

Life in Burma's Relocation Sites



'When ever they come to our village they oppress us, torture us, order us to do forced labour, and demand money and food from us. This time when they came they forced us to leave our village at night and said they will kill us if we do not leave.'

Villager from Yulo Relocation Site

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Life in Burma's Relocation Sites



Marladaw Relocation Site

'No one shall be held in slavery or servitude....Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state....No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.... Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment....Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work....Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care....'

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Articles 4, 13, 17, 23, 25

Contents

Abstract	6
Methodology	7
Terms and Abbreviations	8
Summary	11
Livelihood	18
Restrictions and Abuses	28
Health and Education	34
Aung Soe Moe	40
Kywe' Chan (Per Na Ger)	42
Saleh	44
Daiktu	46
Innet	48
Yan Myoe Aung	50
Klaw Maw	52
Naungbo Kwet Thit relocation site (Koni)	54
Pauk Tha Taw and New He Poe Der	56
Traditions at risk	58
Muthey	60
Bawgaligyi relocation site or new town project	62
Marlardaw	64
Taikpu (Play Hsar Loe)	66
Bawgata (Kaw Tha Say)	68
Thebyenyunt relocation site	70
Relocation sites in Thandaung Township	72
Relocation sites in lowland areas adjacent to Thandaung – Tantabin townships	74

Abstract

Widespread human rights violations have been occurring in ethnic areas of Burma since the late nineteen sixties. This report, based on a 2008/9 field survey, focuses on the government's use of mass displacement and relocation designed to destabilize the ethnic populations of Karen State.

The government first initiated a policy of ethnic relocation in Karen State in 1975 as part of what became known as the four cuts campaign, a policy intended to deprive the ethnic resistance movement of food, money, intelligence and recruits. While noting the existence of such earlier camps, this report specifically examines the lives of people living in sites after a further concerted effort to control the civilian population was initiated in 2006.

This report identifies three types of site created by the military regime. The first, roughly translated from Burmese as 'model' villages, are some of the most recent examples and have been created under the guise of development; the second type, initiated in 1979, are primarily security driven and have resulted in highland villages being relocated to the plains; the third, which are also security initiated and mainly located in Taungoo, consists of villages cleared from areas of military infrastructure. Villagers in this latter type, unlike the previous two, have been given no provision for relocation; rather, the population was told to vacate the area with little regard as to where they would go.

Relocated villagers, despite the fact that purported contact with resistance forces has all but been eradicated, continue to face severe abuses by Burmese authorities. Forced labour on infrastructure projects and military controlled business is widespread. Villagers are ordered to act as sentries, messengers, porters and minesweepers by the Burma Army. Corruption and illegal taxation is prevalent in all the sites assessed. In addition, the opportunity for making a living has been drastically reduced. Malnutrition, especially in infants, has increased and is exacerbated by army restrictions that prevent villagers from access to food, medicine and education.

This report identifies serious issues of concern that continue to affect the ethnic populations of Burma. It highlights the government's disregard for the rights of its people and its blatant use of the local population as little more than a captive workforce to be used as the military dictates.

Methodology

This report specifically addresses sites located in four townships under SPDC administration primarily three townships in Bago Division: Shwegyin, Kyauk Kyi, and Tantabin, and one in Karen State, Thandaung. Sites in Tavoy and Duplaya districts, despite also having relocation sites, are not included.

To gather information on the lives of the people and the living conditions in the sites, 15 field workers, split into 3 groups, were sent to the relocation sites with a standardised set of questions to ask those inside. Researchers were provided by a number of community based organisations working within Karen State. These organisations included Free Burma Rangers and the Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People. These were also supported by local volunteers. In total, researchers interviewed 200 people, of these 150 were interviewed using the questionnaire.

Locations of sites and areas visited were marked using the Global Positioning Systems for future identification and mapping purposes. Health and infant welfare was measured using the MUACT (Mid-upper Arm Circumference) test.

Maps used in this report were made by the DMDP using the World Geographic Coordinating System and WGS 1984 data. Map references were based on data collected during the survey, ESRI digital mapping components and Google Earth.

Where access to some sites proved impossible, respondents were interviewed outside the relocation villages while travelling to their fields. All interviews were conducted between December 2008 and January 2009.

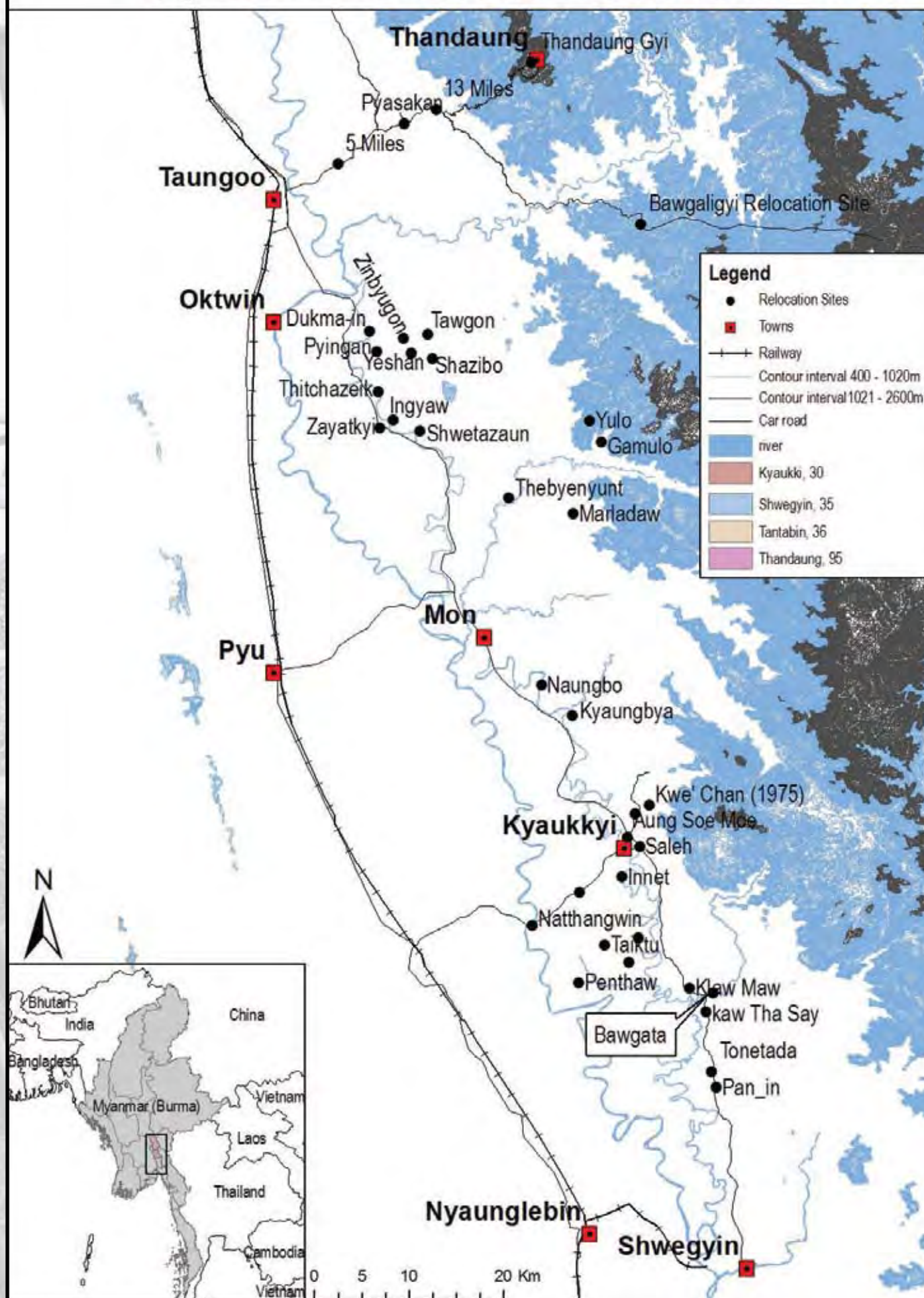
Terms and Abbreviations

BSPP	Burma Socialist Programme Party, name of Burmese government from 1963 – 1988.
DKBA	Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, Karen armed group allied with the Burmese government.
FBR	Free Burma Rangers
IB	Infantry Battalion of the Burma Army
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
KNLA	Karen National Liberation Army
KNU	Karen National Union
LIB	Light Infantry Battalion of the Burma Army
MOC	Military Operation Command of the Burma Army
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Committee, name of Burmese Government from 1988 – 1997
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council, name of Burmese Government from 1997 – present
TOC	Tactical Operations Command, of the Burma Army
kyat	Burmese currency. US \$1 = 960 Kyat (as at 20 November 2009)

Summary



Map of Kler Lwe Htu and Taw Oo Relocation Sites



Summary

With international attention focusing on the 2010 Burmese election and the international community rethinking its sanctions and engagement policy, it is extremely important to examine the living conditions of people under the regime's control. This report, through the use of interviews with the local population and recent images from government controlled relocation sites, seeks to highlight the continuing plight of people under the State Peace and Development Council's care.

The 'Union of Burma' achieved independence from Britain in January 1948.¹ The country's borders were the result of a three-stage nineteenth century colonial annexation which combined the majority Burman heartland, or 'Burma Proper', with the outlying regions known as the 'Frontier Areas'. The frontier areas consisted of various ethnic groups² who have long resisted Burman domination and what has often been characterized as chauvinism towards them.³



After gaining independence, a number of these ethnic groups, along with communist rebels, took up arms against the Burmese government. Throughout the early period of the war, ethnic forces, especially the Karen, were able to seize considerable territory both in the lower Irrawaddy Delta and the eastern part of the country now designated as Karen State. The Karen have long resided in both these areas and both the Irrawaddy Delta and Karen State formed part of what the Karen were originally seeking in their goal of creating an autonomous Karen country.⁴

While the Burma Army had been able to gain considerable ground by the late fifties it wasn't until 1962, with the bloodless coup of General Ne Win, that a concerted effort was embarked upon in trying to destroy the ethnic resistance. The Burma Army moved quickly to regain a foothold in the Delta and forced the Karen army east into Taungoo and south into Karen State. In an attempt to end the insurgency, the Burma Army formulated the four cuts strategy (Pyat Lay Pyat). The four cuts campaign, intended to deprive the ethnic resistance movement of food, money, intelligence and recruits, was designed to target the civilian population of the areas where ethnic forces might operate. Karen State was separated into three areas; White, under government control; Black, free fire zones under insurgent control; and Brown, contested by both.

Over 30,000 Tatmadaw troops were engaged in Four Cuts operations in the areas around Taungoo, Nyaunglebin, Thaton and Papun. Between 1975 and 1978, the Karen National Union estimated that over 800 villages comprising of at least 20,000 homes were burnt down. During this period more than 160 civilians were killed, 120 were injured, 40 women were raped and over 200,000 villagers were displaced.⁵

It is this strategy, although officially denied, that is still implemented in areas where ethnic resistance forces operate. Forced relocation and collective punishment are common place in ethnic areas throughout the

¹ The use of the word Burma over Myanmar is a contentious issue. On 18th June 1989, the SLORC adopted Law 15/89, entitled the "Adaptation of Expressions Law". The first clause states that: 'The expression "Union of Burma" and the expression "Burma", "Burman" or "Burmese" contained in existing laws enacted in the English language shall be substituted by the expression "Union of Myanmar" and "Myanmar" respectively.' However, many see this as an attempt to further denigrate the ethnic peoples of the country. For a detailed discussion on the issue see 'An Introduction to the Toponymy of Burma.', The Permanent Committee on Geographical Names, 2003 and 2007.

² It is estimated that ethnic groups represent 35% of Burma's 58 million people. See Global IDP Database 'Profile of Displacement: Myanmar (Burma)', June 2005

³ The term 'Burman Chauvinism' was adopted to signify the KNU's ideological enemy at the Third Karen National Union Congress and was chosen after the term 'Burman' was rejected.

⁴ Karen aspirations for a separate homeland have been replaced for calls of a genuine federal union.

⁵ KNU Bulletin, September 1986



Abandoned house at Ka Moo Lo (Zin Daing Kalay)

country. As these villagers note:

'I have been relocated many times since the Four Cuts Operation [began] in 1975. We were forced to leave from Kaw Yu Thay Der and Noeh Per our original village to Shalai. Our farms got damaged; we have faced food problems and many difficulties. We were also stopped from leaving the village.'

Villager from Saleh (DMDP_30_SL_48_010_1208)

'Since 1956 we relocated to Shazibo and spent 5 years there, in 1975 we moved to Inn Kyaw and spent 10 years there and in 1986 we were relocated again and spent 2 years there. We were relocated once more [to Inn Kyaw] in 2006 until now. We have to seek our shelter in other people houses in such difficulties.'

Villager from Inn Kyaw (DMDP_AK_156_039_0209.doc)

In the absence of being able to target ethnic forces the Burma Army targets civilians. The Karen Human Rights Group notes, when discussing the most recent offensive in Karen State, that the reason:

*'... appears to be to establish control over the villagers of this hilly region who have always evaded state control. The target of the offensive is therefore not the Karen National Union (KNU), but the villagers themselves, and many of them are already fleeing into the forests.'*⁶

⁶ 'Villagers Displaced as SPDC offensive expands into Papun', 2006, KHRG



A relocated family sits in front of their abandoned home. With little food available in relocation sites, villagers are forced to return to their former homes to scavenge for what they can

One villager stated that:

'The operation commander of MOC 16 came to our village and forced us to leave; they said that their purpose was to clear it of civilians and revolutionaries. They said that we had to stay there [the relocation site] only for three months. I pleaded with them many times, but they did not change their mind. We had to leave and everything had to be done on 16th April 2006.'

Pastor from Ka Moo Lo (DMDP_95_KML_82_035_0109)

The Karen Human Rights Group had reported six years earlier that it appeared that the regime assumed

*'The best way to destroy these [rebel] groups is to destroy the ability of the civilians to support them.'*⁷

Although the widespread use of relocation sites, as a tool against Karen insurgents, was originally initiated under the control of the then Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), they have consistently been relied upon by successive regimes including the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) in 1992, and again by the State Peace and Development Council, in 2006. At both times the Burma Army also launched major offensives against the Karen National Union.

The use of mass relocation of civilians to fight insurgencies is not a recent occurrence. Originally used by the British during the Second Boer War, the strategy proved particularly successful during the Malaya campaign in the 1950s. It was there that Malaya's Military Chief, General Sir Harold Briggs, implemented

⁷ 'Suffering in Silence: The Human Rights Nightmare of the Karen People of Burma', 2001, KHRG

what became known as the Briggs plan. The plan consisted of three essential elements which would later be incorporated into the Burmese regime's four cuts campaign. The first involved clearing areas where insurgents were known to operate, one district at a time; the second was uprooting all guerrilla infrastructure in the cleared areas; and the third was the resettlement of the local population into secure villages.⁸

The policy, a variation of which also formed the strategic hamlet strategy implemented in Vietnam, was intended to prevent insurgents' access to food. However, the implementation of the policy in Burma has resulted not only in preventing access to food by what the regime terms insurgents, but primarily, and some might argue intentionally, the civilian population itself.

This report has identified three kinds of relocation site or villages as currently existing in Karen State:

1. Relocation places that have been fenced-in and are under the direct control of the Burma Army.
2. Villages that have been relocated next to SPDC car roads and are controlled by the SPDC via authorities formed from the relocated community.
3. Villages that have been ordered to relocate by the Burma Army without any previously defined resettlement areas. These are the most unstable as villagers are forced into hiding and are at risk from a variety of abuses from Burma Army patrols.

Although villagers have been ordered to relocate to specific locations by the authorities there has never been prior provision made for shelter, food, health or education. The Burmese government has failed to address the villagers' needs in regards to schools, sustainable livelihoods, or food security.

'They [the SPDC] provided us with nothing. We had to stay in other villagers' houses or gardens. In 2006 they forced us to stay in someone's garden. We stayed there for three or four months, then they again forced us to move to a rice field, we did not have any buildings; we just had to stay under the water proof [tarpaulin].'

Villager from Ka Moo Lo (DMDP_95_KML_86_034_0109)

There has been little regard for those villages already present in areas where new villages are to be relocated. Often the SPDC has forced local villagers to sell their land and then sold it to those they have relocated at an inflated price.

'Some [local villagers] have had to abandon their lands for the relocation site... We had to pay about 18,000 kyat, now the cost it is up to 700,000-800,000 kyat. The SPDC bought these lands at a low-price then sold them to us at a high-price'.

Many villagers had to pay for moving to the new sites with some having to sell their belongings to do so.

'I was ordered to build a house, but they did not help me. They ordered me to cut bamboo and I had to pay 1,500 kyat for each one, I cut ten bamboo and had to pay [the authorities] 15,000 kyat.'

Villager from Yulo (DMDP_95_YL_101_030_0109)

'...after we moved to the relocation site we sold them all [cattle] to buy the land.'

Villager from Saleh (DMDP_30_SL_50_009_1208)

⁸ 'Resisting Rebellion - The History and Politics of Counterinsurgency', Anthony John, Joes, 2004, The University Press of Kentucky



Remnants of people's belongings from K'ser Doh Village. The village was burned by IB73

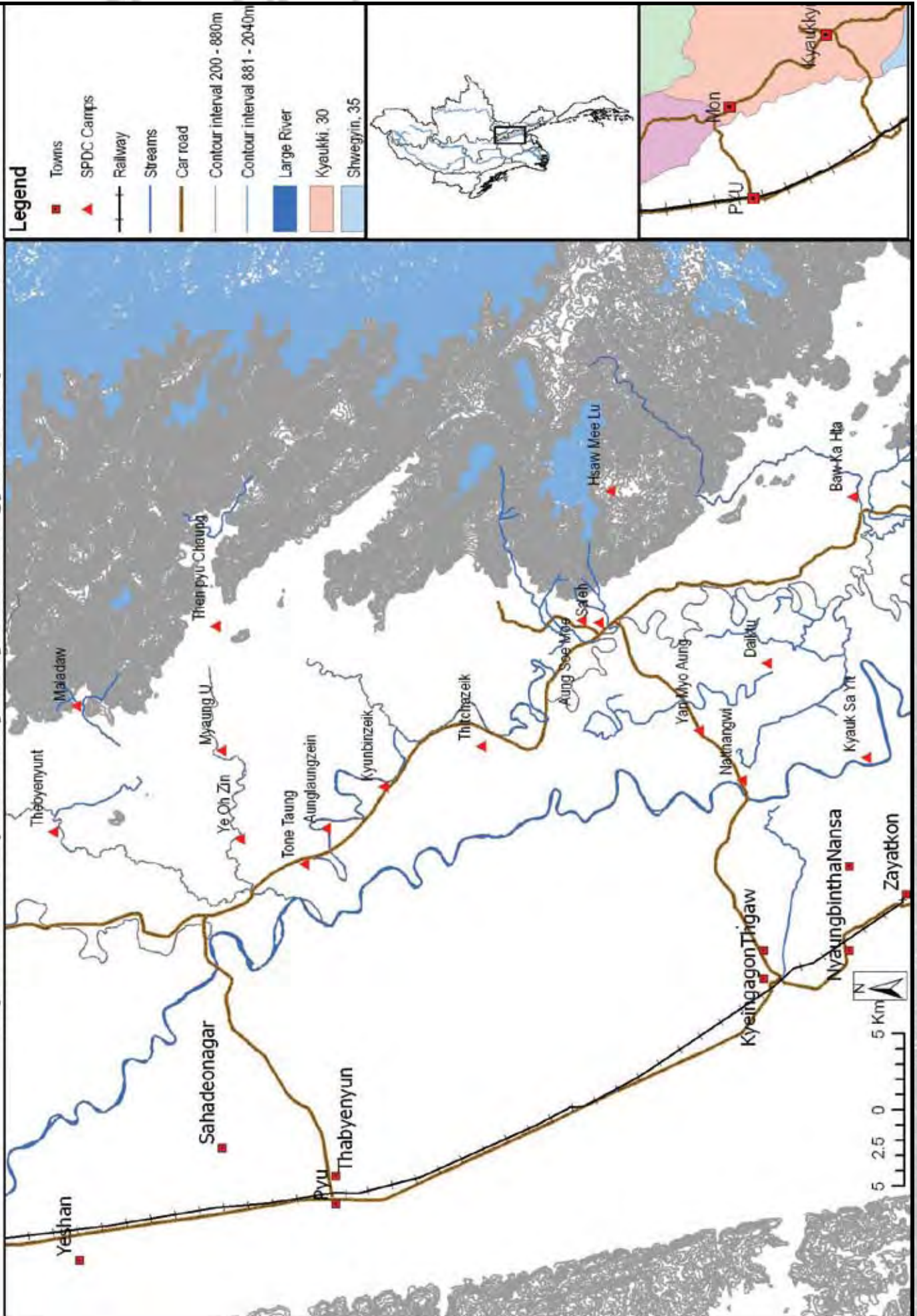
A number of geographical factors, ignored by the regime, have also added a greater burden to relocated villagers. In Kyauk Kyi and Shwegin township (Kler Lwe Htu District, under KNU administration), villagers were relocated from the mountain side, where they were able to maintain orchards, to the foot of the mountain. These areas consist of disqualified soil and small disintegrate stones which deprives the villagers of the ability to grow crops. As a result, villagers, when allowed, are forced to travel to their abandoned villages and pick what remains in their orchards. Lowland areas, where sites have been chosen, contain a number of lakes, many of which are owned by local villages. While these lowland locations allows villagers the opportunity to find daily work, such employment is still not adequate to support families.

Similarly, most of the relocated villages in Thandaung and Thantabin townships (Taw Oo, under KNU administration) were located on the mountain side before being forced to relocate next to SPDC outposts and car roads. These roads have been constructed for communication between frontier SPDC outposts and rear headquarters. The area around them is also unsuitable for growing crops and villagers are forced to return, at great risk, to their abandoned villages.

The situation in all relocation sites has deteriorated dramatically. While some restrictions have eased over the last two to three years, this had little impact on the ability of site residents to find a sustainable living and many are facing starvation. The regime's negligence in looking after its population and the corruption and abuses perpetrated by the Burma Army continue and look set to do so in the future.

As the international community looks to re-engage the Burmese government, and possibly provide more aid to those populations at risk, it is important to ensure that such aid be tied to the Burmese government actively seeking to improve the lives of its rural and ethnic people. The Burmese government must allow aid agencies access to relocation sites and ensure that abuses perpetrated by the Burma Army end. Villagers must be allowed to return to their villages and be permitted to carry out their lives as they wish without hindrance or abuse.

Map of SPDC Outposts In Kyaukkyi and Shwegyi Townships



Livelihood



Livelihood

Relocated villagers are facing an extremely bleak time ahead. Restrictions by the SPDC have resulted in villagers' health and welfare deteriorating rapidly. While originally being able to carve out a suitable living from orchards on the mountain side their standard of living has dropped dramatically.

'When we stayed at our own village we did not have to buy food, we could collect it from the forest. But now we have moved to the relocation site we even have to buy vegetables since we are not allowed to leave the site, we can only leave if we have a recommendation letter.'

Villager from Daiktu (DMDP_30_HTTP_35_004_1208)

Life in the relocation camps is becoming increasingly more difficult and many villagers have seen their income greatly reduced.

'I used to get 70%-80%, 90% income from farming when I was staying at my original village, but now I only get 50% as we can not properly work on the farms.'

Villager from Inn Kyaw (DMDP_AK_156_039_0209.doc)



What remains of a burned cardamom orchard



A Villager sorts through Betel nut leaves. The leaves will be sold or exchanged for food or other necessities

'When we stayed in our own village we had enough time to care for our plantation and we could produce six times more from one acre, but here we can only produce two or three times the amount for one acre.'

Villager from Daiktu (DMDP_30_HTTP_35_004_1208)

'When we stayed in our village [profits from] our plantation was so good. Our highest profits came from betel nut plantations and rice. The highest profit I got from rice was 50%, and from betel nut 300%, but after the relocation the profits became very low, I cannot work on either farm now. I can only work on a small peanut plantation with a little profit.'

Villager from Taw Oo (DMDP_37_TG_143_047_0209)

Adding to the problem is the space given to villagers and their relationship with other villages that were already in the area prior to the relocation site. While most respondents reported that there was no strong animosity between the two, especially when the villages were Karen, some did face problems.

'It is impossible for us to feed animals or grow vegetables there, because we have got a very small space. The other problem is the Burman [villagers] will come and steal ours [crops] during the night.'

Villager from Yulo (DMDP_95_YL_101_030_0109)



Villagers return from their abandoned farms. After paying for permission letter villagers still risk standing on landmines or being shot or arrested

Villagers have only two opportunities to sustain their livelihoods. The first of these applies primarily to villagers who had previously been able to farm crops such as betel nut, cardamom and banana. After being relocated, villagers have been allowed, after buying a recommendation letter, to tend to their orchards in their abandoned villages. What produce they are able to save can then be sold or exchanged for rice or other necessities.

'We have to pay 5,000 kyat for each recommendation letter which allows us to sleep on our farms. Still we have to pay 5,000 kyat to 7,000 kyat for each person during the ploughing period. Different units of army demand different amounts of money.'

Villager from Koni (DMDP_30_KN_81_019_0109)

However, this option has become increasingly more uncertain. Relocation sites can be up to a week's walk away from their previous villages and many areas are scattered with landmines. Burma Army patrols continue to operate in these areas and villagers are subject to arrest and in some case have been killed or wounded.

'I was injured by a landmine on the 12th October 2006 when I was returning to Taw Oo area. I spent one month and 7 days in hospital and it cost me 700,000 to 800,000 kyat. When I was in hospital the doctors asked what ethnicity I was, I said I am Karen and they replied that I had stepped on a landmine that my people had planted and not to worry.'

Villager from Yulo (DMDP_95_YL_100_029_0109)

'On 17th January 2009 when we went to our abandoned betel nut field we heard the sound of gunfire from the Burma Army. Later we went to the site and we saw a letter that said "We took one of the villagers, don't worry about him". Later this dead body was found and we realised that he had been shot by the Burma Army...we guess that it was LIB 30 commanded by Kin Maung Oo. Recently this unit was present and active in Saw Mi Li, Ler Doh, Mu They and Paw Gai Ko.'

Villager from Aung Soe Moe (DMDP_30_ASM_91_011_0209)

'We always have to be afraid of the Burma Army when we are traveling from relocation to home. We always have to pass military camps. We have to be careful or they would capture us and punish us, sometimes they could kill us also.'

Religious Leader from Maw Gai Tha Per Kho (DMDP_30_MPK_98_025_1208)



A young woman with baskets of dog fruit



Villagers carrying bamboo poles back to their village

Villagers are required to return to the village often within a day and the amount of food they are allowed to carry is strictly monitored by the Burma Army.

'...they do not allow us to sleep at our farm, we have to go and come back only in one day. They warn us not to travel alone or we will be killed. In 2006 Thra Wah Shee and a few villagers were caught and killed, because they were accused of planting landmines.'

Villager from Maw Gai Tha Per Kho (DMDP_30_MPK_114_024_1208)

In addition, villagers are required to carry supplies from SPDC camps to and from army outposts along their route. This puts further burden on villagers, especially when returning, as they cannot carry both their produce and supplies for the Burma Army.

Due to the precarious nature of travel, and pressure by the military authorities, many orchards have become overgrown and unproductive. Villagers have also reported that Burma Army troops, or other villagers, have stolen their crops and other items after they were relocated.

'We left our orchard and the animals, but after we had moved to the relocation site the Burma Army came and took all of our animals, then they destroyed our house and burned down three others.'

Villager from Yulo (DMDP_95_YL_100_029_0109)



A child weaves a mat. With little to no education children have little option but to work for their parents

'I owned some pigs and some chickens and I also owned several piece of land for betel nut plantation, but now I can not work on them. Our animals were taken after we moved to the relocation site.'

Villager from Play Hsar Loe (DMDP_95_PSL_138_045_0209)

'...the Burmese [villagers], on seeing us forced to leave our village, went and stole our belongings and plantations.'

Villager from Ka Moo Lo (DMDP_95_KML_82_035_0109)

'We left behind all the animals like chickens and ducks, but the Burma Army stole all of them and destroyed our houses. Our betel leaf trees have gone dry, because we could not water them. We have lost everything, because we dare not go back to our village and take care of our property.'

Villager from Yulo (DMDP_95_YL_101_030_0109)

The second work option available is that of a day labourer. Villagers from relocation sites may be able to gain employment from local residents who own their own orchards, farms and lakes. This kind of work is often seasonal. In the dry season villagers may be employed in collecting roots, cutting bamboo poles and carrying produce to storage. In the rainy season, they plow farms and sow seed to grow paddy. In the cold season, they harvest the paddy. However, even this can be expensive, and day labourers face the same problems as others when travelling.



Burmese traders from a nearby town sort through betel nut leaves. Site residents rely on the traders to exchange goods and food

'Because we are controlled by the Burma Army we have to earn money as day labourers. We have to pay 10,000 kyat for each recommendation letter; some times they do not care [about giving us] the recommendation letters and we can not go any where without it. If they [the Burma Army] see us on the way they fire their guns, arrest us, cover our faces and then take us to their military camps and demand money or foodstuffs such as chicken and pork.'

Villager from Koni (DMDP_30_KN_80_020_0109)

Due to the lack of suitable employment or any other viable alternatives, villagers are forced to sell their own possessions. However, many were already forced to leave with what little they could carry. Some others were luckier and were able to take cattle they owned.

'When I was still in my old village I had seven or eight cows, now, I have only four left because I had to sell some to buy food and other basic needs'.

Villager from Daiktu (DMDP_30_HTT_35_004_1208)

The situation is further exacerbated by the number of times villagers are forced to move. Many respondents reported moving at least three times, often back to locations they had previously been ordered to vacate.

'...1990 or 1991, [was] the first time we were forced to leave Bay Lar our original village and move to Thitchaseik, then we had to move to Kyaw Pa Daw, from Kyaw Pa Daw back to Thitchaseik again and now we have moved here.'

Religious Leader from Maw Gai Tha Per Kho (DMDP_30_MPK_98_025_1208)

'I remember the first time was in 1997, the SPDC forced us to relocate to Kyi Ko. The second time was in 2002, the SPDC forced us to move to San Pya then in 2007 and again in 2008 we had to move to Kanazabin relocation site.'

Villager from Maw Gai Tha Per Kho (DMDP_30_MPK_97_026_1208)

'I have been forced to relocate ten times in one year. I have twice moved to Thabyenyunt.'

Play Hsar Loe Villager (DMDP_95_PSL_137_043_0209)

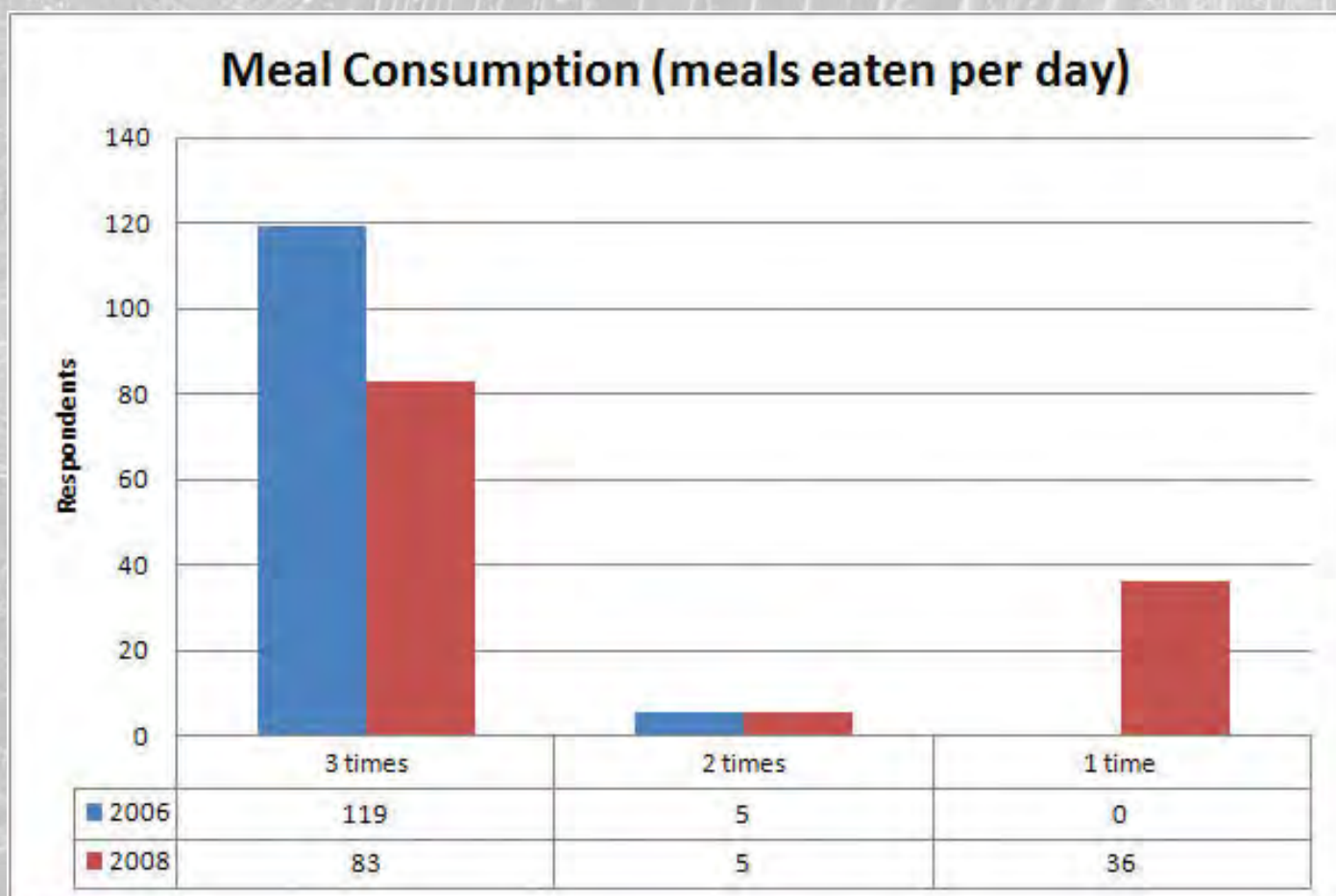
'[we have moved]Five times, the first place we moved to was Tawgon in 1975, the second time also to Taw Oo, third times we moved to Yetagun (Glaw Mi Der) in 1991, Ohbinyaung (Ler Kla Der) in 1996 and again to Taw Oo in 20th April 2006.'

Villager from Taw Oo (DMDP_37_TG_143_047_0209)

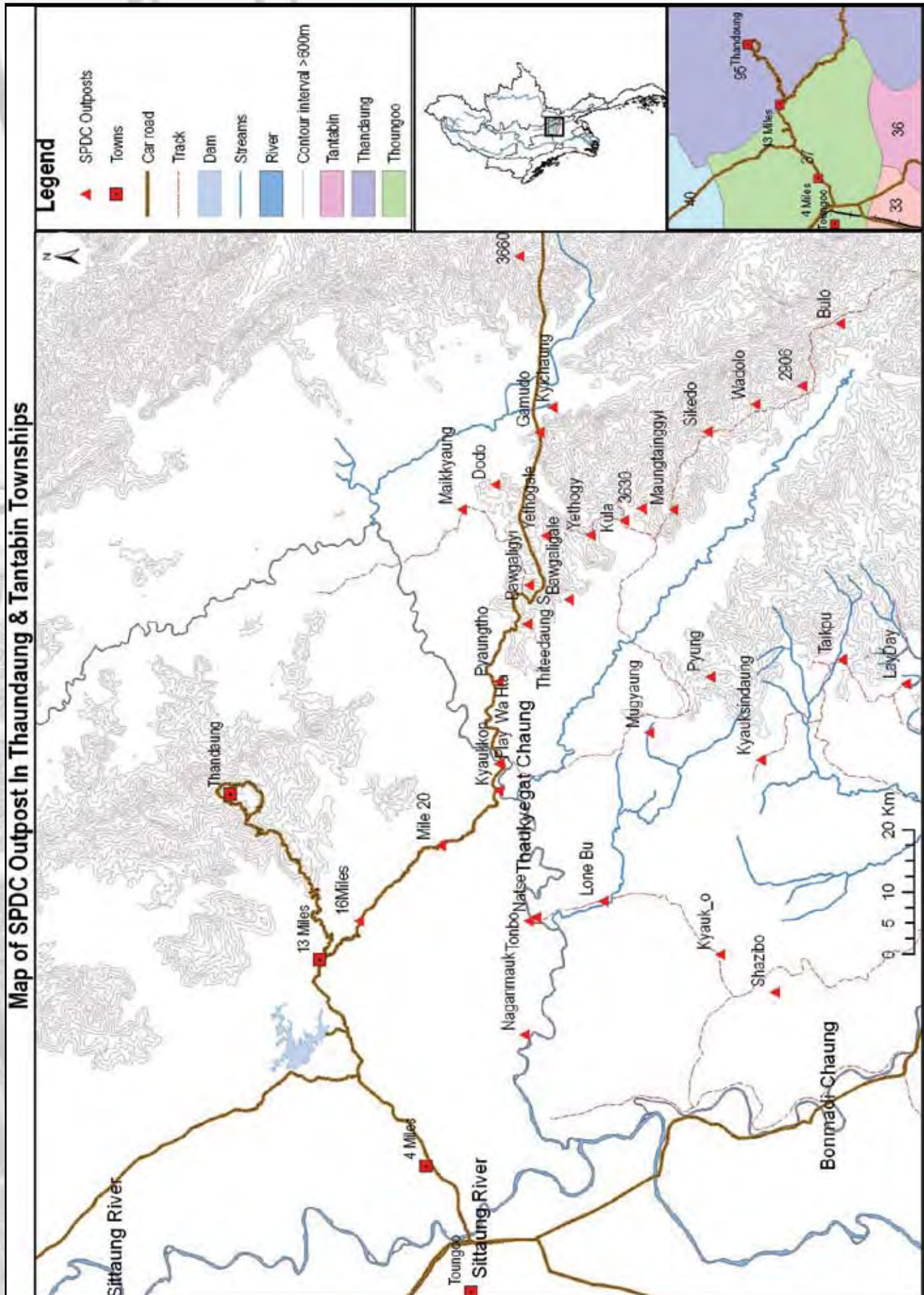
It is not uncommon for relocated villagers to be forced to live in the gardens, under the houses, or in the cattle sheds of other villagers.

*'They forced us to leave our village and move to Thebyeynyunt Relocation Site. When I reached Thebyeynyunt Relocation Site my family and I had to stay under the house of a Burman family. My wife had a baby at this time and we had many problems. Two or three days later I moved under the house of Thra Mu *****. I always have to stay under other's houses. We stayed there for a long time then I was ordered to move to San Pya.'*

Villager from Yulo (DMDP_95_YL_101_030_0109)



Map of SPDC Outpost in Thaundaung & Tantabin Townships



Restrictions and Abuses



Restrictions and Abuses

Citing security as the main reason, the SPDC continues to restrict villagers's movements. Villagers who seek to engage themselves as day labourers are only allowed a one day permit. Those who wish to travel to their previous villages to collect fruit from their orchards are issued a permit allowing them only three days. Such



A Burmese Army truck take villagers to act as porters, Kawtheyder, January, 2008

restrictions are directly responsible for the loss of income especially in the case of those who need to tend to their farms or orchards which quickly become dilapidated.

Furthermore, all villagers in relocation sites are forced to engage in security details around their village and nearby car roads. If KNLA activity is reported in the area, villagers are forced to act as human shields and are embedded with Burma Army troops as they launch patrols in the area of reported activity. If an attack takes place it is the villagers who must provide compensation to the local army commander.

Additionally, local army commanders force villagers to engage in routine work for their battalion, this includes cutting bamboo poles for fencing, carrying water, cooking for Burma Army troops and acting as messengers and porters. This work is usually organised on a rotational basis and between three to five people a day are forced to work for the camp. Forced portering, especially, can be extremely dangerous.

'They forced us to go ahead of them to clear landmines and at the same time carry their heavy supplies.'

Play Hsar Loe Villager (DMDP_95_PSL_137_043_0209)

'...once they forced us to go and carry supplies...I was injured by a landmine. My eyes were hurt and both of my hands and legs were cut. They did not take care of me and even said cruel words and forced me to continue until it reached the point that I could only see with one eye.'

Villager from Koni (DMDP_30_KN_80_020_0109)

'They [also] use children, women and older people to carry their supplies and follow them to clear landmines. One of their soldiers has to travel with two villagers.'

Villager from Yulo (DMDP_95_YL_100_029_0109)

'We have to repair their buildings and other things; we always have to change our village head every month. If we pass their military camp we always have to serve food like chickens and other foodstuffs...they often force us to carry their food supplies to Kwee Do Kla. Some people have stepped on landmines and the SPDC do not provide help for the victims.'

Villager from Koni (DMDP_30_KN_81_019_0109)

Most recently, Burma Army troops, on hearing of enemy activity in areas around their camps, have taken to indiscriminately shelling the surrounding countryside instead of sending troops to investigate. The fact that relocation camps are also in these areas is ignored and a number of casualties have been reported. Play Hsar Loe Resettlement camp was shelled in 2007 injuring three sisters including a 3 year old child.



A baby hurt in the indiscriminate shelling of Play Hsar Loe relocation site



Burma Army checkpoint. Villagers have to pass through a number of these while travelling to their abandoned farms

'They [the Burma Army] often fire heavy weapons (mortars) into the village.'

Play Hsar Loe Villager (DMDP_95_PSL_137_043_0209)

Villagers have very little choice to but to comply with SPDC demands for forced labour. Those villagers who attempt to refuse must find money to pay for someone to go in their place:

'...this year when they were building a car road near Yu Lo and Ka Moo Lo, they demanded us to do forced labour there, but we dared not to go so then they ordered us to pay money or have some one take our place. We had to pay 10,000 kyat for a family and 7,000 kyat for a widowed family, and then we were forced to relocate.'

Religious Leader from Maw Gai Tha Per Kho (DMDP_30_MPK_98_025_1208)

'...they constantly force us to do work; we have to do everything they command. We have to take recommendation letters if we go somewhere, if not they are going to kill us.'

Play Hsar Loe Villager (DMDP_95_PSL_139_042_0209)

In addition to forced labour, many of the villagers face widespread extortion under the guise of development; SPDC forces frequently demand money from impoverished villagers.

'They demanded money in several ways and state that it is for school, clinic or bridge repairing, but I see that they put all the money into their own pockets.'

Villager from Inn Kyaw (DMDP_AK_156_039_0209)

'They demand money from us in several ways including recommendation letters, road repairing, setting up schools and clinics and [they] state that this money is for the civilians benefit, but I see that all the money goes to their benefit.'

Villager from Taw Oo (DMDP_37_TG_143_047_0209)

Those who cannot pay face imprisonment or torture.

'We have to sell our property and pay extortion to the SPDC, otherwise they would torture us.'

Villager from Koni (DMDP_30_KN_80_020_0109)

'Once my father was arrested by the SPDC troops and we had to pay 70,000-80,000 kyat for his release.'

Villager from Nathangwin (DMDP_30_NTG_5_005C_1208)

'In March 2007 I was arrested and sent to jail, but before they sent me to jail I was detained 9 days in their military camp. Here they tortured me in several ways. I was arrested, because someone had blamed me for doing something. They demanded 500,000 kyat and I also had to split from my family.'

Villager from Ka Moo Lo (DMDP_95_KML_109_037_0109)

'Once when they came to our village, they tortured and beat almost everybody in the village. I was seriously hurt and had to go to hospital, they also beat my children. I spent fifteen days in hospital and two weeks after I returned from hospital I had a baby.'

Villager from Ka Moo Lo (DMDP_95_KML_112_036_0109)

At least one villager reported that they believed the Burma Army purposely sought to destroy their crops by building a road close to their village.

'In 2008 they built a road and destroyed our entire plantation. More than 100 trees of durian were damaged. We could say that their purpose in that car road's construction was to destroy our plantation.'

Pastor from Ka Moo Lo (DMDP_95_KML_82_035_0109)

Almost all respondents reported receiving insults and threats from local Burma Army troops often in relation to their ethnic background.

'They said that "we have to kill all the Karen people, if not their strength will increase.'

Villager from Inn Kyaw (DMDP_AK_157_040_0209.doc)

'...they often said that the Karen have no country, Karen are rebels and they [the Burma Army] will kill all of us.'

Villager from Taw Oo (DMDP_37_TG_143_047_0209)



Aung Soe Moe resident shot dead by Burmese troops in January 2009 at his betel nut farm



Health and Education



Health and Education

Most relocation sites have no clinics or schools. While some have been able to set up small workable clinics, these are often manned by only one government health worker who must travel between each village. Some villages are located within walking distance of government health facilities but even here medical supplies are extremely difficult to obtain and resources inadequate.

'...we can only go [to hospital] if we have the money, because we have to pay for everything there.... Pa Dai Kaw has a hospital...There is a doctor and some health workers there. We have to pay them money and still have to beg them. There are no beds; it just looks like a house.'

Villager from Glaw Maw (DMDP_30_GM_22_001_0109)



Naw The Der Villagers attend to a sick woman

Health issues are further complicated by the location of the sites.

'All of us were healthy when we stayed at our village. Now our health is getting poorer, because we have to suffer the heat from the sun and cold during the winter as there is no tree to cover here...No one in my family has died; several have died from other families.'

Villager from Daiktu (DMDP_30_HTT_35_004_1208)

Villagers have no option but to purchase their own supplies, but only very few are able to do this and must do so secretly.

'For the medication we have to secretly buy it from the shop, if they capture us they will punish us or demand money.'

Villager from Inn Kyaw (DMDP_AK_156_039_0209.doc)

In order to get sufficient medical treatment, which can be extremely expensive, villagers have been forced to sell their own livestock or farms, although it must be noted very few are so fortunate and must rely on local health cures.

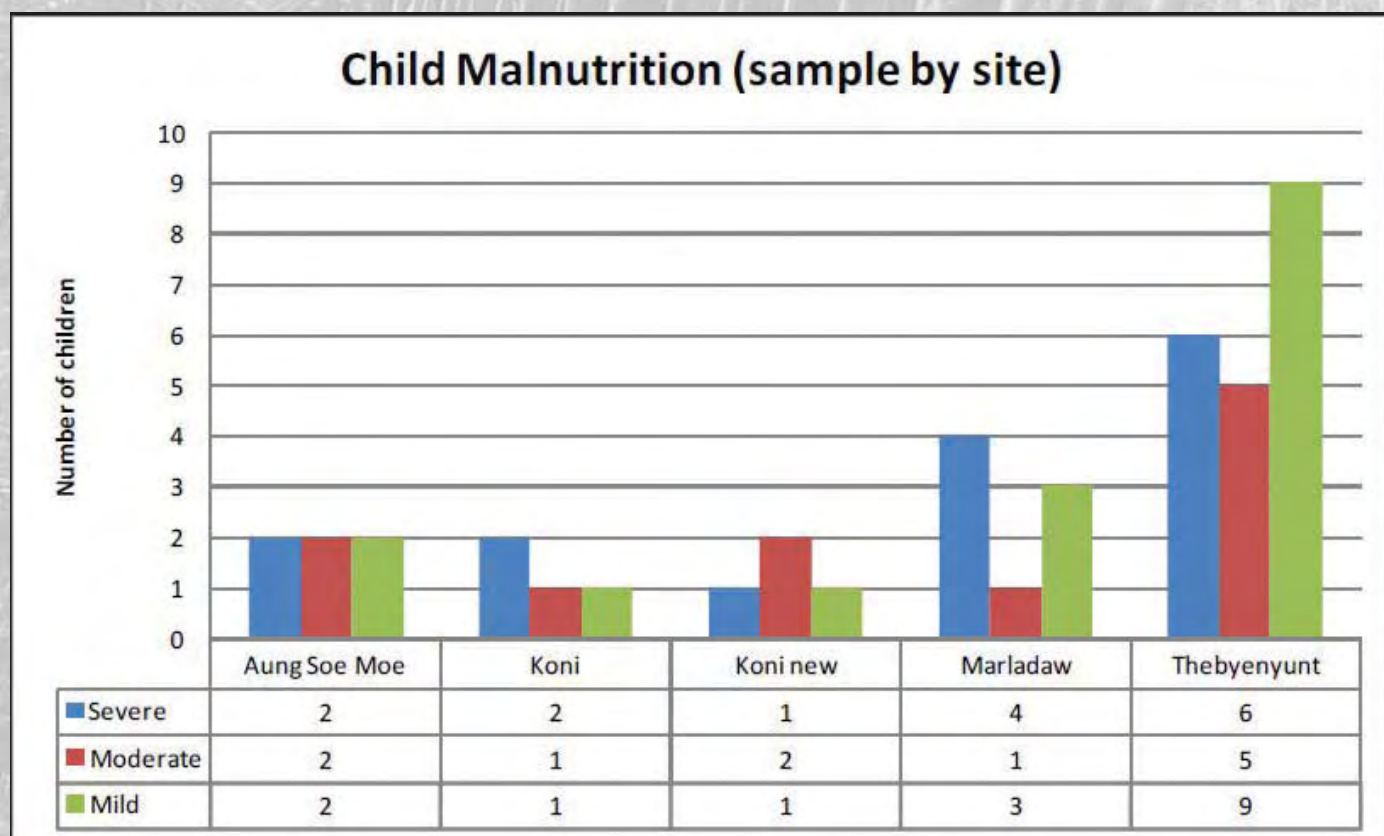
'We have to buy medicine by our self and it is very expensive. We cannot do anything if we can not afford the medicine... We can go to hospital provided that we have got over 100,000 kyat, we would be allowed to stay for 3-4 days in the hospital for treatment. If our illness is not so serious we just take herbal medicine instead.'

Villager from Aung Soe Moe (DMDP_30_ASM_91_011_0209)

Women and infants are at particular risk especially with no access to food and very little ante-natal care available. The survey was able to apply the MUACTION in five areas and found that 85 children were suffering from malnutrition of varying degrees (see illustration).

'...other villagers, like women with new born babies, have encountered the most health problem and some babies died.'

Villager from Maw Gai Tha Per Kho (DMDP_30_MPK_97_026_1208)





Although some relocation sites have been able to set up primary schools, teachers, who have to travel from nearby cities, are unable to provide enough time to students. As a result education is primarily served by local community volunteers. A number of villagers are able to send middle school students to the nearest small town but education can be extremely expensive and the state provides no support.

'Nothing is free for us, parents have to buy everything...[it costs]more than 100,000 kyat for a middle school student.'

Villager from Daiktu (DMDP_30_HTT_35_004_1208)

'...we do not send our children to school, because we cannot afford the fees.'

Villager from Yulo (DMDP_95_YL_100_029_0109)

At least one villager, from Pa Dai Kaw (DMDP_30_PDK_007), noted the expenses of sending students to school. The fees, all of which are borne by the community, include the teacher's salary of 35,000 kyat and student costs of between 50,000 to 60,000 kyat. For children needing to stay in a dormitory the fees increase to 100,000 kyat including uniform.

With such exorbitant fees and the loss of livelihood for parents, only the most fortunate can send their children to school.



Saleh Community School, supported by a local church group





Relocation Sites



Aung Soe Moe

As part of its Four Cuts operations, the Burma Army ordered villagers from the highlands of Kyauk Kyi (Ler Doh) to move to Aung Soe Moe in 1974. It was originally created by moving the population of 8 villages from 2 village tracts, Hko Pu and Saw Mi Lu. All of the villagers had been able to make a living by producing and selling betel nuts, betel leaves, and durian. They were initially told that they would have to stay in the area for four months. Now, 35 years later, there are 160 houses and more than 900 people living there.

Aung Soe Moe is now located between two main army camps at Kyauk Kyi and Muthey. In addition, there are also two other army outposts nearby, at Thanbo and Sitsaygone.

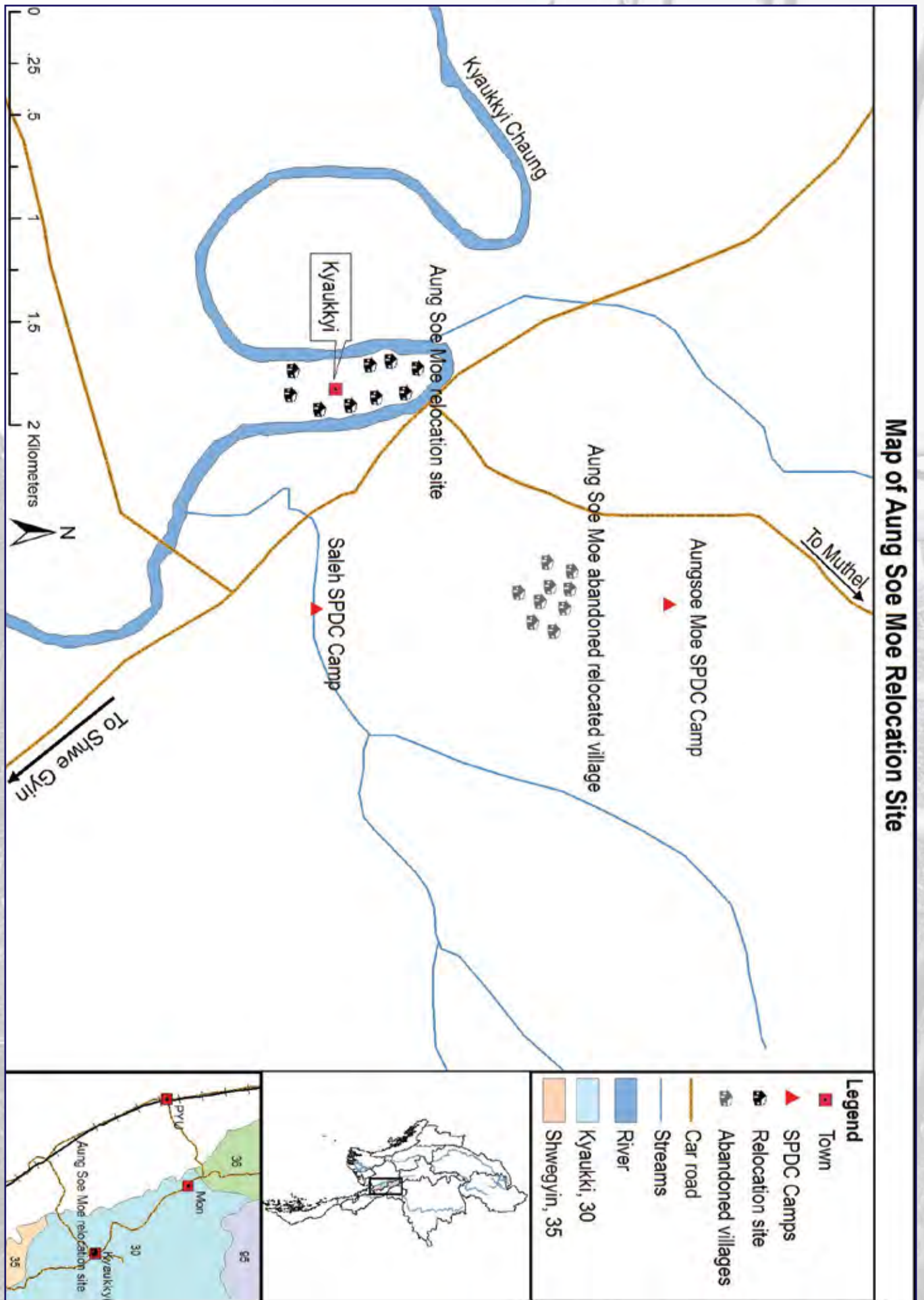
Location: Kyauk Kyi Township
Coordinates: N 18° 19' 32.13" and E 096° 46' 10.02"
Date: 1974, 1979
Number of villages relocated: 8
Names of relocated villages: Aung Soe Moe, Hko Pu, Play Lo Klo, Maw Gai Ko, Ber Ge Soe, Ta Ray Ko, Ler Ka Taw, Htee Yar Kee, Saw Mi Lu.
Current population: 900 (160 Families)
Army units: IB 542 (TOC 5)
Orders issued by: Gen. Ko Ko, Commander, Southern Military Command

During the dry season, when military operations are conducted against the KNLA and the Burma Army transports supplies and ammunition, villagers are prevented from leaving the village. This can last as long as three months at a time. Villagers are often punished if fighting takes place in areas around them. In Oct, 2006, SPDC IB-60 and LIB-351, fought with units of the KNLA and the Burma Army immediately ordered all Aung Soe Moe villagers to leave the village. Again, in the first week of January, 2007, a clash took place near Kyauk Kyi (Ler Doh) town. The authorities blamed the relocated people for having contact with the KNLA and ordered them to destroy their houses and move to Mittar Ward in Kyauk Kyi town. The location was extremely overcrowded and in some cases two to three families were forced to live in the gardens of other people.

Although they were able to go back to the relocation site at Aung Soe Moe there was no guarantee that the Burma Army would not punish them. As a result many stayed in Mittar Ward. For those who have returned the situation is particularly unstable. Although most of the villagers owned orchards and gardens in the mountains, almost all of their crops have either been stolen by Burma Army troops or they have become damaged because the SPDC restricts their ability to tend to their orchards. The authorities allow villagers to purchase a travel pass which costs anywhere between 500 – 1500 kyats but is only valid for three days. In addition to facing restrictions on their movement they are also forced to act as messengers and porters for the Burma Army.

On 7th of February 2007, troops from LIB 60, stationed at Than Bo, fired mortars into Aung Soe Moe forcing villagers to flee. Some people fled to Kyauk Kyi and took refuge in local people's houses or their gardens, others fled to Sham Chaung and Kywe Chan relocation site. Some have returned to Aung Soe Moe, but life for them is extremely difficult. Forced to scavenge for fruit in the forest and surrounding areas they are constantly under threat of arrest or execution by Burma Army troops.

On 16th January 2009, a Aung Soe Moe villager, Saw Cho Pyoe, was shot dead while resting in his hut after picking betel leaves at his orchard. The troops from IB 542 who shot him then tried to destroy and hide the body. After its discovery, and recovering the bullets, his mother reported the incident to the TOC-2 commander. No action has ever been taken against the soldiers involved in the incident.



Kywe' Chan (Per Na Ger)

Kywe' Chan was created out of two villages both called Maw Bwe Khi (also known as Mawbiki) one kilometer apart on a mountainous area east of Kyauk Kyi town, Kyauk Kyi township, Pegu Division. The villagers mainly earned their living by rotational cultivation and harvesting honey, betel leaves, durian, nuts and other orchard grown products.

Location: Kyauk Kyi Township
Coordinates:
Date: 1975, 2007
Number of villages relocated: 1
Names of relocated villages: Mawbiki
Current population: 621 (86 families)
Army units: LIB 351, IB 60 (TOC 2)
Orders issued by: Gen. Ko Ko, Commander, Southern Military Command

In 1975, during the Four Cuts Operation, troops under the command of the Burmese Socialist Program Party forced them to relocate close to Kyauk Kyi town. Under the Four Cuts Operations, Kywe' Chan relocation site was designated as being located in a grey zone and all villagers lived under Burma Army restrictions. However, due to the inadequate supply of food, villagers were forced to leave Kywe' Chan and return to their abandoned villages to try and harvest what they could. These areas, after the relocation, were demarcated as a black zone, and villagers could be shot or arrested any time.

On the 15th of July 2007, SPDC troops from LIB-351, under the controlled of Tactical Operation Commander, Col. Soe Thein, ordered Kywe' Chan village to be relocated for road security. This new site was on both sides of the Taungoo-Kyauk Kyi car road connecting both the Kyauk Kyi and Muthey Burma Army camps.

Currently, there are 86 families with a total of 621 people living in the sites. There is one primary school as well as a nursery which is supported by Christian based organisations and the local community. Health matters, primarily in the form of preventative medicines, are attended to by the 50 bed Kyauk Kyi hospital, which is 15 minutes away. Despite the presence of a nursery, there is no maternal or child care available. A survey of the relocation site, using the MUAC (Mid-upper arm circumference) test, found that out of all children aged 1 to 5 years, 30 percent suffered from either acute or severe malnutrition.

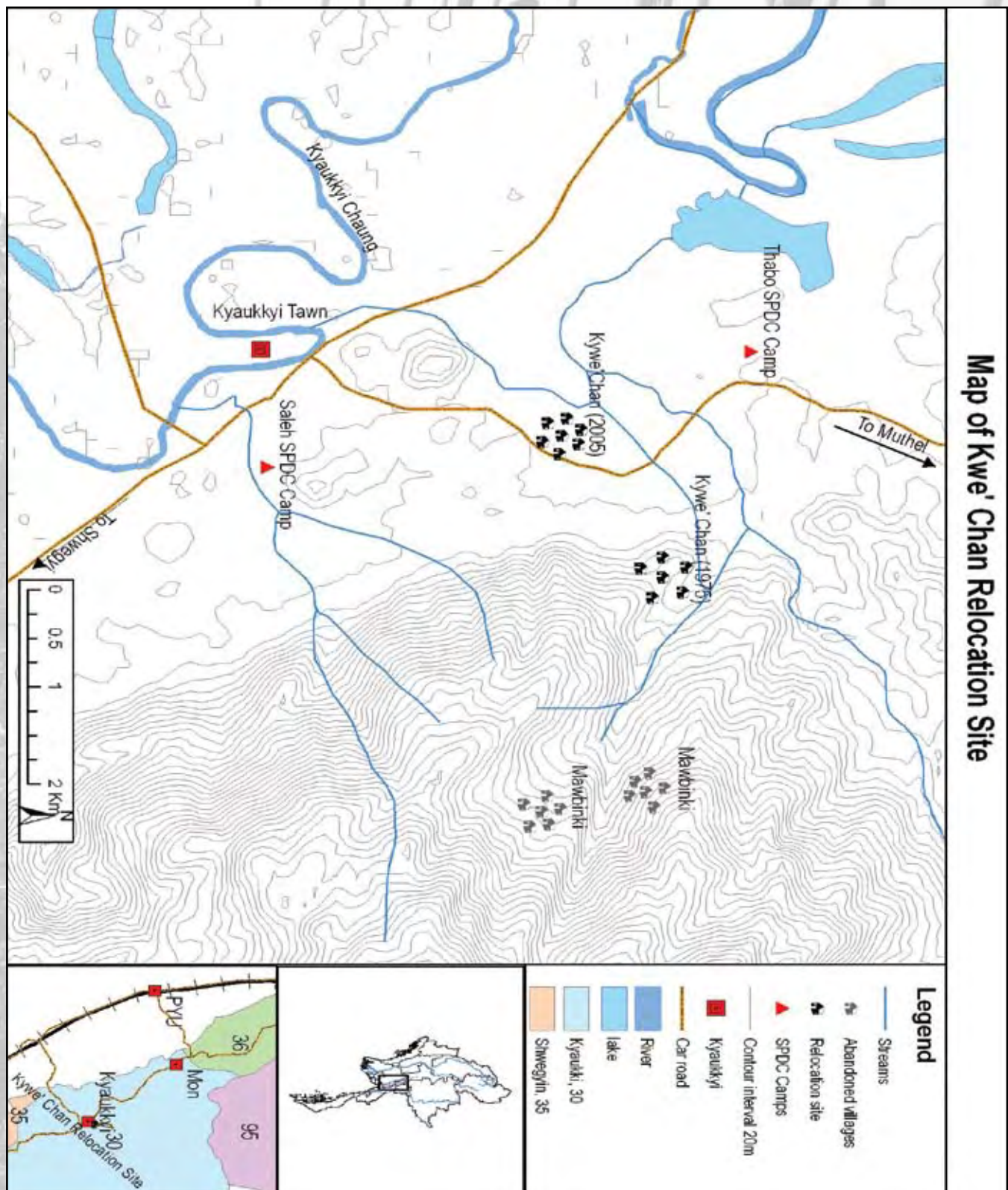
Approximately sixty percent of the people are animist with the remainder comprised of Christians and Buddhists. The living standard of villagers is steadily deteriorating. Restrictions imposed by the SPDC ensure that most of the population is living below the poverty line. The current situation was further exacerbated by the fact that the villagers had to sell their property, such as cows and buffaloes, before leaving their old village.

Although a number of villagers are able to secure employment as day labourers on nearby farms, income continues to decrease. In the summer months villagers cut bamboo poles for weaving bamboo baskets and handicrafts. During the rainy season they have to go to their old village to collect food such as dog-fruit and bamboo-shoots which they sell in Kyauk Kyi to earn some money for food and basic necessities. While the villagers are able to make some income from returning to their old villages it does not come easily. Landmines, laid by the Burma Army, are prevalent and villagers risk serious injury or death in returning to their old homes. Government authorities have stated that if villagers step on SPDC landmines they have to reimburse the price of the landmine which is 10,000 kyat.

In addition to landmine risk, villagers are forced to work at the local SPDC IB-60 camp at Thanbo, under the command of Capt. Aung Kyaw Oo. They were forced to construct a car road connecting Thanbo-Hsaw Mi Lu SPDC camps without payment. Furthermore, villagers are also forced to serve as porters for the military carrying food supplies and ammunition. Villagers wishing to travel have to obtain a travel pass from IB-60 at a cost of 1,500 kyat for one person. Such restrictions on travel, and the abuses associated, including possible arrest and torture, have resulted in the orchards and gardens at the previous village becoming overgrown and

unusable. It is estimated that the damage so far is approximately 25%. Consequently, the more damage to the orchards, the less opportunity villagers will have to sustain their livelihoods causing further burden for them in the future.

This survey has found this burden has become most noticeable in villagers diet. Due to SPDC restrictions, damage to orchards, and the resulting loss of income, a large percentage of the people are forced to rely on one meal a day during the rainy season. The survey also showed that the families most at risk were those where the breadwinner earned a living as a day labourer. Out of 14 people, in different occupations, 11 stated that their families ate only one meal a day, all eleven were forced to survive on daily wages.



Saleh

Saleh Village was originally located in the mountains and consisted of two villages called Thay Waw Der & Naw Per. In 1975, the Burma Army forced the villagers to relocate to the lowlands and renamed Thay Waw Der village as Saleh and Naw Per as Pay Htu.

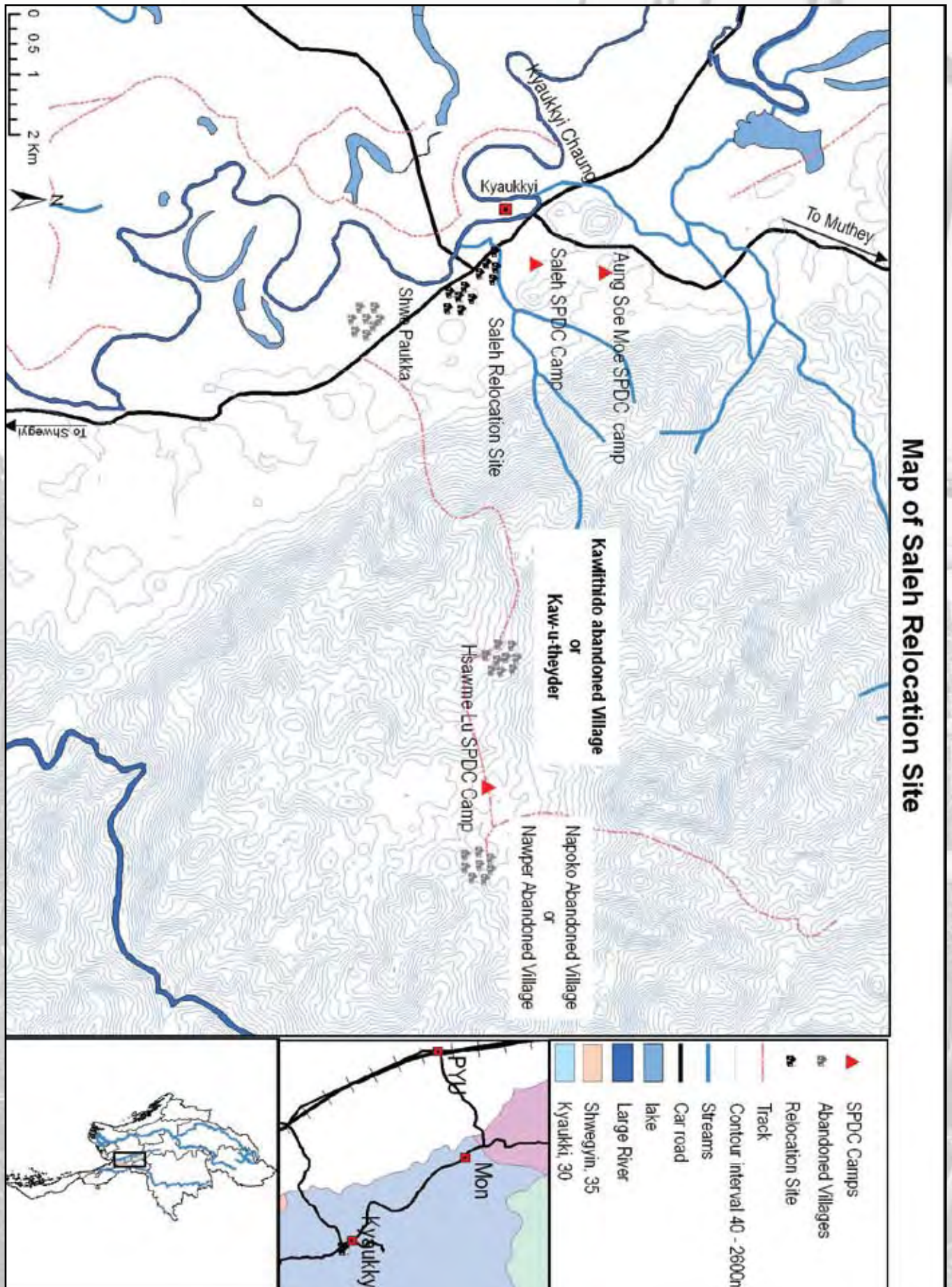
Pay Htu village was forced to relocate next to a car road and its inhabitants, who were mainly hill farmers, have continued to live in that same location until now. Saleh was ordered by the SPDC No. 2, Tactical Operation Commander, Soe Thein, to move next to Pay Htu in January 2007. A year later, in January 2008, the SPDC forced the villagers to move again, this time to Shwe Paukar relocation site.

A number of problems have affected the villagers. One of the most serious is the lack of any decent water supply. Villagers have been unable to get enough water for drinking or bathing, and have to carry it from the previous site of Pay Htu. Additionally, they have faced open hostility from the previous landowners who still reside around the site.

In June 2008, the relocated villagers were ordered to move back to the previous site at Pay Htu. However, the site is not able to provide a sustainable livelihood. During the rainy season the car road has been known to flood, killing what little the livestock villager's own. In addition, villagers do not have any farms or orchards to return to and therefore have to scavenge for food in the jungle or on the mountainside. In the rainy season they can collect bamboo-shoots and dog-fruit but this is insufficient to provide an adequate diet or livelihood.

As is often the case, the army has planted landmines in the abandoned villages and on the paths in the jungle. As a result many villagers risk serious injury or death in searching for food.

Location: Kyauk Kyi Township
Coordinates: N 18° 19' 23.85" and E 096° 46' 40.61"
Date: 1975, 2007, 2008
Number of villages relocated: 3
Names of relocated villages: Kawlithido, (later named Saleh), Napoko (later named Petu) and Naw Per
Current population: 819 (103 families)
Current army units: IB 351 (TOC 2)
Orders issued by:



Daiktu

Daiktu relocation site is located 45 minutes walk away to the west of Ler Doh Town and is surrounded by three layer of fencing. It was created, under the name of development by the SPDC's Southern Division Command, by appropriating the farms of local villagers.

Between the 17th of March and the 20th of August 2006, ten villages from the west of Daiktu, comprising 633 families and 2,253 people, were ordered to relocate to a new site. The SPDC ordered those relocated to dismantle their old houses and to buy and clear the land at a cost of 15,000 kyat per plot. In addition to rebuilding their own homes, villagers were forced to construct a road between Kyauk Kyi and Nathangwin.

Location: Kyauk Kyi Township
Coordinates: N 18° 13' 31.87" and E 096° 44' 47.02"
Date: 2006
Number of villages relocated: 10
Names of relocated villages: Pattala Kyeintawmyaing, Omyedu, Pauk Tah Daw, Wetlataw(Karen), Wetlataw (Burman), Dakala, Kywe' Cho, Sabyagyi, Plaw Law Bler and Daiktu
Current population: 4,424 (633 Families)
Current army units: LIB 439 (TOC 2)
Orders issued by: Gen. Ko Ko, Commander, Southern Military Command

The plots allotted (180 ft x 120 ft) are extremely overcrowded and conditions become unbearable especially during the summer heat when there is no clean water. Villagers have to travel to the old Daiktu village and bring water back to the relocation site, a trip which takes up to thirty minutes for some villagers. In winter the weather is very cold and during the rainy season the land floods. Health is a major problem. There are numerous snakes and insects in surrounding areas and during the hot season there is no shade to protect them. The survey also found that a number of villagers suffer from high-blood pressure as a result of drinking salty water.

The relocation of the villages caused the closure of 9 schools and education in the new site is extremely poor. Although there is a primary school, those who want to go to middle school have to walk for 15 minutes to Thoo K'Bee Village. Children who seek higher education have to live with relatives or friends in Kyauk Kyi. Students without relatives in Kyauk Kyi have no option but to leave school as the distance is too far for them to walk.

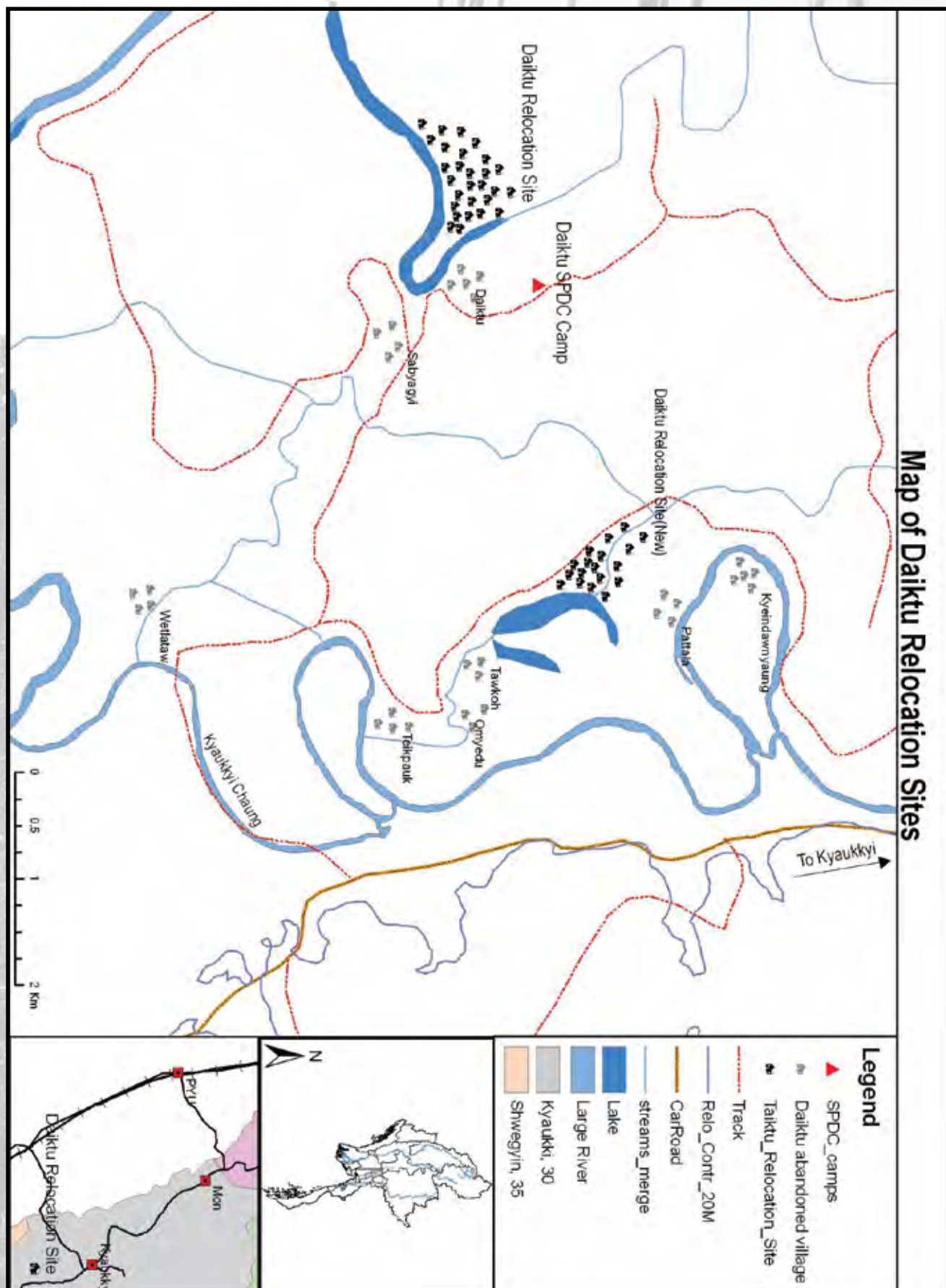
While people are allowed to freely practice their beliefs there is no space to build a church and villagers must attend services at the pastor's house. During the construction of the road, services on Sunday were suspended because the pastor was also forced to work on the road.

Most of the villagers make their living from farming, seasonal cultivation, fishing and as day labourers. Most people relocated from Dakala, Taik Pauk and Wai Lardaw (Burman) are Burman and do not have farms or land for seasonal cultivation. They mostly rely on fishing in nearby streams and lakes. Villagers who are favoured by the authorities are allowed to purchase fishing licenses which they sell on to poorer fishermen.

SPDC restrictions have changed over the years. In 2006, Karen villagers who had previously owned farms were allowed to return and tend to them between 6:00 am and 5:00 pm. Due to the travelling time involved, and also the fact that many villagers also had to carry items between local army outposts, villagers found little benefit from the new arrangement. With so little time they were still unable to properly cut grass, irrigate their farmland or feed their animals. Those who didn't return on time were fined or punished.

In 2007 the authorities allowed villagers to buy a recommendation letter at a cost of 1,500 kyat for ten days. These letters allowed them to sleep in their old village or farms. Despite this, the SPDC ordered villagers to destroy the huts on their farms because they provided shelter for insurgents. Those huts still remaining were then burnt down by the Burma Army. In 2008, the SPDC again ordered them to destroy their huts. However, those who could afford to were able to pay 1,000 kyat a month to keep their huts. Villagers who work as

day labourers or fishermen were also subjected to arbitrary fees. They were forced to pay 5,000 kyat for a hut. On 8th August, 2008, the SPDC again demanded 2,000 kyat from the owners of huts, regardless of whether they were destroyed or not. Whether such extortion is government policy or locally made decisions is unclear.

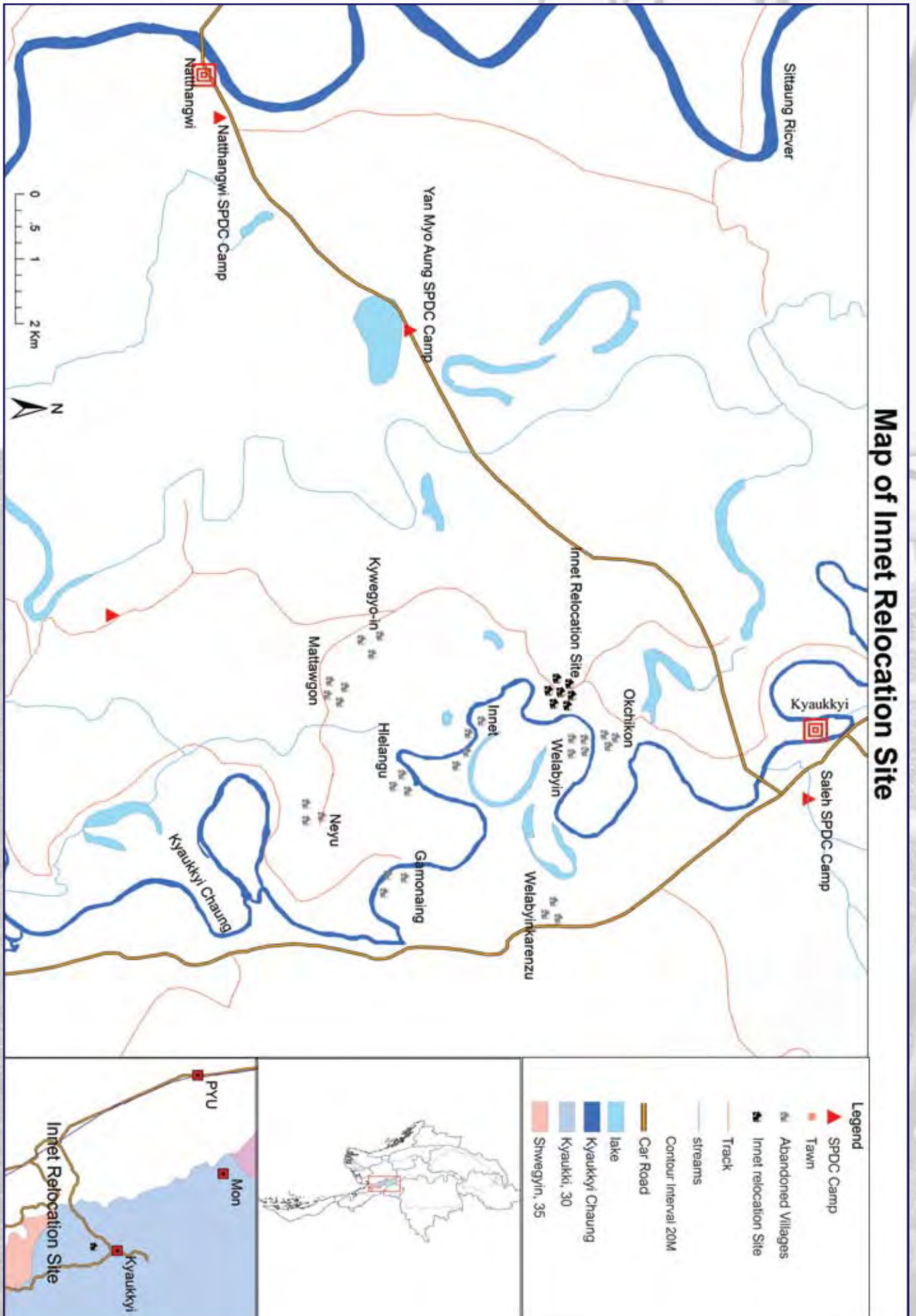


Innet

Most of the original inhabitants of Innet village are Burman. On the 1st of June 2007, 8 villages were forced to relocate to either Innet or to Yan Myoe Aung relocation sites. The SPDC ordered them to completely dismantle their house. If any Innet villagers wanted to return to their previous village to tend to their farms they had to buy a recommendation letter from the authorities at a cost of 1,500 kyat for ten days. Villagers were also ordered to remove the walls and roofs of their farms huts. Those who refused were ordered to pay 5,000 kyat.

Location: Kyauk Kyi Township
Coordinates: N 18° 17' 32.95" and E 096° 45' 50.10"
Date: 2007
Number of villages relocated: 9
Names of relocated villages: Tawlukho, Matawgoo, Kwekyo (Panarner), Nehyew, Lhelangu, Oatheygu, Gamon Aing and Innet
Current population: 1,409 (294 families)
Current army units: (TOC 2)
Orders issued by: Gen. Ko Ko, Commander, Southern Military Command

On the 8th of August 2008, the SPDC authorities demanded residents pay 2,000 kyat for a farm hut and 50,000 kyat for a fishing hut. They said that it was to provide aid for the Cyclone Nargis victims. Also in August, they demanded that all fishing boats be pulled out of the water and ordered the owners to pay 5,000 kyat every month for each fishing hut.



Yan Myoe Aung

Yan Myoe Aung relocation site was originally created in 1992 in order to establish security around the Kayumyaung Bridge which connects Kyauk Kyi to Nat Than Gwin car road. Eight villages were originally ordered to move to the new site but in 1997 a number of villagers were allowed to return their abandoned villages after paying a substantial bribe to the local military authorities. Those who were unable to pay were forced to remain and were joined by a number of newly relocated villagers in 2007 and 2008. Villagers faced the same problems as in other areas, travel restrictions, extortion and forced labour.

Location: Kyauk Kyi Township

Coordinates: N 18° 16' 41.02" and E 096° 43' 14.78"

Date: 2006

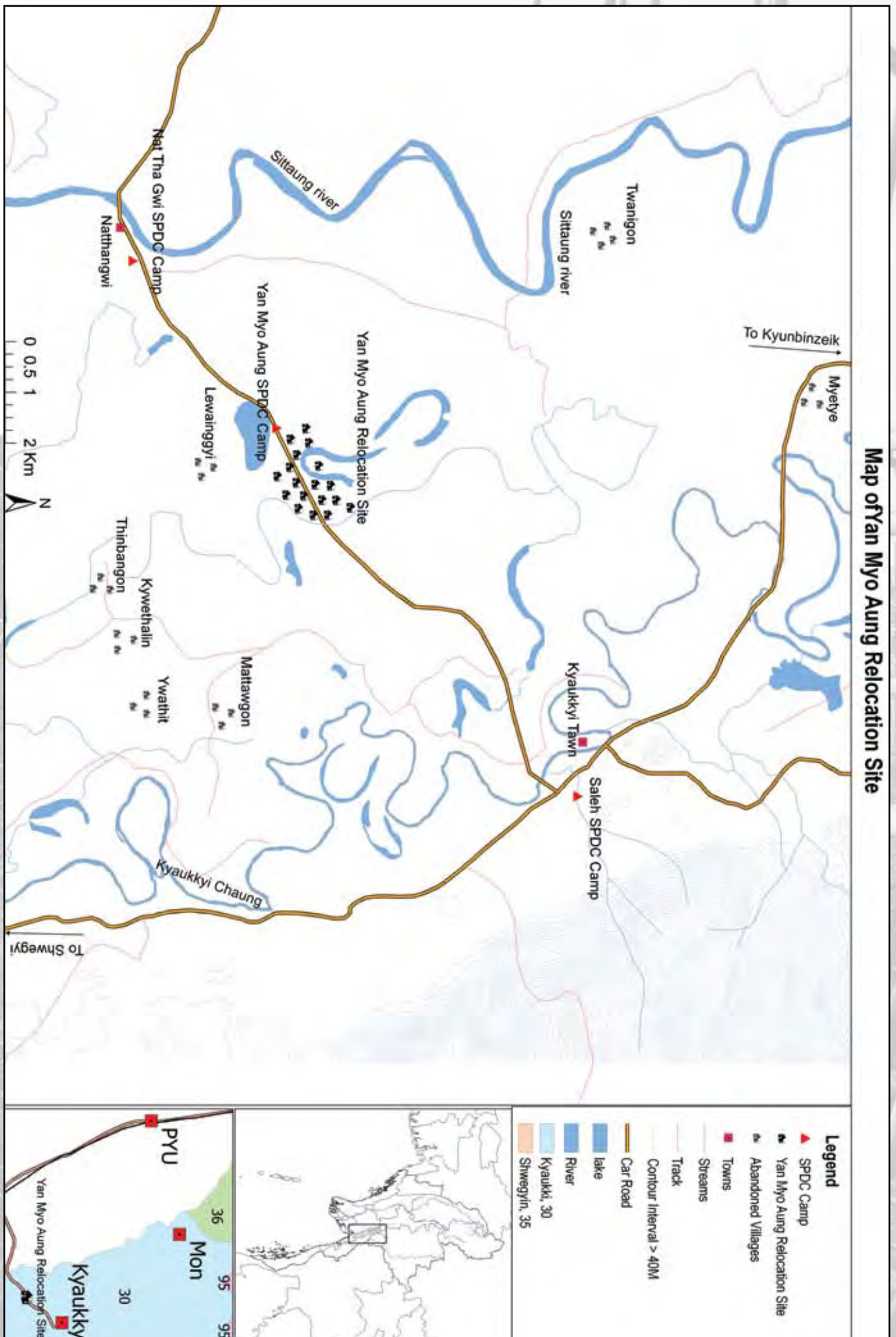
Number of villages relocated: 5

Names of relocated villages: Thauungpauk, Thinbangon, Kywe`thalin Ywa Maa, Kywe`thalin Ywa Thit, Mattawgon.

Current population: 795 (153 families)

Current army units: IB 60

Orders issued by: Gen. Ko Ko, Commander, Southern Military Command



Klaw Maw

Klaw Maw relocation site, in Kyauk Kyi Township, Pegu Division was originally set up by the BSPP in 1975 as part of the four cuts campaign. Initially two villages were ordered to move to the new site, however, In 1997, the SPDC decided to relocate seven more villages to the area.

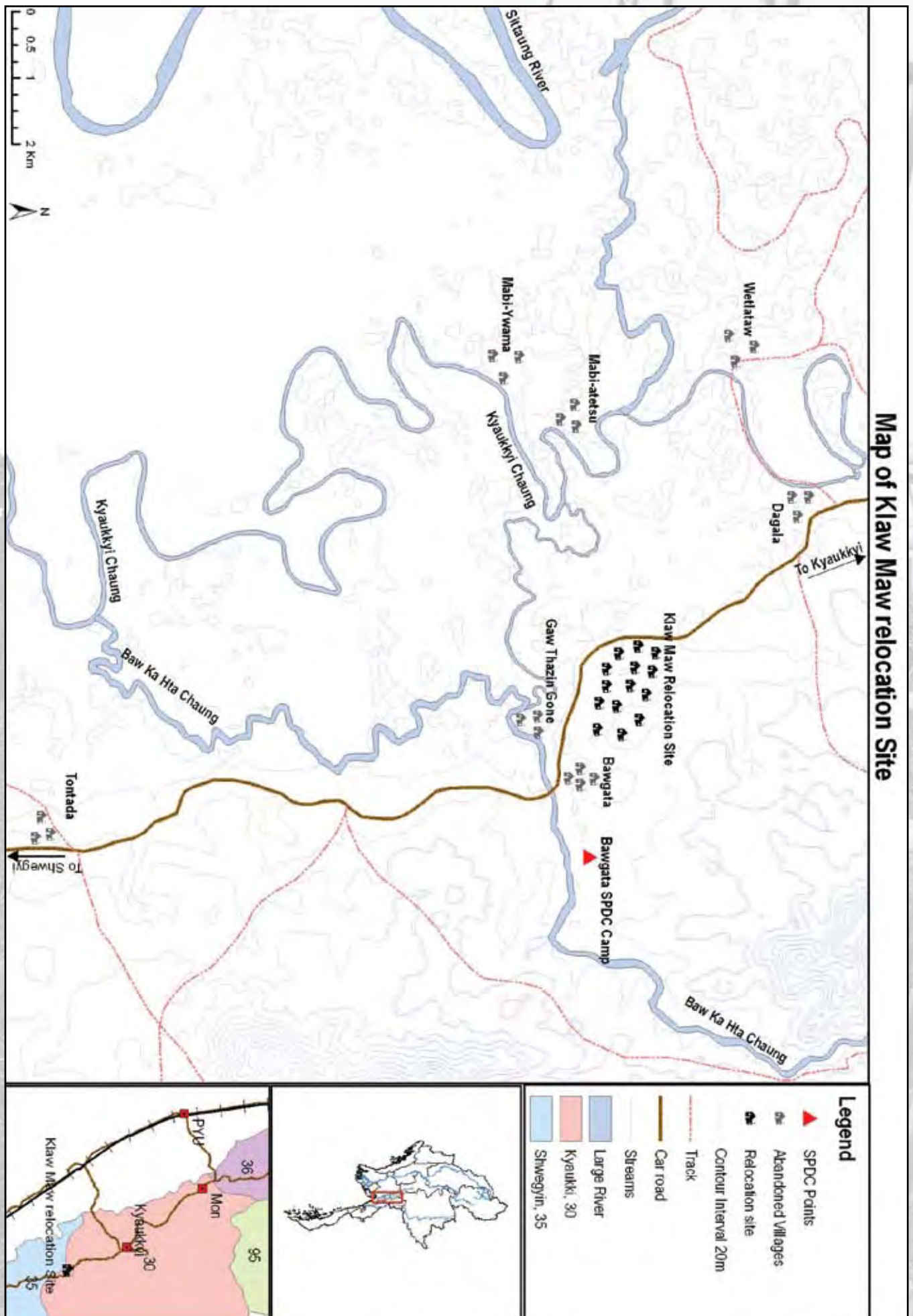
There are currently 317 families, totaling 1,785 people, residing in the site one third of whom are Christian with the majority being Buddhist. The relocation site is served by a primary school which caters for a 131 students who are supported by 14 teachers. Some of the teachers were appointed by the government with the rest provided by the local community and supported by a Buddhist monk.

Health is a major problem and there is no clinic. Malaria is extremely prevalent and villagers are forced to rely solely on herbal remedies to cure their ills, although it but be noted that Polio vaccine was distributed by Kyauk Kyi hospital. Malnutrition is also a major problem especially in young children. Due to government restrictions most families are forced to survive on only one simple meal a day. Most of the villagers residing in the site are unable to farm and predominantly survive as day labourers.

Forced labour is commonplace and villagers have to work at nearby SPDC outposts. They are also forced to contribute labour for road construction and for carrying food and supplies for the army 2-3 times a year. The nearest SPDC battalion, IB-350, demands families pay them 1,000 kyat every month in tax.

Villagers risk being shot on sight if they are found outside the relocation site while looking for food. In addition, the area is riddled with landmines. If a villager steps on one they must pay the army 10,000 kyat. It was also reported that if a Burma Army soldier is killed by resistance forces then villagers must pay the costs of the funeral.

Location: Kyauk Kyi, Pegu Division
Coordinates: N 18° 11' 07.99" and E 096° 49' 35.28"
Date: 1997
Number of villages relocated: 9
Names of relocated villages: Hepoeder, Mabi Ywama, Mabi, Wetlataw, Dakala, Bawgata, Gaw Thazin, Gone, Tontada, Shukinthaya, Zeebingon, Konmyinthaya
Current population: 1,785 (317 families)
Current army units: IB 350
Orders issued by: Southern Military Command



Naungbo Kwet Thit relocation site (Koni)

In 1976, three villages, Ywa Haung (Wai Swel), Me' Me' Ywa (Noe-nya-la), and Takgone (Ta-koh-pwa), were forced to relocate to Naungbo (Koni) as part of anti-insurgency operations in the area. While most villagers were eventually able to return to their original homes, they were again ordered to move in 1989. At the time they were allowed to leave houses standing and were told to move only.

Location: Kyauk Kyi Township
Coordinates: N 18° 28' 0.98" and E 096° 39' 57.95"
Date: 1976, 1989
Number of villages relocated: 4
Names of relocated villages: Ywa Haung (Wai Swel), Me' Me' Ywa (Noe-nya-la), and Takgone (Ta-koh-pwa)
Current population: 56 families
Current army units: LIB 590, LIB 599
Orders issued by:

In June, 2001, the SPDC rotated two new army units into the area, LIB 599 and LIB 590. LIB-599 operated out of Tonedaw and controlled frontier outposts at Aungloungein (local named: Aw-law-sei), and Kyunbinseik (local name Pa-he-lu). The headquarters of LIB-590 was at Ye O'sin. Both were responsible for three village tracts: Takgone, Naungbo and Metaingdaw.

On arriving in the area the two units ordered each village to pay 400,000 kyat or they would have to relocate. Despite all villages paying the amount demanded the battalions relocated them anyway. In 2004, three villages, Takgone, Ywa Haung, and Me' Me' Ywa (Noe-nya-la) were forced to relocate to Naungbo village which was then renamed as Naungbo Kwet Thit.

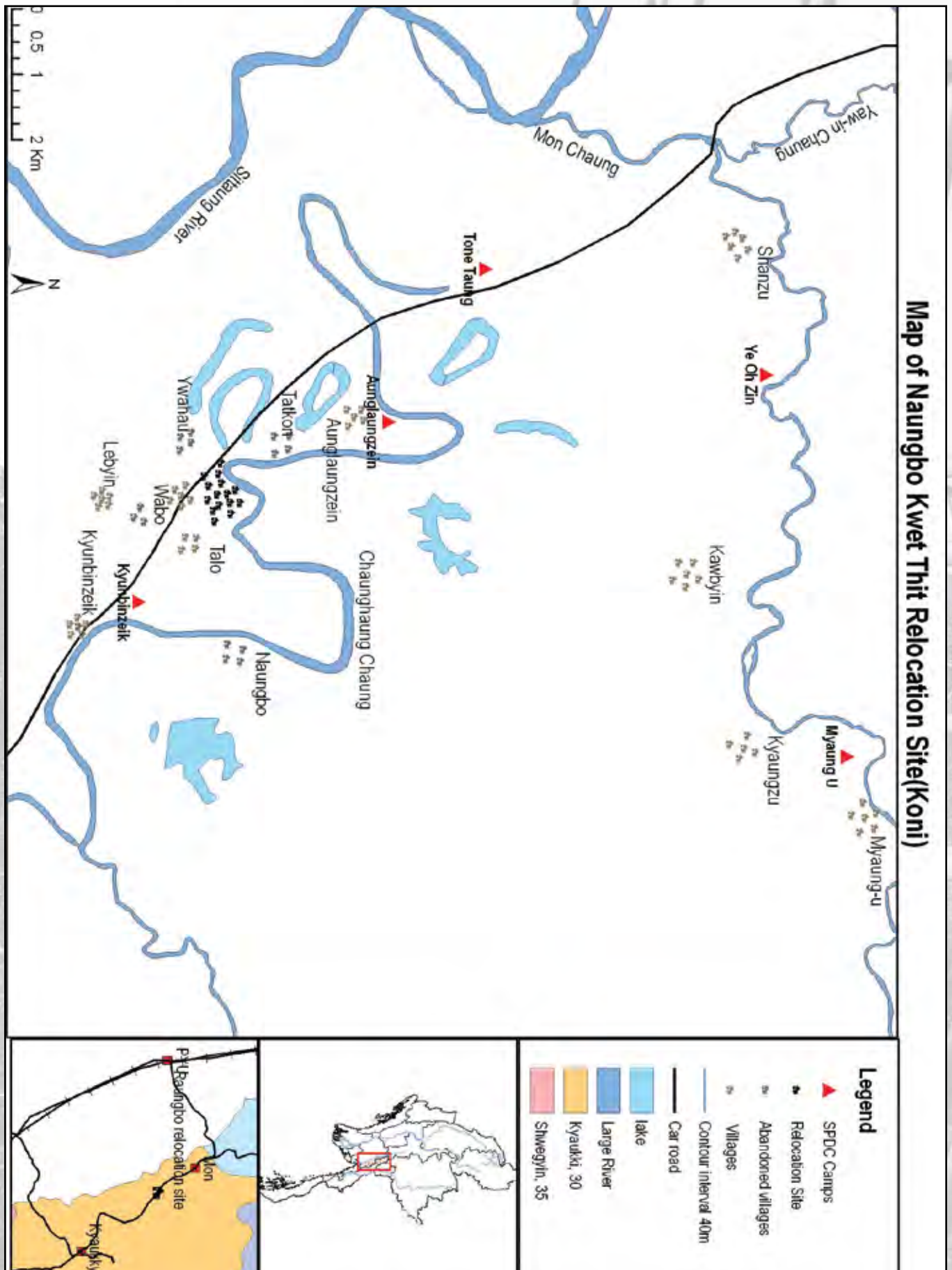
In addition to relocating the villages, LIB 590 confiscated, without reparation, 256 acres of private land. There they built an infantry battalion headquarters and turned what land that was not used into sugarcane plantations. Although military units are frequently rotated into the area, administration duties primarily rest with LIB 590 and 599.

In addition to having to provide various foodstuffs to the army units, both fixed and rotational, villagers are also required to cut wood and bamboo poles to build and maintain army camps, carry water, cook, and act as messengers. They are also required to provide labour on army run businesses.

Villagers are also subject to various forms of extortion. They must provide food for visiting dignitaries, when units travel out of the area for training they must also provide financial support for them. If a soldier is injured or killed by a landmine in the area they must pay compensation. In one reported case of landmine injury, one village had to pay 50,000 kyat for the injured soldier.

Rice farmers are ordered to borrow money from the battalion to plant rice. On harvesting, the money, including interest, must be returned. A large portion of the rice harvested must, by order of the village head, be sold to the battalion at government prices which are half the market price.

If the villagers want to go out to work on their farms they must pay 7,000 kyat for a recommendation letter which allows them to work from 8:00 until 5:00 pm. In May, when planting takes place, villagers were allowed to pay the requested amount. In June, after having already paid for one month, the recommendation letter was cancelled and villagers were ordered to destroy all their farm huts.



Pauk Tha Taw and New He Poe Der

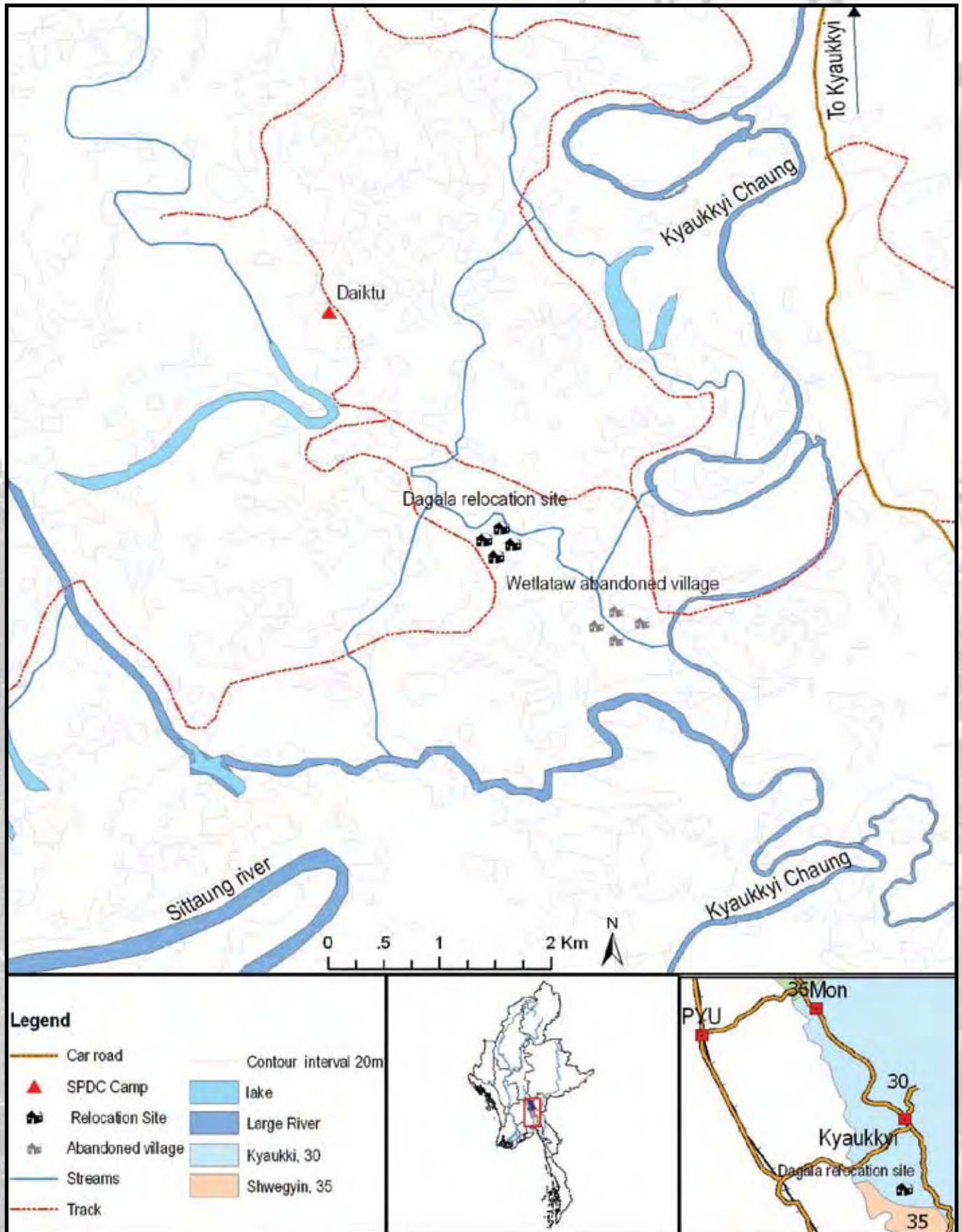
This relocation site was created after Daiktu relocation site was ordered to be closed due to overcrowding and unsanitary conditions.

Residents were told at a meeting, held on the 27th of December 2008, that villagers were allowed to return to their old villages and had to give money to do so within the next three days. They were informed that would have to pay 1.5 million kyat if they wanted to return to their original villages in Patalar village tract or 1.7 million kyat to return to Wetlataw village tract. The money was to be paid to Col. Soe Thein, the commander of No.1 TOC, Southern Military Division Command.

Although people from Wetlataw were able to find sufficient money to return, those from Patalar, who were poorer, could not. Consequently, people from Patalar were ordered to relocate. Villagers from Pauk Tha Daw, Taikpauk and Hepoeder villages were ordered to move to a farm between Patalar and Tawkoh villages on the 1st of January 2009.

People from Dagala were ordered to move to a farm between Wetlataw and Daiktu villages.

Location: Kyauk Kyi Township
Coordinates: N 18° 13' 45.8" and E 096° 46' 51.0"
Date: 2009
Number of villages relocated: 4
Names of relocated villages: Pauk Tha Taw, Taikpauk, He Poe Der and Dagala
Current population: 985
Current army units: TOC 1
Orders issued by: Col. Tin Bo Aung, commander of IB-588, Southern Military Command



Traditions at risk

'In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.'

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 27



The forced relocation of Karen villages not only impacts on the ability of villagers to earn a living and feed their families, but also has resulted in destruction of local traditions and culture. At least one group, the devoutly animist Maw Nay Pwa (also spelt as Monnepwa and Monebwa),¹ has been forced to leave their ancestral homes causing significant deterioration in their ability to practice their traditional customs.

People belonging to the Maw Nay Pwa have strongly held animist beliefs. As with many other animist practitioners, they believe that the ground and the environment where they live is intrinsically connected to their existence. Thus, the ability to be able to travel to their ancestral homes if a person becomes ill, to perform religious ceremonies, and to hold traditional feasts is extremely important.

Since being forced to relocate, these villagers have been prevented from returning to their abandoned villages. Those who do so secretly risk the possibility of being shot on sight, stepping on landmines or being arrested. Such risks were highlighted by the Karen Human Rights Group when the villages were first ordered to relocate:

1 There has been some confusion in the past as to whether the Maw Nay Pwa is a separate group from the Paku. The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) Ethnologue 2009 report still groups them with the Paku but concedes that they may be separate. Field work for this report suggests the two groups are in fact separate.

*'... in the Maw Nay Pwa area in Tantabin township, SPDC Light Infantry Division 66 has been patrolling the villages and surrounding area, and whenever they see a villager they capture, torture and kill them. Six of the villagers from this area have also been killed in the first half of 2006.'*²

While this was reported almost three years ago the current situation has improved little.

In addition to the restriction on movement, the Maw Nay Pwa were also forced to hide one of the most important items a Karen home can have, a bronze drum. These drums, which the Karens believe connect them with a long forgotten past, are held in particular reverence and offerings are usually made to them.



Villagers have had little recourse but to hide them in the surrounding forest or risk them being stolen by SPDC troops or other villagers. As one field report notes:

'Between the 13th and 18th June 2006, LIB 567 destroyed 7 houses by dismantling the roofs and walls. In addition, they destroyed about 30 baskets of rice, fish-paste, salt, cloths, cooking utensils and one Karen traditional drum belonging to Naw Du. They could not carry the drum because it was too big. The ancient drum was made of metal alloy with a face of gold. They cut the face off the drum and left the body.'

The loss of such sacred objects to a village and the people who own them is of extreme importance and their loss has cultural and not only monetary consequences.

To date, five Maw Nay Pwa villages have been forced to relocate. While there are no accurate population figures for the group the Burmese government's forced relocation will see these figures fall drastically.

² 'Toungoo District: The civilian response to human rights violations', KHRG, 15 August, 2006

Muthey

Muthey relocation site was created in 1979 as part of the four cuts campaign. Although villagers were ordered to relocate, most villagers fled into hiding in the hills with only a fraction left to move to the new site. In 2006, the commander of the Southern Military Division Command decided to turn Muthey into a development project. Relocated villagers were ordered to clear the brush around the site to make way for a new village.

The commander's intention was to relocate lowland Burman villagers into the new area. However, his plan met with strong resistance. After arriving, many of the Burman villagers were unable to adjust to their new environment. After some conflict with local villagers they returned to their old villages and the development plan was finally abandoned.

Location: Kyauk Kyi, Pegu Division

Coordinates: N 18° 20' 59.96" and E 096° 56' 30.80"

Date: 1979, 2006

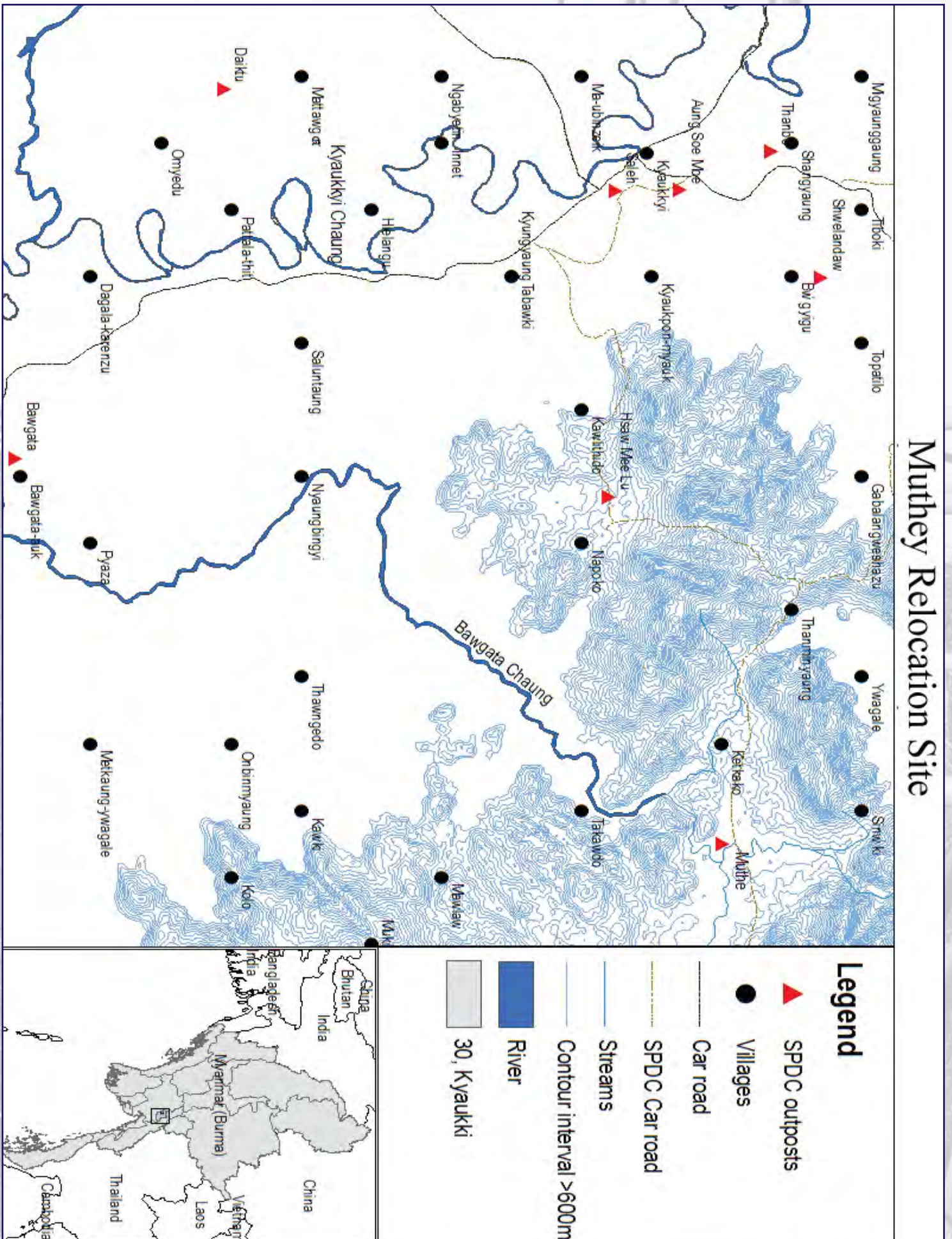
Number of villages relocated: 4

Names of relocated villages: Saybawlu, Bawpukhi, Htee-panar-a-khi and Paw-hpaw-khi

Current population:

Current army units:

Orders issued by:



Bawgaligyi relocation site or new town project

Bawgaligyi is located 38 miles east of Toungoo and is under the administration of Thandaung township, Karen State. The site was originally set up in 1979 by the BSPP and many of the original villagers have been able to return to their abandoned villages after paying bribes to local army battalions.

Most recently, Bawgaligyi has been trumpeted as a 'model village' development project and currently houses 1, 820 people. The majority of the population is Karen with a few Burman villagers providing business services.

Plans for the new town include the creation of 12 sub-districts covering an estimated 650 acres. To allow for this expansion the surrounding farms and orchards were confiscated.

Villagers earn their living from harvesting durian, mangoes, and betel nuts. The produce is then sold to Burman traders in the villages or taken to Taungoo. There it is sold to purchase rice or essential household items. Between 2006 and 2007 the authorities imposed severe restrictions on times when villagers could collect their harvest. While these restrictions have been eased it is still very difficult for villagers to collect their produce. Cardamom harvesting time remains restricted and only recently have villagers been allowed to sleep in their orchards. A portion of what produce they are able to collect must also be given to the various military outposts they pass on returning to the relocation site.

There is a middle school and a number of students are also able to study up to 10th Standard, however, they must attend 10th Standard examination at Thandaung Myothit, at least 1 days walk away. In addition to the school there is also a 25 bed hospital although service is poor. There is little to no medicine and nurses are often forced to earn a living outside the camp. In 2005, ICRC was allowed to install water purification equipment but the organisation has been refused access to the area ever since. It must be noted that villagers have stated that after ICRC left the incidence of human rights abuses has increased.

Bawgaligyi is located in a narrow mountainous area and there is very little space for future settlement. As a result villagers are forced to seek shelter in other people's houses. Inhabitants are prohibited from leaving the site and must therefore secretly leave to find food and other items. Some villagers have been able to pay bribes to local army units and have been allowed to stay at abandoned villages. There are a variety of recommendation letters that can be bought from the local authorities. Some allow one day, others a week, and cost 200-300 kyat and 2,000 kyat respectively.

Bawgaligyi is located in a particularly strategic location and the Bawgaligyi-Mawchi car road provides easy access to the SPDC camps at Yethogyi (Kaw-the-der), Maung Daing Gyi (Naw Soe), Sikehdo (Si-ker-der), Pyaungmatho (Plaw-mu-der) and Busakee.

Every family has to work once a week for the SPDC at these various outposts. They have to cut bamboo poles, carry them to the outpost and repair them when required. They are also forced to clean brush along the side of the car road to prevent resistance forces attacking from undercover. They are also responsible for maintaining the fences surrounding the site and providing security.

Location: Thandaung Township, Karen State
Coordinates: N 18° 54' 32.32" and E 096° 47' 9.04"

Date: 1979

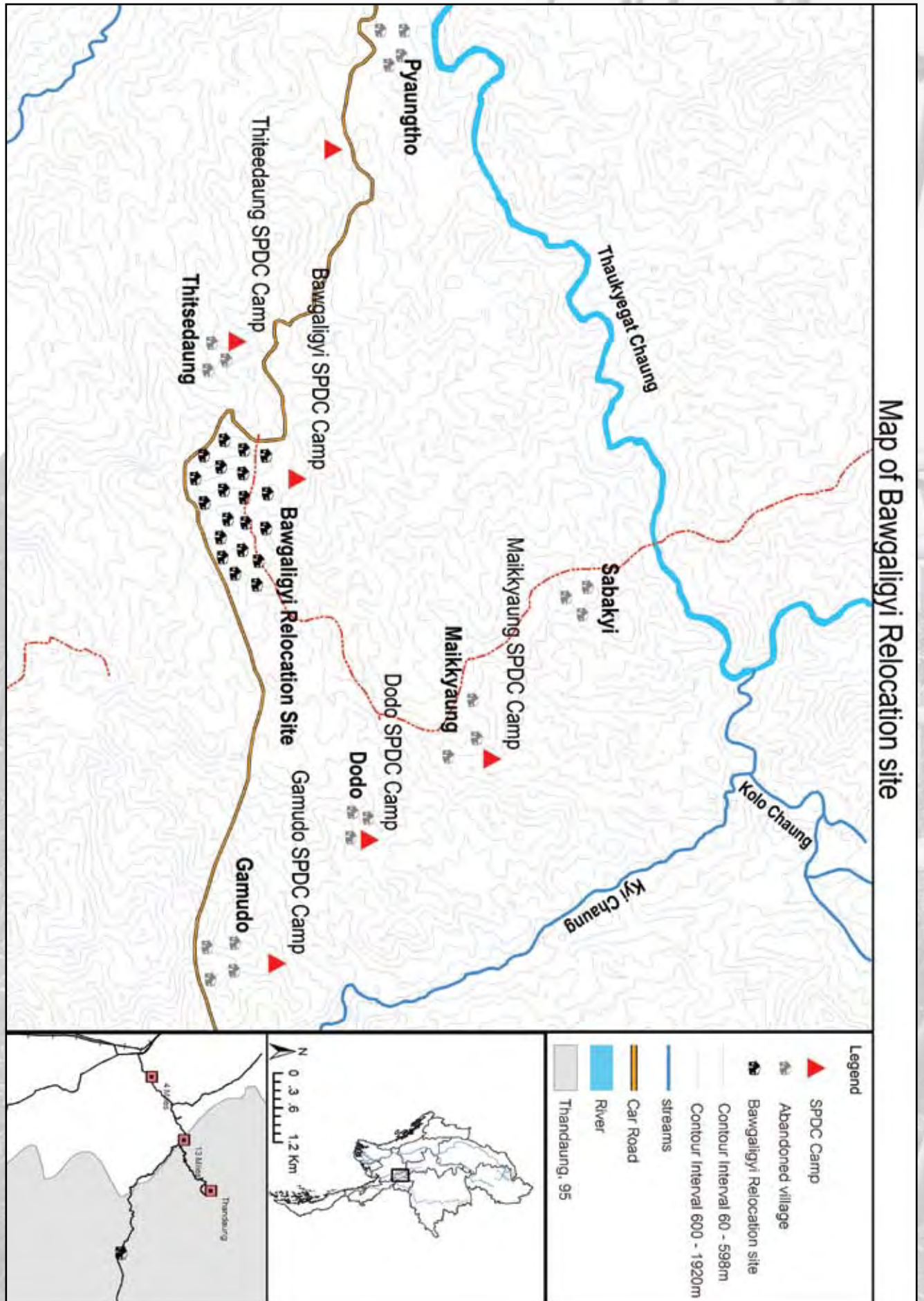
Number of villages relocated: 6

Names of relocated villages: Me Kyaw (Maw Ko Der), Sabagyi (Pe`kawder), Garmudor (Garmuder), Doe Do (Der Doh) , Kondaing (Kuplawder), Pyaungtho (Mawpahder).

Current population: 1,820

Current army units:

Orders issued by:



Marlardaw

Maw Ker Tha Per Koh (Ka Na Soe Bin in Burmese) is located at Thebyenyunt village tract, Thandaung Township, Karen State. During its 2006 offensive in the area, the Burma Army, MOC16, ordered three mountain villages to relocate to this new lowland site. It is located at the foot of an SPDC army outpost called Kanazoebin which the relocated villagers were forced to build.

Villagers were given 15 days to move to the new site and each family was given a plot of land 40x60 feet wide. Due to the lack of space it is very difficult to survive and life is made worse due to the fact that there is no shade. Villagers were ordered to clear the land of all trees and subsequently the summer season is extremely hot while in the rainy season the land floods. Illness is commonplace and while there is a SPDC built clinic there is little to no medicine and villagers who can afford it have to travel to the hospital in Zayagyi town.

There are approximately 700 people living in the site and each person has to give the local army unit 5,000 kyat a year. This is becoming increasingly more difficult due to SPDC travel restrictions which only allow villagers to leave for four days a year during harvest time. Villagers have to survive by returning to their abandoned orchards and selling what produce they can find in return for food thus leaving little left to pay the extortion fees demanded by the army.

Between January and March 2008, villagers from Marlardaw were forced to construct a road connecting Thabyenyunt through Marlardaw to Zindainggyi (Saw Tay Der) SPDC camp. At the end of March, villagers were then ordered to construct another road connecting Thabyenyunt relocation site to Zindaingale (Ka Mu Lo). A person who could not go for road construction had to pay 40,000 – 50,000 kyat to the local SPDC authorities. At least one person stepped on a landmine while working on the road. In addition to road construction, villagers are also required to repair military outposts and act as porters for the army.

Location: Thandaung Township, Karen State
Coordinates: N 18° 38' 2.28" and E 096° 43' 5.01"

Date: 2006

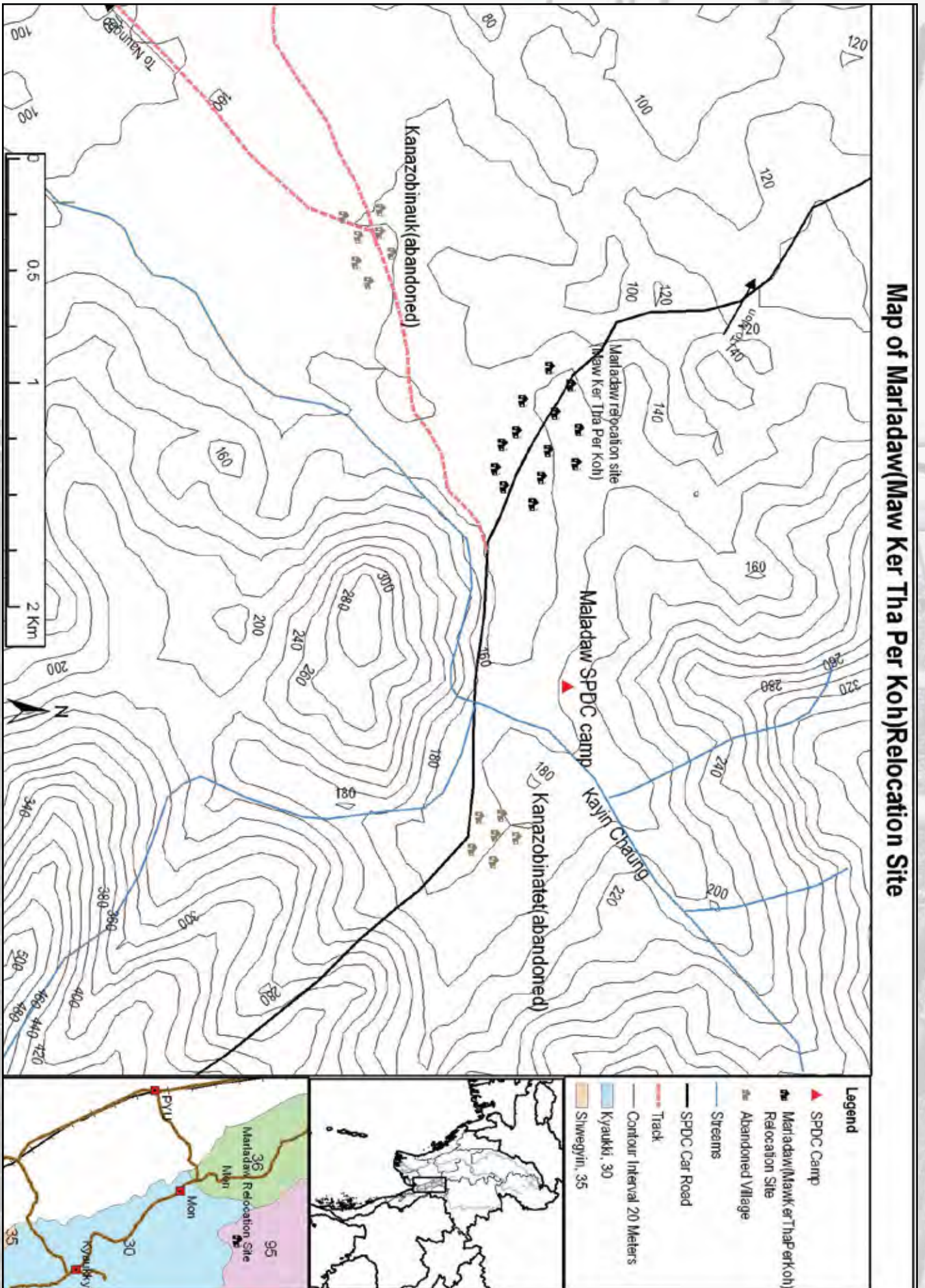
Number of villages relocated: 3

Names of relocated villages: Ka Na Zoe Bin, Ka Na Zoe Bin Atet and Marlardaw.

Current population: 700

Current army units: MOC 16

Orders issued by:



Taikpu (Play Hsar Loe)

Taikpu, locally known as Play Hsar Loe (Play Sa Lo), is located in Thandaung Township east of the of the Sittang river. It is approximately 10 miles east of Za Yat Kyi town and has a population of 394 people. It was created in April 2006 when the SPDC's LID 66 ordered the primarily Maw Nay Bwa villages of Myauk Chaung, Han Tho and Bebeh to relocate as part of an ongoing pacification campaign in the area that began in 1974.

Location: Thandaung Township
Coordinates: N 18° 45' 18.57" and E 096° 42' 56.42"
Date: 2006
Number of villages relocated: 3
Names of relocated villages: Myaukchaung (Yer Loe), Hantho (Plawbawder), Bibe (Laywawloe).
Current population: 1953 (approx. 400 families)
Current army units: LID 66
Orders issued by:

As in other sites, villagers face numerous restrictions and abuses by the Burmese army. Although authorities have promised to allow villagers to travel to Thabyaynyunt to trade what little they can forage from their orchards, they have been constantly prevented from doing so. Throughout 2006 they were used as forced labour and in 2007 they were ordered to clear the area and construct a 16 mile long road between Thabyaynyunt and Taikpu. Since completion of the road they have constantly been used to porter goods between Thabyenyunt and Mae Tin Taing (Htee Lo), Hsaw Ma Kyi, Tha Kaw, Paw Pa, and Thay Pler Day. Between May and June 2007 the Burmese army also forced the villagers to work for their camp, repairing buildings, carrying food, performing sentry duties and cutting bamboo. As a result of army demands, villagers are unable to adequately support themselves and their families.

The Burmese Army strictly controls movement in and out of the area and villagers found outside without permission risk being shot on sight. Villagers' plantations and orchards have become rotten and overgrown due to the Army's restrictions and labour demands. Food is almost impossible to find. As a result, villagers' health continues to deteriorate and there is no medicine available to treat them. Those facing health problems have little recourse but to rely on traditional medicines as there are no other medical facilities in the area. Adding further to their health problems is the lack of clean water especially in the hot season. Villagers must travel to their abandoned villages and carry water back to Taikpu in the process avoiding landmines and army patrols. Villagers reported that the most common diseases they suffer from are malaria, diarrhoea, gastric illness, malnutrition, colic pain, chicken pox, and anaemia.

In the 2007 rainy season, the Burmese army conducted military operations to the east of Taikpu. Two battalions, under the control of MOC 9 and TOC 2, were responsible. The main unit active in the area was TOC-2, consisting of LIB 540, LIB 375 and IB 539. They ordered villagers to patrol and scout with them, carry food supplies and build a number of new army outposts and camps including, Saw Tay Der outpost, Ler Wah Soe outpost, Klar Ho Day camp and one other camp between Ler Klah Der and Toe Hta.

Military operations in the area continue to destroy any potential livelihood the villagers may have access to. On the 3rd of March 2007, MOC 9 and LIB 539 soldiers burnt down the forest in the surrounding area destroying what little crops, fruits and vegetables, the villagers could collect. In addition they also burnt down three gardens of betel nut and six gardens of cardamom all belonging to Taikpu villagers. Without this source of income villagers are unable to buy food for their families. Our research estimates that in 2007, 49 orchards and 4 houses were burnt, 3 people were killed, villagers were forced to provide 1,400 bamboo poles for the army and 741 people were used as forced labour.



Bawgata (Kaw Tha Say)

In an attempt to secure the Kyauk Kyi-Shwegyin car road, between Bawgata to Minlan Thanseik, the SPDC ordered that all villages along the route be relocated. These villages included Ma U Bin (Burman), Tonetada (To They Poo), Gawthazin Gon (Kaw Tha Say), Yun Pon (Shan village), Ngape Inn (Shan village), Shwai De (Karen), Mabi Ywama (Mabi Doh), Shukinthaya, Konemynitthaya and Mabi Atetsu (Mabi Poe). For the purposes of this report Gawthazin Gone village was selected as a sample. There are also approximately 300 relocated families living in the surrounding area around Bawgata village.

Bawgata is located 17 miles from Shwegyin town (Hsaw Htee in Karen) and 15 miles from Kyauk Kyi Town. It is located in what is considered to be a grey zone, under the administration of both the SPDC and KNU. Villagers from Bawgata have frequently been subjected to arbitrary arrest, torture, and execution and they have been arrested and forced to pay exorbitant fines after nearby clashes between SPDC and KNLA troops. To prevent contact with KNLA forces the Burma Army has relied on forced relocation. Gawthazingon (Kaw Tha Say) has moved three times in the last two years, and at all times within an area of 3 square miles. As a result, villagers have scattered throughout the area and have taken shelter in other villages or in some instances moved to refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border.

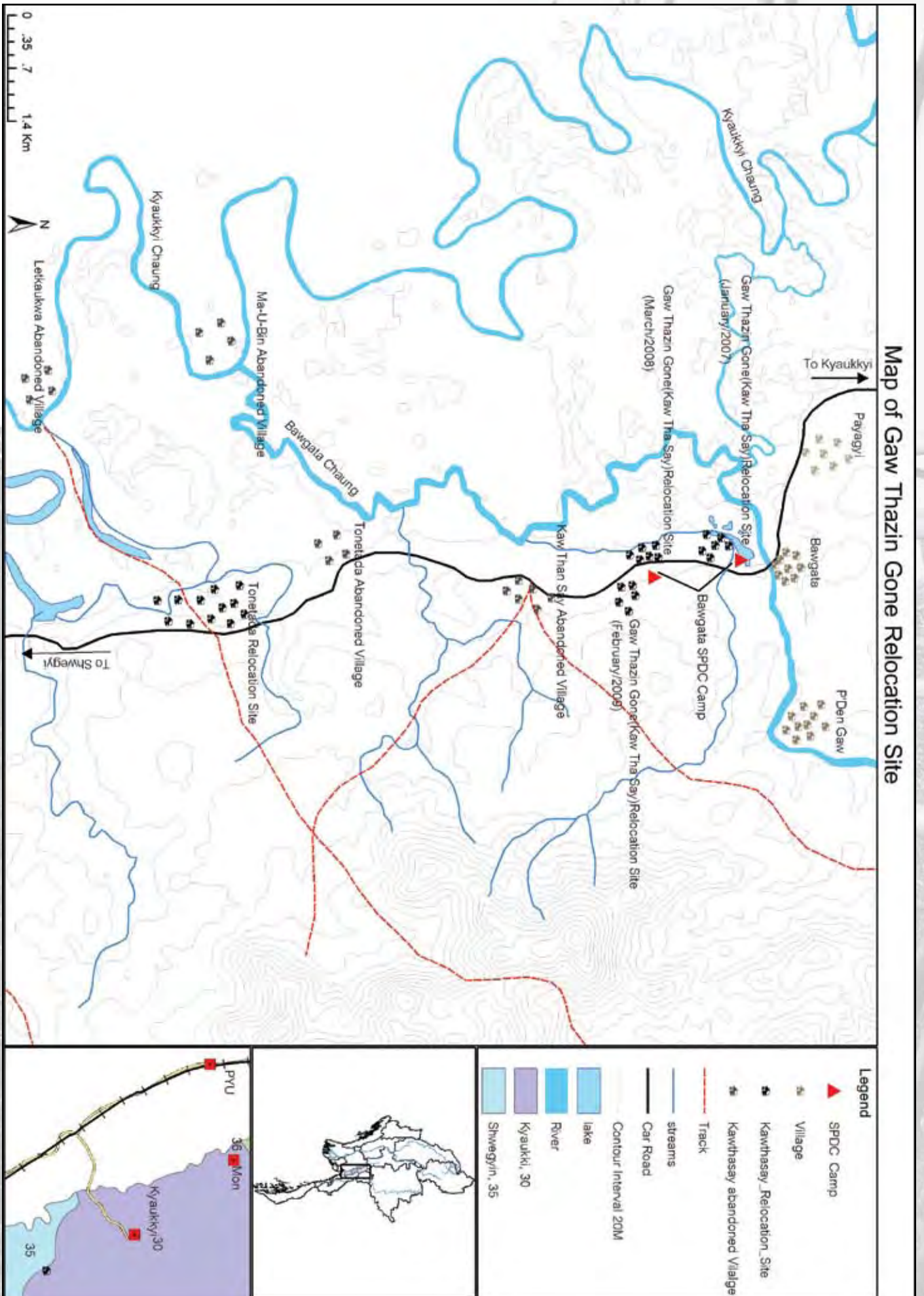
Between 2007 and 2008 the area came under the command of the SPDC's Tactical Operations Command (TOC) stationed at Bawgata. All of the villages between Minlan- Thanzeik and Bawgata were ordered to relocate to Pan Inn and the surrounding areas around Bawgata. In operations to clear the mountainous areas of KNLA forces, the TOC has based its forces around lowland villages and reports of human rights abuses have increased accordingly. In addition to demands made by the local army units, villagers are also forced to pay bribes to the local police.

Gawthazin Gone (Kaw Tha Say), one of the villages that had been abandoned, was divided into two parts: Ywat Ma and Ywar Thit. Most people in Ywar Ma are Burman and Shan and comprise 80 families. Most of the Karen and some Burman, approximately 120 families, live in Ywar Thit. At the time of writing only Gawthazin Gone is affected by a relocation order. It has relocated 200 families or 548 people. Most of them are Christian and there is also a small Buddhist population.

Originally, Bawgata had a middle school which allowed students to be educated up to 7th standard. Later only a primary school was allowed to operate and it did so unofficially. Children who wish to attend middle school or high school have to go to P'dai Kaw village one hour's walk away. There is a rural health clinic but there is little or no medicine. Villagers have to buy medicine themselves or rely on traditional alternatives.

Most of the relocated villagers in Bawgata are farmers while others make a living as day labourers working on farms and picking dog-fruit in the forest. Every family who want to work on their own farm needs to purchase a recommendation letter at 3,000 kyat for 7 days. If villagers wish to avoid forced labour they must pay 500 kyat per family or more. Due to the severe restrictions on movement, excessive extortion demands, and the requirement to do forced labour, villagers are facing extreme poverty and are forced to survive on nothing but watery rice porridge.

Location: Shwegyin Township
Coordinates: N 18° 10' 31.48" and E 096° 50' 41.60"
Date: 1974
Number of villages relocated: 11
Names of relocated villages: Kaw Tha Say, Ma U Bin, Tone Tan Ta, Gawthazin Gone, Yun Pon (Shan village), Ngape In (Shan village), Shwai De, Mabi-Ywama (Mabi-Doh), Mabi-atetsu (Mabi-Poe), Shu Kin Thaya, Konmyinthaya.
Current population: 548 (200 families)
Current army units: TOC 1, MOC 101
Orders issued by:



Thabyaynyunt relocation site

Thabyaynyunt relocation village, also known as Thabyeynyunt San Pya, is located south west of Thandaung township, at the foot of Bone Ma Tee Mountain, 10 miles south-east of Zatatgyi town, Tantabin Township, Pegu division.

As part of the government's development strategy MOC 16 commander, Maj. Gen. Thet Oo, ordered 4 Karen hill tribe villages to relocate between the 20th of April and the 12th of August 2006. This site has been designated as a model village (San Pya translates as ideal or model) and the SPDC authorities have set up a village administration organised through government appointed village heads.

There are 199 families living in the area totaling 1,064 people. All villagers are required to provide labour at the nearby military outposts at Thabyaynyunt, Zindainggyi, Moepyantada and Malardaw. These outposts, and the relocation of the villages, are meant to secure areas at the foot of the mountain and provide security for communication and transport between Kyauk Kyi-Thabyaynyunt-Zindainggyi-Zindaing Galay and the surrounding mountainous areas.

Every dry season, villagers have to work at the military outposts or carry ammunition or food supplies. They are also required to serve as watch men or messengers at the army camps. They must perform these duties at least 5 times in a year. In 2007, the situation was extremely difficult for the relocated villagers. They were used as forced labour in road construction. Villagers were ordered to clear the road before heavy construction equipment was used. During army patrols, villagers were ordered to walk between SPDC soldiers in case of a KNLA attack. Every dry season 10 villagers, rotating every three weeks, are ordered to work on reconstructing the Thabyeynyunt -Zindainggyi road (The road is only passable during the dry season after which it is washed away by the rains).

Due to its 'model' designation, the village has a small hospital, however, there is often no medicine. Those seeking medical attention can also travel to the larger hospital in Zayatgyi, but medicine there is also in short supply. People suffering from illness have to buy medicine from outside. There is a middle school which allows education up to 10th Standard but no educational supplies.

Most villagers earn a living through owning orchards and gardens but some work as day labourers. A few are able to cultivate hill-side farms within the relocation site vicinity and others may be able to travel, with much difficulty, to their abandoned villages.

During the months of January to August 2007, villagers were not allowed to go outside, except to work on road construction. As a result, they were unable to clear the wild plants and weeds from their durian and betel nut gardens. In September 2008, they were only allowed to visit their farms twice a month and weren't allowed to sleep in the orchards. As the harvesting time for durian is May to September, the fruit was either destroyed by insects or rotted. What fruit they were able to save and sell, either to local traders or in Zayatgyi on a three day pass, provided very little in the form of income.

A number of villagers have been able to return to their old villages and tend to their farms and orchards. However, these are 12 miles away and it takes about three and half hours to travel to their farms, and, carrying a load, longer to return. Villagers have to leave at 6.00 a.m. and must return by 5.00 p.m. Villagers must also travel to each outpost and are given other duties, usually carrying supplies or messages. The

Name: Thabyaynyunt
Location: Tantabin Township, Pegu Division
Coordinates: N 18° 39' 0.66" and E 096° 39' 25.84"
Date: 2006
Number of villages relocated: 4
Names of relocated villages: Zingdainggyi, Zingdaing Galay, Me' Sa Pyu (Hsaw Wah Der), Ga-mone-aing (Ler Sha Htoo)
Current population: 1064 (199 families)
Current army units: MOC 16
Orders issued by: Maj. Gen. Thet Oo, Commander, MOC 16

villagers' orchards are on the other side of the Yaukthawa Chaung (Play Lo Klo River) and they must each pay 400 kyat to the army to cross by boat. Taking into account all the problems faced on their journey, villagers have at most 2 to 3 hours to pick produce from their farms. What little they are able to carry is also reduced on the way back as bribes, in the form of produce, are often demanded by the outpost they have to pass through.

The relocation order has also had serious consequences for the culture of one of the Karen tribes, the Maw Nay Pwa. The Maw Nay Pwa are a strongly animist and traditional tribe of the Karen. One of their villages, Zingdaing Galay (Kamulo) was also ordered to relocate. As a consequence a number of their traditions were destroyed including the ancient custom of keeping a Karen drum, a number of which were looted or destroyed by SPDC troops. (see Traditions at risk)



Relocation sites in Thandaung Townships

Thandaung township is in the far north of Karen State and borders Karenni State which lies to the east. Between 1976 and 1978, during the four cuts campaign, the army first began to construct a number of military outposts in the area. They continued this expansion and between 1992 and 1997 the army launched a number of operations aimed at depriving the civilian population of its ability to support resistance forces. The Burma Army swept through the area destroying farms and orchards that villagers relied on to live, thus depriving the local population of their livelihoods and the ability to adequately feed themselves.

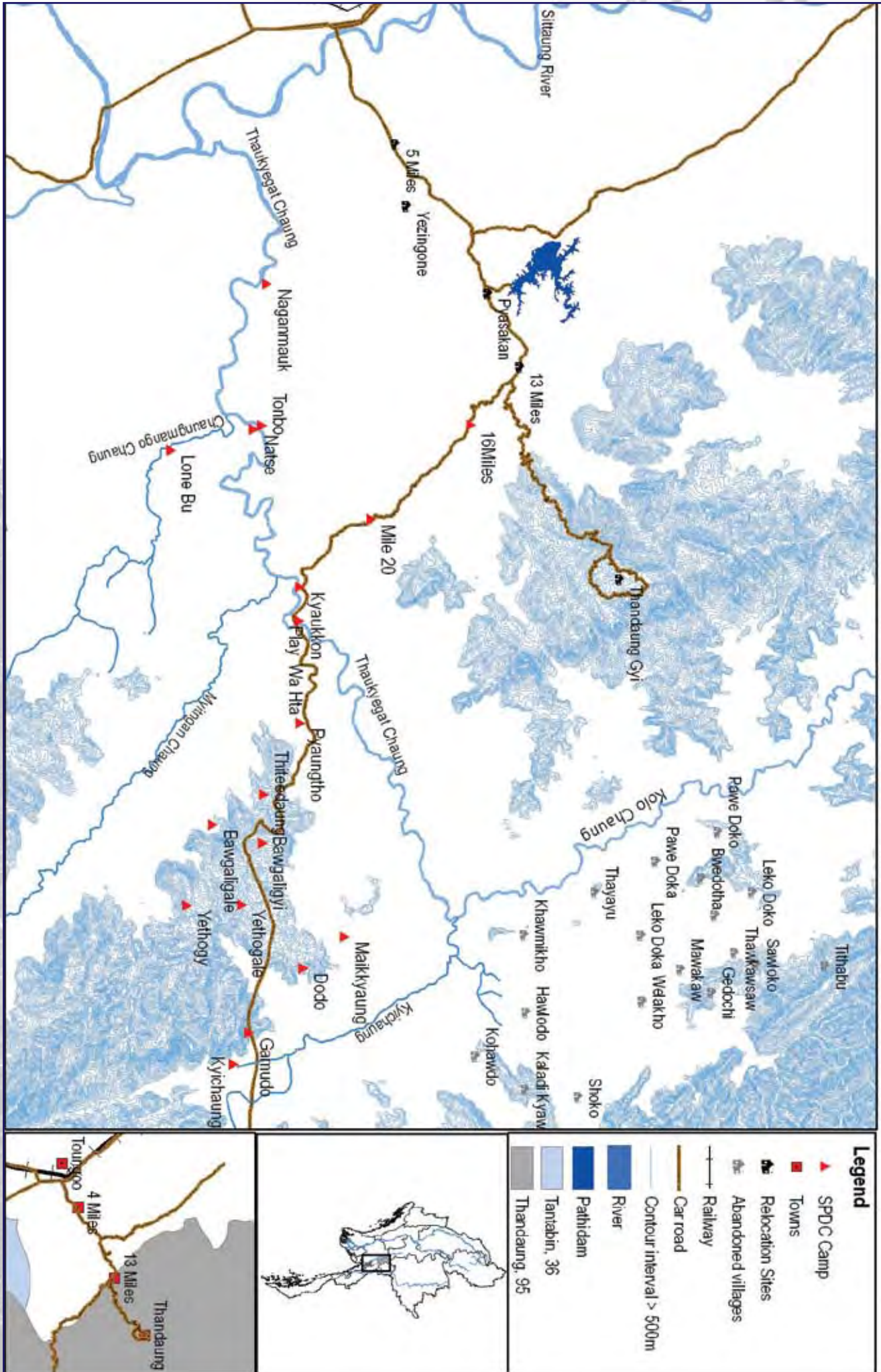
In early 2006, the SPDC embarked on a further concerted effort to control the civilian population in the north of Karen State. The Burma Army demarcated the eastern bank of the Thaukyekut river as a military operation zone and to prevent villagers' movement in the area destroyed the Thaukyekut Chaung (Day Loe) bridge and mined the local footpaths.

As part of its pacification policy in the area the army forced 16 villages to relocate. In total, 2,487 people were ordered to leave their homes, the majority belonging to the Bwe and Pa-ku Karen sub-groups. Many of those ordered to relocate were Christian and they were forced to leave behind the many churches they had built. Unlike in other areas where relocation sites had been previously defined, villagers were ordered to simply flee with no provision made as to where. Villagers took refuge in areas around Thandaung Gyi, Pyasakan, Yezingone, and Tonebogyi. There they had little option but to build small houses on other people's land.

The area around the relocation site is demarcated as a black zone. All males are forbidden from entering the area and any villagers found are subject to summary execution or arrest. As a result, villagers are afraid to travel to their abandoned orchards and tend to them. With little or no income the villagers find it extremely difficult to obtain the most basic of foodstuffs and have to rely on selling what little possessions they have.

The Burma Army, as in other areas, forces villagers to do manual labour for them. In October 2006, 1,771 people were forced to work for the military. Extortion is also widespread and villagers frequently have to provide goods for the army. In the same month they had to give the local army unit 120 viss of cardamom seeds (worth about 1,200,000 kyat), 10 baskets of rice, 1,138 baskets of paddy, 25,000 Bamboo poles and 70 logs. The Burma Army, also in October, burnt down 17 houses and confiscated 34 acres of cardamom plantation. During the summer of 2006, villagers were forced to pay reconstruction fees, at 50,000 kyat per village, for 5 bridges the SPDC had destroyed.

Map of Thandaung Gyi Relocation Sites



Relocation sites in lowland areas adjacent to Thandaung – Tantabin townships

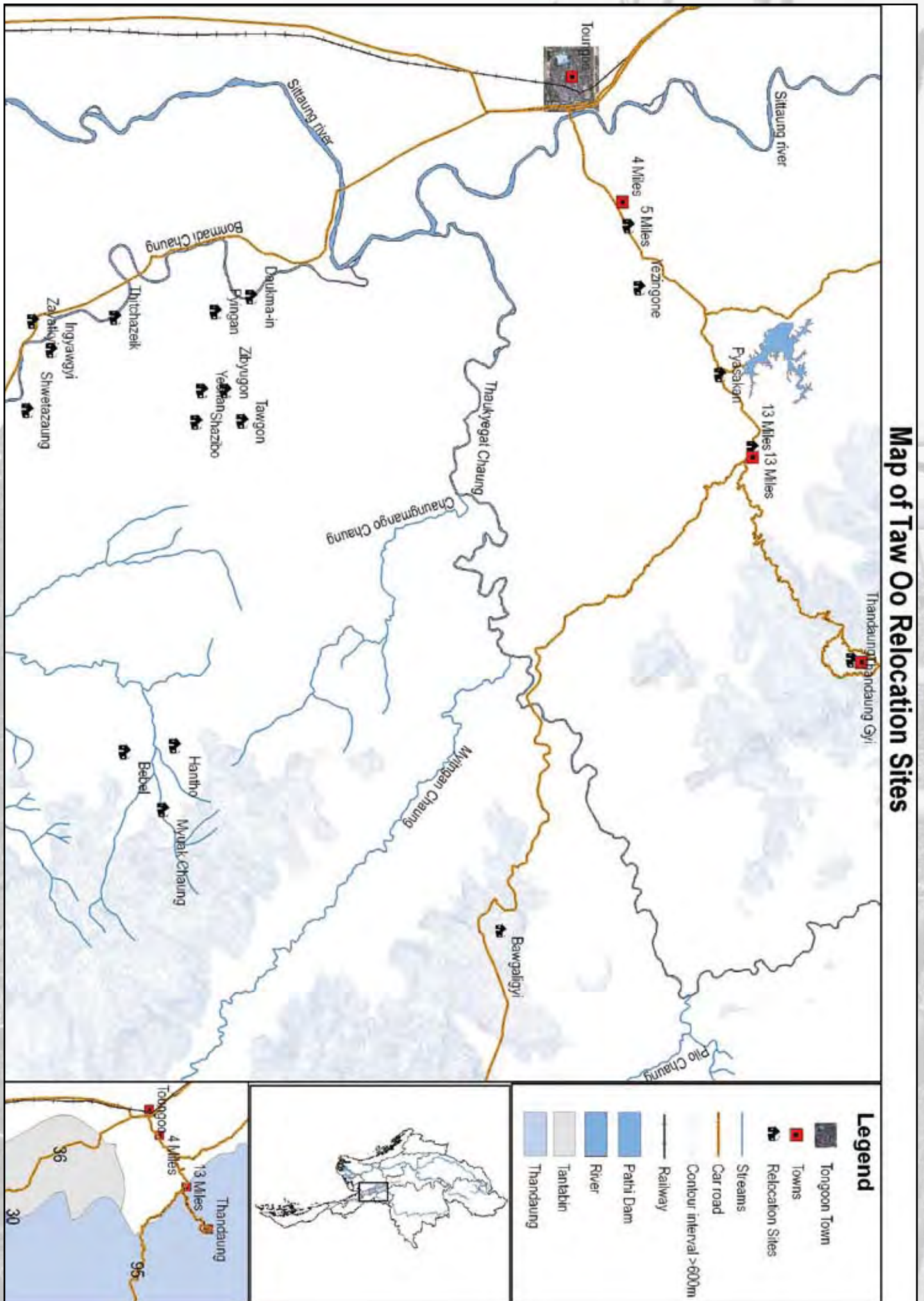
Military operations in this area originally began in 1975. Burma Army troops entered the area and began systematically destroying farms and orchards and burning down villages. Villagers fled into hiding and were able to return to their abandoned villages after the army had withdrawn to central bases. As in other areas, military activity again intensified in 1997. Troops moved into the area burning orchards and looting villages, however, unlike previous times, the army began to construct a number of fixed outposts.

The situation deteriorated even further, when, in January, 2006, the Burma Army's LID 66 entered Thandaung Township and immediately imposed orders restricting the movement of the civilian population. Government forces planted landmines on paths leading to villager's farms and orchards and the local agricultural market, which provided the main livelihood for most of the villagers, was disbanded.

Troops under LID 66 ordered 7 villages to relocate and demarcated the area as a black zone. The orders to relocate were curiously inconsistent. A number of villages were verbally ordered to leave while others were allowed to stay if they obtained a recommendation letter. Those villagers who had to leave were given no orders as to where to go and migrated towards smaller towns including Zepyugone, Tawgone, Yeshan, Shazebo, Aungmyeyar, Pyingun, Laythit, Thitchaseik, Tawma-in, Inngyaw, and Shwetazaung.

In order to ensure security the army has constructed 7 outposts in the area: Yetagon, Lamaingbya, Ohnbinchaung, Myatswa Chaung, Ale' Chaung, Kyauksintaung and Patala Myaung. SPDC troops responsible for the area are controlled by LID-66 and are comprised of LIB-568, LIB-240, LIB-567 and IB-80. In March, 2006, the army burned the brush along the Yethogyi (Kaw Thay Der) - Busakee car road stating that it was to prevent ambush by the KNLA. In the process troops also destroyed villager's orchards, especially cardamom plantations, causing yet more difficulties for the local population.

Most of the people in Taungoo district practice slash and burn paddy cultivation or own betel nut, betel leaf, durian, or cardamom orchards. However, the soil is particularly poor for paddy cultivation and yields insufficient rice. As a result, villagers buy rice by selling or exchanging orchard products. The mining of the footpaths and the closure of the market has had immeasurable consequences on the lives of the local population.



Widespread human rights violations have been occurring in ethnic areas of Burma since the late nineteen sixties. This report, based on a 2008/9 field survey, focuses on the government's use of mass displacement and relocation designed to destabilize the ethnic populations of Karen State.

The government first initiated a policy of ethnic relocation in Karen State in 1975 as part of what became known as the four cuts campaign, a policy intended to deprive the ethnic resistance movement of food, money, intelligence and recruits. While noting the existence of such earlier camps, this report specifically examines the lives of people living in sites after a further concerted effort to control the civilian population was initiated in 2006.

This report identifies three types of site created by the military regime. The first, roughly translated from Burmese as 'model' villages, are some of the most recent examples and have been created under the guise of development; the second type, initiated in 1979, are primarily security driven and have resulted in highland villages being relocated to the plains; the third, which are also security initiated and mainly located in Taungoo, consists of villages cleared from areas of military infrastructure. Villagers in this latter type, unlike the previous two, have been given no provision for relocation; rather, the population was told to vacate the area with little regard as to where they would go.

Relocated villagers, despite the fact that purported contact with resistance forces has all but been eradicated, continue to face severe abuses by Burmese authorities. Forced labour on infrastructure projects and military controlled business is widespread. Villagers are ordered to act as sentries, messengers, porters and minesweepers by the Burma Army. Corruption and illegal taxation is prevalent in all the sites assessed. In addition, the opportunity for making a living has been drastically reduced. Malnutrition, especially in infants, has increased and is exacerbated by army restrictions that prevent villagers from access to food, medicine and education.

This report highlights serious issues of concern that continue to affect the ethnic populations of Burma. It highlights the government's disregard for the rights of its people and its blatant use of the local population as little more than a captive workforce to be used as the military dictates.