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MON RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MONTHLY REPORT

APRIL

2000

The Five Points of the Aim of Mon Relief and Development Committee

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- 1. To provide temporary settlement to the refugees in Thailand-Burma border areas who become homeless and helpless situation due to the oppression of Rangoon military regimes.
- 2. *To help the welfares of the refugees in border areas and IDPs who are displaced inside the country, with foods, shelter and possible protection.*
- 3. To coordinate with local Mon people in developing the grassroots community in the fields of health, education, literacy, agricuture and other rural development projects.
- 4. To empower the local community for the participation of decision making processes for their own lives and communities.
- 4. To struggle for the human rights.

The Organization of Mon Relief and Development Committee

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- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Phra Wongsala Pala | - Chairman |
| 2. Nai Kasau Mon | - General Secretary |
| 3. Nai Dung Htaung | - Member |
| 4. Nai Aung Mon | - Member |
| 7. Nai Glae | - Member |
| 5. Nai Chit Nyunt | - Member |
| 6. Nai Tay Jae | - Member |
| 7. Phra Jon Dae | - Member |

Monthly Report of Mon Relief and Development Committee (April, 2000)

The Sudden Population Growth in Tavoy Resettlement Site And the Population Displacement

In March and April 2000, without expecting the population number in Tavoy resettlement site and the nearest area have suddenly grown. Now, those news arrivals or displaced persons have no enough foods for the whole year and MRDC plans to help them with food assistance and other shelters. The population growth happened because of two following cases or incidents occurred in both Burma and Thailand.

1. Repatriation from Thailand

Although the repatriation of the Mon people with many families have not been make by the Thai authorities for a long time, just recently about 30 Mon families who stayed in Thailand border with any recognized ID cards were repatriated to Burma side of the border. Since 1997, after Mon refugees from Chaung-chi area of Mergui District, opposite side of Prachuab Kirichan Province of Thailand, were repatriated with lack monitoring by UNHCR to Burma side of the border, there has been no such repatriation have been conducted. However, the deportation of thousands of Burmese illegal immigrants have been weekly make by the Thai authorities to Halockhani resettlement camp and MRDC also helped them with foods for some days.

At the beginning of April, when Thai authorities in Thong-phar-phoom area made the new registration of displaced persons and tribe people in the area, they also arrested and deported the villagers who had no identity cards and have stayed in Thailand illegally for some years. When the authorities went into "Ban Bilockhi" village, they also met many Mon families who had no Thai ID cards or Tribe ID. The authorities also arrested those villagers and then deported them back to the border area and told them to not return into Thailand again.

Those displaced villagers also crossed the border and resettled in Tavoy resettlement camp. There were about 160 villagers from over 30 families arrived to our camp in the first and second week of April. When they arrived to the resettlement site, they left nothing and could brought only some clothes and pots along with them. Therefore, the site leaders in Tavoy camp helped them with foods and some shelters. No family chose to return their native homes, where they fled from and decided to stay on in the resettlement site until the human rights situation in their native villages become better.

Actually, those villagers were refugees and they mainly fled from their native villages in Yebyu and Tavoy townships area for over five years ago to escape from the systematic persecution committed by the Burmese Army and the local government authorities. According to our inquiry, those villagers had fled from their active places because of the constant conscription of forced labour by the local Burmese Army's battalions and related tax collection to construct 110 miles-long Ye-Tavoy railway road. They said during that time, they had no time to work in their own farms and plantation for regular income and were hard to survive. Some of them escaped not only to avoid the forced labour but also from forced relocation, forced displacement and other abuses related to accusation of rebel-sympathizers.

Then, they fled into Thailand with expectation to get jobs. At that time, NMSP have not agreed ceasefire with SLORC and the Mon refugees in Thailand were under threat for forcible repatriation to Burma. These villagers knew about the conditions in refugee camp and chose to not join the refugee camp. With the whole families, they went into Thailand

and sought jobs for income and survival. In Thailand, they could not own lands but were used to be day-labourers for Thai gardeners or fruit plantation owners. Although they could not receive the permanent work and income, they could survive in Thailand.

Although they stayed for over 5 years, they were not recognized as refugees or as Thai tribal people. They just displaced outside of refugee camps. When the MNRC and NMSP resettled the returned refugees in the resettlement site, some families also joined and stayed in the resettlement site while many others still remained in Thailand. Normally, the life in Thailand was not difficult like in the refugee resettlement site, and some of them chose to stay on in Thailand until the Thai authorities drove them out of the country.

During March and April 2000, Thai authorities have carefully checked the immigrants from Burma with a worry following the hospital seize in Ratchaburi. The authorities met those villagers have no ID cards to officially allow them to stay on in Thailand. On the other hand, since they were Mon people, the authorities did not choose to send them to a refugee camp, but deported them to Mon resettlement site.

2. New Arrivals from Yebyu Township Area

Actually, the population displacement has occurred in Yebyu township because the insurgency operated by unnamed a Mon armed group, which is led by retired Mon commanders, who were recently NMSP members. This rebellion rose up over two years ago and the Burmese Army also launched various intensive offensives against this rebel group. After NMSP-SLORC ceasefire in 1995, the military regime, both SLORC and SPDC refused to discontinue from conscription of forced labour in rural Mon areas and the civilians in Yebyu township area have been constantly suffered from the unceasingly use of forced labour. Over 10 military battalions of the Burmese Army have used the villagers to build the railway and motor roads, dikes for water distribution to army's farms and frontline and regular porters. Hence, the dissatisfaction among the civilians also pushed them to rise up rebellion, because many retired Mon soldiers were in this area and they rose up rebellion after they could not tolerate the abuses by the Burmese Army.

Since the beginning of March, the Burmese Army launched the intensive military offensives against a Mon armed group which have been active throughout Yebyu and Ye Township area. As a result of oppression and human rights violations committed by the Burmese Army during their military offensives or regular military patrol in these area, many young Mon villagers in the area have joined the rebel force. The forces of that rebel group have gradually grown and it also participated in the political arena.

During the Mon National Day which was held on February 20, that rebel group and its leaders also held a Mon National Day celebration in Paukpingwin village, Yebyu Township suddenly. The village is close to Ye-Tavoy motor road and normally the troops of Burmese Army regularly arrived to this village and have conscripted the villagers as forced labourers. In the Mon National Day celebration, the villagers close to Paukpingwin also attended the ceremony. Thus, all villagers from the villages who attended the ceremony were accused as rebel-supporters or sympathizers to the rebel group.

As a revenge, the local troops of the Burmese Army from LIB No. 273, 410 and IB No. 25, has blocked many villages and have not allowed the villagers to go to their farms and worked their own works. IB No. 25 troops also went into many fruit plantations near the villages and arrested some farmers and tortured them and forced them to go back homes and stay in the village without moving. Some villagers and village leaders were also arrested in their own villages and tortured by the soldiers with accusation they were supporting for the Mon national day celebration and collected fund for that ceremony. Similarly, the villagers in farms and plantations were also arrested and accused as rebel-supporters, and were severely tortured by soldiers. After the Burmese Army blocked their villages, every family was threatened to not support the rebel group while the villagers in farms and plantations were threatened that they must be killed if they stayed longer in their work-places.

Sometimes, the soldiers blocked the whole village and did not allow the villagers to go out of it, they looted villagers' belongings in their plantations and farms. They soldiers took food supplies and fruits in the plantations. If one villager kept a lot of food supplies in his farms, he must be accused as rebel-supporters and could be terribly tortured by soldiers.

Because of movement related restriction and torture related to accusation of rebel-supporters, the villagers were in fear for more persecution and some of them also faced food-shortage problems in their own villages. On the other hand, the Burmese troops who patrolled around the farms and plantations also confiscated some food supplies which they met and burnt down some foods.

As a result, the villagers from Paukpingwin, Mi-htaw-hlar Gyi, Mi-htawp-hlar Kalay, Dani-kyar, Chaung-phar, Kyauktayan and Phaya-thonzu villages have to flee from their native villages and about 70 families moved into Tavoy resettlement camp and over 100 families resettled in Hle-seik, a IDP village established last year and "The Chaung" a new IDP village established in March 2000. Some many other families also displaced in another places.

According to our estimation, about 3000-5000 villagers in the above mentioned Mon villages left from their homes to escape from mis-treatment and systematic persecution by the Burmese Army. Many families moved into SPDC's firm control and where they felt they would be less suffered than in their villages. Among many thousand displaced persons, about 1,000 population has gradually moved into NMSP Tavoy District control area including refugee resettlement area and IDPs villages.

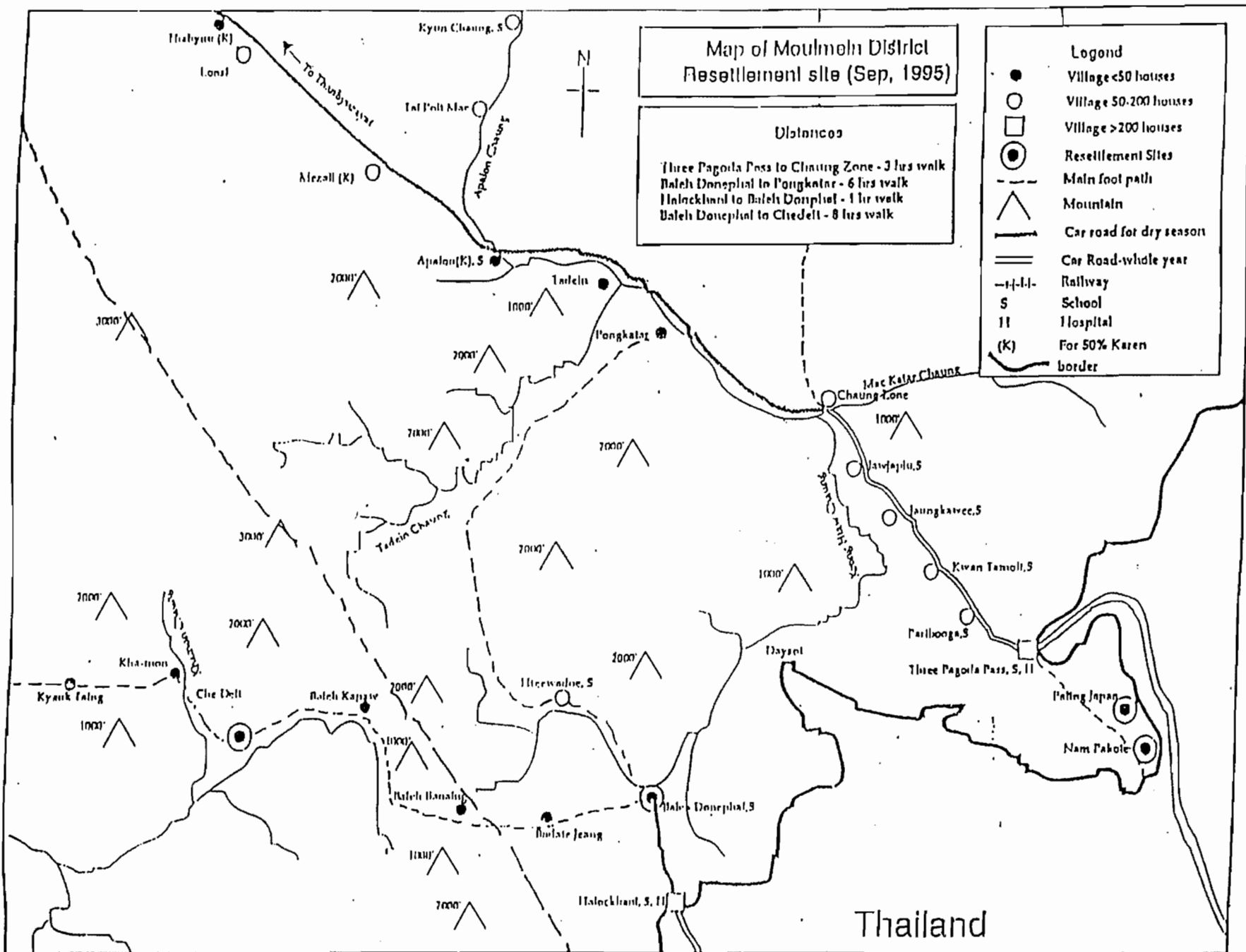
THE REFUGEE POPULATION OF THE THREE CAMPS
(April, 2000)

No.	Camp	Number of Family	Over 12 years		5-12 years		Under 5 years		Total
			M	F	M	F	M	F	
1	Bee Ree	611	1090	1209	344	382	193	204	3422
2	Tavoy	640	1125	1113	368	368	204	242	3420
3	Halockhani	1573	2354	2358	888	902	532	558	7592
	TOTAL	2824	4569	4680	1600	1652	929	1004	14434

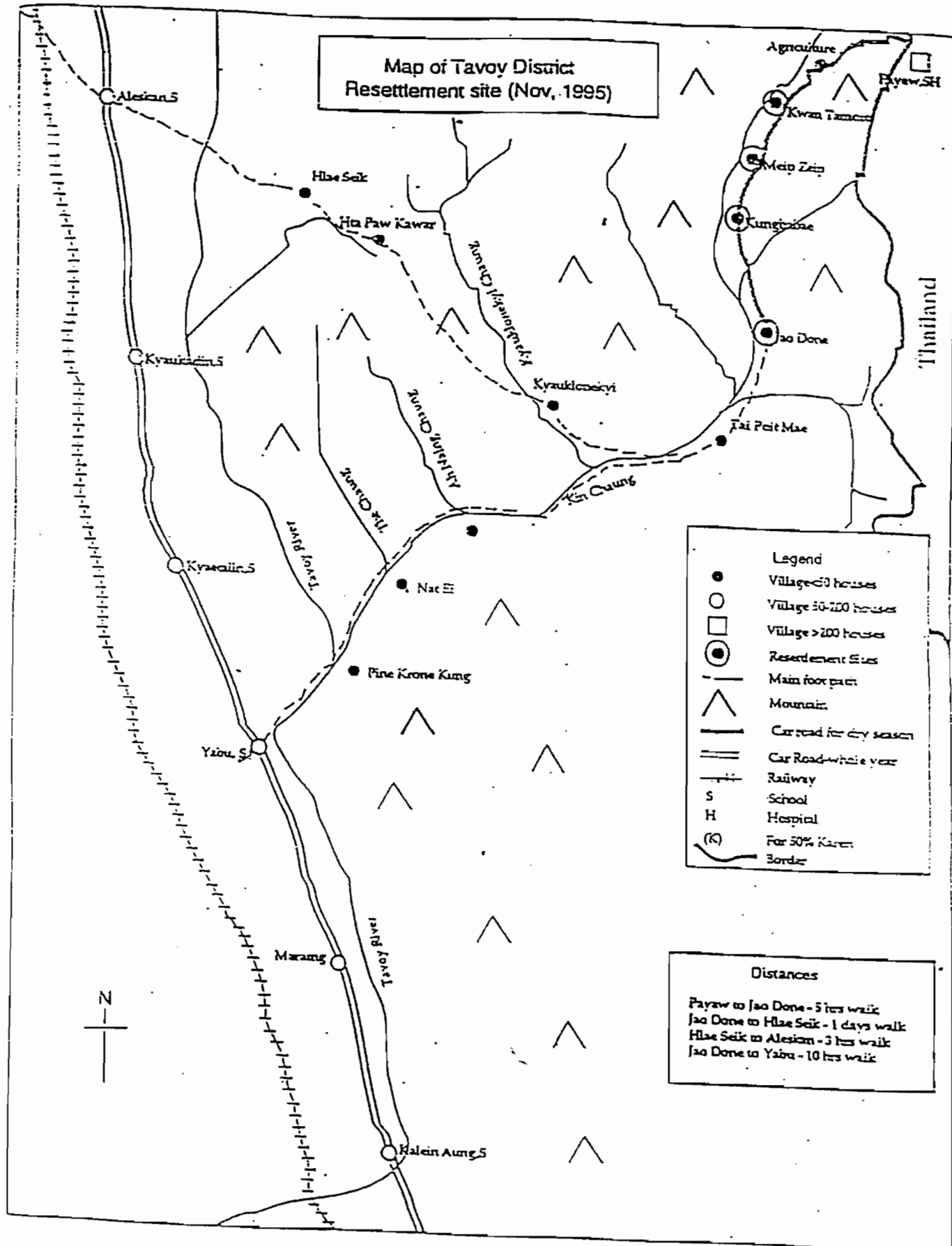
Note: There are about 382 new arrivals in Bee Ree resettlement site and 523 new arrivals in Tavoy resettlement site who arrived during March and April.

THE MATERIALS RECEIVED BY THE MON NATIONAL RELIEF COMMITTEE
(April, 2000)

No	Organization	Rice (Sack)	Fish Paste (kg.)	Salt (kg.)	Sadine (tins)	Remark
1	COERR	120	360	240	3000	
2	BBC	6566	-	26000	-	
	TOTAL	6686	360	26240	3000	



Map of Tavoy District Resettlement site (Nov, 1995)



Map of Ye Alvor
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