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MON NATIONAL RELIEF COMMITTEE

MONTHLY REPORT

DECEMBER

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

(December, 1997)

The Situation of Refugees in 1997

The situation did not improve much for the Mon refugees (the returnees after the spontaneous repatriation without international monitoring in early 1996), to create self-reliance for themselves when they were remaining in the Thai-Burma border areas. Even though the NMSP agreed for ceasefire agreement with the military regime SLORC (currently is renamed as State Peace and Development Council, SPDC), which directly effected to refugee repatriation, this agreement could not guarantee for the survival of the refugees. The government's military offensives in the last dry season against the KNU also forced many thousands of villagers to take refuge in the border area.

The refugees (the returnees) have been remained in camp situation as before at behind of Thai-Burma borderline but inside Burmese territories. These camps are very close to the battlefields between the KNU and SPDC troops, they are very vulnerable from the attack and whenever the government troops launched military operation, these camps are used as temporary bases.

1. The situation in Halockhani: The population grew with Karen refugees

On May 10, 1997, about 100 SLORC troops from IB No. 106 led by Major San Lwin came Halockhani refugee camp and took base for five days. These Burmese troops came with reason to check the border-line with Thai authorities. On May 11, both Thai and Burmese authorities actually checked the borderline but no agreement was reached between them but the SLORC troops continuously took base in the camp. Another reason mentioned by the SLORC troops was that they had responsibility to launch an offensives against the KNU troops in the area close to Halockhani. Within these days, the refugees were very afraid and the tension between the Mon and SLORC was intensified.

Because of the consistent offensives against the KNU, many local villages which were previously under control of the KNU, were occupied by SLORC and it built new military encampment in these villages by using forced labour of the villagers. Some villages were also forcibly relocated to the designated villages where SLORC troops took bases. Some Karen villagers were killed by Burmese troops with accusation of rebel soldiers or rebel-supporters. Many local villagers were arrested to use them as frontline porters or forced labourers to work in building the military encampment in the respective control areas. Normally, these villagers were constantly accused as rebel-supporters, and the abuses against them committed by the Burmese soldiers were inhumane.

Because of the systematic persecution against the ethnic Karen villagers in their native rural villages by the Burmese troops, thousands of Karen villagers displaced inside forests close to their native places or others fled to the border area to take refuge in refugee camps. The camp inside Thailand was also closed whenever there was no gun sound or no fighting along the border areas, according to the Thai government policy on Burmese refugees. There was no fighting in area close to Halockhani and the Karen refugees were blocked in a village, Htee Wah Doe, a section of the camp.

Initially, this small village had only 500 population. During the SLORC offensives against KNU, many thousands of Karen villagers were homeless and the population in this small village was suddenly increased with new arrivals. The villagers from Kya-Inn-Seikyi township of Karen

State and Ye township of Mon State fled to this village due to four-month-long war and human rights abuses in their native villages. In May, the population in the village suddenly grew up to 2,000.

In the rainy season, from June to September, even the war was stopped but the small scale fightings were continuous and there was no improvement in human rights situation. Before the end of July, when the two boats carried the Burmese soldiers returned to Kya-Inn-Seikyi town, these boats were drowned by flood water in Zami river. In this case, the SLORC troops also arrested many Karen villagers to take the arms and equipments from water. Massive arrests of villagers also forced them to flee homes and take refuge in Halockhani camp.

In the third week of September, the SLORC's LIB No. 355 and 356 ordered about 13 Mon and Karen villages in Kya-Inn-Seikyi township to vacant and move into their designated resettlement villages. The deadline for this forced relocation was on October 15. Before the deadline, many villagers were displaced and hundreds of them fled into Halockhani refugee camp. At the same time, about 7 villages along the Three-Pagoda-Pass – Thanbyuzayat motor road were also forcibly relocated. In November, the population in small Karen section grew up to over 3000.

In November, about 76 of Mon refugees from Prachuab Kirichan area were also repatriated to Halockhani after another split among the MAMD group, a breakaway group of NMSP in Mergui district area. (*see the situation in Prachuab area*)

Although MNRC has encouraged them to grow rice, the situation outside the area such as fighting and other human rights abuses, the refugees could not go further to make farms. The refugees were likely blocked inside an area and could not easily created self-reliance by themselves. Thus, they are still needing assistance from outside.

2. The Refugees in Tavoy District Area

The Tavoy district area is recognized as temporary troop location zone of the NMSP by SLORC accordingly to the NMSP-SLORC ceasefire agreement in 1995. The NMSP troops left from the area and but NMSP and SLORC agreed to recognize the area as no troop zone and the SLORC also did not deploy their troops in the area. The early 1996 repatriated refugees could longer reside in this area because of the mentioned agreement.

In April, when the NMSP troops left from the area, the refugees felt their campsite was not safe and many hundreds of them moved into Bee Ree camp or some left into Thailand. At the same time, the SLORC base is very close to this area and the fighting between the SLORC and KNU troops always happened.

During dry season when the refugees tried to make farm in the area, some of them were arrested and tortured by SLORC troops with accusation they were supporters of the KNU troops. The SLORC troops also collected tax from the villagers who made farms. Thus, the situation has been very unsafe for the refugees and the population was low down. Since the situation posed unsafe, this campsite accepted a very few new arrivals who escaped from the conscription of forced labour for the government's road building projects in Tenasserim Division.

By comparing with refugees in other campsites, the refugees in Tavoy district also have lost their chance to make more farm. Furthermore, whenever the SPDC troops came in and took

base in the area, the refugees must have to leave their campsite.

Because of the difficult situation to grow rice and create self-reliance in the area, the MNRC provide full supplies to those refugees.

3. The Refugees in Bee Ree Camp

The security in Bee Ree camp has been posed the most safe among all camps under the administration of the MNRC. The refugees in this camp have more chance to grow rice and they could move outside of their area without restriction. Thus, the main offices for education, health, agriculture and women are resided there.

The Mon National High School is run in this camp and the Mon National Health Committee also particularly provided medical trainings to produce new Health Workers to help the refugees and Mon villagers deep inside Burmese territory. The Mon Women Organization have very often provided several kinds of trainings such as literacy, sewing, nursing, women development and etc., to refugee women.

The population in the camp have been grown with new arrivals who came from Tavoy district area. The MNRC helped them for new settlement. The camp also accepted some new arrivals from Ye township area after the villages were relocated in September. Because of the fighting between the KNU and SLORC troops, about six ethnic Mon plus Karen villages were relocated by forces into SLORC designated resettlement village, Kyaung Ywa.

This campsite is situated in mountainous area and the refugees could not make large farm like lowland area farms. All rice production in the whole area could not provide to be enough to all refugees and they are still relied on the assistance provided by MNRC.

4. The Prachuab Refugees: Nowhere to run

In April, many hundreds of Mon refugees from Chaungchi area fled into Thailand because of the consistent fighting close to the area. They took temporary refuge inside Thai territory for one month. On May 25, the NMSP's breakaway group MAMD surrendered to the SLORC and then Thai and Burmese authorities encouraged the refugees to return Burmese territories. The refugees were afraid to return because the SLORC troops already took base in their villages. On June 6, these refugees were repatriated with inadequate international monitoring.

There was no more follow-up international monitoring after they were repatriated. The villagers were constantly conscripted as forced labourers to build the SLORC military encampments in their villages and there was no reconstruction assistance provided by the government. The SLORC troops also arrested the villagers to use them as frontline porters in offensives against the KNU. Because of this mis-treatments committed by the SLORC troops, in July, many hundreds of villagers fled into Thai territory again. But they were not recognized as the refugees who were recently repatriated and no protection assistance was provided by the international organization and Thai authorities. They were not allowed to be encamped inside Thai territory and were pushed to a dangerous place where the SLORC troops could re-arrest them. As a result, after they had no choice, all of them separated into many areas inside Thailand and became illegal immigrant workers.

Because of the SLORC's mis-treatment and the daily suffering of the villagers, some MAMD members disagreed to cooperate with SLORC. On November 16, a small group led by a column

commander split from the main MAMD again. Because of this conflict, many hundreds of villagers fled into Thai territory again. About 60 of them were arrested by the Thai border police and they were repatriated to Halockhani camp on November 22, by Ninth Division of Thai Royal Army. The other villagers became illegal immigrant workers. Thus only few hundred of the villagers remain inside MAMD controlled area.

The MNRC could not get access to the MAMD controlled area where the refugees were returned since this breakaway group surrendered to SLORC. But MNRC contacted community leaders and tried to help the returnees by secret way. The MNRC could help much to the refugees who left inside Thai territory during in months from June through October. They were residing in many plantation areas and the MNRC members could get access directly to them and ever provided the needs. After they had jobs or could created self-reliance by themselves, the MNRC stopped helping.

Conclusion

Although the MNRC has strong desires to encourage the refugees to be aid-independents, the situation inside the respective areas did not allow them to make and produced enough for their families. These refugees are also well-informed the human rights situation in the rural areas and they must not return their native villages in near future.

Thus, as a local organization, the MNRC, on behalf of the Mon and Karen refugees in its campsite, would like to request the international organizations to continuously help those helpless and helpless population with food, educational, health assistance and others.

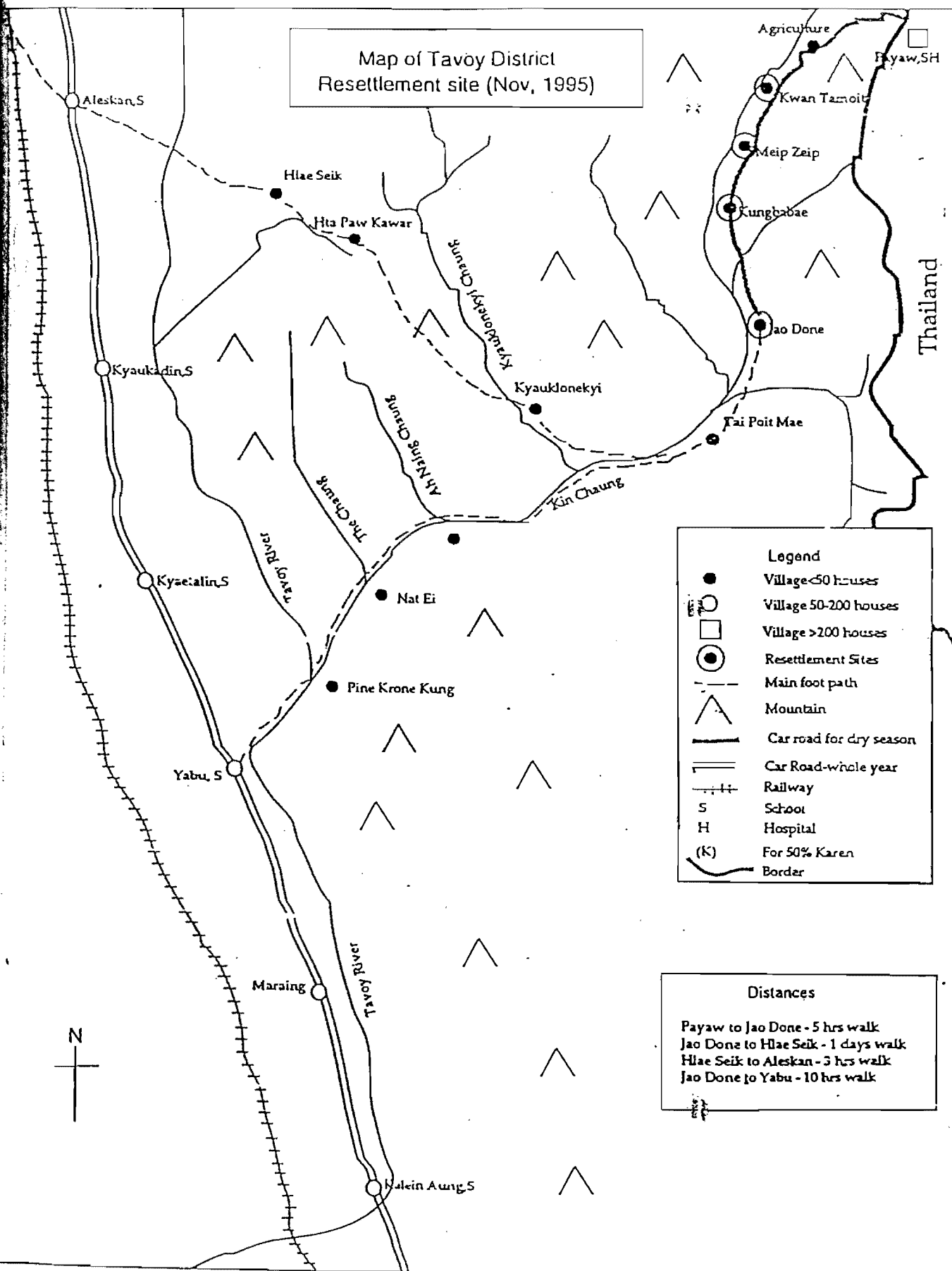
THE REFUGEE POPULATION OF THE THREE CAMPS
(December, 1997)

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

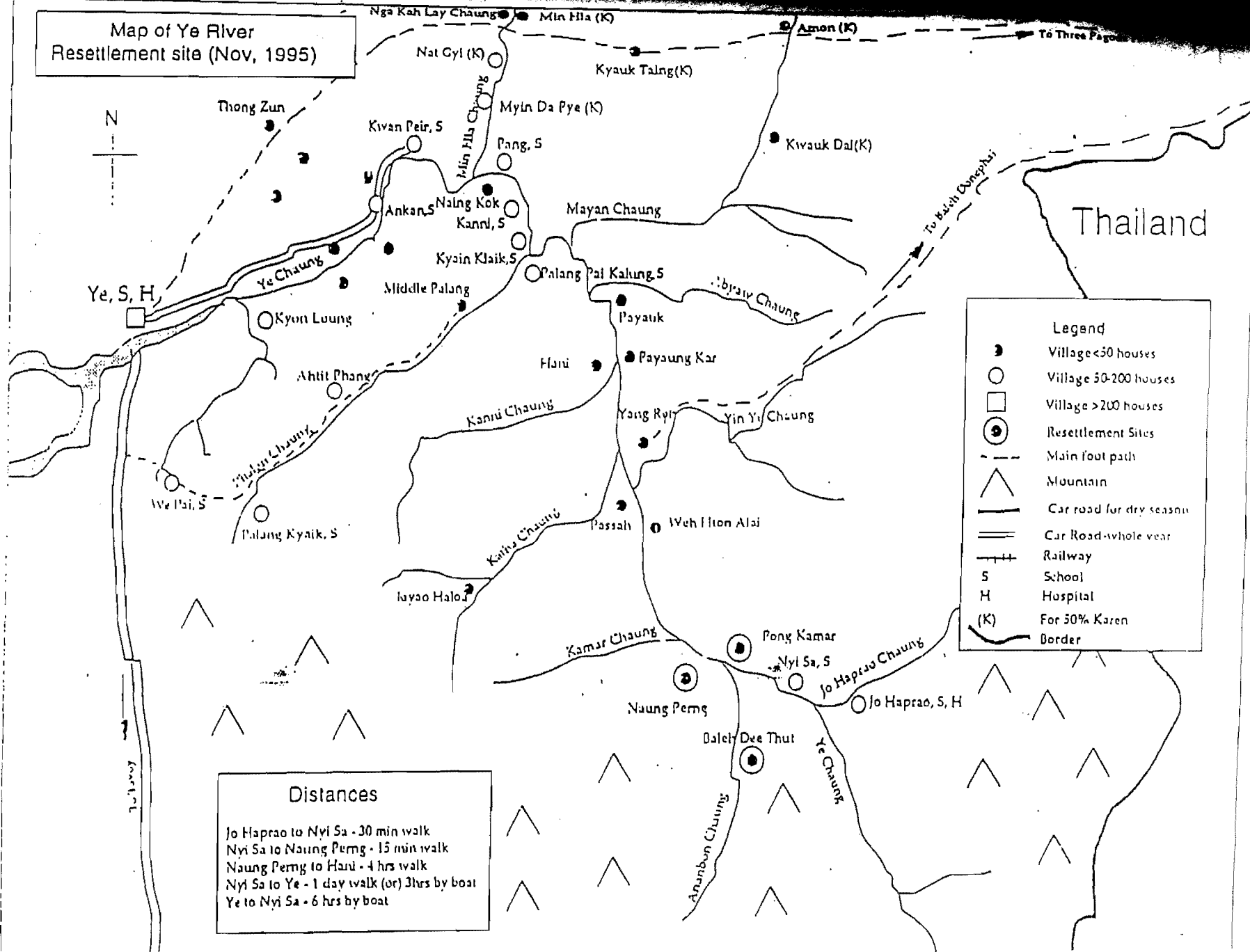
THE MATERIAL RECEIVED BY THE MON NATIONAL RELIEF COMMITTEE
(December, 1997)

No	Organization	Rice (sack)	Fish Paste (kg.)	Salt (kg.)	Bean (kg.)	Remark
1	COERR	120	361	240	723	
2	Consortium	1001	3250	2160	7550	
	Total	1121	3611	2400	8273	

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
Daleh Donephal to Pongkatat - 6 hrs walk
Halockhand to Daleh Donephal - 1 hr walk
Daleh 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
- ~ Border

