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MON NATIONAL RELIEF COMMITTEE

MONTHLY REPORT

NOVEMBER

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

(November, 1997)

The Repatriation of Mon Refugees from Prachuab Kirichan Province

On 22 November 1997, about 60 Mon refugees mostly women and children from Prachuab camp, opposite of Thepsakae district area of Prachuab Kirichan Province, were repatriated to Halockhani camp under arrangement of No. 9 Division of Royal Thai Army. Because of the sudden change of the situation in the area and related unsafe condition, these refugees were repatriated.

Since the refugees were repatriated to the Burmese side of the border on June 6 by the Thai authorities including UNHCR monitoring, the situation inside this area was constantly changed and the human rights situation of the repatriated refugees was violated by both NMSP's a breakaway group MAMD and the Burmese Army. Why these problems have been occurred to the repatriated refugees? Unlike the other world refugees, the Burmese refugees have not been provided a proper assistance especially protection according to international laws and principles, and less of consistent and follow-up monitoring after they were repatriated.

While those refugees were being repatriated, the Burmese Army already took bases in their former border villages inside Burmese territory and although they agreed to return but they had no strong willing. They were well-informed the behaviour of the Burmese Army in rural areas because they originally fled to the border area not only because of war but also because of human rights abuses committed by the soldiers of the Burmese Army.

Before the split of the NMSP and MAMD, many thousands of villagers were taking refuge in this area and they survived with farming activities. There were two main areas namely Chaung Chi and Huai Phak, and they have safely and peacefully stayed in these areas by establishing small villages. Normally, the villagers grew some several kinds of crops such as chilli, cucumber, corn, and others in the surrounding plain lands which were not so far from the village. Some villagers also worked as day-labourers in logging and furniture industries. They needed outside help normally food assistance when the situation in surrounding area had wars or fighting inside the area.

After the split of MAMD and its declaration against the SLORC in November, 1996, the situation of the area became very unsafe and the villagers in the area could not stay safely since then. The consistent offensives of the SLORC troops have been launched in the area against the MAMD, ABSDF, and KNU's No. 4 Brigade. The fightings between these groups and SLORC troops were more intensive in April and May, 1997.

Before the end of April, the offensive against the MAMD group became more intensive. The villagers from Chaung Chi area fled into Thai territory on 27 April. While they were inside Thai territory, they were provided with protection by the security forces of Thai border police for over one month period. In the whole month of May, the fighting inside Burmese territory was intensive and more and more refugees fled into Thai territory. On 25 May, the MAMD agreed to surrender to Burmese Army and arranged a sudden surrendering ceremony in Chaung Chi village. Then the Burmese Army waited for a public ceremony that shown the participation of the villagers in surrendering and cooperation in border area development program.

The authorities of the Burmese Army organized the MAMD members to encourage the vil-

lagers to return their former villages. The villagers had refused for many days and later they agreed to return because they understood the situation that they might be not allowed by the Thai authorities to stay inside Thai territory after the MAMD and the Burmese Army had a agreement that stopped fighting. But many refugees fled into deep inside Thailand when the Thai authorities conducted the June 6 repatriation.

Soon they reached to the villages, the conscription of forced labour by the Burmese Army and the MAMD group was committed. They planned to build many military encampments in the whole area and establish the strong bases to attack other armed oppositions, ABSDF and KNU, close to this area. In conscripting the villagers the soldiers forced not only the able man but also the women and children in the whole village to work in the construction of military barracks. The villagers were forced to contribute the manual labour in works such as clearing the trees and grass for a plain fields, digging earth to build bunkers and trenches, building the barracks and etc.,

The military also destroyed all villagers' houses inside village and planned to build military bases in the middle of the village and forced the villagers to build their new houses by rounding these bases. They took a good protection position by using the villagers as human-shields to prevent from the attack of any outside troop. The soldiers did not allow the villagers to built their houses first and forced them to build the military barracks every day. Under this circumstance, the villagers have no time to reconstruct their life and plan for the future and survival. They were also not allowed to clear their farms and make new crop plantation for income like the previous situation before the Burmese Army arrived to this area.

Because of consistent conscription of forced labour and other abuses, over 300 villagers from Chaung Chi had continuously fled into Thai territory again during the second and third weeks of July. But they were not allowed to make temporary camp like before and take refuge inside Thai territory and were accused as economic immigrants by Thai authorities. According to Thailand's policy, when there was no fighting, these escapees from human rights abuses were not recognized as displaced persons or refugees. Hence, they lost chance to stay inside the camp under the protection of Thai authorities and international community. All of them separated into deep inside Thailand and at the end they actually became illegal immigrants. Only four families reached to Halockhani camp in August.

While many ethnic Mon villagers fled inside Thailand, many ethnic Karen and Tavoyan returned their native villages to escape from the conscription of forced labour and human rights abuses. Although these villagers were well-informed about the situation of their native villages, they decided to return because they felt that the current situation in their native villages was better than in the border area.

Although many villagers left the area, the Burmese Army still encouraged the MAMD group to implement border area development projects and gave more economic chance for the survival of the organization. Since then the leaders of the group took more good chance to get profit from the business such as trading and logging. The ordinary soldiers dissatisfied on the leaders for the abuses to the villagers and on 16 November, one small group led by a column commander split from the MAMD again. The new group confiscated some arms from the MAMD headquarters and revolted against the Burmese Army and MAMD.

The situation in the area became disorder and over 200 villagers from Huai Phak area fled into Thai territory again on 16-17 November and later on. Soon after they reached inside Thai territory, about one-third of them were arrested by the Thai border police and the others disappeared inside Thai territory. Then, the Burmese Army and the left small number of MAMD troops came and occupied the area again. The refugees were afraid to be deported back to Huai

Phak area because they knew the soldiers will mis-treat them. On 21 November, the NMSP and MNRC were informed by Thai authorities that they would repatriate about 60 Mon refugees from Huai Phak because they agreed to return to Halockhani. Before the repatriation of these refugees, about 16 refugees from four families voluntarily returned to Halockhani by their own arrangement.

The Effects of the Last Rainy Season's Flood

In August, there was a big flood in Mon State and Tenasserim Division and the flood water also destroyed a lot of rice crops in these areas. On 22 August, because of the heavy rain, the flood water covered the whole rice fields of Yebyu, Ye, Thanbyuzayat and Mudon townships' areas and in some places the mountains and hill also collapsed onto rice field, plantation, and roads. The flood water at the same level for nearly two weeks and it destroyed the young rising crops and after the water level went down all crops were destroyed.

Only the farmers who have a slightly high land received small amount of crop and many of them may lose crops in the harvest season. In some area, although they did not lose some crops, because of the long period flood situation and the heavy the rice plants produced the very low quality crops.

Whether the farmers get full crops or not from their rice fields, the military regime already adopted a policy to purchase the set amount of paddy at low price from the farmers like previous years. Thus, the farmers have worried the punishment of the regime if they could not sell the set amount of paddy needed by the government. Every year, the government authorities forced the farmers to sell about 12 Burmese baskets of paddy per acre to the designated paddy-buying center. The authorities also set the deadline to farmers to complete selling paddy to them. If not, the farmers must be arrested and detained or in some cases, they were severely tortured by the soldiers and polices.

In addition, because of this flood, the villagers were also unceasingly forced by the local military to re-build the railway and motor road in the Mon State and Tenasserim Division. Because of the collapses of the mountains, one section of Ye-Tavoy motor road near Koemine village, in southern part of Ye town was covered with earth. In September and up to the beginning of October, the villagers and town residents in the whole Ye township were conscripted as forced labourers to dig the earth from the road. The village with 500 households were ordered by the military to provide at least 100 villager labourers to work in the construction for two weeks on a rotation basis.

If the villagers could not provide a set number of the labourers according to the instruction by the military, they were forced to contribute payment to the concerned battalions. They were forced to pay at least 1500 Kyat for two weeks labour contribution in the construction because the military showed the reason that they must have to hire the substitute labourers.

Similarly, in northern part of Ye town, some part of railway and the bridges were destroyed by the flood water. Every houses in villages in the northern part of Ye township were collected payment about 600 Kyat per house to provide the military to repair the roads and the bridges. At the same time, the villagers were also forced to work in repairing the roads and re-build the bridges.

The SLORC was changed into State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in November, but there was no change in new government policy. The rural villagers are still mis-treated by soldiers and the refugee influx to the border area is still continuing. Many of them displaced and could not exercise the rights to enjoy constructing the community without fear. Every thing is remained as before.

POPULATION CHANGES IN REFUGEE CAMPS

BEE REE CAMP

The population has increased in this camp with refugees who moved from the TAVOY CAMP because of the security reason. At the beginning of 1997, this camp has over 2000 population and at the moment the population increased nearly to 2800.

TAVOY CAMP

This camp is situating in NMSP's temporary ceasefire zone. It means the SLORC could take this area anytime and the NMSP must have to withdraw their troops from the area. Without protection of the NMSP, the refugees in the area must not get enough protection. Some refugees are in fear of the arrivals of SLORC troops and decided to move to other camps or migrate into Thailand. The number of the population in this camp slowly dropped down. Since before the end of 1996, over 1000 population left from this camp. At the moment, it has over 2400 population.

HALOCKHANI CAMP

The MNRC has a separate section especially for Karen refugees in this camp. Thousands of Karen refugees have arrived to this section since the SLORC launched offensives against KNU/KNLA at the beginning of 1997. Initially, the section has only about 500 population and now it reached over 3000. Because of the recent forced relocation of the Karen and Mon villagers in Kya-Inn-Seikyi township and along the Three-Pagoda-Pass-Thanbyuzayat motor road, one thousand of Karen villagers poured into this section again. The other three section have about 4150 population including some Tavoyan families. **In November, a total 76 refugees from Prachuab Camp arrived to Halockhani.** Thus, there is over 7000 population in Halockhani refugee camp in its four sections. The Karen refugees are continuously fleeing their homes and their section is in unsafe situation. The MNRC would like to request the international community to provide protection to these war fleeings and escapees of human rights abuses. They must be settled in a safe place inside Thai territory.

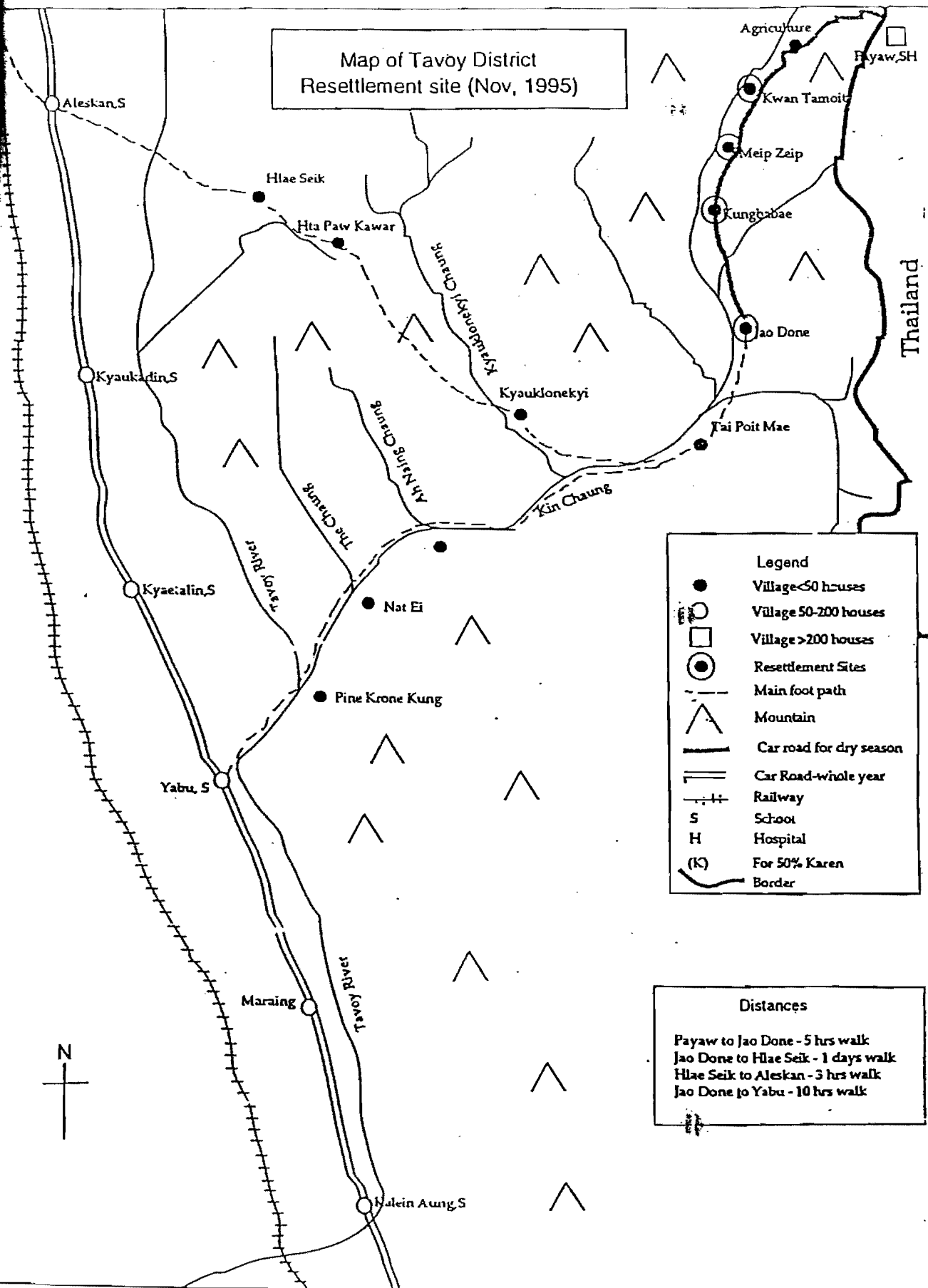
**THE REFUGEE POPULATION OF THE THREE CAMPS
(November, 1997)**

No	Camp	Number of Family	Over 12 yrs		5-12 yrs		Under 5yrs		Total
			M	F	M	F	M	F	
1.	Bee Ree	488	919	999	249	276	159	174	2776
2.	Tavoy	443	837	818	253	222	156	124	2410
3.	Halockhani	1337	2517	2628	688	757	425	441	7456
	TOTAL	2268	4273	4445	1190	1255	740	739	12642

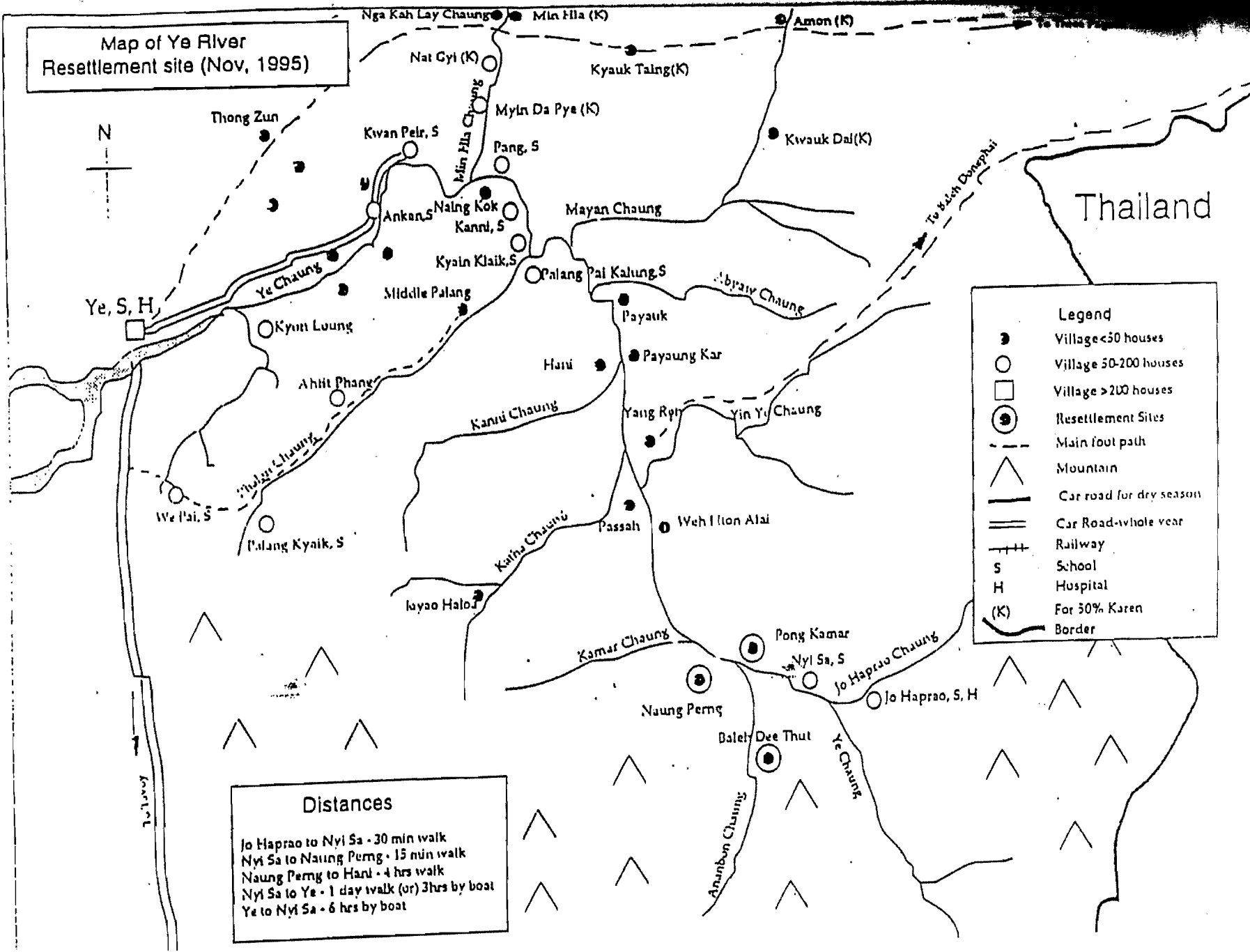
**THE MATERIAL RECEIVED BY THE MON NATIONAL RELIEF COMMITTEE
(November, 1997)**

No	Organization	Rice (sack)	Fish Paste (kg.)	Salt (kg.)	Bean (kg.)	Remark
1	COERR	120	361	240	723	
2	Consortium	-	-	-	-	
	Total	120	361	240	723	

Map of Tavoy District Resettlement site (Nov, 1995)



Map of Ye River Resettlement site (Nov, 1995)



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 Chedell - 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

