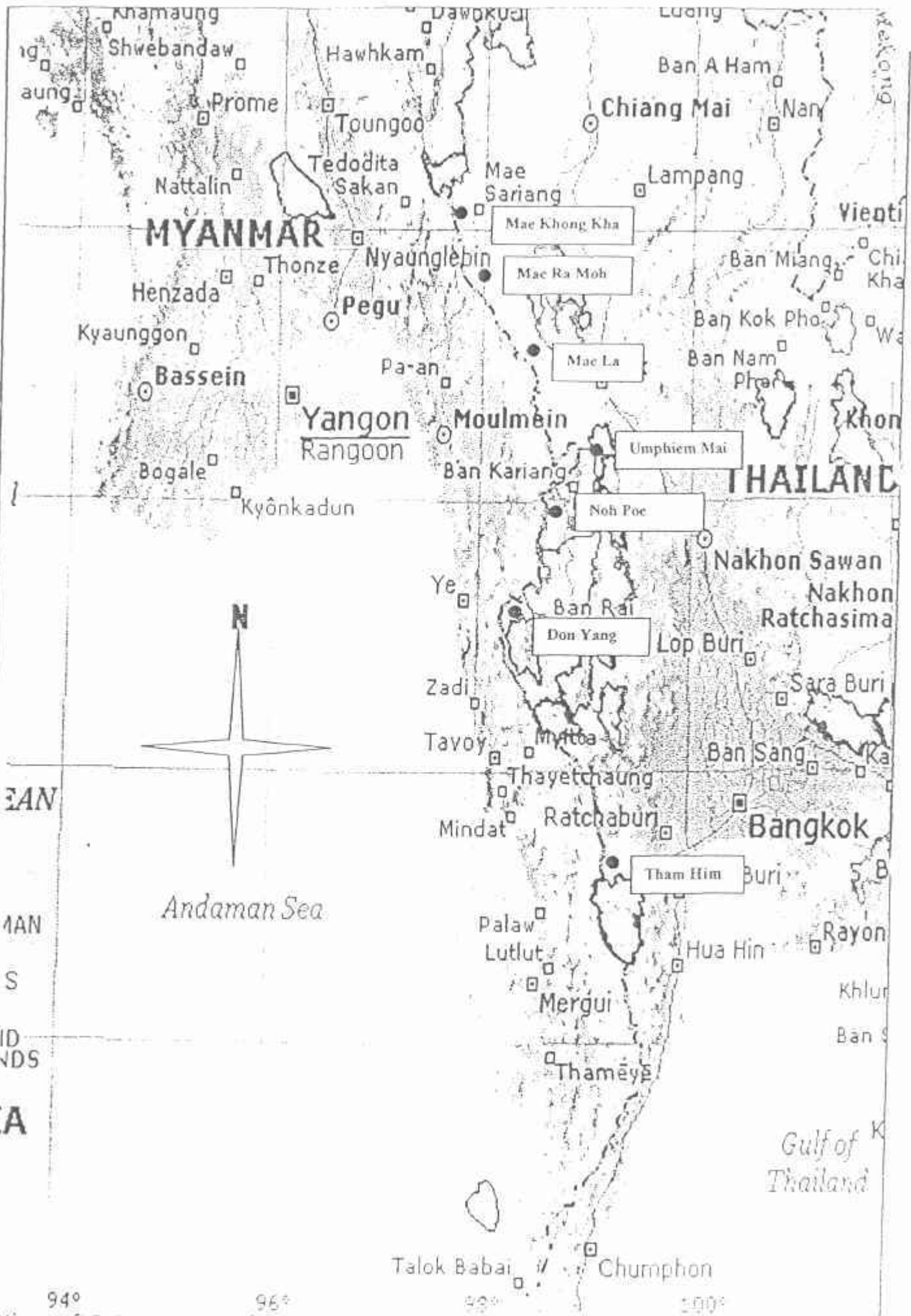




KAREN REFUGEE COMMITTEE

MONTHLY REPORT

MARCH, 2003



MONTHLY REPORT MARCH 2003.

March 2, 1962, General Ne Win took over Power from the Democratically elected Government of Prime Minister U Nu. To all evidence, it was to contain Ethnic dissent that was evidently brewing since some years back. The root cause of such dissent originated with the Pre-Independence Pan Long Agreement signed between the Burmese AFPFL party and some Ethnic Groups. The agreement was for joint effort to lay the ground-work for achievement of independence from Britain, and for the establishment of the UNION of Burma, where all Ethnic Races will have equal say and opportunity. The Agreement included allowance of separation from the UNION by any member state, after 10 years as a member, if membership were found to be no more acceptable.

After 10 years of Union Membership, beginning with 1958, some Ethnic Groups found that separation from the Union would be better for them as they felt that, Minorities had very little say and presence in running the Affairs of the country. Some people even say that P.M. U Nu and other High Ranking Ministers had a hand in helping with the Military Coup, believing that Ne Win will hand back power to them, after he had addressed the Ethnic Problem in his own way. But what happened was that, Ne Win tasted Power, liked it and decided to hold onto Power. It was the insatiable appetite for Power by Ne Win and his Military Regime that led to all this miserable situation in Burma, and which is continuing unto this Day. For the country it was "Kyar Kyauk lo Shin Gyi Koe, Shin Gyi Kyar Htet Hsoe." Which would mean "In fear of the Tiger, take refuge with the Great spirit, the Great spirit worse than the tiger."

Not long after the March 2, take-over, there was confrontation between students and the Junta, resulting in many students killed and the Student Union Building in Rangoon, dynamited by the Military with some live students hiding inside. That was on July 8th 1962. Dissent for the Military by the Student Body has been simmering ever since.

On March 13th 1988, there was a quarrel between some RJT (Rangoon Institute of Technology) students and security people in Rangoon. The result was that 2 students died from gunshot wounds and student dissent spread. On March 16th 1988, students of the Rangoon University Demonstrated, showing open dissent for Military/Security people, accusing them for student deaths. Severe repressive action ensued and many students died at a place near the Inya Lake, called the Little White Bridge. To commemorate the occasion, the place was known to this day as the Little Red Bridge. Agitation against the Military Rulers spread-Thus the Four Eights agitation, *in* which many thousands were to be killed.

This month, the Big News is the Fighting in Iraq-launched by the U.S. led Coalition Forces. The Problem arise from whether Iraq possesses weapons of Mass Destruction and its nature of wanting to wage wars on neighboring countries, at the same time conducting repressive measures on its own minorities in the north and south of the country-The Kurds and the Shiites. It is arguable whether the coalition did the right thing in launching this War, but belligerents in every conflict have their own side of the story. To be sure, war is Bad. Bad things happen from Wars. Some people say, Wars are launched to prevent other Wars- the war to end all wars. But in reality, history is full of wars to end wars. Wars are still being fought. This must be the way with Humanity - Conducting wars, fighting to achieve some purpose, making peace, and then start fighting again.

Still, there are many things that can keep men occupied other than fighting each other. There are many problems that need to be addressed-Diseases like AIDS, SARS, STDS. There are weather related suffering from Droughts, Floods, Storms. There are sufferings from shortages of food and water, there are communal strifes arising from many different factors. There are problems related to Drugs and Human Trafficking. In wars, bad things can happen. Such bad happenings can be measured by the number of Refugees. The present number of World Refugees will surely be increased by this Iraqi War (Gulf War II). Many will die, many will suffer, there will be many bad implication and repercussions, many bad memories- And Wars will still be continuing.

For refugees- they are a people who suffered long and hard from Fighting - and also who had really tasted the Brutality of Despotic Power. They may be excused for Not liking Wars. At the same time, they may be condoned for not liking Despotic Regimes.

K.R.C. Camps Committees Activities

On 3-3-2003 KRC met with Concern Group DFID (Department For International Development) Headed by Ms Sally Keeble . Discussions were made relative to Refugee Situations and living Conditions. The Group also visited Mae La and Noe Poe Camps and held discussions with camps Administrative Committees.

On 4-3-2003 - Refugees from Mae La Camp who went out to pick leaves for shelter Roofing were arrested by Security People - the number of arrest being 106 from Mae La Camp and 13 from elsewhere. But there was no untoward incidence and all returned to camp safely.

H.I- activities in Mae la Camp - Beginning this month H.I (Handicap International) reduces its works personnel in Mae La Camp due to reduced funding. They will continue their work activities in Camps with new Work Personnel.

Mae Kha Sala Camp. Camp Committee Elections was held on the 17th of March 2003. 15 members were elected to run the Camp's Administration. 7 of the committee members were women.

Noe Poe Camp. During this March, there was an outbreak of Meningitis in Noe Poe Refugee Camp. There were (4)deaths. Now the Medical NGOs are working on giving Protective vaccination to) the Camps People.

Protection Workshop. There was a protection workshop which was held with the Participation of UNHCR, NGOs, KRC and KWO. Measures were taken for the provision of an acceptable Incidence Report form for use in Reporting and Protection Work Processes.

This March is the end of Academic Year 2002-2003 - Final Examinations are held in all schools in the seven Refugee Camps. The Total number of schools in the Camps combined amounted to (71) schools. The Total number of students being (33,557). This do not include the Number of Nursery Schools and children attending these schools.

Health Education in Camps.

ARC- conducted Health Education Classes in Um Phiem Camp covering subjects related to Arthritis and Typhus

H.I. conducted Workshops On Mine risks and Awareness.

Rabies. - AMI - will not take responsibility for incidences related to Dog Bites in Camps. There will be no treatment for Rabies - in Um Phiem Camp.

Visitor - Personnel from the Swedish Embassy visited Um Phiem Camp.

Personnel from E.U visited Mae Ra Ma Luang Camp.

These visits by concerned Groups are indication that, Refugees are not forgotten by the International Community.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE CAMPS MARCH, 2003,

| | CAMP | No. of | Over- 12Yrs | | 5 - 12 Yrs | | Under 5 Yrs | | Total |
|---------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| | | families | M | F | M | F | M | F | |
| MAE SOT AREA | Mae La | 5,417 | 11,453 | 11,058 | 2,984 | 2,859 | 2,039 | 1,927 | 32,320 |
| | Um Pheim Mai | 3,513 | 6,288 | 5,982 | 2,056 | 1,936 | 1,140 | 1,077 | 18,479 |
| | Total | 8,930 | 17,741 | 17,040 | 5,040 | 4,795 | 3,179 | 3,004 | 50,799 |
| NORTH | Mae Ra Mu Luang | 1,831 | 3,714 | 3,261 | 1,404 | 1,312 | 725 | 674 | 11,090 |
| | Mae Kha & Sa la | 2,497 | 5,395 | 4,878 | 1,444 | 1,350 | 1,614 | 1,536 | 16,217 |
| | Total | 4,328 | 9,109 | 8,139 | 2,848 | 2,662 | 2,339 | 2,210 | 27,307 |
| SOUTH | Noh Poe | 2,696 | 3,757 | 3,577 | 1,593 | 1,433 | 833 | 946 | 12,139 |
| | Ban Dong Yang | 739 | 1,102 | 1,197 | 405 | 391 | 265 | 268 | 3,628 |
| | Htam Him | 1,652 | 2,049 | 2,190 | 1,322 | 1,395 | 793 | 797 | 8,546 |
| Total | | 5,087 | 6,908 | 6,964 | 3,320 | 3,219 | 1,891 | 2,011 | 24,313 |
| Grand total | | 18,345 | 33,758 | 32,143 | 11,208 | 10,676 | 7,409 | 7,225 | 102,419 |

RICE AND OTHER 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 | Cook- ing Oil 200 ltr | Char- Coal 30 kg saks | Char- Coal 25 kg sacks | Fire wood M3 |
|-------|-------------|------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| B.B.C | Umphiem Mai | 5,703 | 7,350 | 1,226 | 289 | 2,310 | 87 | | 6,918 | |
| | Mae La | 13,139 | 17,000 | 2,823 | 666 | 5,310 | 200 | 10,117 | | |
| 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. EV1- 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.

S VA- to support with Libraries in the camps.

PPAT- Parenthood Planning Association Thailand -Supporting with Family Planning and Preventive/ Education in Refugee Camps.