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MON NATIONAL RELIEF COMMITTEE

# MONTHLY REPORT

SEPTEMBER

1997

## **The Five Points of the Aim of Mon National Relief Committee**

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- 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.**

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## **The Organization of Mon National Relief Committee**

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

# Monthly Report of Mon National Relief Committee

(September, 1997)

## Protection for Karen Refugees

The SLORC has launched offensives against KNU / KNLA for several months and its troops forced thousands of civilian to flee their homes. The treatments by the Thai authorities on Burmese refugees is also different from one border area to another. Thousands of ethnic Karen refugees pouring into northern Thai territory accepted more warm protection and assistance by the Thai authorities. At the same time, thousands of Karen refugees escaped from homes and reached the border area opposite of Kanchanaburi Province were denied entry into Thailand. These numbers of refugees feel very unsafe staying inside Burma and they have no protection by international community including Thailand.

The refugee influxes occurred not only to flee the war while the fightings were intensive but also they have fled the constant human rights abuses committed by Burmese Army. It was clear that when the fightings happened very often in February and March, several hundreds of Karen refugees fled to border areas to flee war. In May the fightings had slowly ceased down after the Burmese Army occupied several KNU/KNLA bases. However, the refugees have arrived to the border areas without ceasing because they flee from the abuses.

Most Karen refugee camps along the border, normally in Burmese side of the border opposite of Kanchanaburi Province, were occupied by the Burmese Army in March, April and May, and the new arrivals who recently fled from their homes have no more safe places to take refuge. Since then, they have arrived to a Karen refugee village near Halockhani camp or to another Mon villages inside Burmese territory. Their entry into Thailand or camps inside Thai territories have been constantly denied. While they are taking refuge with Mon villagers they feel they could be safe from the trouble make by Burmese Army because of the SLORC-NMSP ceasefire deal.

In some area, the Karens are staying together with Mon villagers while some are in the separate places far from Mon villages. For those villages with only Karen population, they feel the SLORC troops (Burmese Army) will come and attack them with accusation of rebel-supporters. The most of them feel their villages are unsafe and vulnerable to attack from the Burmese Army.

Those Karen civilians had escaped from their native villages because of the systematic persecution of their origin country's government and its armed forces. At the same time, these refugees have been barred to cross the international boundaries. In the situation when they have no chance to cross the international boundaries, although they fled from systematic persecution, they are not recognized and treated as refugees or asylum seekers according to international principles.

How do we define they escaped from systematic persecution? After the Burmese Army's occupation of their villages, the soldiers forced all villagers to build new military encampments and to be porters carrying supplies and ammunitions to the front-lines. The villagers also have to pay various kinds of tax collection to the soldiers for military buildings, portering fees and other military expenses. If the soldiers suspected on someone as a rebel or rebel-supporter, he/she must be severely tortured by the soldiers, and extrajudicial killings of the villagers were also happened in the rural area.

Because of the above mentioned the human rights abuses happened in the ethnic Karen rural areas, the villagers have no choice and decided to flee to the border areas. The propaganda that the government is bringing peace for Karen people, is always released in SLORC controlled newspapers, radio and television. But actually the Karen villagers have been constantly suffered from the various human rights abuses since their home villages were taken under firm control of the SLORC troops. The mis-treatment and conscription of forced labour are abuses committed by SLORC soldiers on a daily basis.

There is no sign for an another ceasefire talk between the KNU and SLORC. The SLORC troops relocated many Karen villagers by using forces into their controlled villages. The situation seems the SLORC is preparing to be ready to launch a new large offensives against the KNU/KNLA. In the rainy season, even there was no more big fighting between the two troops, but it may happen in coming dry season.

Without a political settlement in the whole Burma or a temporary ceasefire agreement between the KNU and SLORC, the refugee influx will not cease. The situation for the Karen refugees who are remaining in Burmese side of the border, is considerably unsafe. The international community including UNHCR must find a safe places in Thailand for those refugees. Thailand should not deny for their entry into its territory and should provide temporary shelter with humanitarian consideration.

In Burma, without involvement of international community as mediator, all groups will take a long time to settle the political problem. To find a political solution including to cease the refugee and immigrant influx into Thailand, the Thai and ASEAN government should pressure on SLORC to talk with democratic and ethnic opposition for a political dialogue. At a moment when the political solution is not accepted in Burma, Thailand and international community should extend their humanitarian assistance including protection to the homeless and helpless Burmese refugees who are really escaped from systematic persecution in their origin country.

## Planned Forced Relocation by SLORC

The SLORC may not soften their attitude on the KNU/KNLA. For the next year, there is a negative sign for a ceasefire talk between the KNU and SLORC. The SLORC will not agree for a ceasefire deal with KNU and continue using forces to continue suppression. During and after the last dry season offensive against the KNU/KNLA, the SLORC local troops have continuously launched **four cuts campaign** against the local Karen and Mon villagers in rural areas to cut contacts between the KNU/KNLA and civilians. This is a preparation of SLORC for a new offensive in coming dry season.

In four cuts campaign of the SLORC, its troops normally forced the villagers which are under control of the rebels to move into villages under its control. This practice of forced relocation was introduced in 1970-80s in lower Burma. But at that time, the Burmese troops were not so strong like now and they could not keep control longer in each area they occupied. Whenever the operation was started, the villagers were fleeing into hiding or moved into Burmese Army controlled areas. But after the Burmese troops returned to their bases, the villagers came and stayed in their former villages again.

At the moment, large number of SLORC troops came into the area and separated into the whole area. The villagers have very little chance to flee into hiding around the forests or in their plantations. They must have to decide to flee up to the border areas or move into villages under control of SLORC.

When the SLORC launched the dry season offensives against the KNU, its local troops

moved many local Karen villagers into its control villages by forces in KNU's 4th and 6th Brigade areas. Many Karen small and big villages were occupied by SLORC in these areas and thousands of villagers were suffered from the forced relocation of the soldiers. If they denied to relocate to new places, they must be killed. In some areas, the villagers escaped before hand the reaching the SLORC troops as they knew the terrible treatment of the soldiers in forced relocation process.

The MNRC has collected information in this case in areas along the motor road from Three Pagoda-Pass to Thanbyuzayat and along the Zami river. In the area along the Three-Pagoda-Pass-Thanbyuzayat motor road, there are three villages designated as new resettlement sites for local SLORC troops. They are Taung Zon, Mae Za Lee and Anan Gwin villages and the SLORC troops tried forcing all villagers nearby to move and stay in these villages.

Outside of these settlement sites were declared as free fire zone and the SLORC troops have chance to kill anybody if they met. This movement restriction on villagers make them facing food-shortage problem because they have to abandon their houses, farms, live-stocks and other properties. Besides the possible help provided by troops in the relocation process, the soldiers also confiscated foods from villagers. Soon after the villagers reached into resettlement sites, they were forced to work for military such as building the barracks and carrying supplies and ammunition for troops to front-lines.

In the third week of August, the SLORC troops from LIB No. 356 ordered about 20 Mon and Karen villages along the Zami river of Kya Inn Seik Kyi township to move into their control villages within two months and October 14 will be the deadline. Why did the SLORC troops try to move these villagers? It is a preparation of SLORC to launch a new offensive against the KNU/KNLA in the area and this forced relocation is an usual practice of four cuts campaign.

After SLORC launched dry season offensives, although it occupied several villages, but could not get some villages nearby. In the rainy season, when its troops launched patrol in the area, they were always attacked by Karen guerrilla forces and the local villagers were accused as rebel-supporters. Thus its LIB No. 356 ordered Mon and Karen villagers from 20 villages to move into its designated four villages.

It seems SLORC has prepared to launch offensives against KNU/KNLA rather than to talk for ceasefire. This forced relocation is initiative step cutting off contact between armed rebels and civilians in every preparation of SLORC offensive according to the past experience. But the practice of forced relocation of local villagers to win war on armed ethnic opposition did not make trouble much to the rebels but it is reasonably forcing the villagers to flee their homes to the border areas and increased the immigrants in number into Thailand.

**THE REFUGEE POPULATION OF THE FOUR CAMP ARE FOLLOW  
(September, 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	Halockhani	1011	1324	1376	1686	1733	6119
	Total	2111	2688	3006	3363	3649	12706

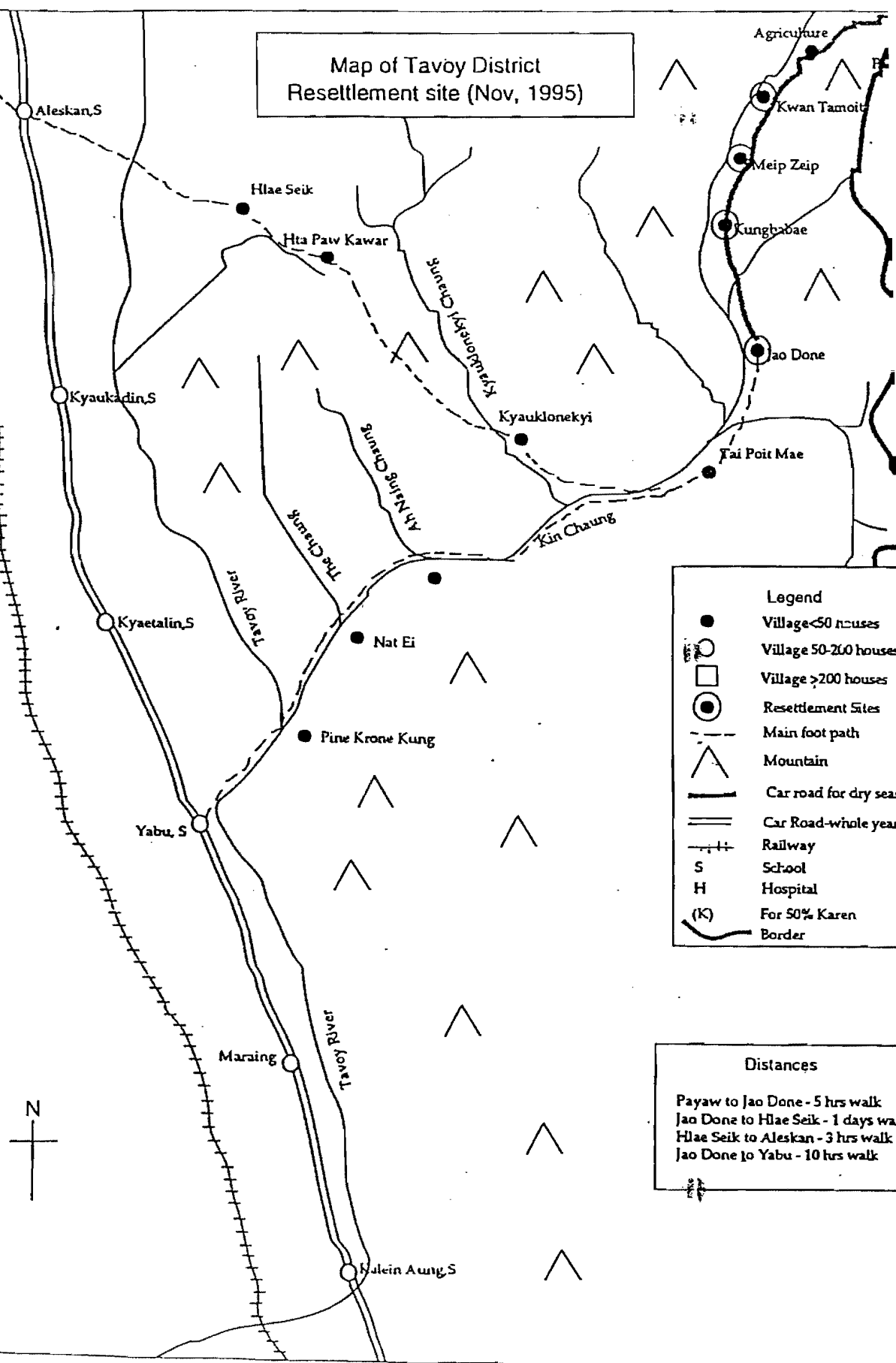
Note: The population of Prachuab refugees is unclear but the MNRC continued its supply distribution program to refugees who fled into Thai territory.

**THE MATERIAL RECEIVED BY THE MON NATIONAL RELIEF COMMITTEE  
(September, 1997)**

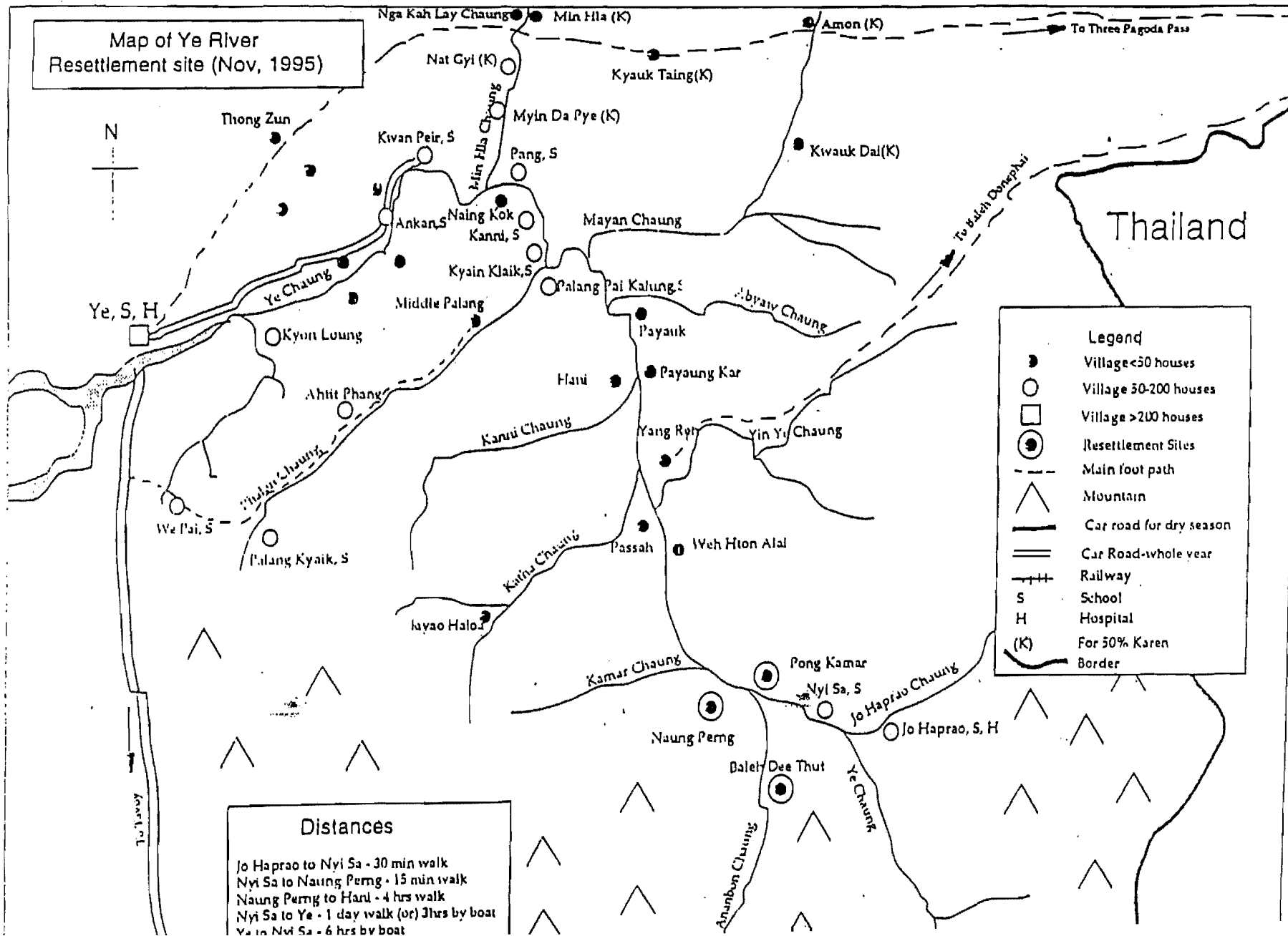
No	Organization	Rice (sack)	Fish Paste (kg.)	Salt (kg.)	Bean (kg.)	Remark
1	COERR	120	360	124	723	
2	Consortium	-	-	-	-	
	Total	120	360	124	723	



# Map of Tavoy District Resettlement site (Nov, 1995)



# Map of Ye River Resettlement site (Nov, 1995)



## Distances

Jo Haprao to Nyl Sa - 30 min walk  
 Nyl Sa to Naung Perng - 15 min walk  
 Naung Perng to Hani - 4 hrs walk  
 Nyl Sa to Ye - 1 day walk (or) 3hrs by boat  
 Ye to Nyl Sa - 6 hrs by boat

# Map of Moulmein District Resettlement site (Sep, 1995)

## Distances

Three Pagoda Pass to Chaung Zone - 3 hrs walk  
 Baleh Donephal to Pongkatat - 6 hrs walk  
 Halockhani to Baleh Donephal - 1 hr walk  
 Baleh Donephal to Chedelt - 8 hrs walk

## 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

