



FACTS

REFUGEES IN SOUTHERN LAOS
SAVANNAKHET
USAID Mission to Laos

PHOTOGRAPHS

Savannakhet Province extends 124 mi east from the Mekong River to the Annamite Mountains that mark the border with Vietnam, and 81 mi south from the Se Bang Fai to the Se Bang Hieng, two tributaries of the Mekong River. Encompassed within this area are approximately 235,000 acres of the more productive agriculture land in Laos.

The war has changed Savannakhet less than the other provinces of Laos. About 164,000 acres of land remain in cultivation and livestock production exceeds that of any other province. Route 13, the major highway of Laos which runs north and south through the province, is open to traffic. At present, Savannakhet is one of the few provinces where integration of refugees into the economy of Laos is possible.

At the end of August 1972, there were 15,351 refugees in Savannakhet Province. Of this number, over half live in villages on land reserved by the Royal Lao Government for the permanent resettlement of refugees: 2,912 at Seno, 22 mi east of the city of Savannakhet, and 5,947 at Tha Sano on the Mekong River, 9 mi north of the city of Savannakhet. Of the remaining number, 3,634 are at the Ban That Refugee Reception Center, 2,122 are temporarily located in villages near the district center Kengkok, and 736 are housed in the barracks of Kengkok Military Camp.

Unlike the northern provinces of Laos where refugees have been on the move for over a decade, Savannakhet Province had little experience with refugee movements until late 1969. In the battle for Muong Phine on Route 9 at its junction with the Ho Chi Minh Trail, 2,931 people were evacuated before the North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao regained control of the area. These first refugees in Savannakhet Province were brought to Seno Military Camp, a for-

Each family in Seno is given five acres of land to farm. In 1972, a total of 620 acres of land have been planted in rice. PL-480 foods supplement the diet of rice for the 520 families there.



mer French base of operations during the French-Indochinese war. The relocation area, 3 mi from the camp, takes its name from Seno-an acronym for Sud-Est-Nord-Oest. The camp and the relocation site are reached over a narrow asphalt road built by the French over 30 years ago.

The Seno Refugee Relocation Center covers an area of 14,820 acres. Five hundred twenty five families or 2,912 people live in eight villages with an average of 70 families to a village. Each family has a house, a garden plot, and five acres of farmland. Of this farmland, approximately 620 acres are now planted in rice. The people have two permanent elementary schools, water for all purposes, and medical facilities. Of the two categories of Full Support and Partial Support that USAID has established to designate the degree of assistance that refugee groups require, the people of Seno now fall into the second category. Present USAID assistance consists of the provision of 3 kg of PL-480 foods per person per month.

Resettlement costs at Seno fall into two categories of dollar expenditures and local currency expenditures. Dollar expenditures total \$186,921 which cover the cost of heavy equipment used in clearing land, constructing roads, and drilling wells and the purchase of commodities not locally available. Local currency expenditures total Kip 73,790,000 or \$ 307,458 which cover personnel costs and the purchase of local commodities. These funds have been used

- To clear 667 acres of land;
- To drill 18 wells;
- To construct 3 dams for reservoirs;
- To provide materials for the construction of 539 houses, 14 classrooms, 2 dispensaries, and four Buddhist temples.
- To build 16 mi of streets for eight villages.

With the fall of Muong Pha Lane on Route 9 in June 1971 and in the continued fighting for Dong Hene, refugee movements in Savannakhet Province increased. By the end of the year, over 5,000 people had moved into the environs of the city of Savannakhet. With the fall of Dong Hene in February 1972, their number had increased to over 12,000. In the interim, the Royal Lao Government reserved an area of 31 sq mi on the Mekong River between Ban Tha Sano and Ban Houa Xang for the resettlement of the refugees from Muong Pha Lane.



Lumber for school construction at Th Sano is cut on a USAID - provided sawmill. BELOW: As land is cleared for sites, refugees gather felled trees to make charcoal to earn extra income.



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Tha Sano: Distributing PL-480 food; (below) one of the three dispensaries.



At present, 999 families live in the 16 villages that make up Tha Sano. The villages are built along a new 14 mi all-weather road which extends through the area. Within the villages, 12 mi of the village streets have been completed of the 24 mi which are planned. As at Seno, each family has a house, a garden plot and 5 acres of farmland. Each village has two drilled wells with four more located near the sites of 24 permanent classrooms under construction. The children of Tha Sano now attend school in 16 temporary classrooms which the refugees have built with bamboo and thatch. Three dispensaries are staffed by Ministry of Health medics and supplied with medicines by USAID.

During the eight months since resettlement of Tha Sano began, USAID dollar expenditures have totalled \$109,470 which cover the cost of equipment used in road construction and well drilling and the purchase of commodities not locally available. Local currency expenditures total Kip 17,119,662 or \$28,297 which cover personnel costs and the purchase of local commodities.

Of the 15,351 refugees in Savannakhet Province, 12,439 fall into the USAID category of Full Support. The people who are in temporary relocation at the Ban That Refugee Reception Center depend entirely on USAID assistance for food. At Tha Sano, the refugees have cleared enough land to plant 66 MT of rice seed; however, the 1972 harvest will not be sufficient to meet all food requirements. The table shows USAID expenditures for the commodities used in relief operations from July 1, 1971 through June 30, 1972, the period of accelerated refugee movement in Savannakhet Province.

COMMODITIES FOR REFUGEE RELIEF

FY 1972

SAVANNAKHET PROVINCE

\$ Thousand

Rice	137.2	^{a/}
PL-480 foods	11.5	^{b/}
Medical supplies	14.4	
Other	23.6	^{c/}
Total	\$ 186.7	

^{a/} Includes transportation costs.

^{b/} Bulgur wheat, WSB, CSM, vegetable oil, noodles.

^{c/} Household utensils, tools, sleeping mats, mosquito nets.



Above: Women at Seno introduce the newest member of the family to noodles : de with PL-480 ingredients.

Upper left: The Asian Christian Services has established a center at Seno to teach refugee girls weaving skills as a source of earning additional income.



Left: To provide water for vegetable gardens and livestock at Seno, dams were constructed to form reservoirs and these "lakes" have now been stocked with fish.

Lower left: A "Water Man" at Ban That Refugee Reception Center transports water from a spring to houses in the Center.

Below: Refugees weave large mats which they sell for side walls of houses being constructed. [September 1972]

