

Woodson

FACTS ON FOREIGN AID TO LAOS

Supplement No. 1

REFUGEES

Embassy of the United States of America
U.S.A.I.D.
Mission to Laos

June 1, 1971

CATEGORIES OF ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES

The refugee situation in Laos is one of constant change in number of refugees and in the kind and degree of assistance that these refugees need. A refugee movement can increase the number of refugees when people move into that part of Laos under control of the Royal Lao Government; that number can decrease when refugees are captured or isolated by Pathet Lao or North Vietnamese forces. Similarly, a refugee movement can increase the number of refugees in one part of Laos and decrease that number in another. As these population shifts occur, the needs of the refugees change. Harvest of a first crop or relocation in a resettlement area changes the kind and degree of assistance that USAID provides. To report these changes of kind and degree, USAID has established categories that serve as guidelines for allocating its resources; these categories reflect the status of each refugee group.

This Supplement to "Refugees" in Facts on Foreign Aid to Laos has been prepared to describe in detail these categories of assistance, the circumstances that determine the movement of refugees from one category to another, and to respond to requests for further information on those facets of refugee movements in which readers have expressed interest.

Categories of Assistance

USAID assistance to refugees is encompassed in the two broad categories designated Food Support and Rehabilitation Support. These two categories are subdivided in turn to reflect the status of the refugee groups that receive assistance: those refugees who are fully dependent on food and rehabilitation assistance; those who are partially dependent on food and rehabilitation assistance; and those who receive rehabilitation assistance only.

The following terms are defined to delineate the kind and degree of assistance in each category:

Food assistance: provision of any kind of food--rice or a mix of rice and PL-480 foods such as bulgur wheat, corn meal, wheat noodles, or PL-480 commodities only. (In northwestern and central Laos, a protein supplement may be included.)

Fully dependent: These refugees are almost completely dependent on food assistance to obtain the caloric intake necessary to life and health; they obtain a minimal self-help supplement from foraging, growing vegetables, or, in some cases, obtaining in the area a few livestock.

Partially dependent: These refugees grow or obtain enough food to meet a substantial part of their caloric requirements, but to meet full minimal requirements, they must receive additional food, usually from PL-480 sources.

Rehabilitation only: These refugees receive no food assistance, but are recipients of other forms of assistance, which varies from region to region depending on security conditions and on feasibility. Rehabilitation assistance includes as a minimum:

Shelter (plastic sheeting or other roofing),
Medical assistance (medicines and access to local medical technician or, when possible, evacuation of serious cases to a hospital),
Adequate water supply, and
Educational assistance in reestablishing schooling for children.

When a successful harvest enables those refugees who are receiving full or partial food assistance to become self-sufficient in food, they move from the food assistance category to the rehabilitation category if they require further assistance. If they have insufficient food to carry them through to the next harvest (this is frequently the case), they reenter the fully or partially dependent category.

Rehabilitation assistance was established as a second category on November 6, 1970 to reflect more precisely the status of each refugee group assisted. In addition to the minimum, rehabilitation assistance may include commodities such as cooking utensils, seeds, tools, fertilizers, insecticides, breeding stock to replace animals lost by refugees on the move, land clearing for village sites and rice fields, wells, dams, storage basins, fish ponds. Under certain conditions,

technical assistance in agriculture may be provided (for example, where hill-rice farmers move to a paddy-rice area), or training in skills such as carpentry, blacksmithing, weaving when income from agriculture is likely to be insufficient to meet local standards of living.

Figure 1.1 of this Supplement shows the total number of refugees who have received both food and rehabilitation assistance during the period from November 6, 1970 to June 1, 1971. Illustrative of the number of refugees in each category, Fig. 1.2 shows the total number of refugees who received both food and rehabilitation assistance in January 1971 as compared with Fig. 2 on page 106 of Facts on Foreign Aid to Laos which shows the total number of refugees who received food assistance only. Figure 1.3 shows the same geographic breakdown of refugee groups as of June 1, 1971.

Total Self-Sufficiency

The refugee assistance policy of the Royal Lao Government and of USAID specifies that at a given point refugees who have been resettled reach a level of living that is comparable to that of the nonrefugees in the community and at which they are considered adequately integrated into the society and economy of that community. At this point, they are permanently settled in villages and are agriculturally self-sufficient. They have a permanent elementary school, access to water for all necessary purposes, adequate medical services, and usually access by road to the nearest major marketing center. At this point, these groups are classified totally self-sufficient and they are no longer considered refugees.

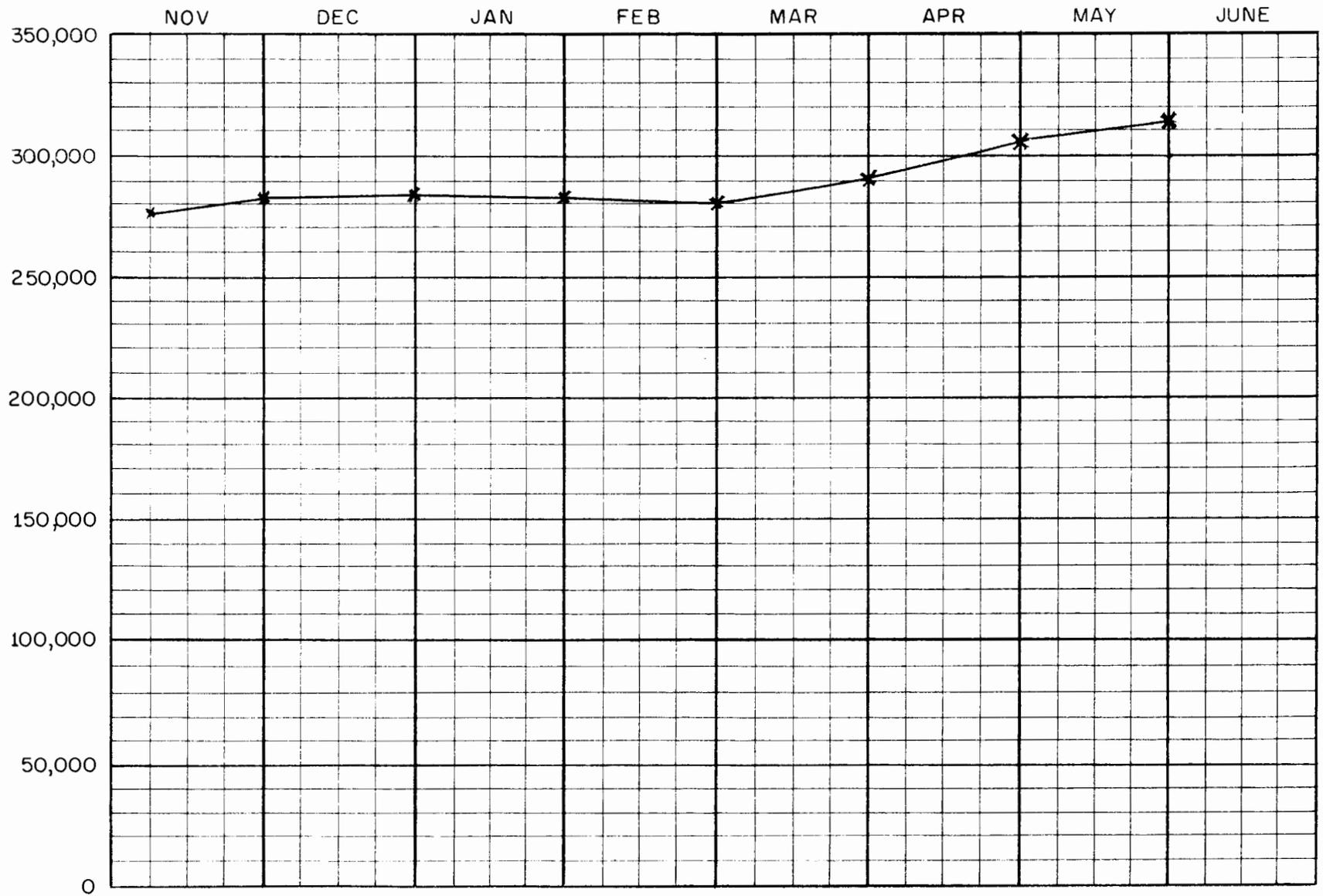
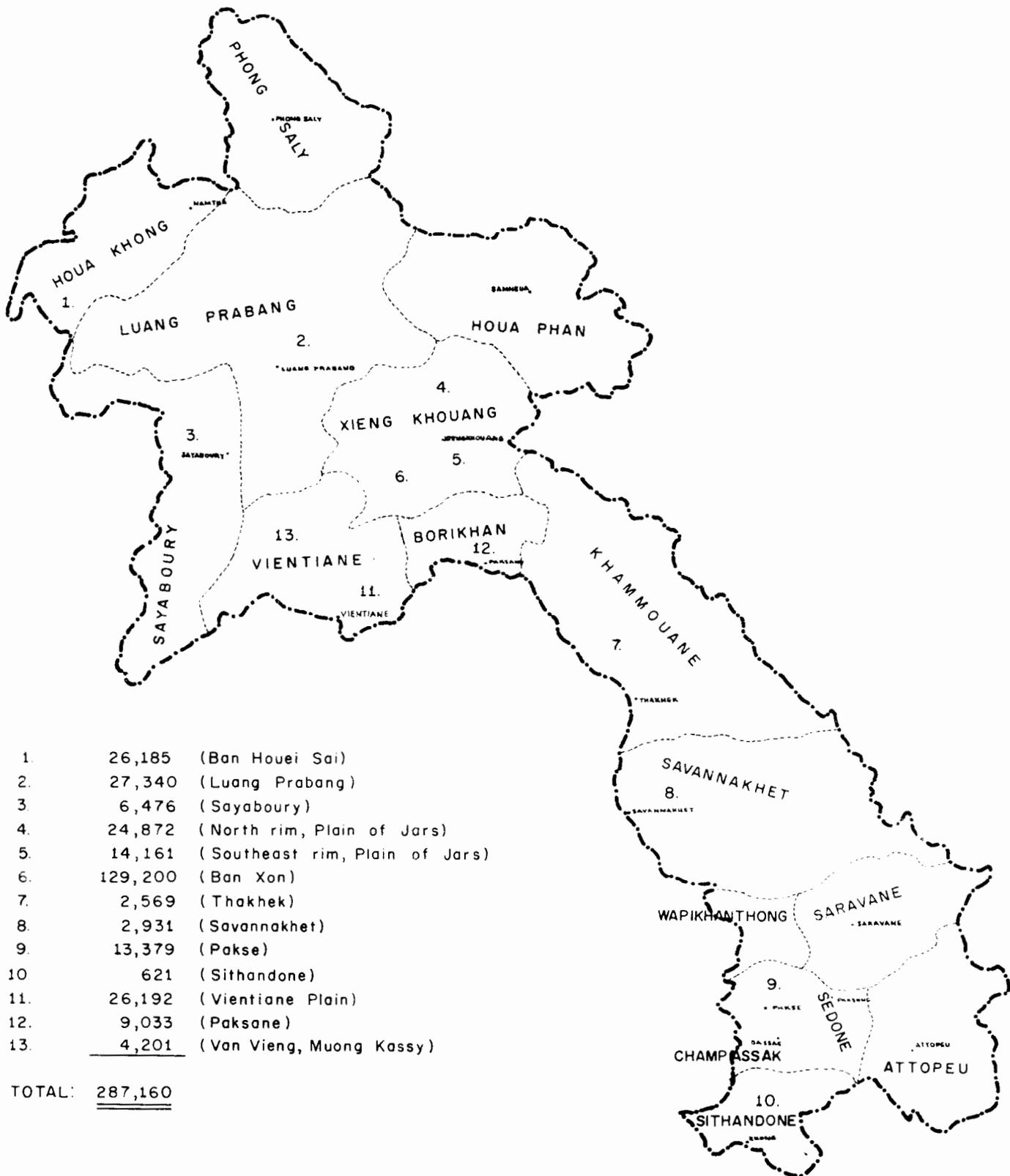


Fig 1.1-- Number of Refugees Receiving Food Support and Rehabilitation Support, Nov. 6, 1970 - June 1, 1971.



| | | |
|-----|---------|--------------------------------|
| 1. | 26,185 | (Ban Houei Sai) |
| 2. | 27,340 | (Luang Prabang) |
| 3. | 6,476 | (Sayaboury) |
| 4. | 24,872 | (North rim, Plain of Jars) |
| 5. | 14,161 | (Southeast rim, Plain of Jars) |
| 6. | 129,200 | (Ban Xon) |
| 7. | 2,569 | (Thakhek) |
| 8. | 2,931 | (Savannakhet) |
| 9. | 13,379 | (Pakse) |
| 10. | 621 | (Sithandone) |
| 11. | 26,192 | (Vientiane Plain) |
| 12. | 9,033 | (Paksane) |
| 13. | 4,201 | (Van Vieng, Muong Kassy) |

TOTAL: 287,160

Fig. 1.2 -- Geographic Location and Number of Refugees Receiving Food Support and Rehabilitation Support, January 1, 1971.

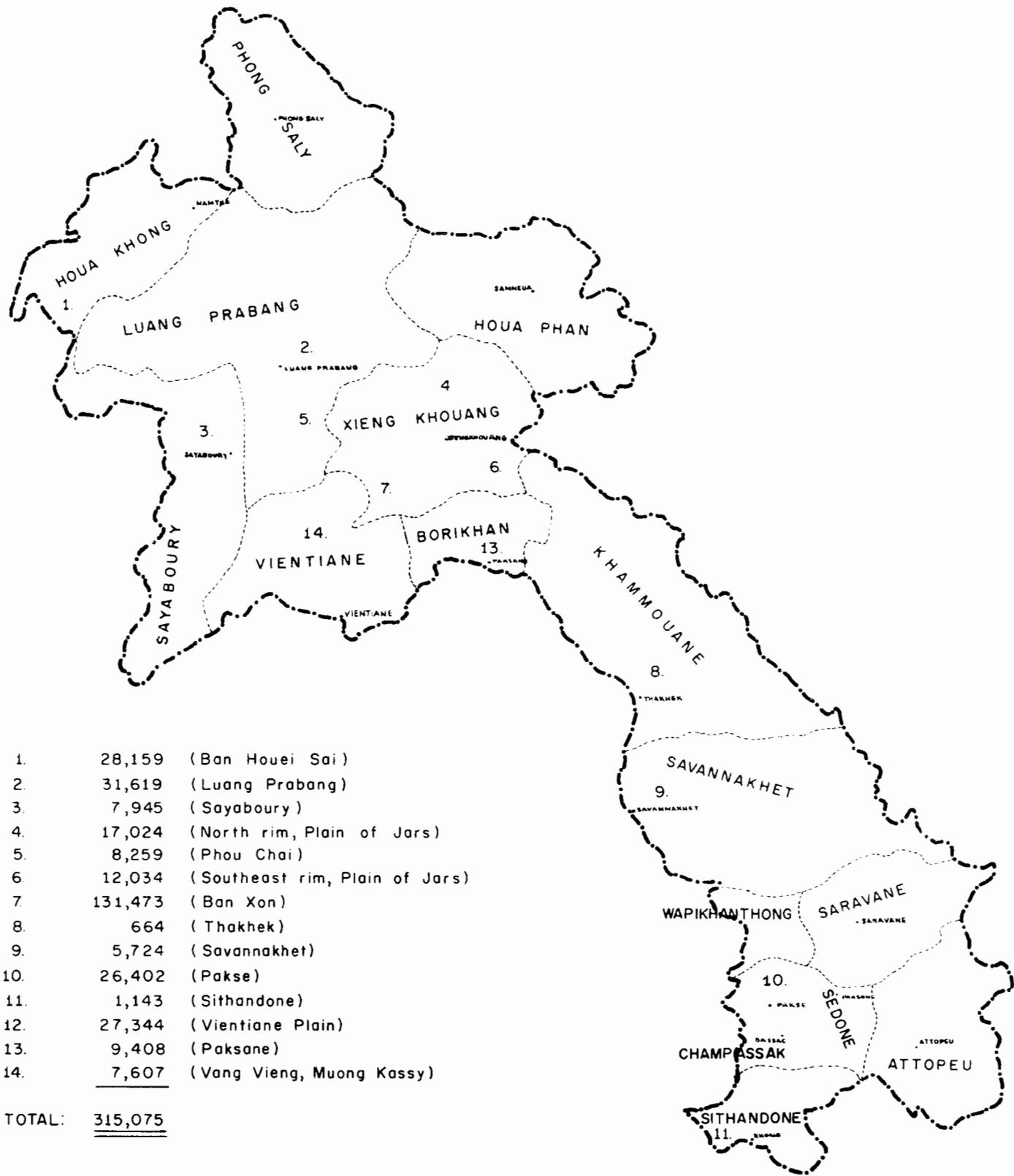


Fig. 1. 3.. Geographic Location and Number of Refugees Receiving Food Support and Rehabilitation Support, June 1, 1971.

PATHET LAO RICE TAX

"The people grew more rice than they had ever grown before, but they had less for themselves. They paid it out in the form of taxes--rice to help the state, trading rice, and rice from the heart."

The Pathet Lao rice tax (noted in Facts on Foreign Aid to Laos, p. 105 as one of the forces that prompt refugee movements) is described in this Supplement in response to a request for further information on the Pathet Lao taxation system. The rice tax is discussed in Life Under the P.L. in the Xieng Khouang Ville Area, Edwin T. McKeithen, USAID Refugee Affairs Officer, December 1969. A brief description of the three kinds of rice tax levied by the Pathet Lao follows:

Rice to help the state: Each member of a family is allowed 100 kilograms of paddy rice tax free. The remainder is taxed at the rate of 15 percent; this "state rice" is put in a public bin in each village.

Trading rice: This tax was put into effect for the 1968 harvest in Xieng Khouang province. Approximately 10 percent of the rice remaining after the "state rice" tax has been paid is bought by a cooperative (purchasing agency and retail outlet) for Kip 27 per kilogram (about 5 cents at the Royal Lao Government free-market rate).

Rice from the heart: This tax, in effect since 1967, is a voluntary contribution solicited from villagers at the time the other taxes are collected. At the time of collection, the purpose is to persuade each villager to exceed his neighbor's or his own contribution of the preceding year. The average for Xieng Khouang appears to be on the order of 10 to 20 kilograms per family, although further contributions are solicited throughout the year as need arises.

Erratum: The fall of Saravane is incorrectly noted on p. 105 as May 1970. Saravane fell to the Pathet Lao on June 9, 1970.