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MON NATIONAL RELIEF COMMITTEE

MONTHLY REPORT

APRIL

1997

The Five Points of the Aim of Mon National Relief Committee

- 1. Resettlement of the refugees who become homeless due to the oppression of Rangoon military regime.**
- 2. To help the welfare of the refugees who become jobless due to oppression of Rangoon military regime.**
- 3. To take care and look after the health of the refugees.**
- 4. To fight against illiteracy for the children in the refugee camps.**
- 5. To struggle for human rights.**

The Organization of Mon National Relief Committee

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Phra Wongsā Pala | - Chairman |
| 2. Nai Shwe Thein | - Vice Chairman |
| 3. Nai Kasauh Mon | - Acting Secretary |
| 4. Nai Dung Htaw | - Member |
| 5. Nai Chit Nyunt | - Member |
| 6. Phra Tay Jae | - Member |

Monthly Report of Mon National Relief Committee

(April, 1997)

Mon Refugees Fled into Thai Soil

Since the Mon Army, Mergui District (MAMD) split off from the New Mon State Party and took control in Mergui District area where the Mon and other ethnic refugees were taking refuge, the wars in the area have been resumed again. After a split, there was terrible situation reached to those refugees and their safety was in doubt. In December, the SLORC local troops launched a new military offensive to the MAMD area, but the breakaway group could protect their territory. Accompanied with that operation, several Karen, Tavoy, Thai (of Burma) and Mon villages were relocated and many hundreds of refugees also arrived to the border area under control of MAMD.

After the offensive in December, the SLORC troops have resumed another intensive offensive again in third week of April to occupy the whole area. Along the offensives, the most refugees who are residing on the border area under control of MAMD were also suffered because of this new offensives. To defeat MAMD militarily, the SLORC troops also arrested and used several numbers of civilian porter along the operation.

Actually, the new offensive was started in mid of April and that military operation plan was prepared for over one month. According to initial aim, the SLORC troops had attempted to occupy the ABSDF and KNU bases along the border area and latter priority was to occupy the MAMD bases. The operation was organized by Coastal Region Military Command which bases in Mergui town, capital of Tenasserim Division, and it combined three battalions such as LIB 626, 358 and 224 to operate the offensive. The whole operation was managed by Col. Aung Khin and he kept his troops for a two-weeks offensives. In operation, the SLORC used totally 12 companies of troops from those battalions and each battalion have to provide 4 companies. It used about 800 troops and arrested about 300 villagers to be porters from Mergui, Tavoy and Yebyu townships of Tenasserim Division and brought them to the frontline. Those civilian porters were forced to carry ammunitions and supplies for the military and sometimes the soliders also used them as human-shields or mine-sweepers when they moved advance across battlefields in which rebels' land-mines were operated.

On April 13, the SLORC troops turned their operation to MAMD and kept ahead to occupy the headquarters of MAMD that situated in Huai Phak area after their occupation some KNU, Muslim and ABSDF student bases surrounding its control area. The Huai Phak (see map) is situated in border area opposite of Thep Sakae District of Prachuab Kirichan Province. By firing with motor shells and marching advance to MAMD military camp, SLORC tried for three days to occupy. In advancing toward to camp, the Burmese troops forced civilian porters to walk ahead of them and some porters also died because of land-mine explosions. Starting from April 23 up to 25, it had tried to occupy the base but later failed and turned its operation to another MAMD military camp again.

On April 26, it conducted a new fighting to Naung Hui camp of MAMD and shelled into a small village that situated in the area because military camp was also based close to that village. All villagers of the whole village had to flee into Thai soil or displaced inside territory. On the same day, they could occupy the military base of MAMD and burnt down all houses in village into ashes. One hardwood factory owned by a Thai company was also burnt down. Before the ceasefire agreement, the villagers received income by working as day labourer in factory and but after ceasefire logging concession in the area

was closed by both Thai and Burmese authorities. Since then, the villagers have faced difficulties for survival and at the same time, they still could not return back to their native places because of various kinds of on-going abuses.

After its occupation of Naung Hui area including MAMD military base and refugee village, it also shelled to Chaung Chi area (see map) where the most refugee villagers were situating. To get the military base, its troops fired with motor shells into villages such as Kwan Raeh Mon, Kwan Seik Mon and Mai Att. Those villages were established for several years and all buildings were destroyed within one day on April 27. About afternoon time, the villagers fled into Thai territory to accept a safe haven. While group by group of villagers of Chaung Chi area were fleeing into Thai territory, two children also died on the way because of tiredness. After the occupation of the area, the Burmese troops burnt down all houses, rice-store, schools, hospitals, monasteries and other buildings which left in the villages into ashes. The villagers also lost the left belongings in their houses.

As a result, some about 800 refugees created a make-shift shelters in the border police checkpoint in Thai territory for nearly one week and then they have to return to their unsafe villages after the Burmese troops returned back. Some refugees also displaced in jungle inside the area. While refugees were remaining in Thai territory, they have faced shortage of foods, shelters and medicines. The refugees were also suffered by various kinds of diseases because of lack provision of medicines. The Thai authorities provided them with some small amount of medicines and foods which did not reach to the needs.

The MNRC and also other international aid agencies could not get enough chance to help those refugees as the Thai authorities had prevented all the time and denied access. The relief workers were just allowed for a while such as to arrange for a meeting with those refugees. Even the group of civilian fled from fear of well-founded persecution of the military regime that rules their origin country, they were never recognized as refugees or asylum seekers. At the end, they had to return back to their unsafe villages again after they had no more choice.

Lack of protection to Burmese Ethnic Refugees

According to the well-documented agencies including some governments and human rights monitoring organizations, Burma that is ruled by a military regime, has been remained with one of the worst human rights records in the world. Since it seized State power in 1988, the military regime SLORC has been constantly condemned by international community for its numerous acts of arbitrary execution, arrest, killing, torture, rape, forced labour and unceasing tax collection. Because of various kinds of mentioned abuses conducted by SLORC troops against civilians in rural area especially to ethnic community who are residing in war confrontation zones, those villagers had to escape from their home villages. Such abuses have been committed as systematic persecution under the program of SLORC's **ethnic cleansing policy** and as a result ten of thousands of ethnic refugees have fled into border area or Thai territory for many years.

At the same time, Thailand also created a better relationship with Burmese commanders of SLORC with business purposes and the ethnic refugees have been denied access into Thailand or refuge inside Thai soil while it has pressured the ethnic armed forces to agree on ceasefire with SLORC. In 1997, after the intensive offensives launched by SLORC to the ethnic armed forces such as Karenni, Karen and breakaway Mon group, many thousands of refugees left their homes and tried to cross into Thailand. Many of them have been denied entry into Thailand and refoulement of those suffering refugees was also conducted by Thai authorities.

In January 1997, there was a big offensive launched by SLORC troops against Karenni refugees who are in Thai territory of a very unsafe places. Some refugees were

killed in the unexpected attack by Burmese troops and the Thai border police could not protect the refugees and prevent the advance of Burmese troops. After the attack, they were not moved from that unsafe camp to a more safer area deep inside of Thailand. Such terrorists' raid on refugees made them to be fear all the time although they are in Thai soil. But the Thai authorities disagreed to move them and put them in the former places.

Similarly, the Karen refugees have been attacked by Burmese troops for several times. Because of SLORC's intensive offensives that launched to KNU, ten of thousands of local villagers also abandoned their native homes and tried to take refuge in Thai territory. There were several evidences since February after the SLORC troops launched more offensives that several refugees who stayed inside Burmese territory or in camps at Thai soil became very unsafe. In February, Karen women and children who fled from KNU No. 4 Brigade were separated from men and all male refugees between age range 13 and 60 years were forced back into dangerous area of Burma. In March, a group 1,800 Karen men, women and children who fled into Thong Pha Phum District were also forced back into Burma.

In April, while the refugee villages that under control of MAMD were burnt down by SLORC troops, about 800 of Mon refugees reached in Thai territory and Thai authorities provided them temporary shelters close to border police checkpoint. But they could stay only temporarily and they were forced to resettle in Halockhani, a Mon refugee camp in border area of Kanchanaburi Province, and refused to provide them a safe place in Thai territory. Later, they have to decide to return their unsafe villages that were already burnt down by SLORC troops.

Although Thailand is a member of the UNHCR Executive Committee (EXCOM), it provided lack of protection to Burmese ethnic refugees. Since it has been a member of EXCOM, Thailand also has obligation in international law that related to refugee convention and protocol. The concept of principle of **non-refoulement** is also important in international law and a State like Thailand, whether it has ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention or 1967 protocol, or not, it should respect the non-refoulement principle. The principle applies to all States to respect for the safety of asylum seekers who escaped from war of their origin country and unrest political situation.

Otherwise, as a signatory member of Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Thailand has denied for the rights of refugee child and it attempted for separation of families in cases when it tried to push the refugees back to Burma. The refoulement of boys under 18 years old was against the rights of child and it was an evidence violating the international law. When it forced male members of refugees who arrived into Thai territory, several numbers of boy between 13 and 18 years old were pushed back to an unsafe places.

In Article 16 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it mentioned that *"the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled protection by society and the State"*, the refoulement of some members of families is meant violating the human rights principles. Thailand, as an active member of United Nations, should respect the international human rights instruments and provide humanitarian consideration to Burmese ethnic refugees.

The problems including unceasing influx of refugees that related to decade-long protracted civil war in Burma have not been solved yet. Without solving these problem and promising to guarantee ethnic equal racial rights and restoration of democratic system in Burma, the Burmese ethnic people must be continuously suffered by Burmese Army and the refugee problem will remain like before. The international community including Thailand should learn the root problem of Burma and help for national reconciliation of the whole country.

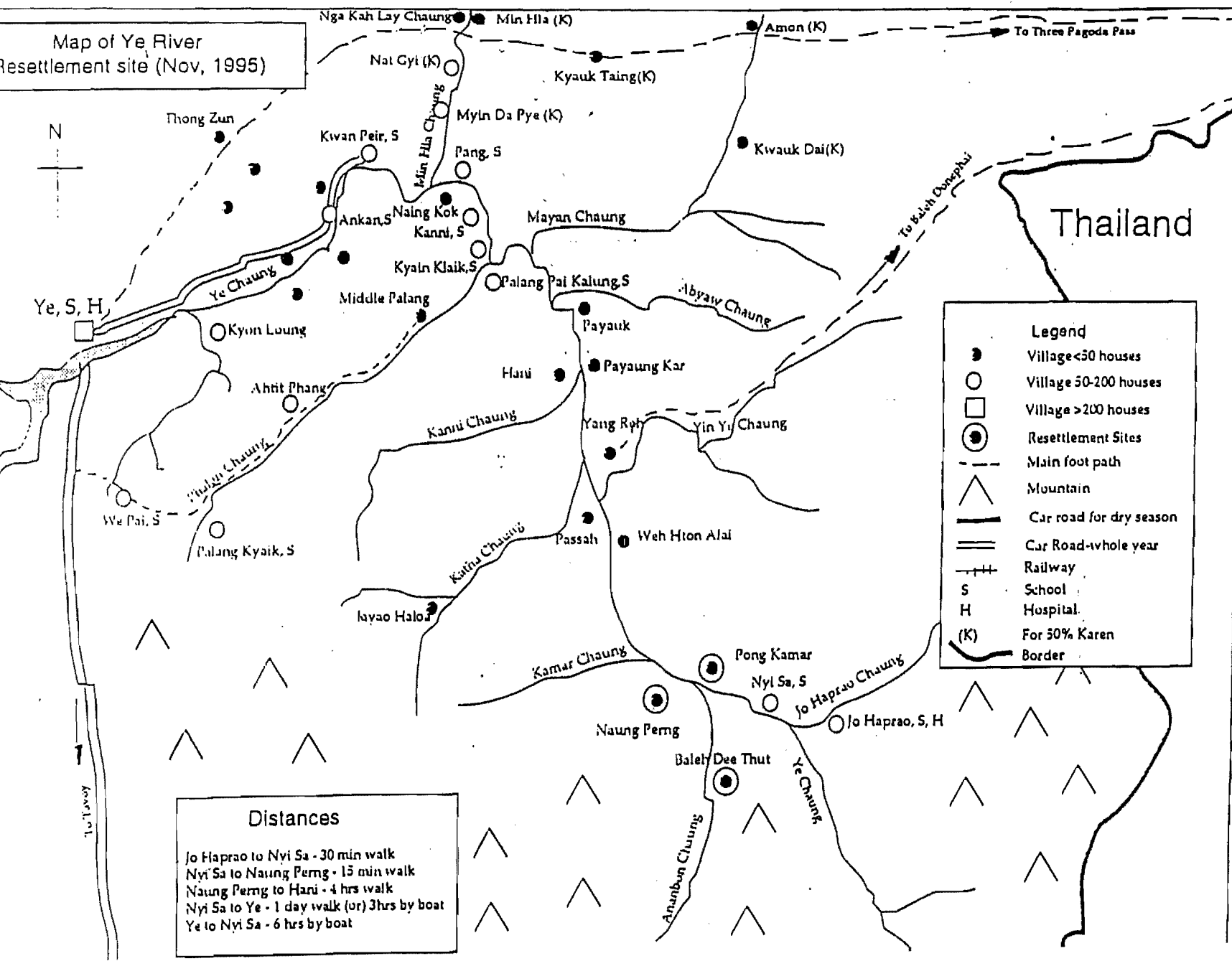
THE REFUGEE POPULATION OF THE FOUR CAMP ARE FOLLOW
(April, 1997)

No	Camp	Family	Adult		Children		Total
			M	F	M	F	
1	Bee Ree	415	486	543	688	772	2489
2	Tavoy	685	878	1087	989	1144	4098
3	Prachuab	491	452	558	702	771	2483
4	Halockhani	1011	1324	1376	1686	1733	6119
	Total	2602	3140	3564	4065	4420	15189

THE MATERIALS RECEIVED BY THE MON NATIONAL RELIEF COMMITTEE
(April, 1997)

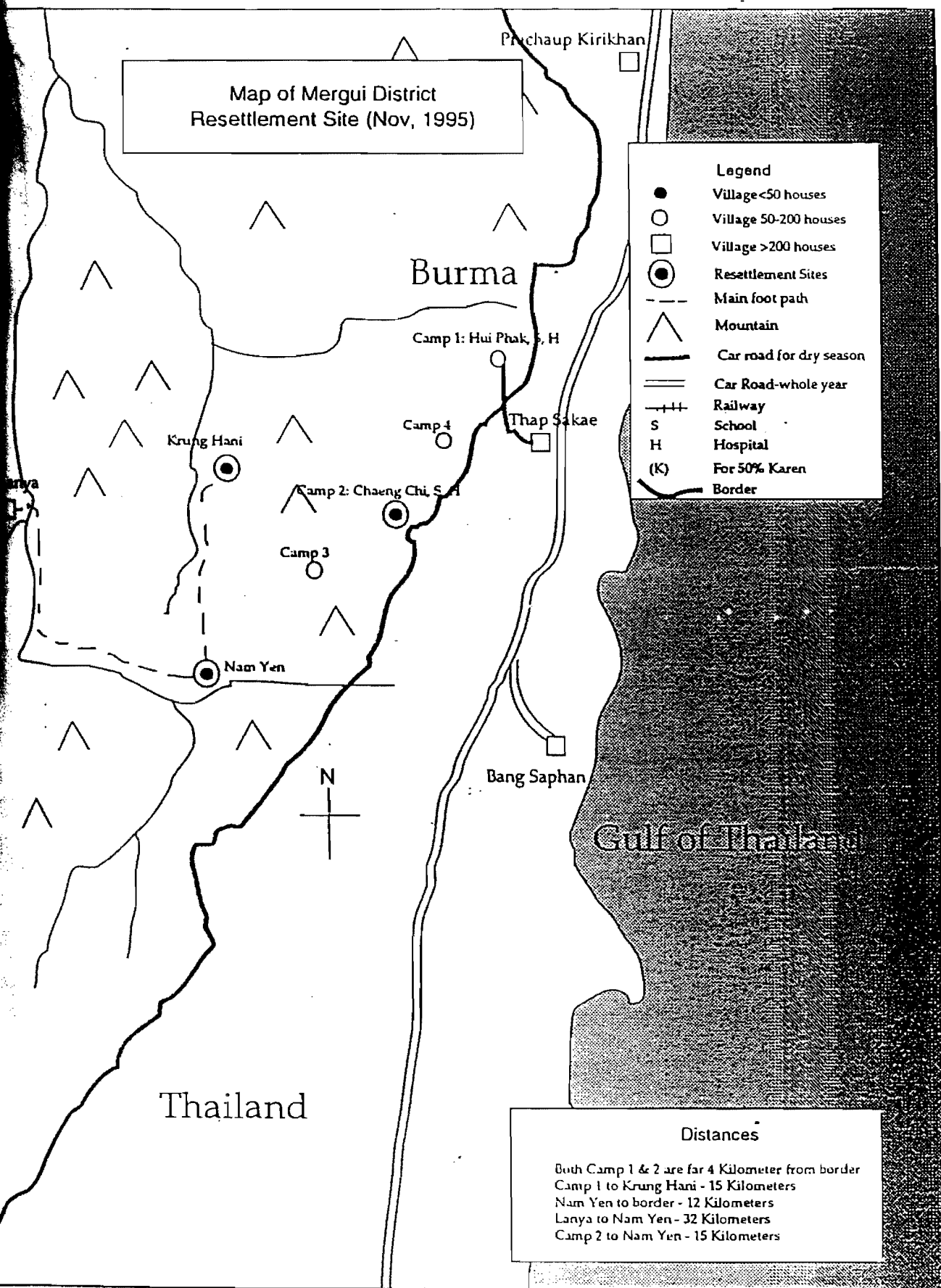
No	Organization	Rice (Sack)	Fish Paste (Kg)	Salt (Kg)	Bean (Kg)	Remark
1	COERR	250	1688	1125	1588	
2	Consortium	3314	, 18500	9000	-	
	Total	3564	20188	10125	1588	

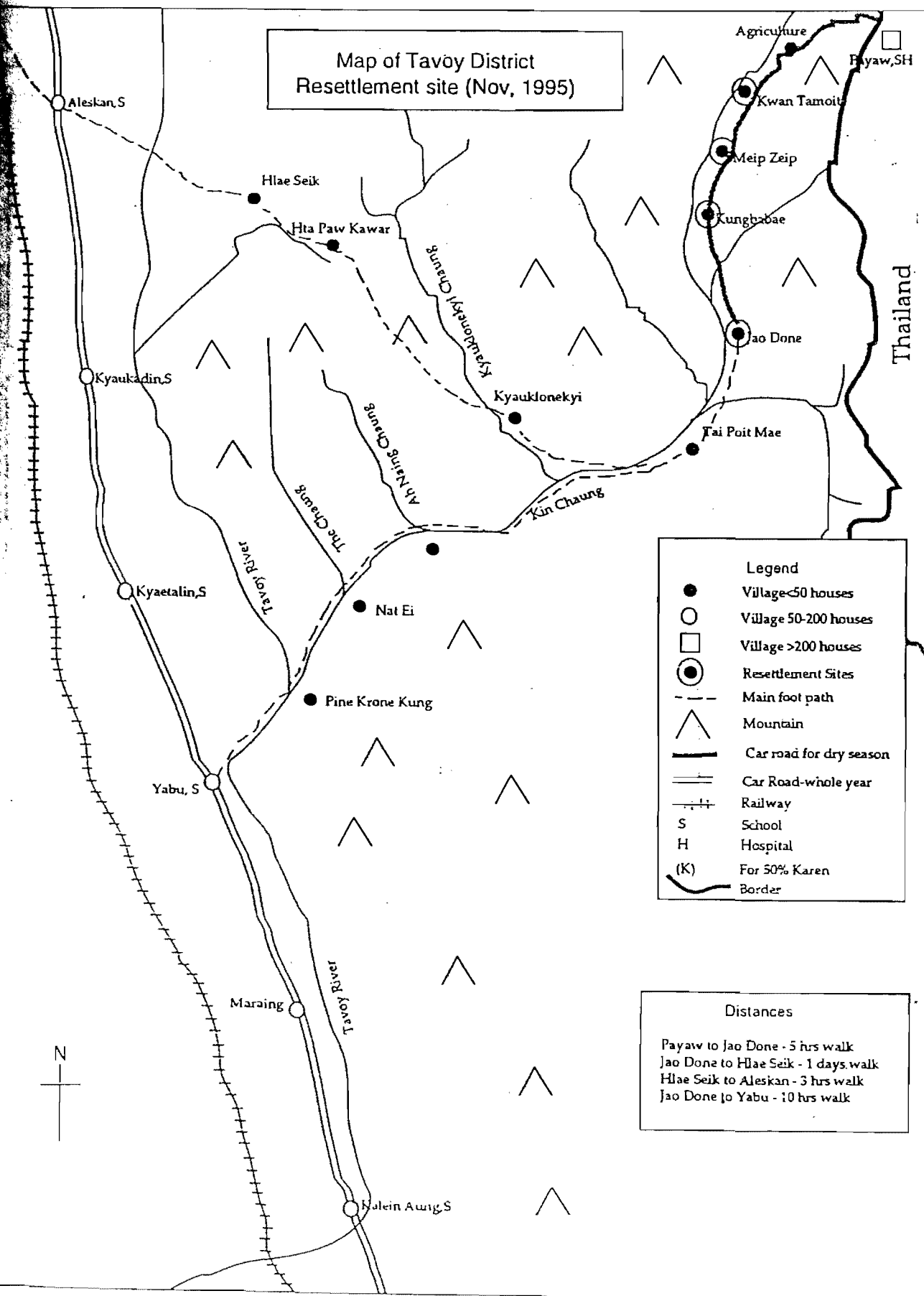
Map of Ye River
Resettlement site (Nov, 1995)



Map of Mergui District Resettlement Site (Nov, 1995)

- Legend**
- Village <50 houses
 - Village 50-200 houses
 - Village >200 houses
 - ⊙ Resettlement Sites
 - - - Main foot path
 - △ Mountain
 - Car road for dry season
 - == Car Road-whole year
 - +++ Railway
 - S School
 - H Hospital
 - (K) For 50% Karen
 - Border





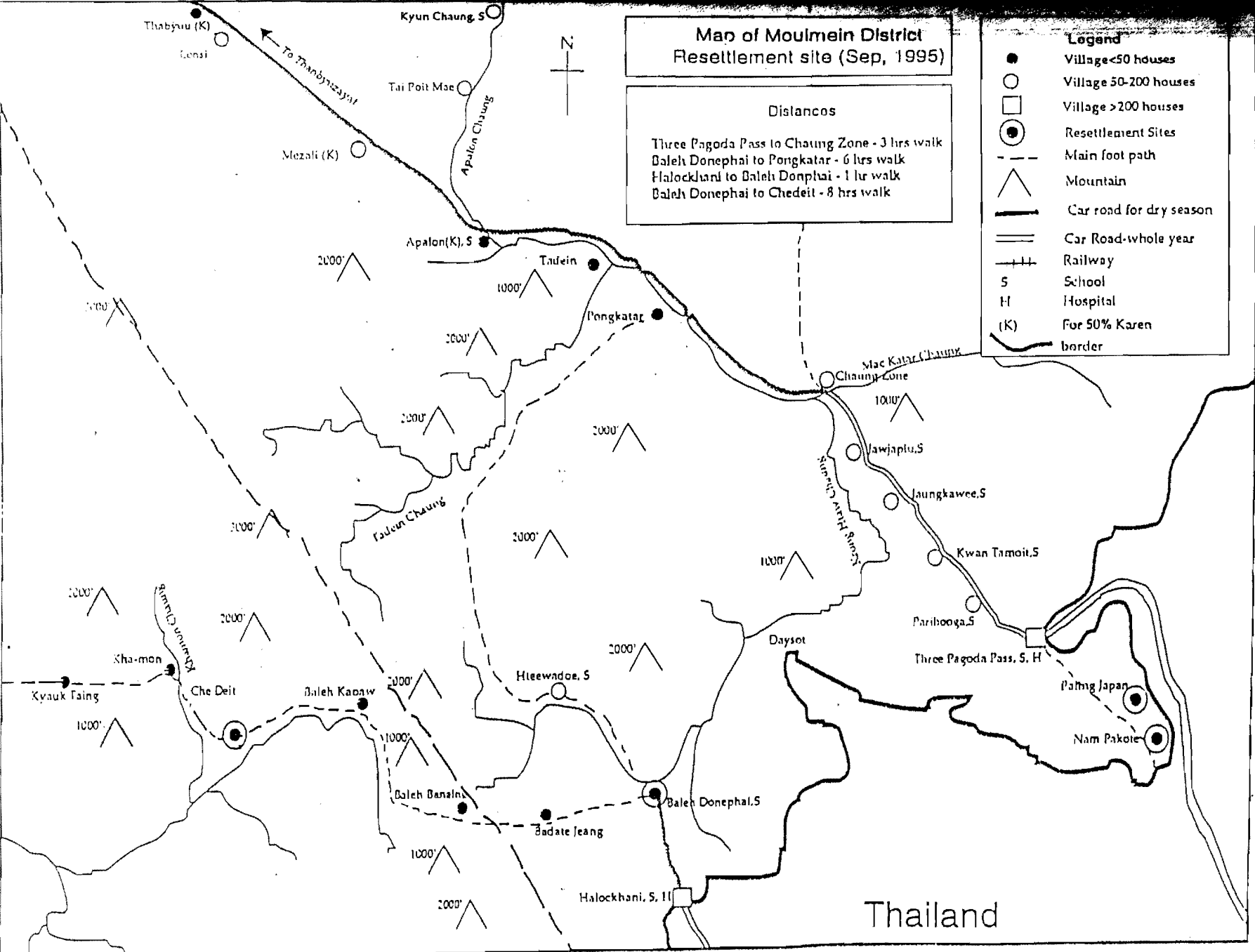
Map of Moulmein District Resettlement site (Sep, 1995)

Distances

Three Pagoda Pass to Chaung Zone - 3 hrs walk
 Bala Donephai to Pongkatar - 6 hrs walk
 Halockhani to Bala Donephai - 1 hr walk
 Bala Donephai to Chedeit - 8 hrs walk

Legend

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Thailand