



# Karen IDPs Report

The plight of  
internally displaced Karen  
in Mu Traw District of Burma



CIDKP

December 2000

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Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People

Friedrich Naumann Foundation

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### **Obituary**

CIDKP would like to acknowledge the contribution of Saw La Thwe, one of the key reporters, who was killed by Burma Army troops during the period of the preparation of this report for publication

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## Acronyms

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| BERG  | Burma Ethnic research Group                     |
| BSPP  | Burma Socialist Programme Party                 |
| CIDKP | Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People |
| DKBA  | Democractic Karen Buddhist Army                 |
| IDP   | Internally Displaced People                     |
| KNDO  | Karen National Defence Organisation             |
| KNLA  | Karen National Liberation Army                  |
| KNU   | Karen National Union                            |
| KORD  | Karen Office of Relief and Development          |
| SPDC  | State Peace and Development Council             |

## PREFACE

This brief report on the situation of IDPs in Mu Traw District in the north of Burma's Karen State, was first drafted in late 1999. The report was prepared by the Mu Traw District Section of the CIDKP. Data had been gathered initially due to the increasing concern at the situation of IDPs in the district during 1998/1999 because of the double disasters of displacement and severely adverse growing conditions - drought and damage to crops.

The report pin points the dismal conditions for the Karen people throughout the district, but the desperate situation of specific group in worst hit areas. It was always the intention to build on the BERG report, *Forgotten Victims of a Hidden War: Internally Displaced Karen in Burma*, published in 1998, which provided the background and general description of the displacement of the Karen in Kawthoolei. The Mu Traw report has been the first attempt by the CIDKP to provide more detailed information focussing on a single district. It is hoped that the report will lead to future publications regarding the situation in the other Karen districts.

The Mu Traw District report is the first publication of the CIDKP. It was prepared completely by the Karen working with CIDKP with minimal initial assistance from BERG. The report was therefore prepared in the Karen language. It was always intended for publication in Karen and English to reach two distinct audiences - the international community and the Karen people themselves. This entailed translation into English and again, BERG provided assistance with the editing of the English version of the report. However, what may have been clear to the Karen readers of the Karen text was not always clear to non-Karen readers of the English text. This led to long drawn out discussion with regard to "meanings". This caused unfortunate delay in completion of the report while continuing adjustment were made to the two texts to keep them consistent. There were delays due to CIDKP lack of experience with producing maps which could be successfully reproduced. This lengthy process in turn introduced the need by mid 2000 for updating the data. In order to minimize further delay in completing the report, it was eventually decided to publish the report as compiled at the end of 1999, with the addition of a brief update.

Readers are urged to keep in mind that the body of the report reflects the situation as reported at the end of 1999, but to read the update. From the update it will be clear that while the disastrous situation for the people of the district continues, evolution of the situation also continues. With few opportunities of external intervention to provide relief and/or protection to displaced people, those affected find their own ways to address their disaster, coming out of hiding and attempting to accommodate themselves to occupation of their land by the Burma army, or moving yet again, either within Burma or across the border into Thailand.



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# Mu Traw District - IDPs

## 1. BACKGROUND

Mu Traw District is also called Papun district because the biggest town in the district is Papun. The district has three townships. They are Loo Thaw, Bu Tho, and Dweh Lo townships. Most of Mu Traw district is mountainous and the three townships are named after the mountains which dominate each township. Soil in the Mu Traw District is fairly fertile, sandy clay and sandy soil. A one acre field can produce 60 baskets (one basket = 46 lbs) of rice. *(See maps on pages 5 and 6)*

The seasons are usually reliable, but in 1998, there was a drought with serious repercussions during 1999, although in 1999 the weather appeared to have returned to normal.

Most of the people in Mu Traw District are Sgaw Karen. There are a few Shan, Burman and Pa-O, but an estimated 96 percent of the people are Sgaw Karen. The religions in the district are Animism, Buddhism and Christianity.

The people are mostly farmers. In the plains they cultivate paddy fields and in the mountains they use shifting cultivation methods. The crops cultivated are rice, sticky rice, sesame, sugar cane, various ground nuts, betel nut, chilli, cardamom, coconuts and various kinds of fruit. The people keep pigs, chickens, cows, buffalo and goats, but for domestic consumption rather than for sale.

In the past, people in Mu Traw District farmed peacefully. Without security problems and food shortages they stayed in their villages. Their hearts were in the land they had inherited from their parents and grand parents, good cultivation land, good weather and clean water.

The situation changed in 1979 when the Burmese government introduced their four cuts' operation to Mu Traw District. Burma army soldiers came and spread themselves throughout the district and, with frequent fighting between Burma army and KNU soldiers, the villagers in the area came to know anxiety and fear.

Burma army soldiers burned villages, looted anything valuable, gold, silver, pigs, chicken, cows, buffaloes, clothes and rice. Villagers were required to carry heavy loads and if they could not do this, they were sometimes killed. Women were sometimes raped.

Because of such things, many of the villagers dare not show themselves to the Burma army soldiers and flee to the jungle and hide away from their village for their safety. The result is that the villagers are then considered as KNU people and, if caught, they are treated badly or killed. Old people, men, women and children are not spared. Because of this, villagers in Loo Thaw township especially must live in fear and be alert all the time. When there were not many Burma army soldiers in the area, it was easier as there were plenty of places to hide. Increasing numbers of Burma army soldiers in the district makes it more difficult to hide.

In Bu Tho and Dweh Lo townships, some of the villages were located near the road. The Burma army soldiers have settled there and although the villagers wanted to escape, there were few places to hide and no security for a large number, so in those areas many villagers had no choice except to meet with the Burma army soldiers. Those who did so had to do forced labour and work as army porters. SPDC schools are to be found in the main towns and on the old main road. *(See map on page 25)*



From 1996 the number of Burma army soldiers in Mu Traw District rose to 21 battalions and they become more active. In 1997 the houses and rice barns in 130 villages over all three townships were destroyed by burning. The villagers dared not to go back to their villages and remained hiding in the jungles and mountains. These are the people now referred to as the internally displaced people (IDPs).

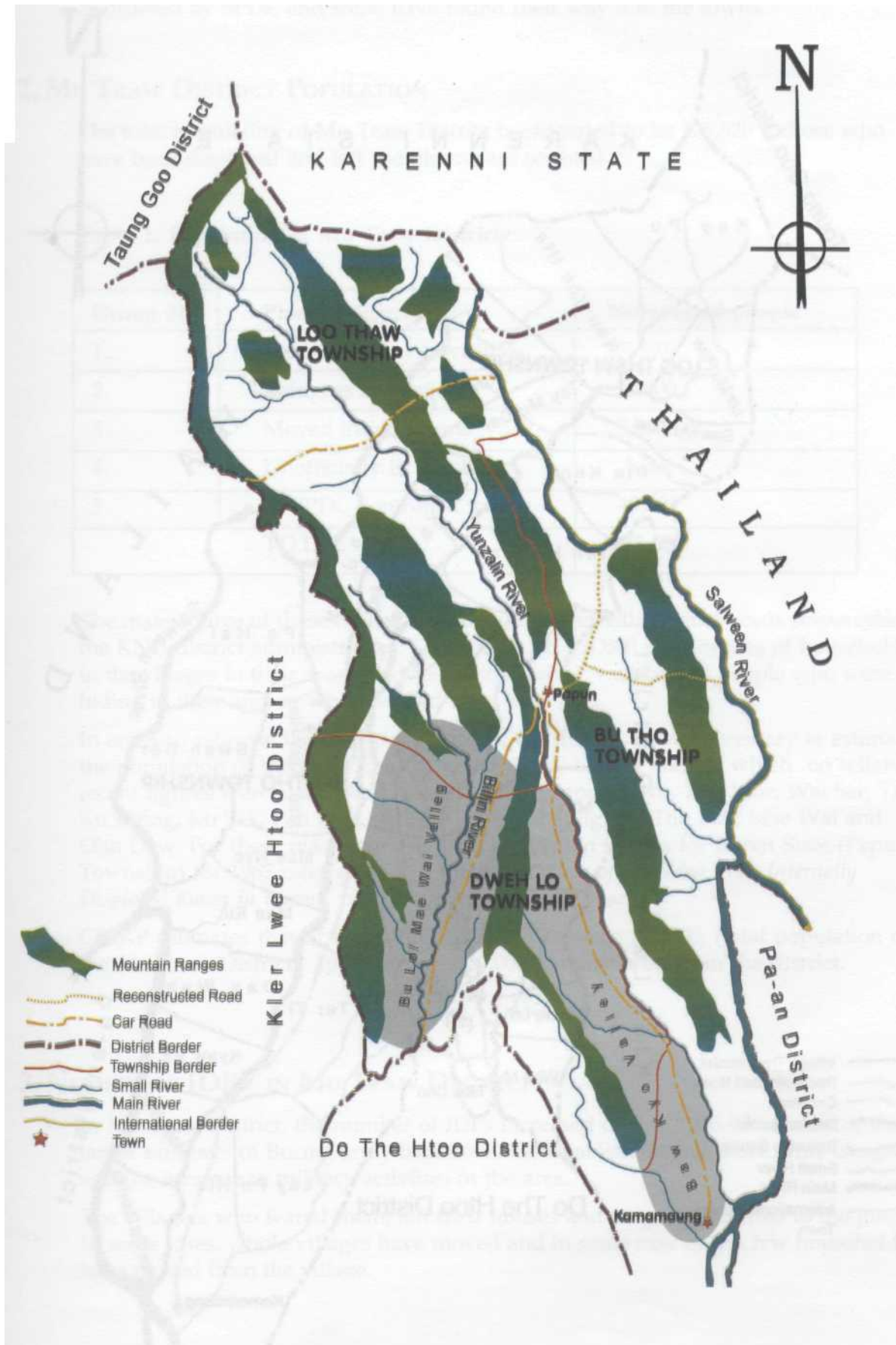


*Burned village*



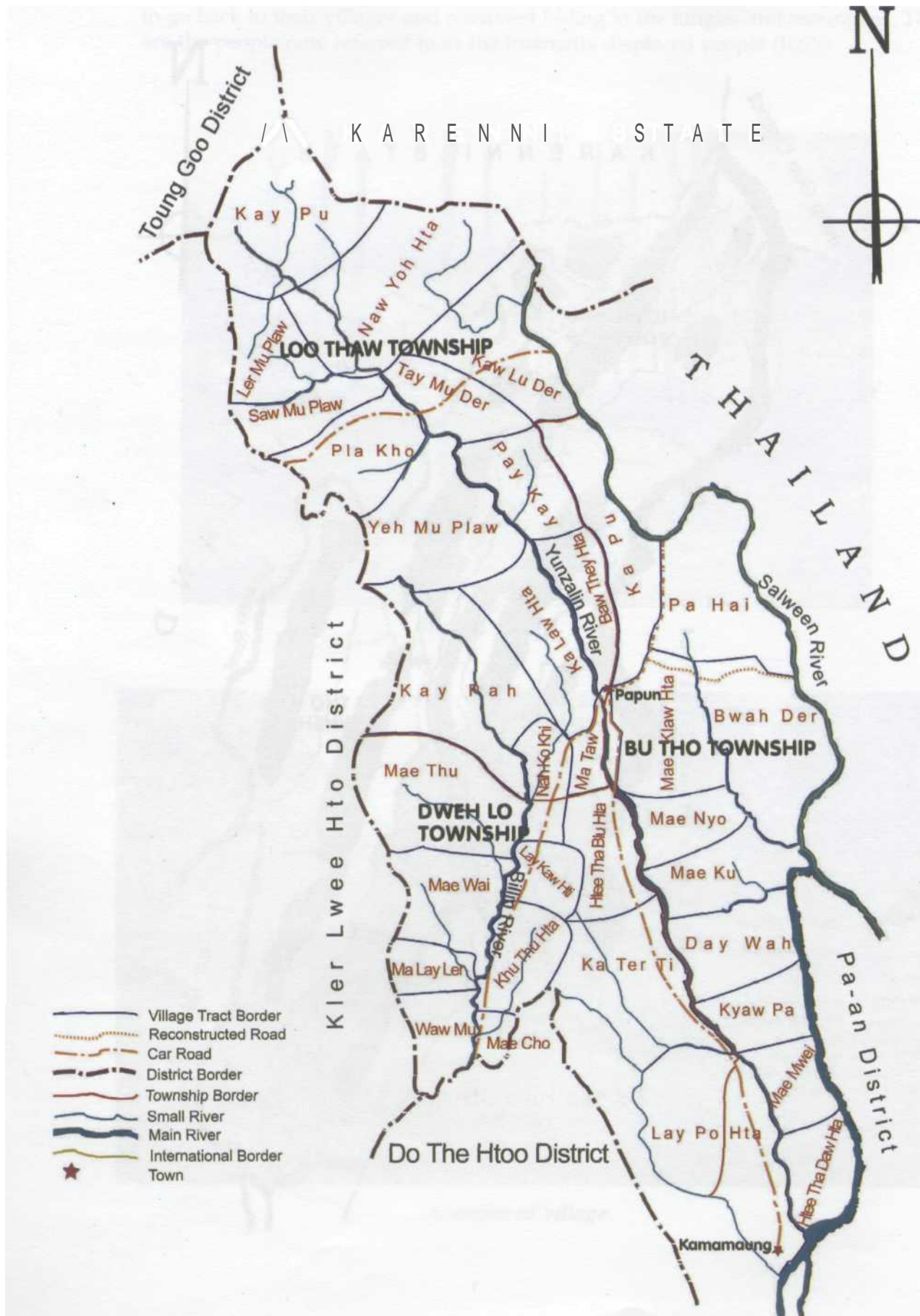
*Abandoned village*

## Topography of Mu Traw District





## Village Tracts in Mu Traw District



Some of the displaced villagers who could find no place to hide or no food were able to flee into Thailand and became refugees. Others went and lived in relocation sites as ordered by SPDC and some have found their way into the towns.

## 2. Mu TRAW DISTRICT POPULATION

The total population of Mu Traw District is estimated to be 125,320 if those who have been displaced and left the district are counted.

**Table 1: Population of Mu Traw District**

| Group No.    | Place of People           | Number of people |
|--------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| 1.           | People of three townships | 55,320           |
| 2.           | Refugees in Thailand      | 20,000           |
| 3.           | Moved inside Burma        | 5,000            |
| 4.           | Unofficially in Thailand  | 5,000            |
| 5.           | In SPDC controlled area   | 40,000           |
| <b>TOTAL</b> |                           | <b>125,320</b>   |

The main source of these figures are the village and village tract heads responsible to the KNU district administration. They provided CIDKP with figures of households in the villages in their areas and their estimates of numbers of people who were hiding in their area or who had fled from their area.

In order to estimate the total population of the district, it was necessary to estimate the population of the major centres under SPDC control and for which no reliable recent figures were available. These places are Papun town, Wai Moe, Wai Sar, Ta Ku Daing, Ku Sek, Pah Loe, Ka Ter Ti, Kamamaung, Ku Thu Hta, Mae Wai and Ohn Daw. For these places we used the population figures for Karen State (Papun Township) for 1967 referred to in *Forgotten Victims of a Hidden War: Internally Displaced Karen in Burma*, p.8. then added 3% per year.

CIDKP estimates that of the estimated approximately 125,000, (total population of the Mu Traw District), approximately 30,000 are displaced from the district.

## 3. NUMBER OF IDPS IN MU TRAW DISTRICT

In Mu Traw District, the number of IDPs increased during 1996-97 because of the larger numbers of Burma army battalions, the establishment of more army camps and the increase in military activities in the area.

The villagers who feared them, left their houses and property and fled to the jungle. In some cases, whole villages have moved and in some case only a few households have moved from the village.

The estimated numbers of IDPs in the three townships of Mu Traw district are shown in the table below:

**Table 2. Mu Traw District - Internally Displaced Persons**

| <b>Township</b>       | <b>Number of Families</b> | <b>IDPs</b>   |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| Loo Thaw              | 2972                      | 17,345        |
| BuTho                 | 1919                      | 10,394        |
| Dweh Lo               | 1721                      | 9,268         |
| <b>District Total</b> | <b>6617</b>               | <b>37,007</b> |

The numbers of IDPs (above) includes the following categories:

- 1 People who were forcibly relocated from their village by Burma army troops and are now staying in other places, some in whole village groups, some scattered.
- 2 People who dare not continue to stay in their village because of frequent military activity and move away from the village. They have established a new village in another place; some have moved as a whole village and some are scattered. These people are all living not too far from their previous place.
- 3 Some villages and some village tracts which moved out of their previous village tract and have moved together into another village tract.
- 4 Some families who moved out from their previous village tract or village and are scattered in other village tracts, and villages.
- 5 Some families who moved out from their village and are staying in the mountains or the jungle. (Figures for these groups are estimated).

#### **4. INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IN MU TRAW DISTRICT**

When people in Mu Traw District leave their houses and villages, they search for places where the Burma army soldiers cannot reach them. Many build small huts and hide in the mountains and valleys and along streams. In some places there are only two or three houses, in some places there may be ten to twenty houses, in a few cases even more. In most cases the displaced people find a place to stay which is at least a few kilometres from their home village.

Some people who stayed in a refugee camp for one or two years returned to their previous village. This occurred especially in March, 1997 when over 1,500 people from Mae Yeh, Oo Dah, Klo Pa and Ka Wa Klo refugee camps were relocated. \*

\* According to interview, the reasons were as follows.

1. When they lived in the refugee camp, they received full staple foods such as rice, salt and fish paste, but they did not get vegetables or meat. They do not have enough land for growing vegetables (or) raising animals. They also do not have money to buy, so some people went out of the camps for income. Since this was not permitted they have to go stealthily and work in fear, so they want to return and work in their village as before.
2. Some people worried that it may not be easy to get back to their own place later so they took the opportunity to struggle to return to their previous village.
3. Some people heard that one day refugees must be sent back to SPDC control so they returned to their village to live in misery rather live in misery under SPDC control.

After they have found a place to stay, if it is possible to cultivate rice, each family will cut and burn some land to farm. If several families cultivate their farms together, there is danger that their hidden settlement will be revealed. This danger limits the amount of rice which the displaced people can grow.

The health and education for the IDPs is always difficult. In places where there are ten or more houses, the villagers usually build primary schools for their children. The children from isolated families cannot go to school. With regard to health they rely mainly on traditional medicine.

After a village is deserted, the villagers dare not return to try to resettle there because the Burma army and KNU soldiers can come any time, and fighting can erupt again. Mostly the people fear that if the Burma army soldiers saw them, they would be caught and killed.

Land mines planted by both sides are also a big danger in the places which are deserted so that few people dare to go back. Some people who have dared to go back were killed or injured.

In some places where there are no land mines, villagers revisit their old village occasionally to search for the crops which they had planted. But it is usually of no use. The deserted fields and gardens are usually filled with weeds and the crops of no use because they had not been looked after.

To add to the misery, in 1998 there was a drought and a plague of insects. Most of the rice could not be harvested and what could was of poor quality. When you went to Mu Traw District, you would see the people begging and searching for rice. Most people had to eat boiled rice soup, boiled bamboo shoots and boiled wild roots.

## **5. CROP DAMAGE DUE TO BAD WEATHER AND PESTS 1998-1999**

In 1998 due to drought, paddy and other crops grown in Mu Traw District did not thrive. Crops dried and could not produce good grain and in addition the unusual weather encouraged various pests such as caterpillars, termites and mice. As a result the harvest was poor in 1998 and food was not sufficient for villagers' consumption. The most productive rice-growing parts of the Mu Traw District are the villager tracts located in the southern part of Bu Tho and Dweh Lo and Loo Thaw townships. The areas of paddy destroyed by bad weather and pests are shown in the township reports, in the map on page 12 and table 4 on page 13.

In 1999 rainfall was higher than usual but in many parts as the monsoon came too early, the villagers had to face more problems. When they prepared the land, the fields which were cut would not burn well and many fields had to be abandoned. During 1999 there was also pest damage to crops in some parts of the region. While overall, by comparison, the situation in 1999 was much better, current estimates suggest that the food shortage problem faced by the IDPs will continue during 2000.

Table 3 on page 11 shows the number of IDPs in July 1999 eating only boiled rice soup.



*Paddy damaged by SPDC*



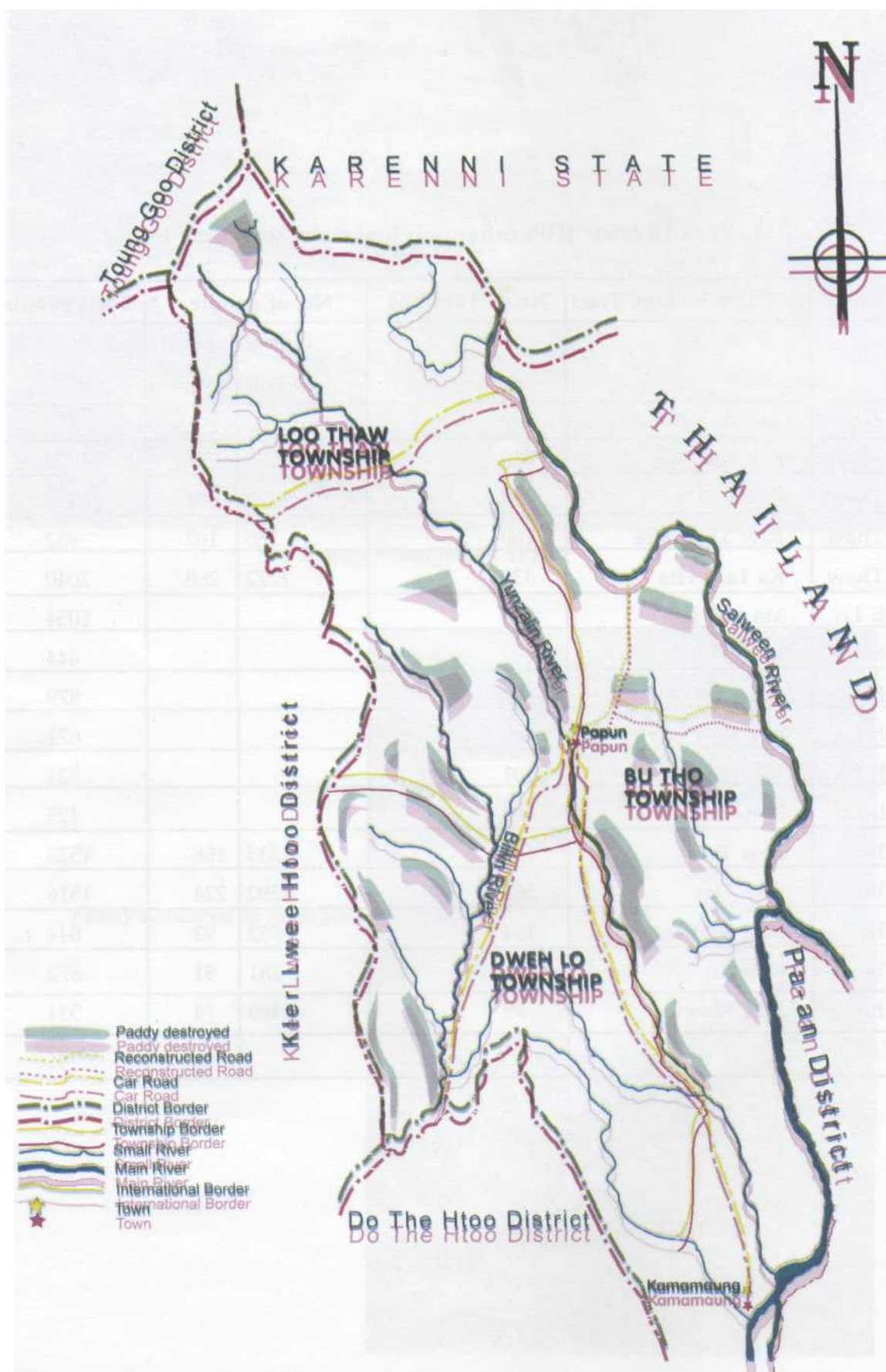
*Paddy damaged by drought*

**Table 3. Mu Traw District: IDPs eating only boiled rice soup, July 1999**

| Township     | Village/ Village Tract | No. of Families | No. of people  |                  | Total people  |
|--------------|------------------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------|---------------|
|              |                        |                 | over<br>5 year | under<br>5 years |               |
| Loo Thaw     | Tae Po Plaw area       | 82              |                |                  | 450           |
| Loo Thaw     | Pay Kay                | 316             | 1530           | 266              | 1796          |
| Loo Thaw     | Kay Pah                | 387             | 1972           | 401              | 2373          |
| Loo Thaw     | Baw Thay Hta           | 160             | 765            | 167              | 932           |
| Loo Thaw     | Ka Law Hta             | 339             | 1772           | 268              | 2040          |
| Dweh Lo      | Ma Lav Ler             | 199             |                |                  | 1054          |
| Dweh Lo      | Mae Cho                |                 |                |                  | 444           |
| Dweh Lo      | Mae Wai                | 111             |                |                  | 879           |
| Dweh Lo      | Lay Kaw Hti            | 149             |                |                  | 671           |
| Dweh Lo      | Mae Thu                | 101             |                |                  | 524           |
| Dweh Lo      | Waw Mu                 | 100             |                |                  | 425           |
| BuTho        | Kaw Pu                 | 189             | 1335           | 188              | 1523          |
| BuTho        | Bwa Der                | 262             | 1292           | 224              | 1516          |
| BuTho        | Mae Nyo                | 164             | 752            | 92               | 844           |
| BuTho        | Mae Ku                 | 146             | 781            | 91               | 872           |
| BuTho        | Mae Mwei               | 89              | 460            | 74               | 534           |
| <b>TOTAL</b> |                        | <b>2,890</b>    |                |                  | <b>16,877</b> |



## Paddy farms damaged by insects and drought



**Table 4. Crops damaged due to drought and pest destruction in Loo Thaw Township (1998)**

| No. | Name of village tract | No. of villages | Wet land paddy |            | Upland paddy  |             |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------|------------|---------------|-------------|
|     |                       |                 | No. of field   | Acreage    | No. of fields | Seed used   |
| 1   | Kay Pu                | 20              | 56             | 116        | 112           | 510         |
| 2   | Baw Thay Hta          | 2               | 9              | 37         | 24            | 199         |
| 3   | Ka Law Hta            | 14              | 209            | 589        | 84            | 878         |
| 4   | Pay Kay               | 10              | 121            | 241        | 186           | 420         |
|     | <b>TOTAL*</b>         | <b>46</b>       | <b>395</b>     | <b>983</b> | <b>406</b>    | <b>2007</b> |

*Data for other village tracts not available; some fields were totally damaged, some could harvest 20%.*

**Crops damaged due to drought and pest destruction in Bu Tho Township (1998)**

| No. | Name of village tract | No. of villages | Wet land paddy |             | Upland paddy  |             |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
|     |                       |                 | No. of field   | Acreage     | No. of fields | Seed usec   |
| 1   | PaHai                 | 13              | 104            | 210         | 397           | 2260        |
| 2   | Mae Nyu               | 8               | 148            | 420         | 77            | 110         |
| 3   | Mae Ku                | 5               | 86             | 210         | 88            | 160         |
| 4   | Mae Klaw Hta          | 16              | 86             | 210         | 88            | 400         |
| 5   | Mae Mwei              | 10              | 124            | 400         | 67            | 240         |
| 6   | Kaw Pu                | 8               | 178            | 770         | 19            | 70          |
| 7   | Bwa Der               | 15              | 113            | 340         | 216           | 340         |
|     | <b>Total**</b>        | <b>75</b>       | <b>903</b>     | <b>2780</b> | <b>977</b>    | <b>4080</b> |

*\* Some paddy damaged; some could harvest 25%*

**Crops damaged due to drought and pest destruction in Dweh Lo Township, (1998)**

| No. | Village Tract   | No. of villages | Wet land paddy |             | Upland paddy  |             |
|-----|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
|     |                 |                 | No. of fields  | Acreage     | No. of fields | seed usec   |
| 1   | Waw Mu          | 6               | 94             | 440         | 48            | 120         |
| 2   | Ma Taw          | 7               | 55             | 110         | 34            | 60          |
| 3   | Ma Lay Ler      | 13              | 107            | 230         | 121           | 270         |
| 4   | Mae Thu         | 17              | 88             | 270         | 218           | 410         |
| 5   | Mae Wai         | 12              | 130            | 520         | 94            | 230         |
|     | <b>Total***</b> | <b>55</b>       | <b>474</b>     | <b>1570</b> | <b>515</b>    | <b>1090</b> |

*' Data for other village tracts not available; some were totally damaged but some could harvest 20%.*

## 6. IDPs IN Loo THAW TOWNSHIP

Loo Thaw Township is located in the north of Mu Traw District and it has numerous high mountains. Most of the district is 3500 feet above sea level and the climate is very cold, especially in the upper seven village tracts. The only communication is by walking tracks.

The fertility of the soil in the lowland area is good for farming, with one acre producing 70 baskets. In the mountain area the soil fertility is not very good and a tin of rice seed produces only 20 baskets. Crops which are cultivated are rice, sticky rice, corn, ground nuts, sugar cane, sesame, coffee, cardamom and fruit.

There are 12 village tracts in Loo Thaw Township. They are Kay Pu, Naw Yoh Hta, Saw Mu Plaw, Ler Mu Plaw, Pla Kho, Yeh Mu Plaw, Kaw Lu Der, Tay Mu Der, Pay Kay, Baw Thay Hta, Ka Law Hta and Kay Pah. (*See Map on p. 6*)

The village tracts have an average population of 1500 to 2000 people. All the people are Sgaw Karen and they are Animist and Christian.

The KNU District and Brigade headquarters are located in the Loo Thaw Township. There are two high schools, 4 middle schools and 60 primary schools. There are also 2 mobile hospitals and 2 mobile clinics, but there are not enough medicines. (*See maps on pages 26 and 27*)

The area where the Burma army soldiers have settled and have control are the areas near the car road, near the rivers and strategic places, altogether 22 sites in the township. It is the township in Mu Traw District with the most number of Burma army sites.

The places where the Burma army troops have settled are: Peh Hta, Saw Hta, Wah Baw Kyo, Maw Pu, Pla Kho, Pya Gaw, Kaw Wai Kyo, Yu Kyo, Ta Hgaw Hta, Ler Klay Kyo, Ta Ma Thay Kyo, Saw Mee Kyo, Maw Kyo, Ler Maw Ku, Po Mu Kyo, Klay Kyo, Leh Khi, Say Day, War Klay Tu, Doo Taw Kyo, Pa Na Law Gay, Taw Mae Pleh. (*See map on p. 24*)

In Loo Thaw Township, the villagers commonly flee from their villages to avoid the enemy soldiers. Because of the large number of Burma army soldiers in the township, large numbers of the villagers have left their houses and villages and become the internally displaced people. Because of this, wherever the SPDC battalions travel in the area, they burn the villages and rice stocks.

#### FOUR WORST-AFFECTED VILLAGE TRACTS IN LOO THAW TOWNSHIP

Four village tracts in the north-west of the township have suffered more than others. They are Ler Mu Plaw, Saw Mu Plaw, Pla Kho and Yeh Mu Plaw. *See table 5 below.*

**Table 5. No. of IDPs in Loo Thaw Township**

| No. | Village Tract | No. of families | No.of people  |
|-----|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1   | Kay Pah       | 396             | 2350          |
| 2   | Yeh Mu Plaw*  | 272             | 2343          |
| 3   | Pla Kho*      | 282             | 1544          |
| 4   | Tay Mu Der    | 189             | 1327          |
| 5   | Ler Mu Plaw*  | 160             | 1023          |
| 6   | Kaw Lu Der    | 268             | 1451          |
| 7   | Kay Pu        | 365             | 2077          |
| 8   | Naw yoh Hta   | 445             | 2227          |
| 9   | Saw Mu Plaw*  | 358             | 2279          |
| 10  | Ka Law Hta    | 237             | 724           |
|     | <b>Total</b>  | <b>1,972</b>    | <b>17,345</b> |

*The four north-western village tracts most badly disturbed.*

When the Burma army launched its "Four Cuts Operation" during the BSPP regime, the KNU, KNLA and KNDO were regarded as their main target. The villagers were regarded as ordinary civilians and although they supported these organisations they did not suffer too badly. Now, in these four village tracts as well as other parts of the district, those who flee from the Burma army troops are all classified as 'the main enemy', the same as the KNU and KNLA and they suffer from the scorched earth policy aimed at eradicating all 'enemy' in the area.

The four village tracts mentioned are located along the main road constructed from Kyauk Kyi to Saw Hta, passing through Pya Gaw and Maw Pu. This road needs to be secure and so the SPDC deploys altogether 11 battalions of its troops in the area along the road. That is the reason there is more SPDC army troops in these four village tracts than others. (*See map on p. 24*)

Economically, these four village tracts have good soil and a sufficient number of wet land paddy fields which can produce not only enough rice for the local villagers but also, normally, to support villagers in other areas with food shortages, especially Toun Goo and Kler Lwee Htoo districts. Perhaps this is the reason that the SPDC has identified this area as of strategic importance.

Beginning from 1997, all Burma army columns passing through the area routinely destroy everything they see and in addition they go out searching for villagers hiding in hide-outs and huts in the forest. Every person they see, including the aged and the sick who are unable to escape are all killed without question. All food and plantations seen are destroyed, all kinds of villagers' animals are all killed. Even buffaloes wallowing in water are all shot dead. The people in Pla Kho, Saw Mu Plaw, and Ler Mu Plaw do not dare to stay in their areas, so they have fled to neighbouring areas, some into Yeh Mu Plaw village tract. (*See map p. 23*)

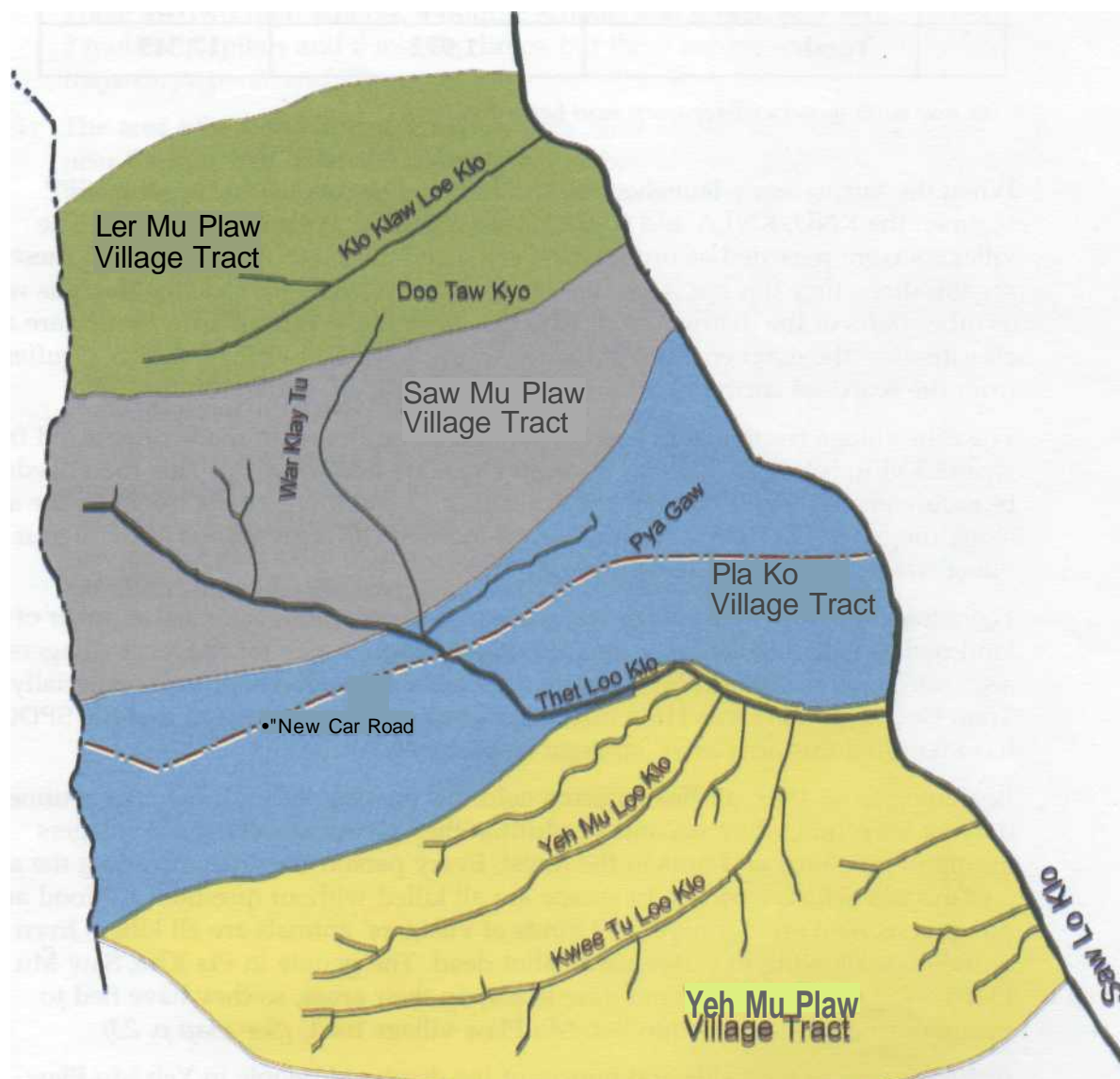
In 1998, many of the fields and houses of the displaced people in Yeh Mu Plaw, Pla Kho, Saw Mu Plaw and Ler Mu Plaw were destroyed by the Burma army soldiers. Altogether, 58 villages in these four village tracts were destroyed. In mid 1999,

1,272 families consisting of 7,020 persons were internally displaced. (See table 6 below.)

**Table 6. IDPs in the four north-west village tracts of Loo Thaw Township**

| Number       | Sections    | Number of villages | No. of Families | No. of IDPs |
|--------------|-------------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| 1            | Ler Mu plaw | 8                  | 160             | 1023        |
| 2            | Yeh Mu Plaw | 20                 | 272             | 2174        |
| 3            | Pla Kho     | 11                 | 282             | 1544        |
| 4            | Saw Mu Plaw | 19                 | 358             | 2279        |
| <b>Total</b> |             | <b>58</b>          | <b>1072</b>     | <b>7020</b> |

### Four worst affected village tracts



The result is that all villagers in these four village tracts can no longer stay in their villages and have to move to other places where there is not sufficient land for farming and the soil is also poorer. In addition, some of the areas they move to are also quite close to Burma army camps so the villagers must still live in fear all the time.

The displaced people dare not to go back to their old villages because there is fighting and land mines in the area. The villages remain deserted and the fields neglected. The Burma army soldiers also do not settle in these deserted villages; if they see cultivated land they destroy it and if they see people they accuse them of being KNU soldiers and they shoot these people. More than 100 IDPs are killed every year in this way.

Despite the bad situation, the villagers tried their best to do slash and burn farming or plant wet land paddy when they can but the yield cannot fulfill all their food needs. At the end of 1999, because of renewed activity of Burma army soldiers in the areas where they have resettled, the harvest period was cut short, so that the harvest was greatly reduced.

#### **FOOD ASSISTANCE**

Despite the distance, it is possible to provide assistance and in the past years, KORD and CIDKP have provided assistance on three occasions. However, the people of Saw Mu Plaw and Ler Mu Plaw received no assistance. The situation in the area is extremely insecure; if assistance is provided in the form of cash, so that people can buy food, in some cases they have to walk for 2 or 3 days in order to buy the foods. A few people have been caught by Burma army soldiers and killed.

#### **HEALTH**

Some medical supplies have reached the people. However, sometimes when they are seriously sick, they have no medicine to use. They have to use only the bark of the tree and herbal treatment. Some times, the sick person has to travel to a place where there is medicine but because they have no money, they were not treated. There are no hospitals and the back pack teams cannot always reach these areas.

#### **EDUCATION**

Even when they live in the jungle, the parents want their children to have education. When the situation allows, teachers are found to teach their children. Usually this is not for the whole year so the children make little progress. The parents would like their children to have an opportunity for education and whenever we go to these places, they ask us for advice and help

#### **OTHER VILLAGE TRACTS IN LOO THAW TOWNSHIP**

The remaining eight village tracts in Lu Thaw Township also face a tough situation. However, these areas have suffered less destruction by Burma army soldiers, so if people have not got food, they can search for it and they can buy it from nearby places.

## 7. IDPs IN Bu THO TOWNSHIP

Bu Tho Township is located in the south-east of Mu Traw District between the Yunzalin River and the Salween River and is dominated by the north-south running Bu Tho mountains. The major part of the township is mountainous but there are also plains in the southern part. Most of the township lies at more than 3000 feet above sea-level.

Most people in this area are farmers. They grow rice, sticky rice, corn, betel nut, sugar cane, ground nuts, sesame and cardamom. The township has 11 village tracts and each consists of 15 to 30 villages. In the township, there are approximately 10,000 people. Most of the people (95%) are Sgaw Karen and there is a small number of Sshan. Most travel is by foot. There is a (car) road from Kamamaung to Papun, the biggest town in Mu Traw District.

There is one middle school in the township and about 40 primary schools. There is a hospital located in Pa Heh village tract. *(See maps on pages 26 and 27)*

### FORMER FORCED RELOCATION SITES

In the past there were four forced relocation camps at but now there are none. The forcibly relocated villagers only stay in the villages such as Saw Bweh Der and Bwah Der. Those who had been forced into the relocation camps have gone back to their own villages which are now under SPDC control. *(See Map on page 30)*

### DISPLACEMENT IN THE SEVEN UPPER VILLAGE TRACTS

The Burma army and DKBA soldiers have settled in many locations in Bu Tho township. These places are Thee Mu Hta, Kyaw Nya, Pa Keh Kyo, Dah Kway, Kamamaung, Bwah Der and Saw Bweh Der. They are located on the banks of the Salween River and around the car road from Kamamaung to Papun and Pa Hai. *(See map on p.24)*

The SPDC soldiers have also settled in the mountains and in strategic places in the seven upper village tracts of Bu Tho township. In these upper seven village tracts, Pa Hai, Kaw Pu, Bwa Der, Mae Klaw, Mae Nyo, Mae Ku and Mae Mwei, fearing that they will be caught by Burma army soldiers and persecuted, the people have fled from their places. Some of them have crossed the border and become refugees. Others are living as IDPs in hiding in groups of 10 or 20 houses. *(See map on p. 23)*

Many people in this area do not have enough food and must eat roots and boiled rice soup. In the past they have received assistance from (KORD) and (CIDKP) but because the numbers of IDPs have increased, the assistance is not enough and did not reach all of them.

In the village tracts of Mae Mwei, Mae Ku, Mae Nyo and Mae Klaw, the people who previously followed the DKBA and went and lived in Myaing Kyi Ngu have come back to their villages. They returned without food so these village tracts needed more food. People are still coming back from Myaing Kyi Ngu, group after group. Since the numbers continue to grow, assistance provided is never enough. In late 1999 there were more than one thousand such people in the area.

## THE SITUATION OF THE SOUTHERN VILLAGE TRACTS

In the southernmost village tracts, Day Wah, Kyaw Pa, Mae Pree and Htee Tha Daw, which are sandwiched between the Salween and the car road, there is no place to hide, so these people stay in their own villages. They have to learn to deal with armed organizations, namely - SPDC, DKBA and KNU and to protect themselves in various ways.

## 8. IDPs IN DWEH LO TOWNSHIP

Dweh Lo Township is located in the south west of Mu Traw District. It has both mountains and plains and includes the Bu Lo / Mae Wai valley and the Baw Kyo valley. The soil fertility is fair. One acre produces 60 baskets. (1 basket = 46 lbs)

The climate is moderate, not too hot and not too cold. In normal times, i.e. if nobody destroys their farm, enough rice is produced for the township, but not for export. In 1998, however, the township was affected by drought, so the rice quality was not good and there was much damage from pests. In most cases the farmers could harvest nothing. (*See table on p. 11*)

Most of the people (95%) in this township are Sgaw Karen, with a few Shan, Pa-O and Burman. In religion, the majority are Buddhist and the rest are Christians. The people are mainly farmers. They cultivate rice, sugar cane, ground nuts, coconuts, betel and fruit. Some people do lumber work when they can.

The township is divided into 12 village tracts, each consisting of ten to 20 villages. The average population of the village tracts is approximately 1600 people. In the Bu Lo / Mae Wai valley, there are 8 village tracts, Mae Thu, Mae Wai, Nah Ko Khi, Lay Kaw Ti, Ma Lay Ler, Khu Thu Hta, Mae Cho and Waw Mu. In the Baw Kyo valley, there are 4 village tracts, Ma Taw, Htee Tha Blu Hta, Ka Ter Ti and Lay Po Hta.

Most transport is by foot but traders use rowing boats on the Yunzalin and Bu Lo rivers. There is the Papun car road but the people dare not to use it.

The only towns are Kamamaung and Ka Ter Ti.

There are two middle schools and 28 primary schools in the township. There is no hospital in the area; people rely on medicines which are sold in the area sometimes and traditional medicine. (*See maps on p. 26 and 27*)

The Burma army has established itself in six main locations in Dweh Lo township, Mae Wai, Khu Thu Hta, Waw Mu, Ka Ter Ti, Blow Lu and Taung Thone Lone. DKBA troops are located at Ma Taw. (*See map on p. 24*)

## FORCED RELOCATION SITES

At the end of 1999 there were approximately 2000 people at Mae Wai, 1250 people at Waw Mu and 180 people at Khu Thu Hta. (*See map on p. 30*)

Mae Wai forced relocation site - People from 19 villages were relocated to Mae Wai. There were originally over 2500 people there but those who could not pay the extortion fees and could not work for SPDC fled from the site and there are about 2000 people there now.

SPDC demand 6000 kyats as porter fees for 2 persons per 10 days from the site, so people have to pay 3 times in a month. Moreover they have to serve in the local militia which is called Set Thar. The people have to fulfil the needs of the SPDC troops whenever they go on an operation. If their demands are not met, children



aged over 10 and women are forced to work. The people are not allowed to work in their own fields near their own villages, they can only cultivate in the paddy fields near Mae Wai relocation site. The people are also not allowed to sleep in their farm huts, and those who disobey are beaten and their farm huts burnt.

**Waw Mu forced relocation** site - People from 7 villages were relocated to Waw Mu relocation site. They have to pay between 7000 and 10000 kyats per month as porter fees. To pay porter fees, villagers have to sell their cattle. People also have to work for the military. People are allowed only to work in the paddy fields near Waw Mu. Sometimes people are allowed to sleep in the farm huts but sometimes they are not allowed. Some people who could not bear staying under the control of SPDC fled and hid in the mountains. Some were found and beaten, some were killed, their huts and other possessions burned down.

**Khu Thu Hta forced relocation** site - People from over 10 villages were relocated to Khu Thu Hta relocation site. Nearly all the people however have returned to live near their old village, except those that had originally come from Khu Thu Hta village. Those that have returned and live around their old village are not free from SPDC control. They have to pay porter fees and if they can not pay they are captured and beaten. People who returned and live around their old village must not run. If they run from the village they are assumed to be KNU, so they have to stay under the SPDC. Some times when they have suffered too much they flee from their village and hide for 3-4 months. Depending on the condition of the place, they can hide for a while but not long, so they return and live under the SPDC again.

#### **IDPs IN THE Bu LO/MAE WAI VALLEY**

There are IDPs in all 8 village tracts in the Bu Lo/ Mae Wai valley area of Dweh Lo township. Nearly all people from 6 village tracts, Mae Thu, Nar Ko Khi, Lay Kaw Hti, Mae Wai, Khu Thu Hta village tract and Ma Lay Ler village tract have become displaced. They must hide in the jungle and try to grow upland rice. If there are SPDC troop activities they prepare to move again. They are moving frequently so their place is unstable and they do not have enough food for their families. There are no clinics and medical assistance never reaches them. There are a few primary schools but most of the children do not get the opportunity to attend school.

#### **THE SITUATION OF THE FOUR VILLAGE TRACTS IN BAW KYO VALLEY**

There are four village tracts in Baw Kyo valley, Ma Taw, Htee Tha Blu Hta, Ka Ter Hti and Lay Po Hta. There are many people and lots of low lying plains with paddy fields and plots of vegetables. There are not many mountains. In 1998 people who lived in these areas were relocated to Baw Kyo Leh, Htee Law Thi Hta, Baw Tho Hta, Lay Po Hta and Ma Taw. But now they have been allowed to return and live in their own villages again.

The area is flat so SPDC troops can move around easily. If the SPDC troop go to their village, the people must not run. If they run when SPDC troops go to their village, if they are caught they are shot and killed and their villages are burnt down. SPDC troops appoint village heads for communication. The village leaders have to pay porter fees and sometimes SPDC and DKBA troops demand rice, pigs, chickens and cattle. Living is very hard, but they can cultivate their land in their own village.

Those who could not bear the control of SPDC leave to hide in the jungle. It is usually not the whole village, only a few families. Roughly 25% of the whole population in the Baw Kyo valley area are internally displaced. They can buy food

from Papun and Kamamaung through the people who live under SPDC control. They have never received any food or medical assistance. They have one primary school. It is not impossible to reach them to provide assistance but if there are SPDC troop activities, it will require a long travelling time.

## **9. THE SITUATION OF THE IDPS IN MU TRAW DISTRICT- SUMMARY AND UPDATE**

Because there is fighting in the district, various problems follow. Villagers fear the harsh treatment of the SPDC soldiers, and flee from their villages and their farms to another place. Some of the villages, houses, personal things and stored food are destroyed. Some of the villagers have been caught and killed.

Some of the villagers are forcibly relocated by SPDC. They have to work for the SPDC soldiers, pay porter fees and taxes. Sometimes they have to work so often that they cannot work for themselves. Gradually, they became poorer and poorer and because they cannot stand it they flee in to the jungle or elsewhere.

The people who flee from their villages, have to hide. Some can secretly cultivate rice using slash and burn methods, but because they must constantly hide, they haven't got enough food. Their livelihood is just like the wild birds in the jungle. When we went to their places, we would see them living in their bamboo huts without enough clothes and food. Some can buy rice and have to ask for help from other people. Some who haven't got rice, have to survive by eating wild bananas, roots and bamboo shoots. Some have to search for these plants for 2 or 3 days before they can bring them back home. If other people can give a little bit of rice, they boil it and mix the rice with roots and fruits.

Rice soup satisfies hunger, but lacks protein and nutrition. Because of malnutrition, they are vulnerable to diseases like edema, malaria, gastric problems and diarrhoea. Regarding health care, there are only a few hospitals and clinics in places where there is good security. There are not enough medicines. If people are sick and have to go to hospital, they cannot go because of the long distance. In some places, there are back-pack teams who travel and help them periodically. In some places, there are no medicines at all.

The displaced people want their children to have some education. In places where a lot of people settle, there are some primary schools but the teachers haven't got any salaries, so it is very difficult because the teachers have to search for their food like every one else. In some places there is no school.

Although these people know that the refugees in Thailand have been looked after, they don't want to go. Some of them have been to the refugee camps and returned. Others live far from the border and the Burma army soldiers have blocked their way so they can't reach the border. However, the majority of the villagers stay not far from the place where their ancestors had lived, whether they faced difficulties or not. They don't want to leave their village and some say that even if they have to die, they will die in their villages and their own country.

The area of Mu Traw District where people are most desperately in need of assistance are the four northwestern village tracts of Loo Thaw Township.

## **UPDATE ON THE SITUATION OF IDPS IN MU TRAW DISTRICT, MAY 2000.**

During the 1999-2000 dry season the SPDC completed the construction of the strategic road (fair weather car road) from Kyauk Kyi to Hsaw Hta which passes through the Loo Thaw township of Mu Traw district. SPDC troops have set up sentry posts along the strategic road about 150 metres apart. Land mines have been laid between the sentry posts. So this fortified road has cut Mu Traw district in two making travel between the southern part and the northern part of Mu Traw district very difficult.

An old car road (fair weather car road) has been re-constructed from Papun to Dah Kwin and Papun to Kyauk Nyat. SPDC troops have also planted land mines along this car road and adjacent travelling paths.

The number of SPDC battalions has increased since last year. There are now 36 battalions in Mu Traw District compared with 21 battalions in 1999. In addition there are troops from 32 mobile battalions for search and destroy operations, bringing the total to 68 battalions.

A new development is that from the beginning of the year 2000, SPDC troops began systematically to burn down "kaw" paddy fields and lay landmines in the "kaw".

"Kaw" is the dying period of a slash and burn paddy field. If the paddy field is not burned when it is properly dry the kaw will not burn well. So it is difficult to clear for growing paddy in the raining season. This kind of operation was never made previously.

The result is that villagers are prevented from growing rice in the farm areas where the SPDC troops have been.

During 1999 the people were able to grow rice. At harvesting time, however, many paddy farms were destroyed by SPDC troops and there was damage to crops as well because of abnormal weather conditions and insects.

## **FURTHER UPDATE, AUGUST 2000**

Because of early rain, many mountain farms did not burn properly, causing bad growth of rice. Damage by rats has also been a problem.

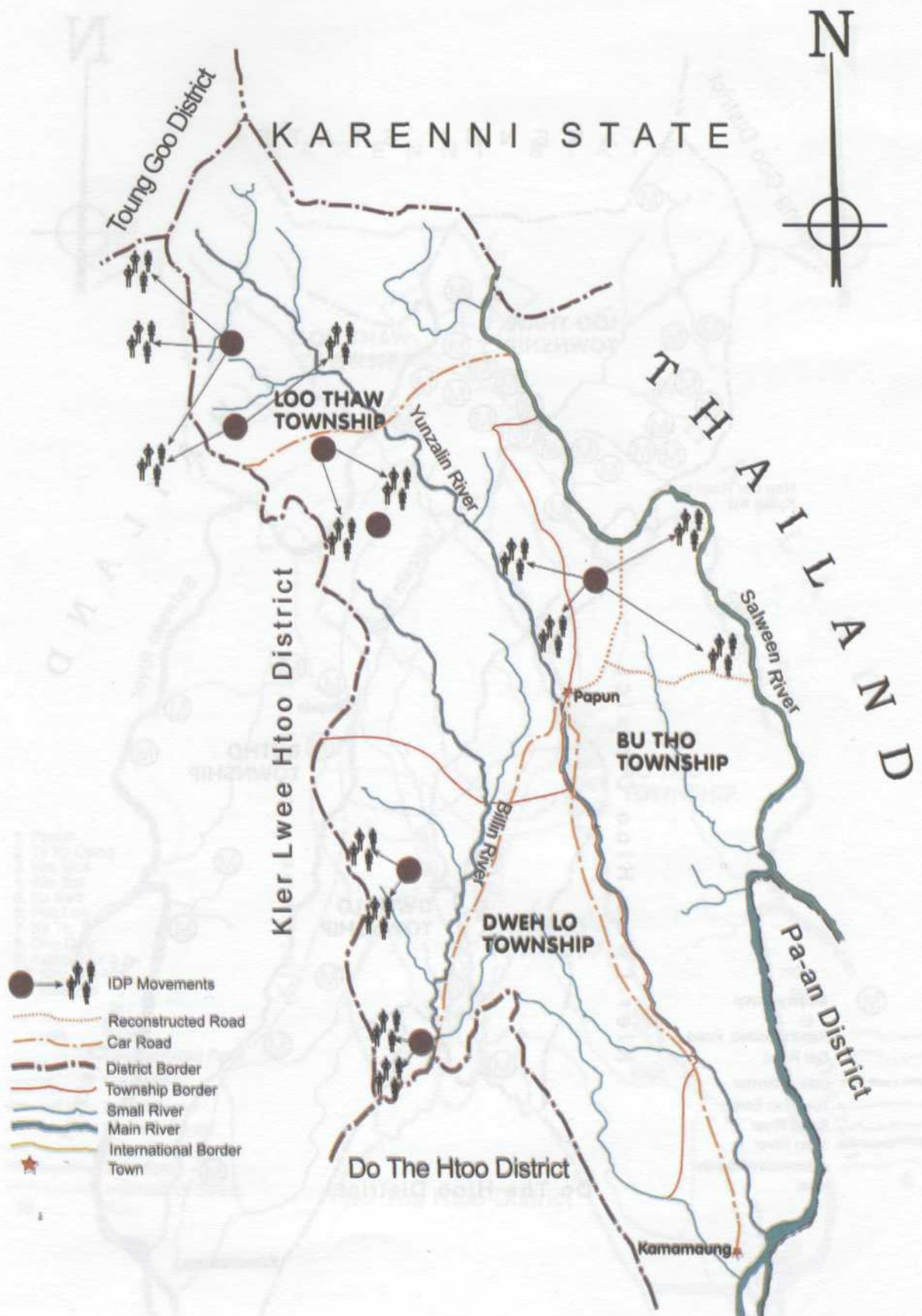
The buildup of SPDC troop movements in Loo Thaw township reported earlier continues. SPDC troop activities usually occurs every two weeks in the areas of Pya Gaw, Ler Mu Plaw, Saw Mu Plaw, Maw Pu and Saw Hta. They lay land mines in places where they have reached, making it difficult for villagers to move.

While almost all people in Loo Thaw flee from the SPDC troops there are a few families in Klaw Hta and Baw Thay Hta village tracts who now live under the SPDC.

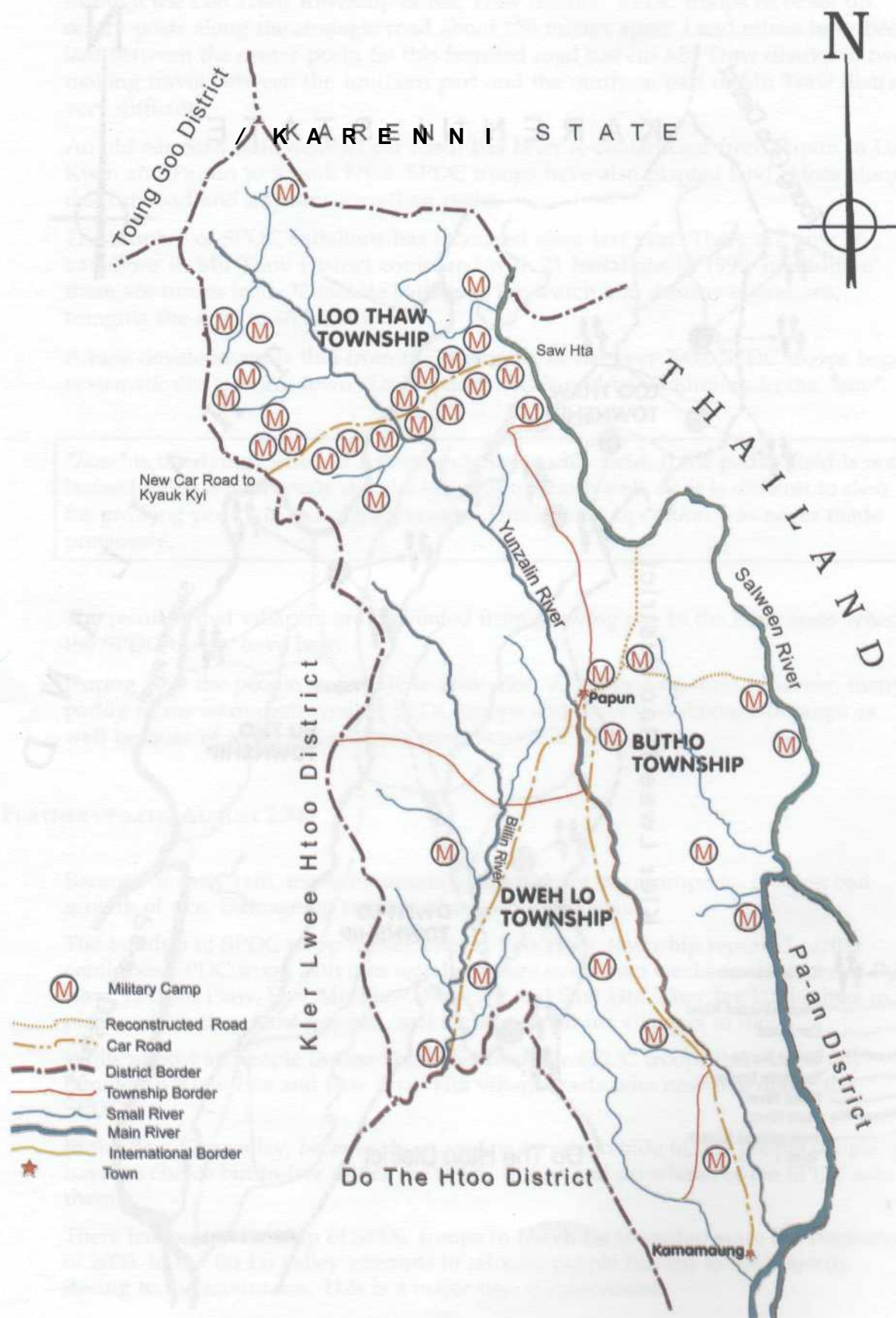
In the Baw Kyo valley, because there are few forests to hide in, the people have no choice but to live under the SPDC troops and do whatever the SPDC asks them.

There has been a buildup of SPDC troops in Dweh Lo township since the beginning of 2000. In the Bu Lo valley attempts to relocate people has led to the majority fleeing to the mountains. This is a major new displacement.

## IPDs Cluster in Mu Traw District

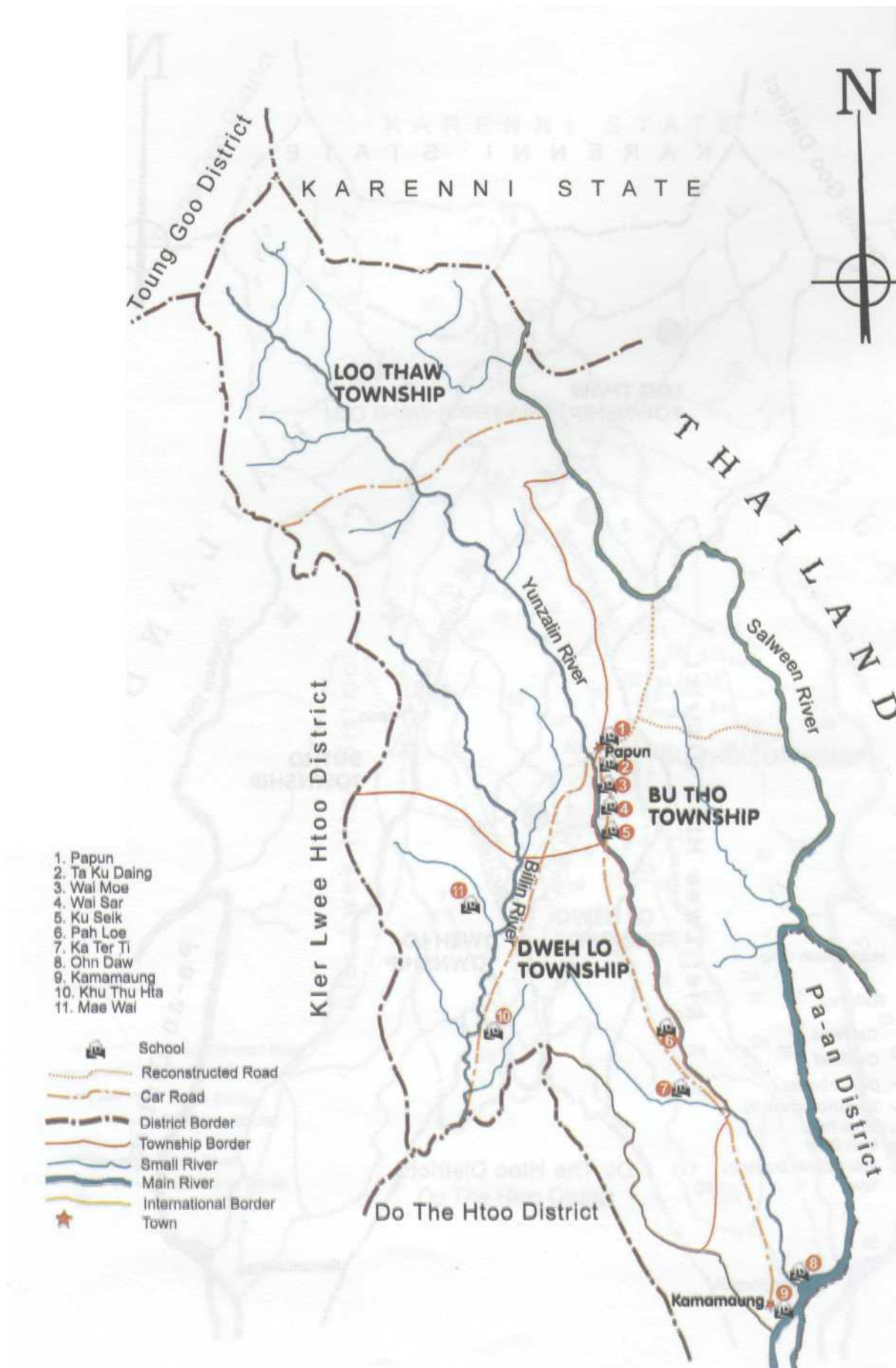


## Location of SPDC Military Camps in Mu Traw District





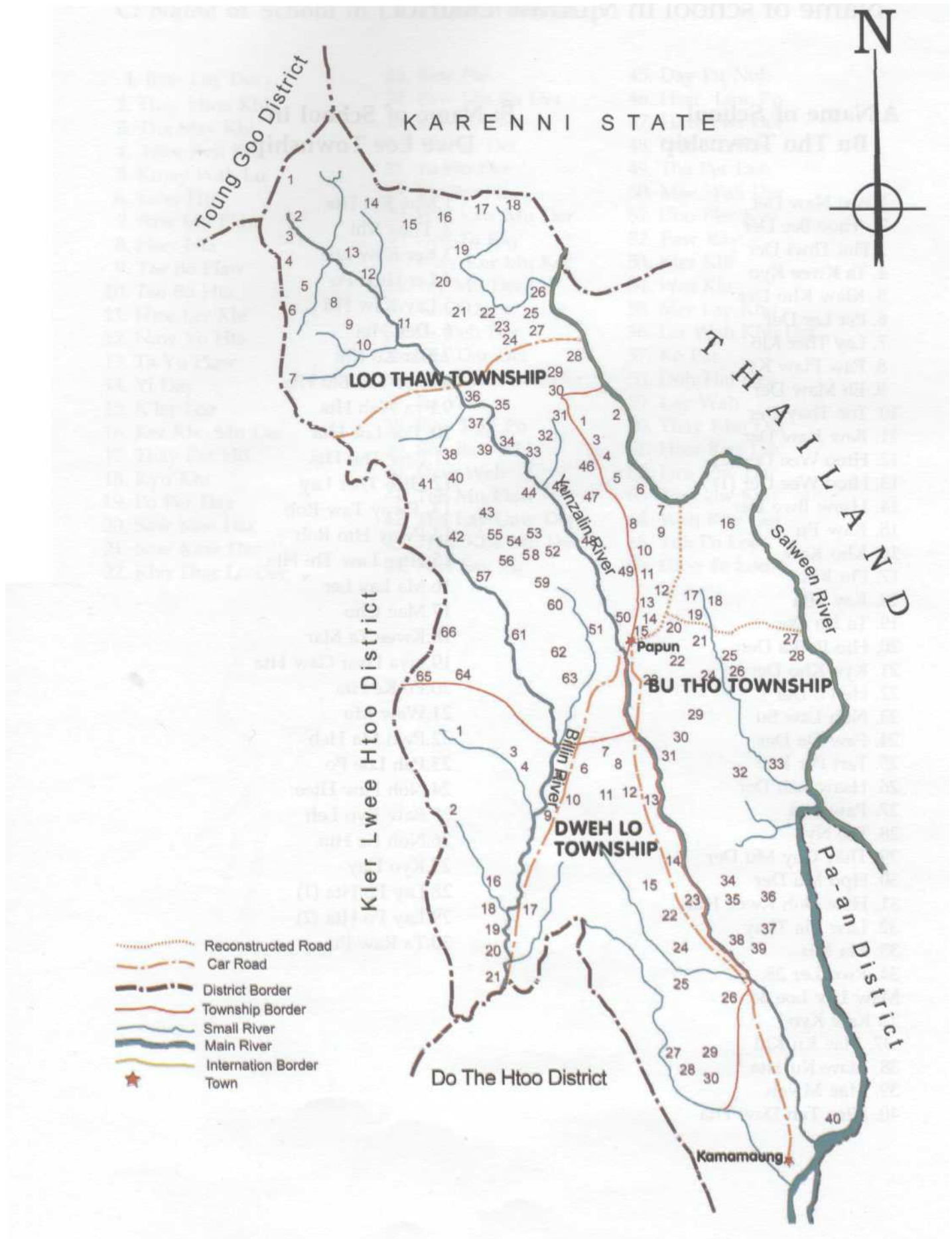
## Location of SPDC Schools in Mu Traw District



## Location of Mobile clinics and backpack activities in Mu Traw district



## Location of Karen Community Schools in Mu Traw District





## Name of school in Mutraw District

### A:Name of School Bu Tho Township

- 1.Wai Naw Der
2. Thoo Bee Der
- 3.Tha Thwi Der
4. Ta Kwee Kyo
5. Klaw Kho Der
6. Per Ler Der
7. Lay Ther Klo
8. Paw Plaw Kyi
9. Eh Maw Der
10. Toe Thay Der
11. Baw Kaw Der
12. Htoo Wee Der (2)
13. Htoo Wee Der (1)
14. Hsaw Bwe Der
15. Kaw Pu
16. Kho Kaw
17. Plu Khi
18. Kay Hta
19. Ta Ku Der
20. Hto Po Pa Dere
21. Kyo Kho Der
22. He Po Der
23. Noh Law Su
24. Paw De Der
25. Tari Per Kho
26. Hsaw Leh Der
27. Paw Hta
28. Toe Nyo
29. Thay Gay Mu Der
30. Hpo Mu Der
31. Htee Doh Kwee Hta
32. Law Pla Thay
33. Ma Mu
34. Pwo Ler
- 35.Maw Lay Loe
- 36.Ta Kaw Kyo
37. Mae Ku Khi
38. Maw Ku Hta
- 39.. Mae Mweh
40. Htee Tah Daw Hta

### B: Name of School in Dwe Loe Township

- 1.Mae KyiHta
2. Plaw Khi
3. Ker Kaw Loe
4. Ler Htoo Po
5. Lay Kaw Hti
6. Deh Hta
7. Nar Ko Khi
8. Htee Tha Blu Hta
9. Pya Weh Hta
10. Poe LoeHta
11. Baw Tho Hta
12. Htee Ther Lay
13. Pway Taw Roh
14. Pway Hto Roh
15. Htee Law Thi Hta
16. Ma Lay Ler
17. Mae Cho
18. Kwee Ta Mar
19. Nya Hsar Gaw Hta
20. Po Ke Hta
- 21.Waw Mu
- 22.Pwo Ma Heh
- 23.Pah Loe Po
- 24.Noh Paw Htee
- 25.Baw Kyo Leh
- 26.Noh Ke Hta
- 27.Kyo Day
- 28.Lay Po Hta (1)
- 29.Lay Po Hta (2)
- 30.Ta Raw Pu

## C: Name of School in Lu Thaw Township

|                     |     |                    |     |                 |
|---------------------|-----|--------------------|-----|-----------------|
| 1. Baw Lay Der      |     | 23. Baw Pai        |     | 45. Day Pu Noh  |
| 2. Thav Htoo Khi    |     | 24. Paw Mu Ka Der  |     | 46. Hsar Law Pu |
| 3. Tha May Khi      |     | 25. Ket Ler Der    |     | 47. Haw Pwi Der |
| 4. Htee Keh Khi     |     | 26. Thway Der      |     | 48. Leh Nar Der |
| 5. Kmay Wah Lu      |     | 27. Ya Plo Der     | 49. | Tha Per Der     |
| 6. Ksler Hti        | 28. | Me Per Hta         | 50. | Mae Wah Der     |
| 7. Saw Mu Plaw      |     | 29. War Law Mu Der | 51. | Doo Pler Kyo    |
| 8. Hser Hta         | 30. | Doo Ta Kay         | 52. | Paw Kay         |
| 9. Tae Bo Plaw      | 31. | Thay Ker Mu Ker    | 53. | Kler Khi        |
| 10. Tae Bo Hta      |     | 32. Tay Mu Der     | 54. | Wee Klo         |
| 11. Htee Ler Khi    | 33. | Ta O'Der           | 55. | Mer Lay Kho     |
| 12. Naw Yo Hta      | 34. | Pa Deh Der         | 56. | Ler Wah Kho Der |
| 13. Ta Yu Plaw      | 35. | Tha Dar Der        | 57. | Ke Par          |
| 14. Yi Day          | 36. | Thay Thar Mu Der   | 58. | Doh Hai Der     |
| 15. Kler Loe        |     | 37. Ka Weh         | 59. | Lay Wah         |
| 16. Ker Kho Mu Der  | 38. | Baw Day Pu         | 60. | Thay Kho Der    |
| 17. Thay Par Hti    | 39. | Boo Baw Khi        | 61. | Htea Kay Der    |
| 18. Kyu Khi         | 40. | Daw Weh            | 62. | Law Poe Der     |
| 19. Po Per Day      | 41. | Yeh Mu Plaw        | 63. | Ter Gaw Kyo     |
| 20. Saw Mee Hta     | 42. | Tha Lay Gaw Der    | 64. | Wah Kho Der     |
| 21. Saw Kaw Der     | 43. | ThaY Kho Mu Der    | 65. | Yoh Po Loe      |
| 22. Kho Thar Lo Der | 44. | Paw Say Pu         | 66. | Htoo Ta Loo     |

## Forced Relocation Sites

