies such as ZOA, ICA and COERR for their interest and help in this field by providing the pupils with school apparatus like note books, pens, pencils etc. from time to time. The total number of pupils for this academic year is 4970 and there are altogether 180 teachers. The number of pupils in the schools increases from year to year.



A temporary shelter for the family made
out of grass.



Some typical grasshuts hastily erected
for shelter.



A makeshift shelter out in the open.



How can we sleep here?
Whatever is going on!



Ma Ma, I'm not feeling well.
It's so cold here.

TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS

CAMP	No. of Families	Over 12 M	12 F	5 to 12 M	12 F	Under 5 M	5 F	TOTAL
WANG KA	648	695	1140	397	394	191	206	3023
NOH PA DOH	340	445	465	171	191	134	126	1532
MAE LA	608	499	981	424	438	142	129	2613
KAMAW LAY KHO	419	628	770	256	242	121	148	2165
KLER KHO	296	550	552	196	174	84	92	1648
SHO KLO	1206	1865	2405	683	645	370	405	6393
MAE TA WAW	375	547	776	323	315	130	121	2212
	3892	5249	7089	2450	2399	1172	1227	19586
MAE PO HTA	61	95	110	37	45	16	23	326
KA HTEE HTA	81	128	135	37	51	26	14	391
TOTAL	4034	5472	7334	2524	2495	1204	1264	20303

RICE RECEIVED DURING THE MONTH

FROM: -

CONSORTIUM OP CHRISTIAN AGENCIES (CCA)	2012	sacks
INTERAID (ICA)	300	"
CATHOLIC OPPICE FOR EMERGENCY RELIEF and REFUGEES (COERR)	235	"
FULL GOSPEL CHURCH	100	
	<u>2647</u>	

OTHER ITEMS RECEIVED DURING THE MONTH

CONSORTIUM OF CHRISTIAN AGENCIES (CCA)	- Salt	150	bags
	- Fish Paste	865	"
INTERAID (ICA)	- Fish Paste	135	

Over above the allotment given to the 9 camps, CCA has also sent during December, 78 extra sacks of rice and 380 extra blankets as emergency aid to those affected by the recent fightings. Interaid (ICA) has provided 2305 sets of gifts under the ICA Child Sponsorship Program.

DISTRIBUTION OF ITEMS RECEIVED

Camp	Salt	Fish Paste	Rice
WANG KA	21	142	410
NOH PA DOH	10	70	175
MAE LA	20	138	390
KAMAW LAY KHO	16	110	275
KLER KHO	14	87	215
SHO KLO	50	326	872
MAE TA WAW	19	127	310
	150	1000	2647

December has been harsh on the Karen civilians who are displaced along the Moei river. A Burmese military raid on a trading village across from Mao Ra Mat on the first of December resulted in some civilians, wounded and some women included, missing and presumed to be killed. The loss in personal properties is great. In fact the villagers fled across the Moei river empty-handed. Even one month after the incident these people are still living in makeshift buildings on the ground with nothing much to protect them against the severe cold at night and the scorching heat of the sun during the day. More military activities in the area force villagers along the Moei river to flee across the border where they live in a similar situation.

As fighting escalates, the refugees and the displaced Karens along the border hardly dare think of what the New Year would bring. They dream of peace and freedom from fear and oppression. But will this dream be ever realised? They need your help and support. They also need your prayers so that through the blessings of God the New Year will be a better Year for them and for everyone.

May God bless all of you in your noble endeavour to help and may the New Year be filled with peace and prosperity.

I beg to remain,

Yours faithfully,



Robert Htwe

Chairman

Karen Refugee Committee