PROFILE OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT: MYANMAR (BURMA)

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PROFILE SUMMARY

Summary (November 2003)

Notorious across the world for its suppression of Aung San Suu Kyi’s democracy movement, the military regime in Burma is less known for displacing hundreds of thousands of its own people. Between 600,000 and one million people remain internally displaced in Burma because of the military regime’s brutal policies to control border areas populated by ethnic minorities. Exposed to ongoing violence and systematic human rights abuses at the hands of government troops, these people are without protection from either their government or the international humanitarian community. This has affected the eastern border areas in particular, and especially the Karen, Karenni, Shan and Mon ethnic groups. In western Burma, the Muslim Rohingya people and other minority groups along the Bangladesh and India borders have also suffered from the military campaign. In addition, thousands more have been displaced in schemes to resettle the urban poor and the building of large-scale infrastructure projects. With their traditional livelihoods ruined and humanitarian assistance blocked by the army, the situation of Burma’s displaced people is desperate. In order to improve both the democratic process and the humanitarian situation, more active international diplomacy, and attention towards the situation in the ethnic minority areas is required from the UN, its agencies and international NGOs.

Background and main causes

The military regime in Burma, presently known as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), seized power in 1988, renaming the country, Myanmar. Two years later, the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, won an overwhelming majority in multi-party elections but were prevented from taking power by the military. Since then Aung San Suu Kyi has spent many years under house-arrest, and the NLD has been forced into political opposition.

Since seizing power, the military regime has more than doubled the strength of its army, using its military might to keep the country under its control, particularly in areas of ethnic minority-led insurgency. Troops are deployed throughout the ethnic minority-populated states, many of which run along the border areas. Since 1989 some 17 ceasefires have been agreed between the SPDC government and insurgent groups, but three main armed organisations remain active, and control pockets of territory within the border states. These are the Karen National Liberation Army, the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), and the Shan State Army (SSA).

Counter-insurgency operations in border areas directly target civilians. There are regular reports of torture, arbitrary executions, sexual violence, indiscriminate use of landmines, and forced recruitment by both the government troops and armed opposition groups. The livelihoods of people are further undermined by systematic use of forced labour, restrictions placed on farmers’ access to their land and the systematic confiscation of land and property. The widespread use of forced labour by the Burmese army has resulted in many civilians being unable to earn their living as farmers or labourers, and thus forced to flee.

In most parts of Burma, the primary agent of displacement is the Burmese army (the Tatmadaw). However, non-state armed groups have also been responsible for forced displacement. The most prominent example in recent years has been the United Wa State Army (UWSA). Between 1999-2002, at least 125,000 Wa and other villagers were relocated from northern Shan State, to the UWSA’s Southern Command area, opposite Thailand’s Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai provinces. This movement of Wa people, in turn, led to the forceful displacement of those originally living in the resettlement areas, mostly groups of Shan and Lahu people (LNDO, April 2002).

Between 1996 and 2002, according to information provided by local NGOs working along the Thailand border, as many as one million people became displaced in eastern Burma. At least 150,000 of them fled as
refugees or joined the huge ‘illegal’ migrant population in Thailand. By 2002 approximately 268,000 people remained in hiding in the forests and mountains of eastern Burma, and another 365,000 people had been forced to move to more than 176 forced relocation sites. Approximately 2,536 villages are known to have been destroyed, relocated, or otherwise abandoned in eastern Burma because of Burmese army activity during this period (Burmese Border Consortium September 2002). As of October 2003 no available information indicated any major return of these IDPs.

But the fighting on the borders is not the only cause of internal displacement. Rohingya and other people in western Burma are often displaced as a result of brutal discrimination policies, including the construction of ‘new villages’ for trans-migrants from central and northern Burma. In most cases, displaced people in Arakan state flee to Bangladesh, where conditions of asylum are very harsh, and from where they face the prospect of forced repatriation (Forum Asia, 15 June 2003).

Another main cause of internal displacement in Burma is forced urban relocation. In the early 1990s, and occasionally throughout the decade, communities have been forced to move away from infrastructure projects, including roads, bridges and ‘urban development programmes’. Hundreds of thousands of residents of Rangoon and other towns and cities have been required to move to ‘satellite towns’ that have been established during recent years (MRG May 2002; KWN September-October 2003).

There is often an overlap between conflict-induced and what is often characterised as "development-induced" displacement. For example, between 2001 and 2003 the Burmese army forcefully relocated tens of thousands of people in advance of the dam construction in Shan, Karenni and Karen states. Many more people will lose their lands if planned projects go ahead (Salween Watch, March-August 2003). Similar displacement took place in the Tenasserim Division during the 1990s when people were forced to leave their villages in order to create a ‘security corridor’ on either side of a new gas pipeline. In October 2003 Global Witness issued a report that documented how forced labour was linked to the military's involvement in the timber trade.

Although there has not been any major flow of refugees out of Burma, those who seek refuge in neighbouring Thailand have most often endured several years of internal displacement before crossing the border. This is usually a final option, chosen only when the alternatives for protection inside Burma have been exhausted. The Thai government implements a strict asylum policy, and only offers protection to refugees fleeing direct fighting. The Thai military has forcibly repatriated refugees back to Burma on a number of occasions (ALRC, 10 March 2003). In the west, it has been reported that the Bangladesh government is using "intimidation and harassment" to pressure Rohingya refugees back to the Arakan state inside Burma (MSF, 17 September 2003).

**Physical security is non-existent**

The counter-insurgency operations have created a human rights situation in the border areas of Burma that is considered one of the worst in the world. Instead of adhering to its obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians in territory under its control, government troops are systematically exposing people to harassment, direct violence and other human rights abuses. Chronic insecurity is a major problem for displaced populations both in hiding and in relocation sites. Although the ICRC has gained some access to zones of on-going armed conflict (ICRC 8 April 2003), the absence of independent observers in most conflict areas means that the displaced populations are extremely vulnerable.

There are regular reports of torture and arbitrary executions, forced recruitment by both government and armed opposition forces, and the indiscriminate use of landmines. Ethnic minority women are at particular risk, as rape has increasingly become a tool used by Burmese troops to create fear and punish civilians in the conflict areas.

By 2002 local sources estimate that more than 200,000 IDPs were living in hiding, or living in temporary forest shelters, in Karen areas and in Mon, Karenni and Shan States (Burmese Border Consortium,
September 2002). People in hiding in the rural war zones are liable to be shot on site by Burmese army patrols, which seek out communities suspected of aiding the insurgents.

Forced labour is a major protection issue for people also after becoming displaced. Since 1998 ILO has continuously documented how forced labour is directly linked to military operations. In 2003 the UN special rapporteur on human rights pointed out that "living in hiding" was the only way to avoid this exploitation (UN GA, 5 August 2003, para. 52).

Since the last update of this country profile in 2002, numerous credible reports have documented that the protection situation has not improved, for example: Burma Issues, April 2003; KHRG, 16 June 2003 & 25 September 2002; HRW, October 2002; SHRF/SWAN, May 2002; EarthRights 26 November 2002; HRFM, May 2003; UN GA 5 August 2003 and Landmine Monitor, 9 September 2003.

Humanitarian conditions remain poor
People forcefully relocated by the Burmese army are commonly given about one week’s notice to leave their village, following which government troops loot any remaining belongings and destroy buildings and food crops to discourage return. Civilians have to provide their own means of transport to relocation sites, where they are generally given little or no assistance in resettling.

In many areas (e.g. Tenasserim Division central/southern Shan state), relocation sites are simply empty stretches of land, where families are expected to erect their own makeshift shelters (RI, 10 October 2002; NCGUB, September 2002). Other relocation sites are sited in existing villages or towns. Entry to and exit from relocation sites, including access to work and farmlands is tightly controlled by the Burmese army. Conditions in relocation sites vary, but there is rarely adequate access to safe drinking water, and health and education services. People in relocation sites are reportedly used as forced labourers. They are made to carry military supplies, build and maintain nearby army camps, and work on road and other infrastructure projects (NCGUB, September 2002). As the economic and social welfare conditions in many camps are so poor, local military authorities (e.g. in Karenni state) have in some cases allowed people to drift back to their old villages, or elsewhere in Burma. However, those who manage to return are often subject to further rounds of forced relocation (Vicary/BEW, 14 May 2003).

In some areas where ceasefires are observed, NGOs and local people, including resettled IDPs, have begun the task of re-building their war-ravaged societies (Ratana Tosakul-Boonmathya, 28 August 2002). The Kachin and Mon ceasefires of the early-mid 1990s resulted in a slight overall improvement in the human rights situation. However, villagers continue to be displaced as a consequence of natural resource-extraction and ‘development’ projects, and their land has been confiscated to build Burmese army bases.

Some IDPs in hiding remain close to their villages, and try to continue cultivating their fields. After some time, they are sometimes able to return home. Others flee further into the jungle, where they attempt to farm small plots of land. When hiding in the jungle, people have to cope with extremely harsh conditions, where even basic foraging for food is often constrained by the presence of government troops (Cusano 2001).

Humanitarian access and international response
The Burmese government in general refuses any outside involvement in its border areas and does not allow access to war affected populations by international organisations. Some 40 UN agencies and international NGOs are operating inside Burma, but few have direct access to displaced populations, except for some relocated urban populations. Operational assistance by UN organisations and international NGOs inside the county consists mainly of social development projects targeting the poor in government-controlled areas, including the Rakhine, Chin, Kachin and southern Shan states, and to a lesser degree in southeast Burma (Karen and Mon states and Tenasserim Division. Many of the beneficiaries of these projects were once
forcefully displaced. Some international NGOs in Burma are able to assist relocated populations, via local partner NGOs.

Local community-based networks in Burma are active in many ethnic minority populated areas (both government-controlled and ceasefire zones), and some international support is, on a non-official basis, reaching IDPs in hiding across the border from Thailand. This crucial support is delivered by local partner groups which mainly provide medical and food assistance. Many displaced communities maintain basic education and other services for their children without outside aid (KTWG, 2003).

While there has been consistent focus on the political situation in Burma, the humanitarian crisis has not been given similar attention. However, forced displacement in Burma has occasionally been addressed in international fora and officially condemned, for example in the UN General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights. The UN Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, whose mandate was established 1992, continues to press for access to vulnerable populations, and respect for their human rights. He has recently asked the government to facilitate an assessment of the situation in southern Shan state (UNCHR, 16 April 2003).

However, while the military government is being condemned for its suppression of the democracy movement and is subject to some unilateral sanctions, similar actions are not initiated in response to the crisis of internal displacement. In order to improve the protection of IDPs, more active international diplomacy and attention towards the situation in the ethnic minority areas is required from the UN, its agencies and international NGOs.

Long-term solutions to the crises of internal displacement will only be possible in the context of a settlement to the deep-seated political conflicts in Burma that has the commitment of both the military rulers, the National League for Democracy and representatives of the ethnic groups.

Note: The November 2003 update of the profile of Internal Displacement in Burma/Myanmar and this executive summary was prepared with assistance of a grant from the Research and Writing Initiative of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.
CAUSES AND BACKGROUND OF DISPLACEMENT

Political Background

Military regime tightening its grip (May 2003)

- May 2003: Government forces’ attack Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s motorcade, killing several NLD supporters, followed by her and others’ detention without trial
- UNCHR Special Rapporteur blame government for political deadlock

"For the past 50 years they [the ethnic minority insurgents] have been fighting for greater autonomy from the central Myanmar government. A military coup in 1962 led Burma, as it was then known, to become isolated from the world under the rule of the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) in a one-party system totally dominated by the military. Following nationwide pro-democracy demonstrations in 1988, the State law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) staged a coup to take over the governing of Myanmar, reinstating martial law and imposing restrictions on opposition to the government. The SLORC renamed itself the State Peace and Development Council in November 1997. Human rights violations, including forced relocation of rural and urban populations, have, according to Human Rights Watch (Asia) increased in intensity since the SLORC seized power from the BSPP in 1988." (Harris 1998, p. 128)

"In the 1988-89 period, as the international community remained focused on the activities of the pro-democracy forces both within Burma and in Thailand, the Burmese military launched a major offensive against the combined ethnic and student forces in Karen- and Mon-held territory. The government apparently hoped that a display of military force against the ethnic minority armies would convince people of the need for a strong army to save the country from imminent disintegration. The SLORC vastly expanded the size of the army (from around 180,000 men under arms in 1988 to 340,000 in late 1993), and in 1990 purchased new weapons from China in a $1.2 billion deal that included jet fighters, tanks, and naval patrol boats. The strengthened armed forces, assisted by thousands of civilians forced to work as porters (usually two porters for every soldier), launched major offensives against the armed ethnic opposition every year from 1989 onwards, even at times crossing into Thailand to attack from the rear." (HRW September 1998, "Reasons for Flight")

"The deadlock symptoms with regard to the dialogue and escalating political tensions contributed to setting the scene for the tragic events of the night of 30 May [2003], followed by a significant deterioration of the human rights situation. On that day National League for Democracy members and supporters accompanying party General Secretary Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on her tour of Upper Myanmar were attacked by pro-Government protesters near Depayin (Sagaing Division). As a result, more than 100 NLD members and supporters, among them elected members of Parliament, monks and students, were arrested, killed, wounded and missing. Information from various sources received thus far by the Special Rapporteur seems to indicate an element of premeditation on the part of the protesters and part of a general pattern of growing harassment of National League for Democracy supporters, particularly during Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s countryside trips. […]

Overall, the 30 May-related developments have constituted a potentially terminal setback on the political front and for that matter for the human rights situation in the country: it could be argued that all the progress that had been achieved since the process of dialogue began in 2000 has been undone in one stroke. The Government’s present posture has led to the freezing of diverse possibilities for cooperation with concerned States and international institutions, which had been ready to cooperate with Myanmar in the
normalization of political and economic life. Thereby, the Government has put at serious risk the process of addressing urgently the existing precarious humanitarian situation, with all potential ramifications for the exercise of all human rights." (UN GA 5 August 2003, Summary)

"The Burmese government has played this game before. It arrests Suu Kyi. A crisis ensues. It releases her. The illusion of progress is achieved. But the people of Burma continue to suffer. UN envoy Razali has had to expend much of his time and political capital negotiating Suu Kyi's release over the last several years, instead of pursuing his true objective - brokering negotiations leading to a genuine political settlement. In recent days, he has rightly urged the international community to maintain its focus on that goal.

The military continues to use forced labor on a large scale. Villagers are compelled to work without pay on infrastructure and agricultural projects, as porters in army camps, and on the construction of temples. Children as young as seven are forced in many parts of the country to carry army supplies and to work on construction sites. In effect, Burma maintains the crudest form of command economy: When the military wants something built, it simply commands people to build it.

Perhaps the most horrific of the military's abuses are committed against civilians living in the country's ethnic minority areas. In recent years, the military has pursued a strategy of forcibly relocating minority villages in areas where ethnic activists and rebels are active, and in areas targeted for economic development and tourism. In the Shan and Karen states in particular, these relocations clearly amount to a campaign of ethnic cleansing. They have produced hundreds of thousands of refugees and a million internally displaced persons. Burmese troops have burned villages, hospitals and schools in ethnic areas, conscripted villagers to perform forced labor, and executed suspected opponents of the regime. Shan human rights organizations have amply documented, and the State Department has confirmed, the systematic rape of women and girls in the Shan State by the Burmese military. Most of the documented rapes were committed by officers in front of their troops; a quarter resulted in death." (HRW 19 June 2003)

For a brief overview of the political situation, see "Burma: Time for Change" by the Council on Foreign Relations (June 2003)

Main causes of displacement in the border areas

Army offensives against ethnic opposition groups have caused massive displacement of the civil population since the late 1960s

- Increased relocation due to expanded presence of SLORC soldiers in areas previously under control of ethnic insurgent groups
- Civilians rather than combatants are main victims of the army campaign, and are subject to a broad range of serious human rights abuses
- Since 1988 ‘Democracy Uprising’, the junta has more than doubled the size of the armed forces, from about 175,000 to more than 400,000 men
- From 1992 onwards, tens of thousands of ethnic minority villagers in areas all along the Thai border were forced to relocate to Tatmadaw-controlled areas
- The scale of forced relocations increased significantly after 1996

"Although the practice of forced relocations by the military as a means of controlling the population in the ethnic regions is not new, the scale of the relocations increased significantly after 1996. The victims of..."
displacement are mostly peasants, including members of ethnic groups such as the Karen, Karenni, Shan and Mon, who live in areas of insurgency and are victimized by counter-insurgency activities or are caught in the crossfire between the army and the insurgents." (UN 22 January 1999, para 30)

"The problem of displacement in Myanmar is complex and open to so many different interpretations that a comprehensive assessment is difficult. The causes of displacement are numerous and differ from one region to another, although certain common features and trends can be discerned.

The role of the army, in this context, is paramount. Since independence, it has exercised a strong influence over the governing of the ethnic states. Many Karen, Karenni and Shan do not perceive the army as a national army, and soldiers, particularly ethnic Burmese, generally behave towards the local population as if they were enemies." (UN 22 January 1999, paras 30-36)

"Since 1988 the junta has more than doubled the size of the armed forces, from about 175,000 to more than 400,000 men and has increased the Government’s military presence throughout the country, especially in ethnic minority areas." (US Department of State, February 2001)

"The main motivation behind the arrests, detentions and killings in this report is the weakening of the people’s movement and more specifically the non-Burman ethnic nationality political movement. The Burmese military has implemented many policies combined with brutality in their attempts to weaken firstly the support for these movements and then the ultimate destruction of the movement altogether. At the heart of the conflict in Burma is the continued denial of the political, economic and social needs of the people and this is particularly evident in the actions carried out upon Burma’s ethnic nationality groups." (ALTSEAN August 2003, p38)

"The internal armed conflict in Myanmar is typical of contemporary civil wars everywhere; the vast majority of the casualties are civilians rather than combatants. Myanmar's various ethnic-based armed groups no longer control any significant territory, but operate in mobile units around the countryside, occasionally visiting a village and asking for rice. Shan, Karenni, Mon and Karen civilians are targeted for punishment by the SPDC because of their ethnicity and presumed support for armed groups operating near their villages. The vast majority of these people, who bear the brunt of the armed conflict, are subsistence rice farmers living in small settlements." (AI 13 June 2001)

"As the ethnic minority armies lost increasing amounts of territory each year and their ability to find the funds to support and supply their forces declined as lucrative trade routes and logging areas fell to the SLORC, the government switched the focus of its campaign to the civilians in or near rebel-held territory. From 1992 onwards, tens of thousands of ethnic minority villagers in areas all along the Thai border were forced to relocate to Tatmadaw-controlled towns. Often, they were also used to provide forced labor on road-building projects designed to secure newly acquired territory for the SLORC and facilitate cross-border trade. In addition, the internally displaced became a ready source of porters to carry the supplies and munitions of Tatmadaw troops during major offensives or, increasingly, as they went on routine patrols and established new barracks in former rebel-held villages.

[...]
The increased capacity of the Burmese armed forces, the concerted push by the SLORC for cease-fire agreements with the rebel armies and its determination to bring recalcitrant rebels to the negotiating table by force, its vision of a Burman, Buddhist state in which minorities were second-class citizens, and the persistent human rights violations by both military and civilian authorities in Burma all contributed to refugee flight and to the danger of persecution when or if they returned." (HRW September 1998, "Reasons for Flight")

"With state coffers empty, and an increasingly large army to feed and accommodate, the ongoing civil strife must be funded by economic activities. The exportation of primary products, such as timber, mining and illicit drugs, generates quick cash and are principally located in the border areas. In 1989, the government
earned an estimated US$200 million alone from concessions with Thai companies to log in border areas where the Burmese military had not yet gained access. This deal provided much-needed foreign exchange, but also resulted in the clearing of thickly forested land, thus enabling the military to extend the war into areas right up to the Thai border. During the period 1989-94 there was a significant increase in the number of people internally displaced by fighting as well as the number of refugees arriving in Thailand.

On the side of the insurgents too, cash is required to continue with their campaigns, which in some cases are half a century old. Hence, winning the war becomes equated, for all sides in the conflict, with gaining control over strategic resources.” (BERG September 2000)

"The correlation between increased militarization, human rights abuses and humanitarian problems is extremely strong. The ongoing armed conflict and its attendant human rights atrocities are a direct cause of the dire humanitarian situation. People in areas where there are anti-resistance forces are the most vulnerable populations in terms of humanitarian need."(Burma UN Service Office, March 2003, Humanitarian Assistance to Burma)

**In April 2003 the United Nations Commission on Human Rights expressed its grave concern at:**

"Extra-judicial killings; reports of rape and other forms of sexual violence persistently carried out by members of the armed forces; continuing use of torture; renewed instances of political arrests and continuing detentions, including of prisoners whose sentences have expired; forced relocation; destruction of livelihoods and confiscations of land by the armed forces; forced labour, including child labour; trafficking in persons; denial of freedom of assembly, association, expression and movement; discrimination and persecution on the basis of religious or ethnic background; wide disrespect for the rule of law and lack of independence of the judiciary; unsatisfactory conditions of detention; systematic use of child soldiers; and violations of the rights to an adequate standard of living, such as food, and to medical care and to education;

[…]
The violations of human rights suffered in particular by persons belonging to ethnic minorities, women and children, especially in non-ceasefire areas;

[…]
The situation of the large number of internally displaced persons and the flow of refugees to neighbouring countries, and recalls in this context the obligations of Myanmar under international law."(CHR 16 April 2003, Paras. paras A & C-E)

**Displacement in ethnic minority-populated border areas continues in the context of the Burmese Army's 'Four Cuts' counter-insurgency strategy (2003)**

- The 'Four Cuts' policy aims to cut the supplies of food, funds, recruits and information to insurgent groups by systematically terrorizing the civilian population in resistance areas
- In the context of the ‘Four Cuts’, ethnic minority civilians are routinely detained and abused by the Burmese Army, which is a major cause of displacement
- IDP populations fall into two main categories: those who go to government (or ceasefire group)-controlled relocation sites, and those ‘in hiding’ in the jungle

"The military regime has subjected people to displacement for both economic and security reasons. Government displacement programs have been in place since the late 1960s, and possibly before. Since that time, under the guise of regional or area development, private land and plantations from civilians have been confiscated by the military - without any compensation - for military plantations, farms or animal breeding ranches, or for the construction of roads, railways, hydroelectric power plants, large dams and small scale infrastructure projects. In addition, the regime has forced numerous urban populations to move into areas
away from city centres. In the 1990s the trend has been for the military to displace civilians from cultivable land which is then used for the construction of military bases or for income-generating projects.

In the volatile border regions, displacement campaigns have been aimed at securing combat zones, cutting off civilians support for insurgents, and curtailing the activities of ethnic armed groups. These activities fall under what the SPDC refers to as the ‘four-cuts’ policy. This program was introduced in 1974 with the aim of cutting the supplies of 1) food, 2) funds, 3) recruits, and 4) information to the resistance groups. In some border areas which the regime had labeled brown areas, forced relocation programs were carried out systematically. In other areas, which were classified as black areas, all villages were destroyed, fields and paddy barns were burnt, and anyone found in the area was shot. These campaigns against civilians were intensified after the 1988 pro-democracy uprising. Currently under the four-cuts campaign, villagers and village elders suspected of having contact with the resistance are detained, tortured, and executed; regime troops systematically extort and pillage villagers’ crops, food supplies, livestock, cash and valuables; and villagers are forced to labor for army projects. Any village that is suspected to be supporting the opposition is forced to relocate. In 1996-1997, the military regime launched programs to forcibly move or wipe out all rural villages in areas not directly under their control. As a result of these intensified programs to destroy the populations in the ethnic areas, the number of people displaced has continued to increase dramatically.

When a village is forced to relocate, the villagers are usually told that they will not be permitted to go home until the opposition groups have capitulated. The SPDC issues written orders addressed to village headmen, which specifies the date by which the entire village must be relocated to a designated site. Relocated persons are not compensated for their homes nor are they given enough time to collect all of their belongings. Villagers must leave behind the majority of their belongings, including their livestock. Often people must also leave behind elderly and sick relatives. The areas cleared of villagers are then designated as "free-fire"or black areas. Houses, villages, and crops left behind are often pillaged and then dismantled and/or scorched to prevent the return of villages. Villagers seen in the areas of their former homes are considered to be rebel soldiers and shot on site. In some cases landmines are laid on the roads leading into villages, or in abandoned fields and homes."(NCGUB, September 2002, "Internally Displaced People and Forced Relocation")

"The SPDC has implemented the Four Cuts policy more systematically and brutally than did its predecessors. In areas of Burma such as the Karen, Karenni (Kayah), and Shan States where opposition groups continue to fight, the SPDC's current tactic is massive forced relocations of the civilian population. Forced relocation was used as a military tactic in the past, but only on a localized scale. In 1996, however, the junta began delineating regions of resistance and forcing hundreds of villages at a time to move to army-controlled sites along main roads or to camps near major towns. In hill villages throughout Karen State, residents are now being ordered to move into the center of their villages, meaning that they are only to go to their fields between dawn and dusk under threat of being shot if they violate curfew. This restriction disrupts the entire crop cycle because villagers are used to staying in field huts far from the village for much of the growing season. Many of them find that they can no longer produce enough food for themselves.

[...] Under military control, rural Burma's subsistence farming village is losing its viability as the basic unit of society. Internally displaced people are usually thought to have fled military battles in and around their villages, but this paradigm doesn't apply to Burma. In the thousands of interviews conducted by the Karen Human Rights Group with villagers who have fled their homes, approximately 95 percent say they have not fled military battles, but rather the systematic destruction of their ability to survive, caused by demands and retaliations inflicted on them by the SPDC military. Where there is fighting, it is fluid and sporadic, and most villagers can avoid it by hiding for short periods in the forest. Once the SPDC occupies the area around their village, however, the suffering is inescapable. Villages, rooted to the land, are defenseless and vulnerable, and villages can be burned--destroying rural life in southeastern Burma." (Heppner, September 2000)
"The cleansing process is thorough and systematic, consisting of the following steps and leaving the population completely terrorized and impoverished, hiding in the jungle or living at relocation sites under conditions of such scarcity that their primary concern is simply survival:

mount a military offensive against the area;
forcibly relocate all villages to sites under direct Burma army control;
use the relocated villagers and others as forced labour, portering and building military access roads into their home areas;
move more army units in and use the villagers as forced labour to build bases along the access roads;
allow the villagers back to their villages, where they are now under complete military control and can be used as a rotating source of extortion money and forced labour;
consolidate control through "development" projects, forced labour farming for the army etc.;
in case of resistance retaliation is carried out against villagers by executing village elders, burning houses and other means.

Army columns of 50 to 300 men move from village to village. On arrival near a village the troops first shell it with mortars from the adjacent hills, then enter the village firing at anything that moves and proceed to burn every house, farmfield hut and shelter they find in the area. Paddy storage barns are especially sought out and burned in order to destroy the villagers' food supply. Any villagers seen in the villages, forests, or fields are shot on sight with no questions asked." (BCN 2002)

"The policy is aimed at turning 'black' rebel-held areas into 'brown' (contested, or free-fire) zones, and thence into 'white' zones, securely controlled by government forces. The idea is, as a Burmese proverb has it, 'to drain the sea, in order to kill the fish'.

Under the Four Cuts policy, Tatmadaw units issue orders to villages in ‘brown’ and ‘black zones, to relocate to government-controlled areas, usually with little or no warning. The policy has at times amounted to a form of ethnic cleansing, as those villagers who do not move to relocation sites have experienced gross violations of their human rights (including murder) and vast areas of the Burmese countryside have been depopulated. Those who do move to the government’s ‘new villages’ often face acute shortages of medicines and other necessities, and frequently have to work unpaid for the military.

Since the 1980s, the Tatmadaw has implemented the Four Cuts in combination with a massively increased nation-wide use of forced labour. [...] Those villagers unable to meet the on-going demands for forced labour and arbitrary taxation are often forced to leave their villages, and either join the IDP population in hiding in the jungle, or resettle elsewhere."(Ashley South/BBC, September 2002, Background)

"These relocations have often been accompanied with other forms of human rights abuses. After relocation orders have been issued and people have been expelled from their homes, SPDC has declared expansive areas as "free-fire zones"— anyone who tried to remain in their homes can be shot on sight. Relocated persons are not compensated for their homes nor are they given enough time to collect all of their belongings. Nearly all of the villagers must leave behind the majority of their belongings, including their livestock. Often people must also leave behind elderly and sick relatives. Once they leave their village, SPDC troops pillage the villages' homes and burn them to the ground."(Nancy Hudson-Rodd, Myo Nyunt, Saw Thaimain Tun & Sein Htay, 2003, p. 28).

**Forced relocation carried out by Burmese Army, in advance construction of 380km dam in Shan, Karenni (Kayah) and Karen (Kayin) States (2001-2003)**

- Dam Construction on the Salween River has been preceded by the displacement of tens of thousands of people by Burmese Army
- The reservoir will eventually flood many areas in Karenni (Kayah) and Shan States where people have been forced to leave
"According to a paper presented by Foundation for Ecological Recovery in June 2003, the reservoir of the Upper Salween dam will be about 380 km long, with about 56km in Thailand, flooding around 600 000 rai of land. 20,000 rai of the Salween Wildlife Sanctuary will be put under. The reservoir of the lower dam will flood over 3,540 rai and will have direct impacts on the Salween National Park and three villages along the river. [...] 
In Burma, the reservoir will flood many areas in Karenni (Kayah) and Shan States that are currently depopulated due to conflicts. Once the dam is built, the land of the refugees and internally displaced will be gone, permanently flooded.

It was reported in August [2002] that border troops are conducting impact studies on communities along the 130 km section where the 2 dam sites on the lower Salween are planned. Besides the communities living in the area, 5 Burmese army bases, and at least 2 bases of the armed opposition Karen National Union will be affected. KNU officials have voiced strong opposition to the projects, as they will have very severe affects on the livelihoods of Karen people along the border. [...] 
Proponents of three dams planned for the border with Burma tout the cheap energy rates possible. Opponents say the suffering caused to disadvantaged groups and the environment is too heavy a cost to pay. [...] 
Three hydropower dams are planned for the Salween. Egat has sought cabinet approval to develop two dams, the Upper and Lower Salween dams, at an estimated cost of 200 billion baht, while MDX Plc, a Thai construction outfit, has begun work on a 3,600-megawatt dam near Ta Sang in Burma's Shan state.

MDX executives say Ta Sang dam would be the largest hydropower dam in Southeast Asia. It also would be the first dam built on the 2,800km Salween. [...] 
Burma's opposition National League for Democracy led by Aung San Suu Kyi and 69 Thai and Burmese NGOs submitted a letter in December [2002] to Kraisaik Choonhavan, chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, demanding that the government scrap the project.

"The Salween dams are large-scale projects which will have major impacts on communities in the area," the letter read. "Whether the dams are built in Shan state or on the Thai-Burmese border, they will involve human rights violations. Up until now, Thai politicians, Egat and private companies have claimed that the Salween River Basin is not populated. In fact, over 10 million people of 13 different ethnicities are living in the basin and relying on the river, which is one of the richest river ecosystems in the world."

Salween Watch, a Chiang Mai-based non-governmental organisation, reported recently that over 300,000 Shan and other ethnic people had been forced to relocate from central Shan state to make way for MDX's Ta Sang dam.

Sai Sai, a Tai villager who takes refuge in Thailand and works as a volunteer for an NGO, pleaded with the Thai government to stop taking advantage of Burma's lack of democracy and its disregard for human rights and the environment for its own benefit.

Bangkok's decision to go ahead with the Upper and Lower Salween dams will lead to further hardship for a huge number of ethnic people, similar to those who have been relocated to make way for or forced to work without pay on MDX's Ta Sang dam, he said. "These ethnic people will have no choice but to take refuge in Thailand," Sai Sai said. "(Bangkok Post, 9 April 2003, quoted in Salween Watch, March-August 2003, pp.2-16)"

For MAPS of the dam sites see the internet site of Salween Watch
http://www.salweenwatch.org/home.html

- Burma has one of the highest numbers of children within governmental armed forces in the world
- Orphans and street children particularly vulnerable to forced recruitment by the Burmese Army
- Conscription of child soldiers condemned by UNCHR
- Reports of teenage boys fleeing to avoid conscription

"Children have been recruited, voluntarily and forcibly, by governmental armed forces and armed opposition groups alike. Although reliable and objective information is difficult to obtain in the case of Myanmar, it is clear that the country has one of the highest numbers of children within governmental armed forces in the world, including those under 15. Some are recruited voluntarily, attracted by the prestige or financial reward of a military career or hoping to protect their family from harassment by the SPDC, but many others are forced to join. Orphans and street children are particularly vulnerable to forced recruitment. According to one 17-year-old who joined underage: "I knew people who were 11, 12, 13, and they all claimed they were 18. Anyone can become a soldier."

According to an ILO Commission of Inquiry on Myanmar, there is regular forced recruitment throughout Myanmar, including of children, into the Tatmadaw [Myanmar armed forces] and various militia groups. This recruitment does not appear pursuant to any compulsory military service laws, but is essentially arbitrary. Each district and village in Myanmar is reportedly required to provide the armed forces with a certain number of recruits, with quotas being given to the local authorities. Local authorities who fail to achieve their quota may be fined, while a reward of a similar amount is provided for each recruit provided in excess of the quota. This procedure has resulted in many men and teenage boys either being forcibly recruited or fleeing to avoid conscription. Indeed village or ward authorities are known to hold lotteries to decide who should go and this commonly results in the forced conscription of children. It has also been used by armed groups allied with the government, including the Democratic Kayin Buddhist Army (DKBA).

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has reiterated its grave concern about the "numerous reported cases of forced and under-age recruitment of child soldiers" and strongly recommended that the Myanmar armed forces "[s]hould absolutely refrain from recruiting under-age children, in the light of existing international human rights and humanitarian standards" and added that all forced recruitment of children should be abolished. The government denied the allegations while admitting that: "[i]t did happen that, in order to be enlisted, young men pretended they were older than they really were, for example by falsifying their identity papers."

[...]

According to the ILO Commission of Inquiry, children, some as young as 10 are forced to do portering for the military. Men are preferred for this role but as they sometimes run away, the troops resort to women and children. A refusal to do portering is systematically met with physical punishment or fines. According to local reports, in Northern Rakhine state nearly all of the men and boys of a village (between the ages of 7 and 35) perform up to 10 days per month of labour in the military, and are reportedly required to carry food and ammunition to the border. Forced labour also seems to be connected with ethnicity as Rohingyas claim that they are forced to serve as porters while nearby villages of Buddhist Burmans are exempt. The ILO Commission of Inquiry also reported on other kinds of extremely hazardous work carried out by children for the armed forces. Civilians, including children, are used as human shields and minesweepers. In
potential conflict areas, civilians, including women and children, were often forced to sweep roads with tree branches or brooms to detect or detonate mines.

There have been reports of child soldiers in each of the armed opposition groups active in Myanmar, but detailed information on recruitment practices is not available. According to one source, recruitment by these groups mostly takes place on a voluntary basis, although forced recruitment has also been reported. Some groups draw on the tribal base of their ethnic communities, others involve students and young political refugees from Myanmar. None of the ceasefires appears to have made specific provision for the demobilisation of child soldiers. More often, "the agreements have provided ethnic groups with the authority to hold onto their arms, police their own territory and to use their former rebel armies as private security forces to protect both legal and illegal business operations." (CSUCS May 2001 "Myanmar")

"Burma is believed to have more child soldiers than any other country in the world. The overwhelming majority of Burma’s child soldiers are found in Burma’s national army, the Tatmadaw Kyi, which forcibly recruits children as young as eleven. These children are subject to beatings and systematic humiliation during training. Once deployed, they must engage in combat, participate in human rights abuses against civilians, and are frequently beaten and abused by their commanders and cheated of their wages. Refused contact with their families and facing severe reprisals if they try to escape, these children endure a harsh and isolated existence. Children are also present in Burma’s myriad opposition groups, although in far smaller numbers. Some children join opposition groups to avenge past abuses by Burmese forces against members of their families or community, while others are forcibly conscripted. Many participate in armed conflict, sometimes with little or no training, and after years of being a soldier are unable to envision a future for themselves apart from military service." (Human Rights Watch, October 2002, pp. 14-15)

In April 2003 the United Nations Commission on Human Rights called upon the government to:
"To put an immediate end to the recruitment and use of child soldiers and to extend full cooperation to relevant international organizations in order to ensure the demobilization of child soldiers, their return home and their rehabilitation in accordance with Security Council resolution 1460 (2003) of 30 January 2003."(CHR 16 April 2003)

**Forced relocation is closely linked to forced labour (1998-2003)**

- From the 1990s, hundreds of thousands of civilians have reportedly been forced to work on public infrastructure projects without pay
- Several organizations report forced relocation programs where civilians are subjected to forced labour and that forced labor is commonplace in and around the relocation camps (2000-2003)
- The result of frequent forced labour has often been that many ethnic minorities can no longer earn their living as farmers and are forced to flee
- Service in rural areas considered by many SPDC officers as an opportunity to get rich by using villagers and soldiers as forced labour on "personal money-making projects"
- Widespread forced labour and portering confirmed by UN Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights (2003)

"Perhaps the most common human rights violation of ethnic minorities is forced labour of civilians, who are much more likely to be seized by the army than the majority Burman group. There are two broad types of forced labour: the first is portering, which entails carrying heavy loads for the military over rough terrain for days or weeks at a time. The second type involves work on construction projects such as roads, railways, and dams. Men, women, and children are all taken for labour duties, and almost never paid for their work. Portering is generally more arduous, as civilians must work for days or even weeks at a time
and are kept as virtual prisoners. Children sometimes work on construction sites if their parents are ill or are busy working on their farms." (AI 13 June 2001)

"Beginning in the early 1990s the military authorities embarked on the construction of infrastructure projects throughout the country, including roads, dams, railway lines, and military barracks. Hundreds of thousands of civilians have reportedly been forced to work on these projects without pay. According to reports, in 1997 the central authorities began a program of self-sufficiency, issuing orders to local military commands which instructed troops to feed themselves. Subsequently troops began confiscating land farmed for generations by members of ethnic minorities, and forcing these farmers to cultivate their confiscated land to provide food for the military. In addition troops have continued or increased their practice of stealing food which villagers had grown for themselves." (AI July 2000)

"The widespread campaign of forcible relocations continues in the Kayin [Karen], Kayah [Karenni] and Shan states. Once relocated, the people are reportedly forced to remain on the relocation sites in often health-threatening conditions, which include overcrowding and lack of food, sanitation and safe drinking water. The military also often restrict residents freedom of movement to a set radius outside the camp. The relocated population is threatened not to leave the radius or return to their places of origin on pain of execution. Relocations are often accompanied by violence, especially against women, looting and extortion by the military. The observed pattern of forced relocations amounts to a premeditated destruction of a way of life, and is condemned in the strongest terms." (UN, 22 August 2000, para 54)

"Forced labor is commonplace in and around the relocation camps. The SPDC troops force the villagers in the relocation sites to work on a daily or weekly basis; generally one person from each family must go. This forced labor includes clearing bushes and trees from the roadsides both inside and outside the relocation site, cleaning military buildings, cultivating land for the military bases, hauling water for the troops, building fences around the military camps, digging bunkers, road construction, portering for the military and other general servant work. The villagers are also being used to work in the infrastructure projects in the area.

[...]

People in villages which are under complete SPDC control and are not forced to move are also fleeing, even from areas where there is no fighting whatsoever. They flee because they are ordered to do so many forms of forced labor for all of the different military camps in the area that they can no longer grow their own crops or earn their own living." (NCGUB 2000, pp. 130-131, 153)

"Children as young as 12 and 13 have to go for the labour so that their parents can try to make a living for the family. Beginning in November 2000, everyone from the villages of Wah Mu, Po Kheh Hta, Nya Cha Gaw Hta, Kwiw Dta Ma, Ma Lay Ler and Gkay Gkaw was forced to work building fences around their entire villages, leaving only one to three gates into their village which could be guarded, and the villagers’ movements to and from their fields are now strictly controlled. They were then forced to cut and clear the roadsides, build road bridges, and build 3 rings of fencing around Wah Mu Army camp of Light Infantry Battalion #366. Anyone who failed to go for this labour had to pay 500 Kyat per day, and they must also pay up to 100 Kyat per piece of bamboo which they fail to send. The KHRG researcher in this area estimates that the villagers are only left an average of 10 days in each month to work for their own livelihood, and must work the other 20 days without pay for the SPDC." (KHRG, April 2001)

"Forced labour is constantly demanded from the villages under SPDC control despite the regime’s claims to be putting a stop to the practice. [...] The rugged hills of the region have very little infrastructure and there are no large-scale road or railway projects using thousands of people for forced labour at a time, but forced labour is nonetheless an ever present burden in every village under the SPDC’s control. A village head in an SPDC-controlled village must send villagers for labour at the local Army camp building barracks, digging trenches, fetching water and doing other work around the camp. The villagers go for this work on a rotating schedule. Many villages have two or more camps nearby and the village head may have to send people to work at more than one of the camps. He must also send villagers to stand as unarmed sentries at Army camps and along any nearby roads. The few roads which exist in the area are dirt and need a great
deal of maintenance, which the villagers are forced to perform. They must also regularly clear scrub along both sides of the road in order to protect the Army from ambush. If the local Army unit has a farm or a money-making project like a brick kiln or logging, the village head must send people to work on those too. In addition to this, the village head is ordered to provide porters whenever the Army needs them, so he must find villagers who are not already working at the camp or doing sentry duty to go. Much of the portering is also done on a rotating basis. An Army column may pass through the village and demand yet more villagers to go with it as operations porters. While these forms of labour are not as visible or headline-grabbing as the building of a railway, the work goes on every day, it is just as difficult, and collectively involves the labour of thousands of villagers.

For many of the SPDC’s officers, service in the rural areas, especially if there is no fighting, is a way of getting rich quickly. A one-year assignment in a fertile area can easily turn a profit of 5 or 10 million Kyat for a Company or Battalion Commander. This is done in several ways: using villagers and soldiers as forced labour on personal money-making projects like brickbaking, logging or fishponds; ‘deducting’ at least half the salaries of their soldiers and selling rations on the market; demanding forced labour and then collecting ‘fees’ to avoid it; arresting and ransoming village heads and villagers; and finally, through direct extortion, theft and looting. Whenever battles occur, landmines explode or trucks are destroyed, the soldiers blame the villagers and large sums of money are demanded as ‘compensation’. These demands are in the hundreds of thousands of Kyat and are usually imposed on several villages at once, accompanied by threats to relocate the villages.” (KHRG October 2001, p.97, 142)

"Almost all of the interviewed persons had had to do forced labour for the Tatmadaw in 2002. The only exceptions were internally displaced persons, who had been living in hiding and thus managed to avoid the Tatmadaw troops. Forced labour demands had been especially high in villages near the Tatmadaw bases, in relocation sites and in villages located near a road. None of the persons interviewed had received payment for their work. Most of them had had to come and work at military camps of the Tatmadaw. Villagers had had to cut wood and bamboo and bring this to the camp. There they had had to build and repair barracks, make fences, dig trenches around the camp and build bunkers. Often, they had also had to provide water and firewood to the military camps on a regular basis. Many of them had had to perform forced labour at least once a month for a period of one to five days.

Those who had served as porters testified that they had had to carry loads consisting of food and rations, cooking utensils and clothes, but also arms and ammunition. Most of them complained that the loads were too heavy and that they had been given insufficient food and had received no medical help for injuries. Many porters had been beaten and kicked by soldiers because they could not keep up with the rest. Porters included men and women, even pregnant women in one case, or old persons. Some of the interviewees could not even remember how many times they had had to do portering. Many had had to go once a month, varying from 1-2 days to 10-15 days. In some cases, they had done periods of 1-2 months. Many of them complained that because they had had to do portering so often they had not had enough time to work in their fields or make a living.

Most of those ex-porters had either been caught in their villages or in their fields and forced to go with the Tatmadaw soldiers. In other cases, porters had been organized by a village headman, who, in turn, had been ordered by the Tatmadaw soldiers to provide a certain number of porters. In some cases, people could avoid portering by paying a fee, but many of them were poor and could not afford the fee."(UN GA 5 August 2003 paras 52-54)

**Forced labour also linked to the logging industry:**

"In some instances villagers have been forcibly relocated away from military logging areas.

Villagers not only suffer the indignity of having their land forcibly occupied and their resources stolen but are forced to provide the labour and tools to do it as was explained to NGO workers by a Shan refugee in January 2002: 'Tools and food must be provided too...They went to do the logging because they were
forced by the military. They got nothing, no payment, for their work. They had to bring all their own food and tools to go logging.'

To make matters worse the working practices are crude and conditions hazardous. Villagers have been forced to work in areas containing landmines (see page xx). In one example terrified villagers, viewed as “dispensable”, have been used as forced labour by the SPDC/DKBA for logging operations in a heavily mined forest near Kawkareik.

Exploitation of new tracts of forest requires good road access to get large trucks in and the logs out. One of the roles of forced labourers is to build new roads, widen old ones and maintain those that are in operation. According to the accounts of some villagers road maintenance duties are carried out by all villagers, including children, pregnant women and elders

More recently, in January 2003, the Independent Mon News Agency reported that forced logging was being used for the construction of a new army base." (Global Witness, October 2003, pp. 54-55)

In April 2003 the United Nations Commission on Human Rights called upon the government to:
"To take immediate action to implement fully concrete legislative, executive and administrative measures to eradicate the practice of forced labour by all organs of government, including the armed forces, and to implement fully the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry established to examine the observance by Myanmar of the International Labour Organization Convention concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour, 1930 (Convention No. 29)." (UNCHR resolution 2003/12, Situation of human rights in Myanmar, 16-4-2003, para B)

Reports of forced conscription into the local militia force
"KHRG has received reports from villagers that the SPD C is now not only demanding that the villagers in the Kler Lah relocation site go for forced labour and portering, but as of March 2002 they have also ordered some of the villages which have been relocated there to commit one villager from each household to report for enforced conscription into the local Pyithu Sit (People’s Army) militia force. A villager from Kaw So Ko in Tantabin Township has reported that he was also forced to join the Pyithu Sit in his village in April 2002. KHRG has not yet been able to verify how widespread this conscription is within the District.

Construction on the Kler Lah to Mawchi car road has been progressing since 1998, with work commencing from either end with the intention of connecting the two halves somewhere near the border between Toungoo District and Karenni (Kayah) State. According to a KHRG field researcher, this has now been accomplished. However, it is at present still only an unsealed dry season road which becomes impassable during the wet season, needing to be repaired again after the rains cease. The implications that the completion of this road will have for the villagers are threefold: firstly, it will lead to an even greater military presence in the region due to both the increased access that the road will now provide and because it gives the SPDC yet another thing to defend, thus 'justifying' their presence there; secondly, there will be a rise in the amount of forced labour used both to maintain the road and to construct the new military camps which will doubtless be built along the road’s length; and thirdly, that there will then likely be an increase in forced portering along the road to those military camps, particularly in rainy season when the road is impassable to vehicles." (KHRG, 16 June 2003)

See next envelope for ILO information on forced labour

In 1998 ILO documented a pervasive use of forced labour - recent information shows that forced labour remains common practice

- ILO Commission of Inquiry confirms pervasive use of forced labour (1998)
- The ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) reports in February 2001 that the military junta had not taken any action aimed at genuinely curbing, let alone eliminating, forced labour.
- ILO mission found by end 2001 a strong correlation between the presence of military camps and the practice of forced labour.
- ILO mission also reported that forced labour was especially serious in the southern Shan State, the Karen State and in the northern Rakhine state.

**ILO reported in 2002 that:**

"The tentative conclusion that the HLT [ILO's High-Level Team] had reached after completing its three weeks of interviews and visits in Myanmar was of a very moderately positive evolution in the situation. Beyond the obvious although uneven effort at disseminating the Orders, the two groups of the HLT shared the view that a certain decrease in the imposition of forced labour had taken place, even though it was difficult to judge precisely to what extent. The HLT did, however, have doubts about the sustainability of the process over time, and was concerned about the geographical inconsistencies in the progress made, given that in some areas a considerable amount of forced labour appeared to persist. This was particularly associated with the presence of the military, especially in more remote areas.

56. The picture which emerged from discussions and interviews conducted across the border, which concentrated on the case of ethnic groups was even more disturbing. In fact, it was not very different from the situation presented in the report of the Commission of Inquiry. Forced labour in most of the forms previously identified seemed still to prevail, particularly in villages which were close to a military camp. All too often it was accompanied by acts of cruelty.

57. ... A balanced assessment of the trend in forced labour practice needs to reflect general patterns, as well as to distinguish between different types of situation. The following two general patterns seem to emerge:
(a) In contrast to the situation reported in 1998 by the Commission of Inquiry, the HLT found no indications of the current use of forced labour on civil infrastructure projects.
(b) In all areas for which the HLT had information it was apparent that there was a strong correlation between the presence of military camps and the practice of forced labour whether or not these troops were engaged in military activities [...].

However, it is important to make the following distinctions:

(c) In many areas, despite continued forced labour as a result of a military presence, there were indications that the situation had improved. The sustainability of this improvement is not clear, since it depends on the willingness of local military commanders to continue to rely less on forced labour.

(d) In certain other areas, particularly southern Shan State and the eastern parts of Kayin State near the Thai border, the situation appeared to be particularly serious. This might be partly explained by the greater military presence in these areas, and by their remoteness, but there also appears to be an element of greater repression against these populations as a result of the ongoing insurgencies in these areas. Contrary to claims made by the authorities in Yangon, there is no indication that portering in these areas has diminished in any noticeable way as a result of any greater use of mules or because of any improvement in the road network.

(e) The situation is also particularly serious in northern Rakhine State, which is also a remote area with a large military presence. The Muslim population in this area is disproportionately affected by forced labour; it reflects an element of discrimination against this population, which also takes the form, inter alia, of restrictions on movement." (ILO/CEACR 2002, sects. 55-57)

*In a 1998 report, ILO presented its findings which have been the reason for the current sanctions against Myanmar by ILO.*
"There is abundant evidence before the Commission showing the pervasive use of forced labour imposed on the civilian population throughout Myanmar by the authorities and the military for portering, the construction, maintenance and servicing of military camps, other work in support of the military, work on agriculture, logging and other production projects undertaken by the authorities or the military, sometimes for the profit of private individuals, the construction and maintenance of roads, railways and bridges, other infrastructure work and a range of other tasks, none of which comes under any of the exceptions listed in Article 2(2) of the [Forced Labour] Convention [No. 29].

Failure to comply with a call-up for labour is punishable under the Village Act with a fine or imprisonment for a term not exceeding one month, or both, and under the Towns Act, with a fine. In actual practice, the manifold exactions of forced labour often give rise to the extortion of money in exchange for a temporary alleviation of the burden, but also to threats to the life and security and extrajudicial punishment of those unwilling, slow or unable to comply with a demand for forced labour; such punishment or reprisals range from money demands to physical abuse, beatings, torture, rape and murder.

Forced labour in Myanmar is widely performed by women, children and elderly persons as well as persons otherwise unfit for work.

Forced labour in Myanmar is almost never remunerated nor compensated, secret directives notwithstanding, but on the contrary often goes hand in hand with the exaction of money, food and other supplies as well from the civilian population.

Forced labour is a heavy burden on the general population in Myanmar, preventing farmers from tending to the needs of their holdings and children from attending school; it falls most heavily on landless labourers and the poorer sections of the population, which depend on hiring out their labour for subsistence and generally have no means to comply with various money demands made by the authorities in lieu of, or over and above, the exaction of forced labour. The impossibility of making a living because of the amount of forced labour exacted is a frequent reason for fleeing the country.

The burden of forced labour also appears to be particularly great for non-Burman ethnic groups, especially in areas where there is a strong military presence, and for the Muslim minority, including the Rohingyas.

All the information and evidence before the Commission shows utter disregard by the authorities for the safety and health as well as the basic needs of the people performing forced or compulsory labour. Porters, including women, are often sent ahead in particularly dangerous situations as in suspected minefields, and many are killed or injured this way. Porters are rarely given medical treatment of any kind; injuries to shoulders, backs and feet are frequent, but medical treatment is minimal or non-existent and some sick or injured are left behind in the jungle. Similarly, on road building projects, injuries are in most cases not treated, and deaths from sickness and work accidents are frequent on some projects. Forced labourers, including those sick or injured, are frequently beaten or otherwise physically abused by soldiers, resulting in serious injuries; some are killed, and women performing compulsory labour are raped or otherwise sexually abused by soldiers. Forced labourers are, in most cases, not supplied with food -- they sometimes even have to bring food, water, bamboo and wood to the military; porters may receive minimal rations of rotten rice, but be prevented from drinking water. No clothing or adequate footwear is provided to porters, including those rounded up without prior warning. At night, porters are kept in bunkers or have to sleep in the open, without shelter or blankets provided, even in cold or wet situations, often tied together in groups. Forced labourers on road and railway construction have to make their own arrangements for shelter as well as all other basic needs.

The Commission considers that the impunity with which government officials, in particular the military, treat the civilian population as an unlimited pool of unpaid forced labourers and servants at their disposal is part of a political system built on the use of force and intimidation to deny the people of Myanmar democracy and the rule of law. The experience of the past years tends to prove that the establishment of a
government freely chosen by the people and the submission of all public authorities to the rule of law are, in practice, indispensable prerequisites for the suppression of forced labour in Myanmar.

This report reveals a saga of untold misery and suffering, oppression and exploitation of large sections of the population inhabiting Myanmar by the Government, military and other public officers. It is a story of gross denial of human rights to which the people of Myanmar have been subjected particularly since 1988 and from which they find no escape except fleeing from the country." (ILO 2 July 1998, Paras. 528-535 & 542-543)

Further details on forced labour:

"62. In its communication dated 16 February 2001, the ICFTU provided extensive information regarding the current practice of forced labour in Myanmar. The ICFTU noted that the military junta had not taken any action aimed at genuinely curbing, let alone eliminating, forced labour. Rather, military and administration officials at every level had taken action aimed at hiding the extent and nature of forced labour imposed on the civilian population, at weakening or nullifying the effects of any orders preventing forced labour that might have been issued by superior levels, and at preventing and countering, through propaganda, disinformation and deception, the measures foreseen by the Conference resolution. This action included a massive campaign of letter-writing and petition signing, by so-called "representative workers". Referring to the open letter discussed in paragraph 47 above, the ICFTU considered that this letter was part of a campaign by the Government to counter the Conference resolution. [...]" (ILO March 2001)

65. Details of a large number of specific instances of forced labour were contained in the ICFTU submission, relating to portering for regular patrols and military operations, the construction of roads, bridges and fences, the construction and servicing army camps, including the provision of building materials for these camps, the provision of transport for the military, the collection of firewood for use by army camps or in army-owned brick kilns, work in army-owned rice plantations, and work as unarmed sentries or messengers for the military. One order from an army battalion informed village heads that porters and bullock carts would only be requisitioned for use on military operations, and not for administrative purposes, but in general the pattern of forced labour demands appeared to be essentially unchanged from the practice reported by the Commission of Inquiry. The large number of different military units and other authorities issuing demands for forced labour suggested that the practice remained widespread.

66. A document prepared by the Federation of Trade Unions of Burma, and contained in the ICFTU submission, indicated that a number of means had been used by the authorities to cover up their use of forced labour. These included issuing orders for villagers to attend meetings at the army camp, where they were requisitioned for forced labour, rather than issuing explicit orders for forced labour; issuing undated, unsigned and unstamped orders; demanding that written orders were returned to the issuing army personnel; using civilian authorities to requisition labour on behalf of the military; and arbitrarily arresting young, healthy persons, who after a few days in prison would be sent to work as porters for the military, dressed in used army uniforms (but who could be recognized as porters as they were barefoot)." (ILO March 2001)

Main causes for displacement in urban areas

- People are often forced to relocate from the routes of infrastructure projects, i.e. construction of roads, bridges, railways and embankments
- 'Urban Development Programmes' have been cited as a form of forced relocation in urban centres as the residents of a designated area have been required to move to 'satellite towns' at short notice
- 500 families are known to have been evicted from their homes in Rangoon, in preparation for the "Visit Myanmar Year" in 1996
- Islands off the south coast of Myanmar developed for tourism forcing residents to relocate

"In a campaign designed to raise income from tourism and cosmetically mask widespread civil strife, the SLORC dubbed 1996 'Visit Myanmar Year'. In 1994, at least 500 families are known to have been evicted from their homes in Rangoon, in preparation for the much-vaunted influx of tourists. The regime’s hope, that 250,000 foreign visitors would visit the country in 1996, seemed unrealistic in the light of the 1993 – 1994 season, which saw only 40,000 to 60,000 tourists. Nonetheless, investors in Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, Japan, France and England were happy to finance countless hotel-building projects in the run up to ‘Visit Myanmar Year’. Those living in sites earmarked for construction were understandably less euphoric, as they faced eviction without adequate compensation. In Mandalay, the country’s former capital, it was reported that people who still lived in traditional wooden houses were forced to convert them into modern, two-storey buildings. If they could not finance the renovation, they were relocated to sites outside the city where there were almost no facilities. The same applied to those living alongside the main Rangoon to Mandalay railway. Reports of forced renovation and eviction were also coming from other parts of the country. The Minister of Hotels and Tourism, boasted: ‘Where there should be flowers, there will be flowers; where there should be trees, there will be trees’." (COHRE September 1998, p. 26)

"Weak private property rights regarding land ownership continued [in 1999] to facilitate involuntary relocations of persons by the State. The law does not permit private ownership of land; it recognizes only different categories of land use rights, many of which are not freely transferable. Postcolonial land laws have revived the precolonial tradition that the State owns all land and that private rights to it are contingent upon use that the State deems productive.

To make way for commercial or public construction and in some cases for reasons of internal security and political control, the SPDC continued to relocate citizens out of cities to new towns; however, this occurred on a much smaller scale than during the early 1990's. Persons relocated to "new towns" continued to suffer from greatly reduced infrastructure support and living standards, and residents targeted for displacement continued to be given no option but to move, usually on short notice." (US DOS 25 February 2000, sect. 1f)

"The overlap between gaining control of people, and projects carried out in the name of national development is well illustrated by the case of a nature reserve and the demarcation of islands as national parks. It is not known just how many people have been relocated with these projects as a primary cause given the counterinsurgency operations carried out in these areas. Villagers in Tennaserim division in late 1996 reported that they were forcibly relocated when the land was declared a forest conservation area. […]

The islands off the south coast of Myanmar are now being developed for tourism. Some of these islanders have been forced to flee and relocate under conditions of extreme brutality. In one incident in September 1996, 140 people were killed on Lanbi island to make way for an 'eco-tourism venture' to be known as the Lanbi Island Marine National Park. […]

All over Myanmar, 'development' projects such as widening and construction of roads, bridges, railways and embankments are under way. People are often forced to relocate from the routes of these projects; they seldom receive compensation for the loss of their homes and are forced to work on these projects. This extensive labour then denies them the ability to sustain their families. Examples includes the Ye-Tavoy railway and the extensive road network being constructed in Tennaserim division. […]"
'Urban Development Programmes' that involve the residents of a designated area having to move to 'satellite towns' at short notice have been cited as a form of forced relocation in urban centres: no comprehensive data are available. It has been reported that the authorities have first disconnected the electricity and water supplies at the old settlements and then razed them to the ground. Compensation or assistance to build new homes is rarely offered and the new sites afford little infrastructure such as sewage, clean water or access to health facilities. Once registered with the local authorities in these 'satellite towns', people are denied permission to move." (Harris 1998, p.133)

"The question of displaced persons has begun to blur with government resettlement and urban development programmes more generally. Since 1988, the government has instituted major new town projects in several parts of the country, and such resettlement or displacement fits a long-standing pattern. One unpublished report, for example, by Habitat (the UN Centre for Human Settlements), estimated that in 1990 1.5 million people (or 4 per cent of the population at that time) had been affected by displacements dating back to the 1950s.

Clearly, the question of land rights is a particular issue for discussion and reform. Many of those fleeing the country or displaced in the past decade, however, have been victims of a third human rights violation that has become particularly criticized in recent years: that of forced or compulsory labour."(Martin Smith/ MRG, May 2002, p. 24)

"Since 1989, the military junta has been launching the beautification program of Rangoon and other cities across Burma by forcefully relocating and inducing voluntary relocation to new satellite towns. There are ten satellite towns around Rangoon alone to which almost half a million population has been relocated. Similarly, satellite towns were created around the famous ancient city of Mandalay in Upper Burma, forcefully relocating the residents to attract and accommodate Chinese and other foreign investors as well as tourists. The junta claimed that most of the evicted were squatters and fire victims who were not allowed to re-acquire their old plots of land. However, the Burmese nationals reported that among the forcefully evicted were regular homeowners. The forcefully their homes were well below their market values. They were also asked to pay for the new plots of land in satellite towns. If they could not pay, they were moved further away and forced to settle in shabbier satellite towns outside Rangoon division.

Also, the villagers and residents living at ancient tourist sites, such as Mandalay, Pagan, and Amarapura in Upper Burma, were forcefully relocated for the purpose of renovating these sites for tourist attraction. The central feature of the satellite towns created across Burma is that modern homes of military commanders and high ranking government officials are built along the main highways and railway tracks with access to electricity, telephone, and water supply. On the other hand, the homes of forcefully relocated people are built with traditional bamboo and thatches that are located far away from the main roads with no electricity and water supply. Military elites and high ranking officials secured low-interest mortgage loans from state banks and building materials at subsidized prices to build two to three homes in the best sections of these satellite towns. They would either sell these homes to make abnormal profit or maintain absentee ownership of unoccupied homes and rent them out to foreign businessmen and diplomats to earn foreign exchange."(Nancy Hudson-Rodd, Myo Nyunt, Saw Thaman Tun & Sein Htay, 2003, p. 27).

News reports in 2003 about on-going urban forced relocation in the Mon State capital:
"According to local sources, over 1,400 houses in Myenegone and Hlaing wards have already been destroyed, following order by the SPDC authorities.

A businessman from Moulmein said the authorities will compensate those whose houses are being relocated, but the price varies from a thousand kyats per square feet for brick houses to 20 kyats for wooden houses and 140 kyats for thatched roof houses.

In return, local residents will be granted land available for housing in Phetkhin and NganTe wards. They will have to buy their land in these new areas but prices are not yet known. The new sites will be on lots approximately 80 by 60 feet per household, according to a report from Moulmein.
Photos of houses being destroyed were taken on September 21 by ward authorities. The owners had to pay 1,500 kyats to get a photo taken.

The source reported that the authorities would resettle those who can afford to build more expensive brick houses along the main road, while those who can afford wooden house will be on side streets and the poor, who can only afford thatch roofed houses, will be given land farther away from the main scene/streets.

The Burmese junta has launched a mega project to make the capital of Mon State the terminal point for the rail line from Rangoon. The railway station itself is scheduled to be built at the Myenegone cemetery in Moulmein. The space reserved for the new station occupies about 200 acres." (KAO WAO NEWS, September 18-October 1, 2003, OVER 1,400 FAMILIES RELOCATED FOR NEW RAILWAY STATION; source: Independent Mon News Agency: September 24, 2003)

**Substantial forced relocation of urban populations during the early 1990s**

- Claimed that some 1.5 million people had been relocated or resettled between 1989-1990
- Resettlements undertaken by the government for purposes of land development planning and other urban works
- Urban squatter communities moved to rural border areas

"According to a 1994 report of the US State Department, an estimated half million residents in Rangoon [Yangon] had been forcibly relocated from the city centre to new satellite settlements on the outskirts of the city between 1988 to 1994. Prior to this, a 1990 UNCHS/Habitat report indicated that between 1989-1990 some 1.5 million people throughout the country (4% of the entire country's population) had been relocated or resettled. Given this small urban population of Myanmar this represents some 16% of the urban population. More than half of this massive social engineering exercise took place in only four cities – Rangoon, Mandalay, Bago [Pegu], and Taunggyi[...]. In secondary towns the populations relocated accounted for 22% percent of the total town populations, respectively 120,000 out of 754,520 persons.

Considered by UNCHS/Habitat in their 1990 report as unprecedented internationally, for both the scale and the time period involved, these urban relocations or resettlements were undertaken by the government for purposes of land development planning and other urban works. These included development of: housing for civil servants; road, rail and pedestrian passageways; parks and gardens; commercial and residential use; clean up and beautification; and drainage systems and water bodies. An additional cause for much concern, was the accelerated forced relocation of poor communities to new, ill-prepared relocation sites, which was combined with a heavy handedness on the part of the military government to impose law and order standards in newly resettled areas.

Urban displaced people, particularly those- poorest households, have frequently been described in government documents as squatters, although some of them were previously renters or owners of permanent houses. They were often evicted at their own expense to new resettlement sites where conditions were difficult and where social services were lacking or scarce. Some such squatter clearance projects in Mandalay and Rangoon appear to have taken place to punish people after the 1988 upheavals, while 'fire' became an effective way of clearing squatters, as old plots are rarely returned to fire victims.

The most controversial of these urban displacements were those which concerned the relocation of urban communities to schemes designed as new rural communities. Throughout the early 1990s the government moved squatter communities and other urban populations from urban to border areas where people were to inhabit low population density areas and provide labor for construction and other infrastructure or
development activities. Examples of this have been reported in the Kabaw Valley of Sagaing Division and in the Dimosoe area of Karenni State." (BERG July 1999)

"In the cases of urban resettlement or 'beautification' projects, the townspeople are moved to outlying areas of the city called "satellite towns. These new towns are made of populations forced to relocate by the military government, and are located in the outskirts of cities, usually a few miles out where there are very few facilities. In the last five years, the junta has forcibly resettled tens of thousands of potentially restive poor people from city centers into these distant slums. Clean water is scarce and sanitation is poor in these slum areas. In addition, the people who are relocated face great difficulty as public transportation into the cities is either nonexistent, or else extremely poor and unreliable. Employment in the new satellite towns is scarce. There are inadequately equipped schools in these towns, but health care is a problem as the few clinics that exist are understaffed and under supplied and the city hospitals (also understaffed and under supplied) are difficult to get to." (NCGUB, September 2002, "Internally Displaced People and Forced Relocation")

**Background for displacement in specific areas**

**Armed conflicts ongoing despite cease-fire agreements in many areas (2002)**

- Since 1989, 17 armed ethnic groups have concluded cease-fire agreements with the Government
- Ethnic groups with cease-fire agreements have retained their own armed forces and perform some governmental functions
- However, despite some improvements, human rights abuses continue in and adjacent to ceasefire areas
- Karen insurgents (KNU) have continued to conduct military operations in the eastern and southern regions of the country, including not only Karen State, but also Mon State, Tenasserim Division, and Pegu Division.
- In Kayah State, the Karenni National Progressive Party has resumed fighting against the Government since the breakdown of a short cease-fire negotiated in 1995
- In central and southern Shan State, government forces have continued to engage the Shan State Army (SSA)

"During the colonial period the British administered separately many areas where ethnic minorities made up the majority of the population. A major consideration in the creation of the Union of Burma in 1948 was the governance of the border areas surrounding the central plain. The Union of Myanmar currently comprises seven divisions and seven ethnic minority States, which are named after the Shan, Kayah, Karen, Mon, Chin, Kachin, and Rakhine ethnic minorities. However the States have no autonomy from the central authorities and disputes which soon arose after independence led to the establishment of armed groups in all seven states. This emergence of armed groups based on ethnicity is a crucial element in the history of the post-colonial Burmese state.

Ethnic minorities comprise approximately one third of Myanmar's population of 48 million people. They live in all areas of the country, but are mainly concentrated in the seven states which surround the central Burman plain. According to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC, Myanmar's military government), there are 135 "national races" in the country. The authorities claim that they are striving to "...preserve and understand the culture and good traditions of the national races..."(6). Yet ethnic minorities are being deprived of their economic, social and cultural rights on a large scale." (AI 13 June 2001)
"Since independence in 1948, the army has battled a series of ethnic insurgencies. Ethnic insurgent groups have sought to gain greater autonomy or, in some cases, independence from the ethnic Burman-dominated State. Since 1989 17 such groups have concluded cease-fire agreements with the Government. Under the agreements, the groups have retained their own armed forces and perform some governmental functions within specified territories inhabited chiefly by members of their ethnic groups. However, other groups remain in active revolt. The KNU has continued to conduct insurgent operations in areas with significant Karen populations in the eastern and southern regions of the country, including not only Karen State, but also Mon State, Tenasserim Division, and Pegu Division. In Kayah State, the Karenni National Progressive Party has resumed fighting against the Government since the breakdown of a cease-fire negotiated in 1995. In central and southern Shan State, government forces continued to engage the Shan State Army (SSA). The military maintained a program of forced relocation of villagers in that region and there were credible reports of army killings, rapes, and other abuses. Border disputes with Thailand during the year exacerbated military abuses of civilian populations along the Thailand border. According to the SHRF, on May 4, in Kun-Hing township, SPDC troops killed five displaced farmers. The villagers previously had been resettled forcibly from surrounding villages by the army." (US DOS 4 March 2002, sect. 1g)

"As Burma entered the twenty-first century, the political situation was by no means moribund. As the years went by, incremental changes were taking place in different parts of the country which a younger generation of leaders believed could yet pave the way for rapprochement and solutions. Despite continued military rule, Burma in 2002 was not the Burma of 1988. In particular, the three-cornered struggle between the BSPP government, the CPB and the ethnic minority NDF had been replaced by a new three-party equation: that of the military regime, the NLD, and diverse ethnic minority parties, both armed opposition and elected.

The situation was never straightforward. The events of 1988 had triggered a dramatic fall-out. The BSPP’s demise was followed in 1989 by the collapse, due to ethnic mutinies, of the CPB’s 15,000-strong People’s Army and the emergence of four new ethnic armies in north-east Burma, headed by Wa and Kokang nationality forces.

While the NDF and other opposition groups considered their responses, the government was the first to reach out in a new ceasefire policy initiated by the SLORC secretary-one, Lt-General Khin Nyunt. Although political details were not on the agenda, this set the stage for the first major peace talks since 1963–4. Under truces reached, ceasefire forces would be allowed to maintain their weapons and territories – and join political discussions – until a new Constitution is introduced. Many ethnic leaders, too, were encouraged by the 1990 elections (there were often close links between above- and under-ground parties), and, in the next few years, the ceasefires spread to include ever more parties, including the Kachin, Mon, Palaung, Pao and Shan members of the NDF. By 2002, over 15 ethnic forces had peace – though not political – agreements around the country.

[...] Behind this change of strategy was a growing war weariness after more than four decades of inconclusive fighting in which many communities had been devastated. But also prompting minority leaders, who had spent many years in armed struggle, was a desire to be on the inside of the political process at this rare moment of reorientation in national politics. Based on past experiences, few expected much military or political support from outside the country. Their new aim would be to build up national reconciliation inside Burma through development programmes in the move from ‘peace’ to ‘political dialogue’. Said the 83-year-old Mon president Nai Shwe Kyin, ‘After bloodbaths lasting nearly half a century, we must establish trust with the view that one day national reconciliation will come about.’

However, despite such peace agreements, it is important to stress that the picture was not even across the country. In non-ceasefire areas, especially in the Chin, Karen, Karenni and Shan borderlands, there were still clashes and intensive government operations. Indeed, the ceasefires had a major impact on the strategic balance. Insurgent groups, such as the KNU, which remained determined to link up with the NCUB and pro-democracy groups at the borders, came under particular pressure as former allies agreed to truces.
Indeed, from the mid-1990s, their situation was steadily undermined, as a series of splinter groups broke away to make their own cease-fires."(Martin Smith/ MRG, May 2002, pp. 13-14

"After decades of fear, insecurity, and widespread violence, which has included many documented instances of killings, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, forced displacements and portering, the first dividend of these cease-fire agreements is peace, the second is some development, even if it has not been in the main forthcoming. The latter has been allegedly a factor in some splinter groups returning to the armed struggle. Those who have entered these agreements understand them as the first step of a political negotiation process leading to a permanent agreement reflecting the principles of mutual respect, equal status, rights and duties, sovereignty of the Union, all of which should be enshrined in the future Constitution. In the meantime, each group retains its weapons, army, organization, and cooperates with the SPDC to develop the zones under its control.

Positive steps have been taken on both sides to consolidate the initial agreements, including respect for large autonomy of the cease-fire zones, financial and economic cooperation to develop local infrastructures (roads, schools, medical facilities), teaching of Burmese and English in public schools while it is left to each group to teach its own history, culture and language to its children, and the issuance of national identity cards to the people living in these zones so that they can freely travel throughout Myanmar. While these are important steps, cease-fire groups have expressed concern that political discussions have not progressed and that they are excluded from the current secret talks between the SPDC and the NLD.

Sustainable peace in Myanmar requires the integration of all the peoples and components of society into the political dialogue that will shape up their common future. This is precisely where the pledge - and the challenge - of democratic reform starts. I hope that the SPDC and the NLD will give further consideration to this important dimension, the ignorance of which has led to decades of conflict, and may undermine the current progress. In the meantime, I would encourage international assistance actors to visit cease-fire zones and support development efforts there, especially in the fields of agriculture, education, access to safe water, income generation, and health. In this regard, the pioneering work of UNDP/UNOPS in the remote townships of Kachin, Chin and Rakhine States should provide a useful source of inspiration." (Pinheiro 28 March 2002)

According to a development worker interviewed in 2002 by Global Witness:

"‘The extent to which these armed ethnic groups actually represent the interests of the ethnic group that they are nominally part of is variable, as each leadership has different capacities and motives. Some groups have a strong welfare ethic and have set up social services in their areas even before the ceasefires; whilst other groups have strong interest in business and personal profit for their party and army elite. Most groups probably incorporate both of these tendencies to some degree.’

‘Ceasefire group’ is a catch-all term for those groups that have struck ceasefire deals with the SLORC/SPDC, but the nature of these deals and of the groups themselves differs widely."(GW, October 2003, p. 48)

Despite the 1995 SLORC-NMSP ceasefire, human rights abuses and displacement continue in Mon State:

"Some destroyed Mon villages were re-established after ceasefire. However the ceasefire is not the final solution for the armed struggle and political settlement in Burma. Although the Burmese Army ceased their fighting against the MNLA, but on the other hand, they have violated various types of human rights violations. Even after the Mon ceasefire with the regime, thousands of Mon civilians have been forced to contribute their labour in the government’s development projects.

Some former Mon soldiers from MNLA, who dissatisfied on the constant use of forced labour especially in the construction of 110 miles long Ye-Tavoy motor road, also resumed fighting against the military regime. They started their fighting in early 1998 again outside of NMSP and the regime agreed ceasefire zones.
Therefore, the small scale armed fighting have occurred against in Ye Township (in Mon State) and Yebyu Townhsip (in Tenasserim Division).

[...]

The Mon villagers outside of the regime’s firm control area and NMSP’s 12 permanent ceasefire zones are still accused as ‘rebel-supporters’. In this situation, thousands of Mon villagers still displaced similarly to other ethnic people in the various parts of eastern and southern part of Burma.“(HURFOM, May 2003)

*In September 2003 a committee of ethnic nationality politicians launched a new ‘ethnic initiative’, to try and break the political deadlock in Burma. See: Ethnic Nationalities Solidarity and Cooperation Committee (ENSICC), ‘ROAD MAP FOR REBUILDING THE UNION OF BURMA’, 2-9-2003*

**Intensification of forced relocation in Shan State due to continued armed struggle (1996-2002)**

- Massive internal displacement has occurred in Shan State since the 1950s
- Cease fire agreement signed with diverse insurgent groups, but fighting and displacement continue in central and southern Shan State between the Shan State Army-South (SSA-South) and the Tatmadaw
- Since 1996 forced relocations has affected villages in 18,000 square kilometres in the heart of Shan State – displacing over 300,000 civilians

"During negotiations between Britain and Burma about independence, Shan and other ethnic minority leaders demanded guarantees of minority rights in return for an agreement to join in a Union of Burma. These were conceded in an agreement between the Burmese Government and the Shan, Kachin, and Chin representatives in 1947 in Panglong, a Shan town. After Burmese independence in 1948, however, disputes arose between some Shan political figures and the central administration in Rangoon over the handling of Shan affairs. In 1958 the first Shan armed opposition group was organized, and since then various other groups took up arms." (AI 13 June 2001)

"Massive internal displacement has occurred in Shan State since the 1950s. Multiple insurgencies have resulted in continuous fighting between a variety of armed ethnic groups and the central government into the 1990s. Conflict and displacement has been compounded by the entry of two other armed parties in Shan State: the Kiromintang remnants from China in the 1950s, and the Chinese-backed Communist Party of a (CPB) between 1968 and 1989. In addition to the Shan majority, other ethnic groups in Shan State have been affected, including the PaO, Palaung, Wa, Lahu,-, in, Akha and Kokang." (BERG September 2000)

"Several Shan armed groups have been involved in insurgent operations since the 1960s, but almost all have entered ceasefire agreements since 1989. Among the most significant is the Mong Tai Army, which is headed by Khun Sa (who is wanted in the USA on drug trafficking charges), and which reached an agreement with the SLORC in January 1996. However, the Shan State Army-South (estimated strength 3,500 troops, including some formerly from the Mong Tai army, who disagreed with the ceasefire) continues its war with the Tatmadaw in the central and southern areas of the Shan state." (ICG 2000, pp. 16-17)

"The Mong Tai Army (MTA, led by Khun Sa) surrendered to the government in January 1996. Although Khun Sa surrendered, troops formerly under his command who formed the Shan State Army-South (SSA-South) began to move north from former MTA bases along the Thai-Myanmar border to the central Shan State, where they conducted guerrilla operations against the tatmadaw.

In retaliation during March 1996 the SPDC initiated a campaign of forcible relocations on a massive scale in the central Shan State, as the army evicted civilians from their villages in an apparent effort to break up
any alleged links with the SSA-South. Well over 1,400 villages were forced to relocate. Although some Shan civilians have managed to return to their original villages, others have hidden in the forest for months or even years from tatmadaw patrols, and tens of thousands of others have fled to Thailand in the last six years." (AI 17 July 2002, p10)

"Although the pace of forced relocations has slackened, the consequences of displacement are still acutely felt by villagers who have lost their land and most of their possessions. In addition, the army has not provided them with farmland, food, paid employment, or any other form of compensation. Moreover, once the army has cleared villages of any inhabitants, it forbids villagers from returning to harvest their crops or to collect their belongings. Deserted villages are usually considered as "free-fire" zones by the Burmese military; as a result, hundreds of Shan civilians have been shot dead when they tried to return to their homes." (AI 13 June 2001)

"The vast majority of affected people are rice farmers who have been deprived of their lands and their livelihoods as a result of the State Peace and Development Council's (SPDC, Myanmar's military government) counter-insurgency tactics. In the last four years over 300,000 civilians have been displaced by the tatmadaw, hundreds have been killed when they attempted to return to their farms, and thousands have been seized by the army to work without pay on roads and other projects. Over 100,000 civilians have fled to neighbouring Thailand, where they work as day labourers, risking arrest for "illegal immigration" by the Thai authorities." (AI July 2000, Introduction)

"As in previous years, most of the Shan refugees interviewed by Amnesty International were forced by the tatmadaw to perform a variety of jobs, including portering, building roads and buildings and growing crops for the military. Those living in relocation sites in towns provided a captive source of labour for the military who were stationed nearby. People living in villages were also taken on a regular basis for forced labour duties. They were never paid for their work and they also had to provide their own food." (AI 13 June 2001)

"Fighting between the tatmadaw and the Shan State Army-South(11) (SSA-South) is still occurring, and still generates refugee flows into neighbouring Thailand. Skirmishes near the Thai-Myanmar border between the two groups continued into June 2002 when the rainy season had begun; normally fighting decreases after the onset of the monsoon.

Fighting during May and June 2002 between the SSA-South and the Myanmar Army in the eastern Shan State has forced hundreds of Thai and Burmese civilians to flee from their homes on both sides of the border." (AI 17 July 2002, p9)

"In 1996 the SPDC delineated a huge area of Shan State, and ordered the forced relocation and destruction of every village in the region. The villagers were forced to move into sites more directly under SPDC control. By 1998 over 1,400 villages in 8 townships had been forcibly relocated and destroyed, displacing a population of at least 300,000 people. Since that time, the forced relocation has continued, although not on such a large scale."(NCGUB, September 2002, "Internally Displaced People and Forced Relocation")

"The Pa-O are one of the ethnic minorities of Burma. They live primarily in the Taunggyi area of southwestern Shan State. A smaller number live in the Thaton area of Mon State in Lower Burma. [...] Forced relocations have been particularly sweeping in Mon, Karen and Shan States -- those states where most of the Pa-O live. The Pa-O Nationalist Army signed a ceasefire with SLORC in 1991, but because the Pa-O live in many of the areas where other rebel groups are still active they have been swept up in the forced relocations and human rights abuses for which the ruling junta has become infamous."

(Russ Christiansen & Sann Kyaw/ ‘Cultural Survival Quarterly’ Issue 24.3, 31-10-2003, paras 1&3)
Resettlement of 128,000 Wa cause further displacement in the Shan State (1999-2002)

- Some 125,000 Wa and other villagers from northern Shan State forcibly relocated, and settled around existing villages near the Thailand border in southern Shan State forcing original inhabitants to leave
- The United State Wa Army (UWSA) is loyal to the SPDC and has reportedly 20,000 troops
- Abuses against original inhabitants both by the SPDC and UWSA
- Estimated that at least 4,500 have become internally displaced in other areas of Shan State because of the arrival of the Wa

"In 1999, around 50,000 families (about 250,000 Wa people) were forcibly moved from the northern Shan State (Wa State) to the Muang Yone- Muang Hsat area of southern Shan State. In 2000, between 100,000 -200,000 Wa have been relocated. Many of the relocations, carried out by the pro-SPDC United Wa State Army (UWSA), were on short notice. Families were suddenly broken up when relocations came during the absence of husbands or wives. Many villagers had become homeless and landless by Wa mass resettlement programme.

Upon arrival in the south, the Wa are allocated one small bamboo hut per family and given one small milk tin of rice per day. Oil and salt are rarely available, and meat and vegetables less so. Sanitation is poor and disease is rampant. Between 1999 - 2000, over 7,500 died of malaria, typhoid and anthrax. The closed border makes delivery of medicine difficult and medical vaccination almost impossible." (ICFTU 27 February 2001)

"On 16 January 2000, Khin Maung Myint, Liaison Officer for the United Wa State Army, announced that the Wa leadership had begun a three-year project of relocating ‘50,000’ of their people from the Chinese border to the north to the Thai border in the South."

This report is an attempt to expose the effects of the move on the Wa settlers themselves, as well as on the local populations in southern Shan State into whose areas they were settled.

Both the UWSP and the junta [SPDC], have official stated that the mass Wa resettlement program is aimed to eradicate opium production by enabling villagers to grow alternative crops in the more fertile land of southern Shan State. However, evidence in this report shows that the resettled villagers are planting new opium fields, with the support of SPDC and UWSP officials.

This report speculates that the UWSP has carried out the programme to gain territory and economic advantages from border trade into Thailand and Laos.

On the arrival in the south, the [126,000 Wa] villagers were settled mainly around existing villages in the townships of Mong Hsat, Mong Ton and Tachilek, lying opposite Thailand's Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai provinces and Laos.

The lives of the original inhabitants of these areas, mainly Shan, Lahu and Akha, have been gradually disrupted. Their lands and property have been seized by the newcomers, and they have had to face abuses committed by both SPDC and UWSP troops. The report estimates that the number of original inhabitants affected by the resettlement program is approximately 48,000. Of these, it is estimated that at least 4,500 have fled to other areas of Shan State, while another 4,000 have fled to Thailand.

[Historical background]
The Wa were left almost untouched by the British and also by the Japanese. Although the British Shan States also included the Wa States, they were not part of the federation formed in 1922. After World War II there was fighting between Wa and Chinese Muslims in the north and among Wa themselves in the south,
when the Kuomintang, freshly driven out from the Mainland stepped in. The area was cleared of the Kuomintang only in 1954, when the Wa area and its northern neighbor, Kokang, were jointly created into a special district, with Hopang as its capital, and Mongmai and Pangyang as sub-capitals.

In 1968, the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) it a drug entered eastern Shan State and established the People's Army, in which the Wa constituted the major force.

Following mutiny against the CPB by the Kokang on 12 March 1989, the Wa revolted on 17 April and drove out the communist leadership. Soon after, they formed the Burma National Solidarity Party, which was later renamed the United Wa State Party (UWSP), with a military wing, the United State Wa Army (UWSA).

The Wa leadership began negotiations with Rangoon, and UWSP publications state that a ceasefire agreement was reached on May 18, 1989.

In 1989 war broke out with the Shan Mong Tai Army (MTA), led by warlord Khun Sa, for control of the Doilang-Mongyawn area in southern Shan State, which fell into Wa hands after the MTA, shattered by mutiny, surrendered to the Burmese military in January 1996. However, Shan troops who refused to surrender reassembled as the Shan State Army - South, which continues to operate as an active armed resistance group in the southern Shan area.

The UWSA is reportedly 20,000 strong and boasts to be the largest force among the existing non-junta armed forces. It is also reported to enjoy good relations with the Chinese government." (LNDO, April 2002, pp. 1, 3, 6, 14)

"Most recently, forced transfers of population have allegedly been taking place from northeast Shan State adjacent to China to designated areas of southern Shan State, involving mostly Wa farmers and combatants and their families, as well as several hundred Lahu families and ethnic-Chinese. Shan and Lahu residents who used to live in these relocation areas have allegedly been dispossessed of their houses and lands and become internally displaced or refugees." (Pinheiro, 28 March 2002)

"In most parts of Burma, the primary agent of displacement is the Tatmadaw. However, non-state armed groups have also been responsible for forcible relocation and the creation of IDPs, the most prominent in recent years being the United Wa State Army (UWSA).

Between 1999-2002, at least 125,000 Wa and other (Lahu, Haw Chinese etc.) villagers were relocated from ‘Wa Special Region 2’ in the north of Shan State, to the UWSA’s Southern Command area, opposite Thailand’s Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai provinces. Between 5-10,000 of these people reportedly died of treatable conditions. Informants agree that relocated villagers received some support from the UWSA, in the form of rice and cash. However, they disagree as to the fate of the original - mostly Shan and Lahu - inhabitants of sites in the south, to which villagers from the north were moved. As many as 48,000 of these people have been displaced or otherwise affected by the new arrivals. There is also disagreement regarding the Wa authorities’ motive in relocating such large numbers of people, as well as those of the SPDC and (state and private) Chinese interests.

Most ‘source’ villages lacked sufficient rice farming land, were located in deforested areas, and were often very poor and dependent on opium cultivation. Therefore, many of those relocated were at first not displeased to move to better land in the south. However, few people were given a choice in the matter, and since 1999 most of those relocated have been forced to move - sometimes at gunpoint. Relocatees are mostly moved in whole villages, which probably helps to maintain existing community structures. However, villagers are given between zero and a few weeks advance notice, and - while the majority were transported at least part-way in trucks - some have had to walk all the way (400 Km) to the Southern Command area.
The lack of consultation with ‘source’ or ‘host’ communities reflects the UWSA’s ‘top-down’ approach to policy and action. This command style - and associated distrust of autonomous community organisations - owes much to Burmese political culture, to the under-developed nature of Wa social structures, and to ideas of the ‘leading role of the party’ inherited from the Communist Party of Burma (of which the UWSA was an element, until 1989).” (South/BBC, September 2002)


Displacement of Karen (Kayin) villagers a main strategy by the Burmese army to gain control (1995-2003)

• For many lowland Karen migrants, displacement began 20 or 30 years ago when, voluntarily or not, they left their homes and moved eastward
• Since the 1940, the Karen National Union (KNU) has been the main armed Karen nationalist movement
• Forced relocation of Karen villages in Karen, Karenni and Mon states and Tenasserim division started during the 1960s
• Intensified relocation of Karen in the Tennaserim division between September 1996 and January 1997
• In 1994, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Organisation (DKBO), known by its armed wing DKBA (the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army) broke away from KNU and started to collaborate with the Burmese army
• DKBA has relocated villages, confiscated rice and controlled rice distribution
• 1997 major displacement in the wake of a major offensive against KNU in Tenasserim division and southern Karen state
• A massive and brutal forced relocation campaign took place in the southern Dooplaya District during the 2002 dry season, including a massacre of 10 civilians and other serious human rights abuses

"'Karen’ is a blanket term that covers several peoples inhabiting a large area of mainland Southeast Asia between Burma’s Irrawaddy River and Thailand’s Chao Phraya. Today, Karens live around the Irrawaddy River Delta and along the Sittang, Salween and Tennasserim rivers in Burma, and along the Moei, Ping and Kwae Noi rivers in Thailand.

[...] No one knows how many Karens live in Burma.

[...] The disparity could be the result of a failure to include remote villages, of problems of classification (who, exactly, is Karen?), or of a political intention to reduce the official number of Karens, and thereby emphasise their minority status. Using fertility rates to project population, the government, in 1992, estimated that there were 6.2 million Karens. The Karen National Union, which has not taken a census, claims 7 million Karens throughout Burma. If there were 6 million Karens in Burma today, they would comprise about 12 per cent of the total population. Approximately half of them live in eastern Burma, including Karen State, parts of Mon State, Tennasserim Division and the eastern extreme of Pegu Division.

[...]
For many lowland migrants, displacement began 20 or 30 years ago when, voluntarily or not, they left their homes and moved eastward. Although war is responsible for their displacement today, the ultimate resolution to their problems will involve land, politics and economics far from where they started. Highland Karens, displaced from their villages, may also have migrated several times. Their original homes may
have already been taken over by others, degraded by logging, or seriously altered by development projects. Karens affiliated with KNU recognise that displacement is only one of their problems. Unless some political settlement reduces conflict with the government, they will risk displacement no matter where they stay." (Cusano, September 2001, pp.143-144)

"Since 1968, the Karen have been mainly represented by the KNU [Karen National Union] and its armed wing, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), which at its peak in the early 1980s could raise an estimated 10,000 soldiers. The KNU also held significant territory in Burma and operated along a 500-kilometer stretch of the Thai border, from Papun in the north to Tenasserim division in the south. Since 1984, when significant numbers of Karen refugees first crossed into Thailand, they have been assisted by the Karen Relief Committee, linked to the KNU.

[...]

After the April [1992] attack and the failure to capture the KNU's headquarters, the Burmese commander of the offensives against the KNU announced a unilateral cessation of operations. However, while there was reduced fighting in this period, the army embarked on a program of forced relocations of Karen villages in Karen, Karenni, and Mon states. Where skirmishes did take place between the Tatmadaw and the armed opposition, civilians in nearby villages were targeted for retaliatory attacks that often included extrajudicial executions. These attacks coincided with increased use, from 1993 onwards, of the "four cuts" strategy in the Karen townships of Hlaingbwe, Pa-an, and Papun and in Tenasserim division as the army attempted to cut off enough support to the KNU to make them more disposed towards a cease-fire. The result was a dramatic rise in the number of Karen seeking refuge in Thailand." (HRW September 1998, pp. 8, 11 & 12)

" In 1994, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Organisation (DKBO), known by its armed wing DKBA (the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army), challenged KNU's exclusive claim to Karen nationalism. The group organised Buddhist Karens in the KNU rank and file and, with support from the Burmese army, drove KNU from many of its strongholds along the Thai border. By cooperating with the Burmese army, DKBA flouted the dominant mode of Karen nationalism, which was Christian-led, S'gaw speaking, partially westernised, and essentially separatist in its attitude towards the Burmese state. Posing the first powerful alternative to KNU, DKBA has enhanced the political status of Pwo-speaking Buddhist Karens of eastern Burma. Indeed, DKBA has brought to light the complicated relations between Karen civilians and militant nationalists.

The advent of DKBA changed several aspects of how Karens become displaced and cope with their displacement. Because DKBA is composed of Karens from former KNU areas and, like KNU, is sustained by Karen communities in eastern Burma, it is a powerful agent in depriving KNU of civilian support. With intimate knowledge of local terrain, political history and economy, DKBA has been able to pinpoint and challenge KNU bastions. For example, in Pa’an, Hlaingbwe, Kawkareik and Myawaddy townships, DKBA has relocated villages, confiscated rice and controlled rice distribution. DKBA controls several key transportation routes leading to the Thai border, and has the power to stop would-be refugees from reaching camps in Thailand. DKBA controls many border villages that once provided personnel and succor to KNU. The group tries to woo KNU members and sympathisers from refugee camps, promising a better deal under DKBA if they return--and threatening retribution if they don’t. By attacking KNU-controlled refugee camps in Thailand, DKBA has influenced displaced Karens' choices about where and how to flee." (Cusano, September 2001, p. 147)

"In November 1996, another round of talks between the KNU and the SLORC held in the Mon state capital, Mulmein, broke down with no progress having been made. Then in January 1997 the KNU hosted an "ethnic nationalities seminar" that produced a ten-point "Mae Tha Raw Hta Agreement." The agreement was said to have been signed by fifteen ethnic opposition groups, though some of those named in the agreement later said they were not present when the final document was produced. The agreement called for a "federal union of national states having the full rights of national equality and self-determination" and for tripartite dialogue, including the National League for Democracy, the ethnic nationalities and the "SLORC military clique."
As a result of the KNU’s involvement in this agreement, which was seen as a direct challenge to the SLORC and possibly the end of all negotiations, in February 1997 the SLORC commenced a major offensive against those areas in the Tenasserim division and southern Karen state still under the control of the KNU." (HRW September 1998, pp. 8, 11 & 12)

"This [February 1997 offensive] has caused at least 50,000 people to remain internally displaced. Some 20,000 have sought asylum in refugee camps in Thailand and an unknown number of people have entered Thailand as migrant workers. [...] Between September 1996 and January 1997 people were forced to relocate in the Tenasserim division, some on more than one occasion, from about 70 villages. Motives for this forcible relocation seem to have centred around the ability of the SLORC to control the area, and use the scattered people for forced labour on army bases and roads. This situation of generalized violence includes some 20 documented cases of murders and of confiscation of land and rationing of the villagers’ rice. It has been estimated that some 25,000 civilians have been affected by these forced relocation orders." (Harris 1998, pp. 130-131)

"In early 1997 the SPDC began a campaign to wipe out all Karen civilian villages in the hills. Where villagers could be found they were ordered to relocate westward into the plains; where they could not be caught, their villages were shelled without warning, looted and then burned to the ground, while villagers found afterwards were shot on sight. Most villagers fled into the hills to live in hiding in small groups of families while trying to grow small patches of rice, and many others moved westward as ordered into the plains, either to stay with relatives or to garrison villages along the main roads as the SPDC troops had demanded. Many of the people who moved into the plains have now fled back into the hills. They say that they returned to the hills because they could not survive in the plains; they had no land to plant, there was no paid labor to survive on, and they could not face all the demands for forced labor and money from the SPDC troops. Some had died because they were not used to the water and the illnesses in the plains. In the end they fled back into the hills. Now they join the thousands of Karen villagers who have lived as internally displaced in these hills since 1997."(NCGUB, September 2002, "Internally Displaced People and Forced Relocation")

"The forced relocations in Kayin State were part of a campaign by the Tatmadaw against KNU to cut the link between the population and KNU and thus deny them any form of support from the local community. People were told by the Tatmadaw units that they had to move to another village within a few days. Often they were threatened that they would be shot if they refused to leave. The deserted villages were mostly burned down. Villagers who were discovered hiding in the jungle after a relocation order had their possessions destroyed, including all their food, to deny them the possibility to survive there."(UN GA 5 August 2003, para 48)

**The Situation in Northern Karen State (Toungoo District)**

"The situation faced by the villagers of Toungoo District is worsening as more and more parts of the District are being brought under the control of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) through the increased militarisation of the region. At any one time there are no fewer than a dozen battalions active in the area. Widespread forced labour and extortion continue unabated as in previous years, with all battalions in the District being party to such practices. The imposition of constant forced labour and the extortion of money and food are among the military’s primary occupations in the area. The strategy of the military is not one of open confrontation with the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) – the armed wing of the Karen National Union (KNU) - but of targeting the civilian population as a means of cutting all lines of support and supply for the resistance movement. There has not been a major offensive in the District since the SPDC launched Operation Aung Tha Pyay in 1995-96; however since that time the Army has been restricting, harassing, and forcibly relocating hill villages to the point where people can no longer live in them. Many of the battalions launch sweeps through the hills in search of villagers hiding there in an effort to drive them out of the hills and into the areas controlled by the SPDC. Fortunately, the areas into which many of them have fled are both rugged and remote, making it difficult for the Army to find them.
For those who are discovered, once relocated, they are then exploited as a ready source for portering and other forced labour." (KHRG, 16 June 2003)

**The southern Dooplaya District**

"In mid-April 2002, with the outside world increasingly focused on the imminent release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Rangoon, the SPDC took the opportunity to rapidly intensify Operation Than L’Yet. Between April 11th and 14th, Division 88 troops destroyed and forcibly relocated Na Tee Kloh, Thi Kweh, Noh Kweh Hta, and T’Ray Kee villages in Kya In township. From April 19th to May 12th, columns moved through the area south and west of their divisional base at Kyaikdon, forcibly relocating the villages of Kru See (a.k.a. Kyone Sein), Tee Tha Blu, Noh Kloh Dtau, Noh Maw Pu, Pa Klaw Kee, Lay T’Ray, Tee K’Pa, Khaw Kheh, Tee Kyaw Kay, Tee P’Nweh, Baw T’Roh Kee, Paw Ner Mu, Tee Khay, Tee Hsa Rah, K’Kya Po Kee, Tee Law Bler, Meh Naw Na, and Tee K’Mler Hta to Army-controlled sites. Other villages were ordered out without being told where to go.

[…]

For those who choose to flee into hiding, Dooplaya has fewer places to hide than some other Karen regions. Apart from the easternmost regions adjacent to the Thai border, the three townships affected by the operation are dominated by wide open rice fields separated by stretches of forest, with winding rivers and low hills. Even so, many villagers are still trying to hide near their fields or among the higher hills. The SPDC troops have not pursued them extensively thus far, because up until the beginning of the rains in June they were preoccupied with forcibly relocating and destroying villages, and since that time their mobility has been somewhat limited by the rains. The last forced relocations occurred in July, and since that time the operation has not been as intensive. KHRG researchers report that the most recent killings of civilians occurred in June, though in July SPDC troops shot and wounded two villagers in Meh Dta Kwih village of Kya In township. Army patrols have continued to comb the villages throughout the rainy season, and people hiding near their villages have frequently had to run to avoid them, but those hiding in the more remote areas have thus far escaped discovery. All of them are certain that if seen they will be shot on sight. At present they are surviving on whatever food they were able to salvage from their villages, and are trying to tend a rice crop in their former fields or in small fields they have cleared at more remote sites. They forage for roots and jungle vegetables, and some return to their villages occasionally to harvest coconuts and other fruit from their trees, or to tap rubber which they hope to sell." (KHRG, 25 September 2002)

**The Situation in Central Karen State (Pa’an District)**

"Since 1997 most of Pa’an District in central Karen State has been firmly controlled by forces of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), with the assistance of the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA). Both groups are still fighting the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA, the armed wing of the Karen National Union) in the Dawna Range area, a strip in the far east of the district adjacent to the border with Thailand, but the remainder of the district sees little fighting, with the KNLA only able to mount small scale hit-and-run guerrilla attacks against SPDC and DKBA positions. In consolidating their control, both the SPDC and the DKBA have been increasingly restricting and exploiting the Karen villagers who make up almost the entire population of the district. Although most of the villagers remain in their villages under SPDC and DKBA control, their lives are difficult and they are becoming increasingly impoverished. The continued use of forced labour, the demands for money and food from the villagers, and the resulting poverty have driven many to flee to refugee camps or to join the illegal migrant labour market in Thailand. Landmines have also become a serious problem in the area, with villagers making up the majority of mine victims."(KHRG, 7 September 2002)

**Displacement of Karens especially appalling in the Nyaunglebin and Papun districts (1997-2002)**

- Since the end of the rainy season in October 2000, the SPDC has intensified its counter-insurgency campaign and their efforts on destroying the crops and food supplies which the displaced villagers need to survive
• SPDC campaign targeting the civilian population with almost no attempts made to seek out the armed resistance groups or engage them in battle
• Villagers are forced to move to Army-controlled sites further west for use as forced labour building and maintaining more Army posts, but many flee before the arrival of the military troops
• The Guerrilla Retaliation units (Sa Thon Lon) have operated in the region since September 1998

"Since 1997 the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) military junta ruling Burma has been involved in an intensive campaign to consolidate control over the rugged hills and river valleys of Papun and Nyaunglebin Districts in northern Karen State and eastern Pegu Division. The entire campaign has targeted the civilian population rather than the armed resistance. In order to undermine any possibility of resistance and gain complete control over the subsistence Karen farmers who inhabit the region, the SPDC has destroyed over 200 villages, driven thousands of villagers out of the hills to garrison villages, and continues to hunt and kill the villagers who have fled into the hills to hide from the forced relocations. Over 40 Battalions have been sent in, new roads have been established, and all of the villagers now living under SPDC control must do forced labour supporting these battalions. Since 1999 more and more troops have been sent into the hills to hunt out the villagers trying to hide near their villages, and since 2000 these troops have focused most of their efforts on destroying the crops and food supplies which the displaced villagers need to survive. Villagers are shot in the fields at harvest time, crops are trampled or burned, and fields and abandoned villages have been land mined. The situation for the internally displaced is desperate. In the SPDC garrisoned villages things are little better, as the Army’s constant demands for forced labour, money, food and materials and its arbitrary torture of village elders and others drives people to flee into the hills and become displaced themselves. The situation for all of the villagers in the region is becoming increasingly desperate, but there is no sign of any decrease in armed resistance activity and therefore no probability that the campaign will end anytime soon.

[...]
The area covered by this report covers part of northern Karen State and part of eastern Pegu Division, bordered by the Salween River and the Thai border to the east and the Sittaung River to the west [...]. The boundary between the two districts runs north-south through the hills, but all of these rugged hills can be considered a single area due to their shared geography and the similar situations existing in both districts. Most of the area is mountainous except for the lower Yunzalin and Bilin River valleys and the plains along the Sittaung River. The villagers in the area are almost entirely Karen, living in small villages of 10 to 20 families dotted throughout the hills and surviving by subsistence rice farming, mainly hillside rice. The majority are Animist and Buddhist, with a minority of Christians. In the more central plains on the eastern banks of the Sittaung River, there are also Burman and Shan villages.

[...]
The key element in this SPDC campaign for control is that it consists almost solely of targeting the civilian population. There are almost no attempts made to seek out the armed resistance groups or engage them in battle except for skirmishes deep in the jungle which usually occur when resistance forces ambush SPDC patrols. There are also no attempts made to develop the villages or conduct any sort of ‘Hearts and Minds’ campaign. In the hills of northern Papun District and eastern Nyaunglebin District, at least 200 villages have been destroyed or abandoned in the past four years and tens of thousands of villagers are still in hiding in the forest. Where the SPDC has partial control in western Dweh Loh township of Papun District, the military has recently intensified relocations of hill villages to Army-controlled villages. Nearby Bu Tho township and the eastern portion of Dweh Loh township are well into the cycle of relocation, return, and repeated relocation which was described earlier, as the SPDC progressively increases its control. They are presently in their villages but face heavy demands for forced labour, materials and money, and could be relocated again at any time. Furthest to the west, the plains of the Sittaung River are under the strongest SPDC control; villagers there faced a wave of forced relocations and forced roadbuilding in 1998-99 and most of them are either still in the SPDC-controlled relocation sites or have fled eastward into the hills to join the internally displaced.

[...]
Information obtained through interviews with villagers and KHRG field researchers indicates that the activities of the Sa Thon Lon have decreased in 2000 and 2001. They still operate in the district as well as
in Toungoo District, but they now stay in SPDC or DKBA bases and do not move about as much. The number of killings attributed to the Sa Thon Lon has also drastically decreased. A possible reason for the decrease in the level of activity and number of executions attributed to the Sa Thon Lon is that they have already killed everyone they were able to catch in 1998 and 1999." (KHRG October 2001, pp 1, 12, 21)

"The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) began its 2001-2002 dry season offensive operations with a three-pronged push in Papun District and eastern Nyaunglebin District. This has been followed by moves into northern Papun District and along the Salween River where it forms the border with Thailand [...]. The main attacks came at the beginning of the rice harvest season, forcing villagers to leave much of their crop in the fields where some was eaten and the rest destroyed by the SPDC soldiers. Most villagers had little left from the previous year’s harvest and these new attacks almost guarantee that they will not have enough rice to see them through to the next harvest at the end of 2002.

From November 9th 2001, five battalions of SPDC Light Infantry Division #33 (Light Infantry Battalions #11, 119 and 111, and Infantry Battalions #4 and 76) came down from K’Baw Tu Army camp in Ler Doh township of eastern Nyaunglebin District and moved into south-central Lu Thaw township of Papun District. The five battalions split into two columns which moved east into Kheh Pa, Yeh Mu Plaw and Pay Kay village tracts of Lu Thaw township, an area along the border of Nyaunglebin and Papun Districts which had become a tenuous safe area for displaced villagers who fled from further west in 2000 and early 2001 when SPDC columns entered, burned and landmined their villages in Ler Doh and northern Hsaw Tee townships of Nyaunglebin District. In November 2001 these already displaced villagers found themselves under attack and on the run again, along with local villagers of the Kheh Pa and Yeh Mu Plaw areas. The soldiers destroyed any possessions, school supplies, crops or food caches that they came across. One of the columns burned Lay Wah, Thay Koh Der and Maw Thay Der villages in southeastern Lu Thaw township. However, most of the villages were not burned. Some in the area have speculated that this is because the SPDC does not want burned villages to be photographed and used internationally as evidence against them. Instead, some of the unburned villages have been landmined, which still makes them uninhabitable for the villagers.

The two SPDC columns reunited and crossed back to the west side of the Bilin River on November 27th 2001, then went back west into Nyaunglebin District. Many of the villagers who fled the columns have now returned to their villages or hiding sites. Schools have been reopened and villagers are trying to gather what paddy remains in the fields. The situation still remains unstable and reports from KHRG researchers and the Karen National Union (KNU) indicate that the Burmese Army may be resupplying and preparing to launch another attack into the area sometime in March or April 2002. One column of troops did return to the Lay Wah area in early March, forcing the villagers in the area to flee once more." (KHRG 5 April 2002)

"The situation of displacement, landmines, and extrajudicial killings is most acute in Papun district in Kayin State and Nyaunglebin district in Bago [Pegu] Division. Many of those interviewed by Amnesty International said that there were some KNU soldiers in their vicinity, but these soldiers usually moved through areas and did not maintain any fixed bases. The KNU occasionally asked for rice, but in general did not harass Karen civilians and sometimes acted as guides or provided intelligence about the tatmadaw’s movements to villagers. However the KNU is essentially unable to protect Karen civilians in Papun and Nyaunglebin districts from the wide variety of human rights violations which the SPDC inflicts on them. Karen civilians, particularly those in "black" areas, are considered as enemies by the tatmadaw and suffer disproportionally compared to the KNU troops." (AI 13 June 2001)

*See the [Internet site of the Karen Human Rights Group](http://www.ibiblio.org/freeburma/humanrights/khrg/archive/index.html) for further updated information about the situation facing IDPs in these areas:*
Forced relocation in Tenasserim (Tanintharyi) Division directly linked to construction of gas pipelines (1991-2000)

- Villagers displaced from highly militarized pipeline corridor
- Claimed in May 2000 that violence and forced labor in the pipeline region has continued
- Villagers also displaced due to forced labour and relocation associated with other infrastructure projects (roads & railway)

"Since the early 1990s, a terrible drama has been unfolding in Burma. Three Western oil companies—Total, Premier, and Unocal—bent on exploiting natural gas, entered partnerships with the brutal Burmese military regime to build the Yadana and Yetagun pipelines. Determined to overcome any obstacle, the regime created a highly militarized pipeline corridor in what had previously been a relatively peaceful area. The results, predictable to anyone familiar with the recent history of Burma, were violent suppression of dissent, environmental destruction, forced labor and portering, forced relocations, torture, rape, and summary executions.

[...]In July 1996, EarthRights International and the Southeast Asian Information Network (SAIN) released Total Denial, a report that exposed the human rights and environmental problems associated with the Yadana pipeline. In the nearly four years since the publication of that report, the violence and forced labor in the pipeline region have continued unabated. [...]

The influx of Burmese troops was only one step toward militarizing the region for the pipeline projects. To proceed, the soldiers had to take complete control. Villagers’ movements had to be monitored. Villages had to be moved. Through early 1993, Karen communities that lay east of the Ye-Tavoy road were particularly targeted for relocation to create a secure corridor for the pipelines. [...] Karen villages 15 to 20 miles both north and south of the pipeline routes were forced to move to the Ye-Tavoy road—closer to SLORC outposts—to create a labor pool and eliminate threats from armed ethnic groups. This relocation area became the pipeline corridor, and the timing of the relocations coincided with the negotiation of the pipeline deals and the attack on Nat-E-Taung in late 1991. The pattern of relocations further suggests that the impending pipelines were related directly to the relocations and gave SLORC further pretext to control the population in this particular area. Indeed, villages outside this relatively narrow corridor were not relocated at this time despite the presence of armed ethnic groups in those areas. Villagers suspected of having contact with any resistance groups in the corridor were dealt with harshly[...]. Some villages were completely relocated. In others, troops compelled residents living on the outskirts of the village to move to the center to enhance the military’s control of the people. The relocations and subsequent sweeps of the forested areas for any villagers who might be hiding near the Thai/Burmese border effectively depopulated the region east of the Ye-Tavoy road.

[...]

Between 1991 and early 1993, the Burmese military relocated a number of Karen villages. Targeted Karen communities included Karen Shintapi, Chaung Sone, Paw La Goo,Ya Pu,Lauk Ther,and Zinba. Portions of Zinba and Chaung Sone—the outskirts of the village—were relocated to the center of the village, so the army could more effectively control the population. Several of the communities, namely Ya Pu and Lauk Thein, were relocated after July 1992, when the Yadana contract had been signed, which belies the companies’ assertions about relocations and their projects. Other villages, such as Michaunglaung, were torched in late 1992, again after the contract had been signed, making the relocation final and crushing any villagers’ hopes of return-ing to their life-long homes." (Earthrights May 2000, pp. 2, 39, 43)

"Tenasserim Division (renamed Tanintharyi by the SLORC/SPDC military junta) forms most of Burma’s long southern leg, sandwiched between the Andaman Sea to the west and southern Thailand to the east, measuring approximately 600 kilometres (400 miles) north-south but seldom more than 100 kilometres (60 miles) in east-west width. The population of the villages and towns along the Andaman coast is a mix of Burman, Karen, Mon, Tavoyan and some villagers of Indian descent; some villages and areas are almost
exclusively Karen or Mon, while others are various mixtures. Villages further inland, in the hills and river valleys nearer the border with Thailand, are predominantly Karen with some Mon villages in the north of the area and a mixture of Mon, Karen, Thai and Burman in the far south. Travel in the region is difficult; the ‘main’ road along the coast is often little more than a wide dirt track, and roads heading into the interior are often more like oxcart tracks. In the hills most travel is on foot, or by canoes (powered by paddles or motors) along major rivers such as the Tenasserim, which are dotted with rapids and can be treacherous. The region has long been a world unto itself in the struggles between Burmese regimes and the resistance groups. The succession of military juntas in Rangoon have never managed to gain more than limited control over the coastal towns and most of the coastal road, while a variety of resistance groups have traditionally dominated the interior. The most significant of these are the Karen National Union (KNU) and the New Mon State Party (NMSP), though there have also been and continue to be smaller Tavoyan, Muslim and Burman resistance groups, Mon splinter groups, and in the remotest regions even remnants of the Burmese Communist Party. Even the KNU has always left its people in the area (referred to as Mergui-Tavoy District or KNLA 4th Brigade area) to operate with a great deal of autonomy. The NMSP made a ceasefire deal with the SPDC in 1995, but since then various splinter groups have broken off and restarted fighting the Rangoon regime, sometimes in the south of Tenasserim and sometimes in the north; the most recent breakaway of Mon soldiers began in September 2001 in the northern part of the district.

Tenasserim Division began to attract more international attention when reports of gross human rights abuses connected to the construction of the Ye-Tavoy railway and the Yadana gas pipeline were reported from 1993 onward. Both the Yadana gas pipeline and the Ye-Tavoy railway are now complete but they continue to have repercussions on the human rights situation of villagers in the region, as do the plans for new commercial projects which have driven the powers in Rangoon to intensify their campaigns to subjugate Tenasserim Division in the past 5 years.

In September 1996, the State Law & Order Restoration Council (SLORC) military junta began a campaign of forced relocations and forced labour road building in the entire area from Palauk in the north to Tenasserim town in the south. By the end of January 1997 over 60 Karen villages between the Andaman coast and the Tenasserim River had been destroyed, with their inhabitants forced to move to Army controlled sites to do forced labour building new roads into their home areas. Army camps were then established and supplied along these roads. In February 1997 the SLORC followed this up by launching a massive military offensive into KNU stronghold areas along the upper Tenasserim and Paw Kloh rivers. The KNU was forced to give up most of its territory and take up guerrilla operations, while tens of thousands of villagers fled to Thailand or into hiding in the hills. Most of the predominantly Karen villagers, both in the pre-offensive relocation zones and the areas devastated by the offensive, were either trapped in their villages by SLORC troops, herded to relocation sites for use as forced labour building roads and Army camps, or fled into hiding in the forests where they avoided SLORC patrols with orders to shoot them on sight. The SLORC sent in bulldozers just behind its attack troops to begin work on a road from the port at Tavoy to the Thai border at Bong Ti, fuelling speculation that a major purpose of the offensive was to begin work on a joint Burmese-Thai commercial project linking Bangkok to a new deep-water sea port on the Andaman Sea at Tavoy. Also in February 1997, the SLORC launched an offensive against the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) 12th Battalion headquartered at Kaw Tha Say southeast of Mergui, almost at the southern tip of Burma. This followed the destruction of several Karen villages in the area a few months earlier, and attempts by the junta to force the villagers into road labour camps.

Though the 1997 offensives took most of the territory previously controlled by the KNU, the SLORC (renamed in late 1997 to the State Peace and Development Council) has failed to fully consolidate its control over the region for several reasons, primarily the difficulty of supply and troop movement, harassment by KNLA guerrilla forces, and the determined non-cooperation of the villagers. Low level fighting continues throughout the region, and human rights abuses by the occupying SPDC forces have become endemic. Those living in villages under SPDC control have found themselves repeatedly relocated to place them under more direct Army control, and suffer under constant demands for forced labour, extortion and demands for materials and food. Many are still fleeing into the hills to join the internally displaced, where they must struggle to grow some food and avoid being shot on sight by SPDC patrols.
Many have tried to flee to Thailand, but the Thai 9th Infantry Division patrols this part of the border and they frequently force refugees back across at gunpoint."(NCGUB, September 2002, "Internally Displaced People and Forced Relocation")

"In Tenasserim Division, population displacement occurs throughout rural areas as civilians try to flee from their villages to escape systematic persecution by the Burmese Army. Civilians in conflict constantly suffer from killing, arrest and torture, as they are accused of being of rebel-supporters by the SPDC. They are also forced to contribute forced labour for the army and serve as unpaid porters for military offensives. Women also frequently suffer sexual abuse from SPDC soldiers.

The length of the period of displacement varies from situation to situation. When SPDC troops are planning military offensives against rebel forces, soldiers attempt to arrest large numbers of villagers to use as civilian porters. To escape this forced portering men in villages have to flee and hid in the forests or in farms or fruit plantations. In this situation, the men are only displaced from their families for about 3 days, or until the troops leave their area. Sometimes however, if the troops remain active in the region, they could be forced to remain in hiding for up to 2-3 months. Similar displacement occurs whenever villagers attempt to avoid the constant demands of forced labour from the army, which leaves them no time to complete their own work. In these cases, all family members could be displaced, because if the men are absent, women are forced to work instead. If villagers attempt to hide at their farms or fruit plantations, they must avoid soldiers operating in the area. If they are discovered they can be tortured or killed as ‘rebelsupporters.’ Displacement that occurs when villagers hide in their fields or plantations to avoid forced labor can last from 1-6 months.

Long-term displacement occurs when the SPDC battalion commanders order the villagers to leave their villages and relocate. The commanders give the villagers a deadline to move from their villages, which is sometimes insufficient time for the villagers to gather all of their belongings.

Generally, most villagers are displaced due to a variety of factors. In one family, a husband may be arrested for porter service, and his wife conscripted to contribute labour in a construction site or army camp. Then the family has less and less time to work on their own farm and ultimately they decide to flee from their villages and find another place where they can get more food and suffer less abuses from soldiers. Sometimes, IDPs move many times searching for safety and a regular food supply."(NCGUB, September 2002, "Internally Displaced People and Forced Relocation"

"[In order] for Burmese troops trying to gain better security for the gas pipeline. In 1997 all the Karen population in Kamoethway area were forcibly relocated by Burmese troops to their designated relocation sites and they were strictly controlled.

[...] 
After six years, this area has become a free fire zone or brown zone as branded by Burmese troops. Forced labour is a regular task for the people in relocation sites, they have no freedom to make their living and they have to live very carefully. Many of them were accused by the Burmese troops of having contact with the Karen resistance and were tortured or killed. The villagers in forced relocation sites have difficulties for earning their living, but this is not only major challenge for them, another challenge is to fulfill the extortions demanded by the Burmese troops.

Villagers are controlled not only through restrictions, but also through the Burmese troops attempts to create misunderstanding between families and communities. This is why it is hard for the villagers to come together and find a way to revolt. There are no positive signs for a better future for the villagers in Kamoethway area and the oppressions will continue as long as the Burmese Army occupy the area. The interest of foreign companies for doing business in this area is also increasing and is contributing to the unsolved conflict between the Karen and the ruling military junta.

Geographic Structure
Kamoethway area is to the east of Tavoy town in southern Burma. It is close to the Thai border, within two days walking distance through jungle paths. Most of the population are Karen but there are also some Tavoyan who labour in Karen orchards.

[...]

**Burmese Army forced relocation program**

In 1997 the Burmese military started a major offensive against KNU’s Mergui-Tavoy district and over-ran their district HQ within one month. After 1997, Burmese troop started a mass relocation program among Karen villages, including the Kamoethway area. Karen villages to the east of the Kamoethway River were moved to the west bank while some of the Karen villages on the west bank of Kamoethway were relocated to other villages and others were moved to the middle of the village. Some villagers escaped to Thailand, some to the refugee camps, some illegally hid in Thai villages on the border and others continue to hide in the jungle.

After the Burmese troops occupied the area, they deployed their troops and built their military bases in the villages. The forced relocation program in Kamoethway area was a part of Burmese army’s strategy of mass forced relocation program of the Karen population in Mergui-Tavoy District and other Karen areas. The forced relocation program in Mergui-Tavoy district started before 1997 but the effects really started to occur in 1997 and the following year. The objective of the forced relocation program is to cut off the Karen population from the Karen resistance and to secure the area.

[...]

**Extra judicial killing**

After 1997, many villagers in forced relocation sites were extrajudicially killed by Burmese troops and Burmese troops founded peoples militia’s. They accused them of collaboration with the Karen resistance. Many villagers were tortured and killed. The area was branded a brown zone by the Burmese military because the activities of the Karen soldiers still remain in this area. The eastern bank of Kamoethway River was entirely branded as a free-fire zone. Any villager discovered in this area would be shot on sight or would be asked for their permission paper given by the Burmese troops, without the permission paper he or she will be accused of supporting the Karen soldiers and will be tortured or killed.

Villagers were also shot dead beside relocation sites or within the relocation sites when they returned from their plantation or tending their cattle. The Burmese troops always expressed sorrow and used the excuse that they had mistakenly killed them.

[...]

**Land Confiscation**

After 1997, the Burmese troops set up a main base in Kawpaw area, and another base in Myitta village which borders Kamoethway and Pawko area. In Myitta village, the Burmese troops have confiscated more than 40 acres of land from 26 villagers. In Kawpaw village, the church’s land was confiscated by Burmese troops for the building of their military base.

According to the latest information, the Burmese troops plan to build some more artillery battalions in the Kamoethway area, at a place between Taungtholon and Heindah Chaung. Another artillery battalion is at Htaw Klo, close to the Thai border.”(BL, April 2003, pp. 5-6)

*See the internet site of the Mergui-Tavoy District Information Department, for background and further information on displacement in Tenasserim Division (including photographs of IDPs, relocation sites and destroyed villages, plus ‘Map showing mass forced relocation program against the Karen population by Burmese troops in Tenasserim division’*

**Mon people remain displaced despite cease-fire since 1995**
Military rulers initiated in the 1990s a massive program of road and railroad construction in the Mon state

Forcible or compulsory displacement in the Mon State has occurred also in urban areas

Forced labor, forced relocations, arbitrary taxation, and the extrajudicial execution of villagers suspected of assisting Mon soldiers, and land confiscation reported as main causes for flight

Mon and Karen villages were forced to relocate as gas pipeline is being built between Burma and Thailand

Despite cease-fire agreement in 1995, the Mon refugees did not feel safe to return to their homes and instead established camps in Mon-controlled areas

Break-away group took up arms in September 2001 (now largely dormant)

Displacement and ethnic conflict in Mon State compounded by land confiscation and the transfer of people from central Burma by the Burmese Army

"The New Mon State Party (NMSP) reached a ceasefire agreement with Burma’s military government in 1995. This agreement delegated twelve separate areas through Mon state, Karen state and Tenasserim Division to the administrative control of NMSP. Outside of these zones, Mon villagers live under SPDC rule except for contested areas of Ye township in southern Mon state and Yebyu township in northern Tenasserim Division where a splinter group from the NMSP continues its armed resistance. Similarly, Mon villagers from Kyain Seikgyi township in southern Karen state remain in a contested area where the Karen National Union (KNU) is active." (BBC October 2003, p 15)

"In Mon State, the ethnic Mon have suffered serious displacement after nationalists under the New Mon State Party (NMSP), took up arms against the military government after the 1962 military coup. Reported to be more urbanised than either Karen or Karenni State to the north, where inhabitants are mainly rural dwellers, forcible or compulsory displacement has occurred largely in urban areas, such as Moulemein city. While displacement in rural areas has taken place, its incidence has decreased since the cease-fire between the government and NMSP in 1995 - which has held generally with the exception of areas overlapping with Karen-insurgent-held areas." (BERG September 2000)

"The population of the Mon State and Tanintharyi Division, in the southeast of Myanmar, is a mixture of Mon, Karen, Tavoyan, and Merguians as well as smaller ethnic minority groups. The Mon, who along with the Khmer were among the first settlers of mainland Southeast Asia, established major kingdoms in the pre-colonial era. They live in villages north of Dawei. The Merguians, living primarily in the Mergui area, and Tavoyans, living mostly in the area of Dawei town, are ethnically the same as the Burman group, but have developed their own dialects and local cultures. In February 2001 Amnesty International interviewed members of these groups from Yepyu and Tanintharyi townships in Tanintharyi Division and Mudon, Paung, Thanbuzyat and Ye townships in the Mon State as well as Kya-ein-seik-kyi township, Kayin State.[…] They had fled to the Thai-Myanmar border because of forced labour and excessive and arbitrary taxation as well as other human rights violations.

Although the New Mon State Party (NMSP) agreed a cease-fire with the then State Law and Order Restoration Council […] in June 1995, a few smaller groups broke away from the NMSP and continued to fight against the SPDC. In addition a small number of Karen National Union (KNU) troops engage in skirmishes with the Burmese army in the Bago and Tanintharyi Divisions and the Mon State. As a result, civilians in the areas where these groups operate are at risk of being taken as porters for the tatmadaw as they patrol the countryside, and also of interrogation about the armed groups' whereabouts." (AI 13 June 2001)

“Reported to be more urbanised than either Karen or Karenni State to the north, where inhabitants are mainly rural dwellers, forcible or compulsory displacement has occurred largely in urban areas, such as in
round Moulemein city. While displacement in rural areas has taken place, its incidence has decreased since the cease-fire between the government and NMSP in 1995 - which has held generally with the exception of areas overlapping with Karen-insurgent-held areas.” (BERG September 2000)

"While military offensives were the major cause of Mon refugee outflows in the 1980s, by 1992 - when the NMSP had already lost much of its former territory - forced labor, forced relocations, arbitrary taxation, and the extrajudicial execution of villagers suspected of assisting Mon soldiers were the main causes of flight. The SLORC set about developing the Mon state and Tenasserim division peninsular, embarking on a massive program of road and railroad construction and clearing economically important areas of people who might support the Mon and Karen ethnic armies. The single most common reason for flight over the next five years was the construction of the railroad between Ye and Tavoy (a distance of 160 kilometers). In late 1993 the SLORC started rounding up villagers in Mon state to provide labor to build the railroad, and as of May 1998 the use of forced labor on this project was continuing. Over this period of time, thousands of Mon, Karen, and Tavoyan villagers were forced to work at the site for up to two weeks per month, sometimes more. As in other forced labor projects, the villagers were forced to find their own transportation to the site, take with them their own tools and food for the duration of their stay, and work without pay until their allotted section of work was complete. Villages nearest the site were targeted first, but as the project continued, people from further afield were used. The work was overseen by Tatmadaw soldiers, who often beat people considered not to be working hard enough, and there were few safety precautions, so that laborers sometimes died in accidents and landslides. After months of such work, during which time they were no longer able to tend their fields, villagers lost the ability to sustain themselves and had no option but to flee to Thailand.

[...]
The other major development project that affected the Mon was the gas pipeline that was to be built to carry natural gas from the Gulf of Martaban across Burma and into Thailand (see below). The original route was to have taken the pipeline to Three Pagodas Pass, though a shorter land route coming out further south at Nat Ei Daung was finally agreed upon. Nevertheless, in preparation for the pipeline, which would be vulnerable to attack by ethnic minority forces, Mon and Karen villages were forced to relocate, and in 1995, the SLORC created a new army command position, the Tenasserim Coastal Military Command, whose headquarters were in Tavoy. The increase in Tatmadaw soldiers in the area led to an immediate increase in the forced recruitment of civilians as porters and as laborers to build new army barracks in the region, and this contributed to refugee outflows from 1994 onwards." (HRW September 1998, "The Ethnic Minorities" & "The Mon")

"Another very unfortunate development was the decision by Mon leader, Colonel Pan Nyunt, to break away from Mon central politics, establishing an own splinter group in September 2001. The Burmese army has since launched a full-scale offense to destroy this splinter group, which publicly announced its aim of resuming the war against the SPDC with support of troops in the area. In late December 2001, Col. Pan Nyunt’s splinter group issued a formal declaration on the formation of a new political party called the Hongsawatoi Restoration Party, and a vow to fight against the military junta." (UNPO December 2001)

"Kya-inn-seikyi Township. In Three Pagoda Pass area (the border area with Thailand but it is in Kya-inn-seikyi Township) and Kya-inn-seikyi Township areas, there are KNLA and the Mon splinter group, MRA (Monland Restoration Army) have launched the military activities against the Burmese Army. MRA also launched the military activities against MNLA troops who have controlled some parts of this area. After HRP (Hongsawatoi Restoration Party) split from NMSP, and they established a political party and planned for resuming of new military campaigns. SPDC and Burmese Army also had some concerns that they could not manage well on the ceasefire. A few number of HRP’s armed force, MRA, also made military ally with KNLA troops and took some military activities to raise their organization’s fund in the area since the early day of split.

Therefore, since early 2002, the Burmese Army intensified its offensives to uproot the bases and activities of Mon and Karen rebel soldiers. In dry season, the Burmese Army had used IB No. 34, IB No. 301, IB No. 77 (under the command of LID No. 88), LIB No. 550, LIB No. 354 and LIB No. 538. Some battalions had
their bases in Kya-inn-seikyi Township and some were brought from other area, not from Mon State and Karen State.

In March and April, the Burmese Army troops tried to track down the MRA troops and suspected the Mon villagers in Three Pagoda Pass area as rebel-supporters. The Burmese soldiers also arrested some villagers in some Mon villages near Three Pagoda Pass Township. Again, in late April, Burmese Army’s LIB No. 550 also relocated a Mon village, called Kyone-kwee, which was about 15 Kilometer from Three Pagoda Pass town and arrested one Mon Buddhist monk in the village monastery. About 60 families of the villagers had to move from their village and escaped to another area. LIB No. 550 soldiers also disrobed the arrested Mon monk and imprisoned him.

At the same time, other battalions of Burmese Army launched their military activities along Zami river, along Three Pagoda Pass – Thanbyuzayat motor road and went around into many Mon and Karen villages which are on the roads. As the Burmese Army brought many new soldiers into these areas, those soldiers constantly accused both Mon and Karen villagers as rebel soldiers or rebel soldiers. Those battalions and soldiers also did not respect any ceasefire zones and the killing of many villagers also occurred in many villages. IB No. 77 involved in various executions of the civilians as it was a new battalion brought into the area and had inhumanely treated the civilians.

[...] In the period from May to August 2002, many families of villagers from Kya-inn-seikyi Township displaced and some number of families Mon, Karen and Lao-shan ethnic people, also arrived into New Mon State Party controlled area. Villagers from over 10 villages, which situated along Zami river have arrived to these villages. Over 2000-3000 people displaced but only about 1000 people arrived to NMSP areas."(HURFOM, Population Displacement is Humanitarian Crisis in Burma, May 2003)

"In most cases, whenever forced relocation happens in rural area in Mon State, the commanders who order the villagers to leave their homes do not give the villagers a place they need to move to. Instead they tell the villagers that they can resettle anywhere, as long as it is not in the area of their former village. Some villages are accused of being rebel bases and villagers are suspected of being rebel-supporters. These villagers suffer more than other villagers from torture and killing by the SPDC, and those villagers who are afraid of being killed and tortured try to leave the village. For example in 2001 HURFOM reported that "Ah-mae village in Yebyu Township has been accused as a rebel base for a Mon splinter group and the villagers and village headmen were always beaten by soldiers from IB No. 104. Some villagers were killed by soldiers. Because of systematic persecution against this village community, the villagers from that village have gradually fled to another area, especially, to NMSP control area."

Sometimes after villagers have been displaced they try to return to their original villages despite the dangers, to harvest cash crops such as betel-nut, and coconut, or to try and cultivate paddy in the fields. When the battalion that ordered them to leave their village is replaced with a new battalion, IDPS are in some cases able to return to their homes, and if the new battalions are less brutal than the previous ones, they can stay longer in their villages. When more brutal battalions come, they flee again. Population displacement is a main problem in southern Burma especially in Karen State, in some part of Mon State and most parts of Tenasserim Division. (Source: HURFOM) (NCGUB, September 2002, "Internally Displaced People and Forced Relocation")

Reports that people in the Mon state have been forced on the move because of land confiscation (2002-2003)

- Land confiscated to build army bases

"With a purpose to build a Artillery Regiment in the southern part of Mudon Township, SPDC’s Southeast Command confiscated about 200 acres of lands from 49 Mon farmers suddenly on November 5, 2002."
Most lands were grown with some rubber trees and the farmers planted them for several years. The owners of lands are Mon villagers from Set-thawe, Do-ma, Kalort-tort and Ah-bit villages, the army did not pay any compensation cost to those who lost their lands.

Burmese Army also declared to village headmen in the area that as the location was strategic one, therefore, they needed to deploy artillery regiment. Most rubber plantations were near a hill and while the Burmese Army planned to deploy their artillery guns and motors they took the hill. However, to get support for foods and regular income, they also confiscated lands grown with rubber trees by the local farmers."(HURFOM, November 2002)

"May 2003, Ye Township, Mon State: Burmese Army confiscated about 600 acres agriculture lands near a Mon village, Morkanin, northern part of Ye Township of Mon State, with a plan to construct a base for a new artillery regiment.

Burmese Army plan to construct a base for Artillery Regiment No. 317 and confiscated lands of rubber and fruit gardens between two Mon villages, Morkanin and Htitkayin, which are belonged to the civilians.

"Like the previous confiscation, they (the army) did not pay compensation. Without informing, they just came and took the lands" said by local villagers.

The newly deployed AR No. 317 is under the command of Artillery Division No. 606. In this land confiscation, the regiment commanders took more lands than their requirment for a base.

Accordingly to a person who know the rules in the Burmese Army said, "normally, to deploy a battalion or regiment, it needs only 300 acres of land in maximum, they could not confiscate more than that".

The SPDC regime has a plan to deploy about 10 artillery regiments in Mon State and currently they have deployed about 9 regiments already.

In the previous years, thousand acres of lands belonged to the local civilians were confiscated by SPDC and Burmese Army, in their deployments of both artillery regiments and infantry battalions.

No compensation has been paid in any compensation and that made civilians to be angered and disappointed. Land confiscation also creates negative impacts of unemployment."(HURFOM, May 2003)

Land confiscation continued in 2003:
"The State Peace and Development Council, the current ruling military junta in Burma has expanded its regiments and battalions in Mon State. Over ten new regiments have been built in the former black and grey areas, which will in effect increase military and civilian control over the Mon population.

[...] The Burmanization policy proves the motives of the ruling Burmese junta to exercise complete control over the Mon and other ethnic nationalities, aptly referred to as the "Population Transfer Program".

[...] The Military Operation Command No (19) recruited local "Security Guards": native retiree Burmans from the pool of military personnel in rural Mon villages. Many local Mon politicians have the capacity to take the job but are refused and rejected of any positions. The villagers prefer their Village Chief (Headman) for the position, someone who speaks the Mon language and who is from the area.

"We know it to be what it is: simply discrimination against us, they take their men over ours due to the Burmanization policy", said Win Thein, a senior politician in Ye. The local Village Chief who works under an order of the BA is assigned the job, while he earns no single Kyat (local currency) from the State; but he has the power to extract fees from the local population to pay him cash on hand with special instructions.
Some areas of Ye and Ye Phyu Townships, southern Mon State, are marked as "Black Areas" whereas there are a few anti-government armed forces that actively operate in the remote areas. The BA commanders take the opportunity of claiming that they need native Burmans to speak the same language or who understand Burmese for military instruction during security patrol, a local source said.

According to a source from the New Mon State Party, a military base in Mhokanin village, northern Ye, was built for the prime purpose of relocating retired military personnel and disabled war veterans to the camp. The military camp is near to local Mon villages where the Burman soldiers have free time to engage in social activities and mix with the local girls and women in the community, while many of the Mon men have left their homes due to human rights violation and economic destitution.

"It is clear that they (Burmese army) confiscated over 8,000 acres of land and built military bases, it is only for the purpose of population transfer", the NMSP members in Ye said."(KAO WAO NEWS, July 8-21, 2003, POPULATION TRANSFER INTO MON STATE)

Substantial forced relocation in the Karenni State (1996-2000)

- Government-initiated development schemes, aimed at separating people from non-state groups by forcing them into relocation sites, has resulted in most displacements since 1960s
- Major forcible relocations of complete villages found place in 1992 and in 1996
- Amnesty International reports that forcible relocation is based on ethnic origin or perceived political belief
- Varied patterns of migration from Mawchi (& elsewhere in Karenni) to ceasefire areas, Shan State and Thailand
- No major forced relocation campaign since the late 1990s; many IDPs reported leaving relocation sites in recent years

"Currently in Karenni State there are three types of displacement: conflict-induced; development-induced; and displacement arising as a result of resource scarcity. Conflict exists in these areas as a result of the Karenni National Progressive Party’s (KNPP) efforts to secede from the central government. These efforts have been strongly resisted by the military government, with displacement used as a tool since the 1960s to secure areas from rebel forces. This displacement has included the confiscation of land and natural resources by the military, greatly impoverishing local communities."(NCGUB, September 2002, "Internally Displaced People and Forced Relocation")

"The first migration out of Mawchi into other areas in Burma and into Thailand began in the early 1970s with the first ‘four-cuts’ campaign. However, some of these people returned in the early 1980s, but since then, anyone who has left Mawchi has not returned. However, the significant movement of people really begins in the mid-1980s, when the Tadmawd made gains in territory, partially as a result of the split in the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP). One of the single biggest exoduses of people occurred in 1990, when about 200 families moved to work in the gem mines in Mong Hsu in Southern Shan State. Many of these people earned good incomes in Mong Hsu, but many are now reportedly dead because of malaria, heroin addiction, alcohol abuse and AIDS.

Prior to the forced relocation campaign in 1996, the population of Mawchi had dwindled to around 2,000. However, the relocation campaign doubles the population, but only for a short period. After the initial movement into the town people slowly begin to leave. The rate at which people left the town was slower than previous exoduses, as there was nowhere to move, as the Tatmadaw controlled nearly all the areas surrounding the town. In spite of the increased difficulty in leaving the town, many people were desperate to get away because of the shortage of food."
In the earlier years after 1996, the richer people in Mawchi went either to Loikaw or Mong Hsu. Many of the other people went to the refugee camps, while others began to live in the forests. Others from the town went to live in the area controlled by the Shan State Nationalities Liberation Organisation (SSNPLO) that had entered into a cease-fire agreement in 1994. There are now about 500 families from Mawchi Township living in the area and engaged in rice and poppy cultivation. As this is a cease-fire area people can participate somewhat more freely in agriculture.

In 2003, people are still moving out of Mawchi, but they no longer go to Loikaw because they believe it to be as bad as Mawchi. People are also no longer going to Mong Hsu because of the lack of employment in the mines. Some people are still moving to the SSNPLO area, but more people are now going to the Karenni National Progressive Liberation Front (KNLPF) areas. About 70% of the people now leaving Mawchi are going to these areas, before they move onto Thailand.

Most of the people in the last few years do not go directly to Thailand, as they now have quite a bit of information about the situation there. The option chosen is usually determined by connections with family and friends. One option is for the men to go and see if the situation is better in the cease-fire areas, then call their family to join them. The men look for work, moving cattle between the Salween into Thailand, where they again begin their search for employment. The women, children and old people settle near the borderline and engage in slash and burn agriculture. The plan is for the men to go backwards and forwards between Thailand and their families.

Another option for people leaving Mawchi is to go and live in the jungle before they make the next step to move out of the area. Usually, about 1-2 families leave Mawchi together and go to the jungle for about a month, sometimes getting together with other families also living in the jungle. The largest group to leave Mawchi at one time to go to the jungle was 10 families. In the jungle people try and make contact with friends or family in Thailand, or with Karenni troops, who will show them the way to the one of the camps or the KNPLF areas.”(Alison Vicary/BURMA ECONOMIC WATCH, 14-5-2003)

“Situated to the north of Karen State and with a population of 207,357 in 1998, in Karenni State there are currently three main forms of displacement: conflict-induced; development-induced; and displacement arising as a result of resource scarcity.

In Karenni State, the Karenni and particularly the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) seek an independent state - a claim fiercely resisted by successive military governments. Perpetrated by the Burmese army since the 1960s to secure decisive military solutions, displacement has led to the expropriation of land and natural resources, shattering the resource base of many local communities.

The protracted conflict has not only led to displacement, but has also increased the rivalry between a myriad of armed groups vying for control of resources, populations and a stake in the balance of power in Karenni State. As armed Karenni groups rely on local levies or militia that can be called on to fight when needed, the war has been brought directly to the villages where Burmese Army retaliatory campaigns, including relocation, have aimed at separating communities from insurgent armed groups.

Most of the more recent civilian population movements in Karenni involve either refugee movements across an international border or involuntary movements into relocation sites and hiding villages within the state. The broad extent of the movements show that settlement patterns within the state are fluid and constantly changing and a significant proportion of the state’s population have experienced displacement and resettlement at least once. However, other patterns of movement are also significant. So as the events of the last four years can be put in a wider perspective, five different patterns have here been defined.

The on-going conflict between State and non-State armed groups has led to the large-scale displacement of civilians in Karenni. The causes for this include: the widespread presence of State and non-State armed groups which threatens the security of civilians; military operations undertaken by all sides, including relocation policies of the State; human rights infringements; and a prevailing climate of impunity.
throughout. The conflict has also influenced the way other displacements have been carried out since the State’s response has been a military one in which policies are implemented without consultation, participation or even within the civil-legal frame-work." (BERG May 2000, pp 48-49)

"Forcible relocations are part of the army's “Four Cuts” counter-insurgency strategy, which entails cutting alleged links of intelligence, food, money and recruits between armed opposition groups and local civilians. During the last seven years there have been two major forcible relocations by the tatmadaw in the Kayah State. In March 1992, 57 villages were ordered to relocate to Pruso and other sites in northwest Kayah State. As a result, 8,000 people moved; dozens of them were reported to have died from malnutrition in the relocation centres; and others were forced to do work on the Aungban - Loikaw railway and perform portering duties for the military.

Beginning in May 1996 the then SLORC ordered 98 villages between the Salween River in the east and the Pon River in the west, to move to sites which they had designated for relocation, including Shadaw and Ywa Thit. The military reportedly initiated the forcible relocation program in this area where KNPP troops were active and which was difficult to control because of mountainous terrain. Villagers received written orders which stated that they “would be treated as enemies” if they did not move by June. Villagers from other areas in Kayah State were also forced by the military to move to Nwa La Boh, Tee Po Koh, Daw Tama Gyi, Pasaung and Pruso town. After these forcible evictions, the military burned down many of the villages in order to prevent its residents from returning. An estimated 4,000 villagers went to the Shadaw relocation centre, thousands went to other centres, and some 4,500 fled to refugee camps in Thailand. Others decided to hide in the forest away from tatmadaw control.

[...] Forcible relocation as practiced by the tatmadaw in the Kayah State, appears to be carried out solely on account of the ethnic origin or the perceived political beliefs of the affected Karenni civilians. Its effects are devastating. People are forced to remain in life-threatening conditions in the relocation centres, including lack of sanitation, safe drinking water, food and proper medical care. Some of them earn money or food by hiring themselves out as day labourers, but these efforts are curtailed by the forced labour they must perform routinely for the military." (AI June 1999, "Kayah State")

A May 2000 report by the BERG group also provides details about displacement related to various public infrastructure projects, among others:

"Another project that caused an unknown number of displacements was the rail link between Loikaw and Aung Ban on the border with Shan state. Work on the railway, which is 40 kilometres long, started in 1991 and was completed in 1994. During this time, 31 acres of farmland plus 9 acres of land in Loikaw city were requisitioned to make way for the line [...] A further 24 households were displaced in Loikaw to make way for additional but unspecified transport infrastructure projects. In each case no compensation was made. In addition to the displacements which came about directly as a result of the railway, the building of the embankments disrupted (in some cases blocked) irrigation systems and supplies of water to local farms. This then resulted in a further voluntary displacement, the extent of which is not known." (BERG May 2000, p. 67)

“Recent data indicate that while villagers have been displaced by fighting, it is also government-initiated development schemes, aimed at separating people from non-state groups by forcing them into relocation sites, that has resulted in most displacements since 1960s. These schemes were responsible for the wide-scale displacement of about 25,206 people in 1996 alone. Of these, 11,669 are known to have moved to relocation sites, 4,400 were registered in refugee camps and a further 9,137 unaccounted for. Since 1998, many IDPs have moved out of relocation sites back to their villages (some voluntarily, while others have been ordered back) or to refugee camps in Thailand.

Land ownership is extremely fragmented and a significant proportion of the population is landless in Karenni State. There are large numbers of displaced connected to economic interests in the area. With an economy based on access to teak resources - and of equal importance, hydro-electric power and mining concessions - the government has in some cases taken steps to pacify areas, quelling so-called 'insurgency'
problems before undertaking investment in the areas. Much of this displacement is carried out in military style outside any civil or legal framework. Moreover, the deterioration of the formal economy has fostered the growth of an extra-legal state economy, focused on the extraction of natural resources that all groups, including the state, rely on.

In the absence of lasting and substantive peace, the displacement of civilians is likely to continue. The current cease-fire agreements in the state appear to be ad hoc economic deals rather than a process aimed at political resolution and peaceful reintegration. The cease-fires in fact have allowed armed groups to legitimise their extra-legal state economy and added to further factionalism in the competition for increasingly scarce resources.” (BERG September 2000)

See also: Burma Issues (2003), ‘IDPs in Burma’, for background information on displacement in eastern border areas


- Estimates suggest that there were around 67,000 internally displaced in the Kachin State prior to the signing of a cease fire
- While conflict-related displacement has decreased, the impoverishment of many rural dwellers following three decades of strife have led to significant rural displacement
- Following the ceasefire, villagers have continued to be displaced by the Burmese Army, and as a consequence of natural resource-extraction
- However, local groups have been formed in many displaced communities, and have started to work with local and international NGOs to reconstruct Kachin society

“While the situation of internal displacement is not reported and hence the scale of the problem not well known in Kachin state, 30 years of internal conflict between the various Kachin independence movements and the Burmese army has resulted in large-scale displacement of the Kachin population. Figures from Kachin State suggest that perhaps 100,000 were forcibly relocated from their homes by counter-insurgency operations between the 1960s and 1990s, while other estimates suggest that in 1994 - prior to the signing of a cease-fire - there were around 67,000 internally displaced. More recent estimates suggest that although conflict-related displacement has decreased, the impoverishment of many rural dwellers following three decades of strife have led to significant rural displacement. As no peace dividend followed the cease-fire agreements, leaving the issue of resettling previously displaced groups obscure, many rural populations in Kachin State have become landless and forced to seek a livelihood in the extractive natural resources (mining) sectors or in the service sector in urban areas.

Indeed despite the negotiated cease-fire arrangements between the central government and the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) and the Kachin Democratic Army (KDA) there continue to be problems of displacement and land confiscation. As has been remarked by numerous civilians in Kachin State, cease-fires have allowed the different armies to retain their arms and territory, controlling and taxing the populace, while basically prioritising business for themselves through the extraction of natural resources. These complaints are not solely levied at the rebel groups, but more importantly at government, as the army has claimed much farmland, principally to grow food. Recently the government put up 27,000 acres of fallow land for paddy production and has opened a land-title registration office in Myitkyina to facilitate the transfer of such land to new owners.” (BERG September 2000, "Kachin State")

"During the civil war, many rural inhabitants were forced to relocate. They were deprived of their home communities, farmlands and other property. The majority of them today are poor, illiterate, and plagued by fatigue and famine. 

[...]
The cease-fire between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Burmese military on February 24, 1994, has brought a moment of peace and political stability to Kachin State and its people, particularly to the majority in the rural countryside.

[...]
During the civil war, villagers had moved from one place to another for their survival. They have been displaced and lost their occupations, education, health and self-esteem. After the cease-fire in 1994, many returned to resettle in relocation areas near and around Myitkyina, the capital city of Kachin State, but have no security in life. In relocation areas, members are from diverse ethnic and religious groups and from different home communities. The majority are Christians and very few are Buddhists and animists. Generally, people form their own factions of kinsmen and close friends whom they have met regularly at local religious services. Different ethnic and religious factions tend not to unite or trust each other easily. Villagers are generally very poor and live from hand to mouth. They have uncertain employment. They have hardly enough food or money to live on.

[...]
To avoid confrontation with the military, many of them fled from the relocation settlements and hid themselves in the San primary forest. After the cease-fire agreement in 1994, villagers were not allowed to return to their home villages. They had to rebuild their lives, families, communities and cultures from scratch. In relocated communities, there were no roads, no schools and no public health stations. Villagers in the vicinity have relied on the San forest for their livelihood. They have hunted wild animals and collected forest products, such as mushroom, bamboo, vegetables, medicinal herbs, rattan and fuel woods for home consumption and use and for market. They cut down trees and converted about two to three hundred acres of the forest area into farmland for shifting cultivation yearly. Since villagers have no knowledge of alternative occupations and in any case lack capital to invest in any other occupational alternatives or permanent paddy fields, they find it difficult to give up their traditional methods of shifting cultivation. As a result, the San virgin forest protection project became a local initiative for halting shifting cultivation, which was originally believed to be the prime factor contributed to deforestation in the San forest area.

[...] To help escape this vicious cycle of poverty and pattern of exploitation [local development workers] have initiated diverse small-scale community development projects such as micro credit unions (MCUs), rice banks, and buffalo banks in their respective areas.

[...] The case of the micro-crediting system has initiated alternatives to borrowing from private moneylenders who charge exorbitant interest rates. The Kachin Rural Women Development Center has provided a new economic and cultural space for rural women from remote areas to rebuild their collective identities as being dignified women with capabilities to sustain their lives and families, communities, and culture. Lastly, the virgin forest protection project has demonstrated how villagers can sustain their economic livelihoods in a sustainable environment.”(Ratana Tosakul-Boonmathya, 28-8-2002)

See the ‘The Kachin Post’ internet site for further information on the background to displacement issues in Kachin State

Forced Relocations, displacement and abuse of Muslims in Rakhine (Arakan) States and other areas (1997-2003)

- Muslims forcibly evicted from their villages in the the Kayin (Karen) State (1997)
- In 2001 certain townships in the Arakan State had become "Muslim-free zones", where Muslims are not permitted to live, mosques destroyed, and lands confiscated
- Riots during February 2001 in Arakan capital Sittwe, where over 50 Muslim homes burned to the ground
• Governmental policy to move and concentrate the Rohingya population in the northern part of the districts of Maungdaw and Buthidaung

• Construction of model villages for Buddhist settlers and new military camps forces Muslim Rohingyas to move to less fertile lands

"Meanwhile new refugees continue to arrive, fleeing the ongoing intimidation by the Myanmar authorities. Both repatriated refugees and new arrivals complain about the fact that they don't receive a citizenship, food problems, arbitrary taxation, rising extortion and restriction of movement." (MSF 17 September 2003)

"Arbitrary confiscation of land without compensation continues, either to provide land for new Buddhist settlers or to build and enlarge military camps, including plantations to grow crops for the military for their own food as well as for commercial purposes. In 2002, at least two new “model village” for Buddhist settlers were established in Maungdaw Township and several military camps have been constructed or expanded to consolidate the border between Burma and Bangladesh in the aftermath of the September 11 attack and the global anti-terrorist campaign.

 [...] The Rohingya in Northern Arakan State continue to face constant humiliation and systematic discrimination, and are subject to widespread human rights violations. They are living in a climate of fear and oppression. Despite the presence of UNHCR and international agencies, conditions have hardly improved. As one NGO representative in Rangoon recently stated: "The presence of UNHCR and some international NGOs has only provided limited relief, but not a structural change." (Forum Asia 15 June 2003, pp.9-10)

"North Rakhine State (NRS) is one of the remote border regions of Myanmar. Geographically separated from the rest of the country by mountains in the east, the inhabitants of NRS share close ethnic and cultural links with neighbouring Bangladesh. The NRS has a population of 800,000, 82 percent of whom are Muslims of Indian sub-continent origin. The area has one of the highest population densities in all of Myanmar and is subject to seasonal heavy rainfall and tropical storms, all of which can adversely affect livelihoods. The economic and social indicators in the NRS show the local population as being some of the most vulnerable in the country.

[...] Unfavourable conditions in the NRS have spurred two mass departures of Muslims to Bangladesh. The first took place in 1978, involving some 200,000 persons. The incident repeated itself in 1991/1992, where the numbers reached some 250,000. No major population exodus has occurred since then, although an intermittent outflow of households to Bangladesh continues to be reported by agencies working in the NRS and Bangladesh. Food insecurity linked with poverty factors and little hope for economic improvement were the major causes for the mass departures."(WFP, 10 January 2002, Executive Summary, & pp. 6-7)

"There are credible reports that SPDC authorities systematically have repressed Muslims in certain areas and forcibly relocated them from certain areas. For example, Arakan Muslims have been forced to donate labor, money, and materials toward buildings for the Buddhist community. There now are certain townships in Arakan State, such as Suchas, Thandwe, Gwa, and Taung-gut, that are "Muslim-free zones." Muslims no longer are permitted to live in the areas, mosques have been destroyed, and lands confiscated. To ensure that the mosques are not rebuilt, they have been replaced with government-owned buildings, monasteries, and Buddhist temples.

[...] There were periodic outbreaks of anti-Muslim violence in the country during the year [2001]. In February riots broke out in the town of Sittwe, the capital of Arakan State. There were various, often conflicting, accounts of how the riots began, but reports claimed that government security and firefighting forces did little to prevent attacks on Muslim mosques, businesses, and residences. After 4 days of rioting, security forces restored order. There are estimates that over 50 Muslim homes burned to the ground and that both Muslims and Buddhists were killed and injured. Since that time, the Government has tightened already strict travel restrictions for Muslims in the area, essentially preventing any Muslims from traveling between
Sittwe and other towns in the region. In March seven Arakanese politicians were sentenced to between 7 and 12 years in prison for allegedly inciting the riots." (US DOS 4 March 2002, sect. 2c)

"The year 2002 marks the 10th anniversary of the flight of the Rohingya refugees from Rakhine State, Myanmar to Bangladesh. Discrimination, violence and forced labour practices by the Myanmar authorities triggered an exodus of more than 250,000 Rohingya Muslims between 1991 and 1992. Over the years, approximately 232,000 refugees have been repatriated to Myanmar under the supervision of the UNHCR, and 21,600 remain in two camps. […]

The situation in Burma had not changed upon their return. Many Muslims returned landless and without documentation. Denied citizenship, they were uniquely subjected to institutional discrimination and other abuses, including limitations on access to education, employment, and public services, and restrictions on the freedom of movement. […]

The human rights situation in Rakhine State has not changed, but has by some accounts deteriorated. Human rights reports, the testimonies of new arrivals, and witness accounts in Rakhine attest that conditions that triggered the exodus 11 years ago exist today. Restricted movement, excessive taxation, and violence and intimidation continue to prompt departures and hinder the reintegration of those who have returned. It is clear that as long as the Myanmar government refuses to respect the basic rights of the Muslims, they would always remain a vulnerable group." (MSF March 2002, pp. 8, 10, 29

" Two Rohingya armed resistance movements have been set up in response to Burmese oppression. The Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) was formed in the early 1980s in reaction to the new discriminations affecting the Rohingyas and to the 1978 expulsions. It switched from political activism to armed struggle soon after the 1991–92 persecutions. The RSO essentially acts by infiltration and attacks in Northern Arakan from Bangladesh. The other, less important, armed group is the Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front (ARIF), created in 1987. Its activity seems to have ceased over the past few years. Generally speaking, the armed Rohingya resistance is not very active and constitutes above all a pretext for the militarization of the region as well as a way for the Burmese junta to keep a close watch on the population. […]

As an essential element of the governmental policy of the colonisation and militarization of North Arakan, forced relocations are diverse and mainly serve three purposes: to «clean» Arakan of its Rohingya population and concentrate it in the northern part of the districts of Maungdaw and Buthidaung; to increase the presence of Buddhist settlers, in order to "reconquer" the region through model villages; to contain the Rohingya population with an increased military presence.

The ethnic and religious cleansing of Arakan is being progressively achieved. Muslim villages outside the far North are becoming rare. Most of the Rohingyas who lived in the Kyauktaw, Mrauk-U or Minbya districts have been forcibly displaced to the North over the past few years. These forced relocations, which go hand in hand with serious human rights violations, have been denounced by the UN Special Rapporteur on Burma, notably in February 1993 and January 1995. 15 The Rathidaung Rohingyas (in the border district south of Maungdaw and Buthidaung) met with the same fate. According to villagers still living in Rathidaung, out of the 53 Muslim villages existing in the district before 1995, only two remain in 1999. […]

The Burmese authorities regularly resort to forced relocations of Arakanese. Villagers are warned at the very last moment. They do not always get compensation and when they do, it usually is far from the actual value of what the villagers lost as they were displaced. The most common cause of forced relocations in the last decade is the installation of a new military camp. As in Maungdaw and Buthidaung, the government, concerned with controlling the whole population, has also displaced the small minorities of Arakan (notably the Mro) from their mountainous and remote areas towards the plains. Finally, the recent development of tourism has caused the displacement of people living close to historical sites which the government wanted to highlight. These forced relocations always entail an impoverishment of the population, for whom moving is expensive, especially because of the cost of rebuilding a house. Furthermore, any displacement also means an agricultural loss: most often, the land the villagers get
(provided they get some) is smaller and less fertile than what they had. The villagers also lose their trees, the source both of income and of food. (FIDH April 2000, pp. 5,7,24,39)

"According to villagers still living in Rathidaung, out of the 53 Muslim villages existing in the district before 1995, only two remained in 1999. The construction of model villages for Buddhist settlers in the north of the state also entails the forced relocations of Muslims who are moved to less fertile lands, usually without adequate time to prepare or any compensation."(NCGUB, September 2002, "Internally Displaced People and Forced Relocation")

Narinjara News reports that settlers have been transported to Rohingya lands from Kachin State and Rangoon:

"Members of a Kachin ceasefire group were brought into Rakhine State, in the western part of Burma for settlement on 22nd October, according to our correspondent.

A total of thirty three ethnic Kachin families from the northern part of Burma were moved to be settled at Ngaraing-chaung model village under Maungdw Township, bordering with Bangladesh. The village formerly called as Kathay model village, where a wide scale forced labour was used, has been renamed as Ngaraing-chaung by the Burmese junta (SPDC).

[...] According to local sources, the members of the Kachin ceasefire group brought for settlement carry guns and motorbikes with them, which show that they have been brought to be kept as paramilitary forces to be used for border surveillance and other military duties including guerrilla warfare against dissident insurgent groups.

On 20th October, some Burmese settlers from Rangoon, the capital of Burma, were also brought into the village. A welcoming ceremony was arranged for the new settlers on 23th October. The village is situated at about 1.5 km from the Bangladeshi border, it was learnt.

Before this batch of settlers, about one thousand families from Burma proper have been settled by the Burmese junta in the area close to Bangladesh."(Narinjara News, Settlements Of The Kachin Ceasefire Groups in Western Burma, 7-11-2002)


Further reading:
HRW(July 2002): "Crackdown on Burmese Muslims"
BCN ‘Caught Between a Crocodile and a Snake: The Increasing Pressure on Rohingyas in Burma and Bangladesh & The Impacts of the Changing Policy of UNHCR’, April/May 2003

Internal Displacement in the Chin State and Nagaland(2000-2001)

- The situation in the Chin State is not well known, but estimates by the Chin population reflect large scale displacement
- In the Sagaing Division, the Naga have suffered significant conflict-related displacement in recent years
- In addition to conflict-induced displacement, people have been forcibly resettled by border area 'development' programmes
- Numerous Naga villages have been displaced after fighting between SPDC and Naga insurgent forces
"The militarisation of Chin State and Sagaing Division has created untenable burdens for the people of the region. Families and communities are increasingly separated and face economic uncertainties from the loss of their productive time, widespread unemployment and increasing prices of basic commodities, and the army’s extortion of arbitrary taxes, exemption fees and compulsory crop procurements. The unique cultural identities of the Chin and Naga peoples are under growing threat because of the military regime’s practice of religious persecution and its burmanisation programs. All have led to a steady exodus to neighbouring areas across the border to India, searching for means to survive." (BCN 2002)

**CHIN STATE**

“The situation in Chin State has also not been well reported, hence the scale of the problem is not generally known. However, estimates by Chin people themselves reflect large-scale displacement of population. The Chin National Front (CNF), a pan Chin nationalist movement, reports displacement taking place. Members also estimate that there are 40-50,000 persons displaced from their homes, many of whom have fled to Mizoram State in north-east India.

In addition to conflict-induced displacement, many states have introduced border area 'development' programmes, entailing resettlement of populations and carried out under the auspices of the Ministry for the Development of Border Areas and National Races, set up in May 1989. Initiated in border states where successive central governments have been involved in long-standing conflicts with ethnic armies, its objectives among others, are to carry out 'all round development', promote national unity and stamp out poppy cultivation. This programme was to extend to 19 distinct border zones with an estimated population of four million [...]. In these zones two groups were eligible for resettlement: former insurgents who laid down their arms in so called 'welcome' sites and populations displaced by military action between the army and insurgents.

In the seven largely Burman-inhabited divisions, with the exception of Tenasserim Division, the displacement situation is little better despite the absence of any insurgent activity there. Evictions for reasons of city beautification, urban development and infrastructure construction (particularly roads, railways and dams) are likely to be the same as in the seven ethnic majority states. The construction of the Kalay-Gangaw railway line in Sagaing Division illustrates clearly that the problems of forced displacement are not only confined to the war-affected zones. The line crosses mostly flat farmland and paddy fields; these were destroyed without any compensation being paid by the national government.” (BERG September 2000)

"In the Chin State there were reports that 3,000 Naga villagers fled the country into northeastern India in May [2001] when the army launched an offensive against Naga separatists. Army troops reportedly burned villages and laid landmines to discourage villagers from returning.

[...] Authorities have attempted to prevent Chin Christians from practicing their religion. Military units repeatedly located their camps on the sites of Christian churches and graveyards, which were destroyed to build these camps; local Chin Christians were forced to assist in these acts. In addition the army reportedly also has taken over churches to use them for bases in remote areas. [...] Since 1990 government authorities and security forces have promoted Buddhism over Christianity among the Chin ethnic minority in diverse and often coercive ways. This campaign, reportedly accompanied by other efforts to "Burmanize" the Chin, has involved a large increase in military units stationed in Chin State and other predominately Chin areas, state-sponsored migration of Buddhist Burman monks from other regions, and construction of Buddhist monasteries and shrines in Chin communities with few or no Buddhists, often by means of forced "donations" of money or labor.

[...] There also were a number of credible reports that the army continued to force Chin to porter for it, both in Chin State and Sagaing Division. In addition the Army reportedly no longer takes rations with it, and rather lives off of local villagers often by force, although villagers reportedly were permitted to provide monetary compensation in lieu of such work. Local government officials ordered Christian Chins to attend sermons by newly arrived Buddhist monks who disparaged Christianity. In addition there were reports during the
year that many Christian Chin were pressured and some were forced to attend monk school and Buddhist monasteries and then encouraged to convert to Buddhism." (US DOS 4 March 2002, sect. 1g & 2c)

**NAGALAND**

"Moreover, as is the case in Sagaing Division, the designated administrative boundaries of the division conceal the ethnic diversity within its borders and internal displacement which has occurred. Many Naga people, estimated to be around 100,000 strong in total, populate the four northern townships of the division, near the town of Khamti and the Patkai mountain range […] Fighting for an independent Nagaland in both India and Burma, and facing increased internal divisions, the Naga have suffered significant conflict-related displacement. In the last six years particularly along the Khamti-Tekai road, numerous Naga villages have been displaced after fighting between SPDC and Naga insurgent forces. It is estimated that up to 1,300 villagers have been displaced and fighting seems presently to have increased." (BERG September 2000, "Other States and Divisions of Burma")

"Delegates of the Relief Team from NPMHR and NSF have just returned from Chen Mohu, Mon after delivering the relief materials to the Nagas from Eastern Nagaland who has been displaced following the Myanmarese military crackdown on their villages. The team comprising of eight members from both the aforementioned organizations left for Mon on the 1st of June, 2001 and returned on the 4th of June, 2001.

Many villagers from Chen Hoyat, Throilo and Nyanching have taken refuge in the neighbouring villages of Mon district of Nagaland state, while many are still hiding in the jungles in Eastern Nagaland. According to the refugees we met at Chen Mohu the atrocities meted out on them were gruesome. A couple caught by the Myanmarese army suffered excruciating tortures leading to the death of the husband. The wife was raped for two days and released at another village. Their five children had fled with the rest of the villagers. Several had gone missing while the bodies of at least three who had starved to death had been discovered. Those who escaped also do not know how the people are sustaining themselves in the jungles in the rainy weather of the summer season.

Except for some few houses and granaries in the outskirt of Throilo village, all the three villages have been burnt to ashes. Many of the cattle were eaten up by the Myanmarese army in the campaign. The others were just shot and left to rot in the jungles.

After burning down the three villages, the Myanmarese army left several mines inside as well as around the burnt villages. As of now, nobody has fallen victim to the landmines. Only a bear, a pig and two cows has been killed by the landmines. For this reason the villagers are unable to go back and rebuild their villages." (NPMHR/NSF June 2001)

*See the internet site of the Chin Human Rights Organisation for further information on the background and patterns of displacement (including forced labour) in Chin State.*
POPULATION PROFILE AND FIGURES

National total figures

Between 600,000 and 1 million IDPs in Burma by mid-2003

- Estimated that as many as one million people from the Thai border areas were displaced between 1996 and 2002
- At least 632,978 IDPs in border eastern border areas either living in hiding or in forced relocation sites by 2002
- 70,000 civilians newly internally displaced in 2002
- Reported in 2002 that 100,000 people in the Northern Rakhine area may be internally displaced

Systematic estimates for the total number of IDPs in Burma are not available, but several national and international non-governmental organisations are monitoring the IDP situation in areas hosting particular ethnic groups – especially the Shan, Karen, Mon and Karenni states where the majority of the IDPs are located. Available IDP figures for these areas appear to be more reliable than in many other crisis affected countries in the world. By mid-2003 there were no information available that indicated any major return during the preceding months, and estimates of total displacement by end-2002 is therefore still considered valid.

"Perhaps one million people living in the States and Divisions of Burma adjacent to the Thailand border have been displaced since 1996. At least 150,000 have fled as refugees or joined the huge "illegal"migrant population in Thailand. (43,000 have entered the refugee camps along Thailand’s western border, and at least 100,000 Shan refugees have crossed into the four northern provinces, joining the "illegal migrant"population.) Countless others have moved away to other villages and towns in Burma.

This report estimates that at least 632,978 displaced people are still currently either living in hiding (approximately 268,000 people), or in more than 176 forced relocation sites (approximately 365,000 people), in these border areas. It also identifies 2,536 ‘affected villages’, which are known to have been destroyed (usually burnt) and/ or relocated en masse, or otherwise abandoned due to Burmese Army (Tatmadaw) activity." (South/BBC, September 2002)

"An estimated 70,000 civilians have become internally displaced in 2002 alone. Many are dying from lack of basic medical care."(CSW, November 2002, p2)

difficult to verify IDP numbers in Burma...

"There is no acknowledgement from the military regime regarding IDPs. Consequently, there are a plethora of difficulties in obtaining statistics regarding IDPs from Burma.

The overlap between the concepts of conflict-induced displacement and development-induced displacement is great when IDPs are viewed." (FMO, 2003, p. 14)

"Reportedly, most of the asylum-seekers arriving in Thailand had previously lived for some time as internally displaced persons (IDPs). Independent monitoring or assistance to IDPs has so far not been authorized by the SPDC and it is thus very difficult to verify their number in Myanmar. Unofficial estimates place the current number of IDPs in Myanmar at from 600,000 to 1 million persons, with around 300,000 in north-eastern Shan State, 100,000-200,000 in Kayin State, 70,000-80,000 in Kayah State,
60,000-70,000 in Mon State and about 100,000 in northern Rakhine State.” (CHR 10 January 2002, para 100)

Selected estimates of total national figures between 1996 and 2002:

USCR has since the mid-1990s in their annual reports suggested that the total number of internally displaced persons may be as high as 1 million (USCR 1996-2003, see the Burma sections)

Major areas of internal displacement by January 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Estimated figure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North-eastern Shan</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayin/Karen</td>
<td>100,000-200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayah/Karenni</td>
<td>70,000-80,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>60,000-70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Rakhine</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UN Commission on Human Rights, 10 January 2002, para100

Distribution of IDPs specified for 13 different areas by the Burma Ethnic Research Group (BERG) – (2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State and Divisions</th>
<th>No. of people Affected</th>
<th>Date of Data and Number of Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karen State</td>
<td>108,280</td>
<td>(Dec 1997) (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shan State</td>
<td>&gt;300,000</td>
<td>(Apr 1998) (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon State</td>
<td>&gt;20,000</td>
<td>(Sept 1998) (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karenni State</td>
<td>31,620</td>
<td>(Dec 1998) (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chin State</td>
<td>40-50,000</td>
<td>(Nov 1997) (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kachin State</td>
<td>67,000</td>
<td>(Jan 1994) (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arakan State</td>
<td>&gt;250,000</td>
<td>(Aug 1997) (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yangon</td>
<td>504,000</td>
<td>(Oct 1994) (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandalay</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>(May 1990) (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bago</td>
<td>36,000</td>
<td>(May 1990) (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sagaing</td>
<td>1,260</td>
<td>(Dec 1999) (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayeyarwaddy</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>(May 1990) (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanintharyi</td>
<td>37,000</td>
<td>(May 1990) (21)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BERG September 2000

"There is a large number of internally displaced persons (IDP's) in the countries. NGO's estimate that there could be as many as 1 million minority group members who the SPDC has moved forcibly from their villages and districts and who now live near or along the Thai border. NGO's also estimate that an additional 1 million IDP's also might exist in various other locations throughout the country; however, it is very difficult to confirm specific numbers of IDP's.” (U.S. DOS February 2001, Section 2.d.)

Geographical distribution
Location of people displaced in the Thailand-Burma border regions, between 1996-2002

- Approximately 268,000 people living in hiding in the jungle
- Approximately 365,000 people in more than 176 forced relocation sites

Burmese Border IDP Populations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>IDPs in Hiding or Temporary Settlements</th>
<th>Number of Relocation Sites</th>
<th>IDPs in Relocation Sites</th>
<th>Affected Villages (destroyed, abandoned, or relocated)</th>
<th>Total IDP Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenasserim</td>
<td>6,598</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>58,296</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>64,894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon State</td>
<td>40,000*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen State</td>
<td>96,469</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>99,765</td>
<td>719</td>
<td>196,234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karenni State</td>
<td>50,000*</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6,850</td>
<td>200*</td>
<td>56,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shan State</td>
<td>75,000*</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>200,000*</td>
<td>1,478</td>
<td>275,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>268,067</td>
<td>176**</td>
<td>364,911</td>
<td>2,536</td>
<td>632,978</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(* Extrapolated from available data.) ** plus 4 Wa relocation areas

Note: These figures are likely to be quite conservative estimates, and do not include the large number of IDPs who have re-settled in relatively unaffected villages and towns in Burma. Also excluded are migrants and refugees in other countries (mostly Thailand). There are also large numbers of IDPs in other parts of Burma which are beyond the scope of this report. Affected Villages are those which are known to have been destroyed by, or abandoned because of, Tatmadaw activity, and also villages known to have been relocated en masse. Villages which have been destroyed, abandoned or relocated in the past, but which have since been resettled, are not included. Due to problems of access, these figures are likely to under-represent the number and populations of relocation sites, and of affected villages, in the selected areas. However, some relocation site residents may since have fled to Thailand, returned home or - more probably - adopted a life in hiding in the forest.

(Ashley South/BBC, September 2002)

"Most villagers flee into the hills when ordered to relocate and live in hiding, while SPDC patrols come through to burn their villages and food supplies, uproot their crops and shoot villagers on sight if they find them. This is currently happening to the people of an estimated 1,500 villages in Shan State, 200 villages in Karenni (Kayah) State, 200 villages in northern Karen State and eastern Pegu Division, 50-100 villages in central Karen State, and 100 or more villages in Tenasserim division."(Nancy Hudson-Rodd, Myo Nyunt, Saw Thamain Tun & Sein Htay, 2003, pp. 29-30).

MAP: Relocation Sites 2002 (Karen, Karenni, Shan, Wa)
P'DF format (51k) GIF format (110k)

MAP: Affected Villages, Burma-Thailand Border 2002
PDF format (44k) GIF format (110k)

See map section for more maps.
Over 300,000 Shan villagers affected by relocation programme (1996-2000) and tens of thousands are being forcibly relocated from the northern Shan State (2001-2003)

- Reports of over 1400 villages relocated throughout 7,000 square miles in Central Shan State since 1996
- Over 300,000 people have been ordered to move into strategic relocation sites
- Displacement of new villages in southern Shan state on the Thai-Burma border since 1999

"In March 1996 forcible relocations on a massive scale began in the Shan State as the army evicted civilians from their villages in an apparent effort to break up any alleged links with the SSA-South. To date well over 1,400 villages have been forced to relocate.

(AI 13 June 2001)

"Since March 1996, the Burmese military regime has forcibly relocated over 1,400 villages throughout 7,000 square miles in Central Shan State. Over 300,000 people have been ordered to move at gunpoint into strategic relocation sites. No assistance has been provided to them. The relocation program has intensified during 1997 and 1998, with new areas being forced to relocate, and existing relocation sites being forced to move again. Vast rural areas of 11 townships have been turned into depopulated "free-fire" zones.

[...]

It is estimated that over 80,000 Shans have fled into Thailand during the last two years. Current Thai policy has denied these Shan safe refuge and the right to receive humanitarian assistance." (SHRF April 1998, Executive Summary”)

"During 1998, there continued to be consolidation of relocation sites, as had occurred in 1997. [...] There were also new villages forcibly relocated in Loksok township, to the west of the existing areas of forced relocation. During the first few months of 1999, new villages in Murg T on, in southern Shan state on the Thai-Burma border have been relocated." (SHRF April 1999, p.5)

“Since 1998 the region [of forced relocation] has not expanded significantly in size, but more and more villages within the relocation zone have been cleared, and relocation sites have been consolidated from smaller sites containing one or two villages to larger sites in main towns or near military bases. SPDC patrols roam the region, burning whatever is left in villages and shooting villagers they find on sight. Most of the villagers in this area have been homeless since the operation began, and the displacement is taking a fatal toll." (NCGUB August 2000, p.131)

"A […] potentially much larger category of Shan refugee [in Thailand] is Shan villagers displaced by people being moved from the northern Wa area in Shan State adjacent to the border with China to the Thai border opposite Chiang Rtaí/ Chiang Mai. As many as 250,000 people are said to be scheduled to be relocated and as many as 50,000 to 100,000 may already have been moved during the last year." (BBC August 2001, p.8)

"In late 1999 the SPDC began to resettle members of the Wa ethnic minority from northern Shan State near the Chinese border to Mongton and Murngsat townships in the Shan State near the Thai border. Tens of thousands of them have subsequently been moved to these locations." (AI 13 June 2001)

"At the time of [the 1989 UWSA and other] ceasefires, there were an estimated 80,000 displaced persons in 30 camps in UWSP areas along the China border."(Martin Smith/ MRG, May 2002, p. 24)

"It is estimated that, since 1999, 125,000-plus people have been relocated from northern to southern Shan State, by the Wa authorities. Furthermore, some 75,000 people are currently residing in relocation sites in
central Shan State, with a roughly equal number of people living in hiding or otherwise displaced in the state. This makes an IDP population in Shan State of some 275,000 people.'(South/BBC, September 2002)

See also: Resettlement of 128,000 Wa cause further displacement in the Shan state (1999-2002)

The number of displaced Karens may exceed 200,000 (2002)

- In 2002 the Karen IDP population in Karen State and Tenasserim Division was approximately 261,000 people
- An estimated 158,000 people were living in 127 known relocation sites, and there were 103,000 IDPs in hiding
- By April 1998, about 480,000 Karen, or 30 percent of the rural Karen population of eastern Burma, were either internally displaced or refugees
- In 1998 it was likely that some 200,000 Karen live displaced in the jungles of eastern Burma
- Villages situated along car roads in the southern Tennaserim division forced to consolidate and relocate
- A report from the Nyaunglebin and Papun districts in the Karen state suggests that 50,000 may be internally displaced

"Based on data collected between 2000-02, by the CIDKP and several other organisations, the number of IDPs in hiding in Karen areas in 2002 is estimated at 103,067 people, broken down as follows:

### Karen IDPs in Hiding or Temporary Settlements 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Families</th>
<th>Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toungoo</td>
<td>1,641</td>
<td>9,662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyaunglabin</td>
<td>1,755</td>
<td>10,590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thaton</td>
<td>1,899</td>
<td>10,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papun</td>
<td>6,617</td>
<td>37,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pa’an</td>
<td>2,488</td>
<td>13,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duplaya</td>
<td>2,727</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mergui-Tavoy (Tenasserim Division)</td>
<td>1,278</td>
<td>6,598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>18,405</td>
<td>103,067</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are 127 known relocation sites in these areas (i.e. not including Mon, Karenni or Shan States), containing an estimated 158,061 people. Therefore the IDP population in Karen State and Tenasserim Division combined may be 261,128 people (some of whom are in hiding outside the official boundaries of Karen State).'(South/BBC, September 2002)

"It is difficult to count displaced Karens. Armed conflict only exacerbates the technical and political obstacles to conducting a census, and problems of classification blur the distinction between who is and is not displaced. The only known attempt to count displaced Karens, undertaken in 1997, subtracted the number of refugees registered in Thai camps from the total number of people believed to have been displaced, then estimated how many of the remainder may be internally displaced. Using this method, researchers suggested that approximately 30 per cent, or 480,000, of the rural Karen population of eastern Burma was displaced at that time. In addition to the 91,000 Karen in refugee camps in Thailand, 100,000-200,000 were displaced internally (BERG, 1997, p. 35). Since then, fighting and forced relocation have
continued, and it has become more difficult to enter Thailand. It is likely that some 200,000 Karen men, women and children live displaced in the jungles of eastern Burma." (Cusano, September 2001, p.148)

**Other estimates of the number of internally displaced in the Karen State:**
"Figures of displacements in rural areas are hard to obtain, estimates made in 1998 of the IDPs in Karen State and Tenasserim Division found between 100,000 and 200,000 Karen were internally displaced. The government has been cited as the responsible party for the forced relocation of small villages to larger villages or to relocation sites in order to control of areas where there is conflict. When combined with the number of people who were then in refugee camps in Thailand, it was estimated that approximately 30 per cent (or 480,000) of the rural Karen population of south-eastern Burma was currently displaced .“(BERG, 1998: 34)

"The Special Rapporteur is not in possession of independently verified statistics on the number of displaced persons in Myanmar, but local and international NGOs estimate the number in Karen State to be between 100,000 and 200,000” (UN 22 January 1999, para. 28)

"As of April 1998, about 480,000 Karen, or 30 percent of the rural Karen population of eastern Burma, were either internally displaced or refugees, mostly the former. Burmese army troops prevent villagers from returning to their homes – homes that may no longer exist because of the army's strategy of burning fields and villages."(USCR 1999, p.104)

"At least 300,000 people have been displaced by the forced relocations in central Shan State, another 50,000 in Karenni State, an estimated 300,000 or more in Karen State, and many throughout Tenasserim Division." (KHRG June 2000, chapt. IV)

“Since the end of the rainy season in October 2000, the SPDC has intensified its campaign to destroy once again any villages which have been rebuilt and to hunt out the villagers in hiding. The columns look for villagers harvesting rice, open fire on them and landmine their fields or uproot their crops, and hunt out and destroy any hidden rice supplies. There are at present approximately 40 SPDC Battalions involved in this operation, making the food and security situation for the villagers in hiding extremely desperate. It is extremely difficult to place exact numbers on those internally displaced in these two districts, but the number could now be 50,000 or even more.” (KHRG April 2001, p.1)

**Over 50,000 Karenni reported internally displaced by 2000**

- Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) reports 50,000 internally displaced in Karenni State in June 2000
- Violation by SLORC of cease-fire agreement with major armed group in 1995 followed by major forced relocation campaign
- Government-initiated development schemes, aimed at separating people from non-state groups by forcing them into relocation sites, has forcibly displaced people since the 1960s
- Claim by unverifiable source that there were 70,000 Karenni IDPs in 1999

**A Karenni representative stated the following figure of internally displaced in an interview with Christian Solidarity Worldwide:**

"[…] the number of Karenni IDPs is about 50,000. Very little help is getting through to the majority of them. It is also getting more difficult for Karenni refugees to cross over into Thailand due to increased border security. About 1000 managed to cross over between January and May 2000; since then it has been only a trickle. Furthermore, once they arrive in Thailand, refugees are now held in a transit area in Camp 2 for up to 4 months before they are released into the general camps. Thailand has stated that all refugees
along the Burmese border are due to be repatriated within 3 years from early 2000." (CSW November 2000, p.4)

"At least 300,000 people have been displaced by the forced relocations in central Shan State, another 50,000 in Karenni State, an estimated 300,000 or more in Karen State, and many throughout Tenasserim Division." (KHRG June 2000, chapt. IV)

“Recent data indicate that while villagers have been displaced by fighting, it is also government-initiated development schemes, aimed at separating people from non-state groups by forcing them into relocation sites, that has resulted in most displacements since 1960s. These schemes were responsible for the wide-scale displacement of about 25,206 people in 1996 alone. Of these, 11,669 are known to have moved to relocation sites, 4,400 were registered in refugee camps and a further 9,137 unaccounted for. Since 1998, many IDPs have moved out of relocation sites back to their villages (some voluntarily, while others have been ordered back) or to refugee camps in Thailand." (BERG September 2000)

"During 1997 more refugees continued to arrive [in Thailand], as the program of forced relocations continued and was extended to Mawchi, site of some of the 1992 relocations. Conditions in the relocation sites remained dire, with the lack of sanitation, food and medical care leading to scores of deaths from malaria and other diseases. Villagers sent to the camps were forced to build fences around the periphery, turning the camp into virtual prisons. In July, eleven additional villages were forcibly relocated to Laikha district, bringing the total of internally displaced in Karenni state to over 32,000. By May 1998 the internally displaced had not been permitted to return to their homes. Trickles of people who had been able to get out of Burma were continuing to arrive in the refugee camps, the population of which by then totaled 12,520 people, with an average of 500 people arriving each month. With no access to the area by any international organizations, including United Nations agencies which in other countries had developed programs for the assistance of displaced populations, it was impossible to know how these people were managing to survive." (HRW September 1998, "The Karenni")

"The Special Rapporteur is not in possession of independently verified statistics on the number of displaced persons in Myanmar, but local and international NGOs estimate the number [...] in Karenni State, 70,000." (UN 22 January 1999, paras. 27-28)

"Karenni sources estimate that there are some 50,000 IDPs in Karenni State, plus at least 6,850 people in relocation sites, making a total Karenni IDP population of about 56,850 people."(South/BBC, September 2002)

**Over 130,000 Kachin reported internally displaced by the early 1990s**

"Between 1961 and 1986 alone, the KIO, an NDF member, claims to have recorded the deaths of over 30,000 Kachin villagers at the hands of government forces, and, by the early 1990s, over 130,000 Kachins (over 10 per cent of the population) had become internally displaced or refugees.

In 1989, a former pro-CPB faction, the New Democratic Army, agreed a truce with the SLORC, and in 1994 a ceasefire was eventually agreed between the government and the KIO after the intervention of local Christian leaders. Following these agreements, many long-divided communities attempted to rebuild with a new focus on development. However, the humanitarian situation remained grave."(Martin Smith/ MRG, May 2002, p. 18)
PATTERNS OF DISPLACEMENT

General

 Civilians generally become displaced as army orders villages to move or they flee when the military campaign become unbearable (1999-2003)

- People directly displaced when forced to move to relocation sites or army camps, or they flee to the mountains or the jungle from the military
- People usually move in small groups of a few families or individuals
- In all cases, most IDPs end up in a situation with very limited coping mechanisms

"The internally displaced generally fall into two categories. The first group includes those whom the military regime relocates to cut off the opposition armies’ access to food, finances, communications, and recruits. Forcing civilians into relocation centers also provides the military a steady supply of laborers. The second group consists largely of those who refuse to relocate or who flee the relocation areas because they cannot survive there, as well as those who flee their homes because of other types of persecution. The uprooted generally flee toward the Thai border, but are often stopped by Burmese troops or Thai border guards." (USCR 2002)

The National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma has in more detail documented different patterns of displacement:

"Displacement into areas under full SPDC control: Many villagers suffering from abuse under the SPDC four-cuts program, or who have been told to relocate without a specified site have chosen to resettle in areas under full SPDC control, which they feel are safer and more stable than the conflict areas, or where they have friends or relatives. Yet as most of the displaced villagers are farmers, they face many difficulties when they are forced to move into new villages or towns. Available land in these areas is often scarce and the search for other employment in new areas is difficult. In larger towns or cities farmers are often forced to seek work as day laborers in low paying jobs. The families who have been forcibly relocated also usually move without being able to bring all their belongings, adding to their problems of resettlement. Villagers sometimes move to villages and towns where they have relatives, but their relatives are often not able to provide the extra support needed, as they themselves are suffering. In addition, these IDPs living in areas under SPDC control are subject to the same abuses as the other villagers around them. These include the demands for forced labor, fees, and restrictions that are commonplace across Burma. Yet because the abuses committed are sometimes less then in areas under the four-cuts program, many villagers choose to face the risk of moving to areas under full SPDC control.

[...]

Displacement into areas and camps controlled by armed opposition groups: Villagers who have been forced to flee their homes and villages for any of the above mentioned reasons, are sometimes able to seek shelter in areas controlled by armed opposition groups, where they feel they have some protection from SPDC abuses. Several of the armed opposition groups operate camps and resettlement sites in their areas of activity. However, in these camps and sites, supplies and services are very limited, and often the shelter and supplies offered are only temporary. Access to food, education and health varies from site to site, as does the level of security. In some camps and sites schools, health care and other services are provided for a limited number of IDPs, and the area is safe from SPDC attack, yet in almost all such places, there are no employment opportunities. Therefore, the IDPs have to live off of whatever the opposition groups can provide for them."
Displacement into jungles, fields, and other remote, usually "free fire" or black areas of Burma: There are nearly 1 million people estimated to be hiding in the border conflict areas of Burma, and this is the IDP group with the least access to basic survival needs. These villagers have fled into hiding, despite the risks, because of various factors. These IDPs include:
Those who flee SPDC troops in advance of their arrival;
Those who can no longer stand the abuses they suffer in their villages;
Those who were ordered to move from their village to a relocation site or other place, and who chose not to do so; and
Those who have fled from relocation sites due to unlivable conditions.
These IDPs are regarded as enemies by the SPDC troops, as the areas where most villagers hide are located in black or "free-fire" zones. They are shot on sight, or else captured, tortured and then sometimes killed whenever they are found. Their shelters, rice plantations and belongings are looted or destroyed when discovered. Under the guise of ridding areas of opposition forces, the SPDC has launched several "search and destroy" operations, in which soldiers root out and destroy everything they see in the area including people. The troops often plant landmines on paths that they suspect the IDP villagers use, and they practice a "scorched earth" policy of looting, destroying and burning any signs of habitation or food supply. Troops have even been known to cut down fruit trees growing naturally in the forest in these operations in an attempt to make it impossible for anyone to survive in the forests or jungles.

Villagers often hide in areas near their old villages and risk attempting to work and harvest their crops in secret. This work is extremely dangerous, and if crops are discovered by soldiers, they are burned or destroyed. If the villagers are unsuccessful in harvesting rice, they forage for other sources of food in the forests. Villagers in hiding, for the most part, are unable to travel outside of their area of hiding to purchase other necessities, and must make do with what they can find around them. (NCGUB, September 2002, "Internally Displaced People and Forced Relocation")

"Villagers in the area [inside the Karen state] have been forced to sign binding documents stating that they will not have any contact with the KNU. Any contact with the KNU after the signing of the documents would probably result in the torture and possible execution of the villager and the possible burning of the village. These documents may be used to legitimise the Dam Byan Byaut Kya (Guerrilla Retaliation Unit) execution squads. The Guerrilla Retaliation Units’ sole purpose has been to locate and execute any villager who has had any contact with the KNU, even if that contact was as tenuous as supplying a bowl of rice to, or portering a load for the KNLA a decade ago.

The Guerrilla Retaliation Units first appeared in Western Nyaunglebin District in September 1998; it wasn’t until the beginning of the following year that they began to expand their operations northward into Tantabin (Taw Ta Tu) Township of Toungoo District. Operating in small units of five to ten men and often travelling by night, their ranks are filled with men handpicked from regular battalions who were noted for being particularly brutal. They move from village to village with a list of people suspected to have had contact with the KNU, who are to be taken from their homes and executed in the forest. Everything about the way that they operate is done to instill fear among the Karens. Their message is simple: they will kill anyone who aids the resistance." (KHRG, 16 June 2003, paras 1-6 & 9)

Infrastructure, location and movement patterns in relocation sites vary (2002-2003)

- Some relocation sites are based on existing villages or towns; others are ‘new villages’
- Entry to and exit from relocation sites - and access to work and farmlands - is tightly controlled by the Burmese Army
- Larger relocation sites are often situated close to car roads
Conditions in relocation sites vary, but access to services is often poor or non-existent, and residents are often subject to forced labour (e.g. road construction) and other abuses.

"The forced relocation of thousands of villages is a product of counter-insurgency activities carried out by the Tatmadaw, in the context of a fifty-year civil war, characterised by chronic and severe human rights abuses directed against the civilian population (the major exception being the 1999-2002 Wa relocations). Relocation site residents are frequently subject to extortion, and forced to work on government infrastructure projects. Those who choose not to enter the relocation sites flee their villages, and live in hiding in the jungle. The Tatmadaw launches regular patrols, aimed at seeking out these IDPs, destroying their temporary shelters and rice supplies. People forced to move to relocation sites now constitute the largest sub-category of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the report outlines the types, populations and whereabouts of these relocation sites.

Three main types of relocation sites are identified:

a) Large ‘Relocation Centres’, the residents of which have been forced to move from several outlying villages to one Tatmadaw-controlled location, often situated in the vicinity of infrastructure projects (e.g. car roads). Residents sometimes retain control over food stocks and access to farmland, although they are usually liable to various ‘rice taxes’, and subject to extensive forced labour. Many residents are unable to support themselves, and experience high rates of malnutrition, and numerous deaths have been reported. ‘Relocation Centers’ therefore often eventually dissolve - usually with the unofficial approval of local Tatmadaw and state officials. As these Centres are progressively abandoned, some residents return and attempt to rebuild their old villages; others adopt a life in hiding in the forest. In both cases, they are often subject to further bouts of forcible relocation.

b) Smaller ‘Relocation Villages’ are pre-existing villages that have not been moved in their entirety, although outlying houses and satellite hamlets are forced to re-settle on confiscated land in the village centre. Like the ‘Relocation Centres’, many ‘Relocation Villages’ are fenced in, and more-or-less tightly controlled by the Tatmadaw. Residents of ‘Relocation Villages’ are also often called upon to do forced labour, but usually have some opportunity to tend their farms.

c) Non State-controlled Relocation Sites, including those under the command of the United Wa State Army (UWSA), an armed 'ceasefire group', which between 1999-2002 forcibly relocated at least 125,000 people from northern Shan State to its Southern Command area, 400 Km to the south."(South/BBC, September 2002)

"In most of the places that have been chosen as "relocation sites"by the SPDC, little preparation or organization is done in order to receive the displaced people. The SPDC is unconcerned whether or not water, food, cultivatable land, employment and services are available in the new areas. The burden for sheltering and caring for the displaced at relocation sites generally falls on the local community. If the relocation site is part of, or near another village or town, this extra burden results in increased depletion of the resources of the original population. No humanitarian assistance comes from the government, although at some sites there is very limited assistance from church organizations. In some cases, rice has been distributed to the IDPs during the initial relocation period, yet these rations are insufficient and the distribution period is short. One refugee who came from the relocation site at Mawchi in Karenni State stated that rice intended for the relocated people was diverted and sold by local township authorities.

The SPDC troops force the villagers in the relocation sites to work on a daily or weekly basis; generally one person from each family must go. This forced labor includes clearing bushes and trees from the roadsides both inside and outside the relocation sites, cleaning military buildings, cultivating land for the military bases, hauling water for the troops, building fences around the military camps, digging bunkers, road construction, portering for the military and other general servant work. The villagers are also forced to work in the infrastructure projects in the area. Moreover, they are made to pay various fees for development projects, military funds, food for visiting troops, and so on."
Services at the relocation villages vary from site to site, as each site is under the responsibility of relevant state or township committees. However, in general there are no arrangements made to provide services for the relocated people.

**Access to water** varies – in some sites wells have been dug in addition to streams and lakes. Yet in some sites, such as the Shadaw relocation site in Karenni State, the lack of drinkable water has resulted in several problems, including sickness and deaths caused by chemicals that were added to the water in an attempt to clean it.

**Sanitary facilities** are usually nonexistent for the IDPs and they either are required to build their own, or use outer areas of the sites for latrine purposes.

The poor water and sanitation at the sites, among other things, has resulted in higher levels of sickness and mortality, yet **health care facilities** are either missing altogether, or else seriously under-equipped and under-supplied.

There is no **access to electricity** in most sites, and in some sites, such as Shadaw relocation site in Karenni State, torches (flashlights) are banned and dry cell batteries are not permitted to be sold in the site. This lack of provisions for night lighting increases the vulnerability of women, among other things.

**Education facilities** are also insufficient or nonexistent. In most cases, the relocated people establish makeshift schools themselves. If there are pre-existing schools, school buildings, teaching materials and teachers are never sufficient, and families often do not send their children to school as they cannot afford the school costs, or they require their children to help in the family’s attempts for survival. (See chapter on health and education for more information)

[...]

Villagers in relocation sites live in constant fear of the violence and demands of the state forces, both inside and outside the relocation sites. Villagers are not permitted to leave the sites without passes, which they must purchase from either SPDC soldiers or local authorities. The passes are usually only valid for 1 day, from dawn to dusk, although in rare cases week passes have been granted. (see chapter on the freedom of movement) This leaves the villagers little time to travel to their places of work, complete their work, and then return. In addition, security for the villagers outside of the relocation sites is notoriously bad. Villagers seen outside the camps are vulnerable to capture, arrest, torture, and killing, even if they hold valid passes, as they are accused by SPDC troops of leaving the camps to support rebel forces. Women are especially vulnerable, and many cases of rape have been reported by women who have gone outside the camp to forage for vegetables or get water. (see chapter on women) The local authorities do nothing when cases of abuse are reported to them by the villagers.”(NCGUB, September 2002, "Internally Displaced People and Forced Relocation")

**Many refugees have survived two years or more as IDPs in relocation sites or hiding before entering Thailand (1998-2003)**

- Displaced Karen prefer to stay near their land rather than go down to the SPDC controlled villages or flee to Thailand
- Many attempt to flee as refugees only as a last resort, after suffering serious human rights abuses

"On a recent trip to the Thai-Burmese border, Refugees International (RI) interviewed new arrivals to Thailand and confirmed the Burmese army’s use of torture, rape, forced labor, extortion and summary executions in ethnic minority areas from northern Shan state to southern Tavoy. Three to four thousand Burmese seek asylum in Thailand each month, and the majority are from these areas. According to RI’s interviews, there is a lack of basic necessities such as food, appropriate shelter and medicines for those
refugees hiding in the jungle, as well as for most who live in relocation sites. Because IDPs’ food stores are routinely destroyed or confiscated by the Burmese army, the additional threat of starvation and illness is especially common. High rates of malnutrition and deaths from preventable illness have been reported by those able to secretly access IDPs. […] The Burmese army is notorious for its abuses against civilians. "They treated me like an animal, like a dog. They broke my head until blood streamed out. My jaw, cheeks and ribs were broken—the SPDC [State Peace and Development Council, the official name of the Burmese government] can do what they like—they can kill and rape. We are weaker than they," one older man from the Mon ceasefire area told RI.

According to interviews conducted by RI, IDPs facing human rights abuses and threats to their survival usually seek refuge in Thailand as a last resort. Naw Paw Wah, a 29-year-old Karen mother of four, only fled her village when her husband was nearly killed by the Burmese army. Prior incidence of forced labor, beatings—including while she was four months pregnant—as well as the existence of rapes and extrajudicial killings in her village were not enough reason to brave the journey to Thailand. Only when a severe beating to her husband left him with permanent physical and mental disability did she decide she had no choice. "I was afraid they would torture me like that next." Despite the fact that soldiers were beating her family members and recruiting them for forced labor routinely, another woman from the Karenni ethnic group told RI that she only left after a Burmese officer raped her sister and attempted to rape her. The displaced endure abuses rather than seeking asylum because they know that coming to Thailand can be dangerous and that denial of entry at the border happens routinely. News has trickled back inside Burma that even if IDPs can find a secret route into Thailand, they may not be allowed into refugee camps. There are no guarantees that they will be protected from abuse by Thai authorities or receive humanitarian assistance. Thailand’s strict policy towards refugees is achieving its goal of deterrence, causing IDPs to stay in Burma at great risk to their security and well-being." (Refugees International, 10 October 2002, )

"The villagers prefer to live near their villages and sneak back to work and harvest their fields. If that is not possible due to the Army’s presence then they prefer to at least live somewhere in what they consider to be Karen land. Displacement is forced on the villagers, most of whom just want to live in peace farming their fields, but in spite of the shootings, frequent bouts of malaria, fevers and diarrhoea, extreme poverty and the ever-present threat of starvation, they still prefer to stay near their land rather than go down to the SPDC controlled villages or flee to Thailand. Thai government authorities always claim that refugees from Burma come only because they have heard of an ‘easy life’, but for these hill villagers the idea of fleeing to Thailand is extremely frightening. To them Thailand is a very foreign place where they have no land or relatives, and without land to grow food or relatives people starve. They have heard that the refugee camps are not safe from Burmese attack, that conditions there are not good, that Thai authorities regularly force people back across the border, and they know the trip is long and difficult, dodging SPDC patrols and landmines. Most only undertake the trip if their food supplies have run out and the SPDC patrols make it impossible to stay anywhere near their village, when they see the only choices as flight or death." (KHRG October 2001, pp.78)

"Several Shan interviewees had been in hiding for months or even years after having been forcibly relocated by the tatmadaw to relocation sites away from their home villages, fields and food supplies. At the relocation sites they generally had no means to make a living, as they could not farm their land, and there was little or no employment for them. When they could no longer survive in the relocation sites, they often went into hiding. While they were not at risk of being taken for forced labour in hiding, they did face other dangers which eventually caused them to flee to Thailand. They lived in small settlements in the jungle and tried to grow some food, but often had little to eat. Shan civilians also risked being shot on sight by tatmadaw troops on patrol as they searched for SSA-South soldiers." (AI 17 July 2002, p12)

Patterns of displacement in the Shan State (1999-2002)

- People given three to seven days notice before having to leave their villages
Relocation sites are usually areas of bare land near towns, main roads and army bases

Some forcibly relocated villagers moved straight to towns

No major forced relocations carried out by government forces, since 1998

In April 2002, a 40-year-old Shan man:
"In December 1996, there were over 60 households in my former village and we all had to move. People had fired bombs into the village. The villagers scattered. My family left our paddy in the field when it was ripe enough to harvest, just leaving it all behind. When we moved we took only a few clothes and walked three days on foot. Then we walked two more days to another township and stayed there. We worked for whoever employed us. There we stayed with other people, but we had to work for something to eat. The employer didn't tell us how much he would pay us, he just gave us some rice to eat. If there was work to do, we had to do until it was done. We stayed there for two years, before returning to our former village in Eastern Shan State. When we returned to our village, it was like we had come to a new place. Coming back to the village, we worked for others on our own farms. It was really difficult to earn a living. I stayed for four years until I came to Thailand yesterday."

In March 2002, a 22-year-old Shan woman:
"I came to Thailand because there was no money for planting or for our daily living expenses. It is difficult to work in our village because the Burmese military expels us to the towns. We didn't move to the town, but hid in the jungle instead. Our plants were ready to harvest and all our livestock was there. The government military burned down our houses and whenever they saw a cow or buffalo they would shoot it. There was nothing left. They even burned my sewing machine. We had to ask for dishes from other people. We moved back and forth from my village to the town because we were not allowed to work on our land. If other people employed us, I could eat. We kept trying to sneak back to our farms to work, but we had to be very careful the military didn't see us. Sometimes we starved for two or three days when we went back because we were afraid to cook. We were afraid the military would see the smoke. We tried to cook at noon when the sun was very bright."(RI, December 2002, p. 15)

"In 2001 and 2002, there were no more reports of massive relocations in Shan and Kayah States on the same scale as those during 1996-1998. The forced relocations documented mainly took place in the south-east of Shan State (by the Tatmadaw and the United Wa State Army (UWSA)) and in Kayin State (by the Tatmadaw, and in some cases by the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), a break-away group from KNU). There were no reports of new mass relocations in other parts of Shan or Kayah States, mainly because most areas where armed opposition groups were active at that time had already been relocated in previous years.

The forced relocations in the south-east of Shan State by the SPDC and the UWSA forces were reportedly directly related to a relocation programme of the UWSA to move down hundreds of Wa villagers from Wa regions down to the Thai border. Shan, Lahu and Akha villagers were often simply told that their land was confiscated and that they had to leave their houses."(UN GA 5 August 2003, paras 46-47)

As described in the "Background" section, forced relocation is the major form of displacement in the Shan state:
"By mid-1998, over 1,400 villages in 8 townships had been forcibly relocated and destroyed, displacing a population of at least 300,000 people. Tens of thousands of people were struggling to survive in relocation sites throughout the region, foraging for food and begging from cars passing on the roads. The SPDC provided them nothing. Those who tried to hide in the forests around their villages were shot on sight by SPDC patrols, and in some cases there were systematic massacres of as many as 40 people at a time. At least 100,000 people fled across the border into Thailand; the SPDC troops allowed them to go, happy to see the Shan people leaving Burma.

[...]

71
The village forced relocation region spans roughly 7,000 square miles (18,000 square kilometres) in the heart of Shan State. Since 1998 the region has not expanded significantly in size, but more and more villages within the relocation zone have been cleared, and relocation sites have been consolidated from smaller sites containing one or two villages to larger sites in main towns or near military bases. SPDC patrols roam the region, burning whatever is left in villages and shooting villagers they find on sight. Most of the villagers in this area have been homeless since the operation began, and the displacement is taking a fatal toll." (KHRG 5 April 2000)

"For the last three years Amnesty International has documented this pattern of forced relocation and other attendant human rights violations in the Shan State. Other non-governmental organizations have also extensively reported on these incidents, and the UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar and a number of governments have repeatedly raised the issue. However it is regrettable that despite widespread calls from the international community, no improvement in this pattern of violations has occurred in the Shan State or in any other area of Myanmar." (AI July 2001)

"There are various patterns of displacement for the Shan villagers who have been forcibly relocated from their homes. There are basically four alternatives, which are detailed below. However, many of the displaced have not chosen a single alternative, but have chosen more than one or, in some cases, even tried all four, in different orders. Thus, there are countless variations on the patterns of displacement.

Moving to the relocation sites
The term "relocation sites" refers to the sites designated by SLORC/SPDC troops to which the relocated villagers were forced to move. These were usually areas of bare land near towns, main roads and army bases where nothing at all was provided for them by the local authorities.

[...]

Going into hiding
One option for the villagers ordered to move was simply to go into hiding in the jungles near their villages, and then lead a precarious existence dodging Burma Army patrols while seeking to continue cultivating their crops.

[...]

Moving to towns or other areas of Shan State (outside of relocation sites)
Some forcibly relocated villagers moved straight to towns. The main factor influencing whether people did this was either money, which meant that they could afford to purchase land or housing there, or else having relatives in towns with whom they could stay, and perhaps find work.

Others moved to villages on the periphery of the area of forced relocation, which they felt would be safe from relocation because they were under the control of the ceasefire organisations such as the Shan State Army, the Shan State National Army, the Shan Nationalities People's Liberation Organisation or the Pa-O National Army.

Moving to Thailand
There has long been a pattern of migration of Shans to Thailand to find work, as particularly during the time of economic expansion before 1997 there was a huge demand for migrant labour. Thus, despite the fact that there are no refugee camps on the Shan-Thai border, Thailand was thus the obvious place for many of the relocated villagers to flee for survival, as opposed to some of the other neighbouring countries such as Laos and China." (SHRF 1999, pp. 6-9)

See also:
The Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF), 2003, Charting the Exodus From Shan State

- In early 1997 the SPDC stepped-up its campaign to subordinate or destroy all Karen civilian villages in the hills
- The Burmese army’s counter-insurgency tactics usually follow a pattern to forcibly relocate Karen villages
- Temporary displacement is a frequent, even routine, way of life for Karens in the war zones
- The displaced remain in the forest living in small huts after destruction of their villages by SLORC troops
- Villages repeatedly deserted and rebuilt until the army gains control in the area
- Reported that many Karen villagers have not been given relocation sites on which to move

In May 2002, a 23-year-old Karen female told Refugees International:
"The village chairman was told the village had to move one mile away. The place we were to move to was a small plot of land about 80 x 40 feet. Many other villagers were also forced to relocate to this area. Many more were still moving to the new site when I left for Thailand on May 27, 2002. There is no way I can feed my family on this land and the military issued an order that anyone seen on their old land would be shot to death."(RI, December 2002, p. 16)

"The SPDC’s present policy is to bring all rural villages under direct military control. This policy has meant establishing more Army camps throughout most of the Karen areas, and forcible relocation of villages too remote to be controlled by an Army camp to Army controlled villages. The relocated villages are then destroyed by the soldiers. This has happened in the plains along the Sittaung River, in parts of Papun District along the lower Bilin and Yunzalin rivers, and near Papun town where the Army already has some control. Most people in the small villages in the rugged Papun hills have never been under SPDC control and usually disappear into the hills before the soldiers can get to them, so the SPDC began to systematically destroy hundreds of these villages in 1997 without even formally ordering them to relocate. The villagers are still in hiding in the hills, so the soldiers search out and destroy their food supplies and shelters and shoot them on sight to force them to come down to the SPDC-controlled relocation sites.

Once the SPDC’s new camps are established, the officers want to have villagers around for forced labour, so they want some of the villages to be re-established. At the same time, villagers who were forced to SPDC-controlled villages find that they cannot survive there because the SPDC provides nothing, they have no land and no jobs and are constantly taken for forced labour, so after a few months they escape back into the hills or to the sites of their home villages. Without stronger control the Army is unable to prevent this, so after a year or two the villages become partly reestablished.

The Army eventually recognises them as de facto villages but because they are not under direct control of an Army camp they will eventually be relocated again. These cycles can happen again and again until enough new Army camps are established to bring the villages under direct control.

The SPDC then designates these villages as ‘white’ or Nyein Chan Yay (‘Peace’), villages and allows them to remain, although under threat of further relocation. The Army increases its presence making it very difficult for the villagers to contact the resistance groups.

Areas which the SPDC does not feel are under its complete control are usually subjected to periodic relocations until firm control is established. The villages relocated are those which are too far away from Army camps to be effectively controlled or which are believed to be assisting the resistance. Villages which have never been under SPDC control before are only notified of the relocation when the soldiers arrive in the villages, burn them down and leave notes in the ruins that the villagers should come to one of the
relocation sites. Villagers notified in this way do not usually go but flee into hiding in the surrounding forest."

"According to a KHRG researcher, an estimated 5,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) are now believed to be living in hiding in the jungles in Tantabin Township alone. No longer able to cope with the constant demands for labour, money, and food, they have opted to flee from their homes to live a nomadic life of subsistence in the jungles, where they are relentlessly hunted by roving SPDC patrols, and where if discovered they are shot on sight. Such a decision is not one made lightly; the remoteness of Toungoo District dictates that very little assistance can be provided to these IDPs, forcing them to be self-sufficient in an environment which affords them very little. Flight into these jungles is therefore a move made only from extreme desperation. The hills into which many of these IDPs have fled possess very poor soils which are so low in nutrients that their harvests are affected drastically as a result." (KHRG, 16 June 2003)

"Though people may ultimately flee in a sudden, violent moment, they probably anticipated that they would leave, but didn’t know when. The Burmese army’s counter-insurgency tactics usually follow a pattern: after targeting an area for depopulation, the army orders villagers to move by issuing a written notice, convening a meeting of village headmen or visiting the village themselves. According to field reports, notification seldom results in quick and orderly compliance. Unless or until the army comes back to move or scatter the villagers, people assume a subtly defiant wait-and-see attitude. They may attempt to negotiate with the local military command but, more often, they will ignore the first notice and go about their business. The army sometimes reacts to uncooperative villages by sending a detachment of soldiers to emphasise the order. This may result in the first instance of serious human rights abuse, and may include detention, torture, summary execution, looting and destruction of homes, property and livestock. Knowing that farmers are reluctant to leave their land, the army may also burn or confiscate crops, food and farm implements. This is when jungle displacement begins.

However, the army does not always notify in advance. Areas with heavy insurgent activity (those in designated ‘black-zones’), remote villages that orders may not have reached, and villages that have flouted army demands for provisions and labour may suffer a rapid attack from which people also flee into the jungles. But even without prior notice, Karen villagers are aware of the army’s movements and potential for violence, and of their community’s standing in the political struggle among rival military powers. They choose to stay on their land until combat, human rights abuses or hunger finally force them off.

After fleeing, displaced Karens seek the first opportunity to return home. Though they lose their houses and possessions, they still manage to return to their fields. Temporary displacement may be a frequent, even routine, way of life in the war zones.

[...]

At best, villagers may flee with ample warning, stay hidden in the jungle for only a few hours or overnight, and return to an intact village, perhaps because the soldiers changed course or, for other reasons, did not enter the village and moved off to a safe distance. More often, however, people flee with little warning and must wait out the troops’ stay and the inevitable looting of food and valuables. Soldiers may make the village a temporary base, or may stay until the villagers come out of hiding and return. At worst, displaced people see no chance of returning home." (Cusano, September 2001, 149-150)

**displacement patterns in the Southern Karen State**

"In most cases the troops either go to the village or summon the village head to their camp, and order the villagers to move within one or two weeks. If a column visits the village, the villagers are forced to the church or the football ground and held there under guard while soldiers move house to house systematically looting or destroying their belongings and livestock. Closer to the deadline, a column goes again to the village. If some villagers still remain there, village elders are arrested and tortured, houses are burned, and the remaining villagers may be force-marched to a relocation site. Eventually the entire village is burned or dismantled.

[...]"
The difficulty of finding places to hide has led most of the villagers to move to the relocation sites as ordered. These are generally within or adjacent to SPDC-controlled villages, usually along a vehicle road or major oxcart track and close to an Army camp. Thus far KHRG is aware of sites at Kya In ‘New Town’ (Myothit), Meh T’Kreh, P’Ya Ngote Doh, Wah Mi Gone, Lay Wah Kah, Ka Lay Kee, Noh Taw Plah, Meh Ta Lah, Lay Taw Hta, Paw Wah Kee, Bee T’Ka, Nga Pyaw Taw and Kyaw Kay Ko in Kya In township; Kyaikdon and Saw Hta (Azin) in Kawkareik township; and Tee Po Than in Kru Tu township. At many of these sites villagers have been forced to build fences around themselves, and their movements are tightly restricted. They cannot go out without a pass, and even with a pass are only allowed out from dawn to dusk. To prevent families from fleeing into hiding, whenever someone goes out some of his or her family members must remain behind at the site. Villagers are not allowed to return home to farm their own fields because the SPDC believes that they would then supply food to the Karen Army. Instead, most of them look for unused land near the relocation site which they can clear for a hill rice field." (KHRG, 25 September 2002)

See also: Karen Human Rights Group (December 2002), ‘Photo Sets’, especially Photo Set 2002-A, where you will find "More than 500 photos documenting the human rights situation in Karen areas of Burma.


- The Hongsawatoi Restoration Party, which split from the mainstream NMSP in 2001, has ceased to be active,
- However, people continue to be displaced by Burmese Army human rights abuses and land confiscations (2003)

"Mon Relief and Development Committee (MRDC), a Mon relief organization based in Thailand-Burma border area, have information about the population displacement since the period of 1993/1994. After ceasefire, the committee also established many IDPs villages in NMSP controlled areas and settled over 10000 of IDPs who has been displaced for some years in NMSP area during the conflict and with new IDPs who fled from other areas.

MRDC reported that there are about 40,000 Mon villagers (including the IDPs in its resettled villagers) have been displaced in Mon territory. However, MRDC could not get access into all areas to help the IDPs and they have helped the IDPs who arrived into their resettled IDPs villages."(HURFOM, Population Displacement is Humanitarian Crisis in Burma, May 2003)

"On the morning of November 27, 2001, about 120 troops from Burmese Army’s IB No. 62 led by Lt. Col. Wai Tun burnt down 32 houses in a Karen village called Htee-wah-doe, which is situated about 5 kilometers from the border with Thailand’s Sangkhlaburi District. Troops from IB No. 62 arrived at the village on October 25th, searching for KNLA troops and a recent Mon splinter faction led by Col. Pan Nyunt. When they could not find any rebel soldiers, the commander ordered his men to burn down the village. The troops burned and looted houses, a hospital, and a school, and arrested 15 Karen villagers. Some were forced to act as porters for the army and several are still missing. One man suffered a bullet wound in his leg, which was eventually amputated. Some 500 villagers who feared arrest and torture by the Burmese soldiers had already fled into Halockhani Mon village before the arrival of the Burmese army. After the Burmese army burnt down their village, all 300 remaining villagers fled to Halockhani to seek haven under New Mon State Party (NMSP) protection. The IB No. 62 commander warned that they would come back to the village later to check for rebel activities. Currently, over 800 villagers are living displaced in makeshift shelters in Halockhani. While the troops were in the village, they stole villagers’ belongings and took livestock. The Halockhani resettlement site is populated with Mon refugees who were spontaneously resettled during the NMSP-SPDC ceasefire."
Htee-wah-doe village was established by displaced villagers, who fled from mostly Kya Inn Seikyi Township of Karen State after the 1997 dry season offensives launched by Burmese Army. Following the attack, the Burmese government gave the Karen civilians an ultimatum to either remain near Htee Wah Doh or go to an area to the north under government control. Amnesty International released a statement about the incident stating that: "Neither option is secure for these people, who are literally caught between two countries, with nowhere safe to go...It is imperative that the Thai Government immediately allow them ... to enter a Karen refugee camp for protection." (Source: AI, Independent Mon News Agency)

**Forced Relocation for government construction projects:** In the first week of March 2001, Township PDC authorities forcibly relocated three Mon villages in Paung Township with a plan to construct a dam, rendering about 3300 villagers from 350 families homeless. The villages which were relocated include: (1) Kadeik, (2) Inn-myaung and (3) Kyaukyetwin. They were situated in the eastern part of the township, beneath the Kalarma Mountain Range. During the relocation of villagers, the authorities did not provide any compensation cost and or set up resettlement places for them. Instead they just ordered them to leave their villages and stay anywhere within the "army zone". Most of the villagers moved into villages where they had relatives and friends. Those relocated were given about one week to move from their villages. About 350 families were displaced by the SPDC’s development project; including about 200 families from Ka-deik village, 150 families from Inn-myaung village and 300 families from Kyauk-ye-twin village. The displaced villagers are Mon ethnic people who have lived in these villages since before Burma gained independence. In Mon State, because of development projects, such as the construction of roads, dams, water canals, bridge, etc the Mon State PDC authorities frequently confiscate lands by force or order the landowners to abandon their lands and houses. Most of these projects are implemented under the name "border area development program." (Source: HURFOM)

On 1 October 2001, over one hundred houses were destroyed and their inhabitants relocated by SPDC authorities in Moulmein, Mon State, in the course of a road construction project that includes the building of a guest house and a bridge. According to a notice issued by the Moulmein Township Peace and Development Council on 1 October, nearly 130 houses in Kyet Tan ward, on the bank of Salween river, were slated to be destroyed and the inhabitants were ordered to move immediately. This relocation caused a loss of 650 million Kyats (about 1 million U.S.dollars) worth of property. About 700 people (inhabitants of 128 houses) were moved to Kywe Chan Khone, six miles to the west of Moulmein. At their relocation destination, the displaced people were not provided with houses or clean water. The relocation site consists of a swampy plot of land. SPDC authorities did not compensate for losses incurred by relocation and did not cover the cost of transportation to the relocation site. While plans had been aired previously to start construction in Kye Tan ward, on 2 October Moulmein authorities also gave notice that Hlaing ward and Shwe Pyi Aye ward (encompassing a total of 300 houses) were to be evacuated so that construction on these sites could commence in November and December. (Source: Mizzima) (NCGUB, September 2002, "Internally Displaced People and Forced Relocation";"Over ten thousand displaced people live at the Thai border in the black areas of southern Burma. The villagers are fleeing due to shortage of food as a result of fighting between anti-government rebel groups and the Burmese Army. [...]

Local farmers in Ye township, the southern part of Mon State and local people in Ye Phyu Areas in Tenasserim Division fled to Cheoh Dide village during the earlier rainy season after their farms were confiscated by the Burmese Army.

According to Rot Rot, Coordinator of Mon National Relief and Development Committee, people in Ye Phyu, Ye and Kya Inn Sein Kyi areas escaped from their native villages because they can no longer endure the ongoing conflict and its related forms of human rights violations.

"The people are in a desperate situation, they flee from their villages, many are victims of the conflict going on there, being forced to porter and rounded up for slave labor projects, and many are suffering from extreme hardship." Rot Rot said.
Local farmers have been imposed with an official "Pass" from the BA officials and must have it with them to visit their farms and gardens. If they stray from their village and gardens they risk being accused as "rebel supporters" and will be shot on sight if found without a pass, said a source from the Mon Relief Committee.

The Relief Committee is providing a month supply of rice to the newly displaced people arriving at Cheoh Dide camp. The displaced were able to endure the harsh journey through the dense jungle, but many others are unable to reach the border due to the lack of food for feeding their families, the very young and older members of the family and the disabled.

The relief workers said the displaced people leave their homes because they cannot go out freely to fish, or farm, during the day and night. Many local Mon farmers in Ye and Ye Phyu depend on their farms and fishing to sustain their basic survival needs. Searching for food leads some into the "black areas" (war zone) defined by the military government.

For the last three years the BA has confiscated over 8,000 acres of land in Mon State, forcing many thousands of farmers to become landless and unable to feed their families. (Kao Wao News, DISPLACED PEOPLE BEYOND THE BORDER, July 2003)

Patterns of displacement in the Karenni State (1999-2000)

• A significant proportion of the state’s population have experienced displacement and resettlement at least once
• Many Karenni have first moved into relocation sites, but then gone into hiding in the forest, moved to Thailand, or relocated further inside the region
• Relocation sites are being closed down due to the inability of SPDC to supply them, and in some cases IDPs are returning to their old villages

"The successive military regimes of Burma have three times carried out forced relocation programs in Karenni State. First under the BSPP, particularly in No. (2) District of Karenni State, when an estimated 50 villages were destroyed and burnt down and tens of thousands of villagers in the area became homeless. Second, under the SLORC, who forcibly relocated many villages in No. (3) District of Karenni State, and about 500 of the villagers in the area died from diseases such as malaria and diarrhea. Then in 1996, the military government again carried out its forced relocation program across the Karenni area. A forced relocation order with the deadline of July 7, was first given to villagers living between the Salween and Pon rivers, the two major rivers in Karenni State. According to the order, the villagers had to leave their villages in seven days and go to forced relocation sites designated by SPDC. The villagers were warned that seven days after the order, the area would be declared a free-fire zone, and anyone found in the villages or in the free-fire zone would be considered a rebel and shot dead on sight. In the year 2000, the SPDC allowed many Karenni people who had been living in forced relocation sites since 1996 to go back to their own villages. The villagers however, were ordered to report to the nearest SPDC outposts at least once a week. Currently, they are not allowed to stay over night at their farms, and are required to possess passes, which cost 20 kyat in order to travel to their farms during the day. Villagers are prohibited from carrying military uniforms or traditional guns used for hunting, and from trading in medicine or batteries, and the purchasing and selling of rice is restricted. Villagers are allowed to travel from village to village only twice a week-on Tuesday and Thursday. When they travel they are checked for their National ID cards, and are required to pay 20 kyat at every checkpoint.

Situation in Relocation Sites: Relocation sites have been scattered throughout the state at Shadaw, Ywathit, Mawchi, Pah Saung, Baw La Keh, Kay Lia, Mar Kraw She, Tee Po Kloh and Nwa La Bo. As more villages were relocated, more sites such as Daw Dta Hay were created. All were under complete
control of the Army, usually located adjacent to new or existing Army bases. Although living in the jungle was fraught with problems associated with the danger of the patrols and finding food to eat, some people still tried to remain there, but many gave in to the order and moved to the relocation sites. Conditions at the relocation sites were extremely basic, with the lack of proper shelters, pure drinking water, and little food or medicine contributing to many deaths from starvation and illness. At each of the large sites, there is evidence of an intention to provide health care to IDPs, either at a health facility inside the site or at a nearby health centre. In practice, however, given the general constraints to the public health system, services were not utilised well. With facilities both under-equipped and under-supplied, health care providers were often left to do the best they could. In some of the other sites, such as Htee Poh Kloh and Mar Kraw Shay, refugees said there were no health facilities at all.

Approximately, 1000 villagers in No. (1) District alone died in both forced relocation sites and hideouts. International relief organizations have no access to the sites. Leaders from a couple of local churches tried to provide food and other needed materials for the villagers in the hideouts but they were not allowed to do so. The villagers were not allowed to go out of the sites to farm. Recently, villagers from some sites have been allowed to farm outside the sites, but they must return at the end of the day. The villagers also face forced labor and portering. A certain number of villagers have to go to the nearest strongholds of the SPDC everyday where they are forced to offer free labor such as digging trenches, making fences, fetching water and collecting firewood. Women and children are also made to do forced labor.

Perimeters of the relocation sites are reportedly largely left unguarded and the fences that the villagers are often forced to build are primarily around the army camps and not the actual relocation sites. Troops are lax in securing the camp perimeters realizing that villagers have no choice but to forage for food outside the camps. This is often used by the villagers as a chance to flee the relocation site and go into hiding in the jungle, usually near their old villages. The continual flight of residents has been ongoing since the relocation sites were first established, and many villagers report that a large number of people have already left the relocation sites in search of food and that the current populations of the relocation sites are much less than what they were initially. (NCGUB, KNAHR)

By November 2000 CSW was reporting that most of the relocation camps in Karenni State, apart from the two largest at Shadow and Mawchi, had been closed down, because the SPDC could no longer supply them with food. The majority of IDPs who had been forced to live in these Relocation Camps were forbidden to return to their villages, which for the most part had been destroyed. They therefore joined the large population of nomadic IDPs trying to survive while hiding in the rain forests near the Thai border.  

[Situation of IDPs in Hiding: These villagers find their lives are in great danger as they are constantly being hunted by SPDC troops. While on the run and in hiding the villagers suffer from many kinds of diseases such as malaria, diarrhea and skin infections. Many villagers have died from treatable diseases. Villagers fall ill frequently due to lack of proper shelter. They are all the time on the move, especially when SPDC troops approach their hideouts. While on the move, villagers have to travel in all kinds of weather, sleep on the ground, eat what they find in the jungle and drink impure water. Many IDPs in hiding have also died from starvation, as most are not able to farm. These IDPs also have no access to education. Some communities in may be able to set up a kind of makeshift way for the children to study, but they cannot keep up this way of studying when attacks and hunting from the SPDC come. Killing of innocent people, destruction of villages, looting of property and making the people’s lives miserable are signs of genocide by the SPDC against the Karenni people. Shortly after the relocation orders in 1996, the military launched a campaign to find IDPs in hiding and force them into relocation sites. As part of this effort, soldiers destroyed rice supplies, domestic animals and fruit trees in the deserted villages. Two years later, in May and June of 1998, there was a further attempt at forcing IDPs into relocations sites, which caused some 87 IDPs to flee to refugee camps on the Thai border."(Source: KHRG 2000)" (NCGUB, September 2002, "Internally Displaced People and Forced Relocation")

"Much of Karenni State has been subject to SPDC’s scorched-earth policies and destruction. The majority of the villages in Shadaw region (approximately 100) and about 100 villages around Mawchi (No. 2
district), for example, have reportedly been destroyed by the SPDC troops. Meanwhile, the number of Karenni fleeing across the Thai-Burma border has diminished in 2002. The decline is a reflection that the areas closer to the border have largely been rid of their inhabitants. Meanwhile, the journey to the border is too hazardous and too far for many of those living deeper inside the country to attempt. Without international community intervention, there is a real risk that the situation in Karenni State will escalate into a de facto ethnic cleansing, or even a physical and cultural genocide."(CSW, November 2002, p. 2)

"Recent data indicate that while villagers have been displaced by fighting, it is also government-initiated development schemes, aimed at separating people from non-state groups by forcing them into relocation sites, that has resulted in most displacements since 1960s. These schemes were responsible for the wide-scale displacement of about 25,206 people in 1996 alone. Of these, 11,669 are known to have moved to relocation sites, 4,400 were registered in refugee camps and a further 9,137 unaccounted for. Since 1998, many IDPs have moved out of relocation sites back to their villages (some voluntarily, while others have been ordered back) or to refugee camps in Thailand." (BERG September 2000)

There are also reports that relocation camps are being closed down due to the inability of SPDC to supply them:

"[…] most of the Relocation Camps in Karenni State, apart from the two largest in Shadow and Mawchi, have been closed down, due to the inability of the SPDC to supply them. Most of those who had been forced to live in these Relocation Camps have been forbidden to return to their villages (most of which have been destroyed). They therefore swell the numbers of nomadic IDPs living a precarious hand-to-mouth existence in the rain forests near the Thailand border."(CSW November 2000)

"The relocation sites were scattered throughout the state at Shadaw, Ywathit, Mawchi, Pah Saung, Baw La Keh, Kay Lia, Mar Kraw She, Tee Po Kloh and Nwa La Bo. As more villages were relocated, more sites such as Daw Dta Hay were created. All were under complete control of the Army, usually located adjacent to new or existing Army bases. Although living in the jungle was fraught with problems associated with the danger of the patrols and finding food to eat, some people still tried to remain there, but many gave in to the order and moved to the relocation sites.

[…] The perimeters of the relocation sites are largely left unguarded and the fences that the villagers are often forced to build are primarily around the army camps and not the actual relocation sites. The troops are lax in securing the camp perimeters mainly because they realize that the villagers have no choice but to go and forage for food outside the camps. This opportunity is often used by the villagers to flee the relocation site and go into hiding in the jungle, usually near their old villages.

This has been ongoing since the relocation sites were first established. Many villagers have reported that large numbers of people have already left the relocation sites in search of food and that the current populations of the relocation sites are much less than what they were originally.” (NCGUB 2000, pp.142-142)

"Most of the more recent civilian population movements in Karenni involve either refugee movements across an international border or involuntary movements into relocation sites and hiding villages within the state. The broad extent of the movements show that settlement patterns within the state are fluid and constantly changing and a significant proportion of the state’s population have experienced displacement and resettlement at least once. However, other patterns of movement are also significant. So as the events of the last four years can be put in a wider perspective, five different patterns have here been defined. People who have crossed an international border — both refugees and migrants People who are currently involuntarily settled in relocation sites and gathering villages People who are still involved in a cycle of displacement, relocation and transition; including the landless and those in and out of relocation sites and hiding villages People who have never moved from their homes, either voluntarily or involuntarily People who have voluntarily moved away from their homes, either temporarily or permanently, to find work or to trade
Patterns of conflict induced displacement include:
- Displacement into State controlled areas such as relocation sites or gathering villages;
- Displacement into hills and forests surrounding the village, either to avoid threats or actual violence due to the presence of both State and non-State armies or to avoid relocation orders into State controlled areas;
- Displacement into other areas where lesser hostilities mean less harassment and generalised violence;
- Displacement into Thailand, either in refugee camps or elsewhere;
- Displacement within non-State controlled areas.

In addition to IDPs who resettled in relocation sites, a significant proportion of those who were ordered to leave their villages in 1996 are currently still displaced outside relocation sites. In the first few months following the order to relocate, there were at least 13,537 IDPs in this situation. Many of these people had initially moved into the relocation sites, but then quickly moved out either to hide in the forest, move to Thailand, or relocate further inside the region. IDPs who have since reached the refugee camps in Thailand have described their situation hiding in the forest. Forced to live in small communities of three or four families to avoid detection, some groups moved to a new location every few days. Fear of detection meant that there was likely little contact between groups in the same area and many groups avoided activities such as digging wells, building shelters or building sanitation arrangements. Immediately after displacement in 1996, attempts were made by the Tatmadaw to find and force IDPs into relocation sites. During this process, rice supplies, domestic animals and fruit trees in the deserted villages were destroyed. Two years later, in May and June of 1998, there was another attempt which resulted in some IDPs being forced into relocations sites, while some 87 IDPs arrived in the refugee camps at the Thai border. (BERG May 2000, pp. 48-49, 62-63)

Patterns of displacement in Kachin state (2003)

- Kachin IDPs attempt to re-build their communities following ceasefires in 1989 and 1994
- However, the ceasefires have been a mixed blessing for local people

"In 1989, a former pro-CPB faction, the New Democratic Army, agreed a truce with the SLORC, and in 1994 a ceasefire was eventually agreed between the government and the KIO after the intervention of local Christian leaders. Following these agreements, many long-divided communities attempted to rebuild with a new focus on development. However, the humanitarian situation remained grave." (Martin Smith/ MRG, May 2002, p. 18)

According to Global Witness:
"The ceasefires have led to a vast improvement in the human security of the average person in Kachin State. This includes a very significant decrease in the loss of life and significant decreases in the most serious human rights abuses such as forced portering, rape, and torture. In addition for the first time in three decades of war many families were able to plant crops again and come out of hiding in the jungle. There have also been small improvements in education and healthcare, freedom of movement and trade. A small number of Burmese and a handful of international NGOs have been allowed to operate in a limited way to implement health and development work. The KIO is said to have prioritised resettlement programmes for tens of thousands of displaced Kachin people but it is not certain how much resettlement has actually taken place.

However, forced labour as well as indiscriminate killing still takes place in Kachin State. There are also manifold problems with the way that the ceasefires have been implemented, that go a long way to undermining the immediate benefits derived from the cessation of fighting and may ultimately lead to the breakdown of the ceasefire agreements themselves. For instance, there are serious problems of natural resource depletion, health and land rights issues. Since the ceasefires the nature and scale of natural resource extraction has changed radically. Some of these changes may have been written into ceasefire
agreements, whilst other changes have resulted from power struggles within and between ceasefire groups and the SPDC. There is also concern about the increasing number of SPDC troops based in Kachin State. […]
It has also been reported that the NDA(K) [ceasefire group] has a policy of moving villagers down from the mountains towards roads, so that they can be resettled in larger villages. Whether this is to facilitate logging, or if it is a crude method of social control is unclear. The NDA(K) has claimed that this is done to ‘protect’ the forest from shifting cultivation carried out by the villagers. A logger from Pian Ma told Global Witness investigators that the Chinese government is helping these displaced villagers with agriculture.”(GW, October 2003, p. 97)

**Patterns of displacement in Sagaing Division (2000-2002)**

- The SPDC is creating ‘new villages’ in ethnic minority-populated areas, and relocating Burman people to live there

"In Sagaing Division, the designated administrative boundaries of the division conceal the ethnic diversity within its borders and the internal displacement which has occurred. Many Naga people, estimated to be around 100,000 strong in total, populate the four northern townships of the division, near the town of Khamti and the Patkai mountain range […]. Fighting for an independent Nagaland in both India and Burma, and facing increased internal divisions, the Naga have suffered significant conflict-related displacement. In the last six years particularly along the Khamti-Teikai road, numerous Naga villages have been displaced after fighting between SPDC and Naga insurgent forces.... It is estimated that up to 1,300 villagers have been displaced and fighting seems presently to have increased with recent reports of a military crackdown on villages in Eastern Nagaland. The construction of the Kalay-Gangaw railway line in Sagaing Division illustrates clearly that the problems of forced displacement are not only confined to the war-affected zones. The line crosses mostly flat farmland and paddy fields; these were destroyed without any compensation being paid by the national government.”(BERG, September 2000)

"Since March 2001 the State peace and Development Council in Sagaing Division has established three new villages between Kalay and Tamu town. Only Burmese Buddhists have been allowed to settle in the new villages, despite the fact that the surrounding areas have been co-inhabited by ethnic Chin and people of Shan-Bama decent. The names of the three villages are Yanmyo-Aung, Yantaing-Aung, and Yanngein-Aung. These names literally translate to mean "conquest of the enemy," and reportedly were chosen by the SPDC based on superstitious astronomical reading. The area is mostly inhabited by Chin and Shan-bamas and the surrounding the villages are surrounded by much virgin land and forest. However, the non-Burmese inhabitants in the area are prohibited from extending their farms or ploughing the virgin land. The SPDC has persuaded (Burman) people from Minkin township of Magwe division to settle in the new villages, promising them that they will be given whatever they need. Since January 2001, the SPDC authorities have seized goods and commodities from non-Burman residents, including: rice, cooking oil, bicycles, medicines and farm animals, from local traders and villagers. The SPDC than gave these stolen items to the new settlers in the three villages.”(NCGUB, September 2002, "Internally Displaced People and Forced Relocation")
PHYSICAL SECURITY & FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Protection needs of civilians after being displaced

IDPs are in an extremely vulnerable situation during the flight phase (1998-2003)

- The army actively search for fleeing civilians, who are liable to be shot on sight (massacres reported)
- IDP hiding places usually consist of just two to four families in small shelters in the forest
- Some larger sites of IDPs in hiding protected by the KNLA

"Another more recent aspect of this change in strategy is that the Burmese Army no longer just moves through an area destroying villages and fields, they now move into the area, establish their camps, bring supplies up and mount sweeps out of the camps to round up any villagers who have fled. To supply these new camps new roads are built. Often fenced, with wide killing grounds cleared on either side, protected by landmines and patrolled by troops, these roads are a formidable obstacle to fleeing villagers who need to cross them, and also confine the movements of KNLA forces.

Life on the run for the displaced villagers is very difficult, although many do prefer it to living in the relocation sites and performing forced labour at the whim of the local SPDC commander. Others were not given the choice and were forced to live on the run when their villages were burned down. The hiding places of the internally displaced villagers usually consist of no more than two to four families in small shelters in the forest, as this makes them more difficult to find by the SPDC soldiers. A few sites are much bigger with twenty or more families and have become almost like villages. Some of these larger sites have been arranged by, and to a degree supplied by, the KNU and are better protected by the KNLA. This security is by no means permanent and the villagers have to be ready to move at all times. For most displaced villagers there is little or no protection. The only warning is from villagers who have been posted on the trails around the site to give warning of the approaching columns. These ‘sentries’ are usually unarmed and they themselves have often been shot dead. The KNLA does warn the villagers if they have information about SPDC movements, but they are not always around and do not have the numbers to directly confront the SPDC columns. The villagers usually don’t wait to see the soldiers but flee as soon as they hear a gunshot or a landmine explode, whether it is nearby or not. Most of the time the villagers play a cat and mouse game with the soldiers.

Flight from the soldiers is the most difficult time for the IDPs. They are usually forced to leave most of their possessions behind, taking with them only some food, a machete, a cookpot and whatever small items they can carry. Families with small children must also carry their children when they flee. The fleeing villagers sleep on the ground until they can build huts again. Sometimes they don’t even have a tarpaulin to shield themselves from the rain. One villager described to KHRC how after placing a tarpaulin over his wife and children, he then crawled halfway into a tree to seek shelter from the rain and to sleep. The huts are usually small and temporary as the villagers know they will probably have to flee again soon anyway. Sometimes the escape routes are between two Burmese units or camps and the villagers have to move in complete silence. The adults have to cover the children’s mouths to keep them from crying and alerting the soldiers. Some of the villagers have been fleeing like this off and on since the early 1970’s and some have been living in the forest continually for five years or more.

The soldiers usually don’t call out to the villagers before they open fire. If the soldiers call out to the villagers it is usually only a split second before pulling their triggers, and the villagers are given no time to
respond. Attacks on villages and IDP hiding places are carried out as military operations, sometimes including supporting mortar fire. The soldiers sometimes arrive quietly and silently observe the villagers before attacking them, giving them ample time to see that it is unarmed villagers they are about to attack. Other times outright ambushes are laid to trap and kill the villagers. In most cases the soldiers come so close to the villagers that there can be no doubt that the people being shot at are unarmed civilians, including women, children and the elderly. Villagers automatically run whenever they see the soldiers or hear gunfire because they know that to remain would probably mean being shot, or at best being detained and tortured or taken as a porter. " (KHRG October 2001, pp. 15, 36, 37, 42-43)

"On April 21st [2002], a combined column of Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 301, LIB 416 and Infantry Battalion (IB) 78 entered Tee Tha Blu, looted houses and burned some of them, beat villager Pa Haw Su brutally and gave him a cut in the neck with a knife.

[...]

Most villagers had little choice but to move to the relocation sites or other SPDC-controlled villages, but some fled into hiding in the jungle or tried to escape to the Thai border. After the village head of Tee Law Bler in Kya In township had been given orders to move all of his villagers to Lay Wah Kah, some people fled to other villages where they had relatives, while others decided to make a run for Thailand. Together with some families who had fled Noh Ta Sghu and Meh K'Taw villages further north in Kya In township, one group set out toward Thailand on April 28th and spent the night in a group of ricefield huts not far along the way, at K'Ray Dtab Kee. A column from Infantry Battalion 78 was nearby, discovered them sleeping in the huts, and without investigating who was inside the troops unleashed a barrage of fire into the huts. Ten people were shot dead, six of them children: [...]" (KHRG, 25-9-2002, paras 8-9)

"Villagers killed while in hiding: In April 2001, a group of soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion 548 and 549 led by Company Commander Aung KHain Soe arrived at the hiding area of a group of IDPS, between Wah Blaw Lu and Ta Kaw Htee, in Kya Aye Township, Doo Pla Ya District and opened fire on the people hiding there. Two villagers were killed and another two escaped after being wounded. (Source: CIDKP)

[...]

The villagers in the forest live in small groups of one to seven families. Smaller numbers of people in one place means it is easier for them to hide when SPDC troops come near. Villagers are shot on sight if they are seen by the soldiers, so the villagers run whenever Burmese patrols come near. The SPDC’s campaign against the villagers in the area began in earnest in the dry season of 1997 when the SPDC units were ordered to burn the villages east of the Day Loh River and north of the Kler Lah-Bu Sah Kee car road. Having done that, the battalions were ordered in 1998 to destroy the fields. This was to deny the villagers still hiding near their villages any means of growing food. [...] According to the KNU, orders have been given to the SPDC units in Tantabin township to find the hill fields and huts and burn them all as well as to plant landmines in the hill fields and shoot dead any villagers they see. The military wants to force the villagers to come down out of the mountains to the relocation sites in order to deny the KNU a support base, while also bringing the civilians under direct control and making them available for forced labor. However, most of the villagers have already lived in the relocation sites or have heard about conditions there, so they are determined to hold out in the hills." (NCGUB, September 2002, "Internally Displaced People and Forced Relocation")

Displaced women suffer from army’s widespread use of sexual violence in the Shan state and other conflict areas (2002)

- Women and children terrorized by army soldiers in emergency zones and relocation sites (2000-2002)
- Burmese military regime is allowing its troops systematically and on a widespread scale to commit rape with impunity
- Majority of rape cases in the areas of Central Shan State where the rural populations have been forcibly relocated, but victims also from the Karen, Karenni, Mon, and Tavoyan nationalities.
6% of the rape incidents documented in this report occurred while the villagers were in the process of being forcibly relocated and another 6% within relocation sites.

"Rather than look to the Tatmadaw for protection, women from the ethnic nationalities flee in fear at the sight of a soldier. A recent investigation by the Women’s Rights Project and Refugees International documents the widespread use of rape by Burma’s soldiers to brutalize women from five different ethnic nationalities.

During the month of September 2002, the WRP/ERI, in collaboration with Refugees International, conducted a month-long investigation into rape in Burma perpetrated by the military. This project was motivated by a report issued by the Shan Women’s Action Network (SWAN) and Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) in June 2002 entitled License to Rape, documenting the rapes of at least 625 Shan women by Burma’s soldiers over a period over five years, from 1996 to 2001. Despite the fact that rape by soldiers in Burma has been a well-known, well-documented phenomenon for at least a decade, the License to Rape report inspired a level of interest and outrage on the part of the international community not previously directed against the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), Burma’s ruling military regime. SWAN and SHRF are to be commended for their excellent work documenting these brutal abuses. ERI supports their efforts and is gratified to see that the problem of rape in Burma is getting the attention it deserves.

We were outraged by the report as well, but, unfortunately, not surprised. In 1998, after an intensive investigation into gender-based abuses committed by the Burmese army (the Tatmadaw in the Burmese language), we issued a report entitled School for Rape: The Burmese Military and Sexual Violence. This report examined some of the structures, policies, and practices of the Tatmadaw, and concluded that many of these contributed to both the likelihood and the prevalence of rape by soldiers against women from Burma’s ethnic nationalities, in particular. Based on our previous research for that and other reports issued over the intervening four years, as well as the regular contact we have with refugee women from Burma, we knew that the rape of Shan women is an enormous tragedy. We also knew that it is just a part of the problem. We wanted to make sure that the international community understood the full extent to which the army of Burma abuses the human rights of that country’s women. We wanted to not only confirm that Shan women face sexual violence on a regular basis, but also to expand the scope of the investigation to confirm that the military abuses women from other ethnic minority groups in Burma as well.

Over the course of a month, we conducted interviews with individuals, focus groups, indigenous NGOs, and local leaders. We talked to more than 150 people about sexual violence against women perpetrated by Burma’s armed forces—people living in refugee camps, outside of camps in villages, and people still living in Burma. We spoke with women and men, former and current soldiers, recent arrivals and long-time refugees. In particular, we conducted 26 individual interviews with women from 5 different ethnic groups, 1 interview with a Burmese army defector, and 2 focus groups comprised of a total of 45 women. In the individual interviews, we learned of 41 cases of rape, and were able to confirm 24 of those cases through testimony from victims or eyewitnesses. In 7 cases, the perpetrator raped the woman or women on military property, and in 8 cases, the perpetrator was an officer in Burma’s army. Members of the Burmese army proved to be equal opportunity rapists, raping women from the Karen, Karenni, Shan, Mon, and Tavoyan nationalities.

[...] Rape is not confined to Shan State. It is widespread throughout the ethnic eastern States.
Rape by Burmese army members may be systematic. The Tatmadaw’s routine discrimination against both ethnic nationalities and women may constitute the kind of preconceived plan or policy necessary to characterize the rape as systematic.
Rape and increased militarization go hand-in-hand. When more soldiers are deployed, typically more rape occurs.
Rape sometimes occurs on military property (i.e. in military bases, in military barracks, and in military jails). In those cases where the officer wasn’t actually committing the offense on military property, he knew or should have known about these offenses.

Rape often occurs in conjunction with other human rights abuses, such as forced labor, forced relocation, forced portering, torture, and extrajudicial executions.

There is a direct connection between rape and migration. Many women flee Burma either because they have been raped, or because they fear being raped. In addition, rape sometimes occurs while women are in flight.

Widespread rape is committed with impunity, both by officers and lower ranking soldiers. Officers committed the majority of rapes documented in our interviews in which the rank of the perpetrator was known. The culture of impunity contributes to the military atmosphere in which rape is permissible. It also leads to the conclusion that the system for protecting civilians is faulty, which may serve as proof that the rape is systematic.

Due to the well-known impunity for rape, survivors and families are extremely reluctant to complain about rape. In the rare cases where victims do complain, the military often responds with violence." (EarthRights International, 26 November 2002)

"This report details 173 incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence, involving 625 girls and women, committed by Burmese army troops in Shan State, mostly between 1996 and 2001. It should be noted that due to the stigma attached to rape, many women do not report incidents of sexual violence. Incidents may also not have reached SHRF, as information on human rights abuses in Shan State is gained from refugees arriving at the Thai-Burma border. Therefore the figures in this report are likely to be far lower than the reality.

The report reveals that the Burmese military regime is allowing its troops systematically and on a widespread scale to commit rape with impunity in order to terrorize and subjugate the ethnic peoples of Shan State. The report illustrates there is a strong case that war crimes and crimes against humanity, in the form of sexual violence, have occurred and continue to occur in Shan State.

The report gives clear evidence that rape is officially condoned as a 'weapon of war' against the civilian populations in Shan State. There appears to be a concerted strategy by the Burmese army troops to rape Shan women as part of their anti-insurgency activities. The incidents detailed were committed by soldiers from 52 different battalions. 83% of the rapes were committed by officers, usually in front of their own troops. The rapes involved extreme brutality and often torture such as beating, mutilation and suffocation. 25% of the rapes resulted in death, in some incidences with bodies being deliberately displayed to local communities. 61% were gang-rapes; women were raped within military bases, and in some cases women were detained and raped repeatedly for periods of up to 4 months. Out of the total 173 documented incidents, in only one case was a perpetrator punished by his commanding officer. More commonly, the complainants were fined, detained, tortured or even killed by the military.

[...]

The maps accompanying this report [...] show clearly that the majority of rape cases documented (76%) were in the areas of Central Shan State where the rural populations have been forcibly relocated.

The Burmese military regime has long had a practice of forcibly relocating villages in rural areas in order to prevent local people from providing support to resistance armies. The most extensive forced relocation program in Shan State (which is continuing until the present) was carried out between 1996-1997, when the regime ordered over 1,400 villages (over 300,000 rural people, mostly farmers) to move at gunpoint to strategic relocation sites near main roads and Burmese army bases. These villagers, deprived of their lands and livelihoods, were given no support at all by the regime, and many were forced to become day labourers or beggars. As a result, an estimated 150,000 Shans have fled to Thailand to try and survive as migrant labourers. Tens of thousands have hidden in the forests near their old villages.

[...]

85
When villagers were forcibly relocated, they were usually given a verbal or written order to move out of their village within a specified number of days (in most cases 3-7 days). They were told that if they were found in their village after the deadline, they would be shot on sight. However, in a number of cases, the regime's troops did not even wait until the deadline, and began inflicting violence on the villagers either immediately after the relocation orders were given, or while the villagers were in the process of moving. Violence inflicted on the villagers included beatings and other forms of torture, and being burned alive in their houses. It also included rape.

6% of the rape incidents documented in this report occurred while the villagers were in the process of being forcibly relocated.

It is ironic that 6% of the rape incidents took place actually within the relocation sites, where villagers are supposed to be "safe" if they obey the orders of the Burmese military. This indicates clearly that the regime's troops were so sure of impunity with regard to rape, that they did not even need a pretext of "punishment" to commit rape. The proximity of most of the relocation sites to the Burmese military bases thus increased the vulnerability of the relocated villagers to rape.” (SHRF/SWAN May 2002, pp.1, 15, 18)

Previous reports:
"There have been reports of the beatings, rape and killing of women who have remained in villages after relocation deadlines have expired. Relocated villagers have been moved to relocation sites with inadequate provisions and medical care, and labour sites where they are made to participate in labour projects for the military, and are required to provide their own food.” (AI 17 July 2001)

“Forced relocation is not a practice directly at women because of their gender. Nonetheless, the impact of forced relocation is often more deleterious to women because frequently women bear the brunt of relocating and caring for the family under difficult and changing circumstances.”(NCGUB 2000, p.267)

Amnesty International's report (May 2000) on the plight of women in Myanmar also includes information on human rights violations against ethnic minority women.

Reports of people experiencing human rights abuses after being forced to move to relocation sites (2000-2003)

- Reports of relocated people searching for food outside their relocation areas being killed
- People at the relocation sites are being used by the SPDC troops as porters for carrying military supplies as well as build and maintain army camps

In 2003 a Burma Issues researcher interviewed relocated IDPs who were detained by the Burmese Army in the Kamoethway Area, Tenasserim Division:
"In 51% of cases torture was used upon those detained. 91% of cases involved arbitrary detention and in 22% of cases the victim was extrajudicially killed. 40% of those who were arbitrarily detained were confined to a military base. Another 40% were detained in various structures within their village such as temples, schools and other villagers’ houses. Victims either died or were killed in custody, or were detained for days, months or indefinitely, with some disappearing without a trace. All forms of treatment violated international legal instruments designed to protect people’s basic rights. In many cases torture was used to extract information and confessions of guilt. It was also used as a deterrent.

This report finds that in all cases no legal or judicial procedures were complied with when carrying out these detentions. In only three of the 46 cases were those accused formally charged. These three, and the other 43 cases, received no fair trial. The ethnic areas of Burma are administered under an illegitimate military rule where the Burmese military acts as its own judicial and policing system. This allows the perpetration of numerous human rights abuses and political oppression within a culture of impunity.
The SPDC has frequently used the presence of armed and political opposition groups in these areas as justification for its abuses. The SPDC has deliberately targeted the civilian population in its attempts to eradicate these non-Burman ethnic nationality opposition groups.

The Burmese military often accuses villagers of having a relative who is a member of a non-Burman ethnic nationality opposition group. The accusation implies that families should take responsibility for other family members' actions. This creates division amongst families and uses family members as bait to capture those who are members of non-Burman ethnic nationality opposition groups. Villagers are repeatedly targeted if they are known to have a relative who is a member of a non-Burman ethnic nationality opposition group. They are often drilled for information regarding the activities and movements of the relative and his/her group. Many villagers revealed that this continual harassment caused them to flee their villages and was a major cause for family displacement. Families would be split up and those that were members were often restricted in their ability to see their families again. (BI/ ALTSEAN, August 2003, p. 15)

IDPs in the Shan State face similar conditions in the relocation sites:

"Those in relocation sites must fear the violence of SPDC troops at all times. Villagers are terrified of leaving the site for fear of being beaten, raped, or killed. Across Shan State the testimonies of people living inside relocation sites echoes a palpable fear of soldiers, who have taken people off the streets of relocation sites and beaten them in surrounding forests. Many families, particularly the men, hide when they hear that soldiers are coming through the camps for fear that they will be captured for use as military porters. Forced labour is a constant burden for all villagers in the relocation sites; the SPDC has forced civilians to build military camps, roads, and railways across Shan State since the mass relocation operation began in 1996. The time required to work for the military is also a major factor preventing people from farming their own fields or earning money to feed their families." (KHRG 5 April 2000)

Safety of IDPs in Mon cease-fire areas undermined in 2002 as army clashed with Mon breakaway group

"Although the New Mon State Party (N MSP) agreed a cease-fire with the then State Law and Order Restoration Council in June 1995, a few smaller groups have broken away from the NMSP and continue to fight against the tatmadaw. The NMSP still maintains four cease-fire areas in the Mon State, and is also present in townships outside their cease-fire areas. In addition a small number of Karen National Union (KNU) troops engage in skirmishes with the Myanmar army in the Tanintharyi Division and the Mon State. As a result, civilians in the areas where these groups operate are at risk of being taken as porters for the tatmadaw when they are on patrol in the countryside, and also of interrogation about the armed groups' whereabouts.

The most recent among the Mon breakaway groups is the Hongsawatoi Restoration Party, and its armed wing the Monland Restoration Army. These were founded in November 2001 by former NMSP Colonel Nai Pan Nyunt, who is believed to have 100 - 150 troops. In May 2002 the Monland Restoration Army and the NMSP began fighting in the Mon State, just across from Sangklaburi District of Kanchanaburi Province of Thailand.(19) As a result the security situation in Halockanee, one of the four NMSP cease-fire areas which houses thousands of internally displaced people, has deteriorated. In late November 2001 Htee Wah Doh, a settlement of Karen internally displaced people adjacent to Halockanee, was burned by the tatmadaw because of the presence of the Mon Restoration Army, causing hundreds of Karen civilians to flee to Halockanee.(20) In addition other Mon armed groups are fighting against the tatmadaw in different areas of the Mon State and Tanintharyi Division. (AI 17 July 2002, p.21)

As of October 2003 it appeared that this situation had stabilised
Inadequate protection both within and outside Karenni relocation sites (2000)

- State authorities have not responded when abuses in relocation sites have been reported
- Lack of safe sleeping quarters for unmarried women, female-headed households and unaccompanied children
- Leaving passes being issued but movements outside relocation sites involves high risk

"Interviews with refugees have shown that there have been attacks on both men and women including rapes, both in relocation sites, and just outside. Refugee accounts make it clear that while they may have been protected against non-State armies in the relocation sites, they were much more vulnerable to the abuses of State forces against which they could do very little. In one case, security was provided by the KNDA. Barbed wire fencing and the establishment by the State of civilian sentry guards in some sites provided no protection in this sense and when abuses were reported to State authorities, they were largely not taken up. In addition, there appears to have been little or no provision of safe sleeping quarters for unmarried women, female-headed households and unaccompanied children. Insufficient rations meant that many women were compelled to supplement their food from forests or small farmed plots outside the camp, during which they were more vulnerable to attacks.

At each site, IDPs were able to leave the site with a leaving pass; in some places this was issued by the authorities responsible at the site, while in other cases the village headman issued it. Leaving passes brought by refugees to the Thai border were issued to the senior male member of each household with other members listed on the pass rather than being issued with their own passes. This would make non-household heads, particularly women more vulnerable to suspicion and reprisals if they were found alone outside the relocation site or separated from their families during the displacement process. The lack of individual passes, if practised on a large-scale basis, would handicap monitoring and protection efforts.

The leaving passes permit IDPs to stay out of the camp on a daily basis (in other cases on a weekly basis) to tend crops, collect forest products or do labouring on land in areas where the local population have not been relocated. However, in some cases people were ordered to provide forced labour for local army camps so frequently that they were unable to grow crops or work elsewhere. In addition, there were incidents of violence against IDPs outside the camp, or in some cases accusations that they had contacted armed groups when they returned to the camp." (BERG May 2000, pp. 56-57)

"The military also restricted Shadaw residents' [in the Karenni state] freedom of movement. Although they were allowed to leave the camp, they could only travel within a five mile radius or risk being shot on sight. A 50-year-old animist farmer who escaped from Shadaw in January 1999 told Amnesty International that one of his acquaintances had been shot in the shoulder when he returned to his old village to find food. He was completely deaf and could not speak so he was not aware of the five mile rule. Because his family paid for treatment at the clinic he survived his injury. Another former Shadaw resident, a 32-year-old Buddhist farmer, said that he was caught by the military in July 1998 when he had returned to his home village in Shadaw township, and was working on his farm. He was threatened with a knife and interrogated about KNPP troop movements. His wrists were tied behind his back for one and one half days before he escaped. Another man from Shadaw township was arrested by Light Infantry Battalion 428 in July 1998 when he returned to his village for a traditional animist ceremony. He was beaten all over his body, put in stocks, and only freed the next day after his headman vouched for his innocence." (AI June 1999, "Kayah State")

Landmines have increasingly become a threat to the civilian population (2001-2003)

- Nine out of fourteen states and divisions in Burma are mine-affected, with a heavy concentration in eastern Burma
• At least fifteen ethnic armed groups are believed to use antipersonnel mines and endanger the life of the civil population
• The use of anti-personnel mines is common in the Karen State, and has increased dramatically in recent years
• Landmines placed on trails used by the villagers to restrict their movements
• Villages often mined by the SPDC soldiers after the villagers flee to prevent the villagers from returning
• Armed ethnic groups use landmines to protect base areas - & civilian (IDP) populations
• Reports of villager porters in Toungoo District [Karen State] being forced to walk in front of SPDC soldiers because of the mine danger

According to Landmine Monitor, landmines are planted by the Burmese Army, and also by opposition groups:
"Myanmar’s military has continued laying landmines. At least 15 rebel groups also used mines, two more than last year: the New Mon State Party and the Hongsawatoi Restoration Party. […]"

Mine Ban Policy
Myanmar’s ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) has not acceded to the Mine Ban Treaty. Myanmar abstained from voting on the pro-Mine Ban Treaty UN General Assembly Resolution 57/74 in November 2002.

On 17 February 2003, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Rangoon hosted a Briefing Session on Landmine Issues in Myanmar, which was attended by representatives from five UN agencies and eleven international and local NGOs. The session was organized to discuss the landmine crisis with Nobel Peace Laureate Jody Williams, ICBL Coordinator Liz Bernstein, and the Landmine Monitor Burma/Myanmar researcher. The UNDP stated that attendance was the highest of any of the thematic meetings held within the UN compound and this suggests the level of concern regarding this issue. UN agencies are at present considering moves to implement their mandate on the mine ban with all the interested parties within the country.

Production, Transfer, Stockpiling
Myanmar has been producing at least three types of antipersonnel mines: MM1, MM2, and Claymore-type mines. […]

Use
Myanmar’s military forces have used landmines extensively throughout the long running civil war. Previous editions of Landmine Monitor Report have identified the units responsible and the locations of most significant use. During this reporting period, it appears that mines were laid most extensively in Karen State. In the Pa-an District in Karen State, villagers stated that SPDC soldiers laid mines on all easy approaches to their camps, and that every camp had a 50-meter landmine risk radius. […]

Non-State Actors
Burma has a large number of armed political organizations operating within its borders. At least fifteen ethnic and rebel armed groups are believed to have used antipersonnel mines recently. These include: the Pao People’s Liberation Front; All Burma Muslim Union; Wa National Army; Rohingya Solidarity Organization; Chin National Army; Shan State Army; United Wa State Army; Karenni Army; Karen National Liberation Army; Democratic Karen Buddhist Army; All Burma Students Democratic Front; People’s Defence Forces; and Myiek-Dawei United Front. In addition, two groups using mines for the first time during 2002 are the New Mon State Party (NMSP), previously only reported to be holding stocks but not using them due to their agreement to cease hostilities with the SPDC, and the Hongsawatoi Restoration Party, itself an NMSP splinter group.
The Rohingya Solidarity Organization allegedly laid mines in late 2002 in their operational area along the Burma/Bangladesh border. The Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) is believed to maintain at least two extensive minefields in the Pa-an district of Karen State; the KNLA states that the mines are needed to protect internally displaced Karen people (estimated to be hundreds of thousands) from attacks by the Myanmar Army.

Several armed militias are capable of building blast and fragmentation mines or victim-activated improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The DKBA now manufacturing a Claymore-type directional fragmentation mine. […]

Landmine Problem
Nine out of fourteen states and divisions in Burma are mine-affected, with a heavy concentration in East Burma. Mines have been laid heavily in the Eastern Pegu Division in order to prevent insurgents from reaching central Burma. Mines have also been laid extensively to the east of the area between Swegin and Kyawgyi.

The Dawna mountain range and Moi riverside close to the Thai-Burma border is reportedly heavily mined. Some mountains in Karen State, formerly used as fire bases by the KNLA, have been "no go"areas for over a decade due to severe mine infestation. Areas to the north, east, and south of Papun and to the west, south, and north of Myawadi are heavily mine-affected, as well as areas in the Dooplaya District of Karen State bordering on Thailand.

The Myanmar Army lays mines close to areas of civilian activity allegedly to prevent people from returning to their native villages after forced eviction during counterinsurgency campaigns. Interview records with mine survivors show that more than 14 percent are injured within half a kilometer of village centers. The same records reveal that 63 percent of civilian survivors crossed the area they were injured in many times before they stepped on the mine.

Mines have been laid along much of the Bangladesh/Burma border (see previous Landmine Monitor reports), which remain in the ground and continue to claim victims despite continued diplomatic protests by Bangladesh. Some areas of the India/Burma border are also mined.

Some Karen villages in the Pa-an District have had to re-locate three times after being burnt and mined. Villagers in this area were able to identify six different types of mines. […]

Atrocity Demining
SPDC military units operating in areas suspected of mine contamination have repeatedly been accused of forcing people, compelled to serve as porters, to walk in front of patrols in order to detonate mines. In November 2002 in northern Karen State, villagers claimed they had to send two new people each morning to check puddles with their hands for landmines. They said that the military used villagers to sweep for mines rather than equipment because this would deter the rebels from laying them. In the same area in November and December 2002, villagers reported having to roll drums of tar for 6 to 8 miles a day along a roadway to trigger any mines.

Survivor Assistance Within NSA Areas or Among the Internally Displaced
In areas close to its borders where ethnic-based militias may control or access territory, some minimal care is provided by relief and medical teams attached to the NSAs. The Back Pack Health Worker Team (BPHWT) also provides some emergency care for casualties in NSA-controlled areas of Mon, Karen, Karenni, and Shan States.

The Trauma Care Foundation Burma (TCFB) has sought to establish a ‘chain of survival’ network within non-SPDC accessible or controlled sections of Burma to improve pre-hospital survival possibilities for the war injured. […]
The Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People (CIDKP) runs a prosthetics workshop in the Kho Kay area of Karen State. In 2002, 29 amputees were fitted with prostheses; all but two were landmine survivors. Medical organizations such as BPHWT refer mine survivors to the CIDKP workshop. (LM, 9 September 2003, ‘Myanmar Chapter’, paras 1, 3, 5-6, 9-11, 12-18, 20, 23, 25, 35-36 & 38)

"The SPDC has not acceded to the Mine Ban Treaty and abstained from voting on the pro-mine ban treaty UN General Assembly Resolution 56/24M in 2001. There is no de-mining activity within Burma, and survivors of landmines receive no compensation and are in fact often required to pay for their own treatment and the cost of the mine to local officials. There are consistent reports of Burma army units forcing non-Burmese ethnic minority populations or people serving as porters to walk in front of the soldiers to detonate mines, thus acting as ‘human minesweepers’."(FMO, 2003, pp. 17-18)

"Another threat to life which Karen civilians face in the northern Kayin State is the high number of anti-personnel landmines which are planted by both the tatmadaw and the KNU. Several of those interviewed by Amnesty International reported the deaths of relatives and associates after they had stepped on mines, many of whom bled to death after receiving no medical treatment. The use of anti-personnel mines is common in the Kayin State, and has increased dramatically in recent years. Amnesty International opposes the manufacture and planting of anti-personnel mines as indiscriminate weapons which all too frequently result in civilian casualties. […]

Several refugees from Papun and Nyaunglebin Districts described deaths of fellow villagers after accidentally stepping on anti-personnel mines. In recent years the use of landmines by the KNU and the SPDC has reportedly dramatically increased, and unmarked and uncleared minefields have become a grave concern. However there are no mine clearance programs in Myanmar, nor any known mine awareness campaigns. (AI 13 June 2001)

"Landmines are extensively used by both the SPDC and the KNLA in the hills of the two districts [Nyaunglebin and Papun]. A tactic used by SPDC soldiers which is becoming more and more common is the placing of landmines in deserted villages and in the hill fields. Villages are often mined by the SPDC soldiers after the villagers flee to prevent the villagers from returning, and the landmining of the fields prevents the harvest of those fields or any future use of the fields until the mines have been cleared. Burned villages are sometimes landmined because the soldiers know the displaced villagers will return to forage for their belongings. Abandoned villages are sometimes landmined instead of being burned. Landmines have been placed next to people’s houses and even at the foot of the ladders up into houses. The use of landmines has become so common and the fear of them so great that villagers are unwilling to go back to their villages after the soldiers have been there out of fear of them. […]

Landmines are also placed on trails used by the villagers to restrict their movements. This is especially so on trails which the SPDC knows the villagers are using to get rice and other supplies. Some are buried, while others are attached to a trip wire which has been strung across a trail. Landmines have also been used as booby-traps. In one instance a woman was raped and then killed by an SPDC officer. A landmine was then placed beside her body which later killed her brother who had come to find her. […]

Neither side, however, keeps maps of where their mines are laid. The KNLA tries to tell villagers which pathways are mined, but their efforts always prove insufficient. The result is that while most villagers are killed or wounded on SPDC mines, many also step on those laid by the KNLA."(KHRG October 2001, pp53, 54)

"The continued use of landmines is a very real problem for the civilians of Toungoo District [Karen State]. Villager porters continue to be forced to walk in front of SPDC soldiers down the Kler Lah-Bu Sah Kee road, and casualties from the landmines on this road are not infrequent. SPDC troops have been planting landmines on paths frequented by villagers and internally displaced persons (IDPs) on their usual routes to purchase food or to collect water. In some cases they have even been known to lay landmines in the villagers’ plantations or in the villages themselves after the villagers have been relocated, with the apparent
aim of killing IDPs still in the area and preventing relocated villagers from returning home. In an interview with a KHRG field researcher, a villager said that after planting landmines around the Kler Lah relocation site, the SPDC posted notices in front of the village, declaring that landmines had been laid in the area. The villager believed that this was carried out so as to legitimise their use." (KHRG, 16 June 2003)

**Lack of protection for returning refugees**

**Concerns over safety of refugees forcibly repatriated from Thailand (2003)**

- Numerous instances of Thai authorities - and particularly Royal Thai Army Ninth Division - forcibly returning refugees and asylum seekers to insecure location,
- Repatriated refugees generally have with no access to humanitarian assistance
- In 200 Human Rights Watch warns against repatriation of Burmese refugees in Thailand

"The Asian Legal Resource Centre … has become particularly concerned by the tendency of neighbouring countries to forcibly repatriate persons crossing the border from Myanmar, in utter disregard to the circumstances from which they have fled, and in violation of international legal principles on forcible repatriation. In its written statement on extrajudicial killings of migrant workers and impunity in Thailand to the fifty-ninth session of the Commission, the Asian Legal Resource Centre has noted a growing tendency by the authorities in Thailand to treat all people arriving from Myanmar as "illegal migrants". With already around 140,000 persons from Myanmar languishing in refugee camps that were first established in 1984, and with perhaps at least a million more elsewhere within its borders, it is understandable that the Government of Thailand is reluctant to simply open its doors to all-comers. Notwithstanding, there have been numerous flagrant instances of the Thai army forcing small numbers of genuine refugees back into conditions of extreme danger.

In one illustrative case recently brought to the attention of the Asian Legal Resource Centre, 63 persons who attempted to gain sanctuary in Thailand during late 2001 were forcibly repatriated by troops of the Thai Ninth Infantry Division. The group--comprising 15 families and including many children and the elderly--had fled from a forced relocation site. They reportedly had at first tried to eke out a living in the jungle, but were located by Myanmar army troops and were forced to flee again after one of their members was shot. An elderly woman died along the way, and many others were seriously ill and chronically malnourished on their arrival at the border--a fact admitted to by the commander of the Ninth Infantry Division when indicating that he had permitted the group to stay and receive medical assistance for two weeks. Presumably the commander felt this an adequate humanitarian gesture towards starving and frightened children, after which they were forcibly sent back into Myanmar. The commander rejected the group's right to asylum on the grounds that--in accordance with strict policy--it was not actually fleeing from fighting. The group was taken by truck, without the presence of representatives of the High Commissioner for Refugees or other independent agencies, and deposited in another equally insecure location on the Myanmar side of the border. In early January 2002, some members of the group are believed to have again desperately tried to enter Thailand, this time to be refused entry outright by the Ninth Infantry Division. The group has since scattered into the jungle and has been lost to the outside world.

The above account is supported by numerous other documented cases indicating remarkably similar series of events, in total involving hundreds if not thousands of people over the last few years. The Ninth Infantry Division has in particular been implicated in many of these incidents, and its commander has not been afraid to voice his contempt for those coming as refugees, nor express his willingness to send them back by force at every available opportunity and without any outside involvement. The Asian Legal Resource Centre is also extremely concerned by an as yet unconfirmed report that 55 men, consisting of 19 former
members of an armed group and 36 civilians, have been disappeared by the Ninth Infantry Division. It is similarly concerned by recent credible reports of forced repatriation of political opponents to the military regime where at least 15 of those sent back have been disappeared by the Myanmar authorities, and are believed to have been summarily executed."(Asian Legal Resource Centre, 30 January 2003)

HRW concerned in 2000:
"Although the Thai government has said privately and publicly that it will not pursue repatriation of refugees under unsafe conditions, the Thai National Security Council (NSC) since July 1999 has publicly announced that the government plans to repatriate all Burmese refugees within the next three years. The public messages may in part be rhetoric aimed at the Thai public, but there have been some worrisome developments that give the impression that the government may be laying the groundwork for repatriation or that some local officials have misinterpreted the intent of the national government.

Action on the subject of repatriation has over the past two months taken two directions. First, the NSC has asked UNHCR to approach Burma's ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) to propose setting up sites in Burma to protect and assist displaced Burmese so that they will not have to cross the border. UNHCR has requested access to these areas. The Burmese government has denied access thus far but has indicated that UNHCR could be allowed access at an undefined later date. Any return of Burmese refugees at this time would unequivocally expose them to manipulation or attack by the Burmese army. The Thai government needs to issue a clear directive to provincial authorities that any repatriation must be voluntary and accompanied by protection monitoring by UNHCR in Thailand and Burma. "(HRW June 2000)


- Rohingya refugees repatriated from UNHCR-run camps in Bangladesh, often under considerable pressure from the authorities
- International observers concerned about security of Rohingya refugees returning from Bangladesh as human rights situation is difficult to monitor
- More than 212,000 returned to Burma under a controversial UNHCR supported repatriation program during 1992-1995
- Forced labour, portering and forcible relocations under harsh conditions continue to be reported

"In May 2003, the number of refugees being repatriated [from Bangladesh] rose dramatically (704 people in May against 93 in April). At the same time, disturbing reports denouncing forced repatriation, intimidation and coercion suddenly began pouring out of the two Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh. Such complaints had started filtering out in October 2002, decreased for a while, then began shooting up again in May 2003. This sharp increase in incidents follows the announcement, earlier this year, of a UNHCR plan to phase out its responsibilities for the camps and to disengage from the repatriation process after 30 June 2003. As a result, the Bangladesh authorities are now speeding up the repatriation of refugees cleared by the Burmese Immigration, regardless as to whether they are willing or not.

[...] The root causes of the continuing influx of Rohingya lie across the border in Burma. As a result of the Burmese regime’s policies of exclusion, the Rohingya Muslims are stateless under the 1982 Citizenship Law. They are subjected to severe restrictions of movement, which affect their ability to trade and to seek employment as well as limit their access to health care and education. They need to obtain a travel permit even to visit a neighbouring village and, following the communal riots in Sittwe in February 2001, travel authorisations were no longer issued for Rohingyas to go beyond Maungdaw and Buthidaung. Sittwe is now totally off limits to them."
Arbitrary confiscation of land without compensation continues, either to provide land for new Buddhist settlers or to build and enlarge military camps, including plantations to grow crops for the military for their own food as well as for commercial purposes. In 2002, at least two new "model village" for Buddhist settlers were established in Maungdaw Township and several military camps have been constructed or expanded to consolidate the border between Burma and Bangladesh in the aftermath of the September 11 attack and the global anti-terrorist campaign.

As documented by the ILO in early 2003, forced labour is far from being eradicated in Northern Arakan State, even though there has been a significant reduction in the practice over the last decade after UNHCR and WFP [World Food Program] took over responsibility for building local road infrastructure. Compulsory labour continues to be exacted by the military and the NaSaKa for camp maintenance, construction of military facilities, as well as for plantation work in fields confiscated from the villagers. Villagers are also forced to build and repair the houses of Buddhist settlers. Sentry duty is routinely demanded from villagers, and porters are regularly recruited in remote areas. Other types of labour are also requisitioned for the commercial benefit of the military and NaSaKa -- work such as shrimp farm maintenance, collecting bamboo and wood for sale, brick baking, etc. The poor cannot pay bribes to avoid forced labour and are thus compelled to perform not only their own stint of work, but also that of those who had paid off the authorities. The related loss of income deprives them of their daily earnings and greatly contributes to food insecurity. During the first quarter of 2003, new allegations of forced labour for rehabilitation of roads and military facilities as well as for brick baking have been reported.

Illegal taxation and extortion are widely and increasingly reported. In particular, Rohingya need to obtain permission to get married, and the large fee demanded is beyond the means of many. The tactic of arresting people for minor offences or just for being out after dark and demanding high bribes in return for their release appears to have become common practice recently. Moreover, the military control over the local economy, both directly through collection of taxes at checkpoints and from the border trade, and indirectly through a monopoly system on local commodities based on business licences granted in exchange for high bribes, forbids any free-enterprise initiative and hampers any economic development.

The Rohingya in Northern Arakan State continue to face constant humiliation and systematic discrimination, and are subject to widespread human rights violations. They are living in a climate of fear and oppression. Despite the presence of UNHCR and international agencies, conditions have hardly improved. As one NGO representative in Rangoon recently stated: ‘The presence of UNHCR and some international NGOs has only provided limited relief, but not a structural change.’”(Forum Asia, 15 June 2003, p. 5 & 10)

According to UNHCR, 231,000 of the 250,000 Rohingya who fled the Northern Rakhine State to Bangladesh had returned as of September 2000. While UNHCR has established a reintegration programme, UNDP oversees a multi-sectoral integrated development plan for the area. (UNHCR 2001 Global Appeal, p. 166)

"About 250,000 Rohingya refugees fled to Bangladesh during 1991-1992. More than 212,000 returned to Burma under a controversial UNHCR supported repatriation program during 1992-1995, which USCR and many other observers did not consider truly voluntary. […]
During 1997-1998, almost 30,000 new Rohingya fled to Bangladesh. Bangladesh did not recognize them as refugees." (USCR 1999)

"At year's end, there were still 21,000 Rohingya Muslims remaining in refugee camps in Bangladesh. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) repatriation program, which since 1992 had succeeded in returning approximately 238,000 refugees to Burma and originally had been scheduled to end on August 15, 1997, halted prematurely when the Rohingyas as a group rejected repatriation and demanded resettlement in Bangladesh. While the Government agreed to resume repatriation of those remaining, this repatriation is proceeding extremely slowly.
The Rohingyas refused to return because they feared human rights abuses, including religious persecution and other government restrictions. The UNHCR reported that the Government cooperated in investigating isolated incidents of renewed abuse of repatriated citizens. However, returnees face severe and increasing restrictions imposed by the Government on their ability to travel and to engage in economic activity." (US DOS 25 February 2000, sect. 2d)

Appendix VII of the 1998 ILO report on forced labour contains numerous summaries of testimonies from individuals who describe the use of forced labour as well as the human rights situation in general.

See also: "Forced Relocations, Displacement and Abuse of Muslims the Rakhine State and other areas (1997-2003)

More reading:
HRW(July 2002): "Crackdown on Burmese Muslims"
BCN ‘Caught Between a Crocodile and a Snake: The Increasing Pressure on Rohingyas in Burma and Bangladesh & The Impacts of the Changing Policy of UNHCR’, April/May 2003
SUBSISTENCE NEEDS (HEALTH NUTRITION AND SHELTER)

Health


- UNCHR calls on the government to solve the AIDS crisis in partnership with all sectors of society
- ...while the exile government calls for "peace corridors" to facilitate access for international assistance

*In April 2003 the United Nations Commission on Human Rights called upon the government to:*

"To recognize further the mounting gravity of the situation regarding HIV/AIDS and to carry out fully the necessary action against the epidemic, including through the effective implementation in Myanmar of the United Nations joint action plan on HIV/AIDS, in cooperation with all political and ethnic groups and with the cooperation and assistance of all relevant international agencies."(UN CHR 16 April 2003)

"Burma stands perilously close to an unstoppable epidemic. In June 2000, UNAIDS estimated that 530,000 people were infected by HIV [UNAIDS, Report on Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic, June 2000]. This translates into one in 50 (2%) of the population in the most sexually active age bracket of 15 to 49. Some 180,000 of those infected were women, and another 14,000 were children. According to one estimate there were anywhere from 42,000 to 58,000 HIV-positive children born in Burma between 1988 and 1998. [Dr C Beyrer, ‘War in the Blood: Sex, Politics and AIDS in Southeast Asia’, 1998.] There are at least 43,000 AIDS orphans. With around 50,000 new AIDS deaths a year, the total number of children deprived of one or both of their parents is rising sharply.

Official HIV surveillance data in Burma, while imperfect, clearly indicates a serious epidemic that has spread from known high-risk groups into the general population. HIV prevalence of pregnant women receiving antenatal care, averaged 2.2% across the country and in some sites (border areas) was as high as 5.3%. […] The known impact of HIV/AIDS is most severe along the north, Eastern and Southern border areas of Burma neighboring China and Thailand (Kachin, Mon, Shan States, Thanintharyi Division) and Rangoon. […] Specific challenges to effective HIV/AIDS control and prevention in Burma include: risk factors associated with mobile and transient populations." (Burma UN Service Office, March 2003)

"HIV/AIDS infection has reached epidemic proportions in Burma today and reports by UN agencies as well as independent health professionals unanimously confirm this fact. Estimates suggest at least five percent of the population is infected. The alarming situation has become a national emergency that affects all groups, including non-Burman ethnic nationalities and the military. […]

Given the fact that HIV endemic area is mainly in armed conflict zones with 2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in non-Burman ethnic areas being the most vulnerable to the disease, a nationwide humanitarian cease-fire should be declared and a peace corridor created so that UN agencies and international NGOs can initiate an effective operation. (NCGUB 25 June 2001)

Limited capacity to respond to poor health situation facing Karen IDPs (1998-2003)

- Children more susceptible than adults to diseases while hiding in the forest, and without medicine many have died
• Children are not spared by the SPDC soldiers and many have been shot or wounded by shrapnel
• In the past health workers used to be able to manage health care units in their own districts with support from NGOs based in Thailand
• Health service system within the Karen state collapsed after fall of KNU headquarters to junta forces (1998)
• Mobile medical trips has been the mainstay of health care for Karen IDPs since the 1997 offensive

"Health is a major concern for people in hiding. Life in the tropics without shelter or adequate food leads to high sickness and mortality rates from malnutrition, diarrhea, malaria, minor injuries and other easily preventable illnesses. With a complete absence of health care facilities, people mainly rely on herbs and traditional medicine. Although there are some healthcare teams which seek to reach IDPs, the medicine and care they are able to provide is insufficient for the numbers of IDPs in hiding across many border areas." (NCGUB, September 2002, "Internally Displaced People and Forced Relocation")

"Families living as IDP’s in the hills include many small children. Women often give birth in the jungle without the benefit of even a midwife to assist. Many babies do not live through their first year. The mothers are also at risk, both during their pregnancies due to malnutrition and vitamin deficiencies, and afterwards when they are forced to flee without adequate recovery time from childbirth. The children are more susceptible than the adults to diseases in the forest, and without medicine many have died. It is not as easy for the families with small children to run as the children have to be carried, and it also means the family can’t carry as much rice or belongings. Children are not spared by the SPDC soldiers and many have been shot or wounded by shrapnel when the soldiers open fire on the villages. There have been many instances when the soldiers were close enough to see it was children they were shooting at, but they continued shooting anyway.

[...] Medicine and people trained in medicine are almost nonexistent in the Papun hills and eastern Nyaunglebin District. Most villagers rely on traditional medicines made from roots, leaves and tree bark which can be foraged in the forest. People do occasionally come up into the hills and sell medicine to the IDP’s, but it is usually only in small quantities and not very strong. Most of the medicine consists of Burmese patent over the counter drugs which are often of low quality. Injections and other high quality medicines, usually from Thailand, are difficult to obtain and very expensive. It is very risky for the people to come up to sell medicine because any villagers caught carrying medicine in the hills can be executed by the SPDC soldiers after being accused of aiding the resistance." (KHRG October 2001, pp.40, 70)

"Prior to the fall of Manerplaw when the KNU still maintained district administrative structures to deal with health and welfare, various international NGOs working alongside the Karen managed to set up training for health workers. Many of these health workers were then able to manage health care units in their own districts with support from NGOs based in Thailand. Even large hospitals like at Htee Hta in Mergui-Tavoy district could be supported and used to build capacity for local staff. However, the focal point of most of this work was, naturally, in stable KNU-held areas since security and transport of supplies had to be carefully managed.

The Health and Welfare Department [of the KNU] had a mandate to carry out relief for refugees and displaced persons. Some training was occasionally given in community development and monitoring. With the fall of Manerplaw, and then the massive assault culminating in the capture of the two southern districts, much of this assistance to the indigenous population cross-border had to stop. With whole areas displaced from their homes, and people seeking sanctuary at the Thai border, the need became much more to help the IDPs who were by now in all seven districts.

Medical care in the form of mobile medical trips has been the mainstay of health care for Karen IDPs since the 1997 offensive. Two channels have been used -- that of a border-based clinic for Burmese and the KNU
health department. A typical trip would last for six to eight weeks and be provided with a standard allocation of medicines. Funds came through Thai based NGOs.

In 1997, the two operations mounted 22 separate trips reaching on average 800 persons per trip. The KNU health department reported that at least one trip has reached every district; though of course no one area can receive continuous care, care being provided only when a team passes through the location." (BERG April 1998, p.50)

**Poor health conditions in Karen relocation areas (2003)**

"There is no community health center or program in Kamoethway area. There is only one health care clinic in Myitta village. The villagers have to buy their medicine. A woman in Myitta village said they get free medicine from the Burmese army medic, but not more than 2-3 takes (dosage). In other villages, the villagers survive in their own way. Villagers, who know about health care, treat the people in their village. It is not free. There also the medicine is very expensive. Some villagers said the main problem after the Burmese troops come is the follow-up of sickness. Some villagers get sick but they take no medicine because they do not have any."(BI, April 2003, p. 15)

See also: Beyrer: "The Health and Humanitarian Situation of Burmese Populations Along the Thai-Burma Border" Burma Debate, VOL. VI, NO. 3 FALL 1999

**Shan IDPs in relocation sites lack access to health facilities (1999)**

- Relocation sites lack sanitation facilities
- Difficult living conditions in the jungle and lack of food have adversely affected the health of the IDPs in hiding
- Psychological damage inflicted by forced relocation

"Most of the relocated villagers interviewed [in the Shan State] had no health facilities in their original villages. They simply used traditional herbal medicine, or the services of quack doctors. Following the relocation, the situation was exactly the same. There were no public health facilities set up in any of the relocation sites.

Similarly, no assistance was given with sanitation in any of the relocation sites. Of all the villagers interviewed, most had used individual latrines at their original homes. On moving to relocation sites, many were able to [construct] individual latrines, but some used communal latrines, and some had no latrines at all.

Most of the villagers interviewed stated that they themselves or family members had become sick after the relocation. Common diseases were malaria and diarrhoea. In one of the relocation sites (Wan Lao), 20 people died of diarrhoea, in another, (Lai Kha) 30 people died, following the relocation.

[...]

The sparse living conditions in the jungle and the lack of food have clearly adversely affected the health of the IDPs in hiding. Malaria is very common among those in hiding, since there are more mosquitoes in the jungle than in the plains. Anaemia is also common, particularly among women. Many are malnourished.

Many of the children have worms, partly as a result of being left alone playing in the dirt while their parents are busy farming or cooking, and partly because meat is often not properly cooked by the busy mothers.

With no health facilities available, most of the IDPs in hiding have to use herbal remedies to cure themselves.
Apart from physical illnesses, the forced relocations are also inflicting psychological damage on the IDPs in hiding, who are constantly having to live in fear of Burma Army patrols.

A medic working on the Shan-Thai border noted that many children who had been in hiding displayed abnormal behaviour: unable to concentrate and constantly looking around them in fear. Furthermore, women who had been in hiding seemed to be easily upset, with rapid heartbeat at the slightest noise." (SHRF April 1999, pp. 29-30)

**Poor health conditions in Karenni relocation sites (2000)**

- IDPs in Karenni/Kayah relocation sites extremely vulnerable to malnutrition and treatable diseases (2000)
- Lack of sanitation, food and medical care leading to scores of deaths from malaria and other diseases
- Hospital facilities are virtually non-existent in the relocation sites
- The burden for sheltering and caring for the displaced at relocation sites is often placed on the local community
- Reported in 2000 that after closing down of camps, the IDPs were left to live a precarious existence in the forest

“Deaths from basic dehydration due to diarrhea and vomiting are commonplace. In the area in and around the southwestern relocation site of Mawchi, it would seem that the majority of the people are dying from this, which would normally be easily treatable. Most of these deaths are among those hiding in the forest around Mawchi, but many have also died in the relocation site itself. This is in combination with malaria, dysentery and infection from a host of parasites that can normally be found in the jungle have already killed more than half of the people who were living in the jungle of the Mawchi area. Villagers from the Mawchi area and most other areas say that before they fled there was always at least one member of their family who was sick and that family members and friends have already died of minor diseases. The villagers in the jungle fear going very far from their hiding places because they may be killed if seen, so they resort to burying the dead in and around their small settlements, and this can lead to even further spread of the disease. The villagers in the Mawchi area have virtually no access to medical supplies and the journey to flee the area is too long for those in poor health.

Hospital facilities are virtually unheard of in the relocation sites. One exception to this rule is in Shadaw, where the hospital is understaffed and the medicine is very expensive if available at all. Refugees who have come from Shadaw are reporting that the doctors who are meant to be working in the hospital in the relocation site are only going once every two or three months and spending the rest of their time in Loikaw, presumably because they find life more comfortable there. This is consistent with reports from other areas of Burma such as Shan and Karen States, where recently graduated doctors are posted to remote places but choose to stay in nearby towns instead.” (NCGUB August 2000, pp.143 – 144)

"Health services in the many relocation sites throughout the state have fallen under the Housing Construction Work sub-committee of MPBANRDA and the Department of Human Settlements and Housing Development. These projects are difficult to appraise since very limited information is available. In general though, the 12 large relocation sites in the state [...] started off as empty areas of land where shelter, facilities or sanitation arrangements were either insufficient or non-existent. According to refugees this resulted in high morbidity and mortality with significant numbers of deaths during the initial resettlement period in certain sites, particularly Shadaw. Moreover, the burden for sheltering and caring for the displaced at relocation sites was often placed on the local community.
At each of the large sites, there is evidence of an intention to provide health care to IDPs, either at a health facility inside the site or at a nearby health centre. In practice, however, given the general constraints to the public health system, services were not utilised well. With facilities both under-equipped and under-supplied, health care providers were often left to do the best they could. In some of the other sites, such as Htee Poh Kloh and Mar Kraw Shay, refugees said there were no health facilities at the site.

Access to water varied at each site. In addition to streams and lakes at the sites, wells were dug. In some areas this appears to have been sufficient, but in others such as Shadaw, the lack of potable water appears to have continued to cause problems long after the camps were set up. Several IDPs from this site have alleged that in an attempt to solve the problem, chemicals were added to water sources which was said to have led to cases of sickness and even death." (BERG May 2000, p.79)

"Although there is little information available, it seems as if many [Karenni ] IDPs are moving out of the relocation sites and back to their villages [...]. In some cases, these IDPs have subsequently migrated to the refugee camps in Thailand. [...] It is not clear why IDPs are moving back to their villages. In some cases the return appears to be voluntary, while in others people are being ordered back. However, the lessening of the conflict between the Tatmadaw and the KNPP appears to be a factor; and where pro-government or cease-fire groups operating in the locality have taken responsibility for security, IDPs have been allowed back to their villages." (BERG May 2000, pp. 61-62)

**Nutrition and food**

**Poor nutrition status among displaced children and women of reproductive age (2003)**

- Children are more likely to fall into the cycle of infection, weight loss, recovery and repeated infection
- Women of reproductive age are also at increased risk
- Internal displacement has a negative impact on breastfeeding
- Survey found that overall dietary intake of children in the IDP population was poor

"Children are at increased risk of under or malnutrition for a number of reasons. The biological demands of growing children are high, and even small changes in available household food resources can be rapidly reflected at the population level with increased under nutrition, protein energy malnutrition, and micronutrient deficiencies. During times of population stress, children are more likely to fall into the cycle of infection, weight loss, recovery and repeated infection, resulting in acute (wasting) and chronic (stunting) malnutrition. Malnutrition compromises the ability of the child to fight infection, resulting in increased morbidity and mortality , and children are particularly susceptible to iron-deficiency anemia and vitamin A deficiency. Poor nutrition over the long term can result in motor and cognitive developmental delays in children.

Women of reproductive age are also at increased risk, particularly during pregnancy and lactation – at this time, women have increased energy and micronutrient requirements. Internal displacement may increase the risk of protein-energy malnutrition, anemia, and vitamin A deficiency in women, through reduced household food availability, increased rates of malaria, decreased availability of vitamin A rich and other micronutrient-rich foods, and increased susceptibility to geohelminth infections.
**Nutrition Survey:**

In eastern Burma, backpack health worker teams conduct a primary health program in Karen, Karenni and Mon State, targeting a population of approximately 140,000 people, many internally displaced due to ongoing civil conflict. In order to assess the impact of internal displacement on nutritional status, the team conducted a dietary intake survey during the months of July to December 2000. This was conducted in Taungoo, Papun and Paan township in Karen state, Kyaukgyi township in Pegu Division, Bilin township in Mon state, and in Tenasserim Division. Six hundred and thirty seven mothers were asked questions concerning their breastfeeding status, recent dietary intake, and recent health status of their youngest child under five years of age. For each child, mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) was measured.

While breastfeeding rates are high (95% of children had been breastfed), and breastfeeding time is long (the median age at end of breastfeeding was 24 months), exclusive breastfeeding practices are insufficient. Approximately 67% (360/535) of mothers reported that their youngest child was exclusively breastfed for four months, and only 29.4% (157/535) of the children were exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life. Internal displacement likely decreases maternal nutrition status, resulting in disruption of normal lactation and a decrease in rates of exclusive breastfeeding.

Overall dietary intake of children in the IDP population was poor. In the week prior to the survey, among non-breastfeeding children, 39% did not receive a single serving of fish, 40% did not eat meat, 78% did not eat eggs, and 85% did not eat any beans. Twenty-six percent of children did not eat any of these protein-rich foods in the previous week. Intake of protein foods was associated with level of instability in the population. While all the sub-areas in the survey can be considered under stress, internal displacement was most common in Pegu and Tenasserim Division, with 65% and 37% (respectively) of the respondents reporting moving more than three times in the past twelve months. (BBC October 2003, pp. 38-39)

**In the Shan State IDPs both in hiding and in the relocation sites have inadequate access to food (1999-2003)**

- Relocated villagers are not provided with any food by the authorities
- After moving to the relocation sites, they were usually forbidden to return and work on their fields
- IDP in hiding tries cultivate small new plots of land on hill slopes among trees, away from their original fields

“The number of internally displaced people grows exponentially, as villagers are finding it increasingly difficult to survive in relocation sites. Lack of food is the all-consuming concern for uprooted villagers. Those in relocation sites must compete for work on land owned by other villagers, or farm fields at great distances from the relocation sites. They are issued one day travel passes which are only good from dawn to dusk, leaving them no time to work a distant field which may take hours to reach on foot. As a result their harvest never yields enough to sustain their families. Some farmers have been allowed to return to their villages on a temporary basis, usually during key phases in the rice growing cycle. Most often permission has been granted to villagers who own fields close to the relocation sites in town or along main roads. (NCGUB 2000, pp.131-2)

*A detailed report about the situation of IDPs in the Shan state further elaborates the food situation:*

"*In the relocation sites*

With one exception, none of the relocated villagers interviewed for this report were at any time provided with any food by the authorities. Sometimes rice they had brought with them to relocation sites was even confiscated from them, and the SPDC troops forbade members of the local community in nearby towns from donating any food to the relocated villagers. […]"
Since they were mostly forbidden to go farther than a small radius from the relocation sites, this meant that they often could grow no food for themselves. Thus they were forced to become wage labourers, usually on other people's fields. In some areas, no wage labour was available at all and some villagers even staved to death.

[...]

IDPs in hiding
As for the villagers who have not gone to the relocation sites, but are hiding out in the jungles, the food situation is even more precarious. These IDPs often do not dare to tend their original fields since they are afraid of Burma Army patrols. They therefore have to cultivate small new plots of land on hill slopes among trees, away from their original fields on the plains. Although they may have hidden their old stocks of rice in the jungle, they have to ration this sparingly, and often eat only rice soup, or rice mixed with corn or dried jack fruit.

Some of the villagers interviewed for this report who had been in hiding mentioned that they had to be careful even when cooking their food in case the smoke of their fires gave away their positions to patrolling Burma Army troops. They would choose to cook at midday, when the smoke would not be visible, or else at night if it was moonless.

The IDPs try and supplement their food by taking any remaining livestock to sell in the nearest towns, and then purchasing food supplies to take back to the jungle, but this is clearly extremely dangerous. Some of the IDPs in hiding also try and earn a living by catching wild animals or fish, and then selling them in towns." (SHRF April 1999, pp. 25-27)

Lack of food make Karen IDPs vulnerable to diseases (2001-2003)

- IDPs in hiding do not have regular access to food
- IDPs in relocations sites are often forced to hand food stocks over to the Burmese Army guards

"Forced relocation of villagers has a disastrous impact on villagers’ food security. Villagers are often forced to move to relocation sites which are far from their fields. They have to walk several hours to get to their fields and they are often not allowed to sleep in their field huts, making it very difficult to spend enough time working in the fields. Passes have to be obtained which cost 100 to 200 Kyat each and are usually only good for one day. Sometimes villagers are prohibited from going back to their fields altogether. Villagers caught sleeping in their field huts at night or working their fields without passes are arrested by Army patrols, accused of being rebels and often tortured and occasionally executed." (BBC October 2003, p .18)

"The scarcity of food is not a dilemma faced only by the IDPs, but also by all villagers in the area – those who have been relocated and even those who are still allowed to stay in their own villages. KHRG researchers are reporting that villagers in the Kler Lah relocation site must obtain a special permit prior to being granted permission to buy rice. They must purchase their rice from deliveries arriving from the plains in the west of Toungoo District because they are not allowed to return to their own plantations and hill fields where they can grow their own. The permit system prevents villagers from outside the relocation site from buying rice, and also gives the SPDC a means of monitoring who is buying rice, and thus who may be supplying it to the KNLA. At times the SPDC blocks the incoming deliveries, leaving these villagers, who are now wholly dependent on the rice deliveries, without anything to eat, and furthermore with no way in which to get any food. Presumably this is done out of the fear that they will create a surplus of rice in the hills, which the villagers may then supply to the KNLA. In the SPDC’s preoccupation with cutting all lines of supply to the KNLA, it is the villagers who are the worst affected. Many villagers living near Than Daung Gyi are faced with a similar situation; one such villager told KHRG that they are only permitted to buy four bowls [6.3 kgs./14 lbs.] of rice a week. They are ordered to hand this rice over to the local military camp for ‘safekeeping’, who then return it to the villagers in a ration of only two milk tins [390
grams / 13.8 ozs.] of rice per person per day. The villager said that this is only half of the amount of rice a person requires. The rest of their rice is eaten by the soldiers." (KHRG, 16 June 2003, para 11)

"In addition Karen internally displaced people (IDPs) often die from starvation or treatable diseases, as there is no medical treatment or adequate food in their hiding places in the mountainous jungles of northern Kayin State and eastern Bago Division. The tatmadaw usually steals rice and livestock and burns rice barns when they force civilians off their land, so that they have very little food after their displacement. Some IDPs manage to salvage some of their rice store, and grow a very small amount of rice in hiding, but such supplies are clearly not sufficient. Children and the elderly are particularly vulnerable, as it is more difficult for them to resist disease when they do not receive enough nourishment. Although the SPDC claims that its actions are taken to stop food supplies from reaching the KNU, it is the civilians who are being systematically deprived of their right to food. The vast majority of those interviewed said that they had fled because they could no longer survive in the jungle." (AI 13 June 2001)

**Karenni IDPs in relocation sites have inadequate access to food (1999-2000)**

- IDPs leave relocation sites because of lack of food
- Reports of troops forcing villagers to hand over their rice but also that some rice distribution has found place
- Army distributes less than half of food needs to people in the displacement camps
- The economic subsistence situation, and basic social fabric, at relocations site has deteriorated significantly

"The latest and the most severe economic crisis in Mawchi is the result of the regime's 1996 forced relocation campaign. This program led to the total collapse of agricultural production in the area and the subsequent collapse of the rest of the economy. All the villagers from the surrounding areas were forced to move into the town of Mawchi. The cessation of agricultural production brought about a massive increase in the price of food and a large increase in unemployment. Now most people are more or less constantly hungry and spend their days scrounging around looking for food. All the children in the city are engaged in helping their parents obtain food - collecting birds, worms, frogs and insects to eat. Hardly any rice produced gets to market as it is kept for the family to eat and to pay back debts. The small amount of rice that does reach the market, which most cannot afford, is of the lowest quality and fit only for being boiled. This has caused most people to leave the township for Thailand and a number of the cease-fire areas.

[...] The sets of prices that have arisen in Mawchi are such that market exchange is no longer possible. In fact, the local economy is non-viable, as there is no surplus produced. [...] output has been in long-term decline. This is due to the destruction of productive capacity coupled with large-scale human rights abuses by the central military regime. The economic situation in Mawchi, and the surrounding areas, means that there are only two resolutions possible for the inhabitants:
  i) self-production, that is, output not offered for sale
  ii) to leave the town and surrounding areas and move to other areas in Burma, to the refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border, or to become migrant labourers in Thailand.

[...] There was no slash and burn farming in the Mawchi area prior to the relocation campaign, but afterwards, slash and burn agriculture (mostly for rice), began to take place on the outskirts of the town. However, the acreage under cultivation is very small and the yields much lower, than before the relocation campaign. The people involved in slash and burn agriculture are experiencing severe financial difficulties, because of high interest rates on loans for seed and fertilizer. When the debt is repaid there is hardly any rice left for the family to eat. The extremely high cost of inputs and credit is making it increasingly difficult for people to continue to engage (even) in this most basic form of agricultural production.
Meat is now very rare in Mawchi and is virtually never offered for sale. In fact, the only meat that is readily available for people are cats and dogs. On the rare occasions that meat is offered for sale, it is more than nearly everyone can afford, with prices for chicken, beef and pork now similar to those in Rangoon – 2,000 kyat for a viss of chicken, 1,500 kyat for viss of beef and pork.

The shortages of meat and rice have come about for the same reasons. The last ‘four-cuts’ and relocation campaign exacerbated the following problems,

i) lack of production because of the destruction of productive capital (the forced removal of people from agricultural land)
ii) the resulting lack of employment or production opportunities in the town and surrounding areas, ensures that no-one has any goods to exchange or income to buy food or other goods
iii) the high price of inputs induced by reductions in supply to the area

This has not only ensured a dramatic decrease in absolute output levels, but also created a situation where increases in output are extremely difficult.

No Shops

The lack of shops or markets in the town is also evidence of a non-viable economy. Most of the shops in Mawchi closed down quickly after the forced relocation began in the area." (Alison Vicary/BEW14 May 2003)

"In the relocation sites, there seems to have been little attempt to mobilise or re-organise resources to support new arrivals. The inability or unwillingness to consider issues such as the availability of water, food supplies, cultivatable land and employment is largely a reason why communities who were relocated to these sites were not able to settle there. It is of course possible that the permanent resettlement of IDPs was neither intended nor planned for. At many sites, the unpreparedness of the site authorities and the insufficient services (such as the lack of household latrines and water) provided within them have forced IDPs to adopt ad-hoc approaches that may significantly compromise and endanger women’s safety. The displacements [in 1996] occurred during a critical phase in the rice planting calendar, when rice seedlings were being transferred into the paddy fields. Because IDPs were not allowed back to their villages in the first few months after displacement except to collect stored rice, the rice crops in these areas failed. This led to an increased dependency on rice distributions in the following years, at a time when the delivery of rice rations had stopped in almost every site and there was a lack of viable employment for IDPs who are mostly farmers. Moreover, the splitting of communities and the displacement process — either into relocation sites or into hiding — may well have curtailed or changed access to the informal market sector further undermining income earning opportunities, which are operated largely by women.

Distribution of rice appears to have taken place in some camps at the beginning of the resettlement process. Two ‘pyis’ (about eight milk tins) worth per month seems to have been given out in most camps, although at some camps only half this amount was provided. In almost every case, the rations were stopped after a few months. In the relocation site at Nwa La Boe, which is the site closest to Loikaw city, the rice crops in these areas failed. This led to an increased dependency on rice distributions in the following years, at a time when the delivery of rice rations had stopped in almost every site and there was a lack of viable employment for IDPs who are mostly farmers. Moreover, the splitting of communities and the displacement process — either into relocation sites or into hiding — may well have curtailed or changed access to the informal market sector further undermining income earning opportunities, which are operated largely by women.

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[BERG May 2000, pp.56, 80]

Shelter
Dismal shelter conditions in Shan relocation sites reported in 1999

- Most relocation sites are simply empty areas of land
- Reported that some villagers have been forced to buy land in the relocations sites

"Some villagers were forced to buy land in the relocation sites. According to one villager from Koong Kao, Loilem township, some of the relocated villagers had to pay 100 kyats each for a patch of land in a site near Parng Long to build a house on. This money was paid to the local Burmese military (LIB 5 13), after which they received written permission to stay at the site.

Some villagers who did not want to stay in the relocation sites, and had enough money, ended up buying houses in the villages near which they had been relocated. One farmer from Bang Hoo relocated to Pang Long related how he had ended up buying a piece of land in a village Wan Long, which cost him 40,000 kyats." (SHRF April 1999, p. 28)

Minimal preparations made in advance of the arrival of IDPs in relocation sites (1998)

- IDPs required to build makeshift huts at relocation sites
- No particular arrangements are made by the authorities to receive the new forced arrivals at relocation sites

"According to testimonies received, relocation sites, as well as the living conditions in the sites, may vary from one place to another. Displaced persons in refugee camps in Thailand describe the sites as either a large, empty stretch of land surrounded by fences or barbed wire and near a military camp or as the centre of a large village where the army has forced villagers to congregate. The military outpost is normally in the centre of the village.

No particular arrangements are made by the authorities to receive the new forced arrivals. There seems to be a food and a health crisis and a general lack of adequate housing and basic services. Villagers have to build their own makeshift huts and provide their own food. Family members living in the relocation sites are often requested to do various tasks for the army. Each family also has to provide one person to work for the army. They perform various duties such as building the fences, cleaning the compound or guarding the site. The interviews did not make clear to what extent facilities for education and access to health care, especially for children, are available. Unemployment is a major problem in the relocation sites. The displaced are used to working their own land and it is difficult to start any sort of work to generate income. When they are able to find work, they are easily exploited. According to testimonies received, many displaced persons, including children, work as daily workers (porters), whose salaries are around US$2 per week, for 12-hour working days. Others work in construction. Those who find such jobs are considered to be fortunate, since they have an income." (UN 22 January 1999, paras.64-65 )
ACCESS TO EDUCATION

General

Conflict, poverty and language differences behind low school attendance in the ethnic states (2001-2003)

- Government provides inadequate support to state school system in general
- The educational situation is particularly bad in ethnic minority-populated and conflict areas
- Only 10% of children joining school in the Karen, Karenni and Shan states
- SPDC rarely offers government schools in relocation camps
- Claimed that SPDC frequently uses education as a tool of Burmanization in conflict areas
- Mon language schools closed down after cease fire

"Burma was once considered one of the most literate countries in the world. Unfortunately today the education system at all levels is decaying – and along with it the future of Burma’s next generations. The regime has neglected the education of children, allocating minimal resources to public education. In 1999, the World Bank found that state spending on education is among the lowest in the world, equivalent to 28 cents per child annually. Of the national budget, 40.1% is used for the military forces while less than 1% is used for all civilian education. […]"

In addition to dropping out of school for financial reasons, thousands of children are forced to drop out, or interrupt, their education for reasons associated with conflict due to: lack of an educational infrastructure; few teachers; security concerns; constant transience due to forced relocation; and ‘Burmanization’ policies that force the closure of non-Burman schools in ethnic areas. Other factors include: forced labor requirements; burning of villages by the military and subsequent free-fire zones; extra-judicial killing or arbitrary arrest of parents; and the general disruption of village life by military authorities who view all civilian activities as subordinate to military and state interests.

Reports from Karen State and an education study in Mon State provide evidence that the education policy of the regime promotes ‘Burmanization’ throughout the education system to the detriment of ethnic groups. Burmese is the only medium for instruction permissible for state primary and secondary schools. Ethnic nationality children rarely get the opportunity to study in their own language or topics related to their cultural heritage."(Burma UN Service Office, March 2003)

"Children in the ethnic nationality areas have little chance to learn at school. The most vulnerable areas are Karen, Karenni and Shans where only 10% of children can join school. Children in the areas of Mon, Kachin and Chin have more chance to get education compare with other areas. Some 25% of children in Naga area and 50% in Tatian can join school. However, secondary school enrolment rate is very low. Poverty is a common reason. Parents cannot effort to pay for books and dresses for their children’s schooling. Children help parents for family income. Some children are out harvesting and fishing. Some other children become drug addict. Children who lose their parents with several reasons are neglected for schooling. The tragedy is that these orphans come near school and look at children studying in the classroom through windows. They wish to learn but they need opportunity.

One of the reasons that children drop out of school is language problem. For example, Burmese-Muslim children quit Karen schools because they do not understand Karen language. Early marriage at the age of 14 and 15 in Lahu area stops their schooling. Poor health condition is also a common reason. Some
schools ask for fees and parents do not reach it. For example, children in a Karen school disappear when
the school asks for fee.

Curriculum
Curricula and syllabuses are varies in the ethnic nationality areas. Some areas use the curriculum
prescribed by the regime. Some areas re-write their own curriculum. Some schools in Chin area use Indian
curriculum. Medium of instruction in Mon schools is Mon language and all primary school textbooks are
translated into Mon. Karen is now re-writing a new curriculum. Karenni schools use regime’s curriculum
except Burmese history. A Kachin teacher reveals that although they don not want to use the regime’s
curriculum, they use it because Kachin students need to sit state exam. Another Kachin teacher says that
they are not willing to teach Burmese history written by the military regime. Chin teachers also have the
same idea that they do not want to teach history syllabus prescribed by the regime.

[...]
The ethnic vernacular languages are gradually disappeared by the fact that Burmese language is dominant
for many years. According to the KNU education policy, Karen language is given priority in order that
every Karen people masters the Karen language. English is a second language in Karen schools and
Burmese is taught as a common language. The Karenni education committee has launched a five year
project 2001-2005 that medium of instruction will be Karenni language in all Karenni schools.

The ABSDF school teaches Karen language as a subject where the majority are Karen students. An
ABSDF teacher asks for help to other ethnic nationality groups to send language teachers to teach the
children such as Shan and Mon studying in their school. Kachin schools teach Burmese language but they
do not have enough teachers - Kachin children have never seen a Burmese. In Chin state, Hakha language
(LAI), Phalam language (LAIZO) and Titain language (ZO) were allowed to teach at schools since 1925.
However, it was limited by the regime in 1990. The religions groups have been trying to preserve these
languages. In Naga area, Naga language is not allowed at all to teach at school." (NHEC, April 2001, pp.
13-14)

"The reasons for children not attending school and dropping out are varied. The main reasons are civil war,
poverty and poor health condition. Schools are not stable because of fighting between the Burma army and
ethnic armed opposition groups. Parents are poor and cannot afford to buy schoolbooks, clothes etc.
Children are needed to help their parents' work such as harvesting and fishing. Older children look after
small children when their parents go to work. Poor health and malnutrition also discourage children from
joining school. In many cases schools are too far and children cannot go there." (NHEC, 2002, pp. 1-2)

Displaced children have limited access to education (1998-2003)

- Children of ethnic groups have to restart their schooling upon arrival in the relocation sites
  because they are prevented from learning in their own language
- Impoverishment of the villagers caused by their loss of livelihood and the repeated relocation has
  disrupted both the formal and non-formal systems of education in the areas affected
- Forced relocation has disrupted both the formal and non-formal systems of education in the areas
  affected
- Some IDP communities have established poorly-equipped and vulnerable ‘jungle schools’, which
  are supported by local NGOs

"Resettlement sites equipped with school and medical facilities are a rarity, and the displaced people are not
allowed to leave them without a military escort. […] Living conditions in the jungle are obviously very
tough, however some villagers have even managed to set up mini-schools that follow them as they move on
to new places. They get the best-educated people to teach the alphabet and some of the "basics" to the
children. Several NGOs and the exiled Burmese trade unions send brave activists into these jungle areas
laden with bags of medicine and basic school supplies that they give to the displaced people. These "jungleschools", as the Burmese call them, are living proof of the determination of these people to provide a basic education to their children even in the most unlikely circumstances."(ICFTU, August 2003, p.13)

The Karen Teachers Working Group and KNU Education Department provide limited education services to IDPs in hiding:

"There are a number of international NGOs providing assistance and working in coordination with Karen educators in the refugee camps. Karen refugees have the opportunity to set up well organized schools for their children. Students are provided with materials, teachers receive a small annual allowance and some teacher training and curriculum development programs are under way.

The Karen Teacher Working Group (KTWG) was organized in 1997 in response to the needs of Karen teachers working in refugee camps along the Thai-Burma border and in the liberated area of Karen State, Burma.

We are a local Karen non-governmental organization (NGO) with no parent organization and our structure reflects our commitment to maximizing community participation in and ownership of all our programs. The KTWG currently has 32 active members, 31 Karen and 1 Canadian. Our members come from the communities in which we are involved.

We provide culturally-based and situationally relevant programs in Karen to ensure that local needs find local solutions. Our main goal is to equip teachers with skills which enable them to respond to the everchanging needs of our youth and our People. We advocate active student-centered classrooms which encourage problem solving, creativity and critical thinking. These are the skills that will enable us to build our future."(KTWG, 2003, About KTWG)

"The situation for schools inside Karen State, Burma is much more serious. There are schools in operation and teachers in place. The school year is often disrupted as villagers are forced to flee SPDC military offensives. Some schools are opened again in the jungle. SPDC destroy Karen paddies and livestock making it impossible for the community to provide for their teachers. Also, teachers who are charged with the children's education have little or no formal training themselves nor do they have educational texts to rely on for support. Teachers do their best to provide their students with a good education but their lack of experience, skills and/or lack of teaching materials means that children are suffering

In June 2001, twelve KTWG mobile teacher trainers entered Karen State on their first three-month training cycle throughout the 4 northern districts (Mutraw, Doo The Doo, Taungoo and Kler Lwee Htoo). As it was their first cycle, the MTTT (mobile teacher training team) focused on developing positive relationships with local teachers and communities while trying to identify specific needs."(KTWG, 2003, Karen State Education Information, paras 1&2)

"KTWG provided 442,000 Baht to Karen schools throughout Kawthoolei in June 2002. Since October 2002, there has been a noticeable increase in SPDC presence and activities throughout Karen State. This has meant increased suffering, abuse, poverty throughout Karen lands. In terms of education, schools have been targeted as 'signs' of KNU presence in the community and are burned. School materials are destroyed and stolen. Teachers are becoming seen as KNU supporters and thus more in danger of SPDC brutality. Since January this year, KTWG has distributed over 9000 school texts throughout Karen State as well as other school materials."(KTWG, 2003, Latest education report from Karen State schools, paras 1&2)

"Oppression of Culture and Literature

Although almost of the population in this area is Karen, the Karen children have to learn Burmese. The Burmese military government sent some teachers to teach in the school and the rest of the teachers the villagers have to hire by themselves.

[...] The building of schools and the teachers salary comes from the villagers, except for the government teachers. A former Karen schoolteacher told how one day he taught wearing a Karen sarong and a Burmese
army officer saw him and called him aside. The officer asked him why he was wearing this sarong, didn’t he know what kind of school this was. He replied that this is a government school. He asked do you know the village headman. He replied yes and asked the Burmese solider asked him to go with him to the headman’s house. He was absent from his teaching for one day.

After the Burmese troops occupied the area, they also try to build monasteries in Karen villages. Most of the villagers in Kamooetheway area are Christian. The Burmese troops have built two monasteries in Myitta and Pway Poe Klah and plan to build in other villages as well.

In Myitta, the Burmese troops brought Burman people from Taung Thon Lon to settle in the land that they confiscated from Karen villagers. Many villagers fear that they will loose their lands and loose their culture when they hear of Burmese troops resettling the Burman people in their lands.”(BI, April 2003, p. 14)

"IDPs hiding in the jungle are sometimes able to operate temporary makeshift schools with volunteer teachers. These schools lack any supplies, and are forced to shift from place to place depending on SPDC activity. With the increase in SPDC activity, in recent years, and the common occurrence of "search and destroy" operations, the number of these schools has been greatly reduced.”(NCGUB, September 2002, "Internally Displaced People and Forced Relocation")

The Karenni children face a similar situation:
“Basic education is also lacking in the relocation sites. Most of the relocation sites have no schools whatsoever. Space at the Shadaw School is limited and for the most part only Shadaw townspeople can send their children there. People in the relocation site must pay the full cost of schooling. Very few of them have money to do this, so very few of their children go to school. Even if children are able to get into one of the small number of schools that are available they are only permitted to study Burmese. Study of the Karenni language and culture are forbidden.” (NCGUB 2000, p.144)

Displaced Karen communities make efforts to continue education
"Education is important for many villagers but finding time, teachers or books in the forest is not easy. Some villages had their own small unofficial primary schools, with one of the parents (who usually only had 3 or 4 years of schooling themselves) teaching the children part time. Since being displaced, many of these teachers have heroically continued their efforts, and in hiding places deep in the forest it is still common to see a group of children sitting on the ground with notebooks being taught by a woman holding her own baby, possibly writing on an impromptu blackboard. In some more established and larger IDP sites there may even be a temporary shelter serving as a school and a couple of teachers. These schools only go up to the 2nd, 3rd or 4th standard (grade). The only educational materials available are whatever has been salvaged from the village, which is not enough for all the students. The parents try to help, but their means are very limited. The instability of the situation means that the schools often have to close or be moved due to the movements of SPDC soldiers. Eventually the schools are rebuilt again in a new place, but children will have already lost a few months or a year of education. Even this is better than the situation for most children in the region, who receive no education once displaced. [...] For most children even these schools are beyond their reach. If they receive any education it is most often from a more educated villager, usually someone with a third or fourth grade education, who lives in the same IDP site. The children gather together from the different families and learn in someone’s shelter. For these children there are usually no books and no pencils. The children themselves often find it difficult to study after all the pressures of life on the run. Many of the children are eager to learn, but the situation and the weight of their problems make it very difficult. Often there is no time to study, as everyone in the family is needed to work the field or look for food. Many villagers have told KHRG that they did have schools in their villages before the Burmese soldiers arrived. Most of these were KNU-run or village-run schools, but most of these have been destroyed as the SPDC’s path of destruction swept through the villages. A villager from Lu Thaw township explained to KHRG his disappointment that his children couldn’t even read the Karen alphabet. " (KHRG October 2001, pp. 73-74)
ISSUES OF SELF-RELIANCE AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Livelihood opportunities for the displaced

Forced labour and other abuses undermine livelihood opportunities for the displaced (2000-2003)

- Portering involves a prolonged absence from wage earning
- Reduced access to farmlands undermines the food security of those forcefully relocated
- People in smaller relocation sites more exploited than those in larger sites where the work load can be shared

"At all relocation sites in Burma, access to farmland and employment is a serious problem for the relocated villagers. In some sites, IDPs are able to access farmland around the relocation site, yet this allocated land is usually insufficient for basic survival or unsuitable for farming. In other sites, access to surrounding land is denied, especially when villagers are relocated to sites where local residents are already farming the land, either for themselves or for the military. New refugee arrivals at the Thai border in 1999 reported that they had been able to find daily labor at local farms near the relocation sites, earning between 40 and 120 kyats per day. In some cases, villagers are permitted to return to their former farms and plantations, yet due to the restrictions imposed on their trips out of the sites and the dangers these villagers face outside of the sites, most are unable to make a living in this way.

Livelihood Insecurity and Poverty

Many people ask how the villagers survive while they face so many restrictions on earning their living and having to pay several extortions. For the villagers, as they struggle for justice, they are also struggling to survive and they use as many ways as they can to achieve this. They seemingly follow the Burmese troops so that they can have a little freedom of earning their living.

Some of the root causes of insecurity of livelihood and poverty of the villagers are the Burmese troops’ restrictions in forced relocation sites, and targeting villagers’ livelihood or property to eliminate the Karen resistance by the Burmese troops. Another is the soaring prices of rice and foods.

Villagers in relocation sites cannot go out freely to tend their plantations. It depends on the Burmese troops. If they go out, they have to get a permission paper from the village headmen and Burmese troop’s officers. They cannot be away for more than five days. They go on Monday and return on Friday. They have to pay 100 kyat for a permission paper. Sometimes when the Burmese troops hear of the movement of the Karen resistance, the villagers are not allowed to go to their rice plantation at all. Sometimes because of this the villagers’ rice plantations are ruined. Especially in harvest time, the absence of villagers on Saturdays and Sundays allows wild hogs and rats to come and eat the villagers’ rice plantations. Therefore, the villagers get only a small amount of rice.

Sometimes if they are not allowed to tend their plantations for one or two weeks in harvest time all of their rice is destroyed by the wild hogs and rats. Many villagers said they only survive because of their betel nut plantations.

Many villagers said they got in debt after 1997, after their relocation. For the villagers who move to the middle of their village it is easier than the villagers who were moved from their village to another village. Villagers who were moved from their villages had to leave their betel nut plantation and other properties
behind. They depend on their relatives and earn their living by collecting wild yam, making charcoal, labouring on other villagers plantations and selling out their properties. They got in debt higher than the villagers who were moved to the middle of their village. Villagers said they survived through the year only by borrowing money from other villagers or the wholesale store and returning it to them at the end of the year and then having to borrow again for the next year. They accumulate more and more debt each year and they grow poorer and poorer.”(BI, April 2003, p. 11 & 14)

"The other factor preventing people from earning a living at relocation sites [in the Shan state] is the forced labour they are required to do for the Army, whose officers see the relocated villagers as a convenient pool of forced labourers. Villagers living at Hwe Mark Pun site are constantly called to work, mainly to build military camps in the township. Standard practice is to force civilians to go to villages that have already been relocated, dismantle people's homes and fences, and then use those materials to build the camps. People complain of having to work for the SPDC Army twice as much as they are able to work for themselves, and no one is spared from duty. While typically the men go as military porters, women and children have to fulfil the Army's demands for other forms of forced labour, which usually include building and maintaining Army camps, doing unarmed sentry duty on motor roads, clearing scrub from the roadsides (to make it difficult for resistance forces to ambush SPDC columns), and maintaining roads. In the past, villagers in relocation sites have also been used to build railways, such as the track from Shwe Nyaung to Nam Zang, from Nam Zang southward to Mung Nai and from Shwe Nyaung up the hills to Taunggyi. Portering, however, is generally the most feared form of forced labour, because porters are often severely abused and a shift involves a prolonged absence from wage earning; for these reasons, men and sometimes even women and children hide in the forests surrounding relocation sites when they hear that SPDC troops are collecting porters. Villagers living in smaller relocation sites like Hwe Mark Pun are called on for forced labour and portering more often than in larger sites, where the work load can be rotated among a larger population. It is extremely difficult for these villagers to earn enough to survive under such constraints." (KHRG 5 April 2000, "Life in Relocation Sites")

"Villagers living under SPDC control in Papun District, while not hunted down and shot on sight, are still subject to displacement whenever the Army decides a relocation of villages is necessary. Forced labour is demanded from all the villages under SPDC control, despite the SPDC’s claims internationally that they have banned the practice. SPDC Army units frequently enter the villages and demand food and money or simply steal it. This is in addition to the bribes villagers must pay to avoid the excessive forced labour, crop quotas, and other ‘taxes’ which the local Army units demand. Most Karen villagers are subsistence farmers, growing enough rice for their family with little surplus, keeping small livestock and vegetable gardens, and hunting and foraging in the forest, so they do not have access to enough money to pay the SPDC’s demands. The food situation is not much better than in the forest. The constant labour for the SPDC leaves very little time for villagers to plant and take care of their crops. Cash crops and livestock are stolen or demanded by the Army, leaving very little to eat or sell to buy rice. After paying all the fees there is very little money left to buy food to eat either. " (KHRG October 2001, 12-13)

The armed forces are seen as directly responsible for food scarcity and subsequent displacement (1999-2003)

- Burma's armed forces continue to be directly responsible for the most severe violations of the right to food
- Counter-insurgency operations randomly destroy food stocks and crops, relocate civilian communities, and expropriate cash and materials
- Reports that fields have been landmined to hinder villagers from returning and planting
- In 1996/97 the military introduced a policy where the tatmadaw troops had to provide food for themselves, leading to more forced labour
"Much of the SPDC’s counter-insurgency campaign in recent years has consisted of targeting the villagers’ fields to starve them into coming down from the hills as well as making the rice unavailable to the resistance forces. SPDC units that come across the fields of displaced villagers trample, uproot or burn the fields. Sometimes the fields are landmined to keep villagers from coming back and planting in them again. Many villagers have said they will not return to a field that the SPDC has been through out of fear of these landmines. Army columns are also burning off the cut brush left to dry in the fields before it is completely dry. This has the effect of causing an incomplete burn off making parts of the field unusable and limiting the amount of paddy the villager will be able to plant and later harvest. Rice storage barns hidden by displaced villagers in the forest are destroyed if found by SPDC soldiers. Hill fields are open places and villagers can easily be seen while working in them. SPDC columns routinely open fire on villagers with small arms, rocket propelled grenades and even mortars when villagers are seen in these fields. For this reason villagers usually flee when the news of an approaching Army column reaches them.

Crops are also indirectly destroyed by the Burma Army’s troop patrols. Whenever the Burma Army approaches hiding sites, the internally displaced villagers shift to another place in the forest. If these patrols are during the dry season months of February to April, people in the area dare not to cut and burn the vegetation to prepare their upland plots for cultivation. The longer the duration of patrols, the narrower the plots. If villagers are forced to leave their fields during the wet season, their rice crops are often eaten and destroyed by wild animals such as pigs, rats, chickens and birds as well as insects. Patrols at the end of the wet season often scare farmers away from their fields when they had planned to be harvesting, so crops are liable to become over ripe and ruined. Therefore, upland farmers in hiding generally only harvest 40% to 50% of their crop for the year." (BBC October 2003, pp. 19, 30)

"Widespread forcible relocation and forced labour have caused major disruption to many ethnic minorities' traditional ways of life. Those who have been forcibly relocated have lost their farms, their livelihoods, and their ancestral attachment to their land. The result of frequent forced labour has often been that many ethnic minorities can no longer earn their living as farmers because they are too busy working for the military to tend their fields. In this regard ethnic minorities are denied not only their civil and political rights, but also their economic, social, and cultural rights. These rights are guaranteed in the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Article 1, part 2 states inter alia: "In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence.

Beginning in 1996/97 the military reportedly began a "self-sufficiency program" which meant that tatmadaw troops had to provide food for themselves. In reality this entailed increased forced labour duties for the population in counter-insurgency areas, which included growing crops for the military. In addition, while troops had always lived off the villagers to a certain extent, they now began to their steal crops, livestock, money and personal belongings with greater frequency, engendering more hardship for the people. Many refugees interviewed in February 2001 by Amnesty International reported that the army took their cattle and killed them, stole or burned their rice, and took their other possessions when they entered their villages and farms." (AI 13 June 2001)

"Myanmar's armed forces continue to be directly responsible for the most severe violations of the right to food. Counter-insurgency operations randomly destroy food stocks and crops, relocate civilian communities, and expropriate cash and materials. Reports indicate that in some areas military operations directly target rural food supplies and crops without distinction, displace people from villages, scatter them into hills and jungles or force them into relocation sites. Standing between these people and starvation is nothing more than their extraordinary tenacity. Widespread dislocation is resulting in serious and long-term structural food scarcity, not mere seasonal hunger due to occasional military incursions.” (CHR 6 February 2001)

Another report details the food security situation facing the displaced as follows:
"Military operations in the civil war zones target the rural food supply. Apparently, the army’s justification is that this food, or some portion of it, is in fact being supplied to insurgent forces, and therefore must be
The army does attempt to distinguish between food intended for civilian consumption and food allegedly destined for the rebels. Instead, the army targets crops which provide the local food supply, in fear that if harvested, this rice would feed guerrillas. Tilling the soil, planting, tending fields, harvesting—all phases of agriculture are subject to attack.

Arbitrary and severe violence has destroyed countless rural villages, scattering people throughout the jungles. Where the army conducts intermittent raids but has no permanent bases, civilians may choose to remain in or near their villages, hiding when soldiers approach. Familiar with the local terrain, hunting conditions and edible plants, native inhabitants attempt to survive despite the loss of their homes and farms. The Four Cuts have thus created a phenomenon of internally displaced people (IDPs), living with perpetual food scarcity.

The Tribunal finds that the severest cases of food scarcity, including reports of starvation, occur among IDPs made homeless by the military strategy. Furthermore, this sector of Burmese society has the fewest alternatives when facing a food crisis. The army’s presence makes travel hazardous, even when people cross the border into Thailand as refugees.

We find that relocation has profound effects on food security. Moving people cuts them off from their land and natural resource base, subsistence farmers’ lifeline. The military neither compensates people for these losses nor designates new land. In the words of a Tatmadaw officer explaining relocation to villagers, "This is military rule… you stay where we tell you to stay."

Furthermore, food is tightly restricted in relocation centers, depending on the army’s perception of insurgent threat and whether rations actually exist. Relocation creates serious long-term food scarcity, rather than seasonal hunger arising from military incursions or heavy taxes at harvest time. A relocated family has lost its land, and with it the children’s future security in the rural economy. Economically, they must begin again, often starting from zero." (AHRC October 1999, pp. 59-62)

The statement by the Myanmar Government (SPDC) during the Commission on Human Rights in April 2000 contrasts sharply to the above description:

"Mr. Lallah refers to the incidents of hunger and food scarcity in Kayin, Kayini and Shan States, and the Delta region of Myanmar. It is well-known that, far from having a shortage of food, Myanmar has been a traditional exporter of rice. Myanmar is exporting rice, ranging from hundreds of thousands of tons to one million tons per year. In fact, countries in South-East Asia are looking upon Myanmar as a potential major source of food security in the region." (Myanmar Government, 30 March 2000)

Reports of confiscation and destruction of crops and food shortages in Mon, Karen States, and Tenasserim Division (2003)

"The confiscation of lands and forced labour also contribute to food insecurity in government controlled areas of Mon state. About 2,000 acres of land have been confiscated from paddy farmers in Ye township alone, and redistributed to large scale fruit plantations since 1999. This increase in landless paddy farmers has resulted in the township no longer producing enough rice to support its population. At the same time, the demands for forced labour continue to prevent farmers from tending to their fields." (BBC October 2003, p. 16)

"Confiscation or Devastation of crops: The Burmese Army knows the available food supply or rice or paddy is very important for the rebel soldiers to survive and to have food during their military operations. By many ways, the Burmese Army tried to cut food supplies to not reach to the rebel soldiers."
Normally ethnic farmers have grown their paddy in ‘slash and burnt’ method in hilly areas and they could plant permanently in some lands but in some areas, they have to shift their farms on a regular basis, 3 or 4 years cultivation. In most situation, the farmers have to stay at their farms to take care the plants: such as uprooting other grass plants; preventing the attacks by animals and insects; providing natural fertilizer and other activities. While the farmers or sometimes including their families stay at their farms to do their daily works and thus, they have to keep foods, especially rice or paddy at their farms. But storage of these food supplies is dangerous for Burmese Army.

When the Burmese Army launched the military offensives against the rebel, they also tried to confiscate some foods from farmers in farms and collected in one place. The Burmese Army controlled all of these crops and they did not let the villagers keep them. They provided just food rations to the villagers. Sometimes, during the harvest seasons when the paddy are getting ripe, if the Burmese Army could not bring all crop grains to their military bases, or to the villages where they could control, they just burn the crops down. The Burmese soldiers sometimes burnt down large area of paddy farms in hilly areas with a purpose to cut all food supplies that could be accessible for the rebel soldiers.

When they met the paddy stocked in the forest or in farms, they took some for their foods and then burnt down these supplies into ashes. Burning down the rice and other food supplies of the local farmers outside of the villages not only cut the supplies that could reach to the rebel soldiers, it also created suffering of food-shortage of the local farmers.

[...]

Related Food-shortage problems. There are many reasons that the IDPs could face food-shortage problems during they are displacing or in hiding situation. They access to foods would be cut when they are far from their native villages. The military offensives and the military operations launched by the Burmese Army could also prohibit their opportunity to get access for foods.

When they are in hiding place, they could contact the outside communities when they felt safe and when there is the military activity of Burmese Army, they could not contact to anyone. In many cases of displacement, the IDPs also faced serious food-shortage problems for many reasons.

Accordingly to MRDC, for Mon and Karen IDPs who arrived their set IDPs villages and even into NMSP ceasefire zones also faced food-shortage problems because of the following reason:

1. The new displaced villagers, who arrived into these Mon IDPs villages and NMSP areas from various parts of conflict areas in Ye Township, Yebyu Township, Kya-inn-seikyi Township and Kawkareik Townships are not so familiar with new area. It is quite difficult for them to seek work and to have income. Although they could seek a little of work in dry season, however, these works could not provide them with insufficient income for their families. If compared with other areas where there are conflicts, NMSP controlled areas are likely stable and therefore, they could stay safer than other areas.

2. Normal families in NMSP areas could communicate with outside communities for many businesses under the protection of NMSP. They are not afraid of being arrested by Burmese Army as they could claim to them that they are from ceasefire zones. Thus, the villagers in NMSP controlled areas have could have movement to the nearest towns and villagers. But for IDPs, they are very afraid of being arrested by the soldiers from Burmese Army because of their past experience in their villages. They fear for arrest, torture, arrest of porters as they were in their villages. At the same time, they could not get any job in the IDPs villages or NMSP ceasefire zones. Especially, Karen IDPs, who arrived into Mon IDPs villages and NMSP ceasefire zones are too afraid of re-arrested by Burmese soldiers and do not dare to go outside of the villages.

[...]

3. Normally, in many areas where IDPs are taking refuge, the local villagers just use ‘slash and burnt’ method of cultivations and they could produce the crops that are insufficient even for the villagers who remained in the area for such a long period. The villagers even in NMSP areas also tried to get food from
the areas outside of NMSP control. When there are more IDPs arrived into one area, they could not have sufficient foods for all people and therefore, the IDPs could face food-shortage problem first.

4. Normally in the rainy season, the traveling from one place to another is too difficult and the people and IDPs who stayed in the remote areas or in hiding areas could not get easy access to villages or areas where they could get foods. IDPs are very vulnerable in this situation to face food-shortage problems, because they are not familiar with the people in the area to get their helps and no money to buy food. “(HURFOM, Population Displacement is Humanitarian Crisis in Burma, May 2003)

Local farmers forced to grow crops for the troops (1999-2003)

- Reported in 1998 that SPDC no longer supplied troops with full rations
- Reports that SPDC troops are not only taking food from the villagers, but they are also taking their land and forcing them to work to grow food for the Army
- Reports from areas in the Karen State that the combination of the crop failures and the increased taxation and demands for food have made it impossible to survive

"The SPDC told its field units in 1998 that it would no longer be able to provide full rations and that the units would have to find alternative methods to get food. Since then, Army units have been confiscating land from villagers without payment. The villagers are then forced to plough, plant and watch over the crops for the Army. The food grown in these fields goes to the Army to supplement its rations and is also sold for a profit by the officers. Meanwhile the villagers have lost their best fields and are unable to get enough food to eat.

Army units are also notorious for demanding or stealing rice, poultry and livestock when they pass through or stay in villages. Nothing is usually given in compensation. Army camps throughout Karen State issue orders to the surrounding villages telling the villagers to provide them with rice, vegetables and meat." (BBC October 2003, p.18 )

"The army is reported to be increasingly placing restrictions on the kinds of crops grown by the local farmers, forcing them to grow crops for the troops which they will either consume themselves or sell. On 4 May 1998, in Murng Pan, IB 66 [army unit] is reported to have ordered farmers to grow no more than a small amount of garlic, whereas farmers had traditionally grown this crop for export to Thailand. They were told they had to grow soya beans for the army instead. On 23 June, IB 286 [army unit] in Kaelee told villagers from Murng Nawng and Murng Nang (who had been forcibly relocated) that they needed licences to grow rice and if licensed, they had to give half their rice crop to the army. If they had no licence, their rice fields would be confiscated. [...]" (UN 22 January 1999, para. 50)

A report from the Karen State give further details about this practice:
"At the same time, something is happening which has never occurred to such a large extent before: an increasing number of villagers native to the Sittaung River plains, both Karen and Burman, are fleeing eastward into the hills, and some are fleeing southward along the main road through Pegu and Kyaikto, then eastward to the Thai border. In the past the prosperity of the Sittaung valley villages has always made it possible for them to survive even under the burden of SLORC/SPDC demands for extortion money and forced labour, but things have changed in the past two years. The SPDC has increased its military presence in the area in an attempt to increase its control in the hills to the east, and these troops are placing ever-increasing demands for extortion money, crop quotas and forced labour on the civilians. The SPDC in Rangoon is no longer sending them full rations and has ordered them to grow their own food or take it from the villagers; as a result, not only are they taking food from the villagers, but they are also taking their land and forcing them to work to grow food for the Army. At the same time, crop quotas which all farmers must hand over to the SPDC have increased and the corruption of the civilian authorities who collect the crop
quotas has grown worse. The farmers might be able to survive this in good years, but most of them have suffered partial or complete crop failures for the past two years running due to droughts when they need rain, followed by floods once the crop is planted. The combination of the crop failures and the increased demands has made it impossible to survive. As though this were not enough, many have found they have to flee a new SPDC force which has been introduced in the area: the Sa Thon Lon Guerrilla Retaliation death squads." (KHRG 24 May 1999)

**A similar situation has been described in the Shan state:**
"The number of internally displaced grows exponentially, as villagers are finding it increasingly difficult to survive in relocation sites. Lack of food is the all-consuming concern for uprooted villagers. Those in relocation sites must compete for work on land owned by other villagers, or farm fields at great distances from the relocation sites. They are issued one day travel passes which are only good from dawn to dusk, leaving them no time to work a distant field which may take hours to reach on foot. As a result their harvest never yields enough to sustain their families. Some farmers have been allowed to return to their villages on a temporary basis, usually during key phases in the rice growing cycle. Most often permission has been granted to villagers who own fields close to the relocation sites in town or along main roads. The SPDC usually has an alternative motive for sending people back; a case in point is Wan Lao village in Kun Hing township, where even non-native villagers were allowed to repopulate the area after the forced relocations had resulted in the SPDC Army being unable to confiscate sufficient rice from the villagers. The military distributed leaflets encouraging people to return, but when they did they were bound by the same limitations and restrictions that had applied in the relocation sites, with the additional burden of taxes and rice quotas to hand over to the SPDC at harvest time." (KHRG 5 April 2000, "Introduction")

**Karen IDPs in hiding have potential to grow their own food if not discovered by SPDC troops (2003)**

- IDPs in hiding sites depend on the shifting cultivation method of slash and burn farming to survive
- IDPs can generally survive in hiding as long as their rice crops are not damaged or destroyed by extreme weather, pests or SPDC troops
- Villagers from hiding sites risk arrest, detention or even execution when they approach government controlled relocation sites

"[Karen] IDPs in hiding sites depend on the shifting cultivation method of slash and burn farming to survive. Cultivating one crop of rice paddy requires attention from clearing the fields in January or February through to the harvest in October to November. Tapioca, yam and various vegetables are grown as supplementary crops, while bamboo shoots, wild yam roots and other edible vegetables can also be collected in season from the forest. Fish can be caught in streams and fermented into fish paste to last longer, so salt is the main product that needs to be sought from traders and relatives in relocation sites. When rice supplies are low, tapioca and bamboo shoots are mixed into rice porridge or eaten as a staple food instead of rice.

The forest soils are fertile so IDPs can generally survive in hiding as long as their rice crops are not damaged or destroyed by extreme weather, pests or SPDC troops. In general, one pyi (two kilograms) of seed can produce 15-20 baskets (480-640 kilograms) of paddy in one acre of land. After one basket (32 kilograms) of paddy is thrashed of its husk and cleaned, almost one tin (16 kilograms) of rice will remain from a normal crop. This is enough to feed one person for a month. So for a family of four to hide and survive in Tenasserim Division, they need to clear more than five acres of forest and plant at least five pyi (ten kilograms) of seed to harvest 100 baskets (3.2 metric tonnes) of paddy each year."
IDPs with a surplus from their harvest either sell, lend or share their paddy to others in hiding. Villagers in hiding can also access rice through contacting their relatives or traders in forced relocation sites. Some IDPs collect honey or hunt wild animals in order to trade with villagers in hiding, forced relocation sites or Thailand. However, villagers from hiding sites risk arrest, detention or even execution when they approach government controlled relocation sites. Villagers in the relocation sites also risk being punished if they sell food to villagers from outside of the area. These restrictions, plus the poor roads and distance from other states and divisions, have resulted in rice prices for IDPs hiding in the southern township of Tenasserim doubling over the past 3 years to 5,000 kyat per tin (US$ 5 per 16 kilograms).

IDPs in hiding use many different ways to cope with food insecurity, but the main method is to store their paddy in different secret places. Some people store the paddy underground to prevent their food supply from being damaged or destroyed by the SPDC troops or wild animals and pests. The main risk with this is that the paddy becomes rotten, even if the Burma Army doesn’t move into the area. In this case, IDPs try to minimise losses by sharing the remaining food amongst the community." (BBC October 2003, pp 13-14)
DOCUMENTATION NEEDS AND CITIZENSHIP

Legal status of ethnic minorities

Restricted freedom of movement for minority groups (2000)

- Provisions of the citizenship law requires minority groups to obtain prior permission to travel
- Rohingyas need a license even to travel outside their township

"Those residents unable to meet the restrictive provisions of the citizenship law, such as ethnic Chinese, Arakanese, Muslims, and others must obtain prior permission to travel. Some Arakanese Muslims must obtain permission from the security forces to travel to the next town. The Government also prohibits foreign diplomats and foreign employees of U.N. agencies based in Rangoon from travelling outside the capital without advance permission, which sometimes was not granted or rescinded after travel had begun." (US DOS 25 February 2000, sect. 2d)

"The stipulations of the Burma Citizenship Law governing the right to one of the three types of Burmese citizenship effectively deny to the Rohingya the possibility of acquiring a nationality. Despite being able to trace Rohingya history to the eighth century, Burmese law does not recognize the ethnic minority as one of the national races. Many Rohingya families migrated to and settled in Arakan during the British colonial period which would immediately exclude them from citizenship. Even for those Rohingya whose families settled in the region before 1823, moreover, the onerous burden of proof has made it nearly impossible for all but a handful to secure citizenship. Rohingya who cannot provide "conclusive evidence" of their lineage or history of residence find themselves ineligible for any class of citizenship. And because of their formal legal status as resident foreigners, Rohingya are subject to restrictions on their freedom of movement, are denied access to higher education, and are restricted from holding public office. (HRW May 2000, chapt.III)

"In 1999, Rohingyas still had no citizenship and were still subject to the restrictions affecting the foreigners of the country, notably the lack of the freedom of movement.

[...] As a direct consequence of the 1982 Law and the Foreigners’ Act (1940), whether they have a TRC or not, the Rohingyas do not enjoy any freedom of movement outside their own villages. In order to leave their village, they have to ask for a license (section 10, Foreigners’ Act) and “every such license shall state the name of the person to whom the license is granted, the nation to which he belongs, the district or districts through which he is authorized to travel, and the period, if any, during which the license is intended to have effect” (section 11).

In order to move around in their township, the Rohingyas have to ask the VPDC for a license. In order to go beyond their township, they have to apply to the TPDC and, outside the district, to the DPDC. Lastly, in order to get out of Arakan and go to the rest of the Union, they need an SPDC license. On the VPDC local level as well as beyond, the demand is always passed on to the different administrations in charge of the control of the population (Nasaka, Military Intelligence, police, IPD...) each one of which has to give its agreement." (FIDH April 2000, p.19)
The few who possess ID cards apparently able to keep them after being relocated in the Shan state (1999)

- Many Shans villagers do not possess an ID card required for travel within the country
- The forced relocations have made the process of obtaining a card far more difficult
- Relocated villagers without ID cards have difficulty travelling to Thailand

"All citizens of Burma have the right to be issued with identity cards by their local authorities. These cards are necessary for travel throughout the country, and you are subject to arrest if you do not carry one.

However, many Shans who live in remote villages do not actually possess an ID card. This may either be because they have not got around to going to the township office to go through the procedure to get the card, or else because the procedure can cost too much money.

Although in no cases do ID cards appear to have been permanently confiscated when villagers were relocated, one villager (from Koong Kao, Loilem township) said that his identity card had been confiscated temporarily together with those of the other villagers during relocation and only returned once they went to the relocation site. In other words, the ID cards were used to force people to obey the military.

Whether or not the villagers had an ID card in the first place, the forced relocations have made the process of obtaining a card far more difficult, whether to replace an old one or to get a new one.

Several of the villagers said that they had lost their identity cards during the relocation. One man whose card had expired after he had been relocated to Kunhing said that he had tried to apply for a new ID card, but had been told that he would have to wait to get a new one, because he was not from the town of Kunhing itself.

The relocated villagers who did not have ID cards had difficulty travelling to Thailand, and had to request travel passes from the local township authorities, pretending they were going to visit relatives in another part of Shan State.

In October 1998, there was a report that authorities in Mung Nai (one of the townships where forced relocations have taken place) were starting to check household registration lists and crossing out the names of people who are not present. This is extremely worrying, as this means that both the internally displaced who are not in the relocation sites, or those displaced to Thailand may have lost their legal identity as a result of the relocation." (SHRF April 1999, p.30)
ISSUES OF FAMILY UNITY, IDENTITY AND CULTURE

General

Displacement and subsequent military control of civilians undermine community solidarity (2003)

- Villagers in conflict areas are increasingly facing distrust amongst each other
- Lack of contact with outside world has made the Burmese troops strong in their control over the villagers

"Creating distrust amongst communities"
One thing that the villagers are increasingly facing is distrust amongst each other, toward each family and to the community. It is difficult for the villagers to unite and stand together to find the way to fight the oppressor or injustice. There are many reasons for this. One thing is that the villagers who live under Burmese control are closely watched by the Burmese troops or their spies and they also create different opportunities between communities. Another may be caused by the formation of the people militia’s.

The villagers know which villagers they should be afraid of because they are Burmese troop’s spies or suspect them of being Burmese troops spies. Villagers who followed the Burmese troops and try to please the Burmese troops get more opportunity than other villagers do, especially for the security of earning their living. Unlike before, Burmese troops also use a new way of spying on villagers. Reports from villagers stated that Burmese soldiers use groups of 4-5 people who walk around the village at night beside people houses and secretly listen to the villagers talking.

Communities also get different opportunities depending on how they cooperate with the Burmese troops or please them. Many villagers talk about one particular village that they hate or distrust because they found that this village gets more freedom for earning their living. The villagers try to cooperate more with the Burmese troops by forming people militia. There are also more rich people in the village so they make close relationships with the Burmese army officers for their business.

The forming of people militia has also created distrust among the community. Villagers fear if they do not follow the Burmese troop’s orders or if they give help to the Karen resistance, the people militia will learn and will report them to the Burmese troops. Some villagers said that the forming of people militia is also good in some ways because when the Burmese troops patrol with the people militia outside the relocation sites, or if they arrest someone the people militia can recommend for his/her release. However, they also said some of the people militia are definitely being the Burmese troops’ handle. Many villagers do not want to join the people militia. Recently villagers in Kamoethway area had to serve as people militia for 6 month terms. Each village had to send at least two people. Some people try to please the Burmese army officers by cooperating with them and trying to organize by force. Those people get leadership among the people militia and get the opportunity to extort from the villagers, to punish villagers and have power over the community. This causes distrust and also hatred among the community. It creates the conflict between the Karen soldiers and the people militia as well.

[...]

Contact with outside world
Lack of contact with outside world has made the Burmese troops strong in their control over the villagers. Even though human right abuses take place every day, no human rights worker can go there and report on
it. The villagers also have no contact with human right groups inside Burma such as ILO and UN agencies. It is the same for human rights groups based in Thailand or other countries. Some villagers are able to listen to the BBC or VOA radio Burmese service. This lack of contact with the outside world can have a demoralising affect on the villagers." (BI, April 2003, pp. 14-16)

"Villagers are often accused of hiding opposition group personnel in their houses or merely providing them with shelter for the night. In many cases the person they accommodated was a family member as villagers have become increasingly wary of sheltering strangers due to the potential harassment they may face from the Burmese military. The Burmese military, through its military operations, has exacerbated the climate of distrust amongst villagers in the ethnic areas by encouraging and enforcing a culture of informing against those supporting non-Burman ethnic nationality opposition groups. This climate of distrust now permeates almost every level of the community. Villagers commonly find themselves accused and arrested for harbouring non-Burman ethnic nationality opposition group personnel, usually through information provided to the Burmese military by their fellow villagers and sometimes even family members.

[...]
The Burmese military often accuses villagers of having a relative who is a member of a non-Burman ethnic nationality opposition group. The accusation implies that families should take responsibility for other family members’ actions. This creates division amongst families and uses family members as bait to capture those who are members of non-Burman ethnic nationality opposition groups. Villagers are repeatedly targeted if they are known to have a relative who is a member of a non-Burman ethnic nationality opposition group. They are often drilled for information regarding the activities and movements of the relative and his/her group. Many villagers revealed that this continual harassment caused them to flee their villages and was a major cause for family displacement. Families would be split up and those that were members were often restricted in their ability to see their families again. " (ALTSEAN August 2003, pp 14-15)

**While other communities remain together....**

"Another problem affecting the displaced is the disintegration of families and communities. The Special Rapporteur noticed a large number of widows and orphans among the displaced in camps in Thailand. However, numerous communities have remained more or less together in spite of displacement and have maintained many of their cultural traditions. This helps to alleviate some extent the acute problems of displacement and would no doubt facilitate the process of return to the areas of origin. However, very few returns to areas of origin seem to be taking place. Continued insecurity coupled with destroyed infrastructure suggest that displaced persons had compelling reasons for wanting to remain in the camps in Thailand.

[...]
Female-headed households were less able to become self-reliant and were therefore more in need of assistance. In some cases, they were assisted by other families, for example, in setting up shelters. The numerous children who had been orphaned or separated from their families constituted a particularly vulnerable group. In general, there was a willingness on the part of local families or other displaced persons to adopt the children, at least until their parents could be traced if they were still alive." (UN 22 January 1999, paras. 58 & 69 )

**Discrimination of followers of non-Buddhist religions (1999)**

- Christian IDPs in relocation sites not allowed to build churches

"Some of the relocation sites have basic schools and Buddhist monasteries, but there appears to be a policy of forbidding the construction of Christian churches. Villagers have repeatedly been denied permission to build churches in the sites, even though a large proportion of the Karenni population is Christian, primarily Roman Catholics followed by Baptists. When the forced relocations first occurred, some of the Catholic
priests and lay preachers from the villages were told to go to Loikaw and stay among the church representatives there rather than go to the relocation sites with the other villagers." (NCGUB 1999, p.127)

"There is no official state religion; however, the Government continued to show preference for Theravada Buddhism, the majority religion. State-controlled news media frequently depict junta members paying homage to Buddhist monks, making donations at pagodas throughout the country, officiating at ceremonies to open, improve, restore, or maintain pagodas, and organizing ostensibly voluntary "people's donations" of money, food, and uncompensated labor to build or refurbish Buddhist religious shrines throughout the country. State-owned newspapers routinely featured, as front-page banner slogans, quotations from the Buddhist scriptures. Buddhist doctrine remained part of the state-mandated curriculum in all elementary schools; however, individual children generally are permitted to choose not to receive instruction in Buddhism, although the Government at times deals harshly with those who do. The Government also funded the construction of the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University in Rangoon.

[...]
The Government continued to discriminate against members of minority religions, restricting the educational, proselytizing, and building activities of minority religious groups. There is a concentration of Christians among some of the ethnic minorities (for example, the Karen and Kachin) against which the army has fought for decades, although groups that practice Buddhism (for example, the Shan) also have waged many of the ethnic insurgencies.

Christian groups continued to have difficulties in obtaining permission to build new churches, while Muslims reported that they essentially are banned from constructing any new mosques. Buddhist groups are not known to have experienced similar difficulties in obtaining permission to build pagodas or monasteries. In parts of Chin State, authorities reportedly have not authorized the construction of any new churches since 1997. The Government reportedly also has denied permission for churches to be built along main roads in cities such as Myitkina, the capital of Kachin State. In Rangoon during the year, authorities closed more than 80 home-churches (a traditional gathering place for many Christians) because their operators did not have proper authorizations to hold religious meetings. At the same time, the authorities have made it increasingly difficult to obtain approval for the construction of "authorized" churches." (US DOS, 4 March 2002, sect. 2c)
PROPERTY ISSUES

General

Customary system of land use overruled by new land laws introduced by the military rulers (2003)

- Under legislations dating back to the 1950s - and reinforced under military rule - the state has extensive rights over, and ownership of land
- The state has told villagers what to grow, often taxed them excessively, and confiscated the land of those unable to comply
- More recently, the SPDC has acquired large tracts of land and transferred it to commercial companies

"Land is the ultimate resource, for without it people cannot sustain their lives. The majority of people in Burma depend on the land for their livelihood. Land is a major source of wealth and power. Control of land has therefore been the focus of successive ruling bodies in Burma from the British colonial rulers (1931-1948), to the independent/ democratic government (1948-1962), to the various guises of military regimes: the Revolutionary Council (1962-1974), the Burma Socialist Programme Party (1974-1988), the State Law and Order Restoration Council (1988-1997) and the State Peace and Development Council (1997-present).

Through successive forms of governing bodies, there has been a process by the State of taking land thought to be useful for commercial or infrastructure projects, ignoring the customary system of land use and the rights of individual citizens. Rice is the staple crop, staple food and staple export production. Just as in pre-colonial times, governments in Burma have procured rice to provision the army and to sell at discount price to civil servants and quota rice is also sold on the international market. Since 1988 there has been a renewed emphasis on agricultural production for export and the people of Burma are forced to support the ever increasing military presence. The most significant land problems in Burma remain those associated with landlessness, rural poverty, inequality of access to resources, and a military regime that denies citizen rights and is determined to rule by force and not by law. When rural households are driven off their lands, or are gradually and continually impoverished, then the ability to improve the family’s condition is denied and the survival of the family is jeopardized.

[...]
The Agricultural Lands Act 1953, section (9) and (10) dictate that, landowners can transfer or partition their land only on receiving permission from the authorities. Under section (11) and (12) of the same act, they are not permitted to cease agricultural work, let the land lie fallow, or lease the land to others. There are clear indications that cultivators do not really possess the land they own.

[...]
The military junta, which took power in 1962, rice production was nationalized. The government attempted to redistribute productive lands under nationally administered, locally managed collective farming.

[...]
The Tenancy Act 1963 promulgated by the Revolution Council and By Laws relating to the Tenancy Act 1963; Protecting the Right of Cultivators Act 1963; and the Tenancy Amendment Act 1965 further took control of land from the farmers into the hands of the State. […] authority to issue regulations for the tenants working on the lands leased from the state. The cultivators who under the Land Nationalization Act 1953 possessed the right to own land now became lessees under the laws.

[...]
The Protection of the Right of Cultivation Act, 1963, stated that the following were protected: (1) agricultural land; (2) cattle and ploughing implements; (3) tractors and machinery; (4) other implements whether animate or inanimate; (5) prohibition from confiscation for any reason of agricultural produce and arrest of cultivators. However, at the same time it was stipulated that such protection would not apply in the case of: (a) non-payment of dues owing to the state; (b) disputes arising from inheritance cases or actions taken by the state for security reasons.

The Constitution of 1974 states clearly that the State is the ultimate owner of all natural resources and also of land; and it shall develop, extract, exploit and utilize the natural resources. In 1974, the government implemented a new procurement system which was actually a "compulsory delivery system". According to this system, a quota of paddy which had to be sold at a fixed price to the government depot was set for each farmer according to the size of his holding for paddy, the yield per acre, his family size and the amount of paddy to be paid to hired labor.

Prior to the State Peace Development Council (SPDC) coming to power in 1997, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) adopted all the agrarian policies issued by the Burmese Socialist Programme Party ruling from 1974-1988. Under SLORC, which seized power in 1988, all land within Burma---fields, forests, mountains, and reserved lands belonged to the State and were controlled by SLORC. There was no freedom for farmers to grow crops in a sustainable manner or to improve the economic and social well-being of the households or communities. All land set aside for paddy fields must grow paddy only, and there was no programme to redistribute land to the poor.

The socialist-era reassignment of arable land to productive farmers has taken a new twist in the late 1990s: corporate rice farming. In January 1999, the SPDC announced that 200,000 acres of paddy land in Irrawaddy, Rangoon, and Magwe Divisions had been transferred to nine unnamed entrepreneurs licensed by the SPDC to reclaim "wetlands and vacant, fallow and virgin lands." (Nancy Hudson-Rodd, Myo Nyunt, Saw Thamain Tun & Sein Htay, 2003, pp. 3-6 & 13)

Confiscation of land a central element in the army's campaign to control the ethnic minority areas (1999-2003)

- Very few legal titles to land exist, so the military confiscates the land that traditionally belonged to peasants and farmers living in Karenni, Karen and Shan States
- Confiscation of land, of either agricultural land or 'real estate' has become common and widespread
- No compensation paid to the Shan, Lahu, and Akha farmers who were displaced by the arrivals of Wa settlers
- The military has confiscated vast areas of farmland to build army bases, and to feed soldiers and their dependants

"The confiscation of land and property was another recurrent abuse. It was alleged that often the Tatmadaw units entering villages would just take whatever they wanted. None of the persons interviewed declared having received any compensation for the loss of land or property. Confiscation of property often went hand in hand with forced relocations. Some people had left because they had felt intimidated by large numbers of Wa people moving into their areas.

The main reason for this practice by the Tatmadaw would seem to be to deny people the possibility to survive in areas where they thought armed opposition groups were active. A number of people who had been forcibly relocated earlier said that they had stayed in hiding in the jungle until the Tatmadaw was gone. After that, they had built new houses and were able to survive there for a while, but when the Tatmadaw returned and again destroyed their houses and food, they had had no choice but to leave. These
abuses seem to be related to the fact that the Tatmadaw units in the field lacked logistical support from their command. This could have led to an increase in the confiscation of land and property of villagers." (UN GA 5 August 2003, paras 50-51)

"A further concern about the link between strategic resources and warfare which has had a crucial impact on many groups displaced in border states, is that counter-insurgency campaigns and continued turmoil have led to the confiscation of traditional and ancestral lands from many members of ethnic minorities. The Special Rapporteur's 1998 report on Burma commented:

very few legal titles to land exist. This permits the military to confiscate the land that had traditionally belonged to peasants and farmers living in Karenni, Karen and Shan States and to redistribute it to military officials and soldiers.

While the extent of these confiscations remains undocumented, in one township in Karenni State it was estimated that at least 2,400 acres of farmland had been confiscated in 1993 alone. In some cases families whose traditional lands had been confiscated were compelled to work as unpaid labourers on that same land. This then contributed to further displacement, as in such circumstances it is very difficult for families to earn even a subsistence wage.

The arbitrariness of the confiscation of farmland without compensation of any kind has been also been described by the Mon Information Service:

confiscation of land, of either agricultural land or 'real estate' has become common and widespread. There are no instances of the authorities' provision of compensation for any confiscation of farmland or real estate ... according to the 1954 Agricultural Land Nationalization Act, all cultivated lands of the country are owned by the State, and can be repossessed by the State (1998).

 [...] The lack of any rule of law or independent judiciary offers opportunities - in logging, mining, fishing, road building, construction or the beautification of tourist sites - to make money for anyone involved. The land laws offer little protection to the rural farmer who in any case often fears taking any action against the military in case of reprisals.

Without the rule of law, or an independent judiciary free from interference by political or military personnel, displacement of this type is likely to continue both in rural and urban areas." (BERG September 2000)

"Beginning in late 1999 the UWSA began to move segments of the civilian population under its control from northern Shan State to southeastern Shan State. This displacement was undertaken allegedly to prevent Wa farmers from growing opium poppies. The Wa civilians reportedly did not have a choice about moving, and thousands are believed to have died from preventable diseases during and after the move. The SPDC reportedly sold tracts of land in the southeastern Shan State to the UWSA to distribute to the settlers; however no compensation was known to have been paid to the Shan, Lahu, and Akha farmers who were displaced by the new arrivals. In addition Shan civilians living in parts of Murung Hsat township where the UWSA are present are subjected to threats if they do not comply with UWSA demands. In February 2002 Amnesty International interviewed several of these people who had fled to Thailand because they had lost their homes, their livelihood, and their possessions." (AI 17 July 2002, pp16-17)

Farmland confiscated by the Burmese Army, to grow crops and build garrisons

"In 1997 over 1,000 acres of land between Kayon Taung and Kaw Bwee Taung villages, Kyeikmaraw Township, Mon State were confiscated by the South-eastern military Commander. The land was allocated to the military Battalions under the command of government departments, the Navy and the police force for self-reliant agricultural projects and the villagers of these areas to cultivate for them. As the civilians also have their own land to work for their survival, the village headmen collected money and hired people who
were able to work on the military run projects; therefore, each village tract spends approximately 300,000 Kyats every year for hiring people and other expenses.

And in early 1999, SPDC troops of IB 245 confiscated 60 acres of rice fields from the Shan villagers of Wan Pawm, Tin Thaat and Waeng Sun villages in Kaeng Taung, Shan State. After that, the troops forced the villagers in the area to lease the land to grow rice at the rate of 2,000 Kyats per acre per year or for one harvest. (Source: SHRF)"(Nancy Hudson-Rodd, Myo Nyunt, Saw Thamain Tun & Sein Htay, 2003, p. 3).

Houses burned to obstruct IDPs returning to their villages (1999-2000)

- Claims that SPDC by the late 1990s became more systematic in its village destruction campaigns
- After destroying the houses, the SPDC troops seek out and destroy the food supplies
- Villagers in the relocation sites ordered to return to their villages to cut down all of the trees in and around the village

"Since late 1998, regular SPDC and Sa Thon Lon Guerrilla Retaliation units have begun taking some additional steps to ensure that people cannot go back to stay in their home villages [in the Karen State] and that resistance forces cannot take cover there. In some villages they have burned whatever remains of the houses. For example, in December 1998 they burned all the remaining houses in Twa Ni Gom village of Mone township, which has been forced to Yan Myo Aung relocation site and is abandoned. However, some Twa Ni Gom villagers were nearby with passes to farm their fields and saw it happen. When Kya Plaw and Leh Wain Gyi villages in Kyaung Kyi township were forced to relocate in January 1999, the villagers stripped their houses of building materials so that they could build huts in the relocation site, and then as soon as they were gone SPDC troops burned what remained of their houses. In addition to burning the remains of villages, they have begun ordering villagers in the relocation sites to return to their villages to cut down all of the trees in and around the village. Sa Thon Lon Guerrilla Retaliation troops forced villagers in Thit Cha Seik and Weh Gyi relocation sites to return and cut down all except the coconut trees in Ter Bpaw, Lu Ah and other villages. According to a villager from xxxx, people from his village who have been forced to Kaw Tha Say now have to return to cut down "all the trees between Sweh Dtee and Kyun Gy"", a distance of several kilometres." (KHRG 24 May 1999, "Returning to the Old Villages")

"The destruction of villages and their forced relocation to military-controlled sites has long been a tactic of the Burmese Army in its efforts to bring the civilian population under control. However, in the past 3 to 4 years the regime has become much more systematic in its village destruction campaigns, in several cases declaring entire areas to be harbouring ‘insurgents’ and proceeding to destroy hundreds of villages at a time. In Shan State approximately 1,500 villages have been ordered to relocate and destroyed since 1996 in an attempt to undermine the Shan State Army; in Karen (Kayah) State about 200 villages covering most of the state have been destroyed; in the hills of northern Papun District and eastern Nyaunglebin District, the regime’s troops can seldom catch the villagers to force them to relocate, so they have gone from village to village, shelling villages from the hilltops without warning and then burning every house and shed. In the process, another 200 villages have been destroyed since 1997. These attacks are carried out with the sole purpose of forcing the villagers out, and there are very seldom any opposition soldiers in the villages when the attacks occur. Many of the destroyed villages do not even have more than rare and sporadic contact with opposition forces.

Some of the villagers are forced by written orders to go to SPDC relocation sites, after which the Army columns destroy their villages, but most villagers know that they will receive nothing at the relocation sites so when they are ordered to relocate or their village is attacked they simply flee into hiding in the surrounding hills. After destroying the houses, the SPDC troops seek out and destroy the food supplies by finding and burning the paddy storage barns where the villagers keep their rice stocks, and in some areas trampling, uprooting or burning crops they find in the fields." (KHRG June 2000, chapt. I)
Government troops reported to have appropriated property left behind by IDPs (1998)

- Property reported to have been stolen or confiscated by the army after forced relocation
- People forced to leave their land, their crops and most of their animals

"Cases of forced evictions seem to occur with great frequency and as a matter of policy. All the people interviewed by the Special Rapporteur stated that they were given at most one week's notice to move and were told that they would be shot if they did not comply. They were forced to leave their land, their crops and most of their animals. Much of the property was reportedly immediately stolen or confiscated by the army. In some cases, there was adequate time to prepare for departure, so that families or even entire communities could leave together. If not, or if attacked, they had to flee in a disorderly manner, sometimes with husband, wife and children going in different directions." (UN 22 January 1999, para.56)

"The fact that most of the relocated [Shan] villagers were only given 3-5 days in which to move, meant they were unable to take all their possessions with them. A further factor in forcing them to leave behind certain possessions, particularly livestock, was that they did not know where they could keep them and how they would feed them at the relocation site.

Most of the villagers interviewed about which possessions they were able to carry with them listed the following items: ox-carts, baskets of rice paddy, clothes, blankets, cooking pots.

Some of the villagers managed to bring up to 120 baskets of rice paddy with them, but some villagers could only bring a few tins of rice, and left behind up to 80 baskets of paddy.

The important possessions that villagers listed that they had to leave behind, apart from their houses and fields, included: cheroot leaves (their cash crop), cattle, buffalo, horses, rice paddy (up to 80 baskets).

Although Principle 21 [of the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement] states that the property and possessions left behind by internally displaced persons should be protected against destruction and arbitrary and illegal appropriation, occupation or use, many of the villagers said that the livestock they had left was killed and eaten by Burmese soldiers.

'I did not take much with me when I was ordered to move. I thought maybe I would be allowed back soon. But when the troops came on the seventh day to drive us out, they burned down 10 houses in the village, including mine. They looted all my things before they burned my house. Then they shot and killed our 15 cattle." (SHRF interview with woman refugee aged 28 from Wan Na, Murng Kerng, Sept 30 98) " (SHRF April 1999, p.31)

Government ignoring property rights when forcing people in urban areas to relocate (1998)

- Residents have rarely been offered compensation for properties or homes lost, or the necessary assistance for building their new homes

"As a means of facilitating urban development and 'cleansing' the cities of 'squatters' the practice of forced relocation typically requires residents of city centre settlements to vacate their existing homes and move to newly established satellite 'towns' on very short notice. That some residents actually have title to the land on which they live is simply ignored by government. To ensure compliance, the authorities often first disconnect the electricity and water supplies at the old settlements and then raze them to the ground.
Residents have rarely been offered compensation for properties or homes lost, or the necessary assistance for building their new homes. When resettlement sites are offered, they lack the infrastructure to support large-scale relocation of people, having been flooded, lacking proper sewage facilities with little health care provision or sources of clean water, rendering many of those who move there vulnerable to diseases such as malaria and diarrhoea. Once relocated, residents are prohibited from moving again to an area of their choice. "(COHRE September 1998, p. 21)
PATTERNS OF RETURN AND RESETTLEMENT

General

Reports of some return from relocations sites (1998-2000)

- Large number of IDPs left relocation sites in the Karenni state during 1998-99
- Reports of some return by Karenni IDPs from relocation sites to their villages or other more "accessible" villages
- Relocation strictly enforced in the Shan state but some IDPs ordered back to their villages for strategic reasons
- In parts of Kachin State and other ceasefire areas, IDPs have begun to re-settle and work on community development, sometimes in partnership with local and international NGOs

"Although there is little information available, it seems as if many [Karenni] IDPs are moving out of the relocation sites and back to their villages [...]. In some cases, these IDPs have subsequently migrated to the refugee camps in Thailand.

[...]

In the dry season of 1998-1999, there was a large, and as yet unexplained, population movement from the relocation sites to the Thai border. A large proportion of those who arrived at refugee camps appears to have come from Shadaw relocation site. Evidence suggests that they were able to travel in large groups; on 1 February 1999, a group of 400 arrived in Camp 2 at the same time. Since then, refugees have indicated that the numbers left inside the relocation sites are very small, some estimating that there were only 300-500 people remaining in the Shadaw relocation site. Other sites, such as Htee Poh Kloh and Daw Tama Gyi are known to have closed down. However, not all the villages from these areas have been able to move back to their original villages; in some cases they have been displaced a second time and relocated to more accessible villages in the area.

In July 1998, IDPs who had come to the border from relocation sites at Nwa La Boe, Mawchi and Pasaung had been ordered to leave the relocation sites and return to their villages. At Nwa La Boe, many of the resettled families had come from villages in the Shadaw area, where villagers were still unable to return to their home villages. IDPs from Nwa La Boe reportedly refused to return — most likely for this reason. According to one refugee, at Mawchi and Pasaung, families who were told to go back to their village by the SPDC column commander later received orders from the Regional Control Command to remain at the site.

It is not clear why IDPs are moving back to their villages. In some cases the return appears to be voluntary, while in others people are being ordered back. However, the lessening of the conflict between the Tatmadaw and the KNPP appears to be a factor; and where pro-government or cease-fire groups operating in the locality have taken responsibility for security, IDPs have been allowed back to their villages." (BERG May 2000, pp. 61-62)

"In most of the areas [in the Shan state] relocated since 1996 the relocation orders are still being strictly enforced, and the relocated villagers are still forbidden from going to farm outside of about 3 miles from the sites, and are at risk of being shot on sight if they return to their old villages. However, since August 1998, in several townships including Kunhing, Namzarg and Laikha, some villagers have been ordered back to their villages if these villages are on the main road, and within 10 km from the towns. This seems to be a strategy by the SPDC to ensure greater protection for their troops when traveling on the roads, since they can post agents in the villages to watch resistance troop movements. However, most of the villagers
are too scared of the SPDC troops to return to their villages, and many have even fled to Thailand as a result. SHRF only knows of 2 villages about 4 km from Namzarn where the villagers have agreed to return." (SHRF April 1999, pp.5-6)

Lack of security and destroyed infrastructure discourage return (1999)

- Maintenance of community ties may facilitate process of return
- Infrastructure of entire villages had been destroyed and many homes levelled by warfare and looting
- Reports of villages being landmined to prevent resettlement

"Another problem affecting the displaced is the disintegration of families and communities. The Special Rapporteur noticed a large number of widows and orphans among the displaced in camps in Thailand. However, numerous communities have remained more or less together in spite of displacement and have maintained many of their cultural traditions. This helps to alleviate to some extent the acute problems of displacement and would no doubt facilitate the process of return to the areas of origin. However, very few returns to areas of origin seem to be taking place. Continued insecurity coupled with destroyed infrastructure suggest that displaced persons had compelling reasons for wanting to remain in the camps in Thailand.

As far as the security situation in the areas of return are concerned, reports continuously reaching the camps speak of, for example, forced labour and portering, arbitrary arrests, detentions and executions by the Myanmar military of persons suspected of sympathizing with insurgents, with no recourse to formal judicial proceedings. In addition, returnees were finding their homes destroyed and their land either burnt or occupied by the army. In such cases, the returnees had no recourse to justice, either because the judicial system did not exist or because it was not functioning independently. The displaced, moreover, had very few resources and means by which to return home. The infrastructure of entire villages had been destroyed and many homes levelled by warfare and looting. Finally, it would seem that the local authorities had no intention of dealing with the assistance and protection problems of the returnees.

The Special Rapporteur was told that, for the peasants who had lost their land, either because they had to sell it very cheaply before they fled or because it was destroyed or taken by the army, return is not possible. Where the armed conflict is continuing, return is also not an option." (UN 22 January 1999, paras.58-61)

"Landmine Monitor researchers have come across repeated examples of mine use by the Tatmawdaw (government troops) directed against the civilian, non-combatant population-- notably in the mining of villages to prevent resettlement and mining of border areas to prevent refugee flows. In these cases landmines are apparently being used as a tool in a carefully planned campaign of terror against the civilian population. In other instances, civilians are being used as a mine removal tool--human mine-sweepers.

The Tatmawdaw is engaged in a massive operation in the central part of the Shan State in which it is forcibly removing the domestic population from an area of several hundred square kilometers. To prevent people from returning to their home villages, the Tatmawdaw has mined several of the villages. Similar actions have occurred in Karen and Karenni states where villages have been burned and mines laid in the ashes to prevent villagers from returning to their homes." (Landmine Monitor 1999)

“In addition, it is believed SPDC military engineers actively maintain minefields along the border with Bangladesh, replacing old or exploded mines with new mines. Originally laid in 1993, the minefields, which run nearly the entire length of the border, now serve to prevent cross-border economic activities like woodcutting and smuggling, to deter further flight by refugees from the interior of Burma, and to interdict cross-border movement by armed ethnic militias.” (Landmine Monitor 2000)
HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

General

Military rulers continue blocking access to the internally displaced from inside Burma (2000-2003)

- The Government denies that there is a problem of internal displacement and impedes efforts to collect or investigate information about human rights abuses
- Some assistance reaches displaced people from inside Burma, especially in relocation areas, but this is unofficial and low-profile, and documentation is not publicly available
- International NGOs required to have a government ministry representative accompany them on all field visits

"Responses within Burma to issues regarding IDPs have remained largely peripheral. The main constraint facing the international community is inadequate access to displaced persons, mainly as the present government views international intervention negatively. Responses to redress the problem of access have, however, been very modest. In part this is due to the fact that UN agencies and other international interests have pursued a policy of engaging the government at its highest levels to work with UN agencies and international NGOs to address the needs of displaced groups, which has up till now not met with any positive response from the military government." (BERG April 1998, p. 47)

"The regime's restriction on travel by foreign journalists, NGO staff, U.N. agency staff, and diplomats; its monitoring of the movements of such foreigners; its frequent interrogation of citizens concerning contacts with foreigners; its restrictions on the freedom of expression and association of citizens; and its practice of arresting citizens who passed information about government human rights abuses to foreigners all impeded efforts to collect or investigate information regarding human rights abuses. Reports of abuses, especially those committed in prisons or ethnic minority areas, often emerged months or years after the abuses allegedly were committed and seldom could be verified with certainty.

There were approximately 25 nonpolitical, international humanitarian NGOs working in the country. A few others have established a provisional presence while undertaking the protracted negotiations necessary to establish permanent operations in the country. Beginning in 2001, international NGOs sometimes were required to have a government ministry representative accompany them on all field visits, at the NGOs expense [...].

The regime permitted the U.N. Special Rapporteur, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, to visit the country three times during the year. In his reports, Pinheiro cited instances of positive change and pledged to work with the regime, the opposition, members of civil society, and the international community to promote human rights in the country. He also cited problems, including the denial of fundamental freedoms of assembly, association, expression, and movement, and encouraged the regime to correct these deficiencies. He also called for the release of all political detainees. In addition, he cited "the gross violations of human rights of civilians" living in areas of conflict in eastern Karen and Kayah States, southern Shan State, northern Sagaing division, Rakhine, and Chin States." (US DOS 31 March 2003, section 4)

"The Special Rapporteur is convinced that the humanitarian situation requires encouraging the international NGOs to develop their activities. In order for them to do so, it is essential that the relationship between the Government of Myanmar and the international NGOs operating in the country continue to improve. In this
regard, he is concerned about recent restrictive measures affecting their operation. Last June [2001] there were reportedly two isolated incidents involving the brief detention of some NGOs staff. Last July the Department of Health instructed all those NGOs working with it that every time they travelled to the field, they must be accompanied by department staff. Since September 2001 the expatriate staff and their family members are no longer eligible for gratis visas and there are difficulties regarding the importation, purchase and registration of vehicles. In the last two to three months, NGOs were not allowed to have more than three staff for educational activities. The Special Rapporteur stresses the crucial importance of creating a positive environment for the operation of international NGOs and hopes that these restrictions will soon be rescinded. It is in the best interests of the SPDC to demonstrate to the international community that these organizations do operate freely, within the laws of the country, thus facilitating their access to funding and contributing to the alleviation of the existing humanitarian situation." (CHR 10 January 2002, para113)

ICRC the only international actor with official access:
"The ICRC continually aims to reinforce its protection and assistance activities for people affected by conflict. Outside the main delegation in Yangon, delegates are based in four field offices – Kaing Tong (Shan State), Mandalay, Hpa-An (Kayin State) and Mawlamyine (Mon State).

In recent months the ICRC has gained access for the first time to some areas of eastern and southern Shan State. At the same time it has continued to expand its field activities in the southeast of the country (Mon and Kayin States, Taninthayi Division).

[...]
The extension of ICRC activities in these sensitive areas has been welcomed at all levels: "The authorities and armed groups have accepted the presence of the ICRC, and a dialogue about the protection of the civilian population and the lawful conduct of hostilities is gradually bring established" (ICRC 8 April 2003)

See also:
Amnesty International (AI), 10 February 2003, Myanmar: Amnesty International's first visit to Myanmar: Official statement

Report suggest that some local military commanders allow NGO assistance to the displaced (2000)

"In some cases, however, local military commanders have facilitated assistance to the displaced. According to an NGO worker in Rangoon, the personal contacts that develop between NGO staff and local SLORC/SPDC official are crucial. These contacts are often made through family or political relationships, he said. Because of some personal connections, his agency, which focuses on health services, is given access to remote areas otherwise off limits to NGOs. The Burmese staff of his agency have been allowed to provide services in the 'new villages' to which persons have been relocated, as well as in some areas under rebel control. 'We're not the only ones with such success,' he notes, 'but it's not the norm.'

The worker noted another factor: 'Our agency doesn't employ many expatriates, unlike other NGOs, many of which tend to be very 'Asian' in their ways of doing things.'

For these reasons, many international NGOs have failed to negotiate service contracts with the Burmese government. Some agencies work without such contracts, but that can be risky. 'Right now,' says the worker, 'there are perhaps 15 of us, mostly with government agreement and others trying to get them. There are things the government is paranoid about in terms of what we do, but for most part things operate rather loosely.' The local contacts, he reiterates, are key: 'the fact that we're on the ground and have the kind of connections we do allows us to do things informally – things we wouldn't want publicized." (USCR April 2000, pp.23-24)
Some IDPs reached by backpack health workers organised by local medical groups and ethnic organizations (1999-2001)

- Estimated 50 backpack health workers serving IDPs by 1999
- The only assistance IDPs in hiding receive is what can be delivered by the ethnic groups themselves

"Throughout the 1990s, crossing the Thailand-Burma border became increasingly difficult, with the Burmese army attempting to seal the border on one side, and a growing unwillingness from Thai officials to allow entry on the other. In partnership with two KNU-related welfare organisations, the Karen Organisation for Relief and Development (KORD) and the Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People (CIDKP), aid agencies have managed to supply rice, or cash to buy rice from lowland Burma, to displaced communities deep inside Burma’s civil war zones. Such aid, however, is only available in some situations, depending on the people’s location, condition and ability to communicate their needs to the intermediate organisation. Furthermore, to send either significant quantities of rice or money through the mountains from Thailand is a complicated and dangerous logistical feat." (Cusano, September 2001, p.160)

"An indigenous program to provide services to these groups [IDPs in the border areas] has been under development since 1995, using a mobile medical team approach. These teams, with several medics, were eventually found to be too large, and had difficulty reaching many isolated IDP areas. To respond to these needs, local medical groups, in collaboration with several ethnic organizations, developed a new model and program based on backpack health workers. There are currently 50 such backpack health workers serving IDPs, with a target service population of 100,000 persons. Training for 60 more such workers will begin this year. [...] Morbidity and mortality are extremely high. With the exception of indigenous healers, the backpack teams are currently the only health care providers available to these populations. SPDC health services have little or no penetration in most areas and are widely feared by locals. In a few cases IDP areas do have SPDC supported health workers, however, they appear to have no supplies or medications and have, on several occasions, come to the backpack teams requesting essential drugs." (Beyrer 1999, p.10)

"Very few agencies are able to respond to health concerns in Karenni. No international NGOs working in Burma have thus far been able to negotiate access and provide humanitarian assistance into the state. Only public health services, a number of local religiously affiliated agencies and UNICEF have developed health care activities. Although the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been able to visit the state, no humanitarian assistance program has been initiated. In areas where non-State armed groups still operate, services are provided by the occasional visit of a mobile health team organised by agencies in Thailand." (BERG May 2000)
NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

International political initiatives


- The Rapporteur’s mandate was established in 1992
- The Rapporteur recommended that the international community should engage with the government, in order to work for an improvement of the human rights situation
- Special Rapporteur expressed in 2002 his intention to examine HR violations in conflict areas
- Government by 2003 still not facilitated HR Rapporteur’s follow-up visit, to investigate rape and other human rights abuses in Shan State

"The Special Rapporteur’s visit to Myanmar [was] undertaken in March 2003 and information received by him up to 28 July 2003. The visit was curtailed by the Special Rapporteur when he discovered a functioning listening device in the room where he was conducting interviews with political prisoners. […]

With regard to allegations of human rights violations in ethnic areas, the Special Rapporteur is of the view that the credibility of his findings depends on his ability to establish facts in an objective and impartial manner. Consequently, he followed a two-pronged approach to his investigations: (a) conducting research based on independent interviews of refugees from those areas in Thailand and (b) making an independent assessment inside Myanmar by visiting some of the affected areas with a view to corroborating the results of his research and establishing facts about the alleged violations. While (a) had been completed, (b) has not yet taken place. The research conducted in Thailand in October-November 2002 documented such human rights abuses as forced labour, arbitrary taxation and extortion, forced relocations, torture, rape and extrajudicial executions, committed in parts of the States of Shan, Kayin, Kayah and Mon in Myanmar. At the time of writing, a reply from the Government was still outstanding regarding the proposed modalities of an independent assessment of the Special Rapporteur in Shan State."(UN GA 5 August 2003, Summary)

"The mandate of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Myanmar was established by the Commission in its resolution 1992/58 and extended most recently in resolution 2002/67. In its resolution the Commission requested the Special Rapporteur to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session and to the Commission at its fifty-ninth session. The Special Rapporteur accordingly submitted an interim report to the General Assembly (A/57/290 and Corr.1). The present report is based upon the findings of his third fact-finding mission to Myanmar undertaken in October 2002 and information received by him up to 10 December 2002 and is to be read in conjunction with his interim report."(UN CHR 16 April2003)

In December 2002 the HR Rapporteur again called upon the government to allow him to investigate allegations of serious human rights abuses against IDPs:

"35. One of the major consequences of insurgency on the border between Myanmar and Thailand since the 1980s has been the generation of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Insurgency involves the entire population. This kind of warfare affects civilians as the distinction between combatants and non-combatants is very difficult to make. What is dramatic is the fact that the civilian population in the areas of ethnic insurgency in Myanmar, in spite of their individual choices, are inevitably drawn in to the conflict. The army tends to see the refugees/IDPs as enemies and the refugee camps as rear-guard from which to
attack the country. In consequence, every investigation of human rights violations in the war zones is considered as a war of wards against the SPDC.

36. The Special Rapporteur thinks that it is time to overcome this impasse whereby any consideration of well-founded allegations of human rights violations automatically is seen with suspicion as an accusation against the SPDC. He thinks that the peaceful exposure of violations will be a contribution to national reconciliation and peace that may open the path to accountability, a basic requirement for building the rule of law.

37. Serious human rights violations have undoubtedly occurred and continue to occur in the areas where armed groups operate. These violations have been primarily attributed to the army. There is also evidence that groups operating from neighbouring countries and with outside support show little regard for the life and security of civilians. Their continued armed activities in these areas provoked counter-insurgency measures by the army, which has had devastating consequences for the local population.

38. The question of independent investigation of allegations of human rights violations in the ethnic counter-insurgency areas was one of the specific issues addressed by the Special Rapporteur during the reporting period. Special attention was paid to the issue of investigating allegations that Shan women had been systematically raped by Myanmar military personnel in the report "Licence to Rape", published by the Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) and the Shan Women’s Action Network (SWAN) in May 2002. In this regard, during his last mission, he received detailed briefings on three investigations into the recent allegations of rape in Shan State conducted by the Myanmar authorities for a period of three months. He was also invited to travel to Shan State, which he opted to decline as a short visit would have been inappropriate for conducting a serious assessment of the alleged violations there. On his way back from Myanmar, the Special Rapporteur met with the authors and researchers of the above report and his research team interviewed a number of victims of and witnesses to incidents of rape in Thailand. […]

43. Having explained that, the Special Rapporteur proposed that the SPDC explore several options to establish a credible mechanism for investigating these and numerous other allegations of violations in ethnic minority areas and underlined the importance of making an early commitment to that effect. These options are the following, in order of preference:
   (a) An independent assessment team under his mandate, the precise terms of reference of which would need to be thoroughly discussed and agreed upon. This team would look into the recent allegations of human rights violations against Shan women. It could also look into the recruitment and use of children as soldiers as well as other allegations of human rights in ethnic minority areas;
   (b) An international commission of inquiry, which would require a new mandate from the United Nations;
   (c) A balanced national inquiry mechanism which would involve the SPDC and other interested parties in Myanmar. The NLD has expressed its willingness to participate if such a body were to be established. The United Nations could provide technical assistance to help set up such a body if required.

44. As a matter of priority, besides the need for an independent assessment of the allegations of human rights violations in ethnic minority areas, the Special Rapporteur proposed that the SPDC consider allowing an adequate International Committee of the Red Cross presence in all conflict areas of the country. The ICRC could then assess the situation on an ongoing basis, report confidentially to the authorities and work out with them appropriate measures to ensure the security and protection of the civilian population, wherever needed. Access by the ICRC to detention facilities has helped to improve conditions in prisons and the treatment of prisoners. The ICRC presence in conflict areas would help address issues of the kind raised in the recent and other allegations of serious human rights violations and it could also start disseminating international humanitarian law to combatants. The ICRC has both the mandate and adequate capacity in Myanmar (40 international and 220 local staff) to do this.

45. The Special Rapporteur took note of a communiqué issued on 4 November by the SPDC giving an initial positive reaction to these proposals. He welcomed the SPDC’s invitation to the ICRC "to visit with
an adequate presence the Shan State Region”. He hopes that the initial contacts made by the ICRC with local authorities and people in these areas following this invitation will pave the way for developing cooperation and implementing its humanitarian mandate there. He also wrote two letters to Myanmar authorities seeking clarification about the terms of invitation to the United Nations in the same communiqué.

46. As he stated in his presentation at the General Assembly last November, and based on his own research into the situation of human rights in ethnic areas, there appear to be serious problems with the way the army treats civilians in ethnic counter-insurgency areas. This problem will not disappear by denying its existence and should be recognized and addressed properly. Allegations will be made as violations continue to occur. The most reasonable way to address this issue would be to investigate these allegations in a credible manner, to establish the facts, to take action against the perpetrators, to establish procedures to prevent their recurrence, to ensure control over army units and to compensate the victims. The Special Rapporteur requests that the SPDC cooperate with him in conducting an independent assessment under his mandate. He reiterates his readiness to discuss the terms of reference concerning independence, timing, composition of the team, transparency of procedures, investigating methods, and protection of witnesses during the investigation. It is essential that there be a clear acceptance by the SPDC of a modus operandi based on international standards and including sexual violence against Shan women in the terms of reference, and possibly including a review of the findings by the Special Rapporteur’s team in Thailand and of allegations of other human rights violations in ethnic minority areas. This exercise could be launched during his next mission to Myanmar in the first months of 2003 and the United Nations, through OHCHR, would provide technical assistance to help set up the Special Rapporteur’s investigation team."(UN CHR 27 July 2002)

In October 2001:
"The Special Rapporteur received full and unhindered cooperation on the part of the Government of Myanmar during the mission, for which he expresses his sincere appreciation. All of his specific requests for meetings were met and his movements in the country were facilitated appropriately. During his visit he enjoyed freedom of movement and freedom of access to private persons and others of interest. The documentation and information requested were provided promptly and fully. The Special Rapporteur also thanks very warmly the medical staff of the Mandalay General Hospital for their competent care and kind attention.

[...] The Special Rapporteur continues to receive reports and allegations of serious violations of human rights of civilians in areas of conflict between the army and armed groups, particularly in eastern Kayin and Kayah States, southern Shan State, northern Sagaing Division, and Rakhine and Chin States. As usual in this type of conflict, it is the poor and defenceless population which is pressured, violated and victimized by different armed forces that cross their communities. Such violence is largely arbitrary, summary and indiscriminate. This results in large internal displacements and influxes of refugees across borders. The mandate of the Special Rapporteur requires the examination of these allegations in an impartial and objective manner, and he has started doing so. This is a meticulous process, which he intends to pursue during his next missions so as to establish gradually a credible factual account of the human rights situation in these areas." (CHR 10 January 2002, paras 12, 98)

UN Commission on Human Rights has regularly called upon military rulers to end the systematic enforced displacement

In April 2003 the United Nations Commission on Human Rights called upon the government to:
"To improve cooperation with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar of the Commission in order to bring Myanmar towards a transition to civilian rule, and to ensure that they are both granted full and free access to
Myanmar and that all persons cooperating with the Special Envoy and Special Rapporteur are not subjected to any form of intimidation, harassment or punishment.  

[...]  

To end the systematic enforced displacement of persons and other causes of refugee flows to neighbouring countries, to provide the necessary protection and assistance to internally displaced persons and to respect the right of refugees to voluntary, safe and dignified return monitored by appropriate international agencies.  

[...]  

immediately ensure safe and unhindered access to all parts of Myanmar for the United Nations and international humanitarian organizations and to cooperate fully with all sectors of society, especially with the National League for Democracy and other relevant political, ethnic and community-based groups through consultation, to ensure the provision of humanitarian assistance and to guarantee that it actually reaches the most vulnerable groups of the population.  

[...]  

To pursue through dialogue and peaceful means the immediate suspension and permanent end of conflict with all ethnic groups in Myanmar;  

To establish a national human rights commission following the Principles relating to the status of national institutions on the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).  

(a) To restore democracy and respect the results of the 1990 elections and to enter immediately into substantive and structured dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi and other leaders of the National League for Democracy towards democratization and national reconciliation and at an early stage to include other political leaders in these talks, including representatives of the ethnic groups;  

(b) To end the systematic violations of human rights in Myanmar, to ensure full respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, to end impunity and to investigate and bring to justice any perpetrators of human rights violations, including members of the military and other government agents in all circumstances;  

(c) Without further delay to cooperate fully with the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights to facilitate an independent international investigation of continuing reports of sexual violence and other abuse of civilians carried out by members of the armed forces in Shan and other States." (UNCHR 16 April 2003)  

The resolution adopted by the general Assembly on 24 December 2002 had stated that it:  

"Deplores the continued violations of human rights in Myanmar, including extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, enforced disappearances, rape, torture, inhuman treatment, forced labour, including the use of children, forced relocation and denial of freedom of assembly, association, expression, religion and movement;  

[...]  

Urges the Government of Myanmar to end the systematic enforced displacement of persons and other causes of refugee flows to neighbouring countries and to create conditions conducive to their voluntary return and full reintegration in conditions of safety and dignity and to allow the safe and unhindered access of humanitarian personnel to assist in the return and reintegration process;  

Deplores the continued violations of the human rights of women, especially women who are internally displaced or belong to ethnic minorities or the political opposition, in particular forced labour, trafficking, sexual violence and exploitation, including rape; (UN GA 28 February 2002, paras. 4, 19-20)  

and, in April 2002, the HR Commission deplored: 

"The continued violations of the human rights of, and widespread discriminatory practices against, persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, including extrajudicial execution, rape, torture, ill-treatment and the systematic programmes of forced relocation directed against ethnic minorities, notably in Karen, Karenni, Rakhine, Chin and Shan States and in Tenasserim Division, destruction of places of worship, use
of anti-personnel landmines, destruction of crops and fields and dispossession of land and property, which
deprive these persons of all means of subsistence and result in large-scale displacement of persons and
flows of refugees to neighbouring countries and an increasing number of internally displaced persons;

Restrictions on the exercise of freedom of religion, such as the restriction on the building of new mosques
and churches and the forced conversion of people to Buddhism, to which Muslims in Rakhine State and
Christians in Chin State are in particular subjected;

The continuing violations of the human rights of women, in particular forced labour, trafficking, sexual
violence and exploitation and abuse in detention, often committed by military personnel and especially
directed towards women who are returning refugees, internally displaced, or belong to ethnic minorities or
the political opposition;

[...]
The situation of the large number of internally displaced persons and reaffirms the need to give them the
necessary protection and assistance and urges the Government to respect the right of refugees to voluntary,
safe and dignified return monitored by appropriate international agencies; (CHR 12 April 2002, paras. 5c-h)

**The European Parliament in 2001 adopted a resolution on Burma where it urges SPDC to improve the
human rights situation:**

"11. Urges the SPDC to take steps to improve the human rights situation and to put an end to the
widespread practice of torture, extra-judicial executions, the repression of ethnic minorities, as well as to
massive forced relocations and civilian abuse; strongly condemns the violation of the rights of the Shan,
Karen and Karen people;" (European Parliament 4 October 2001)

**US government introduces new sanctions against Burma (July 2003)**

"The United States has begun to implement the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003, which
immediately prohibits financial transactions with entities of the ruling military junta in Burma and will bar
the importation of Burmese products into the United States after 30 days, according to the Office of Foreign
Assets Control (OFAC).

OFAC issued a bulletin July 29 that includes the text of President Bush's July 28 Executive Order regarding
the blockage of the Burmese junta's property, the prohibition of financial transactions with entities of the
Rangoon regime, and the ban on Burmese imports into the United States.

According to President Bush's executive order, such steps are necessary due to the military junta's
"continued repression of the democratic opposition in Burma" and the national emergency declared in
Executive Order 13047."(Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State, U.S.
Imposes Financial Services Freeze on Burmese Regime, 29-7-2003)

"The Senate also acted swiftly last week, approving by a vote of 97-1 legislation to ban Burmese imports to
the United States. Though this appears on its face to be a broad economic sanction, I would argue that in
the unique case of Burma, an import ban is a sanction that effectively and rather narrowly targets the
leadership of the country. The vast majority of Burmese exports to the United States are garments produced
in factories wholly or partly owned by the regime - and approximately a quarter of Burmese exports now go
to the United States."(HRW 19 June 2003)

*See also: Nicholas D. Kristof: Sanctions don’t work, NYT 10 November 2003* [http://www.iht.com/articles/116988.html]
Call by the Burmese opposition in exile for ‘humanitarian ceasefire’ (March 2003)

- In March 2003, the NCGUB’s Burma UN Service Office called for Humanitarian Ceasefires in Burma

"One insurmountable challenge in the current political context for international aid agencies is access to ethnic nationality areas, particularly those where there is open conflict. These areas are where the most vulnerable populations of Burma are found – those who have been displaced and are either living in relocation sites or as IDPs. It is highly unlikely that the regime will agree to a nationwide cease-fire or permit access to this population in the foreseeable future. A possible initiative to explore is replacing the term ‘nationwide cease-fire’ with ‘humanitarian cease-fires’ in the form of ‘Peace Corridors’, ‘Days of Tranquility’ or ‘Sanctuaries of Peace.’ The NCGUB believes this could be a point of entry for further confidence-building between the SPDC and non-Burman ethnic nationalities groups by creating much needed political space for promoting a dialogue. Humanitarian cease-fires would allow the immunization of children and address the severe health needs of people in Burma’s conflict areas.

Humanitarian cease-fires are attempts to get the much-needed humanitarian space in the midst of violent armed conflict. In the 1990s humanitarian cease-fires were extensively applied to allow the provision of health and humanitarian assistance, such as immunization campaigns (e.g., the Global Polio Eradication Initiative) and food supplies to populations in need. They became a relatively common practice in current conflicts and constituted one of the few ‘entries’ into long-standing and particularly violent conflicts, in conditions otherwise inaccessible for other types of international actions.

In different forms – "humanitarian cease-fires", "Days of Tranquility" and "Safe/Peace Corridors" – have been carried out in the midst of wars in 19 countries since 1985: Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia, Chechnya/Russia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Guinea-Bissau, Indonesia, Iraq, Lebanon, Mozambique, Philippines, Dominican Republic, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikstan, and Uganda.

[...] Humanitarian and conflict analysis

An analysis of the conflict and humanitarian crisis should be elaborated with the assistance of a university or an expert who specializes in this area. This must include a specific analysis of the root causes, prevailing interests of the warring parties and major processes of social change. Local actors must be actively involved in the research and preparation of this conflict analysis. (Burma UN Service Office, March 2003, Humanitarian Assistance to Burma)

The ILO Conference in 2000 decided to implement special measures because of the widespread use of forced labour in Burma

Based on the findings of an ILO technical cooperation mission to Myanmar in May 2000, a great majority of the International Labour Conference in June 2000 expressed that there had not been any satisfactory follow up on the recommendations in the 1998 report. A resolution was adopted to implement the recommendations of the 1998 Commission of Inquiry. The Governing Body decided that the resolution should come into effect after an ILO mission to Burma in October 2000 concluded that progress had not been satisfactory:

"In an unprecedented resolution under the never-before invoked article 33 of the ILO Constitution, the Conference - by a vote of 257 in favour, 41 against, and 31 abstentions - called upon Myanmar to "take concrete action" to implement the recommendations of a 1998 Commission of Inquiry, which found that resort to forced labour in the country was "widespread and systematic".
In a letter dated 27 May 2000 and delivered to the members of an ILO technical cooperation mission to Myanmar [see appendix 2 in "Report of the ILO mission"], the country's Minister of Labour, Major General Tin Ngwe, informed the Director-General of the ILO "that we have taken and are taking the necessary measures to ensure that there are no instances of forced labour in Myanmar". He also wrote that Myanmar "would take into consideration appropriate measures, including administrative, executive and legislative measures, to ensure the prevention of such occurrences in the future".

While recognizing that the Minister's letter "contains aspects which seem to reflect a welcome intention on the part of the Myanmar authorities to take measures to give effect to the Recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry", the Conference considered that "the factual situation (had) nevertheless remained unchanged to date". By a vote of 52 in favour, 242 against and 27 abstentions the Conference rejected amendments designed to postpone a decision at this year's session of the ILC.

Under the terms of the resolution adopted today, a series of measures will take effect on 30 November 2000 unless, before that date, the Governing Body of the ILO is satisfied that the intentions expressed by the Minister of Labour have been translated into a framework of legislative, executive and administrative measures that are "sufficiently concrete and detailed to demonstrate that the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry have been satisfied." (ILO 14 June 2000)

See also: In 1998 ILO documented a pervasive use of forced labour - recent information shows that forced labour remains common practice

Call by the International Crisis Group for international actors to reconsider reluctance on humanitarian assistance (April 2002)

- Unclear distinction between humanitarian assistance and development assistance
- While the government favours working with UN agencies, many donors favour the international NGOs
- UN HR Rapporteur claims that international NGOs have complete control over and monitoring of their assistance

"The general attitude among international policymakers appears to be that humanitarian assistance is appropriate under the current circumstances, while development assistance is not. The line between these two contested concepts is blurred, and each donor has its own view of where it goes. More importantly, while such a distinction may be useful politically, it has little meaning on the ground and may in fact be counterproductive. The main danger is that the concept of 'humanitarian assistance' becomes a straitjacket, which locks in aid organisations just as the door appears to be opening for new and potentially ground-breaking initiatives. Instead of applying rigid theoretical definitions, donors need to establish what is possible in the Myanmar context (keeping in mind that this will necessarily change over time or may even shift quickly in response to political developments). Three questions might guide such an inquiry:

What are the priority needs?
What can be done under the current system? What is not possible?
Would such activities undermine longer-term development?

These questions should be the object of careful and ongoing consideration by donors and development agencies active in Myanmar.

[...]

Given the constraints on government-to government assistance and the absence of the big multilateral and bilateral aid agencies in Myanmar, the main conduits of international assistance are the UN agencies and the INGOs. Some of these have now been in the country for five to ten years, and although frequent personnel changes and weak institutional memory are a problem, they have generally learned how the system works. Others are newcomers but should be able to shorten the learning process significantly by
drawing on the experience of those who came before them. While many individual aid organisations, programs and projects today are operating with a reasonable to high level of efficiency, three macro-issues merit special attention: the division of labour between UN agencies and INGOs; the choice of national development partners; and the capacity of the aid system to absorb increasing levels of funding.

As shown earlier, most of the political stakeholders have clear preferences for one of the two main implementing systems. The Myanmar government favours the UN agencies, because it generally has a larger direct stake in UN aid programs. Many donors favour the INGOs for the exact same reasons, and also because they operate more efficiently with lower overheads. Contrary to both these positions, Aung San Suu Kyi has spoken out in favour of the UN system, because she feels it is more likely than the INGOs to be able to stand up to the government.

Each of these arguments points to important concerns regarding the functioning of the two systems. However, from a broader development perspective, it is not a question of either-or. The UN system, because of its global mandate, its larger institutional and budgetary capacity, and better relations with the government, is in a unique position to formulate long-term strategic goals and promote the physical and human infrastructure necessary for national level programs. It also provides an important umbrella for the INGOs, which would be more vulnerable in a rather hostile environment if they were not part of a bigger aid system.

The politics of humanitarian assistance to Myanmar raise two basic questions: Should it be provided and, if so, how should it be provided? The answer to the first of these is an unequivocal ‘yes’ – not only should there be humanitarian assistance, but there should be significantly more of it.

This argument can be made on humanitarian grounds alone. Humanitarian assistance is not just an issue of alleviating individual human suffering, but also of counteracting social instability, which could undermine any progress in the political sphere. Many people in Myanmar are losing hope, and as people anywhere without hope, they are becoming increasingly frustrated with the whole system of government. This is dangerous for political elites on all sides of the political spectrum, perhaps most of all for a future democratic government, which would face much higher expectations in an environment more conducive to social protest.

The question of how humanitarian assistance should be provided is more complicated. The concept of ‘humanitarianism’ provides some guidance – international aid should be directed towards improving the lives of people and reducing suffering. However, it must be recognised that effective use of aid entails reducing systemic vulnerabilities, strengthening local capacities, and promoting necessary policy and institutional changes. This requires attention to longer-term development issues. Perhaps the best general advice that can be given is that international donors and aid organisations should do as much as they possibly can, not only to exploit the existing space for development activities but also to expand it." (ICG 2 April 2002, pp. 18, 22-23, 26)

**Call for protection and humanitarian assistance to Karenni IDPs (May 2000)**

- Call for international community to make a serious commitment to conflict reduction
- Concern that existing humanitarian assistance is too closely linked to fighting parties

"So far most humanitarian interventions in Karenni have focussed on relief strategies and short-term physical inputs. While indispensable and significant, this assistance does little to protect the rights of the internally displaced. In the present context where the conflict is both protracted and complex, much more needs to be done. In addition to provision of humanitarian assistance, the international community needs to make a serious commitment to conflict reduction and resolution rather than the present response which aims at containment."
Relatively little information is available about the effectiveness of current humanitarian inputs, or how programs could be designed more appropriately. Assistance should be carried out, as stated in Principle 24 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, in accordance with the principles of humanity and impartiality and without discrimination. Humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons should not be diverted for political or military reasons. Two mechanisms have currently been developed for giving assistance; one is delivered through or in support of government structures (despite the fact that local populations view the State’s military involvement in the conflict as significant and negative); while the other relies on cross-border assistance delivered through non-State structures. Both mechanisms rely on partisans to the conflict to deliver aid, who can use the assistance to strengthen their support bases, exacerbate local insecurity, intensify group hostilities and reaffirm authority and leadership of such groups in the eyes of the recipients.

The focus of much of the assistance so far has been to target one or more specific groups. This is not always successful in delivering the benefits in a way that discriminates in favour of the most vulnerable or reaches all those with needs. In such situations it is difficult to avoid pitfalls where resources are diverted or manipulated. An approach which seeks to assess both humanitarian needs and delivery, as well as the political impact of the assistance is needed.

The challenge is to find ways to de-link the delivery of humanitarian aid, locating it away from warring parties in a way that is impartial and works with all groups. One way of doing this would be to coordinate and relocate aid distribution points away from warring parties. NGOs might also usefully initiate a process of consultation between opposing groups over issues relating to aid. This may increase transparency and replicate confidence building measures in an environment where impartial observers are denied access.

As Principles 25, 26 and 27 of the Guiding Principles go on to point out, national authorities and other appropriate actors have the right to offer their services in support of the internally displaced. These offers need to be seen in good faith and should solicit a response, particularly from the State. The authorities concerned should also grant and facilitate free passage of humanitarian assistance and allow those engaged in the provision of assistance rapid and unimpeded access.

Moreover assistance needs to be protection oriented and should seek to insure and restore the rights of the displaced. The present environment in which the cease-fire agreements between the State and various non-State actors have been signed are not binding agreements. They offer no recourse to the civil legal system or any other form of non-partisan arbitration. International agencies mandated to protect the internally displaced need to offer their services to all parties concerned. In doing this, organisations and other appropriate actors should respect relevant international standards and codes of conduct. "(BERG May 2000, pp.99-100)

**International operational activities**

**The international response to the issues of displacement in Burma has remained limited and uncoordinated (2003)**

- Some 40 UN agencies and INGOs are operational in Burma, but few have access to displaced populations, except for some urban relocatees
- Although bilateral sanctions have excluded humanitarian assistance, in reality, this area has been cut back dramatically as well
- INGOs working cross-border from Thailand have limited access to IDPs in Thailand, via local partner groups
• Cross-border initiatives to reach internally displaced people from neighbouring countries have
provided limited humanitarian assistance to IDPs in hiding

"At present 9 UN agencies have branch offices in Burma and about 30 international NGOs maintain
humanitarian assistance programs in Burma.

Most international aid agencies have focused on providing safe drinking water and sanitation, supporting
access to education and health care, starting community-based projects and micro-loans, and confronting
the HIV/AIDS crisis. The UN system entities in Burma include: the UN Development Program (UNDP);
the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF); the UN Populations Fund (UNFPA); the UN International Drug
Control Program (UNDCP); the World Food Program (WFP); the Food and Agriculture Program (FAO);
the World Health Organization (WHO); the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); the Joint UN
Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); and the UN Information Center (UNIC). Refer to Annex I for a
summary of the UN agencies projects and Annex II for a list of international NGOs and their project areas.
Specific challenges faced by international agencies in Burma: Aid providers generally encounter the
following constraints implementing their projects: Bureaucratic inefficiencies and delays [...]
Independence [...] Access to ethnic nationality areas [...] Financial constraints [...] Corruption [...] Control over delivery [...] Fungibility [...] Discrimination [...] Capacity-building and sustainability [...] International aid agency cooperation [...] Scrutiny [...] Human rights violations smokescreen." (Burma UN
Service Office, March 2003)

"Some UN agencies and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are present in Burma, but
the Burmese regime restricts their activities, which limits their ability to serve internally displaced persons.
Nevertheless, these agencies, along with local NGOs and ethnic-based groups, succeed in providing some
assistance. Some critics charged that the government siphons off much of the aid." (USCR 2000)

"The Special Rapporteur welcomes the valuable assistance efforts of the international In fact, at present
their capacity for operation is much greater than the current level of aid channelled through them. There
are 29 international NGOs operating in Myanmar, of which 16 are subcontracted by United Nations
agencies. Assistance from these NGOs has increased from $4.5 million in 1999 to more than $7 million in
2000. They provide direct services such as food, health care and shelter and/or support development
projects that help build local capacities." (CHR 10 January 2002, para. 112)

“On the whole international response to the issues of displacement in Burma has remained limited and has
not influenced the government either to recognise or address the problems of displacement. Within the
country, international agencies - such as UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, WHO or UNDCP - have not confronted
the government over rights of access and NGOs have not gained unimpeded access to the displaced in
contested areas. In some cases intergovernmental agencies have inadvertently supported the relocation of
populations and in particular ethnic-minority ones.

The government's Urban and Border Area Development Programmes, which began in 1989, attempted to
relocate populations within the country. This was to some degree supported by UN agencies. UNHCS was
involved in projects for urban areas while UNDP undertook projects in the Wa and Kokang areas, and
UNDCP (UN Drugs Control Programme) had projects in the Wa and eastern Shan State areas. Although
these projects officially ended in 1992, UNDCP continues to support projects in eastern Shan State which
have relocation and resettlement components. The populations targeted for relocation by these programmes
are often ethnic minority groups.

Cross-border initiatives to reach internally displaced people from neighbouring countries have succeeded in
gaining access to many internally displaced populations. Although these initiatives remain modest and are
provided through discrete channels along the various borders, they have been effective and significant in
terms of relief assistance.” (BERG September 2000)
"In principle, bilateral sanctions have excluded humanitarian assistance. However, in reality, this area has been cut back dramatically as well. The U.S. Congress has opposed the distribution of any aid inside Myanmar. Australia and some European countries have provided funding windows, primarily for INGOs, designed to help the most vulnerable sections of the Myanmar population. However, the amounts have been small and limited to uncontroversial areas such as primary health care and HIV/AIDS. From 1988 to 2000, only Japan provided significant humanitarian assistance, including half a dozen health care, education, and food production projects, as well as a large and expanding grassroots assistance program."

(ICG 2 April 2002, p6)

ICRC assistance for IDPs (2002-2003)

- Distribution of humanitarian assistance and provision of safe water and other material assistance to displaced families Kayin, Mon and Shan States
- Prosthesis and orthopedic center opened in Karen State (2002)
- Assessments undertaken of conditions in armed conflict zones of Kayin, Mon and Shan States

"The ICRC began working in Myanmar in 1986, when it obtained the agreement of the authorities to start up a project to support the work of the National Rehabilitation Hospital in the capital. The aim was to bolster the work already being done by introducing affordable technology for artificial limbs and to upgrade the professional skills of local technicians and physiotherapists.

Within a few years the programme had extended to other government facilities, including two military rehabilitation hospitals in Yangon and Mandalay. Today, the ICRC supports artificial limb centres at five state hospitals, providing imported raw materials and parts, helping with maintenance and providing professional training.

Not completely out of reach

What happens when amputees live in remote villages, where no services are available and hospitals are too far away? In cooperation with the local Red Cross and the Ministry of Health, ICRC runs an outreach programme to provide artificial limbs to people who would otherwise have little hope of receiving them. Patients are referred to one of three ICRC-supported centres; the service is free of charge. Since the project began in 1990 nearly 4,000 people have benefited.

In 2002 the ICRC and the Myanmar Red Cross opened an orthopaedic centre at Hpa-An, east of Yangon. This is the first such structure in the conflict-affected southeast of the country, and can accommodate up to 30 patients. Training is provided for 25 local technicians; the maximum annual production rate of 600 artificial limbs is expected to be reached within two to three years.

ICRC-supported programmes are thought to provide 90 per cent of all artificial limbs fitted in Myanmar; since 1986 some 15,000 limbs have been produced.

Talking to all sides in the trouble spots

The ICRC continually aims to reinforce its protection and assistance activities for people affected by conflict. Outside the main delegation in Yangon, delegates are based in four field offices – Kaing Tong (Shan State), Mandalay, Hpa-An (Kayin State) and Mawlamyine (Mon State).

In recent months the ICRC has gained access for the first time to some areas of eastern and southern Shan State. At the same time it has continued to expand its field activities in the southeast of the country (Mon and Kayin States, Taninthayi Division).
"We believe that the mere fact of being present in conflict-affected areas and repeating our visits to the people there can have a preventive protection effect," says ICRC’s Myanmar head of delegation, Michel Ducraux.

This presence is also a confidence-building exercise, allowing the ICRC to establish contact with local authorities, the civilian population and the various armed groups, to explain its humanitarian mandate and working methods, and to assess the living and security conditions of civilians caught in the cross-fire.

The extension of ICRC activities in these sensitive areas has been welcomed at all levels: "The authorities and armed groups have accepted the presence of the ICRC, and a dialogue about the protection of the civilian population and the lawful conduct of hostilities is gradually being established," says Ducraux.

[...]

**Care for the wounded and sick**

In the dangerous border areas between Myanmar and Thailand, emergency care is not easy to come by. The ICRC provides financial support to enable the wounded to get the necessary treatment. In the first three months of 2003, 17 people were helped under this programme.

The ICRC also provides basic equipment to hospitals that have been renovated by its engineers, and can furnish emergency supplies to facilities receiving wounded patients, if needed.

**Safe water, healthy environment**

Health becomes an especially critical issue in remote areas affected by conflict. The ICRC intervenes in Kayin, Mon and Shan States to help ensure safe water supplies and construct latrines. One aspect of this work is in support of the government’s school-building programme; another is to provide villagers with the hardware to enable them to build latrines.

The Myanmar Red Cross is also involved in the health programme, and provides public health education for local people.

By February 2003, more than 13,000 people in 27 villages had benefited directly from the ICRC’s water and sanitation programmes, which included: creating stream catchments, constructing wells, protecting water sources, building block latrines for schools and health centres and distributing basic kits for the construction of private latrines.

**Investing in local partners**

The Myanmar Red Cross is already the ICRC’s main partner in the country for assistance programmes. It supports the work of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to further strengthen the national society's operational capacity, particularly in the fields of restoring family links, promotion of international humanitarian law and conflict preparedness."(ICRC, 8-04-2003, Myanmar : getting closer to the victims)

**2002 Activities**

"In Kayin state, displaced families received agricultural tools, vegetable seed and other material assistance. Work was carried out to give some villages along the Thai border improved access to safe drinking water.

In Shan state, a pilot health promotion project implemented with the Danish Red Cross since 1999 continued. The emphasis was on community-based primary health care, mainly preventive measures and immunization programmes, and on providing access to safe water. Community health workers and auxiliary midwives were also trained.

Amputees from border areas were transferred to the prosthetic/orthotic workshops in Mandalay and Yangon, where they were housed and fitted with artificial limbs and other appliances. The workshops are run by the Ministry of Health with ICRC support. Most of the beneficiaries were mine casualties, but leprosy patients were also fitted. In addition, the ICRC ran training courses for prosthetic and orthotic technicians." (ICRC 22 January 2002)
"Contacts with various interlocutors helped the ICRC to improve its knowledge about IDPs in Shan State. Several field trips in Eastern Shan State enabled the ICRC to gain a better understanding of the living conditions of the civilian population in particular and the humanitarian environment in general." (ICRC 15 March 2002, para. 2.1)

**ECHO targets aid to internally displaced persons in Burma (2001)**

- The ECHO funded aid will benefit both Karen and Rohingya ethnic Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in border zones as well as extremely vulnerable IDPs in Rangoon/Yangon Township areas
- ICRC distributed agricultural tools, vegetable seed and other material assistance to internally displaced in Karen State in 2000

"The European Union is donating 2,000,000 euros in humanitarian aid through its European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) to help vulnerable populations in Burma/Myanmar.

The actions will be carried out over a period of 12 months by a number of NGOs in the fields of water and sanitation, healthcare as well as support for prisoners. In all, some half a million people stand to benefit.

People and regions covered will be Karen and Rohingya ethnic Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in border zones as well as extremely vulnerable IDPs in Rangoon/Yangon Township areas. Empowerment of the intended beneficiaries is also an important part of the humanitarian action.

With regards to water and sanitation, NGOs Save the Children and Action Contre la Faim will carry out projects in Rakhine and Kayin states. These will increase sustainable access to safe water in order to lower the prevalence of water-borne diseases and improve the management of wastewater to minimise faecal contamination. The actions should benefit some 66,000 people.

These objectives will be met through the installation of 3,000 sanitary latrines and the rehabilitation of 59 hand dug wells. Also to be constructed are 95 new shallow tube wells, 22 village ponds, four combined wells and two spring catchments. Village committees will be created, 1,722 hygiene education sessions held and wells chlorinated.

The objective of health actions funded will be to reduce the mortality and morbidity of populations living in programme areas by supporting health services and focussing on malarial management.

Four NGOs - Médécins Sans Frontières (France), Médécins Sans Frontières (Holland), Malteser Hilfsdienst and Aide Médicale Internationale - will target some 20,000 beneficiaries in Mon State and 415,000 in Rangoon/Yangon Township.

Activities to be carried out are the feeding for 360 children; family planning for 4,000 women; 15,000 consultations for children, ante natal clinics for 3,500 pregnant women; screening and treatment of 3,500 women and their partners for sexually transmitted diseases; distribution of 42,000 condoms; AIDS education campaigns, counselling and testing for 50,000; healthcare training for health workers, nurses and doctors; the construction, equipping and running of health centres as well as malaria control, prevention, awareness raising and curative treatment." (EU News Release 21 September 2001)

**Response by Non Governmental Organisations**

**Limited assistance provided by NGOs and individual groups to IDPs across the border from Thailand (1998-2000)**

- Unofficial nature of cross border assistance makes planning, targeting and monitoring difficult
Areas distant from the Thai border are difficult to reach for the groups and individuals providing "unofficial assistance"

Attempts have been made to reach distant IDP groups through mobile medical trips

"The cross-border activities are very small, but they also can get into areas where it's very difficult for anybody but local people who speak the languages, and who can go in undercover, to go. They are having some impact and they're delivering what little health care is there. For example, right now there are about 50 such people with one program who try and cover 2000 people each during cross-border interventions, and that reaches about 100,000, which they estimate in the area where they work is perhaps a third of the pocket. So, for the relatively small programs there are many things that can be done, but coming from the other side into those IDP areas, nobody's done it in a very long time. The security situation is worse now than it's been in a long time." (Burma Project 1999, "In their own words" p.23)

"As assistance to IDPs [in the Karen state] is unofficial, delivered through a variety of channels, planning and targeting to the most needy is difficult. Districts without access to the Thai border cannot easily be helped since the area between them and the border is no longer under the control of the KNU. Toungoo district reports having received no assistance from anywhere. Doo The Htoo district, Thaton township, cannot easily be assisted due to the large number of Burma army troops in the area. KORD was never set up in Mergui-Tavoy district, choosing to rely upon the structures of the KNU Health and Welfare Department.

Groups or individuals involved in delivering aid across the border are reluctant to openly discuss the extent or effectiveness of their work. Certain parts of Kawthoolei have always had more contact with NGOs, missionary groups, or sympathetic individuals; it is these areas that are able to exploit their relationships to attract aid to their particular area. Districts far away from the border have had little contact with the 'aid and relief community' and therefore are less well organised to know who to approach. With the disintegration of the KNU social welfare structures in the field of health and education after the 1997 offensive, it became more and more left up to individuals to find ways to help in their own areas. Mergui-Tavoy district, being furthest from the former KNU headquarters, had always had to rely on its own contacts for help from outside and individuals were sent out to Thailand with the brief to organise help for both refugees and IDPs.

Undoubtedly, with the disintegration of the KNU structures for health and education and the difficulties faced by the remaining KNLA soldiers, the IDPs have been, to a large degree, left to fend for themselves. Registered NGOs in Thailand, with a mandate to look after the refugees in camps, have avoided getting involved in sending aid across the border, especially where it cannot be monitored by their expatriate staff. NGOs with funds tied to the USAID are restricted from using any of their funds inside the boundaries of Burma.

Accepting the reality, some NGOs have tried to channel assistance in the form of cash to purchase rice and to supply mobile medical teams through KORD to areas not accessible to the NGOs themselves.

The amount of assistance reaching the various clusters of IDPs varies according to:
- distance from the border of Thailand;
- strength of remaining KNU forces in the area;
- numbers of Burma army, Burma army/DKBA troops stationed in the area.

Kler Lwee Htoo and Toungoo districts are too far from the border to have been able to receive sustained assistance. In the mountains of Taungoo, the people, though hiding in the forest, try to plant and harvest their crop of rice, but the yield is very poor. Often they cannot plant at the right time of the year but only when the security is stable. The IDPs face a lot of food shortages and have to travel as far as Mutraw district to ask for food from other villages. On one occasion, an NGO was able to send a mobile team with
medicines to Ler Doh township, in Kler Lwee Htoo district, finding measles, malaria and chest infections prevalent. The trip was never repeated and the other townships in the district have received no assistance.

Being closer to the border, most of the IDP clusters in Pa.an and Mutraw districts have been able to get a certain amount of assistance. Mobile medical teams have been arranged to provide basic minimum cover and KORD has been able to give some assistance in the form of rice for two months at a time.

Since the 1997 offensive, the IDP groups in Bilin township in Doo The Htoo have also received some rice assistance from KORD. However, in the flat lands around Thaton township the situation is worse; the people here have no place to hide and they live under the close control of the Slorc. They cannot be reached easily by the KNU Health department/ KORD mobile teams as they are far from the border in the midst of DKBA-controlled territory. They are close to towns but have no money for medicines.

The groups of IDPs on the borders of Dooplaya district have generally been without assistance. However, the largest group, that at Htee Wah Doh, has been able to receive some food and medical assistance through the Mon resettlement site at Halockani.

In Mergui-Tavoy district, assistance to the various groups of IDPs has been planned by the KNU administration in the area. Groups at the border, and many of the smaller groups in the forest, have been reached with food and medicine, depending on where they are. However, there remain many groups far from the border, where it would be too dangerous to send a team of young and inexperienced Karen health workers.

Medical help was initially arranged for all three large groups close to the border without any help from the major NGOs in Thailand. With donated money, medicines, rice and plastic sheets were bought and delivered by the KNU. In the far south, adjacent to Hua Hin, at the site known as Huay Satu (known to the Karen as Htee Yob Kee), a basic health care service was set up with help from two relief agencies previously not active in the border area. For groups further away, mobile medical trips have been conducted three times up to December 1997." (BERG April 1998, pp. 51-52)

Local groups associated with the Karen National Union manage to assist some IDPs (2001-)

- In areas outside SPDC control the KNU still maintains a political infrastructure with officials at the village head through district level
- Where access allows the KNU and related groups provide medical and food aid to IDPs and occasionally to villages under SPDC control
- The KNU arranges for safe places for IDP camps and establishes routes for the villagers to get food
- KNU and other organisations do maintain small mobile medical teams

"The Karen National Union enjoys much popular support in the hills of Nyaunglebin and Papun Districts and until 1995 controlled much of the Papun hills. Only the southern four village tracts of Day Wah, Kyaw Pa, Meh Prih and Tee Th’Daw Hta in Bu Tho township of Papun District are under full SPDC control. In the rest of the two districts the KNU still maintains a political infrastructure with officials at the village head through district level and departments covering forestry, information, education and other areas of government. KNU officials are active in organising at the village level both in the hills and in the villages under SPDC control. A few schools in the area are also supported by the KNU. Where it can it provides medical and food aid to the internally displaced and occasionally to villages under SPDC control. This amount of aid is small and is in no way enough for every villager. The KNU also arranges for safe places for internally displaced villagers to make their camps and establishes routes for the villagers to get food or
even to flee to Thailand. The KNU does place demands on the more stable villages for food, money and porters, although in most areas the villagers are too poor to give anymore. Villagers, while not always happy about giving their money and food to the KNU, generally feel better about it than giving to the SPDC since the demands are not usually accompanied by threats and they view the KNU as fellow Karen.

Limited outside assistance does reach the villagers from the KNU and other Karen organisations which bring in small amounts of rice and other things from Thailand to the villagers. These groups are only able to bring in what can be carried on a person’s back, making the amounts inadequate to feed the large numbers of IDP’s living in the forest. In some cases these organisations give the villagers money with which to buy food instead. This also is usually not enough; one villager noted that he had been given 7,000 Kyat to use to buy rice for the year, but 1 big tin of rice [12.5 kg / 27.5 lb] is 2,000 Kyat thus allowing him to buy three and a half tins. In normal times one adult villager would be able to eat one big tin of rice in a month, so he must get by on three and a half tins for himself and his family for a year. When rice is bought it is usually only in small amounts, about 1.5-3 kg [3.4-6.8 lb], so the villagers must make the dangerous trip to buy it many times before they have enough. These are just stop-gap measures and cannot be supported indefinitely.

The KNU and other organisations do maintain small mobile medical teams which move about the area, but these can’t reach everyone and many villagers have never met them. These medical teams are made up of trained medics but usually don’t have much medicine, and what they do have has to be rationed to the point of sometimes turning away all but the most seriously ill people. Villagers don’t dare to take sick or wounded people down to the towns for treatment for fear of being arrested. The hospitals are too expensive anyway, and in Burma the sick are turned out of the hospital as soon as they run out of money.

The result of this is that many people are dying from treatable illnesses. Malaria, fevers and diarrhoea are common and deadly. Small children and the elderly are especially susceptible to illness and many newborn babies don’t live past the first few months. The constant movement, poor diet, stress and general living conditions leave the villagers especially susceptible to many diseases and infections. Villagers wounded by SPDC bullets or shrapnel have to make do with traditional medicines. Those more severely wounded, especially people who have stepped on landmines, usually succumb to their wounds due to lack of treatment." " (KHRG October 2001, pp 24, 67-68, 71)

See Christians Concerned for Burma internet site, for information about cross-border assistance and the plight of IDPs.  http://www.prayforburma.org/
### ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSPP</td>
<td>Burma Socialist Programme Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBOs</td>
<td>Community-based organizations</td>
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<td>DHA</td>
<td>U.N. Department of Humanitarian Affairs</td>
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<td>DKBA</td>
<td>Democratic Karen Buddhist Army</td>
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<td>DLORC</td>
<td>District Law and Order Restoration Council</td>
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<td>EVIs</td>
<td>Extremely Vulnerable Individuals</td>
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<td>GONGOos</td>
<td>‘Governmental Non-Governmental Organisation’</td>
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<td>HDI</td>
<td>Human Development Initiative</td>
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<td>ICFTU</td>
<td>International Confederation of Free Trade Unions</td>
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<td>ICRC</td>
<td>International Committee of the Red Cross</td>
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<td>INGOs</td>
<td>International Non Governmental Organisations</td>
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<td>KNLA</td>
<td>Karen National Liberation Army</td>
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<td>KNPLF</td>
<td>Karenni Nationalities People’s Liberation Front</td>
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<td>KNPp</td>
<td>Karenni National Progressive Party</td>
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<td>KNU</td>
<td>Karen National Union</td>
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<td>KORD</td>
<td>Karen Office for Relief and Development</td>
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<td>MMCWA</td>
<td>Myanmar Maternal Child Welfare Association</td>
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<td>MNRC</td>
<td>Mon National Relief Committee</td>
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<td>MOU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
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<td>MSF</td>
<td>Medecins Sans Frontieres</td>
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<td>MTA</td>
<td>Mong Tai Army</td>
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<td>NIDs</td>
<td>National Immunisation Days</td>
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<td>NLD</td>
<td>National League for Democracy</td>
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<td>NMSP</td>
<td>New Mon State Party</td>
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<td>NPMPHR</td>
<td>Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights</td>
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<td>NSF</td>
<td>Naga Student Federation</td>
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<td>SHRF</td>
<td>Shan Human Rights Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>SLORC</td>
<td>State law and Order Restoration Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPDC</td>
<td>State Peace and Development Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>USCR</td>
<td>U.S. Committee for Refugee</td>
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<td>VLORC</td>
<td>Village Law and Order Restoration Council</td>
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<td>WVM</td>
<td>World Vision Myanmar</td>
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