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MON RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MONTHLY REPORT

JANUARY

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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 Wongsā Pala | - Chairman |
| 2. Nai Chann Ai | - Vice-Chairman |
| 3. Nai Kasauh Mon | - General Secretary |
| 4. Nai Dung Htaw | - Member |
| 5. Nai Aung Mon | - Member |
| 6. Nai Glae | - Member |
| 7. Nai Chit Nyunt | - Member |
| 8. Nai Tay Jae | - Member |
| 9. Phra Jon Dae | - Member |

Monthly Report of Mon Relief and Development Committee (January 2001)

II. Self-reliance Program and Deforestation Problems in Mon Resettlement Sites

Since 1996, after Mon refugees were repatriated into Burmese territory across the border from Thailand, the recent Mon relief organization (MNRC – Mon National Relief Committee) encouraged the returned Mon refugees to create paddy growing farms in every resettlement. According to promise by international aid agencies, the returned Mon refugees would be provided with foods only for three years. It also meant that during this three-year period, the Mon refugees must create their own farms or own works and should rely on themselves for foods.

So, since 1996, the Mon refugee families found their own lands and grow paddy. However, except Bee Reé resettlement site, because of over-crowded population and security reasons, the refugees in Halockhani and Tavoy sites could not find enough lands to grow paddy that especially produced rice.

Since all refugee resettlement sites are in mountainous areas, the returnees have used mainly "slash and burnt" methods of paddy cultivation in all areas. In this paddy cultivation process, they cleared lands in mountain slopes, by cutting all small and big trees, burning all of them and grow paddy. After cutting many trees on the mountain and along streams and rivers, there have been less and less trees around the resettlement areas.

After cutting all trees for slash and burnt paddy cultivation, new plants cannot rise and grow in these areas, and only tall grasses are growing naturally and getting taller and taller. During paddy plants are growing, grasses also get grower, so the farmers have to kill these grasses to get paddy plants grow higher. After three years, the farmers are unable to kill grasses and they are growing faster than paddy plants, so normally, the farmers have to abandon their farms after three years.

Therefore, after three years, many spaces of lands became empty lands without trees and only tall grasses were in the area. Since over three years, more and more lands have been in number grown. The farmers, who need to produce rice especially for main foods to feed their families after MNRC and donor agencies reduced the amount of food assistance, have moved to a new places and used the mountainous lands by cultivating with "slash and burnt" method.

After 5-6 years of repatriation of Mon refugees to Burmese territory, which is not their native homes, many spaces of lands in mountainous area along the border opposite of Kanchanaburi Province of Thailand, have been deforested because of "slash and burnt" method of paddy cultivation. It is a negative sign of MRDC's "self-reliance program" in encouraging the returnees to produce their own foods.

On the other hand, very little number of refugees could find another option to create self-reliance or to get regular income by working as porters, agents for traders and others in these isolated resettlement sites. In Burma, while the economy conditions of the whole populace is worst, the people in resettlement sites could not create good economic activities with traders in the country. Thus, the refugees tried to clear lands and grow paddy for their own foods and so, more and more deforestation problems happened after 5-6 years repatriation.

Now, the impact of deforestation has been more and more taken place in resettlement sites. Water in streams and river became drought easier than before, if the situation became like this, the people in the sites could face water shortage in April and May. Even in January, when the time is not really dry season, there is very low water level in Ye river, where Bee Reé resettlement site is residing. In all areas, weather became hotter and hotter

than before even in cold season of Burma, in December and January. Therefore, it needs to consider a program how to keep better environment for refugees and reforestation.

The Situation in Rural Areas, after Supply Distribution

Because of the military activities conducted by LIB No. 343 and LIB No. 299 in eastern part of Kya Inn Seikyi township area and along Three Pagoda Pass – Thanbyuzayat motor road; and military activities by IB No. 32, LIB No. 705 and LIB No. 708 in western part of Township area and along Zami river; the rural villagers in many parts of Kya Inn Seikyi Township areas have been constantly suffered from various types of abuses and violations. The result of these persecution is the population displacement.

Since at the end of rainy season in October, 2000, the Burmese Army resumed a new military offensives again to get control of township area, especially, to have full control Three Pagoda Pass – Thanbyuzayat motor road. Soon the end of rainy season, transportation private company always tried to repair motor road, which are absolutely collapsed and useless during rainy season. After road repairs when passengers and traders' trucks started running on this road, KNU/KNLA always tried to collect tax from those passengers and traders for their organization fund.

Thus, the main aim of the Burmese Army's offensives at the end of rainy season is to halt all KNU/KNLA activities of gathering tax from the passengers and traders on the road. However, because of the military experience of KNU/KNLA, it also reinforced its troops and operated military operations against the Burmese Army. Therefore there have been more military fighting happened in many parts of township area.

Whenever a fighting happened near a village, the villagers in that village has suffered by beating, killing and arbitrary arrest of the Burmese Army's concerned battalion. On the other hand, whenever the Burmese troops went into a village, the arrest of villagers including women and children, to use them as front-line civilian porters always happened. To avoid from the arrest of the porters, the villagers have to hide in the forests and their farms. But if they were arrested in their farms and in the forests they could be accused as rebel-supporters again. Then, they could face mistreatments that related to suspicions of rebel-supporters, such as arrests, killing and torturing.

Although SPDC's Ministry of Interior (MOI) officially issued an order dated October 27 to the village and village tract levels administrations and the local military battalions, one local military battalion in Kya Inn Seikyi Township area, IB No. 32 still conscripted forced labour from the villages in their semi-control area to contribute free labour in their farms to harvest crops in November.

In second and third week of November, IB No. 32 had forced many hundreds of villagers from Taung-bauk, Htee-paukhlo, Thaya-gone and others, to contribute their labour in harvesting the crops in the army's 50-60 acres of lands. Everyday, about 50 villagers from these villages had to go and work harvesting of crops in the army's farms.

Not only the army forced the villagers to contribute their labour in the farms, IB No. 32 and LIB No. 708 have collected various types of tax from the villagers. The battalions have collected porter fees, road repairs and construction fees and others. At the same time, the Burmese Army's battalions, which operated military operations in rural areas also, looted villagers' belongings in villages as usual.

Because of the abuses and violations due to suspicions of rebel-supporters, conscription of forced labour and huge tax collection, many villagers from Kya Inn Seikyi township and some from areas from Mon State had to escape from their homes to avoid the above mentioned further persecution.

Because of systematic persecution against the local ethnic villagers by the Burmese Army, to get more control in most areas, the villagers had to flee from the homes. Since September 2000, the new arrivals who have suffered from the abuses and violations committed by Burmese Army's troops, some families of villagers from Kya Inn Seikyi Township and areas from eastern part of Thanbyuzayat – Ye motor road.

At the beginning of the period from September 2000 to January 2001, only some families who had suffered from the abuses and violations that related to suspicions of rebel-supporters by Burmese Army. Later after the conscription of forced labour continued many villagers who suffered from the constant conscription of forced labour and huge tax payment had to flee from their villages again.

Among many new arrivals of IDPs, totally 107 families, about 60% of them are Karen villagers and most of them fled from Kya Inn Seikyi Township and villages along Three Pagoda Pass – Thanbyuzayat motor road. The remaining 40% of the new arrivals are Mon villagers who have fled from Kya Inn Seikyi, Thanbyuzayat and Ye township areas to escape the similar persecution like the Karen people.

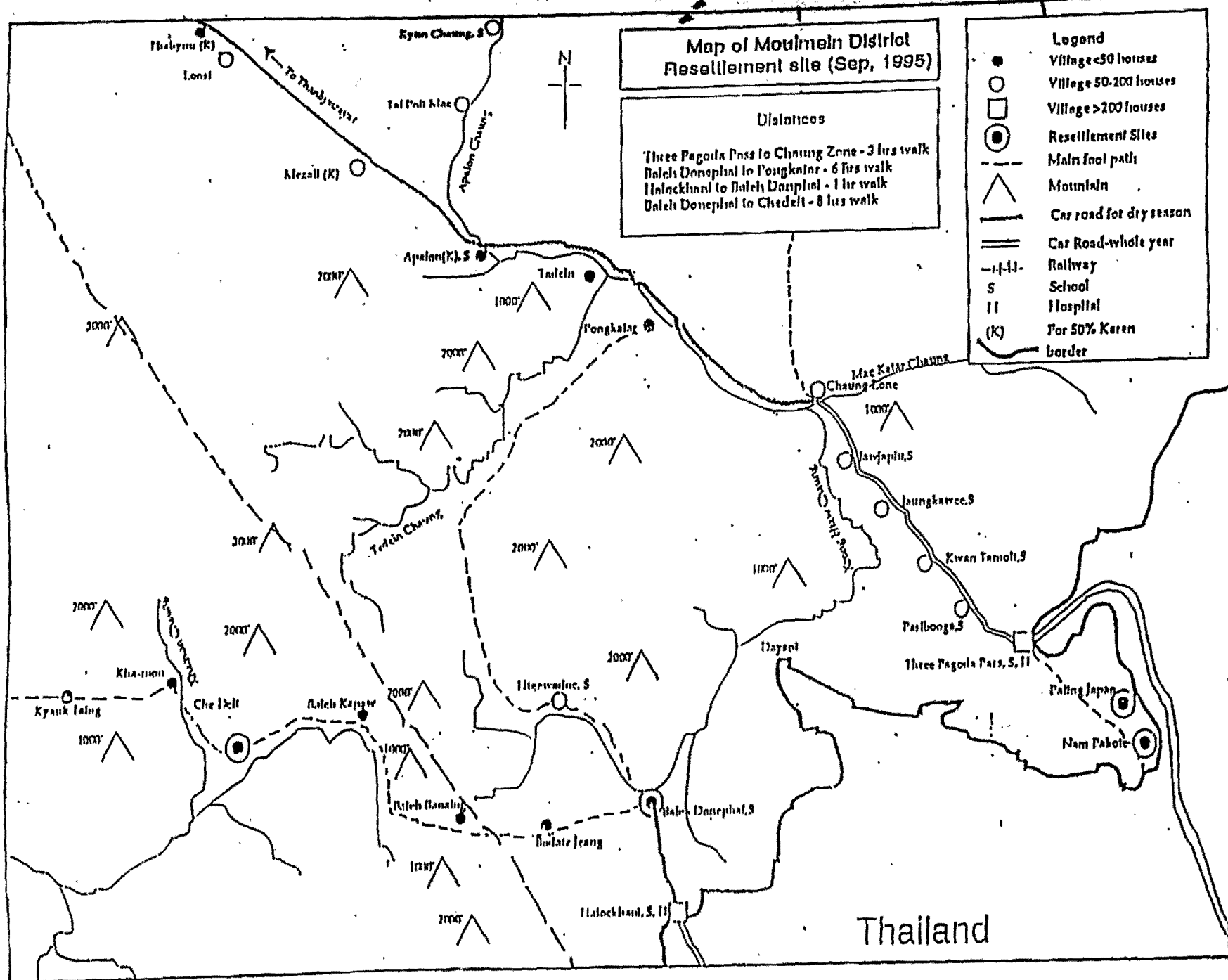
Most villagers who have been displaced for some months near their villages also fled into Three Pagoda Pass area and settled in three Mon villages under the control of NMSP/MNLA. Most villages in Kya Inn Seikyi township area have been gradually ruin since for many years, and most Karen and Mon villagers fled from the previous villages where many villagers already fled from there. Villagers from villages, such as, Wathalee, Wae-phaw, Koe-du-kwe, Mae-tha-karae, Kyatu-ywe-taung, Ma-oo, Wae-sop, Naung-pyade, Win-yaw, Taung-bauk, Hlaing-kani, Danone, Kae-wee and Taungzun. The villagers from Lamaing and Tamort-kanin villages of Ye Township; Ywa-thit and Anankwin villages of Thanbyuzayat township and Kada and Kyun-ywa villages of Kyaikmayaw township of Mon State also had fled from their villages and arrived into these three villages.

THE REFUGEE POPULATION OF THE THREE CAMPS
(January, 2001)

No.	Camp	Number of Family	Over 12 years		5-12 years		Under 5 years		Total
			M	F	M	F	M	F	
1	Bee Ree	625	1139	1240	390	396	156	163	3484
2	Tavoy	639	1069	1073	427	414	203	192	3378
3	Halockhani	1521	2388	2384	986	944	477	491	7670
	TOTAL	2785	4596	4697	1803	1754	836	846	14532

THE MATERIALS RECEIVED BY THE MON NATIONAL RELIEF COMMITTEE
(January, 2001)

No	Organization	Rice (Sack)	Fish Paste (kg.)	Salt (kg.)	Bean (Kg.)	Remark
1	COERR	120	360	240	1000	
2	BBC	-	-	-	-	
	TOTAL	120	360	240	1000	



Map of Tavoy District Resettlement site (Nov. 1995)

Agriculture
Payaw St
Kwan Tawm
Meip Zaip
Kungchoe
Jao Done
Tal Peit Mae

Thailand

Legend

- Village < 50 houses
- Village 50-200 houses
- Village > 200 houses
- ⊙ Resettlement Sites
- - - Main footpath
- △ Mountain
- Car road for dry season
- == Car Road-whole year
- ⋯ Railway
- S School
- H Hospital
- (K) For 50% Karen
- ~ Border

Distances

Payaw to Jao Done - 5 hrs walk
 Jao Done to Hlae Seik - 1 days walk
 Hlae Seik to Aleskan - 3 hrs walk
 Jao Done to Yabou - 10 hrs walk

