



# FACTS

## REFUGEES IN SOUTHERN LAOS PAKSE

USAID Mission to Laos

# PHOTOGRAPHS

Located at the confluence of the Se Done and Mekong rivers, Pakse is the capital of Se Done Province and the commercial center of southern Laos. The economic resources of the six small provinces that make up this most southern region of Laos exceed those of other provinces. The

land areas are suitable for rice, fruit, and vegetable cultivation, and the region has produced a rice surplus as high as 1,000 MT in one year. The Bolovens Plateau, which covers more than 4,000 sq

km (1,544 sq mi)

is a region with one of the largest agriculture potentials in Laos. Until it came under Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese control in June 1971, Pakse was the center of livestock production, coffee, vegetables, fruit, as well as a limited amount of tea. A road network links the provinces and connects

the region with Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand. The Mekong is navigable from one end of the region to the other.

An estimated 546,000 people live in the six provinces. Of this number, about 320,000 are under Royal Lao Government control, 226,000 under Pathet Lao or North Vietnamese control. Of the total population, about 180,000 are tribal people of whom about 40,000 are under Royal Lao Government control. An estimated

40,000 to 50,000 people in the six provinces have moved under the pressure of war since 1962; however, the resources of the region allowed an assimilation into communities to the extent that by early 1970, refugees numbered 5,000. The situation changed with the fall of Attopeu and Saravane in June 1970 when 15,000 people moved into the environs of Pakse. In the increased military activity of the past two years, the number of refugees has grown until at present they total approximately

28,000 people. Of this number, 8,691 people live in villages on land reserved by the Royal Lao Government for the permanent resettlement of refugees: 3,017 at Houei Nam Phak in the National Forest Reserve, 25 km (16 mi) from Pakse, and 5,674 at Phou Ba Chiang, 12 km (7 mi) from Pakse.

The remaining number are in temporary relocation in the environs of Pakse.

In 1968, when deteriorating security conditions on the Bolovens Plateau prevented establishment of a pilot project in refugee resettlement, the Royal Lao Government authorized the use of 900 hectares (2,223 acres) at Houei Nam Phak in the National Forest Reserve as an alternate site. Houei Nam Phak was originally planned as an experimental project in agriculture and



community development as well as refugee resettlement for 300 families who were either refugees or the families of disabled war veterans. The first 70 families who moved into Houei Nam Phak in April 1969 were selected from among 1,200 applicants after agreement to plant their land for six years and to work cooperatively on community projects. Of the three villages planned, two have been completed, and 214 families now live at Houei Nam Phak. The people are an ethnically diverse group - Lao, Lao Theung, and Souei. Traditionally, each village in Laos is made up of one ethnic group. Houei Nam Phak is an experimental project also in the sense that Lao and Mountain Mon-Khmer people live together in each of the two villages.



Resettlement costs at Houei Nam Phak fall into the two categories of dollar expenditures and local currency expenditures. Dollar expenditures total \$66,566 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 58,621,300 or \$244,255 which cover personnel costs and the purchase of local commodities. <sup>1/</sup> These funds have been used

- To clear 200 hectares (494 acres) of land;
- To drill 3 wells;
- To construct 1 dam;
- To provide materials for the construction of 202 houses, 3 classrooms, 1 dispensary, 1 office building, 1 store for the Houei Nam Phak Cooperative Association;
- To construct 5 km (3 mi) of road.



The Phou Ba Chiang resettlement area lies at the base of the long, low mountain from which it takes its name. The site covers an area of approximately 10,000 hectares (24,700 acres), which is 10 km (6 mi) at its widest point and 15 km (9 mi) long. Phou Ba Chiang is planned for the resettlement of 1,500 families in 15 villages. During the nine months since work began at Phou Ba Chiang, 11 of these villages have been completed and 1,000 families now live in the resettlement area. Resettlement costs to date total

<sup>1/</sup> Kip 240 = \$1.00, the official exchange rate until the unified conversion rate of Kip 605 = \$1.00 was established in April 1972.





ABOVE: At Houei Nam Phak Main road with houses (prefabricated by USAID carpenters and erected by refugees). The center photo shows the school, and at the right is the dispensary which serves the community.

LEFT: At a temporary village along Route 13, a refugee builds a sidewall for a house with leaves and bamboo.

RIGHT: A member of one of the 27 Tau-Oi refugee families who live in a temporary village off Route 13.

BELOW: At Phou Ba Chiang Refugees, who moved out of the settlement, prepare to move back again. Center photo shows road construction and at right a woman works on thatch to make roofing for her house.



\$28,000 which cover the cost of equipment use and purchase of commodities not locally available and Kip 11,300,000 or \$18,677 which cover personnel costs and locally purchased commodities.<sup>2/</sup> These funds have been used

To transport 1,000 families from temporary relocation sites to Phou Ba Chiang;

To construct 11 km (6.8 mi) of a 20 km (12.4 mi) road, 3 of 5 bridges, 1 of 3 small earth dams;

To drill 3 of 20 wells;

To provide nails, thatch roofing and tools for constructing 1,000 houses and 3 dispensaries.

Although located only slightly over seven miles from Pakse, lack of security is a major problem at Phou Ba Chiang. Military activity in and around the resettlement area has three times forced the removal of construction equipment and once the evacuation of refugees. A sense of unease pervades some of the villages in the resettlement area; a few of the refugees leave, but they return. The future of Phou Ba Chiang is uncertain - dependent on security conditions.

Over 19,000 refugees are in temporary relocation sites in the environs of Pakse. Among them are about 10,000 refugees from Khong Se Done, which fell to North Vietnamese forces in May of this year. They are reluctant to return although Khong Se Done has been retaken by Royal Lao Government forces. The refugees live in villages which they have built along Route 13 for a distance as far as 34 km (21 mi) north of Pakse. About 3,000 are located at the site of the Selabam hydroelectric project about 4 mi from Pakse. These refugees and those from Phou Ba Chiang fall into the USAID category of Full Support, which designates the degree of assistance which these refugee groups require. The table shows USAID expend-

itures for commodities used in refugee relief operations among these groups from July 1, 1971 through June 30, 1972.

#### COMMODITIES FOR REFUGEE RELIEF

FY 1972

PAKSE

\$ Thousand

Rice	\$ 143.8 <sup>a/</sup>
Salt	2.0
Canned meat	15.9
PL-480 foodstuffs	3.1
Medical supplies	21.2
Other <sup>b/</sup>	29.4
Total	\$ 215.5

<sup>a/</sup> Includes transportation costs.

<sup>b/</sup> Blankets, mosquito nets, sleeping mats, household utensils, clothing, plastic sheeting, tools.

<sup>2/</sup> Kip 605 = \$1.00, the present official exchange rate. [October, 1972]

Refugees at Reception Center, Pakse

