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12 Nov. 1954

TO : Mr. D.C. Lavergne, Special Deputy Refugee Affairs
FROM : F.C. Bruhns, Refugee Advisor
SUBJECT : Refugee Installations in North Central Vietnam.

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I - Participants, Schedule, Territory Covered.

Mr. M. Hilbert, Sanitary Engineer, Mr. D. Wiens, Representative of the Mennonite Central Committee, and Mr. F.C. Bruhns, Refugee Advisor, leaving Saigon on Nov. 2, 1954, for Hue, participated in this 4 day trip through North Central Vietnam, returning to Saigon on the evening of Nov. 5 except for Mr. Hilbert who continued on a trip to South Central Vietnam. The party was accompanied by Mr. Dam, Administrator of American Aid in Central Vietnam, by Mr. Tran-Can, Chef de Bureau and assistant to Mr. Muu, Regional Commissioner for Refugees in Central Vietnam (who was not available), by a representative of the Ministry for Social Action for Central Vietnam, and by an interpreter for Mr. Hilbert. The Province Chief and/or their assistants were contacted in each province and also accompanied the party in their respective territories.

Arriving in Hue just before noon of Nov. 2, Mr. Dam was contacted and a schedule arranged. The afternoon was devoted to a visit of refugee installations in the Thua Thien (Hue) province. On Nov. 3, the party visited installations in the Quang Tri province, returning to Hue in the evening. On Nov. 4, the party visited refugee centers in the municipality of Tourane and in the province of Quang Nam, in and near the town of Paifo, spending the night at the house of the mayor of Tourane. During the morning of Nov. 5, more installations were visited on the return trip from Tourane to Hue, in the province of Thua Thien. After a final conference with the Vietnamese officials stationed in Hue, the party boarded the return plane at 3.p.m.

II - Summary Description of Problems and Impressions

A detailed description of each installation visited is given below in section III. This section summarizes the problems of each province.

Refugee Population: There are approx. 36,000 civilian refugees reported to be in the process of resettlement in North Central Vietnam. According to the information obtained from the Chiefs of Province, this number is distributed among the provinces approximately as follows: Quang Tri: 8500. Thua Thien: 17,000 (3,500 farmers; 1,500 fishermen; 12,000 merchants, artisans and unskilled day laborers - all the fonctionnaires have been already absorbed and found work). Da Nang (municipality of Tourane only): 10,000 (7,000 artisans, merchants and unskilled day laborers, 3,000 fishermen). Quang Nam: 300 (farmers, fishermen, merchants, and day laborers). 2,000 refugees from the Quang Nam province have left during the last few days by boat from Tourane for South Central Vietnam, and an additional 3,500-4,000 are reported to be waiting in Tourane for transport to the same destination.

Capacities of Absorption: In general, Vietnamese officials in Hue feel that the approx. 36,000 civilian refugees now in Northern Central Vietnam can be absorbed without too many difficulties, though some of them may have to be sent to South Central Vietnam which is reported to offer better possibilities for refugee rehabilitation. Officials do not expect the arrival in North Central Vietnam of larger numbers of refugees in the future; if large numbers arrive, they would attempt to direct them to South Central Vietnam.

As far as the provinces are concerned, the following appear:

to offer the best rehabilitation opportunities, according to the information obtained from the officials in Hue which were confirmed by my own impressions:

1) Thue Thien; 2) Quang Tri 3) Da Nang (the municipality of Tourane); 4) Quang Nam (in descending rank order). In Quang Tri, land is available but it is not as fertile as in Thue Thien. The municipality of Tourane appears to have absorbed as many refugees as it can, i. e. 10,000. The province of Quang Nam (Faifo) constitutes a special case. Before going on this trip, I was informed that this province might be one of the most important for permanent refugee resettlement, offering many economic opportunities. This information was contradicted by the Chief of Province in Faifo as well as by the officials in Hue and by Mr. Dam. It was reported that 4 major reasons are working against the absorption of a larger number of refugees in this province: 1) There were many persons expropriated and displaced by the Vietminh in the 6 districts of this province which were, until very recently, under the control of the Vietminh; it is therefore felt that the return and settlement of the displaced persons should receive priority over the settlement of refugees coming from the North. 2) The land available in the province needs heavy machinery (for leveling and clearing) and larger capital investments to prepare it for cultivation, thus making refugee resettlement expensive. 3) It was reported that there is much malaria in the province. 4) As 2 districts of the province are still under Vietminh control, and the other 6 districts are in the process of being taken over by Vietnamese Administrations Teams, which is a delicate political task, it is too early for the resettlement of refugees.

Refugee Housing. Though the quantity of housing space given to a refugee group of 5 persons is about the same all over North Central Vietnam (6 x 3 or 6 x 3.5 meters), the quality and cost of housing vary considerably from location to location. Housing costs, exclusive of labor, for one family or a unit of 5 refugees ranged from 2,000 to 8,500 I.C. Corrugated iron roofing was used widely, increasing the cost considerably as 1 single iron sheet (1 x 2 m.) costs between 118 and 135 piasters, 25 sheets being necessary for the shelter of 5 persons. On questioning, several reasons were offered by different persons why this expensive kind of roofing was chosen: it was said to be more durable and therefore in the long run less expensive, and safer against fire hazards which was reported to be especially important in the Quang Tri province where a strong wind blows all year round and Vietminh marauders are feared to attempt setting fires. However, corrugated iron roofing for refugees was seen almost as much in the other provinces. Considering the general shortage of funds, none of the reasons advanced in favor of iron roofing appeared very convincing, especially as any savings from the 6,000 I.C. housing allowance accrue directly to the benefit of the refugees except in the municipality of Tourane. The fact remains that more than 90 percent of the non-refugee housing seen had straw, not iron roofing.

Immediate Needs: The information given under this heading in Section III below, for the various refugee centers visited, was in each case taken from one of the leaders of the center, itself (mostly the priest), and might not reflect the opinions of the Chief of Province or USAOM personnel.

The main immediate refugee needs in North Central Vietnam can perhaps be summarized under the following 2 headings: 1) Funds and advice for community development, i. e. sanitation, the building of the proper wells, of dispensaries, schools, churches, communal houses, simple access roads, etc. 2) Funds to provide, possibly on a reimbursable loan basis, the necessary working equipment and implements for farmers, fishermen, artisans and small scale merchants, i. e. farming tools, seeds, cattle, some pumps for small-scale irrigation, fishing boats, nets and lines, weaving looms, sewing machines, etc.. The Vietnamese refugee officials in Hue expressed it this way: "Phase No. 1, the reception, and phase No. 2, the reimplantation of individual refugees (i. e. their individual housing) are largely completed. The problem now for the USAOM is to supply the refugees with the equipment necessary to enable them to find permanent homes."

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Administration and Management.

Much seemed to depend on the energy and the decisions of the various Province Chiefs who, in their task of refugee resettlement, appeared to be rather independent from regulations emanating from the central government in Hue. Considerable variety was found between the provinces, especially concerning the amount of subsistence payments and the procedure of handling subsistence and housing allotments. For instance, in the province of Da Nang (municipality of Tourane), all refugee resettlement centers are already considered self-supporting and no subsistence is paid, while any savings obtained from non-use of housing funds do not accrue to the individual family but revert to the budget. Details of procedural differences are given in the following section.

In the Quang Tri province an imaginative Province Chief plans a competition within and between Resettlement Centers. Prizes of 500 or 1000 piasters are to be given to the family with the best vegetable garden, to the family which accomplished most with a given amount of financial assistance, and to the center which can show the best community organization.

Sanitation.

While sufficient water can be obtained in all centers visited, sanitation, so far, has been poor. Mr. Hilbert will write a separate and detailed report concerning sanitation.

III - Refugee Installations Visited.

A. Thua Thien Province (Hue)

1) Nov. 2: Luong-Dien. Location: approx. 30 Km. S.E. of Hue, in the district of Truoi, approx. 2 Km. S. of main road Hue-Tourane.

Composition: Site consists of 1 tent reception camp, already mostly empty and scheduled to be completely evacuated around the middle of November, and 1 permanent resettlement center. While the present number of families is slightly lower, this site is soon to house approx. 200 families, mainly farmers and fishermen. Most of the refugees came, about 2 1/2 months ago, from the coastal area just North of the 17th parallel (demarcation line).

Land: The land here appears to be good and fertile. There are, according to the Chief of Province, 500 ha. of good rice land available for the use of this center at a distance of about 4 Km., ready to cultivate; this land was given by the widow of the eldest brother of the Chief of Cabinet, President Diem, without cost. As there is some malaria near the rice paddies, the refugees preferred their present residence location which is quite healthy and a daily walk of 8 km. to settling closer to the rice land. Adjoining the village, there are about 20 hectares available for vegetables and the planting of some rice.

Housing: Straw houses (paillottes) of the usual type, looking sturdy and well built. Cost, on the average, and excluding labor which is furnished by the refugees themselves, is about 2,000 I.C. per family. As the government allots 5,000 I.C.; this means a saving of 4,000 I.C. No contractors are used, but under the leadership of an apparently very able priest, much cooperative work-sharing is done, assisting also those who are unable to participate in the construction of the houses.

Health and Sanitation: The priest states that there has been no serious sickness up to date, that the village location is healthier than the location of their former homes. At present, water is still handled from the nearby river; 1 well is under construction, but no water had been struck. Mr. Hilbert thinks that water will be struck soon. A total of 4 dug wells, and 1 pit privy for every 4 families - 162 privies, but not yet constructed.

Financial Assistance: 10 piasters and 500 gr. of rice per adult daily, paid directly, through the priest, to the heads of individual families. The priest receives and pays the housing allowance (5,000 I.C.) in 2 installments: 2,000 immediately, 4,000 only after completion of the house, a confirmation that the housing material can be bought for 2,000 piasters.

Immediate Needs: Blankets, hand tools, fertilizers, plows, oxen (which are preferred by this village to buffalos), spades, picks.

Other: Apparently a well-managed resettlement site, under intelligent and effective leadership of the priest. Though the 500 hectares of rice land could not be inspected, the land seems to be good, the close-by river offers fishing possibilities, and ultimate rehabilitation of the refugees appears to be fairly well assured. The Chief of Province stated that 500 more refugee families, in addition to the 200 contemplated, could be absorbed on this site. The building appears to be done at a minimum cost, permitting considerable savings for the benefit of the village. No inflationary tendencies were noticed by the refugees in the adjoining area.

2) Nov. 5: Thanh Bo (region of Lang Co).

Location: approx. 50 km. S. E. of Hue, near main road from Hue to Tourane, where road practically touches the sea before climbing up to the mountain pass. This is the southern most village of 4 adjoining resettlement centers, located on the sea.

Composition: Approx. 400 refugees and 70 houses; 24 more houses are planned. All are fishermen.

Land: The village is built on the beach, too low and too close to the sea to be safe from inundations when the weather is stormy. It was flooded only recently when the inhabitants moved their belongings to higher ground and returned after the end of the flooding. Floods are reported to last only a few hours, to happen fairly rarely, and not to damage the houses.

Housing: Straw houses (paillettes), at the cost of about 2,000 I.C., excluding labor, per family. Dimensions: 6 x 3 m. per house, for 5 persons. No contractors.

Sanitation: Sanitary wells & pit privies have still to be constructed.

Financial Assistance: 10 piasters and 500 gr. of rice per adult daily. This is necessary as fishing, at present, is handicapped by bad weather. The fishing season in this region lasts from February or March to September when there are both better catches and sales.

Immediate Needs: Fishing equipment, 20 boats, medicaments, 1 dispensary, 1 school, wells, 1 church, 1 communal assembly building.

3) Nov. 5: Dong-Duong (region of Lang Co).

Location: adjoining Thanh Bo to the N.W.

Composition: 114 fishing families (611 persons) and 90 houses.

Land: Beach, but located higher than Thanh Bo and at greater distance from the sea, therefore safe from inundations.

Housing: As usual, but with corrugated iron sheets used as roofing. Priest states that, at the time of settlement, it was impossible to obtain straw in the vicinity. Price 4,500 I.C. per family.

Sanitation: Have one open dug well, need 2 more. Also need pit privies.

Financial Assistance: 10 piasters plus 500 gr. of rice. As all families except 3 brought along their boats, fishing yields are better than in the previously described village and savings can be made from

the subsidies. Average savings per family, as reported by the priest, are 3,000 I.C., half of which is obtained from the unused portion of the housing allowance and the other half from unused subsidies.

Immediate Needs: 2 wells, 2 channel stones for drainage (carniaux), 1 infirmary and 1 school (both already planned), fishing equipment, 1 church.

Other: This village appears to be unusually well managed under the direction of a French missionary priest.

4) Nov. 5: Nguyen Cat, also known as Tom Ket (region of Leng Co).

Location: Less than 1 km. to the N.W. of Dong-Duong, on main road from Tourane to Hue.

Composition: 24 vegetable farming families and 18 houses.

Land: Enough land for vegetable farming available adjoining the main road. While this land is privately owned, a government commission will negotiate with the owner to guarantee a fair rental.

Remarks: Time available for this visit was less than 10 minutes.

5) Nov. 5: Loan Ly (region of Leng Co).

Location: Adjoining Nguyen Cat to the N.W.

Composition: 580 persons, all fishermen, and 110 houses.

Land: Dunes and flat land near the main road. At sufficient distance from the sea to be safe from inundations.

Housing: Usual straw houses, built at a price ranging from 2,000 - 3,500 I.C. per family. Straw for roofing was transported by the refugees from Quang Tri. A church is under construction, a school will be built later.

Needs: The priest requested the use of a bull-dozer for cleaning land for housing sites.

Other: 2,000 plants, furnished by the Service des Forêts, are being planted to stabilize the drift sand of the dunes. This Service is reported to have 10,000 of these plants available. Village seems to be well managed by an energetic Vietnamese priest.

B. Quang Tri Province

1) Nov. 3: Cité ouvrière Quang Tri Ville.

Location: In the town of Quang Tri, at the site of the former municipal stadium.

Composition: 420 families (2,000 persons), artisans and unskilled labor.

Land: The site was lower than the surrounding terrain, swampy and very wet though the season of strongest rainfall is still to come. According to Mr. Hilbert, drainage will be difficult but not impossible, requiring much know-how, as the surrounding terrain is very flat. The Public Works Division should advise. The land is owned by the government. This site is not very satisfactory.

Housing: The houses are built very close together, 6 units (6 x 3.5 m.) to a house, 1 unit per family. Communal kitchens are built between the houses. All houses and the kitchens have corrugated iron roofing. Cost per family unit is 6,000 I.C. excluding labor.

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here, 25 sheets are necessary for one family unit (including kitchen);

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the price for the roofing of one family unit amounts therefore to 3,250 piasters. No contractors used, labor being furnished by the refugees themselves.

Sanitation: Apparently poor, due to the swampy ground. Mr. Hilbert will report in detail.

Financial Assistance: 6,000 I.C. housing allowance, paid in installments. Subsidy payments will be reorganized to be paid in several lump sums, details are not yet decided.

Other: A play ground and public buildings are planned to be built in the center of this location but have not been started yet. The government officials hope but are apparently not sure that enough work can be found in the town of Quang Tri and vicinity for the inhabitants of this center. All in all, this seems to be somewhat of a problem center.

2) Nov. 3: Cité Agricole of An Don.

Location: Approx. 5 km. N.W. of Quang Tri town, and 1 km. off the main road.

Composition: 214 families (893 persons), mostly farmers. There are approx. 60 families without male heads.

Land: There are 50 ha. of rice paddies plus 24 ha. of vegetable land (for potatoes, corn and tea trees) available, the land apparently being good but perhaps somewhat scarce. The planting has started.

Housing: Two-family houses, all with corrugated iron roofing, 6 x 4 m. per family. Cost 7,000 - 8,000 piasters per family, excluding labor. The priest talked about plans to install palm-weave ceilings in the houses, to be ordered from South Central Vietnam, for purposes of insulation against heat, a proposition admittedly expensive because of the transport involved. No contractors used.

Sanitation: 2 wells in operation, 2 more are needed.

Financial Assistance: Same as under 1) above.

Immediate needs: The priest is very anxious to have a church built. Also needed: 2 wells, infirmary, school, communal house, blankets, clothing, 1 simple access road, farming implements, cattle (oxen and buffalos).

Other: This site is fairly close to the Vietminh who are reported to maraud at night, in the vicinity. The Province Chief plans to organize a police force from among the villagers. The priest appeared to be less than average economy-minded. There were reports of price increases up to 20 percent for some items being bought in the vicinity.

3) Nov. 3: La Vang droit and La Vang gauche.

Location: Approx. 5 km. S.E. of Quang Tri, 1 km. W. of the main road Quang Tri - Hue. Only La Vang droit was visited.

Composition: 260 families (La Vang droit) and 120 families (La Lang gauche), mostly farmers.

Land: The residence site is an elevated, well drained area but less fertile for vegetable planting than An Don. A sufficient acreage of rice paddies are reported to be available for this settlement at a distance of 3 - 5 km., but the refugees are still conserving their houses and cultivation has not yet begun. The rice paddies are privately owned, rent to be paid is reported to be Emergency Relief - Refugee - Reports 1 of 2 p. 1955
National Archives and Records Administration, RG 226, Entry 1441, Box 10, Folder 10
Vegetables are grown on and near the housing site.

1. A. H. ...

Housing: Separate houses for each family, 6 x 3 m. Iron roofing. Cost reported 8,000 I.C. exclusive labor. The walls are made of a mixture of dirt and straw (torchis) and are supported by a wood (bamboo) mesh. The expensive wood is often not bought but cut by the refugees in the adjoining forest, free of charge. No contractors used. I doubt whether the cost as reported is accurate.

Sanitation: 2 wells in operation, 6 more planned. 12 pit privies are planned which is not sufficient.

Other: 1 school was seen in operation, extremely crowded. It was reported that the price of bamboo increased by 400 o/o during the last 2 months, being very scarce in supply.

4) Nov. 3: My Chanh.

Location: Approx. 20 km. S.E. from Quang Tri, on the East side of the main road Quang Tri-Hue.

Composition: 40 families in 40 houses, mostly farmers.

Land: 50 ha. of vegetable land and 30 ha. of rice paddies adjoin the residence site; light clearing is necessary before cultivation can start.

Housing: Building was started only a week ago. 1 house (6 x 3 m.) per family, with an outside adjoining kitchen. Cost, excluding labor, 6,000 I.C. Iron roofing.

Immediate Needs: Farming implements (picks, shovels, plows), buffaloes, 2 sewing machines (for 2 tailors).

C. The Municipality of Tourane (Da Nang Province)

1) Nov. 4: Center N° 1.

Location: On the beach, N. of the center of Tourane.

Composition: 133 families (approx. 1,000 persons), all fishermen. The refugees have come from the Dong Hoi province, just N. of the demarcation line.

Land: Beach, on the bay, not the open sea. No garden farming is possible.

Housing: Only those families which were unable to bring along their boats receive housing. Those with boats live on them, receiving 2,500 - 3,000 I.C. for the repair of their boats and equipment. Houses consist of 7 to 10 family units, 6 x 3 m. per unit. Cost per family was 4,000 I.C. which increased to 5,000 during last 2 months. Iron roofing.

Sanitation: Very poor. Most of the village is reported flooded during storms. Funds for wells and privies have been requested from Hue, but have not yet been approved. Mr. Hilbert will try to expedite; a well approx. 1 km. away is at present being used.

Financial Assistance: This problem is being handled in this province quite differently than the other ones. No subsidy is at present paid at all, all resettlement centers being considered to be self-supporting already. A close watch, however, is maintained said to be maintained by provincial officials over the needs of the refugee population. Housing is paid on a cost basis, and not by a general allowance of 5,000 I.C. as in the other provinces. Any savings accrue to the general budget, not to the families concerned.

Immediate Needs: 3 wells, 1 infirmary, 1 school, 1 church. Fishing equipment has been requested from the Fishing Service.

National Archives and Records Administration - RG 469/Entry 1441

Box 51 - Folder 54: Center N° 2

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Composition: 220 families (500 - 700 persons), all fishermen. These refugees also come from the province of Dong Hoi.

Land: This location has better drainage than Center No. 1 and is better protected from inundation. There are plans to plant trees on this beach.

Housing: One unit houses 2 families, cost 5,000 I.C. per family; Iron roofing. Housing is better spaced than in Center NO. 1

Sanitation: 2 wells and 20 pit privies requested, none obtained; so far refugees are using same distant well as Center No. 1.

Financial Assistance: Same as in Center NO. 1.

3) Nov. 4: Noi Ha Location: approx. 1/2 Km. from Center NO. 2

Composition: 110 families at present. 70 more families are expected, and the site could accommodate a total of 220 families. Mostly fishermen, but also unskilled laborers who work in town as dockworkers.

Land: A small distance from the beach, in a wooded but sufficiently cleared area.

Housing: One unit houses 3 families, cost 5,000 I.C. per family. Iron roofing.

Sanitation: 4 wells and 20 pit privies requested from Hue but no action as yet. Are now using the well in an adjacent civilian village.

Financial Assistance: same as in Center No. 1

4) Nov. 4: Thac Than.

Location: near railroad station of Tourane.

Composition: Approx. 420 families, of which 275 are unskilled laborers, 80 fishermen, 30 merchants, 20 blacksmiths, and 15 cabinet makers.

Housing: Houses with iron roofing are being constructed, and a school is also being built while the church is still under a tent.

Sanitation: 3 open dug wells are in operation, 4 sanitary wells are wanted. No pit privies yet.

Financial Assistance: Same as in Center No. 1.

Immediate Needs: Community houses, medicines.

Other: At the time of our visit, a representative of the Department for Fishing Services went through the settlement, collecting data on needed fishing equipment.

D. Quang Nam Province (Faifo)

1) Nov. 4: Rue Pasteur

Location: a street in the town of Faifo.

Composition: 10 families, fishermen and merchants.

Housing: 5 houses, each with 2 family units, at the cost of 8,500 I.C. per family. These are the most expensive and luxurious refugee houses we saw on our trip. All have cement floor, concrete block walls approx. 1 1/2 yds. high (the rest is good bamboo matting) and corrugated iron roofing. The refugee houses in this province are done by a contractor.

Financial Assistance: In this province, a subsidy of 6 piasters

and 500 gr. of rice per day are paid to each adult refugee.

2) Nov. 4: Thanh Ha.

Location: just N. of Faifo, on the main road to Tourane.

Composition: 25 families (118 persons). 19 of these families are farmers, 6 merchants.

Land: Only 5 ha. of good rice paddies are available for cultivation, in addition to 40 ha. of poor, sandy soil good only for potatoes. Some irrigation necessary.

Housing: Same expensive, contracted for housing as in Rue Pasteur above. 12 houses stand empty, bringing the total to 37 houses. Only 1 family per house at this location.

Immediate needs: Motor pumps for lifting the water for irrigation purposes, cattle, sewing machines, and 32 looms were requested by the Assistant Province Chief. See below.

Other: The finding of work for the refugees at this location is extremely problematic. No sufficient land, and apparently no work available in town except for a brick factory which is reported to provide perhaps some employment. The Assistant Province Chief wants to train the women in weaving. He and the Province Chief appeared to have few plans if any for the economic absorption of the refugees in this province.

3) Nov. 4: Khue Trung.

Location: approx. 900 M. S. of the bridge at the South end of Tourane, but outside the limits of Tourane municipality.

Composition: This is a proposed site, not yet constructed, which could not be inspected as the administrator (a delegate of the Chief of Province) could be reached only after nightfall. 25 families, mostly farmers, are to receive 25 houses.

Land: 5,000 square meters are available for the residence site. There were reported to be available also a large but unspecified average of abandoned rice land for refugee use, for a nominal rent (10,000 piasters for a 3 year period).

Housing: The same expensive housing is planned as described above for the other centers in this province, at the price of 8,500 I.C. per family unit, paid to a contractor.

Sanitation: 2 wells and 10 pit privies are planned.

Immediate Needs: 1 school (3 rooms); 2 access roads of 100 meters each, farming implements, buffaloes.

Other: The impression was gained that little serious or detailed planning had been done for the establishment of this site. The administrator appeared little informed and contradicted himself several times in the course of the interview.