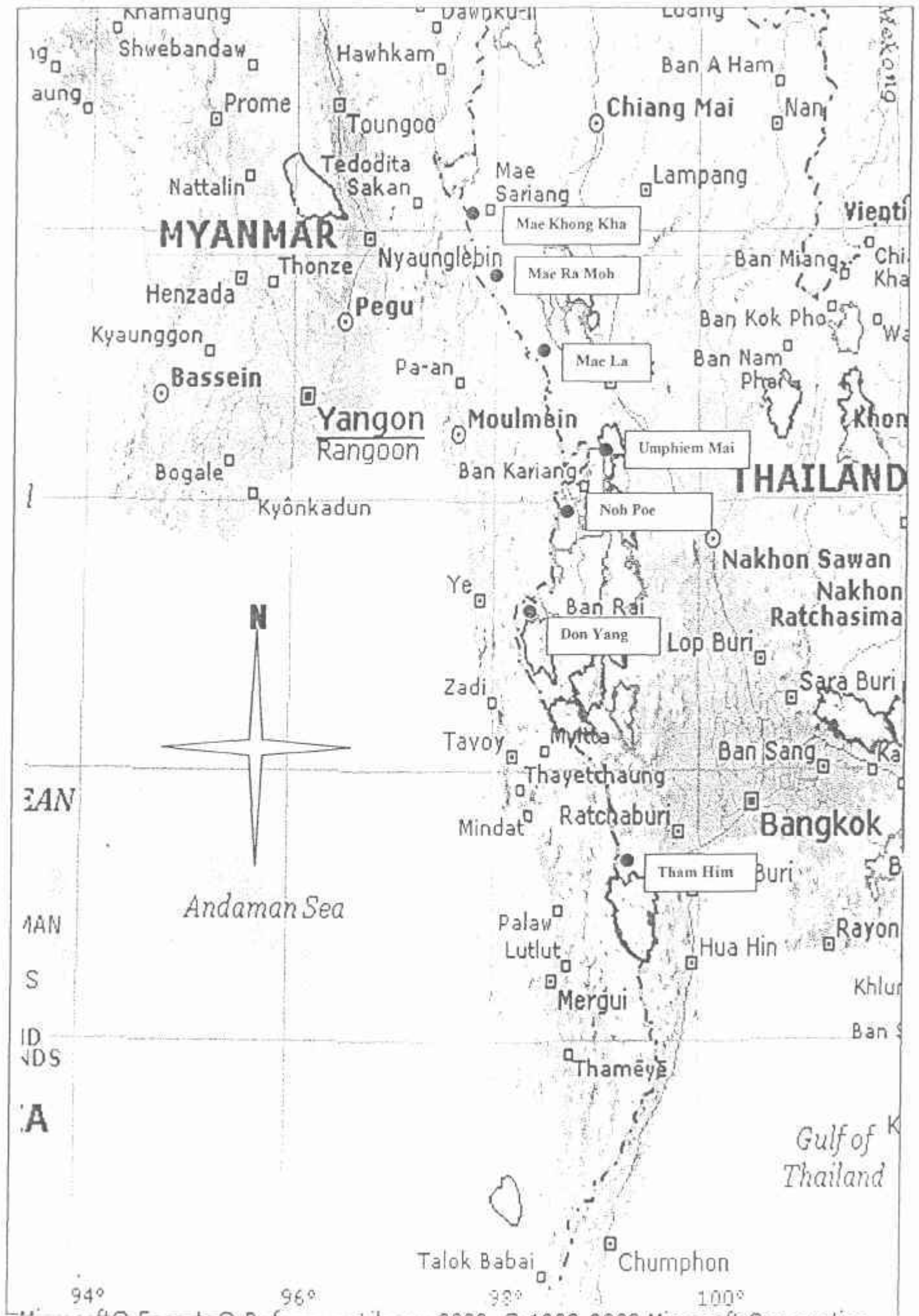


KAREN REFUGEE COMMITTEE

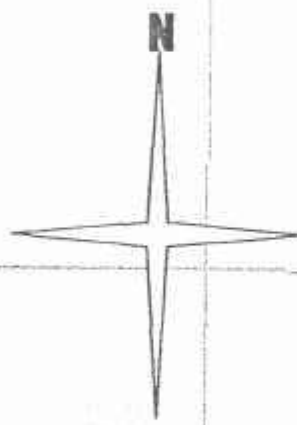
MONTHLY REPORT

JANUARY, 2003



MYANMAR

THAILAND



Andaman Sea

Gulf of Thailand

10°N
15°N
20°N
25°N

94° 96° 98° 100°

Talok Babai Chumphon

Monthly Report January, 2003

This January is the 55th Anniversary of Burma's Independence from British Rule. January 4 1948 -to be precise. This Anniversary, for many, brings back to mind, the free, easy and bountiful living, a half century ago. At that time, no one would have believed that the country could face such appalling shortages and deprivations that we are seeing today. In those days, Burma was called the "Rice Bowl of Asia". The country was overflowing with Rice, Cooking oil and other products. We saw many migrant workers from India, Pakistan and China, coming to work in Burma, the reverse of what we are seeing today. Today, with the same land and sea areas, with the same resources and work people (population increase that is negligible) we are seeing shortages in basic food and commodities, Which go along with poor living and suffering. Many factors are involved, but incompetence and mismanagement can surely be cited as attributing factors for this sorrowful mess in our country

Now with the New Year and with the open season we are seeing stepped up Military activities by the SPDC, which people see as none other than to achieve complete control over Ethnic Regions. As a result of fighting in Myawaddy Border Region, over 600 displaced villagers have crossed over into Thailand to seek refuge. These displaced people will be staying for some time, until there is comparative safety for them to return home. Meantime the Kyat is hitting an all time low and we are seeing jobless, needy people from Burma crossing over in droves, risking all dangers, to find support means. Then this New Year we see SPDC Chief General Than Shwe visiting China. Many people will see it only as "Business as usual" paying homage and then getting support especially in military hardware. This, in the absence of any fighting with any of its neighbour.

Elsewhere, around the world we see very little room for optimism. The US and allies are poised to launch an attack on Iraq pending the outcome of UN weapons Inspectors Report. Iraq is denying having any weapons of mass destruction, while the US and Allies are accusing Iraq of possessing and hiding such weapons. At the same time, Israel is test-firing ARROW missiles, in preparation for any eventual war, in which Israel, like it or not will be involved. Apart from Iraq - another world threat is looming from the North -East Peninsula, with North Korea, clearly indicating its intent to continue with its Nuclear Programme. This in turn would involve other nations, who would initiate their own Nuclear Programmes citing self- defense. Japan, going Nuclear would be most alarming . Then there is the flexing of Nuclear Muscles by India and Pakistan over the Kashmir Issue and which can be blown up into actual conflict, which conflagration can be most terrifying and involving many other Nations.

In Thailand now, it's the start of the War against Drugs. Drugs has become a very serious Problem for the Country and People. It is also a Problem facing many countries around the world. Even Refugees, of all peoples are being affected in some small ways by Drugs. The Chief Executive has declared war on Drugs and many are willing and ready to dig in, in the effort to eliminate this Evil. But, this Drug Menace will not be an easy problem to solve. Many have tried, without success and the Problem is still there, still expanding.

For, Refugees in this Border Regions, its continued staying, away from home. "Home" is not the place that was half a century ago. What we're seeing to day is that, there is still no move towards reconciliation. Ours is a problem that was rooted in Ethnic dissent and which need reconciliation from all parties. We see only failed attempts at Bilateral Talks with the Opposition, which must surely come before Talks with Ethnic Participation can begin

So " Home" for Refugees is still a place in dreams and memories. Home is not what it used to be . Home was a place of Freedom and Joy, of simplicity and natural surroundings, where one need not look over the shoulder when talking to some one.

Now, that is to be no more. Home is where there is fear, anguish and suffering . Can one be faulted for not wanting to go back to such a Home? Try asking a Refugee about "Home"

January 2003 - K.R.C Activities.

1. K.R.C Initiated one Karen Culture/ Wisdom Exchange workshop in Mae La Refugee Camp. The workshop was held from the 13th to the 17th of January 2003. Participating were Mae La Camp Committee Members, the Social Relations Work Group members, Mae La Camp KWO / KYO members together with (11) Thai Karen village Representatives. The discussions were led by the KRC Camps Affairs Coordinator, in which matters relating to inter-Karen Social Relations, communications, Karen Cultural Exchanges and improvements were discussed. These Karen Cultural Exchange workshops will be expanded to other Camps and will be conducted from time to time.
2. The Social Relations work Group, formed by the KRC will be starting with their Task towards improving Social Relations in Camps, beginning with family, neighbourly and community Social Relations improvement.
3. The KRC is laying down Guidelines for Camps Committee Elections Processes in Mae Kong Kha, Mae La, Um Pheim and Noe Po Camps.
4. KRC is activating to improve relations with Thai villagers near Camps. For Example, some Thai villagers downstream from Mae La are complaining of water/ waste pollution from the camp. Waste / Garbage control will be set up and community stream cleaning processes will be conducted by Camps Refugees regularly.
5. KRC together with Responsible People and NGOs are coordinating efforts to provide temporary support for people displaced by fighting in Phro Phra Township.
6. A Protection workshop was held in which KRC, UNHCR and NGOs took part. The workshop was for the purpose of looking into matters related to protection needs by the refugees and to find proper, effective ways to address problems related to Protection, especially for vulnerable People.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE CAMPS JANUARY, 2003.

	CAMP	No. of families	Over- 12Yrs		5 - 12 Yrs		Under 5 Yrs		Total
			M	F	M	F	M	F	
MAE SOT AREA	Mae La	5,435	10,529	10,198	4,108	3,819	1,858	1,812	32,324
	Um Pheim Mai	3,433	5,830	5,550	2,174	2,041	1,280	1,214	18,089
	Total	8,868	16,359	15,748	6,282	5,860	3,138	3,026	50,413
NORTH	Mae Ra Mu Luang	1,817	3,729	3,248	1,388	1,294	711	667	11,037
	Mae Kha & Sa la	2,502	5,470	4,920	1,403	1,304	1,644	1,529	16,270
	Total	4,319	9,199	8,168	2,791	2,598	2,355	2,196	27,307
	Noh Poe	2,630	3,701	3,505	1,554	1,399	791	914	11,864
SOUTH	Ban Dong Yang	742	1,119	1,246	400	342	250	268	3,625
	Htam Him	1,652	2,049	2,190	1,322	1,395	793	797	8,546
	Total	5,024	6,869	6,941	3,276	3,136	1,834	1,979	24,035
	Grand total	18,211	32,427	30,857	12,349	11,594	7,327	7,201	101,755

RICE AND OTHGER ITEMS RECEIVED DURING THE MONTH

FROM	CAMP	Rice 100 Kg Sack	Salt Kilos	F -paste 15-Kg Tin	Yellow Bean- 60-Kilo Sack	Chilies Kilos	Cooking Oil 200 ltr	Char- coal 30kg sacks	Fire wood M3
B.B.C	Umphiem Mai	5,607	7,250	1,206	283	2,280	85	5,667	256
	Mae La	13,073	16,900	2,820	663	5,280	199	10,069	-
COERR	Um Pheim	250	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

We shall always be grateful to the Thai people and Government for their sympathy and understanding in allowing us safe refuge.

We are also indebted to the NGOs for their Supports and Services.

BBC- Support in Food and Shelter Material. BBC is also supporting with warm clothing for all the camps.

MSF - Support in Medical and Health facilities.

AMI-

ARC-

MHD-

ZOA (ABWaid) - Support in Educational facilities Teachers' Training.

Consortium - Support in Educational facilities, Teachers' Training and Education for Deaf/ Mute / Blinds.

TOPS - Support in Educational facilities.

ICS-Asia- Support in Educational facilities and school buildings.

COERR - Rice and Educational support. EVI- to be involved with Extremely Vulnerable People.

H.I - Support for Refugee Handicaps with Prosthesis and rehabilitation and also year- end sporting events for Handicaps.

NCA- (Norway Church Aid) has been providing KRC with administrative & Organizational Support. It has also supported with remuneration for KRC members and workers.

UNHCR- For Registration Process Protection and Ultimate Safe Repatriation.

SMRU - Support with Malaria Control, Prevention and Treatment.

SVA- to support with Libraries in the camps.