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Between Hope and Insecurity: The Social Consequences of the Cambodian Peace Process

UNRISD Monograph, Geneva 1994
edited by Peter Utting

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Preface

In April 1993, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) held a workshop in Geneva on **The Social Consequences of the Peace Process in Cambodia**. The discussions focused on the impact on the Cambodian economy and society of the large-scale United Nations peace-keeping operation and the dramatic influx of international agencies and personnel which occurred in 1992. They also considered alternative strategies for reconstructing a wartorn economy and civil society, key social problems that require urgent attention, and future research priorities. This volume brings together the papers that were presented at the meeting.

The workshop was a first step towards establishing a new research programme on social development in post-conflict situations. For several years, UNRISD has been co-ordinating research programmes in many parts of the world on a variety of related themes, in particular, the causes of ethnic conflict, the dynamics of political violence, and the return of refugees to their homelands. The idea of launching a new area of research, concerned with generating a better understanding of what happens when wars end, emerged in part out of the findings of these three programmes.

The meeting brought together a diverse range of people involved in peace-keeping and rehabilitation activities. The 40 participants included aid workers, national planners, grassroots and human rights activists, as well as representatives of academic institutions, multilateral organizations and national and international NGOs.

The workshop provided an opportunity for the participants to talk openly about their experiences, hopes and frustrations. Some of the discussions were very disturbing, both because they involved accounts of awful events and because they revealed the ineffectiveness of many initiatives of international agencies to end suffering and assist those who have survived.

Inevitably there were some fundamental disagreements about interpretations of particular events and of appropriate ways forward, but it became clear that there was knowledge available about what might be done to improve the effectiveness of international interventions to secure peace. However, the discussions also revealed the pressing need for further research in this field on a range of key issues, such as post-conflict economic strategy, the social consequences of troop demobilization, the socio-psychological effects of war, appropriate forms of foreign aid and delivery mechanisms, and the roles and responsibilities of different types of local, national and international institutions involved in processes of rehabilitation and reconstruction.

I hope that this report will be read by a wide international audience, for it exposes a number of serious problems which require urgent attention.

December 1993

Dharam Ghai
Director

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Between Hope and Insecurity: The Social Consequences of the Cambodian Peace Process contains papers presented at a workshop of the same title sponsored by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD). Financing for the workshop and the publication of this volume was provided by the Danish government via DANIDA. Wendy Salvo and Josephine Grin-Yates contributed indispensable administrative assistance for the project. The fact that the project was launched in the first place owes much to the initiative and commitment of Eva Arnvig.

The authors would also like to thank all the participants in the workshop for their comments and to express their appreciation to Jenifer Freedman, Rhonda Gibbes and Usha Tankha for editorial assistance, and to Anita Tombez for secretarial support.

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Grant Curtis is a political scientist with work experience in northern Canada, West Africa and Cambodia. He was resident in Cambodia from 1987 through 1993, as a Senior Programme Officer with UNTAC's Rehabilitation Component, as Assistant Resident Representative with UNDP, and as a consultant for the Swedish International Development Authority, UNICEF and Save the Children Fund Australia. He is currently at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. He is the author of **Cambodia: A Country Profile**, a report prepared for the Swedish International Development Authority in 1989.

E.V.K. FitzGerald is an economist specializing in international finance. He is Director of Financial Studies at Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford University, and Professorial Fellow of St. Antony's College; and also Visiting Professor of Development Economics at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague. Since 1989, Dr. FitzGerald has been working on the economic problems of transition in Cambodia, and has a long-standing interest in the reconstruction of "war economies" in the developing world. His most recent book is **The Macroeconomics of Development Finance** (Macmillan, 1993).

Vance Geiger is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Anthropology at the University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida. He received his MA in Anthropology in 1988 and BA in Psychology in 1978. From 1988 to 1990, he conducted research on South-East Asian refugees for the Philippine Refugee Processing Center (PRPC) in Bataan, Philippines. Other international experience includes serving in the Peace Corps in Papua New Guinea and the Philippines. In 1992, he spent several months conducting field work in Cambodia.

Eva Mysliwiec obtained degrees in sociology and agriculture and has spent the past 20 years involved in emergency rehabilitation and development work in West Africa and Cambodia. During the 1980s, she directed humanitarian aid operations in Cambodia for several NGO organizations. Immediately after the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge, she co-ordinated emergency rehabilitation and development projects in health, agriculture, industry and sanitation. She is currently director of the Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI), a centre for human resources development and training which she founded in 1990. She is the author of **Punishing the Poor: The International Isolation of Kampuchea** (Oxfam, 1988) which became the basis of an international campaign launched in 1988 to change world policy towards Cambodia.

Peter Utting is a sociologist who has done extensive research on development issues in Central America and post-revolutionary Third World societies. Based in Nicaragua for 12 years, he is currently a research co-ordinator at the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) in Geneva where he directs two research programmes on Rebuilding Wartorn Societies and Socio-Political Dimensions of Environmental Protection Schemes. His recent publications include **Economic Adjustment under the Sandinistas** (UNRISD, 1991), **Economic Reform and Third-World Socialism** (Macmillan, 1992) and **Trees, People and Power** (Earthscan, 1993).

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ARC	American Refugee Committee
CARERE	Cambodian Reconstruction and Rehabilitation programme
CCC	Cooperation Committee for Cambodia
CCSDPT	Committee for Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand
CDRI	Cambodia Development Resource Institute
CGDK	Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea
CIDSE	Coopération internationale pour le développement et la solidarité
CLO	Cambodian Liaison Officer
CMAC	Cambodian Mine Action Center
CMEA	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
CoCom	Coordinating Committee
COERR	Catholic Office for Emergency Refugee Relief
CPAF	Cambodian People's Armed Forces
CPP	Cambodian People's Party
CRC	Cambodian Red Cross
DCG	Donor Consultative Group
ECPAT	End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
EVI	especially vulnerable individual
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FHH	female-headed household
FUNCINPEC	Front uni national pour un Cambodge indépendant neutre pacifique et coopératif (United National Front for an Independent, Neutral, Pacific and Co-operative Cambodia)
ICMC	International Catholic Migration Commission
ICORC	International Committee for the Reconstruction of Cambodia
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	internally displaced person
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KPNLF	Khmer People's National Liberation Front
MCRRC	Ministerial Conference on Rehabilitation and Reconstruction in Cambodia
MFHH	male/female-headed household
MHD	Malteser Hilfsdienst
MHH	male-headed household
MSA	mission subsistence allowance
NGO	non-governmental organization
NOVIB	Netherlands Organization for International Development
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PDK	Party of Democratic Kampuchea
PRK	People's Republic of Kampuchea
PSA/WHO	Programme on Substance Abuse/World Health Organization
PTSD	post-traumatic stress disorder
QIP	quick impact project
SNC	Supreme National Council
SOC	State of Cambodia
TOKTEN	Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals

UNAMIC	United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia
UNBRO	United Nations Border Relief Operation
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDCP	United Nations International Drug Control Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
WFP	World Food Programme
YWAM	Youth with a Mission

Opening Quotations

***“There will be no peace without development,
and no development without peace.”***

Sergio Vieira de Mello,
Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,
Director of the UNTAC Repatriation Component¹

***“What is going to happen to us in two months,
when our food [ration] runs out? We still have
no land to farm, and I cannot find work.”***

Returning refugee, resettlement village, Battambang, Cambodia²

***“To understand the meaning of this time
we do well to see it through the
experiences and aspirations of ordinary
Cambodians. Then our questions change.
We ask about ways they see to ease
suffering and contribute to peace.
We face the fact that
we do not know so many answers.”***

Joan Healy, Overseas Service Bureau Australia³

¹ Cited in Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1993.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

1. Introduction: Linking Peace and Rehabilitation in Cambodia⁴ — Peter Utting

Since 1990, the United Nations has been called upon to intervene in numerous countries around the world to make peace, keep peace and engage in post-conflict “peace-building” (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). By mid-1993, more than 80,000 United Nations forces were involved in 14 peace-keeping operations (United Nations, 1993a).⁵ Not only has the number of such operations increased dramatically in recent years but so too have the scope and complexity of peace-keeping missions (Berdal, 1993). No longer is the United Nations expected to act simply as a buffer or mediator between warring parties. Rather its mandate in contemporary conflict situations is also likely to encompass activities related to democratic transition, emergency humanitarian relief, the repatriation of refugees, disarmament and demobilization, the promotion of human rights, economic and social rehabilitation and mine clearance.

Figure 1.1: Key Dates	
1969-1973:	United States bombing of Cambodian territory
1970:	Military coup and commencement of civil war
1975-1978:	Pol Pot régime
Late 1978:	Vietnamese invasion to overthrow Pol Pot régime and establish new government
1982:	Non-Communist and Khmer Rouge forces form opposition coalition and government in exile, recognized by the United Nations and headed by Prince Norodom Sihanouk
1982:	International aid embargo imposed
1982 to present:	Low intensity civil war
December 1987:	Meeting of Prince Norodom Sihanouk and Prime Minister Hun Sen marks formal commencement of the peace process
1989:	Vietnamese troops commence withdrawal from Cambodia
1989:	Hun Sen government officially embarks on transition to a market economy
23 October 1991:	Paris Peace Agreements signed
March 1992:	UNTAC deployed
23-26 May 1993:	Elections for constituent assembly
21 September 1993:	Constituent assembly ratifies draft constitution which re-established a monarchy
September-November 1993:	UNTAC withdraws from Cambodia

One of the largest interventions of this kind ever mounted took place in Cambodia during 1992 and 1993. Four months after the signing of the **Agreements on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict** on 23 October 1991, the Security Council established the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) to oversee a peace process which aimed to close a particularly tragic chapter of Cambodia’s history. During the previous 22 years, the country had experienced prolonged periods of saturation bombing, brutal totalitarian rule, international isolation, occupation by foreign forces and civil war. The United Nations operation lasted 21 months, cost over 2 billion US dollars⁶ and involved more than 20,000 peace-keeping, security and civilian personnel.

This book examines what happens to a society when numerous international agencies, foreign peace-keeping troops and civilian personnel suddenly intervene; and considers the appropriateness of the approaches employed by the international community for promoting post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction. The following five chapters focus on the Cambodian experience but address questions which are highly relevant for international efforts to promote peace and rehabilitation in other wartorn societies. For example:

⁴ The author would like to thank Tim Allen, Yusuf Bangura, Solon Barraclough, Grant Curtis, Valpy FitzGerald, Dharam Ghai and Susanne Wise for their comments and criticisms.

⁵ This was more than the number carried out during the entire 40-year period from 1948 to 1988 (United Nations, 1993b:2; Clements, 1993:10).

⁶ All references to dollars are to US dollars.

- How can large-scale international interventions serve to reactivate processes of economic growth without seriously distorting the economy and resulting in highly skewed patterns of resource allocation?
- How can such operations take place without contributing to major social problems, marginalizing the host population in decision-making processes and weakening essential public services and community institutions?
- Should aid budgets be increasingly earmarked for short-term humanitarian relief when such aid detracts from longer term development assistance, does little to build local capacities and is targeted to a relatively small percentage of the population in need?

In the aftermath of a series of positive developments on the political front in 1993⁷ and in the light of United Nations difficulties in Angola, Bosnia and Somalia, much of world opinion has been quick to label the United Nations operation in Cambodia “a success”. The following chapters, however, refer to the more problematic side of the Cambodia operation. The authors focus less on political developments and more on economic and social aspects associated with the peace process. They reveal that the record of the United Nations and other major international players in the Cambodian peace process is somewhat chequered with several notable achievements but also serious shortcomings.

UNTAC brought an end to the country’s international isolation and facilitated access to foreign aid and technical assistance. It stimulated trade, construction, infrastructural repairs, employment generation, training and investment in new private enterprise activities. Two programmes in particular — the repatriation of refugees and the organization of elections — achieved their objectives and have been widely acclaimed for their efficacy. UNTAC promoted a number of reforms of the fiscal régime and certain measures to regulate the privatization process of state assets, stimulate savings and curtail price rises in certain essential products (R. Davies, 1993a). It should also be recognized that under extremely difficult and often dangerous circumstances, many peace-keeping troops — United Nations volunteers and civilian staff, plus other international agency personnel — played a constructive and selfless role in attempting to bring about a peaceful and democratic transition in Cambodia.

The two most obvious failings of the transition period⁸ were the inability to secure peace and address the pressing socio-economic needs of the bulk of the country’s population. The UNTAC era was in fact marked by increasing levels of conflict between two of the four Cambodian factions which signed the peace accords, namely, the State of Cambodia (SOC) and the Khmer Rouge. By the time elections were held in May 1993, the Khmer Rouge army controlled between 15 and 20 per cent of national territory — much more than when they signed the Paris Peace Agreements.⁹ The period also witnessed increased levels of hardship

⁷ Such developments include the holding of elections in May 1993, the adoption of a new constitution in September and the establishment of a legitimate government.

⁸ The term “transition period” is used throughout this introduction to refer to the two-year period from the signing of the Paris accords in October 1991 to the withdrawal of UNTAC from Cambodia in November 1993.

⁹ The chapters in this volume do not attempt to assess the military dimension of the UNTAC operation. UNTAC was severely criticized in many quarters, particularly the media, for not “getting tough” with the Khmer Rouge. If getting tough meant engaging the Khmer Rouge in military action, then the insistence of the UNTAC authorities that they were in Cambodia to keep peace rather than enforce it was probably correct (see interview with Gen. Sanderson, **Phnom Penh Post**, 24 September - 7 October 1993:4,5,15). Events in Somalia have revealed the disastrous consequences which can arise when peace-keepers attempt to get tough with a particular faction. Despite their territorial strength, the Khmer Rouge were unable to disrupt the elections as they had promised. Nearly 90 per cent of the electorate turned out to vote. Moreover, following the elections, a significant number of cadres began to defect.

for much of the population, including a marked deterioration in security due to increased military activity as well as growing banditry and crime. The sudden influx of international agencies, assistance and personnel led to major distortions in the economy and contributed to the rise of new social problems.

The roots of some of the economic and social problems addressed in the following chapters can be traced to the process of economic liberalization which commenced during the late 1980s, partly as a pre-condition to a negotiated political settlement. In fact, the UNTAC operation was but one aspect of a broader process of opening up the economy to international forces. Some of the problems described below are similar to those found in other underdeveloped economies experiencing the transition from a centrally planned to a market economy and/or economic stabilization and structural adjustment (see Irvin, 1993).

That many problems would arise during the transition period was, of course, to be expected given the urgency, enormity and complexity of the task which UNTAC had to assume and the limited experience of the United Nations in mounting mega peace-keeping operations. Under the terms of the Paris Peace Agreements, UNTAC, in collaboration with various specialized agencies of the United Nations, was supposed to oversee the process of demilitarization and cease-fire verification; maintain law and order; guarantee a neutral political environment by controlling the activities of numerous public agencies and offices; organize elections; repatriate 370,000 refugees in the space of 13 months; foster an environment conducive to the respect of human rights; oversee the country's rehabilitation and reconstruction by identifying needs, mobilizing foreign aid, co-ordinating donor assistance and monitoring the rehabilitation process; and mount major civic education campaigns in such areas as human rights, landmine awareness and electoral matters.

UNTAC was also constrained by the politics of the peace process which militated against the *de facto* government,¹⁰ controlled by one of the Cambodian factions given its original leanings towards Viet Nam. UNTAC was placed in the extremely difficult position of having to address the country's most pressing economic and social needs in a neutral way, without favouring any one faction. A strict interpretation of the UNTAC mandate prevented the channelling of assistance through existing public structures, or in any way strengthening such structures.

Politics intervened in several other ways. Large amounts of foreign assistance were pledged by donors but not disbursed during the transition period. Types of aid were often determined more on the basis of donor preferences than on accurate assessments of Cambodia's needs and priorities. Inter-agency or inter-donor tensions or competition also complicated matters. UNTAC had little success in defining the operational relationships between and among United Nations agencies, or among donor countries, involved in the rehabilitation process.

Certain regional forces, notably powerful interests within Thailand, fostered an environment which undermined prospects for peace and rehabilitation by providing ongoing support to the Khmer Rouge, investing in certain types of economic activities which had damaging environmental and social effects, and fuelling problems of corruption and bribery (Jennar, 1992 and 1993).

UNTAC's ability to secure peace and promote rehabilitation was also undermined by local politics, notably the decision of the Khmer Rouge to boycott the peace process. UNTAC's mandate prevented it from actually enforcing compliance with the peace accords and, while considerable effort was made to bring the Khmer Rouge into the process, such attempts ultimately proved futile. Furthermore, UNTAC was constrained by the failure of the

¹⁰ The government was known as the State of Cambodia (SOC).

leadership of the different factions to work for national reconciliation. This was particularly evident in the proceedings of the Supreme National Council (SNC) where major decisions on policy matters were supposed to be ratified by leading representatives of the Cambodian factions. Although the peace accords granted the Secretary-General's Special Representative in Cambodia the final say in decisions which affected their implementation, the constraints of local politics clearly frustrated UNTAC's attempts to fulfil its mandate.

The blame for the multiple economic and social problems which characterized the transition period, therefore, cannot simply be laid at the door of the United Nations and other international organizations and bilateral donors. But the way in which such actors went about their business in Cambodia certainly contributed to many serious problems. What is particularly disturbing is that this pattern of intervention may have served to transform the Cambodian economy and society in such a way as to distort or undermine the development process for many years to come.

All the following chapters raise extremely delicate questions concerning the role of the international community in Cambodia. These issues are presented here in order to stimulate discussion, debate and inquiry. Many are of relevance to other countries experiencing the transition from war to peace and it is vital that lessons be drawn from the Cambodian experience. As noted by Dharam Ghai in the preface to the UNRISD report, **Rebuilding Wartorn Societies**:

“one thing is painfully clear: the international community needs to think long and hard about the way in which it is attempting to forge peace and a new future in wartorn societies” (UNRISD, 1993a).

The Chapter Contents

The following five chapters examine the role of UNTAC and other international actors in the field of economic and social rehabilitation. Chapter 2, by Grant Curtis, provides a general backdrop for understanding Cambodia's recent history, the social situation in the country, the role of UNTAC in the peace process and the constraints which prevented the United Nations from fulfilling its mandate in the field of rehabilitation. He describes the numerous social and economic problems that have emerged in recent years and considers the various ways in which both internal and external players in the peace process contributed to these problems.

Chapter 3, by E.V.K. FitzGerald, focuses more on the economic impact of the mega peace-keeping operation and, in particular, its distortionary effects on the labour market, public administration and price system. He highlights the degree of fragility of the Cambodian economy and maintains that more consideration should have been given to the distortionary and destabilizing impacts of a large international presence. UNTAC expenditures, he argues, should have attempted to reduce the distortionary impacts of aid and the vulnerability of the economy by training personnel and providing capital equipment to increase both the productive and administrative capacities of the economy. FitzGerald also questions the assumptions and feasibility of certain World Bank policies for rehabilitation and reconstruction during the post-UNTAC period.

Chapter 4, by Eva Mysliwiec, provides a comprehensive analysis of the changing roles of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction. Since the early 1980s, NGOs have played a vital role in alleviating the suffering of important sectors of the population and in relinking Cambodia to the outside world. Mysliwiec traces the history of NGO involvement in the country and examines the strengths and weaknesses of these organizations. Particular attention is focused on the tensions and opportunities which characterized NGO relations with the State of Cambodia régime and large bi/multilateral donors, as well as on the limited participation of Cambodians in decision-making processes related to project design and implementation.

Chapters 5 and 6, by Eva Arnvig and Vance Geiger respectively, focus on the situation of specific social groups, namely women, children and refugees. Arnvig describes the difficult socio-economic and psychological situation affecting many women and children in Cambodia. She examines a number of disturbing trends relating to prostitution, HIV/AIDS infection, street children and the trade and use of illicit narcotic drugs which have emerged or intensified in recent years. In connection with some of these problems and the deterioration of relations between UNTAC and the host population, she points an accusing finger at the behaviour of certain peace-keeping and security personnel and at the United Nations authorities for not having taken firm and timely measures to improve the situation.

Arnvig also examines some of the difficulties facing refugee women and children who were repatriated to Cambodia. She focuses, in particular, on problems of psychological disorder, how these affected the process of reintegration and the lack of attention given to such aspects by the different agencies involved in the repatriation programme.

Vance Geiger assesses in some depth the programme to repatriate over a third of a million refugees located in camps on the Thai-Cambodian border. He examines the extent to which the programme upheld one of the basic international principles governing the return of refugees to their countries of origin, namely, that repatriation should be voluntary. He then considers the way in which various cultural, socio-economic and psychological conditions influenced the ease or difficulty with which returnees reintegrated and rebuilt their lives.

The original papers which formed the basis of these chapters were commissioned for a workshop organized by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) in April 1993.¹¹ The papers were intended to identify problems associated with the Cambodian peace process that require in-depth research. Several of the points and criticisms raised in the chapters should therefore be interpreted more as well-grounded hypotheses rather than as the definitive findings of systematic research. Because of the seriousness of the issues raised, however, and the importance of stimulating debate and reflection on the role of the United Nations in peace-keeping and rebuilding wartorn societies, it was decided to publish the papers in a revised form. The main issues raised in the five chapters may be summarized in terms of two broad sets of problems, namely, the distortionary effects of foreign assistance and the UNTAC presence, and the nature of social problems that emerged or intensified during the transition period.

Distortions and Imbalances

Perhaps the most glaring imbalance that characterized the peace process was the contrast between the sheer volume of expenditures and aid which was committed or pledged and what was actually achieved in terms of rehabilitation and reconstruction. The UNTAC operation involved local expenditures in the region of 500 million dollars. UNTAC also mobilized considerable donor support to assist Cambodia's reconstruction. At the Tokyo Conference on Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Cambodia in June 1992, donor governments and international organizations pledged approximately 800 million dollars for rehabilitation activities.

¹¹ Draft versions of the chapters were commissioned as papers for a workshop on **The Social Consequences of the Peace Process in Cambodia** held in Geneva on 29-30 April 1993. The workshop brought together 40 participants from a diverse range of institutions and walks of life, including representatives of several Cambodian organizations and international NGOs, officials from UNTAC and other bi/multilateral agencies active in Cambodia and several researchers.

Skewed growth

The sudden influx of international agencies, foreign personnel and external aid led to fairly high rates of economic growth but also to a growth process that was extremely skewed. There was a dramatic boom in service sector activities serving primarily foreign residents and organizations in the major urban centres, notably the capital, Phnom Penh. This led to a significant expansion in urban employment opportunities and also a “skilling up” of the labour force as many Cambodians took advantage of improved employment opportunities by acquiring training in such areas as secretarial support, administration, computer literacy, foreign languages and finance (UNTAC, 1992: 12).

While the urban boom was characterized by a number of positive developments in terms of infrastructural repairs, capacity building, employment generation and training, it benefited only a small percentage of the national population in what is essentially an agrarian economy.¹² Moreover, it had the effect of undermining the rehabilitation of other sectors. The chapters by both FitzGerald and Curtis reveal that this pattern of growth served to weaken crucial sectors of the economy, the public administration and social services.

Resources were diverted away from key activities. Skilled and professional Cambodians moved out of low paid public sector employment into relatively high paid jobs with international agencies and the private sector. This “brain drain” had an extremely debilitating effect on the public administration and the provision of essential services such as health and education. Furthermore, it involved a process of “deprofessionalization” — cases, for example, of doctors or medical assistants abandoning their areas of specialization to work as translators or drivers.

The diversion of resources was also apparent in the area of economic investment. The corollary of the concentration of private investment in urban-based service sector activities was the virtual absence of investment in productive sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing. As FitzGerald points out, the increase in demand for urban-based service sector activities and the influx into the country of cheap imports resulted in a situation where there was little or no incentive for investors to move into, or remain in, production projects in such sectors as agriculture. In such a context, it was vital for international aid agencies and the State of Cambodia government to support the rehabilitation of the agricultural sector. The priorities of many agencies, however, lay elsewhere, while the capacity of the public administration to provide support services crumbled throughout the transition period.

The UNTAC presence led to the rapid growth of urban service sector activities (shops, hotels, restaurants, nightclubs, massage parlours, brothels) of the type generally undertaken by entrepreneurs seeking quick profits. What emerged was a largely uncontrolled pattern of private investment associated not only with speculative profits but also bribery and corruption. Nor was there much attempt to develop appropriate laws or an effective regulatory framework. Such a situation has important implications for the country’s longer term development prospects, for it involved a particular mindset and types of economic and extra-economic practices (for example, corruption) that have become deeply rooted and cannot be simply corrected by a few decrees. As Curtis points out:

“elements of Cambodian society ... now have a vested interest in maintaining such uncontrolled practices, and their correction, not to speak of elimination, will be a long, complicated and costly process for the newly elected government”.

¹² Demographic data are extremely unreliable in Cambodia but it is estimated that roughly 10 per cent of the population lives in urban areas.

Inflation

UNTAC expenditures contributed to major price rises for specific commodities, notably accommodation, urban land and certain types of skilled labour. On the question of inflation, UNTAC adopted a somewhat defensive position (UNTAC, 1992), claiming, as Curtis observes, that its impact had been minimal and restricted primarily to the capital. Instead the finger of blame was pointed at the SOC government which sought to finance or reduce the budget deficit through mechanisms which had a damaging impact on living levels and longer term development prospects. As Curtis points out, one response was to obtain revenues by overexploiting Cambodia's forests and certain other natural resources. Another was simply to print money. This contributed significantly to high rates of inflation which averaged approximately 120 per cent per annum between 1990 and 1992.

FitzGerald warns, however, of naïvely blaming the SOC administration for printing too much money to cover state expenditures. In the debate as to who was responsible for inflation, there has been a tendency to ignore one of the root causes of the problem, namely, the rupture of aid flows from the Soviet Union — notably oil which had provided important state revenues when resold. As FitzGerald observes, no mechanism was put in place to replace this “model” or source of financing. Without budgetary support it was inevitable that deficit spending would ensue and generate inflationary pressures. Moreover, a fairly large part of these expenditures covered the costs of maintaining a large army given the fact that the Khmer Rouge boycotted the peace process and continued to engage in hostilities.

Efforts by UNTAC to impose a degree of fiscal discipline led to some important reforms in the tax system but, as FitzGerald suggests, also appear to have resulted in further reductions in already inadequate levels of government expenditure. This led to a significant reduction in capital investment and social expenditures, witnessed, for example, in the sharp decline in public health and education services. It also resulted in a decline in the real wages of civil servants and related problems of corruption, absenteeism and “moonlighting”.

It could be argued that the principle of “neutrality” which prevented UNTAC from channelling significant assistance through any one faction was in effect violated by allowing public services to deteriorate sharply and human suffering to increase. Certain factions clearly stood to gain from this situation. As FitzGerald observes, such a development “materially affected (albeit unintentionally) the election result itself”.¹³

Types of aid

Chronic distortions or imbalances were reflected not only in patterns of private investment and the labour market but also in the content of foreign assistance programmes and forms of aid allocation. There are a number of aspects to the distortionary effects of aid.

The country was ill-prepared for the sudden influx of international agencies and foreign aid which occurred during 1991 and 1992. Both Curtis and Mysliwiec reveal the numerous problems that arose in this connection. There was little effective co-ordination of assistance projects and programmes. Numerous projects were hastily designed and implemented without an adequate assessment of local needs and resource availability, as well as the macro- and micro-level impacts that projects were likely to have. Activities undertaken by incoming agencies often served to weaken or replace, rather than strengthen, local capacities.

¹³ The elections were won by the royalist FUNCINPEC party, led by Prince Norodom Ranariddh, which received 45 per cent of the votes and 58 seats in the 120-seat constituent assembly. The Cambodian People's Party (CPP), led by the State of Cambodia Prime Minister Hun Sen, received 38 per cent of the votes (51 seats).

A common feature of peace-keeping operations around the world has been the emphasis on short-term humanitarian relief aid, often at the expense of longer term development assistance or efforts to strengthen local capacities. Cambodia was no exception to this rule. Such situations arise partly from the objective conditions of human suffering and the sense of urgency surrounding any peace-keeping operation. They are also reinforced by elements within the media which dramatize and package events in such a way as to foster short-term responses on the part of donor governments and agencies. Politics, too, can play its part when donors opt for forms of aid that are highly visible, good for domestic or international image, but not necessarily the most appropriate for the rehabilitation of the recipient country.

In Cambodia, the imbalances associated with humanitarian aid were compounded in social and spatial terms by the fact that a large proportion of aid was directed towards a relatively small sector of the population, namely, returning refugees and displaced persons, the vast majority of whom were situated in just three of Cambodia's 21 provinces located in the north-west of the country. A significant proportion of aid was also concentrated in and around Phnom Penh. Meanwhile much of the population in need, particularly in provinces in the south and east of the country, received very little assistance.

At the same time the vast majority of the population had to endure a decline in access to essential public services. As noted above, the latter deteriorated significantly during the transition period due to the internal "brain drain" and because international agencies failed to provide budgetary support to the State of Cambodia government, as the largest of the four administrations. Support to the existing administrations had been a specific component of the Secretary-General's May 1992 international appeal for rehabilitation assistance. However, when a World Bank loan was finally proposed in early 1993, its adoption was blocked by the FUNCINPEC faction which went on to win the elections. FitzGerald argues, however, that more should and could have been done to support essential public services:

"Although it is true that UNTAC was not authorized to give financial support to the State of Cambodia government, it could be argued that the United Nations system, either directly or indirectly (through the actions of NGOs or bilateral donors), could have acted so as to ensure sufficient external support to maintain minimal levels of health, education and utilities during the 1991-1993 period without undue political bias. The fact that the main beneficiaries of such facilities would be the poorer strata of Cambodian society made this an essentially humanitarian issue".

Lack of Cambodian participation

One of the most worrying effects of the influx of foreign agencies was the tendency for Cambodians to be crowded out of decision-making processes associated with their country's development. Curtis even suggests that Cambodia may have lost its sovereignty and sense of self-direction. There is now a danger:

"that Cambodia may rather blindly follow a path that does not correspond to the country's development priorities and is unlikely to be in the best interests of the country and its people".

This situation arose partly as a result of objective conditions associated with the shortage of trained Cambodians, the limited capacity to absorb large amounts of aid, weak planning and management infrastructure and the absence of a central Cambodian aid co-ordination mechanism. Moreover, at the local level, many communities were "poorly organized, weakly administered and lacking in a sense of solidarity" (Crisp and Mayne, 1993:20).

Political considerations also played a part. The question of UNTAC neutrality served to restrict consultation with Cambodians in the decision-making and design process associated with rehabilitation programmes and projects. Some agencies and bilateral donors were insensitive to the question of Cambodian participation or considered that the urgency of the situation justified taking short cuts. Mysliwiec makes the point that:

“the pressures of large-scale, bi/multilateral funding dictate the demand for quick impact projects and visibility at the expense of developing relationships and processes that ensure Cambodian participation”.

As a result of this situation, the types of actions proposed by foreign agencies often conformed more to donor agendas and priorities than to those of the Cambodian people. Many international agencies by-passed or did little to strengthen local institutions which could have played an important role in the reconstruction process. Mysliwiec observes that many foreign agencies operating in Cambodia were largely ignorant of traditional forms of social organization and relations in Cambodian society, of how much had changed and what remained. Such knowledge, she argues, is crucial:

“Cambodian society and culture are characterized by complex moral codes and hierarchical relationships. Recognition or neglect of these aspects may account for the success or failure of various projects”.

Little was known, for example, of the roles played by different types of healers commonly found in Cambodian villages, be they traditional healers (*kruu*), Buddhist monks or female mediums (*ruup*) (Eisenbruch, 1992:284). Neither was there much understanding of the importance of specific types of social relations in defining local level structures of status, power and social support. These have been described by one anthropologist in the following terms:

“Khmer society is organized around followers attaching themselves to persons of higher status. These patrons then take care of their followers. The groups which form around individual patrons are not united as groups, but linked by personal ties to the individual patron. These relationships are constantly in a state of flux. People can change from one patron to another, or may use different patron contacts to accomplish different specific tasks. Similarly patrons may rise or fall depending on whether or not they can really provide the goods and services that their clients need” (Ledgerwood, 1992:4).

Lack of knowledge of such aspects resulted in the typical errors which characterize top-down approaches to development the world over. Knowledge of local customs and social relations is crucial both for ensuring that projects respond to local needs and for securing the active and sustained participation of potential beneficiaries. Furthermore, such customs and relations often provide the key for understanding the coping strategies and healing processes which enable people to deal with the type of suffering and trauma associated with war, poverty and uprootedness.

Mysliwiec points out that Cambodians were often treated more as victims than participants or partners by bilateral and multilateral agencies. Information, technology and expertise were concentrated in such agencies. The hundreds of fact-finding missions which poured into the country rarely involved Cambodians as team members. Mission reports or findings were rarely reviewed with local officials or distributed widely in Cambodia, let alone translated into Khmer.

Volunteers and NGOs

There were two agencies or types of organizations that to some extent acted, or could have acted, as a bridge between local Cambodians and bilateral or multilateral agencies, namely United Nations Volunteers and NGOs.

Some 674 United Nations volunteers (UNVs) from 65 countries served with UNTAC, mainly in supervisory, education and training roles related to the organization of elections. As the only arm of UNTAC to live and work in local communities, this group — spread out in 172 districts in 18 provinces — could have played an important role in the rehabilitation process. The majority of UNVs were unique among UNTAC staff in that they received six weeks’

training in Khmer language and culture prior to taking up their posts (Whitcomb and Wignaraja, 1993:13). Moreover, some had experience of community development projects and participatory methods in other countries. They were perhaps also unique in terms of their level of motivation and commitment, their willingness to endure difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions, plus the fact that their cost to the United Nations was a fraction that of regular mission staff of similar levels of expertise (Whitcomb and Wignaraja, 1993:7,19).

In practice, however, the work of most UNVs was mainly confined to electoral activities. They successfully organized the registration of 4.7 million voters, engaged in civic education and supervised the holding of elections. With regard to community development, some UNVs took individual initiatives in, for example, mobilizing resources to build a school but there was no planned institutional strategy to encourage such a role. As pointed out by a UNV attending the UNRISD workshop referred to above, much more could have been done in terms of rehabilitation. Such a role would have helped not only the Cambodian people but also the credibility of UNTAC. The influx of UNVs into the Cambodian countryside, where living conditions were extremely poor, raised tremendous expectations:

“There were big expectations on both sides when we arrived in our district. But we turned up in a large white car with no medicine, no food and no water. Instead we talked about the Paris Peace Agreements, elections, civil rights and the role of political parties which was not what the Cambodians wanted to hear. We were able to offer jobs to 60 people but thousands were left waiting to be recruited. As a result, people are not happy with UNTAC and it has been difficult to build trust”.

Neither was there a mechanism in place which enabled this network of resource persons with a valuable perspective on the local level situation to inform or influence the UNTAC planning process on issues concerning local rehabilitation. On the contrary, it seems that problems of attitude and status served to marginalize some UNVs within UNTAC structures. As noted in a UNDP evaluation:

“In general, UNVs have felt that their status as Volunteers put them at a disadvantage with respect to regular or mission-recruited UN staff. Many seem to have felt that this real or perceived ‘second-class citizenship’ has meant lower priorities in issuance of equipment, UNTAC air transport and other support services, instances of inconsiderate behaviour, and not being listened to or consulted in issues concerning their responsibilities, working conditions and security” (Whitcomb and Wignaraja, 1993:28).

A potentially positive development in the field of rehabilitation concerned the fact that many bi/multilateral agencies chose to work with NGOs. Mysliwiec examines in some detail the nature of relations between NGOs and the larger donor agencies. A few international NGOs had a relatively long track record in Cambodia and an informed appreciation of Cambodian needs, priorities and capacities. They were also involved, to some extent, in policy discussions related to the rehabilitation process. All too often, however, NGOs were regarded and used by donors simply as implementing agents for programmes and projects designed by the donors themselves. In the process they became important components of parallel structures which tended to by-pass or undermine national and local institutions.

What has occurred in Cambodia with respect to aid is part and parcel of a broader problem affecting societies on the receiving end of large amounts of humanitarian assistance. Forms of aid and delivery mechanisms often have the effect of stifling local initiatives and coping strategies, as well as solidifying foundations for longer term dependency on international assistance and agencies.

During the transition period several NGOs shifted their attention towards direct support for community-based programmes and away from assisting government institutions or large donor agencies in the provision of services or project implementation. As Mysliwiec

observes, however, they sometimes found themselves having to engage in “damage control” to deal with problems caused by “the irresponsible interventions and priorities of other donors”.

New Social Problems

Probably no national population has suffered more during the past 25 years than the people of Cambodia. Since the late 1960s, the country has experienced successive waves of traumatic events. These have included periods of saturation bombing by United States forces during the Viet Nam war (Shawcross, 1980); the “killing fields” and autarky of the Pol Pot era in the latter half of the 1970s; and occupation by Vietnamese forces, civil war and an international embargo during the 1980s. Such events have resulted in extensive death and maiming, gross violations of human rights, massive human displacement, extreme poverty, infrastructural collapse and the disintegration of much of the country’s social fabric.

Against this backdrop, it seems difficult to imagine that things could get worse. Yet, in certain respects, this appears to be the case. As several of the chapter authors observe, the tide of human suffering gradually diminished during the 1980s. Under the Vietnamese-backed Hun Sen régime some progress was made in re-establishing basic public health and education services which had collapsed during the period of Khmer Rouge rule. Certain public programmes and policies offered a degree of protection for vulnerable groups. Moreover, violence and crime in urban areas were not a major problem, and the economy, while impoverished and dependent on eastern bloc support, was relatively stable.

The transition period witnessed a sharp rise in lawlessness, banditry, corruption, xenophobic tensions and violence; a rapid growth in prostitution and the incidence of HIV/AIDS infection; a rise in the number of street children; and a deterioration in the situation of certain vulnerable groups, which now include segments of the large returnee population. This period has also witnessed a serious decline in essential public services.

Vulnerability, vice and crime

In recent years, many Cambodians have found it increasingly difficult to access basic goods and services. Thousands of widows and other people who benefited to some extent from government employment policies, food rations and other support programmes during the 1980s have seen that support disappear. Health, education and infrastructure services have deteriorated considerably while inflation has eroded the purchasing power of much of the population.

The food security situation of many households is also threatened. While rice production increased during the early 1990s, the country was ill-prepared to meet the food demands of a population that is now expanding rapidly. Large areas of agricultural land remain abandoned due to the presence of millions of landmines — estimates of which vary from 2 to 10 million (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1993:20). By the time UNTAC was due to withdraw from Cambodia it was estimated that mines were killing or maiming between 300 and 500 people each month (P. Davies, 1993). UNTAC’s de-mining activities commenced belatedly and concentrated mainly on training Cambodians to demine. By mid-1993, only 12,000 landmines had actually been deactivated under the UNTAC programme (Crisp and Mayne, 1993:23).

Figure 1.2: Basic Facts

- Population: 9 million (estimate)
- 60-65 per cent of adult population is female
- 30-35 per cent of households are headed by women
- Annual per capita income: 150 US dollars
- Infant mortality: 123 per 1,000 live births

- Life expectancy: 49.7 years (lowest of all Asian countries)
- 12 per cent of rural Cambodians have access to safe drinking water
- Child malnutrition: 22 per cent in Phnom Penh; 32 per cent in the provinces
- 4 per 1,000 of population are disabled (highest rate in the world)
- Number of landmines: 2-10 million

Agricultural support services are extremely weak. Many returnees who resettled in rural areas lack the knowledge and experience appropriate for agricultural production. The elimination of a significant percentage of the male population during the 1970s and 1980s and the continuing diversion of male resources to defence activities or urban employment have led to serious shortages of labour in many rural areas. These aspects also mean that approximately one third of all households are headed by women who must shoulder tremendous burdens and responsibilities in terms of caring for the young and old and maintaining the family economically.

Vulnerability in the Cambodian context is not simply about “basic needs” or the material difficulties certain groups of people encounter when attempting to access essential goods and services. Vulnerability and people’s capacity to rebuild their lives are intimately tied up with socio-psychological problems. As the chapter by Arnvig reveals, the suffering and trauma experienced by much of the Cambodian population under the Pol Pot régime and in areas subsequently affected by war or designated as refugee camps have resulted in serious psychological problems, fear and mistrust.

The past two decades have seen the weakening of certain social relations and institutions which gave meaning and support to people’s lives. The extended family networks and patron-client relations which formed the basis of local support systems have experienced considerable upheaval, as has the system in which elders or counsellors would provide guidance and take decisions (Ledgerwood, 1992). Such events have had a profound effect on patterns of human behaviour and people’s ability to cope. Arnvig describes the typical manifestations of trauma experienced by some sectors of the population. They include apathy, loss of confidence and trust, anti-social behaviour, depression, insomnia, and learning and concentration problems.

Of particular concern is the way in which the development of children is affected by socio-psychological trauma (de Monchy, 1992). Many must leave school and find work in order to help support the family. In situations where parents are unable to take care of or control their children, the latter often adopt deviant forms of behaviour and are exposed to extreme dangers. Arnvig describes the worrying trend associated with the growing numbers of urban street children. There are indications that significant numbers of children are abandoning their homes and schools in search of an alternative lifestyle and/or because they are obliged to contribute to the family income.

The chapter by Curtis catalogues the critical social situation in the country and examines the complex interplay of factors — including the attitudes, practices and strategies of the SNC, bilateral donors and UNTAC — that resulted in the neglect of the country’s rehabilitation needs during the transition period.

Arnvig examines a set of relatively new social problems, including prostitution, street children and HIV infection. She documents a number of serious problems which arose in connection with the behaviour of United Nations troops and security personnel and their relations with the host population. These included disrespect towards Cambodians and their customs, sexual harassment of women, the rapid growth of the sex industry and the reckless driving of United Nations vehicles.

While noting that prostitution, HIV infection and street children pre-date the arrival of UNTAC, Arnvig argues that the sudden influx of thousands of peace-keeping troops and security personnel served to intensify these problems. To some extent this was to be expected. Few anticipated, however, either the scale of the problem or the longer term effects on the Cambodian economy and society.

The number of commercial sex workers in Phnom Penh is reported to have increased from 6,000 to 20,000 in 1992 (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1993:16). Of particular concern is the rapid growth of HIV infection. Recent data point to the possibility of a future AIDS epidemic. There was a 10-fold increase in the number of blood donors testing HIV positive in 1992. More recent estimates indicate that approximately 1 in 50 blood donors tested HIV positive every month between January and October 1993 (Peach, 1993). UNTAC's chief medical officer in Cambodia has reportedly stated that the number of UNTAC personnel infected with HIV could be as high as 150, although official figures put the number at 47 (Peach, 1993). If correct, then more than twice as many United Nations personnel will die from AIDS as died from hostile actions, accidents and illnesses during the peace-keeping mission.¹⁴

Apart from the scale of such problems, of particular concern is the fact that the United Nations authorities often failed to take prompt or serious corrective action when these matters were brought to their attention. Much more could and should have been done with respect to education programmes to raise awareness, personnel recruitment and briefing procedures, the provision of on-base recreation facilities, the distribution of condoms, the repatriation of troops known to be HIV positive, timely investigation of infractions caused by United Nations personnel, effective disciplinary action and reasonable compensation measures.

Inaction and shortcomings in these areas not only had negative consequences for many Cambodians, they also undermined the capacity of UNTAC to fulfil its mandate. As an UNRISD report notes:

"These [social problems and tensions with the host population] ... have important implications not only for the Cambodian people but for the feasibility and success of the peace-keeping operation itself. Unlike an invading army, the United Nations is restricted in its capacity to establish credibility on the basis of force. It must rely to a large extent on its image, its capacity to negotiate peace, promote national reconciliation, organize free and fair elections, and its ability to minimize the suffering of people in the host country. The behaviour and abuses of certain of its personnel, and the relative lack of corrective action by the UNTAC authorities, have undermined the credibility of UNTAC and made the task of the United Nations in Cambodia all the more difficult" (UNRISD, 1993a).

Arnvig describes the tensions and animosity which characterized relations between many local Cambodians and UNTAC as well as the belated and half-hearted manner in which UNTAC dealt with some of the abuses committed by its personnel.

Such relations, no doubt, contributed to a sharp rise in the number of attacks on foreigners and their property in 1993. A veritable crime wave hit the capital Phnom Penh, in particular, during the post-election period when UNTAC was preparing to withdraw from Cambodia. As Davies observes:

"The recent stagnation of the economy, and the growing realization that UNTAC's withdrawal will leave nothing to fall back on economically, has also had a negative effect. All these anti-social tendencies have come to the fore, directed not only towards Khmers themselves but also the foreign community's property" (R. Davies, 1993b).

¹⁴ Peach reports that 67 UNTAC peace-keepers died: 21 in hostile actions, 17 in traffic accidents, 5 of malaria, 4 from heart attacks and 20 from assorted accidents and illnesses (Peach, 1993:4).

Given the profound and abrupt nature of economic and cultural change during the early 1990s, it is hardly surprising that Cambodia began to experience a crime epidemic. In the space of just a few years, Cambodians have had to come to grips with the reality of economic liberalization and unfettered capitalism: exposure to an acquisitive culture and a “get-rich-quick” mentality, the spread of corruption and vice industries, declining real incomes and the inability of the state to maintain law and order. Many have experienced acute psychological stress, frustrated expectations and a dramatic shift in personal values. Moreover, weapons of all kinds have spread socially and geographically while military and administrative structures which served to keep soldiers, policemen, bureaucrats and local authorities in check have unravelled.

The rapid increase in crime and banditry is a phenomenon common to many societies attempting the transition from war to peace. It would seem to be fuelled by three processes which tend to coincide during the transition period. First, economic liberalization and stabilization can have the effect of restricting opportunities for productive employment, real incomes and essential public services. Restrictions on government expenditures can also have a debilitating effect on the operation of agencies responsible for law and order.

Second, a significant transformation often occurs in people’s identities and moral codes. Many of the norms, values and causes which shaped people’s sense of responsibility or purpose in life suddenly dissipate as new economic, political and social systems are put in place and foreign influences flood the country.

A third element concerns the disintegration of control structures associated with the military and the bureaucracy. One of the standard international prescriptions being applied in conflict or post-conflict situations concerns rapid disarmament and troop demobilization. The Paris Peace Agreements were no exception, calling for successive stages of cease-fire, cantonment, disarming and demobilization of Cambodian troops. In actual practice, demobilization in Cambodia proceeded slowly. By the time UNTAC commenced its withdrawal from Cambodia there were still approximately 140,000 troops under arms. Only 45,000 troops had received separation pay (Brown, 1993:4). The fact that relatively few troops were demobilized may have been a blessing in disguise. Releasing thousands of men accustomed to violence (and no doubt in possession or in easy reach of arms) into civilian society when land and employment opportunities, as well as law and order services, are few and far between can be an explosive cocktail.

Military structures not only provide employment, they can also impose a certain discipline. In Cambodia, however, such structures began to crumble, partly due to lack of finance for the largest of the four Cambodian armies controlled by the State of Cambodia. Many troops remained unpaid for relatively long periods and harassed the local population for money and possessions.

A similar phenomenon affected the bureaucracy and political apparatus linked to the SOC government. A peace process which is due to culminate in elections and a change or legitimization of government, may have the effect of encouraging abuses of power. Existing lines of accountability often break down and many civil servants, police and politicians will seek material gain through illegal or extra-legal means. As in Cambodia, the situation may be particularly alarming at the local level, as already weak provincial structures break down.¹⁵

¹⁵ I am grateful to Grant Curtis for his comments regarding the breakdown of accountability and the weakening of provincial structures.

Reintegration of “returnees”

It is generally agreed that the repatriation of over a third of a million refugees from the Thai-Cambodian border was a successful operation (Crisp and Mayne, 1993). What is far less clear is the extent to which the repatriation programme enhanced or undermined the capacity of returnees to rebuild their lives. As Arnvig points out, getting them back was the easy part; the real challenge related to the process of economic and social reintegration.

This issue is examined by both Arnvig and Geiger. The central question is whether the drive to achieve the ambitious logistical objectives of the repatriation programme undermined the protection of the returnees. As a UNHCR evaluation of the repatriation programme observes:

“As a result of the Paris accords, UNHCR was ... placed in a position where it could not slow down or suspend its humanitarian activities without effectively blocking the whole UN-sponsored peace settlement. Fortunately, the security situation in Cambodia did not deteriorate to the point where UNHCR was forced to confront this dilemma. Nevertheless, the Cambodian experience suggests that UNHCR should seek to avoid an involvement in operations where the organization will feel compelled to place a higher priority on its logistical objectives than on its fundamental protection principles” (Crisp and Mayne, 1993:10).

The chapters by Arnvig and Geiger suggest that there was in fact a trade-off between logistics and protection. The original repatriation plan sought to address the problem of reintegration head on by offering each returnee family key means of production — principally land. It soon became apparent, however, that there was relatively little farming land available, partly due to the presence of several million landmines scattered throughout the countryside. Instead, most of the refugees took up a cash option which netted an average sized family in the region of 200-250 dollars. They also received a 400-day food ration plus a very basic housing kit.

There is considerable debate concerning the appropriateness of the cash option. Arnvig argues that many refugees were ill-prepared to handle relatively large amounts of money since they had spent many years in camps where most basic goods and services were provided free of charge. She maintains that the situation would have been difficult enough with a secure environment outside of the camps but this was not the case. Returnees had to confront not only common thieves but also underpaid or unpaid Cambodian military personnel who levied illegal taxes on public roads and waterways (Chopra, Mackinlay and Minear, 1993:9).

Others have pointed out, however, that the camps actually enjoyed a thriving, albeit illegal, cash economy and that the “refugees were generally quite capable of managing any money they received” (Crisp and Mayne, 1993). Moreover, the cash option enabled many returnees to travel in search of lost relatives and friends while payment in dollars provided a hedge against inflation (Crisp and Mayne, 1993).

Arnvig argues that many returnees were ill-equipped psychologically to handle the difficult conditions they encountered upon return. Basic aspects of life in the refugee camps were determined by clearly defined rules and regulations. The refugees were guaranteed access to certain essential goods and services and, in this respect, did not have to fend for themselves. Arnvig refers to the “dependency syndrome” that can develop in such a context and which can undermine personal initiative and self-reliance. She also refers to a set of psychological problems which some psychiatrists label “post-traumatic stress disorder” (PTSD). She suggests that PTSD affected a significant number of returnees and impaired their ability to take the type of important decisions that inevitably arise when people attempt to rebuild their lives. Arnvig criticizes the lack of attention on the part of United Nations and other agencies to such problems.

Geiger deals at some length with the question of reintegration but argues against the idea that “dependency” seriously constrained the ability of returnees to rebuild their lives. He found

that the returnees were in fact having to take major decisions about where to live and work. This was reflected, for example, in the extent of secondary migration. A large proportion of the returnees chose to leave the villages and sites where they had resettled to find employment elsewhere. When taking these decisions they confronted serious constraints. Geiger maintains, however, that:

“returnees were not constrained in their ability to confront the problems of reintegration ... as much by a ‘dependency syndrome’ state of mind as they were by the very real social and economic circumstances in which they found themselves”.

Such circumstances, he argues, were largely unknown both to the returnees themselves and to those who planned the repatriation programme:

“The surveys and studies conducted to assess the situation in Cambodia in order to plan for the repatriation of the border refugees and longer term development omitted the most important component of the equation, the local villages. It was not just the returnees who had to cope with a lack of knowledge. Planners also faced a lack of knowledge of the dynamics of the local villages, in essence, what the returnees were supposed to reintegrate into”.

Rethinking the Ways and Means of Peace-Making

The issue at the heart of this collection of essays is how to ensure that United Nations peace-keeping operations have a more positive impact in terms of economic and social development, or at least do not seriously distort the development process and increase human suffering while attempting to secure peace.

The problems identified above reveal clearly that rehabilitation was a marginal facet of the UNTAC operation. To some extent, this reflected the prioritization of activities contained in the Paris Peace Agreements which emphasized demobilization, control of the civilian administration, repatriation of refugees and the organization of elections (Chopra, Mackinlay and Minear, 1993).

As noted above, the mandate defined by the peace accords was an important constraint as were other factors over which the United Nations had little or no control.

There was, however, room for manoeuvre. An evaluation of the Cambodian peace process carried out by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs indicates that, whereas most of the signatories of the peace accords (including several permanent members of the Security Council and the Cambodian factions themselves) regarded the Agreements as negotiable, the United Nations Secretariat saw them as “immutable documents ... requiring no further adjustment” (Chopra, Mackinlay and Minear, 1993:16). Moreover, the report notes that, while the head of UNTAC had the right to overrule the SNC, “he has not done so in the rehabilitation component”. Throughout most of the transition period:

“the rehabilitation component (of UNTAC) adopted a relaxed approach to the challenge of coordination. Whether reflecting the wishes of donors, the strategies chosen by UNTAC or the limitations imposed by a Phnom Penh staff of only seven professionals, the component did not harness external resources adequately in the sense of UNTAC’s rehabilitation plan. Activities also suffered from inadequate representation at the provincial level, where of the seven UNTAC components it alone lacked its own staff” (Chopra, Mackinlay and Minear, 1993:29).

Unfortunately there have been few independent evaluations of the role of the United Nations in Cambodia. Not surprisingly, UNTAC and certain other United Nations agencies have tended to respond somewhat defensively to criticism and found refuge in the terms of their mandate or the lack of co-operation from the SNC and donors to counter accusations of inaction and shortcomings.

There is a danger, however, that “the mandate” can become a convenient excuse. What little has been written on the success or failure of different United Nations activities points to the need for much greater flexibility when interpreting the terms of the mandate. Explaining the inactivity of UNTAC in the field of rehabilitation during much of the transition period, one economist writing for the **Phnom Penh Post** recently referred to UNTAC’s “failure of nerve”:

“Despite having a specific mandate, that required UNTAC to get cracking with immediate needs ... very little was done in the critical pre-election period. Although Annex 1 of the framework agreements recognized that the Hun Sen administration would have to operate to ensure normal everyday life in Cambodia, this was not backstopped in practice ... For the most part it was because refuge was taken in the narrowest of interpretations of the Paris text.

“Realities such as there being only one functioning civil service, that the factions were not equal in administrative capacity, and that it was in the Khmer Rouge’s interest to assume a blocking role on the Supreme National Council, were tacitly ignored ... Cambodia’s economy was thus deliberately put on hold for a further 19 months until the elections provided an ‘acceptable’ government, the poor 90 per cent of the population thus became the pawns of Big Power politics” (R. Davies, 1993a).

Just as the successful implementation of development projects rarely conforms to the original project design or blue print, so it was wrong to assume that strict adherence to the mandate laid down in the Paris Peace Agreements would be the most useful way of securing peace and promoting rehabilitation. In the context of a United Nations operation of this kind there was in fact a dual stifling effect: one imposed by the mandate — or UNTAC’s interpretation of its mandate — and another which derived from normal bureaucratic rules and procedures.

For much of the transition period, bureaucratic control was located in the United Nations headquarters in New York with control over the purse-strings not decentralized until early 1993 (R. Davies, 1993a). A recent evaluation of United Nations peace-keeping operations around the world reveals that one of the central problems which have undermined the effectiveness of such interventions has been:

“the insufficient delegation of financial and administrative authority from New York to the field resulting in a lack of operational flexibility necessary to allow for changing circumstances on the ground” (Berdal, 1993:50).

Many UNTAC personnel working in the field encountered major frustrations when attempting to carry out their work due to the lack of support from UNTAC headquarters in Phnom Penh. While perhaps a reflection upon an extreme case, the testimony of one Australian, nevertheless graphically reveals the types of tensions which characterized “centre-periphery” relations within UNTAC in certain parts of the country. He had worked as a human rights officer in a remote area and later went on to become UNTAC special prosecutor in Phnom Penh:

“[Field personnel] had to use their own money to build the police station. They used their own private funds to build the barracks for the Khmer police to be trained and to build a radio mast ... The U.N. had the money — 2.4 billion dollars — but it would never get out to the field ... In other parts of the country people ... suffered badly by not being able to resource themselves. It was hard, for example, to get cars but if you come to the Phnom Penh Headquarters, you will see hundreds of landcruisers [some with winches] which are just luncheon vehicles. We can’t get them, and the feeling [in the field] is that the central administration has let them down. They give us ridiculous orders which sometimes just have to be disobeyed because they are not safe...

“I think that the ideals and objectives of [the United Nations] are magnificent. Unfortunately, it suffers from a lack of internal managerial efficiency and needs to be

thoroughly overhauled. It's a completely unaccountable organization ... There is no one to be answerable to except the Security Council, and the Security Council, of course, plays its own international politics. As far as the internal bureaucrats are concerned who are supposed to carry out these policies, I think they are substantially lacking ... I am satisfied that a lot of contributing nations did send some of their very best people and most of those people suffer the same frustrations that I suffer because they cannot understand why their advice is constantly rejected and why they are not able to do their job".¹⁶

As indicated here, if resources could be found, there was considerable room for manoeuvre in interpreting mandates at the local level. What some may call "flexibility" or others "rule bending" would seem to be an important criterion of success concerning project and programme implementation. Some of the most positive developments in the field of rehabilitation and reconstruction were probably only possible as a result of turning a blind eye to certain rules and regulations.

The **Phnom Penh Post** recently carried an article on "A U.N. success story". It referred to the Cambodian resettlement and reintegration operation known as CARERE. This UNDP programme had managed, on a relatively small budget, to rehabilitate and construct roads, schools, wells, irrigation systems and clinics in the three western provinces of Banteay Meanchey, Battambang and Pursat which had received the bulk of the returning refugee population. In certain areas, it had also managed to bring together the warring factions. Not surprisingly, the article ends:

"In an organization where decisions often must filter through layers of bureaucracy, Carere has been given considerable leeway. Its staff members are known to bend cumbersome U.N. rules to get things done" (**Phnom Penh Post**, 8-21 October 1993b:20).

The experience of the UNTAC rehabilitation unit would also seem to bear this out. Throughout 1992 and early 1993 very little was actually achieved in terms of project implementation. By mid-1993, however, just a few months before UNTAC was due to withdraw, numerous small-scale "quick impact" projects were being implemented mainly in northern and eastern districts of the country. Designing and implementing such projects involved working with local authorities. Technically speaking this involved dealing with SOC officials, although in practice links between the centre and the periphery of the SOC apparatus were often very tenuous. The type of strict interpretation of the terms of the Paris Agreements which normally prevailed would probably have precluded such an arrangement for fear that such assistance would have benefited one particular faction. Fortunately, for thousands of Cambodians in remote areas, this more pragmatic approach provided tertiary roads, bridges, health centres and schools.¹⁷

A UNHCR evaluation of the repatriation programme also points to the importance of flexibility:

"UNHCR asserted the organization's political neutrality, demonstrated a readiness to innovate (and even to take some risks), and pursued a pragmatic approach with regard to the implementation of the original repatriation plan" (Crisp and Mayne, 1993:7).

The type of people in charge of rehabilitation projects or programmes has an important bearing on the outcome. In the positive cases cited above, they were generally extremely committed, dynamic and prepared to take risks. This type of character is a far cry from many

¹⁶ Interview conducted for the Australian radio programme Background Briefing (Cambodia), on Radio National, The Talk of Australia (ABC Radio tapes, no date).

¹⁷ Personal communication with a senior official of the UNTAC Division for Rehabilitation and Economic Affairs, Phnom Penh, June 1993.

who participate in United Nations peace operations. As Arnvig points out, many lack the necessary qualifications and experience and have little knowledge of the host country, its people and customs. Some may well be in it just for the money or for other purely personal reasons.

Training and in-depth briefing of UNTAC staff on aspects concerning Khmer language, society, culture, economy and polity were sorely lacking. Personnel in the UNTAC Civil Administration component, for example, who were expected to control important parts of the SOC administration were not briefed about the structure and functioning of the SOC apparatus or about other important aspects such as how “business” was conducted culturally through the Cambodian bureaucracy. Ironically, the United Nations had fielded a lengthy and sizeable mission in 1990 to look into such aspects but the mission report was rarely, if ever, used. Neither were there formal discussions concerning how the UNTAC mandate might be interpreted. The upshot of this situation was, as one UNTAC official explained, that:

“UNTAC personnel at all levels spent an immense amount of time interpreting, reinterpreting and counter-interpreting the Paris Agreements. This wasted a great deal of time and energy and had a negative impact on UNTAC’s work” (personal communication).

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is to be hoped that the important political achievements of 1993 which enabled UNTAC to withdraw from Cambodia “with honour” will eventually lead to peace and provide a more solid foundation for the country’s development. As the following chapters reveal, however, there was a considerable downside to the peace process which not only failed to bring about a cessation of hostilities but possibly shaped a particular style of development that will prolong the suffering and insecurity of many Cambodians well into the future.

The Cambodian case confirms the hard truth which has emerged from the experiences of other countries, such as Nicaragua, attempting to rebuild after years of conflict. Neither democracy nor peace is a panacea. The construction of peace is often associated with patterns of international assistance, economic growth, stabilization, liberalization, demilitarization and acculturation that can result in increasing levels of vulnerability and undermine local institutions and capacities which could play a key role in rehabilitation. Major hostilities may cease and armies may shrink in size but “peace” is often accompanied by the dispersion of violence which, while less intense, may affect a larger proportion of the population than that directly affected by war. It may also be more difficult to control.

Unfortunately rehabilitation was never a priority of the peace process. Neglect in this area has meant not only increased hardship and insecurity for much of the Cambodian population but also the intensification of the type of societal cleavages (rural/urban, rich/poor and along ethnic lines) which underpinned the intense conflicts that have marked Cambodia’s contemporary history. Such divisions suggest that the political gains of the transition period rest on extremely shaky foundations.

A peace process should not be seen simply as a mechanism that will enable a society to end hostilities and return to “normal”. Rather, the very nature of that process may transform an economy and society in unexpected ways and engender new forms of economic, social and physical insecurity. It is essential that policy makers and planners concerned with issues of peace and rehabilitation recognize and anticipate this possibility.

I end this introduction by reproducing a series of recommendations that emerged during the UNRISD workshop where the draft versions of the following chapters were originally presented. As noted in the report where these recommendations were published (UNRISD,

1993a), it is too late to act on many of them, but several are relevant for peace operations in other parts of the globe.

Minimizing the distortionary impacts of aid. More objective analysis is required of the distortionary effects on the local economy of United Nations mega operations and the sudden influx of international aid and personnel. Particular attention should be focused on how to minimize debilitating effects on public administration and on the delivery of social services as well as how to retain or otherwise encourage labour and investment in vital economic sectors such as agriculture.

The need for moderate but sustained levels of aid. More consideration should be given to the question of how to achieve economic rehabilitation and stability on the basis of moderate levels of aid provided on a sustained basis rather than large commitments disbursed over a short time frame.

Achieving a better balance between humanitarian and development assistance. It is important to achieve a better balance between short-term humanitarian assistance and development aid by channelling more resources toward small-scale community-based projects and quick impact assistance designed to rehabilitate agricultural production and essential social services. Longer term development assistance should focus less on large-scale capital intensive projects and more on human resource development, capacity building within the public administration, infrastructural repair and safety nets for vulnerable groups.

Budgetary support and fiscal reform. More attention should be focused on providing budgetary support, and reforming the tax régime as two ways to reduce the budget deficit and therefore lower inflation. The imposition of an indirect tax on certain forms of expenditure of United Nations and other agency personnel should have been considered more seriously.

The need for an effective aid co-ordination mechanism. It is necessary to establish a more effective mechanism for co-ordinating the efforts of hundreds of agencies now working in the country, as well as the efforts of UNDP and UNTAC.

Improved impact assessment. More time and resources should be allocated to monitoring both the local level impacts and macro effects of projects, as well as the situation of vulnerable groups and the reintegration of refugees.

Greater training and participation of Cambodians. Cambodians must assume increased responsibility for the nature and direction of the rehabilitation and reconstruction process, including prioritization of needs and approval of donor-funded development projects and programmes. The international aid community should expand opportunities for training Cambodian counterparts to plan their own development. Greater efforts should be made to encourage and facilitate Cambodian participation in sectoral meetings and other co-ordinating and policy-making bodies. The numerous fact-finding missions undertaken by international agencies should make a greater effort to incorporate Cambodians as team members.

Improved data gathering and dissemination. The transitional period should be used to carry out sectoral studies and statistical surveys which could provide a more solid data base for defining priorities and designing more appropriate development strategies, policies and projects. Such studies should generate findings and information which are disseminated widely in Cambodia. There should be a greater effort on the part of the United Nations and other donor agencies to translate studies into Khmer.

Greater reliance on local knowledge and institutions. There should be greater reliance on local institutions and resources and, in the absence of donor community knowledge about

local society and culture, more research to determine the strengths and limitations of existing institutions, what remains of traditional community or support structures, and what institutions are re-emerging which could contribute to social cohesion, psychological rehabilitation and basic needs provisioning.

The quality and behaviour of United Nations personnel. Much stricter guidelines governing the recruitment, briefing and training of peace-keeping and professional personnel should be drawn up. Special attention should be given to the question of social relations with the host population. More thought should be given to the provision of on-base recreation facilities and to the possibility of testing peace-keeping troops for HIV/AIDS before entering the country, as well as upon leaving.

Involvement of United Nations personnel in community development. United Nations personnel associated with peace-keeping and electoral education should become more involved in activities associated with community development in order to have a more direct input into the rehabilitation and reconstruction process and to improve relations with the local population.

An effective code of conduct. It is important to redefine and strictly implement a code of conduct for United Nations peace-keeping personnel, with clear indications concerning sanctions for offenders. There is a need to establish a monitoring unit to assess the conduct of peace-keeping personnel and public perceptions concerning the behaviour of United Nations security personnel. It is also important to establish an office (or ombudsman) with sufficient resources and powers to investigate complaints concerning behaviour, and to deal promptly with them.

2. Transition to What? Cambodia, UNTAC and the Peace Process — Grant Curtis

Introduction

That a peace process exists in Cambodia underlines the fact that the country's recent history has been less than happy. Once known as a peaceable kingdom, Cambodia today is equally well known as the home of both Angkor Wat and the "killing fields". The ongoing civil war represents one of the more intractable of the world's recent conflicts, despite the fact that neither race, religion nor nationality has played a prominent part. The Cambodian people have endured more than 20 years of war and war-related hardship, including foreign military involvement through a ruthless bombing campaign, bloody civil strife, massive displacement of population, occupation by foreign forces, international political and economic isolation, and years of "half peace and half war" featuring both guerrilla and frontline military activity.

While primarily a civil conflict pitting Khmer against Khmer, the Cambodian conflict has had a regional as well as an international dimension. Spawned at least partly out of the competing interests of the global superpowers, it remains to some extent an anachronistic legacy of the Cold War. While the prospect of peace in Cambodia has seemed alluring in recent years, the protracted peace process has not yet resulted in an effective cessation of hostilities, despite the deployment of the United Nations' largest ever peace-keeping operation. Although elections have now been held, the realization of durable peace in Cambodia remains but a prospect, with the likelihood that the long-hoped-for "comprehensive settlement" will be further deferred or otherwise compromised.

This chapter assesses the contribution of the peace process to the rehabilitation of Cambodia. It describes the tremendous social problems which currently exist and examines the role of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in addressing those problems.

Recent History¹

A military coup in 1970 launched Cambodia into civil war. As Cambodia was concurrently drawn into the war in Viet Nam, United States B-52 aircraft carpet-bombed the Cambodian countryside in an effort to destroy Communist North Vietnamese forces and their vital supply lines. As many tons of explosives were dropped on Cambodia in the early 1970s as had fallen on Germany during the Second World War. More than 700,000 people were killed, and some 2 million peasants abandoned their homes and rice fields to become internal refugees in Phnom Penh and other urban centres.

On 17 April 1975 radical Khmer Rouge forces "liberated" the country, overthrowing the American-backed Lon Nol military government and establishing Democratic Kampuchea. In human terms, the horror of the preceding years of civil war was replaced with a new kind of terror as the Khmer Rouge embarked upon a grotesque social experiment of anti-development. Within days of assuming power, the Khmer Rouge evacuated all cities, forcing virtually the entire Cambodian population into the countryside to live and work on a communal basis. Sheer human labour was directed to the establishment of a new agricultural base as a foundation for economic self-sufficiency, if not autarky. The Khmer Rouge envisaged a communist agrarian society whose achievements would rival the glories of the ancient Angkor Empire.

Under Khmer Rouge rule most of the country's economic and social infrastructure was dismantled. Private property was confiscated. Factories, vehicles, industrial equipment and

¹ Adapted from Curtis, 1989: 14-23.

goods were destroyed. All economic activity became part of the state apparatus. There were no markets and no independent production or means of exchange; currency was abolished. Schools ceased to function and many were destroyed or put to other uses. The country's Buddhist pagodas were defaced and converted into communal dining halls and storage sheds. Many former urban dwellers ("new people" or non-peasants), individuals connected with previous régimes, and educated individuals in general were targeted for execution. Families were divided. Living conditions under Khmer Rouge rule were extremely harsh, with collective manual labour for up to 18 hours a day, often with only starvation rations of food. By 1977 communal cooking and eating were introduced throughout much of the country. Scrounging for food or hoarding was punishable by death. Dissent was often rewarded with death. Over the course of the "three years, eight months and twenty days" of the Khmer Rouge experiment, as many as 1 million people (i.e. one in seven Cambodians) were tortured and executed, or died of hard labour, malnutrition and disease — a manifestation of autogenocide unique in world history.

Vietnamese troops invaded Cambodia in late 1978 to stem repeated and bloody border violations by the Khmer Rouge. The forces of Democratic Kampuchea offered limited resistance, and were pushed to the Thai border where over a period of years and with international support they were able to regain military strength. In 1982 the Khmer Rouge entered into an alliance with Cambodia's non-Communist resistance forces, establishing the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) under the nominal leadership of HRH Prince Norodom Sihanouk. This government-in-exile retained international recognition throughout the 1980s, including membership in the United Nations General Assembly. In Cambodia, meanwhile, the Vietnamese installed a Communist-style régime known as the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK).

After nearly a decade of war and the "bitter and sour times" of Khmer Rouge rule, Cambodia in 1979 was a ruined country. Much of its educated or trained manpower either had not survived the "killing fields" or had fled the country. The remaining population was traumatized, weak from hunger and disease, and greatly demoralized from the almost complete destruction of the Khmer social fabric. The country's productive infrastructure lay in ruins. So great were the physical and psychological ravages endured by the Cambodian people, including the social dislocation caused by the death of hundreds of thousands and the flight across the Thai border of a large segment of the surviving population, that the first Western observers to reach Cambodia in 1979 questioned the very survival of the Cambodian people.

Cambodia's resurrection demanded the creation of a normal economic and social life out of an almost complete void. An international emergency relief effort provided food, clothing, medical supplies, rice seed, fertilizers, pesticides, agricultural equipment, vehicles, handling equipment and fuel. The relief effort also helped to re-establish more than 100 clinics and hospitals and some 6,000 schools.

Although Cambodia's humanitarian, rehabilitation and development needs remained immense, the "Kampuchean emergency" was deemed to have passed in 1982. A new period of international isolation was imposed on the People's Republic of Kampuchea as punishment for being the Vietnamese-installed successor to Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge régime. Such isolation, however, also punished the Cambodian people by depriving them of the international assistance required to rebuild their lives as well as to begin the reconstruction of their shattered country.

Despite an almost total political and economic embargo throughout the 1980s, the Cambodian people made immense progress in rebuilding their country. Given the starting point of 1979, a kind of "Year Zero" in the history of the country, and in the face of overwhelming

difficulties, including the Western embargo on development assistance, quite remarkable achievements were realized, including the establishment of a government apparatus and administrative structure, the re-establishment of the economy including the development of new agricultural policies and systems of land tenure, the rehabilitation of the productive sectors of the economy and, in particular, the re-establishment and rapid quantitative expansion of the education and health care sectors.

More remarkable yet was that such achievements were made in the face of continued military hostilities which, in addition to prolonging the hardship and misery of the Cambodian people, necessitated the diversion of scarce economic and human resources that could have been better directed to the reconstruction of the country.

The Current Economic and Social Situation

By all measures, and particularly in economic terms, Cambodia in 1993 remains one of the world's poorest countries.² Although all statistical data pertaining to Cambodia must be interpreted with considerable caution, a review of some of the country's basic indicators provides some notion of Cambodia's current levels of social and economic development.³

- With an estimated per capita income of only some 150 US dollars,⁴ the bulk of the Cambodian population lives at or near subsistence level. One in ten Cambodians lives in an urban area, with the bulk of the Cambodian population engaged in agricultural pursuits.
- The annual birth-rate is at least 40 per 1,000, and is probably the highest in Asia; this reflects a total fertility rate of some six births per woman of reproductive age (compared to 3.2 for all of Asia). While annual maternal mortality is estimated to be at least 9 per 1,000, maternal deaths may actually be much greater. With virtually no access to family planning services, the incidence of abortion-related deaths is alarmingly high.
- Cambodia's infant mortality rate is estimated to be 123 per 1,000 live births. One of five Cambodian children does not live to see its fifth birthday.
- Of the total population 20.5 per cent is estimated to be under four years of age. At least 45 per cent of the Cambodian populace is under the age of 15.
- An estimated 60 to 65 per cent of Cambodia's adult population is female and 30 to 35 per cent of Cambodian households are headed by women. Women comprise 60 per cent of the agricultural workforce and nearly 70 per cent of the state factory labour force.
- The crude death rate is estimated to be 16 per 1,000, almost twice the average for the rest of Asia (8.6 per 1,000).
- The life expectancy of the average Cambodian is only 49.7 years, the lowest among Asian countries and one of the lowest in the world.
- Despite known preventative and control measures, poverty-linked diseases are uncommonly high in Cambodia, particularly vector-borne, air-borne and faecal-related diseases. Of reported child deaths 40 per cent result from diarrhoeal diseases.
- Malaria, including drug resistant *falciparum* malaria, is endemic in many parts of the country, with as many as 500,000 cases per year resulting in up to 10,000 deaths.
- There are an estimated 20,000 new cases of tuberculosis per year in Cambodia. The estimated prevalence rate of 550 cases per 100,000 population is the highest in South-East Asia. In some Cambodian provinces the prevalence rate of tuberculosis is as high as 850 cases per 100,000 — the highest in the world.

² In 1992 Cambodia was ranked by the United Nations Development Programme as 136th of 160 countries in terms of "human development".

³ The following data and statistics are derived from a number of sources including official information provided by the Cambodian authorities; UNICEF, World Food Programme and World Health Organization field estimates; data collected by UNTAC; UNDP, 1992; and World Bank, 1992.

⁴ All references to dollars are to US dollars.

- Only 12 per cent of rural Cambodians have access to a safe supply of drinking water. In Phnom Penh, only one in five inhabitants has access to piped water — albeit from antiquated treatment plants and a leaky, often contaminated distribution system.
- HIV/AIDS appears to be spreading rapidly among the Cambodian population. Whereas only three or about 0.08 per cent of total blood donors were found to be HIV positive in 1991, in 1992, 30 HIV positive cases were detected among donors (about 0.8 per cent). In only the first four months of 1993, however, there were 32 confirmed HIV positive cases among blood donors.
- Although Cambodia may be approaching food self-sufficiency under normal climatic/agricultural conditions, much of the country's agricultural sector is subsistence-based, leaving a large percentage of the population subject to the vagaries of nature. Average yields of rice, the staple crop/food, are only 1-1.5 tons/hectare — among the lowest in Asia.
- Child malnutrition is estimated to be about 22 per cent in Phnom Penh and 32 per cent at the provincial level, with incidence of more serious malnutrition in localized, food-deficit areas. The high prevalence of infectious diseases exacerbates the effects of malnutrition, particularly among children.
- The lack of an effective social "safety net" puts increasing numbers of Cambodians at risk. A 1992 survey by the World Food Programme of 180 villages in 10 provinces revealed that a full 20 per cent of villagers could be categorized as "vulnerable" (widows with families, single elderly, handicapped, orphans).
- Despite considerable efforts to eradicate illiteracy, the actual literacy rate is unlikely to exceed 30 per cent.
- Overall primary school enrolment is reported to be 82 per cent, although there are substantial variations among Phnom Penh schools (more than 90 per cent enrolment), provincial centres (70 per cent enrolment) and isolated rural areas, where primary school enrolment can be as low as 20 per cent of the school age population.
- Despite the quantitative expansion of the education system, the quality of education remains low. The education wastage rate is high, particularly among female students, with only some 40 per cent of children enrolled in the first grade completing their primary education (i.e. five years of schooling) within five years. It takes an average of 10 years, rather than five, for Cambodian children to complete their primary education. The high incidence of repetition (up to 30 per cent in Class 1 and 20-25 per cent in Classes 2 to 4) results in a clogging-up of the education system and puts additional pressure on the weak school infrastructure. Drop-out rates are also high, especially after the first two years and particularly for girls.
- Of those students currently enrolled in primary school, 15 per cent will continue to lower secondary school, with 3.6 per cent proceeding to upper secondary school. Only 0.85 per cent of those who enrol in primary school are likely to receive secondary technical training. Only some 0.50 per cent of Cambodia's student population gains entrance to higher forms of education.
- Less than 1 per cent of Cambodia's primary school teachers have completed high school (11 years of schooling); 60 per cent of the country's primary school teachers have only eight years of education.
- One in four Cambodians is presently in school. The lack of educational facilities necessitates a shift system, with some schools operating three shifts per day. The number of classrooms as well as the number of primary school teachers will need to be doubled within the next seven years in order to maintain present — already grossly inadequate — levels of instruction of only some three hours per day per child.
- At the tertiary level, there are now more students pursuing courses of study than the total number of graduates produced between 1980 and 1990.
- Education and health facilities throughout the country are generally inadequate, with most facilities lacking both a supply of safe drinking water and functioning latrines.

- In 1992, the State of Cambodia's budget for health and education was only 25 per cent of its total budget, compared to some 40 per cent for defence. The social sector budget of 19 million dollars represents less than 2 dollars per capita for state-provided health and education services. With most of the social sector budget directed to civil service salaries, virtually nothing is left for recurrent expenditures or for the purchase of essential equipment and supplies, including both essential drugs and educational materials.
- The April 1993 return from Thailand (and other countries) of the last of some 370,000 Cambodian refugees and "displaced persons" marked the beginning of a much longer and more difficult process of resettlement and reintegration. The returnees joined an additional 165,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) driven from their land and means of livelihood by fighting and insecurity. The number of internal refugees will most certainly increase with any further deterioration in the country's security situation. Just several weeks prior to the elections, approximately 20,000 ethnic Vietnamese, many of whom were born in Cambodia, had to flee the country for fear of racially motivated massacres.
- With an estimated 35,000 amputees, Cambodia has the highest proportion of physically disabled inhabitants of any country in the world. Statistically, one out of every 265 Cambodians has lost one or more limbs due to landmines. In 1990 alone, at least 6,000 Cambodians suffered amputation as a result of a mine injury. Only one in eight Cambodian amputees received an artificial limb up to May 1993; at current production rates it will take another 25 years to provide all of Cambodia's amputees with prosthetic devices.
- It is estimated that over 4 million landmines seed Cambodia's rice paddies, roadways and forests. In one month, a de-mining team can clear only 6,000-10,000 square metres of land. As of March 1993, the total area cleared of mines was only 1.6 million square metres (i.e. 1.6 square kilometres of Cambodia's total land area of 181,040 square kilometres).

This collection of indicators paints an "extremely bleak picture of adverse social conditions caused by poverty, war, meagre healthcare, and very poor household hygiene" (World Bank, 1992:9).

Cambodia's social indicators, of course, do not exist in isolation. Rather they are symptoms of much larger structural as well as political and economic problems. These problems include inadequate investment in the country's social sectors; a lack of budgetary resources, including salaries for social sector personnel; a lack of manpower planning as well as inadequate or insufficient training of all personnel; a lack of focus on vocational training, youth employment and general skills enhancement, including literacy training; a general lack of planning and management capability; and a likely, but as yet to be determined, lack of absorptive capacity in relation to foreign aid.

In recognizing that Cambodia is a country in transition, adapting itself to the dictates of a market economy, a June 1992 World Bank study identified four main constraints to the successful implementation of an appropriate human resources development strategy for the country:

- Lack of planning, programming, budgeting and control of recurrent and investment expenditures at both the central and provincial levels.
- Absence of a strategic policy framework as well as a shortage of technical expertise and basic data to orient, modify, evaluate and quantify policies, programmes and projects in the social sectors.
- A very low level of staff qualifications and training in the social sectors, with too many staff of low competence and with little personnel management capability.
- Equity disparities in and poor financial sustainability of public sector social services. That most public sector services now are provided on a fee-for-service basis disenfranchises the

poorest segment of the Cambodian population and also endangers the long-term financial sustainability of the country's public sector social services (World Bank, 1992:131).

In addition to the many problems facing the country's social sectors, the Cambodian peace process has seen the emergence of new social problems, including an increase in corruption; an increase in lawlessness, banditry and other forms of social violence; an increase in prostitution and a corresponding increase in the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS; a further deterioration in the situation of Cambodia's "vulnerable groups", including segments of the returnee population; as well as significant problems in the reintegration of Cambodia's war-affected populations. While the magnitude of these problems is anything but clear and calls for further investigation and research, these and related problems are definitely cause for concern in that they have a negative impact upon the hard-won results of the peace process, possibly to the point of nullifying whatever progress has been achieved.

To this catalogue of social problems I would add fatigue. It is my very strong impression that the Cambodian people are very tired — tired from years of war followed by years of half war/half peace, tired from their long isolation, worn out from battling insurmountable obstacles with only minimal resources, jaded by politics and politicians, emotionally drained from hopes and promises that have subsequently been postponed or otherwise qualified. Unfortunately, I also sense disillusionment and reduced vision and resolve. One Bangkok-based commentator with long experience in Cambodia recently warned that "Cambodia is facing a danger of vanishing into a sea of corruption, incompetence, selfishness, lack of concern from some of its own leaders, total breakdown of law and order, and from the growing hopelessness of its own population".⁵ If the Cambodian people's expectations of the peace process and particularly of UNTAC were unrealistically high, settling for what are likely to be the greatly reduced results of the peace process will be bitterly felt.

UNTAC and the Cambodian Peace Process

On 23 October 1991, the **Agreements on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict** were signed by Cambodia and 18 other nations in the presence of the United Nations Secretary-General.⁶ The signing of the Agreements represented the culmination of a decade of negotiations.⁷

It is to be emphasized that the on-again, off-again negotiations punctuated a protracted process. In addition to political and diplomatic negotiation, the Cambodian peace process also included the early withdrawal of Vietnamese military forces from Cambodia; economic liberalization leading to the difficult transition from a centrally planned to a market-based economy; accommodations and adjustments resulting from the collapse of the Soviet Union and the cessation of Soviet economic assistance; as well as a number of political concessions which led to the establishment of the Supreme National Council (SNC) of Cambodia as the

⁵ Bekaert, 1993.

⁶ The Agreements comprised an **Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict**, an **Agreement Concerning the Sovereignty, Independence, Territorial Integrity and Inviolability, Neutrality and National Unity of Cambodia**, as well as a **Declaration on the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Cambodia**.

⁷ United Nations involvement in these negotiations is succinctly outlined in the section "Background note on the negotiating process" in the United Nations-published version of the Agreements (United Nations, 1992:iii-viii). While this account tracks the peace process from a United Nations perspective, it does not fully explore the context of the negotiations, including the Western embargo and its impact on Cambodia and its people.

“unique legitimate body and source of authority in which, throughout the transitional period, the sovereignty, independence, and unity of Cambodia are enshrined”.⁸

The Agreements invited the Security Council to establish the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia and to provide it with the mandate set forth in the peace accords. The Security Council fully supported the Agreements in its resolution 718 (1991) of 31 October 1991 and requested the Secretary-General to prepare a detailed plan of implementation for UNTAC.

Under the Agreements, the SNC, made up of the four Cambodian factions under the presidency of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, delegated to the United Nations “all powers necessary” to ensure the implementation of the accords. The Agreements determined that the transitional period would begin with the entry into force of the accords, and would terminate when the constituent assembly, elected in conformity with the Agreements, approved a new Cambodian Constitution and transformed itself into a legislative assembly, thus creating a new Cambodian government.

Prior to the establishment and deployment of UNTAC, the Secretary-General had, on 30 September 1991, recommended that the United Nations field a small advance mission in Cambodia to assist the Cambodian parties to maintain the cease-fire and to prepare for the deployment of UNTAC. Based on this recommendation, the Security Council, by its resolution 717 (1991) of 16 October 1991, decided to establish the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia (UNAMIC) immediately after the signing of the Agreements. UNAMIC became operational on 9 November 1991, and consisted of civilian and military liaison staff, a military mine awareness unit, and logistics and support personnel. On 8 January 1992, by its resolution 728 (1992), the Security Council expanded the mandate of UNAMIC to include training in mine clearance for Cambodians and the initiation of a mine clearance programme.

On 19 February 1992, the Secretary-General submitted to the Security Council a report detailing the proposed implementation plan for UNTAC. The Security Council endorsed the report, and by its resolution 745 (1992) of 28 February 1992 established UNTAC under its authority for a period not to exceed 18 months. Upon becoming operational on 15 March 1992, UNTAC absorbed UNAMIC.

Headed by Mr. Yasushi Akashi (Japan), Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Cambodia, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia consisted of seven components: Military, Civilian Police, Electoral, Civil Administration, Repatriation, Human Rights, and Rehabilitation and Economic Affairs, plus executive management staff, a co-ordination and liaison team, an information service, as well as political, economic and legal advisers. At peak strength, UNTAC had more than 20,000 international personnel, including some 16,000 military and 3,500 civilian police. The UNTAC operation was supplemented by thousands of locally recruited Khmer staff, the bulk of whom were involved in the electoral process.

A brief review of the functions of the various UNTAC components will provide a better understanding of the daunting complexity of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia and the enormity of its task.

The **Military Component** — with approximately 16,000 personnel including 12 infantry battalions, military observers, engineers, signals, naval, air and other elements — was given responsibility for four main functions: the verification of the withdrawal and non-return of all

⁸ Section III, Article 3, **Agreements on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict**.

categories of foreign forces and their arms and equipment; the supervision of the cease-fire and related measures such as regroupment, cantonment, disarming and demobilization; weapons control, including monitoring the cessation of outside military assistance, locating and confiscating caches of weapons and military supplies throughout Cambodia, storing of the arms and equipment of the cantoned and demobilized military forces; and assistance with mine clearance, including training programmes and mine awareness programmes.

While the Agreements clearly stipulated that responsibility for the management of local police forces remained with the Cambodian parties, UNTAC's 3,600-person **Civil Police Component** was charged with ensuring that law and order be maintained effectively and impartially, and that human rights and fundamental freedoms be fully protected throughout Cambodia.

The **Electoral Component** was charged with developing a legal framework consisting of an electoral law and regulations to govern the electoral process; mounting large-scale civil education and training activities to inform the general public about the purposes and importance of the election and, particularly, the integrity of the ballot; the registration of up to 5 million eligible voters; the registration of political parties and candidates; as well as the actual conduct of the electoral process.

The **Civil Administration Component** was given responsibility for ensuring a neutral political environment conducive to a free and fair general election through the exercise of controls over the agencies, bodies and offices of the existing administrative structures in all parts of Cambodia. Such control included "direct control" of five main areas (foreign affairs, national defence, finance, public security and information); "specialized control" for the purpose of exercising controls in additional sectors having potential for influencing the outcome of the election and over which a lesser degree of scrutiny would be exercised; and a well-defined complaints and investigation mechanism.

The Agreements determined that all Cambodian refugees and displaced persons should have the right to return to Cambodia and to live in safety, security and dignity, free from intimidation or coercion of any kind, and that their repatriation in conditions of safety and dignity should be facilitated under the overall authority of the Special Representative and as an integral part of UNTAC. The **Repatriation Component** was given responsibility for the organized repatriation of the refugees and displaced persons; the identification and provision of agricultural and settlement land, installation assistance and food for an average of one year for up to 370,000 returnees; the provision of installation assistance and food for up to 12 months for up to 30,000 "spontaneous" returnees; and the provision of limited reintegration assistance for up to 370,000 returnees as well as upgrading of services in areas with a large concentration of returnees through quick impact projects.

The **Human Rights Component** was given overall responsibility during the transitional period for fostering an environment in which respect for human rights is ensured. Such responsibility included ratification or accession by the Supreme National Council of the relevant human rights instruments on behalf of Cambodia, the development and implementation of a human rights education programme to promote respect for and understanding of human rights, the exercise of general human rights oversight and the investigation of complaints and allegations of human rights abuses and, where appropriate, corrective action.

The mandate of the **Rehabilitation Component** was governed by the **Declaration on the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Cambodia**, an integral part of the **Agreements**. The **Declaration** determined that international efforts in support of Cambodia's rehabilitation should focus on urgent humanitarian needs (food, health, housing, etc.); resettlement needs;

the essential restoration, maintenance and support of basic infrastructure, institutions, utilities and other essential services; as well as training related to the efficient operation of Cambodia's various economic and social sectors. The Rehabilitation Component was given responsibility for the identification of rehabilitation needs, for the mobilization of donor assistance, for general co-ordination of donor assistance, and for monitoring of the overall rehabilitation process.

The **Information Service** was given primary responsibility for UNTAC's major information activities including massive civic education campaigns in human rights, mine awareness and electoral matters; for programming to acquaint Cambodians with the Agreements and with the goals, structure and activities of UNTAC; for training; as well as for monitoring and analysing the media of the four existing administrative structures.

UNTACs total expenditures are likely to exceed 2 billion dollars, including 806 million in expatriate salaries and allowances, 235 million for premises/accommodation and 158 million for transport operations (including more than 8,000 vehicles). The core UNTAC budget, funded by way of assessed contributions, **excluded** the cost of the repatriation operation as well as all rehabilitation efforts, with such funding derived from voluntary (i.e. non-assessed) contributions by the international community.

While no one assumed that the UNTAC operation would proceed entirely smoothly, difficulties in implementing key elements of the Agreements significantly compromised the overall effort. Implementation of the peace accords was flawed by continued cease-fire violations. The UNTAC operation was further handicapped by the refusal of the Khmer Rouge or Party of Democratic Kampuchea (PDK) to canton and disarm its armed forces as well as by its refusal to allow UNTAC access to territories under PDK control, including for electoral registration purposes. The UNTAC-supervised peace process was disrupted further by random violence and banditry as well as by carefully calibrated incidents directed at political destabilization, including systematic attacks against ethnic Vietnamese as well as against UNTAC itself. The electoral process was similarly marked by well-orchestrated campaigns of harassment and intimidation, including assassination of party officials. In addition, apparent economic sabotage resulted in a sudden depreciation of the riel, causing economic hardship and injecting further uncertainty into the peace process. The PDK refused to participate in the election and is unlikely to respect the outcome. Nevertheless, as one of the four Cambodian signatories to the Agreements, it remained a major player in the peace process, and retained its membership in the Supreme National Council.

The Agreements prescribed a sequential order of activities resulting in the comprehensive settlement of the Cambodian conflict. Despite the delineation of a critical path, however, UNTAC was given no mandate to enforce compliance with the Agreements except through moral suasion and quiet diplomacy. Without such a mandate, the UNTAC operation was rendered all but impotent as the "gentlemen's agreement" progressively unravelled. As successive steps in the process (e.g. cease-fire, cantonment, demobilization, electoral registration) leading to the election of a constituent assembly and the establishment of a new government were implemented only partially, if at all, other elements of the UNTAC-led peace plan had to be scaled back or otherwise reduced to the detriment of the overall peace process. In other words, UNTAC's inability to implement fully the various steps of the critical path in sequential order compromised the achievement of a "comprehensive settlement". Furthermore, UNTAC was reluctant to utilize the few tools with which it might have ensured greater compliance, including more rigorous regulatory or control measures, effective economic and other sanctions against the PDK, the removal of officials, etc.

While UNTAC may have successfully organized an election and the return of over a third of a million refugees, this represents a significant compromise of the principles and objectives

enshrined in the Agreements. It also raises concerns about the new government's ability to govern the country effectively in the post-election period.

Rehabilitation of the Social Sectors

International assistance in support of Cambodia's rehabilitation was governed by the **Declaration on the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Cambodia**, signed as an integral part of the Agreements. In calling for the implementation of an international aid effort in support of Cambodia's rehabilitation and reconstruction, the Declaration outlined the parameters for external assistance to Cambodia — both during the transitional period pending the establishment of a new government as well as over the longer term. The Declaration proposed that Cambodia's immediate needs be addressed during a "rehabilitation phase" that would also serve to lay the groundwork for the country's longer term reconstruction and development. The Declaration further directed that particular attention should be given to food security, health, housing, training, education, the transportation network, and the restoration of Cambodia's existing basic infrastructure and public utilities.

The Secretary-General's Consolidated Appeal for Cambodia's Immediate Needs and National Rehabilitation outlined overall programming policies for the transitional period and proposed specific rehabilitation activities to address Cambodia's priority rehabilitation needs. The Appeal, which called for 595 million dollars in voluntary donor assistance, was officially launched by Boutros Boutros-Ghali during his visit to Cambodia in April 1992. With regard to Cambodia's social sectors, the Appeal specifically called for the provision of some 75 million dollars for social sector activities, including health, water and sanitation, and education and training. The Appeal also requested up to 109 million dollars in public sector financing to help address the country's parlous budget situation, including the payment of civil service salaries.

In June 1992, a Ministerial Conference on Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Cambodia (MCRRC), co-chaired by the government of Japan and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), was held in Tokyo. The conference, which brought together representatives from 33 countries and 13 international organizations, resulted in pledges of some 800 million dollars for rehabilitation activities — apparently a clear indication of donor commitment to assist in Cambodia's rehabilitation.

Although activities under way during the 1992-1993 transitional period or planned for the near future are clearly contributing to Cambodia's ongoing rehabilitation, it is not clear to what extent such activities are in fact contributing to a coherent programme or process of rehabilitation as defined by the **Declaration on the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Cambodia** and elaborated by the Consolidated Appeal.

In addition, despite the fact that both the Declaration and the Consolidated Appeal focused attention on priority rehabilitation needs, including social sector needs, over a prescribed time frame, the donor community chose to follow a more traditional aid programming approach, with most activity slated to come into effect towards the end of, or even after, the transitional period.

While it is true that UNTAC facilitated the donor pledges for rehabilitation assistance, including funds for the repatriation operation, and was perceived as a kind of guarantor for foreign investment, lack of agreement among the Cambodian parties regrettably precluded much-needed financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Failure to implement key provisions of the Paris Agreements furthermore resulted in other donors taking a "wait and see" approach pending the outcome of the election and the establishment of a new government, with the result that, by the time of the elections, total

resource flows were less than planned, and certainly far less than required by Cambodia's pressing rehabilitation needs. This was particularly true for balance-of-payments support as well as for financial resources to ensure the delivery of essential public services.

Similarly, donors appear to have rejected forms of aid or channels and mechanisms for delivery which would have resulted in quick rehabilitation impact, preferring instead more standardized forms of bilateral assistance. Many commitments were tied to longer term development activities, including several large-scale, capital-intensive projects. That only a modest level of urgent rehabilitation activity was undertaken prior to the elections served to blur any distinction between immediate rehabilitation priorities during the transitional period and the country's longer term reconstruction and development process following the establishment of a freely elected government.

Although Cambodia's donors did not totally neglect the social sectors, the priority social sector activities outlined in the Consolidated Appeal remained critically underfunded, including rehabilitation of health care facilities; the provision of critical medical supplies, including essential drugs; training and upgrading of peripheral health staff; expansion and improvement of prosthetic workshops and vocational training for the disabled; rural water and sanitation programmes; and educational rehabilitation, including the supply of education materials.

Consequences of the Cambodian Peace Process

While it is impossible to predict whether the establishment of an elected government will indeed bring peace to Cambodia, it is not too early to begin to assess the positive and negative impacts of the overall peace process.

Certainly a primary failure of the peace process was UNTAC's inability to ensure a neutral political environment conducive to the conduct of a free and fair election. Just prior to the elections, Cambodia was gripped by fear that bordered on paranoia, rather than stability and a climate of voter confidence. Insecurity — or the **threat** of insecurity — was ubiquitous in Phnom Penh, in the provinces, and in all districts and villages.

The Cambodian peace process was marked by the lack of an effective cease-fire. No day passed without some kind of cease-fire violation, most minor, but far too many involving heavy weaponry and resulting in further casualties. Military activity has increased throughout the country since the beginning of 1993, including in formerly "peaceful" areas. Increased territory also came under the effective control of the Khmer Rouge army.

The lack of a real cease-fire precluded the planned cantonment and demobilization of up to 70 per cent of military personnel from the four Cambodian factions. As a consequence, it was not possible to reduce significantly either the number of military personnel or the overall number of weapons in the country. Failure to implement fully "Phase Two" (cantonment and demobilization) irreparably compromised the entire UNTAC operation. Somewhat paradoxically, the large number of military personnel contributed to nationwide insecurity, particularly as a worsening of economic conditions and the deterioration in the morale and discipline of the various military groups resulted in increased intimidation as well as widespread banditry.

If insecurity in Cambodia had a military dimension, it also had a political one. The climate of fear served the interests of those who wished to call the entire peace process into doubt. Insecurity was used as a tool to foment xenophobic sentiment against the Vietnamese, Cambodia's traditional enemies. Anti-Vietnamese violence escalated rapidly, with scores of ethnic Vietnamese being killed in massacre-like attacks, presumably at the hands of the Khmer Rouge. Thousands of ethnic Vietnamese, many of whom were born in Cambodia,

have fled the country for fear of further attack. Given the political dimension of the “Vietnamese problem”, no party, including UNTAC, made efforts to protect the rights of Cambodia’s ethnic Vietnamese population. The pervasive climate of fear also permitted intimidation to become part of the electoral process, with invective, accusation and rumour further contributing to pre-election instability.

In economic terms, a December 1992 report on UNTAC’s impact on the Cambodian economy credited the UNTAC presence as having played a significant role in confidence building and in mediating Cambodia’s return to the international community. The report claimed that UNTAC endorsement was a precondition to the provision of critical international resources (UNTAC, 1992:1). The report also confidently asserted that:

“UNTAC has provided the impetus for socio-economic change. It has helped set in motion the drive for Cambodia’s longer term development through its contribution to capacity building, infrastructural repairs, and all-important demining operations. Among the other beneficial effects is the stimulus UNTAC has given to construction, trade, and employment generation, and new private enterprise activities” (UNTAC, 1992:2).

While there is more than an element of truth to this statement, it was the peace process — including the UNTAC presence in Cambodia — that stimulated rapid social and economic change in the country. UNTAC itself contributed relatively little to capacity building or infrastructural repairs beyond its own requirements. Moreover, de-mining operations (in terms of actual clearance of landmines) began just prior to the elections. Similarly, while UNTAC stimulated some construction, employment generation and trading activities by virtue of the deployment of 20,000 military and civilian personnel, the opening-up of Cambodia after long international isolation as well as the prospect of further economic opportunities in the post-UNTAC period also contributed to the exponential increase in economic activity.

Investment that took place during the transitional period was centred in Phnom Penh. Most investment was directed to the burgeoning service sector in order to capitalize on the influx of UNTAC and other expatriate personnel with generous per diems for hotel and rental accommodation, restaurants, luxury goods, entertainment and other expenditures. The concentration of investment in Phnom Penh’s service sector resulted in a pattern of development that will be very difficult to sustain in the post-election period. Comparatively little investment was directed to the provinces and the country’s productive sectors.

Although UNTAC’s total projected budget was greater than Cambodia’s estimated GDP (2 billion dollars in 1991), the UNTAC assessment claimed that, because only a small proportion of the UNTAC budget was spent in Cambodia on domestic goods and services, UNTAC’s direct economic impact was far less significant than it might appear. Nevertheless, the report indicated that:

“the arrival of UNTAC in Cambodia has had a considerable impact on the local economy. UNTAC purchasing power has brought in substantial amounts of dollars that have had an evident catalytic effect on economic activity but have also contributed to significant price and wage increases in several sectors” (UNTAC, 1992:2).

The report denied, however, that UNTAC was primarily responsible for the persistent high rate of general inflation in Cambodia or for the dramatic increase in the cost of food and other necessities. Rather the report argued that, since the payment for local products and imported goods in dollars did not result in the equivalent creation of the local riel currency, the UNTAC operation had little impact on the price level of locally available goods and services. Furthermore, the report suggested that, as there appears to have been little change in the balance between the total supply and demand of goods and services as a result of UNTAC expenditure, UNTAC’s impact on the local economy could not have constituted a major

source of inflationary pressure. With large numbers of UNTAC staff as well as much of the local procurement of goods and services based in Phnom Penh, the report claimed that any price and purchasing distortions created by the UNTAC presence were limited almost exclusively to the country's capital.

As regards UNTAC's local purchases, the report estimated that in 1992, total local purchases represented as much as 110 million dollars. "Unquestionably", the report noted,

"the surge in UNTAC spending in the second half of the year has had an important impact on the economy, especially in and around Phnom Penh. But the spending patterns of UNTAC staff are considerably different from the local Cambodian community, the prices of whose normal purchases of goods and services are little affected by UNTAC outlays" (UNTAC, 1992:7-8).

The report further indicated that, rather than contributing to increases in the Phnom Penh Consumer Price Index, "UNTAC dollars helped to provide an offsetting balance to the inflationary effects brought about by the continuing budget deficit" (UNTAC, 1992:11).

The riel underwent a 70 per cent depreciation in mid-March 1993, resulting in the temporary closure of the gold and gems markets, petrol stations and even produce markets as the currency found its new level. Rumour posited the depreciation as an act of economic sabotage in the critical pre-election period. UNTAC was unable to isolate the cause or causes of the sudden depreciation, and was able to do little to mitigate spiralling inflation evidenced in the substantial increases in the prices of goods, especially rice and other basic commodities, fuelled by wide gyrations in the exchange rate.

The price of a kilogram of first quality rice, for instance, jumped from 450 riels in mid-March to a high of 3,000 riels on 20-21 March, settling to some 1,800-2,000 riels by mid-April. The prices of fish and meat rose by 80 per cent, keeping pace with general inflationary increases. Such price increases negatively affected the general population, especially urban dwellers, civil servants and other non-farming populations. Although no actual shortages of either rice or other goods were reported, the price increases resulted in some hoarding of rice. In an effort to stabilize the price of rice and to discourage hoarding of rice stocks, UNTAC (with the support of the government of the Netherlands and the World Food Programme) began to sell rice directly in selected Phnom Penh markets.

Such economic instability served to erode popular confidence further, and added to the general climate of uncertainty and fear.

While denying a major impact on the local economy, the UNTAC report concedes that lack of knowledge of local conditions, combined with the presence of profiteering and speculative pressures undoubtedly exacerbated some of the underlying problems of inflation. The report cited the housing sector as an example where the exploitation of various imbalances in the market situation resulted in major distortions, with rents increasing by as much as four times and land prices escalating exponentially in anticipation of a period of rapid economic growth generated by the UNTAC-led peace process. In some cases, UNTAC paid Phnom Penh-based rents at the provincial and district levels, resulting in a dramatic increase in the price of rental accommodation in many parts of the country. As more and more rental accommodation subsequently came on the market, however, rental prices came down to more realistic — but still inflated — levels.

With regard to UNTAC's impact on the local labour market, the UNTAC report conceded that "competition between UNTAC and other international organizations (including NGOs, embassies, and other specialized agencies) for local labour may have contributed to an

element of wage push inflation”.⁹ Competition for local staff was exacerbated by the limited, but nevertheless surprisingly elastic supply of trained Cambodian labour with multilingual or other employable skills. UNTAC established monthly wage payment standards for locally appointed workers — both skilled and unskilled — that were in some cases double the “going” market wage. By setting artificially high wage levels, UNTAC contributed to the “bidding up” of local wage and salary levels.

Salary payments to locally hired UNTAC staff — paid in dollars — comprised less than 1 per cent of UNTAC’s total local expenditure. For the 12-month period from November 1991 through October 1992 local staff salaries totalled only some 2 million dollars.¹⁰ It should be noted, however, that locally hired UNTAC staff earned salaries at least 15 times greater than most Cambodians.¹¹ State sector salaries, in particular, remained very low, and were often several months in arrears. In addition, the depreciation of the riel seriously eroded the purchasing power of civil service salaries. Whereas a Cambodian state salary in mid-1992 averaged 35-40 dollars per month and was adequate for basic family needs, salaries in April 1993 averaged only 8 dollars per month (37,000 riels at an exchange rate of 4,700 riels per US dollar).

UNTAC employment of locally engaged staff had some beneficial effect, in terms of both injecting hard currency into the economy and providing job experience and training, including improved language skills, to impressive numbers of Cambodians in Phnom Penh as well as in the provinces. That some local staff would be “robbed” from other organizations was anticipated, and indeed this process resulted in an expansion of the total pool of trained personnel, as new staff were recruited and trained to fill local staff positions. It might also be argued that, in working for UNTAC, local staff contributed to a higher good (i.e. peace) in the interest of all Cambodians and therefore could be “spared” from their previous duties. To what extent they will be re-absorbed in the workforce, and at levels consistent with their UNTAC responsibilities, remains to be seen.

A more serious impact, however, was the recruitment by UNTAC (and other organizations) of some of the very few trained or experienced Khmer within the Cambodian administrations, particularly at the provincial and district levels. While the same argument can be made about serving a higher good, it must be recognized that such personnel formed the backbone of the country’s administrative structures. Although the total number of such recruits was relatively small, the removal of key personnel from already disintegrating administrative structures could only have had a negative impact upon the delivery of government services. More than a few districts lost their only trained medical personnel to UNTAC, with these desperately needed doctors and medical assistants serving the UNTAC operation as interpreters or administrators. It is unclear how easy or desirable it will be for such personnel to go back to their previous positions at the end of the UNTAC operation.

It is also unclear to what extent local UNTAC staff will be able to find wage employment in the post-UNTAC period, particularly employment that provides wage payments in dollars.

⁹ This represents some 6 per cent of the total civil service wage bill of the State of Cambodia (62,846 million riels) for 1992 at an average October 1992 rate of exchange of 2,000 riels to the dollar (UNTAC, 1992:13).

¹⁰ Such discrepancy, of course, pales in comparison to the mission subsistence allowance (MSA) paid to UNTAC international staff. At 130 dollars **per day**, the MSA approaches Cambodia’s estimated per capita income of less than 150 dollars **per year**.

¹¹ At the same time, the SNC secretariat, including representatives of the four Cambodian parties, has proven itself a very functional and highly productive entity. With hindsight, it was a grave error for UNTAC to agree to base itself in the SNC’s Wat Phnom complex (the former residence of the French Governor during the colonial era), thus depriving the 13 members of the Supreme National Council of a functional headquarters.

Should peace return to Cambodia, the labour market will quickly swell with large numbers of demobilized military personnel, returnees who have been unable to find sufficient agricultural land and have migrated to towns and cities, recent graduates from the country's training institutions, as well as large numbers of already unemployed or underemployed. The great demand for wage employment will also coincide with the phasing out of the 400-day supply of UNHCR/WFP food rations for the returnee population as well as a likely decline in employment deriving from the overbuilt service sector.

New entrants into the local labour force (i.e. ex-UNTAC employees, returnees, graduating students, as well as "retrenched" civil servants) will need to compete for employment in a period when the demand for labour is likely to experience little expansion. The fact that UNTAC staff were paid in dollars will also reduce the likelihood that such staff will feel that they can seriously consider employment with the post-election government, particularly if government salary levels are not immediately scaled-up to cover basic living costs. In the post-UNTAC period, jobs in the service sector can also be expected to decline substantially.

While UNTAC may have little direct responsibility with regard to the above, the United Nations operation has surely contributed to rising expectations on the part of many; these expectations will be very difficult to realize, whatever Cambodia's post-UNTAC future, and particularly if the post-UNTAC period is not characterized by stability and continued economic growth.

Transition to what?

Unquestionably, the peace process, including the UNTAC operation, brought much benefit to Cambodia. However much flawed in its design or compromised in its implementation, the peace process offered Cambodia and its people the best and possibly only hope for an end to two decades of war, suffering and hardship. It brought an end to the country's long international isolation, which was exhausting politically, economically and socially, and permitted the return to Cambodia of many of the United Nations agencies as well as huge increases in the number of other international and non-governmental organizations. The normalization of diplomatic relations has led to greatly increased levels of development assistance and the extension of such assistance to new areas of the country. The peace process also resulted in the successful return of the more than 370,000 Khmer displaced persons and refugees; the introduction of human rights principles and practices; and the establishment of basic understanding and experiences with regard to multi-party democratic practices.

While these — and other — successes cannot be discounted, it can be argued that some features which emerged during the course of the peace process have had negative consequences for the country's rehabilitation and development, and may in some respects have retarded or distorted Cambodia's development, including its social development. For example, the failure to complete successfully the stages of cease-fire, cantonment and demobilization in 1992 made major donors reluctant to release a substantial amount of the aid pledged for rehabilitation assistance at the June 1992 Tokyo Ministerial Conference. The much-reduced peace process has also given rise to increased concern about Cambodia's post-election future. Such concern has certainly delayed further external assistance, including timely assistance from the Bretton Woods institutions. The postponement of aid flows, especially budgetary support which had been anticipated for the transitional period, meant that the existing administrative structures remained grossly under-financed. The absence of significant balance-of-payments support or financial resources to safeguard already minimal levels of social service delivery resulted in a further decline in service delivery in areas such as health and education. Salary arrears and even non-payment of salaries resulted in further absenteeism, and in all of the Cambodian factions resorting to the excessive — and unsustainable — export of forest and other natural resources.

Foreign business interests, the aid community, and UNTAC itself encountered an operating environment almost devoid of regulatory mechanisms, laws or rational systems of control. This vacuum contributed to the rapid introduction and growth of uncontrolled practices with regard to property markets, contracts and other business dealings, and import/export activities, as well as to such problems as traffic control and an exponential increase in prostitution. Elements of Cambodian society, in Phnom Penh as well as at the provincial level, now have a vested interest in maintaining such uncontrolled practices, and their correction, not to speak of elimination, will be a long, complicated and costly process for the newly elected government.

The architects of the Paris Agreements presumably believed that the framework would promote political compromise and national reconciliation. In fact, however, the UNTAC-led peace process was characterized by what can only be described as the politics of negativism. Cambodia's Supreme National Council was hardly a model of national reconciliation. The members of the SNC, as representatives of four competing factions, remained fractious politicians rather than statesmen demonstrating their commitment to the best interests of the Cambodian people. UNTAC allowed the SNC to become mired in a negative political agenda — for example, the preoccupying issues of Vietnamese “foreign forces” and the SNC's lack of executive authority. This negative agenda precluded the development of common policies or compromises and proved antithetical to national reconciliation.

Regrettably, the Cambodian peace process did not succeed in introducing much in the way of policy options for the country, nor did it encourage the competing parties to address policy issues, individually or collectively, in a serious or constructive manner. The lack of policy options and the absence of a proposed legal and regulatory framework will surely handicap the new government.

The matter of dependence is a theme that has considerable significance for Cambodia. It can be argued that Cambodia's rapid economic and social progress over the course of the 1980s was achieved not only in spite of the country's isolation, but directly because such isolation forced the Cambodian people to work together to rebuild their shattered society. It is a sad irony that after those much-straitened times Cambodia has lost the heightened awareness of its responsibility for itself, as well as, arguably, its sovereignty and sense of self-direction. The fact that others now play a major role in setting Cambodia's development agenda, directly and indirectly, means that Cambodia may rather blindly follow a path that does not correspond to the country's development priorities and is unlikely to be in the best interests of the country and its people.

The establishment of a new government through the promulgation of a new Cambodian Constitution will mark the end of both the transitional period and the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia. However, the process of peace-building and national reconciliation as well as continued rehabilitation and reconstruction must continue into a new period of Cambodia's history. It is to be hoped that the future brings Cambodia the peace and stability the country and its inhabitants so richly deserve.

3. The Economic Dimension of Social Development and the Peace Process in Cambodia — E.V.K. FitzGerald¹

Introduction

The object of this chapter is to examine the social consequences of the large and sudden changes in the Cambodian economy over the past five years, and to contribute to the discussion of future development strategy. The peace process in Cambodia can be said to be well under way in view of the democratic elections supervised by the United Nations, the proximate establishment of a new constitution and the real prospect that external support for armed insurrection will be withdrawn.

The central proposition of this chapter is that, despite the painful reconstruction that occurred during the 1980s, the Cambodian economy remains highly fragile. This fragile economy, in turn, underpins a social structure which supports a large proportion of vulnerable groups without itself possessing strong institutional structures which can effectively manage external shock (such as natural disaster, fluctuations in the world economy or external military attack) or domestic conflict. The process of market liberalization in the 1989-1991 period and the massive “expenditure shock” of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) should thus be evaluated in terms of their contribution to reducing the vulnerability of the Cambodian economy. Plans for the future reconstruction process, in turn, should be judged in terms of the restoration of stability to the peasant economy and basic social services, and directly addressing its fragility to external events and critical lack of skilled technical capacity. Only then can planning start for the creation of a sustainable economic growth process, capable of eliminating acute poverty within a couple of generations.

This chapter contains three main elements. First, the economic situation in Cambodia in the 1982-1991 period is briefly outlined in order to assess the social implications of the reform process initiated in 1989. Second, the economic impact of UNTAC is analysed, with particular reference to the effect on market development. Third, some implications for the discussion of future aid programmes are proposed.

The Economic Context

Cambodia is an agrarian society based on an agricultural economy which has suffered terrible shocks during the past three decades. In particular, the various conflicts since 1969 have destroyed much of the rural infrastructure (roads, storage, irrigation, etc.) and even the natural resources: three quarters of the forests lost to defoliation, the changed course of the Mekong and the paddy fields sown with anti-personnel mines. Genocidal conflict and mass migration have all but eliminated the skills required to maintain a modern economy. This has left Cambodia one of the poorest economies in the world and one of the most vulnerable to external shock. The fragility of the economy when the United Nations intervention was initiated in 1991 on the basis of the Paris Peace Agreements (negotiated between 1989 and 1991) had three main dimensions.

First, the economy was sustained by peasant rice production. Agriculture (including forestry and fishing) accounted for approximately half of GDP in 1987 (see table 3.1) and three quarters of material production; if agricultural processing, transport, etc. were taken into account, then these proportions would be considerably higher. Rubber was the main export but decapitalized after two decades of armed conflict, while fishing and livestock production remained unmechanized artisan activities closely linked to the household rice economy. This

¹ The author would like to thank Grant Curtis, George Irvin and Eva Mysliwiec for very useful discussions on the topic, and Peter Utting for constructive editorial comments.

agrarian system had been undermined by the destruction of dykes and roads by bombing; by the mass murder and relocation of the population under Pol Pot; and the subsequent lack of access to modern seeds, fertilizers, tractors, etc. Since 1982 there had been a slow but steady recovery of basic agricultural production, approximating pre-war production levels by 1989 (Cheriyen and FitzGerald, 1989). Industry had been established as recently as the 1960s, only to be abandoned by the Pol Pot régime, and sustained in the 1980s by aid from the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) in the form of fuel, medical supplies, transport equipment and industrial raw materials. Production costs were high, output and quality low. Transport, power and water utilities were also inherited from the past, in poor condition, and barely maintained. Factory manufacturing accounted for no more than 5 per cent of GDP in 1987.

Table 3.1
Gross domestic product by sector at constant 1989 prices (riels millions)

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992 (est.)	1993 (proj.)
Agriculture	106.8	106.2	113.2	112.2	131.5	135.6	140.0
- Crops	57.9	67.2	71.4	65.3	82.3	83.3	87.0
- Livestock	35.4	25.2	29.4	31.1	31.4	33.3	34.0
- Fishing	9.4	10.0	9.4	12.4	13.5	13.9	13.5
- Forestry	4.1	3.8	3.0	3.4	4.3	5.2	5.5
Industry	31.7	40.9	41.3	40.3	43.7	49.7	57.0
- Manufacturing ^a	14.2	18.6	23.6	22.5	24.0	25.2	26.0
- Construction ^b	17.5	22.4	17.7	17.8	19.8	24.5	31.0
Services	69.3	94.4	92.8	94.5	105.0	117.5	130.0
- Distribution ^c	27.7	48.8	46.5	45.7	51.8	60.9	70.0
- Government, administration, health and education	6.9	9.8	9.3	11.0	11.0	11.2	11.5
- Other	34.8	35.8	37.0	37.8	42.2	45.4	48.5
GDP	207.9	241.5	247.3	247.0	280.3	302.8	327.0
Annual GDP growth	---	16.2	2.4	-0.1	13.5	8.0	8.0

Notes: ^a includes electricity and water; ^b includes mining and quarrying; ^c wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants. **Source:** World Bank, 1992.

Second, the external trade sector was (and continues to be) chronically distorted. As 2 indicates, until 1990 trade was dominated by the CMEA and conducted in non-convertible currency (nominally roubles): exports were predominantly rubber latex from some run-down plantations; imports were predominantly petroleum products (there is no refinery in Cambodia), transport equipment, spare parts, industrial inputs, construction materials and so on. The level of CMEA imports was determined by an aid agreement with the Soviet Union, of the order of 500 million roubles in long-term “credits” over each five-year planning period during the 1980s. These agreements came to an end in 1990 due to the crisis in what was then still the USSR. Trade with the region (mainly Singapore and Thailand) is, of course, in convertible currency: this grew steadily up to 1990 as liberalization proceeded, but at a relatively low level (see table 3.2) and without substantial donor support (except for certain international non-governmental organizations [NGOs] — see Mysliwiec, 1993) or commercial bank credit. The outlook for the 1990s was thus of very serious economic collapse and social hardship due to the shortage of imports and inadequate export capacity — the minimal import projection was of 100 million dollars a year in the medium-term as against exports not exceeding 25 million US dollars² (Cheriyen and FitzGerald, 1989). Unless a substantial aid programme were to be established by OECD donors, the outlook for the Cambodian economy in the 1990s was rather bleak.

Table 3.2
Foreign trade, 1985-1991

² All references to dollars are to US dollars.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991 ^a	1992 ^a
Convertible area (US dollars millions)								
- Exports	2.5	6.9	4.7	11.5	17.4	14.6	63.0	70.0
- Imports	4.1	10.2	7.4	16.6	24.1	12.0	243.0	360.0
- Trade balance	-1.6	-3.3	-2.7	-5.1	-6.7	-2.6	-80.6	-290.0
Non-convertible area (roubles millions)								
- Exports	15.3	18.4	22.5	32.5	26.8	20.1	n.a. ^b	
- Imports	92.1	109.2	113.0	110.3	110.9	103.3	n.a.	
- Trade balance	-76.8	-90.8	-90.5	-77.8	-84.0	-83.2	n.a.	

Notes: ^a from 1991 onward, the "convertible area" contains all trades; ^b n.a. = not available. **Sources:** ADB (1991) for 1985-1990; 1991-1992 from State of Cambodia, cited in Irvin (1993).

Third, the Cambodian state itself was built on extremely fragile financial foundations. Taxation income was very low indeed (equivalent to barely 3 per cent of GDP) while the bulk of budgetary revenue was in fact provided by the sale of the goods provided under the CMEA aid programme, or from the profits of the state enterprises sustained by the aid. This was complemented by a primitive but quite effective system of "tribute" taxation of rural districts in the form of compulsory rice contributions, which were used to feed the army and to supplement meagre civil service wages. Indeed the rudimentary rural credit system worked in a similar fashion by distributing fertilizer to rice farmers against post-harvest deliveries. Central government expenditure was of the order of 8.5 per cent of GDP in 1989, of which at least half went on defence, leaving basic health, education and housing services chronically underfunded. Nonetheless, the extremely rudimentary public health and education systems seem to have functioned reasonably well on the basis of local authority efforts supplemented by NGO support at critical points, with equitable access to these fragile facilities — priority being given to war widows, orphans and the disabled. The inevitable effect of the liberalization process from 1989 onwards was to reduce state income from trade and enterprises, but this was not replaced by an effective tax system for the private sector. Meanwhile, the withdrawal of CMEA aid removed well over half of budgetary revenues after 1989, which had taken the form of the riel counterpart funds from government sales of non-military imports on long-term rouble credits.

The consequence was that the government came to rely on monetary emission as the only way of financing an unfunded fiscal deficit of the order of 5 per cent of GDP (see table 3.3). In a fragile economy without proper commercial or financial institutions, the result was inevitably a sudden acceleration in inflation, which jumped from 5-10 per cent per annum in the 1980s to 67 per cent in 1989 and 156 per cent in 1990 (see table 3.4). The social consequences were double: on the one hand the rapid erosion of real wages and the loss of peasant incomes (particularly for rice farmers) at harvest time; and on the other a marked increase in speculative commercial activity and administrative corruption in order to beat anticipated inflation. In addition, particularly in urban areas, traders began to move into "hard" currencies (such as gold, US dollars and Thai baht) as a store of value for savings and to establish stable prices for imported goods. Domestic inflation was accompanied by a rapid depreciation of the riel, which also began to exhibit alarming fluctuations around the trend due to speculative movements of the stock of hard currency in Phnom Penh and the western frontier zones. The total value of the riel money supply in circulation at the end of 1989 was of the order of 25 million dollars, that is, less than 3 dollars per head of population, which gives some idea of the low degree of monetization of the economy as a whole.

Table 3.3
Summary of budget operations (current riels millions)

	Actual		Estimate	Plan
	1989	1990	1991	1992
Total revenues	15,341.9	23,271.7	58,849.4	96,500.0

of which:				
- State enterprises	7,956.8	7,750.8	25,837.0	21,511.0
- Administrative fees	548.9	412.5	1,082.4	362.0
- Taxation	6,171.2	13,294.9	31,080.0	47,327.0
- Foreign currency revenues	---	---	---	26,500.0
Total expenditures	21,945.1	50,208.5	118,110.6	186,367.0
of which:				
- Economic development	8,187.1	12,272.6	25,674.5	27,650.0
- Administration	6,577.5	19,253.5	44,370.0	81,677.0
- National defence	7,180.5	18,682.4	46,766.1	74,040.0
- Contingencies	---	---	1,300.0	3,000.0
Overall deficit	6,603.2	26,936.8	59,261.2	89,867.0
Total financing	6,603.2	26,936.7	59,261.2	89,867.0
External financing	3,717.3	7,284.0	10,494.0	6,500.0
- CMEA commodity aid	3,375.9	6,783.9	7,994.0	5,000.0
- CMEA humanitarian aid	341.4	500.1	2,500.0	1,500.0
Domestic financing	2,886.0	19,652.7	48,767.2	83,367.0
- Central bank note issue	5,000.0	19,500.0	25,900.0	---
- Arrears	-2,114.0	152.7	22,867.2	---

Source: World Bank, 1992.

Table 3.4
Significant economic indicators

				1992
A. Money (riels billions, except as noted)	1989	1990	1991	(est.)
1. Money supply/end year	27.6	69.0	101.7	291.0
2. Currency in circulation/end year	24.8	62.3	92.9	238.0
3. Currency in circulation, as a percentage of the money supply (2/1 x 100)	90.0	90.0	91.0	82.0
4. Increase in currency in circulation	10.8	37.5	30.6	145.1
5. Fiscal deficit	-6.6	-26.9	-59.3	-141.2
6. Increase in currency in circulation as a percentage of the fiscal deficit (4/5 x 100)	164.0	139.0	52.0	103.0
B. Prices and quantities	1989	1990	1991	(est.)
1. Approximate annual inflation (%)	67.0	156.0	127.0	78.0
2. Increase in the volume of goods and services (%)	2.4	-0.1	13.5	6.5
3. Domestic value of 1,000 riels in constant terms	1,000	400	172	51
4. International value of 1,000 riels in constant terms (riels to equivalent US dollars):				
(a) Official	1,000	477	273	133
(b) Parallel market	1,000	417	273	138

Source: UNTAC, 1992.

In 1989, the transition to a market economy was explicitly initiated as government policy, although a gradual process of administrative relaxation had been under way for some time previously. In an agrarian economy, the key aspect of marketization is the reform of land tenure and trading relations in agriculture (FitzGerald and Wuyts, 1988). The process of transferring land titles to the occupiers of land administratively assigned in the early 1980s got under way in 1991 (World Bank, 1992), and although this undoubtedly created greater confidence among farmers, the longer term consequences of introducing transferable titles (e.g. for widows with land titles but little access to labour power and no credit) do not seem to have been considered. Of more immediate importance was the reduction of forced rice deliveries to the state and the unification of the official and parallel rice markets during 1992. Food trade between regions has helped to unify markets.

A major consequence of food market liberalization (combined with excess domestic demand) has been to improve the internal terms of trade: the ratio of agricultural to industrial prices rose from a base of 100 in 1987 to 159 in 1989 and 225 in 1992 (UNTAC, 1992). As table 3.1 indicates, crop production appears to have increased by nearly a half since 1987, as has fishing. Livestock output has not increased significantly, which is hardly surprising in view of the lack of investment by poor farmers under unsettled security conditions. Forestry production has grown rapidly since 1989, responding to the demand for softwood for construction and the logging of tropical hardwoods in the north-west (much of it smuggled into Thailand), none of which is being replaced. Moreover, once the rising cost of transport services and industrial goods is taken into account, the real purchasing power per unit of farm output (the “internal terms of trade”) has probably declined between 1989 and 1992 (Irvin, 1993). Thus despite the considerable increase in the volume of output observed since the reforms, peasant incomes have only risen moderately since 1989. What is more, there is considerable evidence that economic differentiation has increased markedly in the countryside (evinced, for example, in different housing quality) and the urban-rural consumption gap has widened spectacularly since 1989 — let alone differentials within Phnom Penh (e.g. television ownership).

The reforms in the state-owned industrial sector involved the creation of financial autonomy rather than privatization: freedom of firms to set prices being balanced by the elimination of subsidies on production and investment. However, as most of the state enterprises were not financially viable, and their domestic markets particularly vulnerable to cheap imports, bankruptcy was avoided only by access to bank credit allocated by government decision. The central government itself, no longer in receipt of company profits, has tended to run up large arrears with state enterprises such as the electricity supplier and rubber exporters, further undermining their fragile financial status and making privatization itself more difficult — even if a buyer could be found. As table 3.1 indicates, industrial production recovered quickly in the 1987-1989 period, when it was still sustained by imported inputs under the CMEA aid programme, but has stagnated since (World Bank, 1992).

In consequence, real wages in the industrial sectors declined markedly from 1989 onwards, in terms of both the effect of inflation on stable money wages and the gradual withdrawal of non-monetary remuneration such as rice and kerosene rations. The same phenomenon affected the civil service and, when combined with the opening up of urban markets, led inevitably to “moonlighting” in additional commercial activities and to a certain degree of petty corruption. In parallel, the non-traded sectors, including small-scale commerce and personal services such as restaurants and transport (which are not open to competition from imports), started a process of rapid expansion, notably in Phnom Penh.

In sum, at the outset of the UNTAC mission in 1991, the Cambodian economy had the following characteristics:

- Extremely low levels of per capita income, combined with a reasonably equitable local distribution system, especially for the subsistence of vulnerable groups such as widows, orphans and the war-wounded.
- A production system based on relatively unskilled labour and rainfed land, with extreme shortages of skilled labour and modern equipment, organized in small family firms supported by a weak and inefficient public sector.
- An extremely vulnerable external sector, dependent on external aid from the CMEA (mainly oil) which was already being withdrawn due to the collapse of the USSR.

The market reforms under way in 1991 were necessary in order to stimulate peasant production and to generate a degree of competitiveness in the regional market and so provide

necessary imports from exports of natural resource-based products. However, in order to support the transition in the context of such a fragile economy and establish a sustained growth process capable of steadily reducing poverty, a well-designed aid programme was clearly necessary (Cheriyen and FitzGerald, 1989) — which could target support to restore minimal levels of economic and social infrastructure and services. Without such aid, or with inappropriate aid, the transition might easily have been distorted by commercial speculation or the collapse of essential public services. In sum, it is in the context of this very fragile economy, facing a profound fiscal and trade crisis at the beginning of a process of market liberalization, with deteriorating infrastructure and severe skill shortages — let alone the ongoing destabilization by the Khmer Rouge — that the economic impact of UNTAC between 1991 and 1993 must be evaluated.

Economic Impact of the UNTAC Operation

A rigorous assessment of the economic impact of the UNTAC operation is not a simple task, in view of both the analytical complexity of the topic and the lack of reliable statistical data. We can, however, distinguish between the direct consequences of UNTAC measures designed to assist the economy, on the one hand, and the indirect consequences for the economy of the “non-economic” UNTAC activities (particularly local expenditure), on the other.

The capacity of UNTAC to support economic development in Cambodia after its arrival in 1991 was severely limited by the fact that under the Paris accords the Phnom Penh government could not be recognized as a counterpart for purposes of financial and technical co-operation. Nonetheless, efforts were made to support the process of “budgetary consolidation” (UNTAC, 1993) from mid-1992 onwards through the UNTAC monitoring mission. This appears to have involved a process of reducing the already inadequate public expenditure levels (without even reducing staffing, which implied a further decline in real civil service wages and increasing moonlighting and corruption) rather than increasing fiscal income or strengthening administrative capacity. Unfortunately, much of the burden of expenditure reduction appears to have fallen upon capital investment and social expenditure. The result has been that urban services have largely been suspended, while in rural areas health and education provision has declined sharply (World Bank, 1992). Although it is true that UNTAC was not authorized to give financial support to the State of Cambodia government, it could be argued that the United Nations system, either directly or indirectly (through the actions of NGOs or bilateral donors), could have acted so as to ensure sufficient external support to maintain minimal levels of health, education and utilities during the 1991-1993 period without undue political bias. The fact that the main beneficiaries of such facilities would be the poorer strata of Cambodian society made this an essentially humanitarian issue.

In fact, even though the International Monetary Fund (IMF) did not have an official programme with the government of Cambodia, an outline agreement on stabilization policy was reached in mid-1992, largely driven by the Phnom Penh administration’s fear of hyperinflation, and its economic and social consequences. The pledges made by bilateral donors in Tokyo in May 1992 had totalled some 800 million dollars, but no more than 10 per cent of this had been disbursed by mid-1993, and most of this was used for the resettlement of refugees — the most successful aspect of the UNTAC mission. In view of the serious foreign exchange shortage and the evidence of macro-economic disequilibrium in mid-1992, the multilateral agencies agreed to negotiate directly with the State of Cambodia, prior to a constitutional settlement. A World Bank mission visited Cambodia in February 1993, but its loan proposals were blocked by FUNCINPEC (Irvin, 1993). Arrangements were made by the Cambodia Support Group of donors to refinance the 50 million dollar arrears with the IMF. However, the only multilateral agency to effectively initiate disbursements ahead of the constitutional convention has been the Asian Development Bank (ADB), which started to

disburse a 65 million dollar loan in early 1993 for transportation, power, agriculture and education (Irvin, 1993).

Meanwhile, the NGOs already present in Cambodia — to which were added an increasing number of new agencies after 1991 — continued their valuable work (Mysliwiec, 1993). This contribution was mainly confined to humanitarian work with, for example, returnees, the war-wounded and children. Although some support has been given to small-scale economic activities such as household food production, the net contribution to national production and economic stabilization has been very limited in comparison with either the needs of the Cambodian people or the scale of the resources available to the United Nations. It also appears that UNTAC could have given considerably more positive support to the NGOs with experience in Cambodia, even if the geopolitical situation prevented direct co-operation with the State of Cambodia. In fact, with some exceptions, the United Nations agencies seem to have been unwilling either to work through NGOs or to undertake substantive developmental activities themselves.

In consequence, the impact of UNTAC on the Cambodian economy between 1991 and 1993 can be seen as a by-product of its central activities in peace-making, refugee resettlement and electoral organization. This is not the place to evaluate these activities in their own right, although it is clear that they are an essential prelude to the long-run reconstruction of the Cambodian economy and society. It could thus be argued that UNTAC's activities have been of enormous (albeit unquantifiable) economic benefit, in the sense that, without the effective implementation of the Paris accords (or some effective international intervention to neutralize the Khmer Rouge and establish a substantial aid programme), the economy would have collapsed, the civil war would have continued and the country may have been partitioned. The social consequences of the loss of one or more rice harvests, the mass migration of rural populations towards Phnom Penh and Thailand, the collapse of the currency and government services, and the resurgence of epidemic diseases would have been catastrophic.

Nonetheless, there are at least two reasons for looking critically at the economic impact of the UNTAC mission. On the one hand, the scale of the expenditure (and of its subsequent reduction) relative to that of the Cambodian economy is such as to have a significant effect on the future path of the country's economic development. On the other hand, to the extent that UNTAC is the precursor of similar peace-making missions elsewhere in the Third World, lessons should be learnt as to how to ensure that operational expenditure has a positive effect on economic development or at least does not seriously distort the development process.

The relative scale of this expenditure is considerable. The total 1991-1993 UNTAC budget is of the order of 2 billion dollars, but by far the greater part of this is spent outside Cambodia on purchases of equipment and supplies, and on direct salary payments to the home countries of military and civilian employees of the United Nations. The most relevant figure, therefore, is local expenditure. The UNTAC figures for 1992 are shown in table 3.5, indicating a total local expenditure in that year of approximately 200 million dollars. The 1991 figure was much less than this of course (probably not exceeding 100 million dollars), as will have been expenditure in the latter half of 1993 — although the first few months of 1993 saw an acceleration of expenditure in the run-up to the May elections. To this should be added the expenditure by embassies and aid missions that have recently been set up in Phnom Penh.

Table 3.5
UNTAC outlays in Cambodia, 1992 (US dollars millions)*

	January - June	July - December (est.)
1. Staff payments		
- Allowances		
(a) Military	10.9	6.8
(b) Civilian	9.5	96.3

- Military rations ^a	3.7	49.8
- Local salaries	0.2	1.2
Sub-total	24.3	154.1
2. Premises and offices		
- Building and repairs ^b	4.3	10.4
- Utilities	0.1	3.4
Sub-total	4.4	13.8
3. Transportation vehicle repair	0.6	3.0
4. Supplies, etc.	0.0	2.0
TOTAL	28.9	172.9

Notes: ^a Subject to rounding errors; ^a mostly imported; ^b includes infrastructural repairs.

Source: UNTAC, 1992.

Overall, then, up to 500 million dollars may eventually turn out to have been spent within Cambodia during the 1991-1993 United Nations operation. Two rough comparisons may serve to give an idea of the potentially distorting impact of UNTAC expenditure on this small and fragile economy. First, the average daily United Nations allowance in 1992 was the same order of magnitude as the average Cambodian GDP per head per annum. Second, the total UNTAC budget was of the same order of magnitude as total Cambodian GDP for the three years 1991-1993. Little or no thought (let alone concrete planning) seems to have been given to this problem in preparation for the UNTAC mission.

In terms of composition, by far the greater part of expenditure is made up of expatriate staff payments, and much of the rest in buildings and repairs. In both cases, this expenditure affects the local economy in four different ways:

- Through the purchase of imported goods from local traders, leading to an increase in imports and in traders' profits; the effect on employment or local production being minimal.
- Through the direct employment of Cambodians as counterparts, drivers, servants, etc. by foreign missions.
- Through the purchase of local personal services, in the form of meals in restaurants, taxi journeys, car repairs, bars and even prostitution.
- Through the construction, rehabilitation and rental of buildings for offices and residences.

In the case of imports, the impact has been enormous. As table 3.2 indicates, hard currency imports grew 30 times between 1990 and 1992, from 12 million dollars to 360 million dollars; even if previous non-convertible currency imports are taken into account at a realistic dollar/rouble exchange rate, the increase would be of at least six times. The composition of imports also changed radically, away from fuel and raw materials and towards luxury consumer items. What is more, import channels were transformed, away from bulk purchasing by government agencies towards small orders by private traders. This increase in imports appears to almost match the level of UNTAC local expenditure, implying a marginal propensity to import out of local expenditure (either directly or indirectly) of nearly unity. In other words, little or none of this massive dollar expenditure was saved or taxed.

The net benefit to the Cambodian economy of these imports is difficult to assess. The greater part was clearly directly consumed by expatriates and, although it may well be that some part of the equipment left behind will add to Cambodian capital stock, the lack of a coherent purchasing policy or of adequate maintenance facilities makes this unlikely. Moreover, it is clear that although exports of goods and services seem to have risen considerably between 1989 and 1992 (apparently mainly due to increased tourism) the current account deficit in 1992 was three times the 1986-1990 average.

The direct employment of Cambodians does not appear to have been substantial: UNTAC estimates (table 3.5) suggest that no more than 2 million dollars were spent on local salaries in 1992 — less than on transportation vehicle repair. Thus it cannot be suggested that UNTAC directly created employment on any scale, and, in any case, these jobs would not have been maintained after 1993. However, there is some evidence that a large proportion of the very limited number of personnel in the public sector skilled in languages or minimal administrative functions was absorbed into foreign missions — at salaries several times greater than the 10 dollar a month equivalent received by civil servants in the Cambodian public sector. This might be acceptable in the case of a large, stable economy without a fiscal crisis to start with; but, in the case of Cambodia, the failure to ensure that some part of the large foreign expenditure would lead to improved social services or lower inflation was a serious lapse of governance. A simple solution would have been to impose a special transitory dollar customs duty at least on private imports, and ideally a suspension of “diplomatic privilege” tax exemptions for foreign missions as well. An average duty of 10 per cent on imports would have raised 36 million dollars in 1992 and covered much of the budget deficit — sustaining social services and containing inflation.

One of the most noticeable effects of UNTAC expenditure has been on the growth of restaurants, shops and nightclubs to serve the expatriate community, on the one hand, and the construction boom brought about by the reconditioning of existing buildings and the construction of new ones, on the other. This has had the effect of driving up rents on both residential and commercial properties, with two logical consequences: first, urban real estate has become too expensive for any but the more wealthy Cambodian families; and second, a group of rentier capitalists has emerged in both the private and public sectors. Similarly, the expansion of nightclubs and similar activities has created opportunities for quick profits and bribes for some families and for the exploitation of women and children for others. The expectations of the poor have certainly been raised by exposure to international mass consumer goods, but the means of acquiring these is not clearly signalled as being the product of hard work in productive enterprise. Nine tenths of the Cambodian population (see table 3.6) living outside Phnom Penh saw little benefit from the services boom in any case.

Table 3.6
Cambodia's population structure and rate of growth

Age group	Population, end 1992 (millions)			Sex ratio male/ 100 females
	Total	Phnom Penh	Rest of country	
Under 5	2.0	0.2	1.8	100.5
5-14	2.8	0.3	2.5	100.0
15-64	4.6	0.5	4.1	82.0
65 and above	0.3	---	0.3	50.0
TOTAL ^a	9.7	1.0	8.7	90.5

	Estimated population growth (per cent per annum)	
	Cambodia	Phnom Penh
1991	2.8	3.5
1992	4.9	3.9
1993	4.8	4.0
1994	2.8	3.8

Note: ^a de facto: includes returnees and “temporary” migrants. **Sources:** UNTAC Office of Rehabilitation and Economic Affairs and ESCAP estimates.

UNTAC itself argues that the effect of its local expenditure has been largely positive (UNTAC, 1992). On the one hand, it is pointed out that the rate of GDP accelerated from 1991 onwards: from an average of 6 per cent per annum between 1987 and 1990, to 14 per cent in 1991 and 8 per cent in both 1992 and 1993. However, a more detailed examination of the data in table 3.1 indicates that the acceleration in production was to be found in

agriculture arising from the 1989 reforms, while only the rapid expansion of “commerce” (that is, wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants) can be logically attributed to UNTAC expenditure, that is, about one third of the increase in GDP between 1990 and 1993.

Despite the massive inflow of foreign exchange from 1991 onwards which effectively expanded the available supply of goods and services, the rate of inflation continued to be very high. As table 3.4 indicates, the rate of inflation was 127 per cent in 1991 and 78 per cent in 1992, with a similar rate likely for 1993. To some extent this was the effect of excess demand for non-traded goods — particularly urban real estate. But the local money supply also increased very rapidly, rising from 28 billion riels at the end of 1989 to an estimated 291 billion at the end of 1992. The purchasing power of the riel in 1992 had been reduced to 13 per cent of its 1989 value. UNTAC (1992) suggests, in consequence, that the inflation is the responsibility of the Cambodian government. In a literal sense this is correct, but to the extent that the fiscal deficit was created by the loss of aid from the former Soviet Union (rather than increased government expenditure) it could equally well be argued that the lack of budgetary support from Western aid donors during the pre-electoral period was the root cause of the inflation, which thus materially affected (albeit unintentionally) the election result itself.

UNTAC (1992) also suggests that the inflow of private investment in order to build hotels, restaurants, rental properties, etc. will have a positive developmental effect in the long run as it will provide the basis for tourism in the short run and create the right atmosphere to attract foreign investment in manufacturing in the longer run. This claim in relation to tourism seems somewhat exaggerated as most of the facilities lack essential tourist infrastructure (e.g. swimming pools) and in any case are not located at attractions such as Angkor Wat or the beach. In relation to business, the lack of essential infrastructure such as power, telecommunications and transport is far more of a drawback than hotel space; while the rehabilitated offices are more suitable for foreign missions than serious business activities. Moreover, for the foreseeable future the effect of raising prices in the non-traded service sectors and allowing cheap imports to flood traded-goods markets, is to create incentives for investors to move out of (or avoid) production projects — particularly agriculture. This “Dutch disease” effect is often found in very poor aid-dependent economies, such as Mozambique, and greater effort was required by the international community in order to reduce the negative effects. Possible actions include stimulation of local foodstuff production, repair facilities, etc. to meet expatriate demand; payment of expatriate salaries in home countries; making local payments in riels purchased from the monetary authorities; and the transitory duties on imported consumer goods mentioned above.

Finally, UNTAC claims that the resettlement of refugees from the border camps has had a positive productive effect. While the resettlement itself appears to have been very successful in terms of the number moved and the initial establishment of housing and social services, there are some reasons to doubt the sustainability of rural projects containing people with little or no agricultural experience, and with little or no external support in the form of farm credit or rural infrastructure. There is clearly a risk that resettled families will migrate to the cities within a few years. In addition, the process of resettling demobilized soldiers from both armies in the countryside has yet to be initiated.

This degree of economic distortion outlined above was undoubtedly exacerbated by three factors beyond the control of the United Nations authorities: first, the enormous volume of expenditure by the mission in relation to the size and fragility of the Cambodian economy; second, that UNTAC was prevented by its mandate from becoming directly engaged in developmental activities with the State of Cambodia; and, third, the effect was (and was known to be) a temporary one, which promoted speculative private sector response. Nonetheless, these distortionary effects could have been reduced by appropriate planning of its own activities by the United Nations in order to ensure a positive developmental effect. In

particular, a much greater effort could have been made to ensure that expenditure would eventually increase the productive and administrative capacity of the economy — in terms of both capital equipment and trained personnel — once the operation was concluded.

Future Prospects for the Cambodian Economy and Society

The brief discussion presented in this chapter cannot be expected to yield either detailed or strong conclusions. However, some points emerge quite clearly:

- The difficult process of economic reconstruction started in 1982, despite international economic isolation, had established a reasonably equitable economy by 1989, albeit at a low level of per capita income and dependent on aid for imported energy.
- The 1989-1991 reform process was beginning to introduce market forces to consumer markets and foreign trade, to the benefit of the economy although some signs of inequality were emerging.
- The economic impact of the UNTAC operation in 1992-1993 has been highly distortionary and has not contributed significantly to the prospects for sustainable development.
- The proposed aid programme in support of the economic and social reconstruction of Cambodia in the coming decade should take into account the fragility of the economy in designing the scale and modality of financial and technical assistance.

Above all, it is essential to ensure that the cost of adjustment of the economy to world markets is not borne by the Cambodian poor, who have already paid far too heavily for the errors of their rulers and the strategic manoeuvres of external powers.

It is an almost impossible task to suggest how the Cambodian economy might develop in the coming decades, due to uncertainty about a number of key factors, including the durability of the peace-keeping process itself. Nonetheless, any discussion of future aid efforts must use some sort of baseline scenario. The World Bank has attempted such an exercise, which appears to reflect a consensus of possible donor agencies, among which the Asian Development Bank will presumably play a central role. The World Bank exercise sets out two scenarios for meeting core rehabilitation requirements based on alternative assumptions about external financing, the main concern being the possibility of budget deficits widening and a destabilizing inflationary process setting in (World Bank, 1992). By implication, the thrust of the argument is that a stable, open economy is required in order to stimulate private investment (both domestic and foreign) which will be the main growth factor. In 1992 the World Bank estimated that required rehabilitation expenditure (in 1992 dollars) over the 1992-1994 period would total some 931 million dollars. This can be taken as a benchmark for 1994-1996 as very little will have been disbursed by end 1993. Of this about one half would be required for administrative salaries and other recurrent costs, and nearly a quarter for defence. The remainder would be destined for economic development, particularly agriculture, transport, utilities, health and education. On this basis, GDP is expected to grow by nearly 10 per cent per annum, although the per capita increase would be less due to population growth and refugee influx.

The basis of these estimates is not entirely clear, but a key underlying constraint is the relationship between the public sector deficit, external finance and the price level. In effect, a low inflation rate (declining to 10 per cent per annum) is taken as a target, which in turn leads to the permissible fiscal deficit (of the order of 6 per cent of GDP) and the required level of external financing. In so far as considerable support is needed for current administration, only about half of these requirements would be in the form of project aid while the rest would have to come in the form of programme aid. In the absence of external finance beyond that committed to refugee repatriation, the World Bank forecasts a decline in growth (towards 1 per cent per annum) and inflation rising to 100 per cent.

An authoritative critique of these forecasts (Irvin, 1993) suggests that this “rehabilitation scenario” is too optimistic, for at least four reasons:

- It is clearly necessary to revise the growth forecasts downwards and the inflation forecasts upwards to make them plausible.
- There is no provision for building up adequate reserves to finance foreign trade.
- The disbursement rate assumed in the “rehabilitation scenario” seems unrealistic in view of current experience.
- The forecasts of fiscal income are based on unrealistic assumptions about rapid improvements in administrative efficiency.

The scale of the figures involved, even assuming the donors were prepared to provide such funds, raises a serious issue of absorptive capacity. On the one hand, it would be more logical to anticipate a level of imports more in line with the levels experienced during the 1980s, rising to some 200 million dollars a year, and to redirect programme aid towards the essential input needs of agriculture, transport and health. If these were sold locally, the proceeds could be used to finance both basic administration and a rudimentary rural credit system (Cheriyen and FitzGerald, 1989). On the other hand, project aid should be directed towards small-scale schemes adapted to family firms and farmers’ groups. Extreme care should be exercised with large turnkey projects which tend to absorb scarce skilled labour during the construction stage without creating indigenous capacity for design, implementation or subsequent operation.

In order to design an appropriate aid programme leading to sustainable economic development, a considerable amount of prior policy research is necessary. In particular, it is necessary to focus on five topics:

- Thorough studies of the existing capacity and future potential of key economic sectors such as agriculture, transport, energy and utilities — as a prelude to ensuring a positive environmental and social impact of major infrastructural projects.
- Detailed work on the way in which the rural economy and society functions, with particular attention to gender and poverty issues, as a basis of effective interventions.
- Design of a minimal programme in basic health, education and housing, based on popular participation and local resources.
- Creation of a strong policy research and analysis unit in the central government, with a particular focus on aid administration and social issues.
- Ways in which international commercial and financial links might be re-established so as to support sustainable development.

In conclusion, the future of the Cambodian economy depends not only on the successful completion of the constitutional process, but on the nature (perhaps even more than the scale) of donor support for rehabilitation. Effective use of this aid requires a strengthening of Cambodian capacity to use external finance effectively and the careful designing of programmes so as to support the local productive economy rather than displace it. Much can be learned from the effect of UNTAC on this fragile and poor economy; the price of not drawing appropriate lessons will be paid, not only by the people of Cambodia once again, but also by vulnerable groups elsewhere in wartorn regions of the developing world.

4. Cambodia: NGOs in Transition — Eva L. Mysliwiec

Introduction

The signing of the Paris Peace Agreements, in October 1991, opened the door for the reintegration of Cambodia into the world community and for normalization of aid relations with international aid organizations and financial institutions. As a result of these developments, Cambodians and the NGO community have had to confront a very different set of economic, social and political circumstances. These have included the shifting of power both inside and outside government structures with the arrival of the Supreme National Council (SNC) and the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), economic liberalization, the sudden influx of business, a growing presence of aid agencies in the absence of adequate aid co-ordination mechanisms and clear development objectives, the potential for massive aid and limited absorptive capacity, growing inequalities between rural and urban areas, the rape of the country's natural resources and the emergence of new social problems.

During this transition period, preparations for elections and the election itself have taken precedence over people as the primary concern in the implementation of the peace process. The need to justify the United Nations operation as successful has too often obscured humanitarian concerns. International assistance continues to be manipulated by some in the international community for political ends. The expanding war and insecurity in Cambodia remain the greatest obstacles to reconstruction and development. This is the climate in which NGOs work.

At this critical juncture in Cambodia's history, NGOs have an historic opportunity to contribute to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Cambodia by continuing concrete programming and influencing the overall direction of development policy in the country.

Recognizing the complexity of Cambodia's situation and the challenges it offers, NGOs initiated a development dialogue among themselves in the first instance, and then with Cambodian counterparts and the broader aid community in the last two years.

An NGO workshop on development was held in Phnom Penh, in March 1992, offering NGOs an opportunity to search for a common understanding of the Cambodian situation and to identify potential roles for NGOs in the reconstruction process. That was followed by an NGO-sponsored study and policy paper (**NGOs and the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Cambodia**) prepared for the Ministerial Planning Conference held in Tokyo, June 1992, to which NGOs were invited to participate and to make a presentation. The annual meeting of the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC) was held in August 1992 and also identified priorities for NGO work in this transition period. A subsequent report was written by NGOs for the Donors' Review Meeting held in Phnom Penh in February 1993 (see appendix 1). This chapter draws heavily on the above works and reflections and acknowledges the contributions of colleagues in the aid community.

Background

In order to better understand the development issues which Cambodians and the international aid community face today, it is important to put Cambodian development into an historical perspective and to briefly review the complex factors that continue to affect the process of reconstruction and development.

Many Cambodians look back with nostalgia on the post-independence period and the 1960s as a time marked by tranquillity and development. However, development in this period until

the civil war in 1970 was largely a top-down process, flowing down from Prince Sihanouk, the God-king-turned-politician, to his grateful subjects (Charny, 1992). Cambodia was self-sufficient in food and an exporter of rice even though yields per hectare were among the lowest in Asia. The population-land ratio was favourable and natural resources abundant. Industrial development encompassed weak and inefficient state enterprises which produced consumer goods. The government service, noted for its weakness in planning, neglected to involve the poor in their own development (Muscat, 1989:7-13). No indigenous NGO movement was in evidence and few development institutions existed independently of the Prince.

The 1970s will long be remembered by most Cambodians as years of unprecedented horror and suffering. The war and the Khmer Rouge period brought about the total devastation of Cambodia and its people and turned the development cycle back to Year Zero. The most tragic events of this period were the decimation of a quarter of the population and the unravelling of the fabric of society. The educated class of professionals and civil servants especially fell victim to the genocide thus leaving much of Cambodia's essential infrastructure severely handicapped. After the liberation of Cambodia in the late 1970s Cambodian peasants lacked even the most rudimentary necessities, such as traditional rice varieties and draught animals, as they began to rebuild their lives.

The material and human destruction resulting from the war are now well recognized and documented. Less quantifiable and tangible is the moral and spiritual damage to Cambodia's society, culture and psyche which continues to affect people's capacity to reconstruct their country and plan for the future. Those of us who have worked closely with Cambodians over the last decade have witnessed the frequent depression and inability of some Cambodian counterparts to plan and invest in the long-term development of the country or to place their trust in another human being. Having lived through so much trauma and fear, and still threatened by insecurity and war, it seems to some irrational to think beyond surviving the present situation. These experiences, compounded by an extreme shortage of human resources and by the almost total isolation of Cambodia from 1974 to 1989, significantly impacted Cambodians' notion of development and their role in the development process.

At the village level, the events of the 1970s seriously damaged the very concept of community and its traditional structures and support systems. Labour sharing in labour intensive tasks such as transplanting or harvesting of rice, pulling in a catch of fish, or putting up a house had always been a tradition in Cambodian communities before the war. Traditional and clear divisions of labour and roles within the family and within the community also existed prior to the war. The first significant uprooting of people and traditional institutions occurred during the peak of the Viet Nam war, between 1969 and 1974, when the United States dropped more than 550,000 tons of bombs on Cambodia's countryside, scattering nearly half the rural population and killing or maiming over a million people (Mysliwiec, 1988). Many Cambodians became refugees in their own country and fled to Phnom Penh. During this time Cambodia was introduced to the work of NGOs especially their relief work with refugees.

In April 1975, the Khmer Rouge began their own social reorganization plan, emptying the cities, breaking up families and communities and uprooting them from their traditional occupations and origins. They eliminated the Buddhist temples, one of the centres of rural life, and gradually implemented a forced and radical form of communal living. During this time Cambodia had few contacts with the outside world.

When the Vietnamese ousted the Khmer Rouge from power, a new Cambodian administration was established which attempted to reorganize the devastated rural and urban communities into production co-operatives. This strategy initially had many merits in that it was consistent

with traditional labour sharing practices and addressed the problem of the acute shortage of human resources and implements of production. It also helped and protected the most vulnerable members of the community, especially the large number of widows and the smaller number of elderly and handicapped. As the situation improved, however, Cambodian peasants began to reject attempts at collectivization and to resent state pricing structures. These state-imposed practices acted as a disincentive to rural development.

By 1988, and following a pragmatic assessment of its development strategies, the Cambodian government abandoned its policies of co-operatives and collective ownership and introduced a number of reforms including privatization of production and land ownership. These policy changes had a positive impact on the majority of the population but they negatively impacted the vulnerable members of the community. With labour sharing practices almost abandoned and families farming their land individually, many female-headed households have gone into debt to hire contract labour at peak work times or have had to sell their land and move to urban areas. Many women lament the fact that there is no longer a sense of solidarity in their communities and that certain traditional support systems no longer exist (Sonnois, 1990:21). In urban areas, and especially in Phnom Penh where almost 70 per cent of the population has come from the countryside and has never before lived in a city, the sense of community has been even more difficult to restore (Mysliwiec, 1987).

Disarticulation and security concerns since 1979 have made community mobilization for development activities quite problematic. In spite of this, however, many of Cambodia's schools, pagodas and small village level irrigation schemes have been restored through self-help projects and contributions of cash and labour from the communities themselves. Such self-help approaches to rebuilding communities may be **at risk** with the potential arrival of large flows of international assistance.

History and Role of NGOs

The work of NGOs in Cambodia has been shaped not only by Cambodians' perceptions or former experiences with development but by many other factors as well, especially the politicization of aid. That, unfortunately, has been one of the few constants in an ever fluid situation.

As the political and economic environment surrounding Cambodia evolved, there have been many changes in the identity, strategy and institutional structures within the NGO sector. The NGO experience in Cambodia is indeed unique and has been continuously challenged and transformed by the constraints and opportunities which emerged from those constraints.

In an exercise called "River of Life", which was part of an NGO development workshop that took place in Phnom Penh in March 1992, NGOs traced the history of their involvement in Cambodia in terms of seven stages (Anon., 1992).

1954-1970: Independence

After independence from the French colonial powers, Cambodians turned to rebuilding their country. Bilateral aid for development was available in the period 1954-1970 but there were few NGOs working in Cambodia and most were engaged in religious activity. A number of important surveys and studies were initiated during this time (e.g. geological and soil surveys, the Mekong River Commission Study), but came to an abrupt end with the onset of the Viet Nam war.

1970-1975: War

Between 1970 and 1975, Cambodia became the victim of an undeclared war. Bilateral development assistance ended but NGO assistance increased and focused on the provision of emergency relief to the victims of war (e.g. mainly food, medicine and shelter to internally

displaced persons). At this time the United Nations played a minor role in the training of Cambodian government staff.

1975-1979: Khmer Rouge

Cambodians describe this period as the “dark years” of fear, isolation, destruction and genocide in which they were taken back to Year Zero of their development. However, Khmer Rouge propaganda claims that much development took place during their rule especially in the field of irrigation. There was no expatriate (other than Chinese and North Korean) or NGO presence in the country during these years.

1979-1982: The emergency

Following the liberation of Cambodia from the Khmer Rouge, the international community responded generously to the international appeal to avert famine in this devastated nation. Aid, however, soon became a political issue as the majority of Western nations perceived the Vietnamese liberators as invaders and objected to the newly installed Cambodian régime.

A small number of NGOs re-established their presence and emergency programmes inside Cambodia while others began working with the refugee population at the Thai-Cambodian border. Consortia (such as CIDSE and Oxfam) representing many donor agencies were formed at this time in order to facilitate the delivery of assistance.

Faced with the limitations of a severely damaged infrastructure, NGOs found themselves forced into the unusual role of assisting in the rehabilitation of infrastructure in order to be able to respond to urgent emergency needs. NGO activity in this period spanned virtually all sectors of the Cambodian economy and society (e.g. restoration of the urban water supply, the provision of basic agricultural inputs, spare parts for essential industries, Bailey bridges, ferries and other transport equipment, basic medical supplies and hospital equipment, chalk and notebooks). Priority attention was given by NGOs to the health and agricultural production sectors. NGO programmes revolved around “shopping lists” provided by government ministries which in 1979-1980 needed almost everything.

Agency staff were often appointed on short-term contracts thus making continuity and co-operation difficult, even within the agencies themselves. The isolation of the country, however, encouraged co-operation and sharing of the limited information and resources available between NGOs and the few international organizations (namely, UNICEF, WFP, FAO and ICRC) working in the country. The most difficult aspect of the aid operation at this time was the monitoring of the huge amounts of material delivered to the Cambodian authorities due to inadequate transport and communications infrastructure. Flexibility and ability to put humanitarian concerns above political considerations gave the NGOs an edge over United Nations and other multilateral organizations and helped to avert greater disasters.

The main source of Cambodia’s foreign assistance was the “socialist” countries — the Soviet Union, Viet Nam and those of Eastern Europe. But the greatest achievements of the emergency period — the rapid recovery of basic food production and the re-establishment of a national educational system — are attributable to the Cambodian people themselves.

1982-1987: Isolation and reconstruction

In 1982 the United Nations declared the Cambodian emergency over and the international community imposed an aid embargo on the country to force an end to the Vietnamese occupation. The scale of funding for assistance to Cambodia dropped drastically and United Nations agencies whose normal mandate exceeded an emergency role (e.g. FAO) left the country.

NGOs working both inside the country and at the Thai-Cambodian border found themselves in a highly polarized situation. Security concerns became a paramount issue for government authorities as well as for the leaders of the resistance movements contesting power. The Khmer Rouge were reconstituted as a viable fighting force due to the relief efforts carried out by the United Nations agencies and NGOs at the Thai-Cambodian border, and also to the political, military and financial assistance of regional and Western supporters. Thus Cambodia entered a new period of “half peace, half war”.

For the small Western aid community working inside Cambodia (i.e. 15 NGOs plus UNICEF, WFP, ICRC and UNHCR), access to the provinces was increasingly difficult. Government policy towards the aid community became more restrictive. Thus Western NGO personnel could not be directly involved in training and technical assistance despite the obvious need for human resource development. Agencies had no alternative but to channel assistance to the provinces and districts through cumbersome centralized government ministries and departments. Also, agencies focused significant resources on strengthening the central administration in order that essential public services could be extended to the countryside. Many NGOs were uncomfortable with the roles they found themselves in and suffered an internal dilemma as they searched for an appropriate working relationship with the Cambodian government and central technical departments.

NGOs continued to provide reconstruction assistance, but had far fewer resources at their disposal. Work was often disrupted when key counterparts were rotated for defence-related activities. The embargo frustrated many NGO attempts at reconstruction, particularly those of United States agencies. Projects requiring substantial material inputs from industrialized countries were marginalized. At the border, humanitarian assistance was often manipulated by the resistance forces in support of the armed struggle.

Other than the Cambodian Red Cross, no local NGOs existed during this time. However, state-supported “mass organizations” such as the National Women’s Association, the youth associations and the trade unions, at first politically oriented and motivated, played a significant role in civic, health and sanitation education, in literacy campaigns, vaccination campaigns, and in assisting the families of soldiers lost in battle.

By 1986 the political stalemate and the obvious suffering resulting from the war and embargo compelled NGOs to take up a strong advocacy role. It was no longer enough to maintain “band-aid” type reconstruction programmes; education and campaign work on the impact of the embargo became part of an NGO humanitarian strategy for Cambodia. Thus through an international campaign, built on the NGO-commissioned study, **Punishing the Poor** (Mysliwiec, 1988), NGOs were instrumental in mobilizing the public pressure needed to force incremental changes in the Western policy of isolation and embargo. From then to the present the role of advocacy has remained an important element of NGO work in Cambodia.

1988-1991: Liberalization

Three political events had a significant impact on Cambodians and foreign agencies in this period. First, the meeting between Prince Norodom Sihanouk and Prime Minister Hun Sen in France in December 1987 gave Cambodians a new lease on life. This opened the way for a series of complex negotiations lasting more than two years and leading to the signing of the Agreements on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodian Conflict in October 1991. Second, the final withdrawal of Vietnamese troops occurred in 1989. Third, Cambodia initiated a number of internal reforms and adopted a policy of liberalization moving towards a mixed market economy. These events had a favourable impact on the work of NGOs and enhanced their overall effectiveness. In response to these changes some bilateral donors began to channel assistance through NGOs. Also the number of foreign NGOs establishing aid programmes increased twofold. These two facts are not totally unrelated. It also became

politically feasible for the multilateral development agencies, under cover of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to send preparatory study missions to the country.

The opportunities created by the above developments led NGOs to expand their work both in terms of scope and geographic location. NGO staff now moved and worked in the provinces, were directly involved in the training of Cambodian counterparts, and were able to participate more meaningfully in the planning and implementation of programmes and projects. For the first time, they were also able to employ Cambodian staff. NGOs seized the newly created opportunities to initiate community development activities at village level and to slowly shift to what they considered to be more traditional NGO roles.

A shift in activity also occurred at the border. As restrictions on training activities were gradually lifted, agencies working with refugees found it easier to train Cambodian counterparts and to equip them with skills which, after repatriation, would be useful and necessary in the task of rebuilding their country.

With bilateral funding for humanitarian activities becoming available, NGOs which had worked hard to move away from relief work to engage in more mid- and long-term reconstruction and development work suddenly found themselves facing a new dilemma. Having campaigned internationally for the resumption of bilateral assistance to Cambodia, NGOs were now reluctant to be diverted from their normal, more community-based development-oriented agendas in order to implement the large-scale relief assistance programmes of the bi/multilateral donors. NGOs were also concerned about their own limited capacity for managing and implementing larger scale programmes, as well as being used by donors as substitutes for Cambodian institutions or as instruments for implementing the political agendas of the donors.

1992 to date: The transition

In 1992, NGOs looked forward to the long awaited restoration of normal aid relations between the international aid community and Cambodia with mixed feelings of hope and trepidation. Of the peace process and potential influx of aid, it was said, “Cambodia has survived the war; it survived the Khmer Rouge régime; it survived the embargo and the international isolation of the 1980s, but will it survive the influx of aid and aid agencies?”¹ While there is as yet no conclusive answer to this question, initial trends in the reconstruction effort are worrisome.

Lack of peace remains the greatest obstacle to any reconstruction effort. In fact, in many respects the situation has seriously deteriorated since the signing of the peace accords and the arrival of UNTAC; security is much worse and general stability is even shakier. By early 1993, only approximately 95 million of the more than 800 million dollars of international assistance pledged at the Tokyo Ministerial Conference on Cambodia in June 1992 had actually been disbursed, and most of that had been targeted to repatriation-related activities and selected regional interventions. Many donors have been reluctant to provide significant reconstruction assistance prior to the elections for fear of strengthening the hand of the acting government. Thus aid has remained a political tool even in the face of overwhelming need. In the absence of adequate budgetary resources and any significant international assistance, public administration and the delivery of essential public services are disintegrating. The latter have been further weakened by the “brain drain” from public administration — which is no longer able to pay even meagre salaries on a regular basis — to the bi/multilateral institutions and the UNTAC election apparatus.

¹ The source is a staff member of an international aid agency working in Cambodia.

Many NGOs are concerned that Cambodians have lost control over their own development process. This has resulted largely from the shortage of trained personnel, the limited absorptive capacity, the weak planning and management infrastructure, and the lack of a central Cambodian aid co-ordination mechanism.

The role of NGOs in this phase spans a continuum of activities from the delivery of services to large numbers of people, such as returnees or internally displaced persons, to using bi/multilateral funds for the support of small-scale local initiatives. Charny identifies four types of NGO activity (Charny, 1992). Most NGOs carry out a mix of these activities, depending on their individual policies and approaches.

- **Large-scale service delivery using multilateral and bilateral funding.** Many NGOs are already assuming this role in the context of the repatriation effort from the border camps. The NGOs are contracted by the funding agencies to provide specific services to a target population. The ability to deploy staff rapidly and to reach isolated villages more easily gives NGOs a comparative advantage over larger agencies in this type of programme.
- **Service delivery in co-operation with government structures.** This type of work still involves working through local structures. The scale and approach focus on co-operation with and capacity building for Cambodian counterparts, especially at the province and district levels. This role will become even more important during the reconstruction phase following elections.
- **Community development.** Due to political constraints, NGO experience with community development in Cambodia is relatively short and untried. However, most well-established NGOs have a wealth of experience to draw upon from other developing countries, especially in the Asian region. The community development programmes thus far attempted in Cambodia initially involved both training and support for village level government personnel to become facilitators of community development activities, and work by NGO staff to establish independent community organizations which can implement self-help projects. NGOs have a comparative advantage over both government and bi/multilateral aid agencies in facilitating this process.
- **Development of local NGOs and civic and popular organizations.** Until 1992, the NGO community in Cambodia consisted, with one exception, of foreign implementation and funding agencies. Yet many of the NGOs working in Cambodia (see appendix 2) are normally not implementing agencies themselves. In other developing countries they usually provide funds to indigenous initiatives and work through local NGOs. In 1992, however, over 20 local community groups focusing on human rights, women, welfare, education and rural development, organized themselves and were officially recognized by the SNC and most international organizations as Cambodian NGOs. Additional training and financial resources will be necessary for this type of institution building. Support of local initiatives, civic and popular organizations, is another area where NGOs potentially could have an edge over government or bilateral and multilateral institutions.

In terms of their own commitments, NGOs will largely continue to focus their programmes on the production and service sectors which involve the majority of the Cambodian population: agriculture (including hydrology, fisheries, forestry), health, education and rural water supply. However, their programmes will gradually shift from assistance to central government institutions towards provincial, district and village level initiatives. Integrated community development and credit projects will figure prominently in many of their programmes. Women's issues, environmental concerns and training of local counterparts will likely command greater attention and resources.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the NGO Sector

Figure 4.1 illustrates strengths and weaknesses in the NGO sector as observed by some NGOs and their Cambodian counterparts.²

Figure 4.1 Strengths and weaknesses of NGOs, 1979-1992	
Strengths	Weaknesses
Commitment to Cambodian counterparts; willingness to invest in training	Tendency to take a project-by-project approach; lack of a co-ordinated approach to capacity building
Commitment to work at grassroots level as opportunities to do so became available	Tendency to re-invent the wheel and undervalue local knowledge and skills
Application of humanitarian criteria to programme decisions	Reluctance to give up control
Flexibility to respond to needs based on humanitarian criteria	Failure to convert personal contacts into institutional linkages for policy dialogues
Willingness to do advocacy work on behalf of the Cambodian people	Weak managerial capacity and lack of commitment to evaluation and analysis of experience
Ability to access wider networks outside Cambodia for training and exposure of counterparts and for influencing policy	Limited strategic perspectives and consideration of macro analysis
Ability to provide quality technical assistance, especially in the areas of health and hydrology/rural water supply	Competition between NGOs and tendency to be territorial; insufficient attention to sustainability of projects
Support of local initiatives and the establishment of local NGOs	Tendency to by-pass government institutions and underestimate the importance of linkages

The values and strengths traditionally associated with the work of NGOs in developing countries are reconfirmed in the NGO-Cambodian experience of the last 12 years: commitment to people, first and foremost; commitment to strengthening of local capacity; attention to process; and humanitarian principles even in the midst of civil conflict. At a time of tremendous need and when Cambodia was denied rehabilitation and development assistance by most of the international community for political reasons, a small group of NGOs established aid programmes in Cambodia and was the only link Cambodia had with the Western world.

There are significant gaps in the field of NGO evaluation. It is unfortunate that a study has never been conducted to assess the collective achievements of the NGOs and the impact of their work on Cambodian society and culture. This fact in itself reflects a traditional weakness of NGOs; adequate resources and commitment are often not available for this important aspect of their work. Lack of adequate recording systems among NGOs themselves and the frequent turnover of staff have also been an impediment to evaluation. More evidence is available on a sectoral basis where certain NGOs have built up an expertise in a particular area of work such as water supply, prosthetics, animal health, hydrology or health. A number of sectoral committees are in place for the co-ordination of information between those agencies working in a particular sector. This should facilitate the process of assessment.

² In March 1992, 60 staff and Cambodian counterparts of the NGO community in Cambodia held a development workshop in Phnom Penh to search for a common vision of development. Some of the strengths and weaknesses of NGOs listed in the table are drawn from the workshop proceedings, **Forging Cambodia's Future in Partnership**.

It could be useful for NGOs in future emergency situations to understand the benefits or disadvantages of working through consortia organizations. At the end of the emergency period in 1982, many consortia disbanded with a number of their members discontented over the experience and choosing to continue their work in Cambodia on an individual agency basis.

Between 1982 and 1990, the resources available to NGOs dwindled considerably. NGOs were no longer able to meet the Cambodian need for material supplies and were also unable to begin village level work due to political constraints. Consequently, NGOs accepted top-down approaches to provincial and district level work as the only way to benefit rural people. This was perceived as both a constraint and an opportunity but many agencies were still uncomfortable with the role.

The issue of working relationships between NGOs and governmental institutions has plagued agencies in many developing countries. Many NGOs are reluctant to work with government. Part of the obstacle rests in attitude and traditional stereotypes that exist even today; namely, the feeling shared by some NGOs that only **they** are genuinely committed to assisting the poorest of the poor and, conversely, that governments, by nature, cannot have similar concerns or motivation.

Other factors contributing to the wariness of working too closely with government can be taken more seriously. Some NGOs are concerned about being co-opted by governments and losing control over their wider agendas. Others may not want to substitute the responsibility of governments for addressing the needs of the poor. In the present Cambodian situation, where government is unable, for lack of resources, to address the needs of the poor, NGOs are playing a substitution role. This becomes a problem when bi/multilateral donors use NGOs for delivery of services rather than investing in strengthening of existing local structures and increasing Cambodian capacity to do this. In such cases some NGOs have become parallel structures and contribute to the undermining of local infrastructure.

The nature of the NGO-Cambodian administration relationship over 12 years has been an interesting one. As a consequence of the absence of bi/multilateral development agencies and most Western diplomatic missions, NGOs have probably never before enjoyed such high level access to government officials as they did in Cambodia in the 1980s. Yet, with Soviet and Vietnamese policy advisers in virtually all sectors of the Cambodian administration, NGO staff did not really have an opportunity, despite their access, to meaningfully influence the macro-policy directions of the Cambodian government. Nor is it obvious that they would have had the capability to do so.

NGOs worked closely with mid-level Cambodian counterparts in the implementation of individual projects and through such personal and professional contacts helped to lay the ground for an appreciation of alternative approaches. Cambodian society and culture are characterized by complex moral codes and hierarchical relationships. Recognition or neglect of these aspects may account for the success or failure of various projects. In the period prior to liberalization NGOs paid much attention to the development of relationships and process. Converting those personal contacts into institutional linkages will be crucial particularly in light of the administrative changes which will most likely take place in the post-election period. Today, the pressures of large-scale, bi/multilateral funding dictate the demand for quick impact projects and visibility at the expense of developing relationships and processes that ensure Cambodian participation. There is ample evidence available in development literature to confirm the folly of such strategies.

It is widely recognized in development circles that NGOs work best at the micro-development level and at innovating and developing approaches for wider replication by government.

Conversely, it is equally well known that NGOs tend to have limited strategic perspectives. Too often, NGOs in Cambodia have missed opportunities to make strategic links with policy formulation. For example, the agricultural sector in Cambodia offered a number of opportunities to build a better understanding of the problems of high-tech, capital-intensive, centre-based development strategies which were being encouraged by some Ministry of Agriculture staff. NGOs supported such projects and attempted within the projects to experiment with alternative strategies in the hope of influencing a change in thinking and a commitment to more sustainable approaches. But the isolation of the individual projects and the weakness of NGOs in developing a collective analysis worked against significant NGO influence at the policy level in this as well as other areas of NGO activity.

One of the many challenges facing the NGO community in Cambodia today is how to enhance their collective capacity to analyse their experiences and to articulate those analyses for policy formulation. An equally important task involves bridging the micro-macro gap, i.e. moving from a micro approach towards larger systems and policy relevance.

Because of prolonged international isolation and embargo, Cambodian policy makers have had limited exposure to alternative development models and strategies. Hence, the role of NGOs vis-à-vis government is crucial, since NGOs can make a vital contribution to strengthening popular participation in processes of social transformation. However, NGOs will need to identify and develop mechanisms for working with government in ways that will enhance the effectiveness of both.

A recent trend, and weakness, evident among some NGOs in their work at the local level (especially in the period following liberalization) is the tendency to ignore the larger context in which they operate and the failure to recognize the extent to which the communities they serve are parts of systems strongly influenced by other agencies and forces. Some isolated rural development projects which rely heavily on modern agricultural technologies, for example, do not take into consideration the broader macro-economic factors, such as marketing and pricing systems, which can influence their viability. Also, ignorance of traditional roles and divisions of labour, as well as of traditional relationships between communities may lead to new forms of oppression and increase the burden on some members of the community, usually women. Equally inappropriate are strategies that encourage village communities to adopt “Western” notions of self-reliance and independence, when a development strategy based on the concept of interdependence between villagers and their government development institutions would be more appropriate and realistic in terms of long-term sustainability. In the Cambodian situation it was not uncommon, in the period after the signing of the peace accords, for some bi/multilateral donors to encourage their client NGOs not to co-operate with the Cambodian administration which the donors did not support. Even more distressing was the fact that some NGOs accepted such conditions from their funders.

Emergence of Indigenous Organizations

As mentioned earlier, socio-political factors are crucial in the development of local grassroots organizations and NGOs. The period 1979-1989 is notable for its apparent lack of indigenous, non-governmental institutions and civil society, as known in a “Western context”. Under the centrally planned Cambodian system of the early 1980s, the National Women’s Association, the youth associations and the trade unions, all with direct links with the Party apparatus, were the only people’s organizations to speak of. The Cambodian Red Cross was the only relatively independent and autonomous institution with a mandate for helping the vulnerable members of society and the victims of disaster.

There were neither any independent political parties nor an independent media. No **apparent** popular mechanisms for enforcing accountability of government and business to the public

interest seemed to be in operation. The qualifiers, “Western context” and “apparent”, have deliberately been used in our discussion here as it is not unusual for Westerners to assume that the bulk of the population in other societies has neither power nor means to express power unless the mechanisms or institutions are similar to those of Western industrialized societies. How much does the expatriate community working in Cambodia really know about the traditional organization of Cambodian society and its traditional power structures, about its risk aversion strategies and coping mechanisms? How much of the traditional systems remain or have changed due to the events of the last two decades is a critical question which must be considered by those who engage in institution building activities and social transformation.

The picture of Cambodian society today is very different from that of a year ago. Following the liberalization of the late 1980s and the signing of the peace accords, 20 political parties have registered for the election; a number of independent media exist, several local human rights organizations are currently active and over 20 indigenous “NGO type” organizations and professional associations have officially been recognized by the SNC and Cambodian government. While these are encouraging signs, there are still numerous constraints in the development and support of local organizations. First, Cambodia has limited experience with democracy. Second, Cambodia has had limited exposure to traditional NGO work and approaches. This is as true of the Cambodian administration as of some of the leaders of newly established indigenous associations. The NGO experience in Cambodia in the period of the 1980s is truly unique and far from the norm. Third, the great sense of insecurity and fear prevalent in Cambodia today generates mistrust and lack of confidence between Cambodians and Cambodian groups. Thus the motives of organized groups become suspect (even more so when those groups are organized by overseas Cambodians) and the interest that the foreign community takes in newly emerging local organizations further places them in a fragile and vulnerable position. The limited managerial skills of many of the local organizations are another constraint.

While the development of local organizations needs to be nurtured and supported, great caution must be exercised, especially in the absence of more knowledge concerning traditional forms of social organization and power. The level of conscientization of indigenous groups may differ widely from that of foreign agency staff acting as catalysts. There is always the danger that foreign agencies unintentionally manipulate and impose their own ideological frameworks and priorities on local groups by promoting, for example, Western models of “empowerment” or “participatory” development, or Western economic frameworks. The likelihood of this happening in the Cambodian context is quite high, especially where the process of “critical consciousness” of the local people has not yet had the time and opportunity to ripen and mature (Rahnema, 1992). The large-scale funding potentially available for the support of local initiatives and organizations also raises some concern, especially when the availability of funding becomes the primary factor, if not the motivating factor, for starting a local organization. Here, too, there exists a wealth of experience to draw upon from other developing countries. Such experience tells us that the key to a group’s organization and sustainability is the mobilization of its own resources, under its own initiative. Strategies for external support should be long term and appropriate to the various stages of the group’s organization and proportionate to the group’s own efforts and capacity. Successful experiences also show that the development of local organizations is a process that takes many years. In the Cambodian context, it is not too early to ask whether the pressures of foreign funding and priorities will upstage the efforts of the emerging local movement to define its own agenda and objectives and pursue them in a sustainable manner.

Role of Overseas Cambodians

When speaking of local/indigenous initiatives it is important to note the significant contribution to reconstruction made by the overseas Cambodian community once it became possible to travel to and communicate with Cambodia. Cambodian individuals and

associations have mobilized resources within their communities abroad for the reconstruction of schools, pagodas and clinics, and for the provision of essential medicines, school supplies and equipment.

More recently some overseas Cambodians have been returning to explore economic investment opportunities while others have returned to offer their expertise in a number of sectors and via various bi/multilateral agencies and NGOs. With no shortage of available funding, others have started their own local NGOs and associations.

Great efforts have been made by a number of international agencies to identify and develop data bases of overseas Cambodian experts. Such research has revealed that there exists a rich pool of human resources outside of the country, whose skills are currently lacking in Cambodia today. Poorly co-ordinated attempts by international agencies³ to attract Cambodian experts back to Cambodia in order to strengthen local capacity and infrastructure have so far met with limited success. There are several reasons for this: the uncertain political climate, poor security, difficult living and working conditions are disincentives to many overseas experts who are already well established in their countries of resettlement and in their jobs abroad. Furthermore, the State of Cambodia government has been reluctant to accept overseas Cambodians in its administration. Political considerations, resentment, wage disparities and fear of being displaced by persons with more skills and training are possibly at the root of the administration's reluctance to accept overseas Cambodians as partners in reconstruction.

While the advantages of involving overseas Cambodians in reconstruction and development programmes are obvious, the disadvantages are no less. Many overseas Cambodians have become alienated from their own culture and lack appreciation of all that has been accomplished by Cambodians in Cambodia over the last 12 years. The scale of salaries and lifestyles to which many of them have become accustomed would make it difficult for them to accept work on an equal basis with their local counterparts. Western education and training may not necessarily help them to adapt their knowledge and skills to the local situation. On the other hand, there are a number of overseas Cambodian experts who have reintegrated successfully into the current situation and are carrying out their work with sensitivity and dedication.

In view of the tremendous shortage of skills and trained technical personnel in Cambodia needed to implement the reconstruction and development agenda, too little concerted effort and resources have been devoted to exploring ways of tapping the wealth in human resources represented by the Cambodian community abroad.

NGO-Bi/Multilateral Relationships

The historical circumstances of Cambodia have brought the international aid community into higher levels of interaction than perhaps exist in other countries.⁴ During the period of Khmer Rouge rule, no foreign agencies were present in Cambodia and the country was virtually cut off from the rest of the world. In 1979, after the liberation of Cambodia, when the plight of the Cambodian people was exposed by the media, the international community responded generously to appeals for assistance. This led to a sudden influx of NGOs and multilateral agencies and a large emergency relief operation. The urgent needs of famine stricken Cambodia compelled agencies to look beyond their traditional mandates and to forgo the normal evolution of agency roles and hierarchy. While the relief operation had its share of mismanagement and duplication of effort, NGOs generally accepted the leadership roles of UNICEF and ICRC, the "lead agencies" during the emergency period. Multilateral and

³ Tokten and IOM are the two largest and better known programmes established in Cambodia for facilitating the return of short-term and long-term Cambodian experts. Some embassies and international NGOs are also recruiting overseas Cambodians for some of their programmes.

⁴ The following history of NGO/multilateral interaction is largely drawn from Charny (1992).

international agencies and NGOs met in Phnom Penh on a weekly basis in a spirit of openness for information sharing, co-ordination and working towards a common goal.

When the emergency period was arbitrarily ended in 1982, the number of multilateral and international aid agencies was reduced. Apart from a dozen NGOs, only UNICEF, ICRC and WFP remained. The weekly inter-agency meetings continued but inter-NGO co-ordination and co-operation took on more significance. Thus sector working groups were established in key areas of NGO activity.

At the Thai-Cambodian border, the United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO) took over the “lead agency” functions from UNICEF and ICRC. Their mandate addressed the provision of humanitarian assistance to displaced Cambodians in the border camps. UNBRO co-ordinated all humanitarian activities at the border, and expected NGOs to work within UNBRO-established policies and structures as well. Most NGOs were contracted by UNBRO to provide essential services in the camps. Thus, a co-operative working relationship was established at the border between NGOs and UNBRO.

Although co-operation best characterizes the relationship between NGOs and multilateral agencies, tensions and differences existed particularly as the political stalemate and isolation dragged on. NGOs expressed strong opposition to the punitive policy of embargo against the state of Cambodia, to the unmonitored UNBRO assistance to Khmer Rouge-controlled camps at the Thai-Cambodian border, and the overall manipulation of humanitarian aid by the international community in order to achieve political objectives. NGOs resented the sporadic efforts of the specialized institutions monitoring the humanitarian situation in Cambodia on behalf of the international community to draw on NGO expertise without in any way changing the fundamental political framework for aid to the Cambodian people.

With the expectation of a political solution to the Cambodian problem at the end of the 1980s NGO-bi/multilateral co-operation and co-ordination initiatives were renewed. A few bilateral donors began to utilize NGOs to channel their assistance to Cambodia and a number of United Nations assessment missions drew on NGO expertise and included NGO representation in their missions.⁵ At this time, the NGO community encountered the strange phenomenon of United Nations agencies or institutions, without as yet established programmes in Cambodia, attempting to assume the role of co-ordinator for already well-established NGOs. This became a source of friction and resentment.

The NGO community itself underwent significant changes in the period of liberalization and transition. This coincided with a sudden influx of new NGOs drawn to Cambodia by the more varied opportunities for programming and the availability of new funding.

As the numbers of NGOs increased, the structure of the weekly inter-agency meetings as the main mechanism for co-ordination became unworkable. In order to keep up with the changes within the NGO community itself, NGOs felt compelled to find a new mechanism to facilitate information sharing and improve overall inter-NGO co-operation. Thus, in August 1990, NGOs founded the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC) whose membership today represents more than 60 per cent of NGOs with resident staff in Phnom Penh. Also the sectoral working groups were expanded and strengthened, with groups meeting every month to address common concerns in the areas of agronomy, animal health, community development, education, forestry, rehabilitation of the handicapped, repatriation and women in development. The major weakness of most (though not all) of the sectoral working groups was the failure to include Cambodians.

⁵ This refers to the UNDP country assessment mission of 1989; the UNDP mission to analyse the NGO experience in 1990; the UNDP Infrastructure Survey of 1990; and the UNDP Rural Integration Strategy Mission in 1992.

An exemplary but all too rare model of inter-agency/Cambodian government co-ordination mechanism is the Coordinating Committee (CoCom) in the health sector. CoCom brings together senior Ministry of Health personnel, staff of the multilateral and international organizations involved in the health sector, and three NGO representatives of the sectoral working group (known as MediCam). CoCom provides a forum for international organizations and NGOs to discuss policy issues, but recognizes the government's role as the developer of policy in the health sector. CoCom also serves the Ministry of Health in an advisory capacity and at times shields the Ministry from having to deal with the unending missions and sometimes conflicting advice of individual agencies. This type of forum allows disagreements over policy direction to emerge in an open dialogue.

With the signing of the peace accords, inter-agency relations became considerably more complex and difficult. A number of mechanisms were established by the aid community to facilitate aid co-ordination prior to the elections. The "Joint Support Unit" established by UNDP and UNHCR to co-ordinate repatriation-related activities evolved into what is now the Donor Consultative Group (DCG). The DCG is an informal consultation mechanism which includes UNTAC staff with responsibility for rehabilitation and the economy, the multilateral agencies, the major bilateral donors and three NGO representatives selected by the CCC. Cambodian representatives of the SNC who are also included in the DCG have participated only sporadically. Originally to be held on a monthly basis, DCG meetings are now less frequent and appear to be more of an opportunity for information sharing on the part of the UNTAC Rehabilitation Office rather than a forum for substantive discussion on humanitarian and co-ordination issues. Donors have generally shown themselves to be reluctant to share, participate and discuss. At the provincial level some co-ordination takes place through informally organized sectoral working groups established by various agencies.

Perhaps the most important contributions of the UNTAC Rehabilitation Office to date are the work leading up to the elaboration of the Secretary-General's Appeal for Cambodia, the mobilization of international donors to respond so generously to the Appeal and the monitoring of international assistance since the signing of the accords. Its role of international aid co-ordination and especially ensuring a balanced distribution of that aid is weakened by inadequate resources and the individual agendas of various donors, as well as by the lack of any co-ordination mechanism from the Cambodian side. A new international aid co-ordination body, the International Committee for the Reconstruction of Cambodia (ICORC), adopted by the Tokyo Ministerial Planning Conference of June 1992 will take over the role of co-ordination from UNTAC after the Cambodian elections. As an international body ICORC will have its own limitations; there can be no substitute for a Cambodian mechanism to address the day-to-day functions related to the planning of international assistance, project screening and co-ordination. Such a body, working in close consultation with the international organizations and NGOs, could identify priorities for international assistance and ensure that the assistance provided responds to national priorities.

Initial Trends in the Reconstruction Effort

A significant (and perhaps unprecedented) step in NGO- bi/multilateral relations was the inclusion of NGO representation in the two international donors' conferences and acceptance of NGO participation in the future long-term aid co-ordination body, ICORC. This recognizes the substantial experience of NGOs in Cambodia and the importance of their future role in the reconstruction of Cambodia. The challenge to the NGO community created by this opportunity is twofold: (a) how to enhance the capacity of NGOs to analyse their collective experience in key sectors and articulate policy options; and (b) how to develop the capacity to monitor and constructively criticize the process for planning and implementing the large-scale rehabilitation and reconstruction effort.

The biggest challenge for the bi/multilateral agencies will be to “overcome the tendency to see NGOs simply as means to ends determined by the large donors” (Charny, 1992). While many bi/multilateral donors often speak of the importance of including NGOs in policy discussions or in the planning and design phases of projects, in reality the picture is quite different. For many donors NGOs are convenient tools for implementing projects but they are peripheral to determining development strategies. A number of recent developments signal a disturbing trend in certain bilateral assistance programmes. A number of donors have chosen to ignore the long-established programmes of NGOs in particular areas and are designing large-scale projects that may completely wipe out 10 years of NGO and Cambodian efforts and investment. Such is the case, for example, with a newly proposed large-scale irrigation scheme in Prey Veng province, in an area where for many years local communities have been involved in small-scale, community-based and **manageable** irrigation works. In another case, a number of NGO agricultural extension/training projects in Kompong Speu province are being “taken over” by a Japanese agricultural programme without any prior contact or consultation with the NGO community which has a long history of involvement in that particular sector in that province. Duplication of efforts, especially in the provision of equipment to local institutions is also a frequent practice which could be avoided by talking to the agencies involved in the area. Similarly, some “quick impact projects”, designed to stimulate community activities, sometimes undermine local initiatives and longer term self-reliance efforts. A project to provide agricultural implements, for example, has recently undermined the efforts of a local community and NGOs to establish a tool producing cottage industry.

With the establishment in Cambodia of the bi/multilateral agencies, NGOs anticipated a need to change roles and welcomed the opportunity to shift to more community-based programmes. They did not, however, anticipate the extent to which their efforts would be diverted from their own programme objectives to “damage control” activities as a result of the irresponsible interventions and priorities of other donors. The Japanese government’s shipment of pesticides to Cambodia is a case in point and a serious cause of concern. NGOs find themselves unable to persuade either the Japanese government or the Cambodians to consider alternatives to control the potential damage to Cambodia’s farmers and to the environment. Another example, though somewhat different in nature, relates to the repatriation of more than 300,000 Cambodian returnees from the Thai border camps. UNHCR and the collaborating agencies are to be commended for the success of a highly difficult and complex operation. The relocation of returnees has been a major accomplishment but it is not an end in itself. The more formidable task, left for others to perform, is the reintegration of these returnees and ensuring that they possess the necessary resources, materials and skills to become productive and self-sufficient. That greater effort towards these ends during the decade-long encampment was prohibited and constrained is yet another facet of the Cambodian tragedy. It remains to be seen whether the bi/multilateral agencies and donors will show the same commitment, flexibility and responsibility towards the reintegration of returnees as they did for their relocation.

The above examples illustrate the pressing need for a mechanism that will not only monitor the performance of the aid donors and community but that will hold it accountable to, first, the Cambodians and, second, the international community as a whole.

Another unfavourable trend emerging from the rehabilitation and reconstruction effort is the tendency to relegate Cambodians to victim status, as persons being ministered to rather than being treated as partners. Also, with information, technology and expertise concentrated within the expatriate agencies, Cambodians find themselves more and more alienated from the entire development process. More efforts could be made to translate key documents into Khmer. The alienation of Cambodians from the development process and the creation of

parallel structures by the aid community have further undermined the fragile infrastructure and capacity to deliver essential services.

A number of imbalances can also be observed in the delivery of international assistance. Cambodians, in fact, may be in the process of losing sovereignty and control over their own development process. Since the Tokyo Ministers' Planning Conference it has primarily been the donors who have dictated where, to whom and how aid is to be delivered. Thus disproportionate assistance has gone to returnees versus the larger sectors of Cambodia's poor population. Regional imbalances have been created by the fact that donor aid has largely been targeted to three north-western provinces and, within those provinces, to areas of returnee relocation. Donor disbursements have tended to favour relief projects rather than longer term reconstruction and development programmes. Rural and agricultural sectors, which employ a majority of the Cambodian population, and the social sectors have virtually been overlooked by the donors, as have women and other vulnerable groups. Donors have circumvented attempts by UNTAC to co-ordinate, prioritize and facilitate a more equitable allocation of resources. In this process Cambodians have been relegated to the side-lines, a role which some of them have too readily accepted.

The events of the past two decades have left Cambodians in a very vulnerable position vis-à-vis the international aid and financial institutions. As a result of lack of information and options, Cambodians have often felt compelled to accept whatever aid is offered even though it may not correspond to their own development objectives. In-depth sectoral studies have not yet been undertaken. By assessing needs and outlining various options and their consequences, such studies could provide Cambodians with the choices and information necessary to make informed decisions regarding development priorities and strategies and thus strengthen their participation and leadership in the development process.

NGO Priorities and Potential

The history of NGO involvement in Cambodia has been unique but offers still greater challenges and opportunities in the future. NGOs have a number of advantages in their favour: (a) a wealth of experience in societal reconstruction from around the world, (b) well-established relationships with Cambodian officials based on trust, (c) respect from key actors in the bi/multilateral agencies, and (d) unprecedented access to national and international aid co-ordination and policy-making bodies. Thus equipped, NGOs are uniquely suited to helping Cambodian counterparts develop and implement appropriate and alternative models of development.

In this context, the following priorities for NGO programming are relevant:

- **Strengthen local capacity.** The international aid community widely recognizes the need to strengthen Cambodian capacity to manage the development of the country. NGOs must expand the opportunities for the training of Cambodian counterparts to plan and manage their own projects. Greater efforts must also be made to encourage and facilitate Cambodian participation in sectoral meetings and other co-ordinating and policy-making bodies.
- **Support sustainable models of development.** NGOs should largely focus on the production and service sectors which involve the majority of the Cambodian population: agriculture (including hydrology, fisheries and forestry), rural water supply, health and education. NGO programmes are gradually moving away from assistance to and through national structures towards province, district and community initiatives. At village level, food production, family health and education should become the focus of integrated community development programmes. Rural credit is likely to be a component of many of

these programmes. Sustainability of projects and environmental issues, as well as the special needs of women must also be addressed through these programmes.

- **Support local initiatives.** NGOs have been instrumental in encouraging local initiatives and supporting the emerging indigenous movement. Such efforts can be expanded but must be approached with sensitivity and a long-term commitment.
- **Foster links with regional and international networks.** As civil society develops in Cambodia, NGOs will be well placed to foster links with counterpart institutions in the region and internationally. Because of the prolonged isolation, Cambodians have had few opportunities for exposure and networking. Reintegration of Cambodians into the world community is important not only for Cambodians to learn from the experiences of others but also for the international community which has much to learn from Cambodia's experience. Facilitating contacts for local organizations with similar ones elsewhere in South-East Asia will be valuable.
- **Address the needs of vulnerable groups.** NGOs have traditionally worked with vulnerable populations marginalized by society and neglected by macro-development programmes. In Cambodian society they need to focus on women and female-headed households, the disabled, the internally displaced, the returnees from the border camps, and rural families with small plots of marginally productive land who are the most vulnerable members of society.
- **Work for reconciliation.** The current climate of insecurity and war has engendered mistrust and suspicion between Cambodians. Enmity and resentment exist especially between Cambodians who remained in the country after 1979 and those who fled to the Thai-Cambodian border. Due to their experience with the leadership of both populations and their commitment to reconciliation, NGOs are in a unique position to nurture the healing process and support Cambodian initiatives at reconciliation.
- **Advocacy on development.** Whereas NGO advocacy activities in the past have largely emphasized the political dimensions of the humanitarian problems facing the Cambodian people, future lobbying efforts need to focus on development-related issues. These include: (a) monitoring the overall performance of the international community and the Cambodian government in contributing to sustainable development in Cambodia; (b) monitoring the performance of the international community in the reconstruction effort, especially in relation to the Secretary-General's Appeal and the principles of Sovereignty, Respect for Local Capacity and Balance (see appendix 1); and (c) reconciliation and human rights and the extent to which government policies and the policies of other governments impinge on the rights of individual Cambodians.
- **Improve NGO co-ordination and analytical capacity.** NGOs must implement, facilitate and encourage sectoral analysis, learning and sharing of information within their own community. NGOs can strengthen the CCC to provide the macro perspective needed to draw on and articulate the policy implications of this analysis. The CCC membership has agreed to recruit a development analyst as a first step towards the above goal.
- **Improve co-operation and co-ordination with bi/multilateral agencies.** NGOs and bi/multilateral agencies have set a solid foundation for collaboration. This can be further improved by embracing the principles of **mutuality, complementarity, access** and **inclusion** outlined in the NGO statement to the Tokyo Ministerial Planning Conference.⁶

⁶ The NGO statement defined these principles as follows:

(a) **Mutuality:** The major donors and the NGOs should share information and analysis as widely as possible in the spirit of open engagement on common problems.

(b) **Complementarity:** The NGO and major donor roles in rehabilitation and reconstruction can clearly complement each other. In their funding programmes NGOs should emphasize work at province level and below. The multilateral and bilateral agencies should emphasize national level interventions and large-scale infrastructure development.

(c) **Access:** NGOs seek access to policy discussions with the Cambodian authorities and major donors in sectors of substantial NGO activity.

(d) **Inclusion:** NGO-multilateral/bilateral co-ordination mechanisms should ensure that Cambodians —

Appendix 1: NGO Statement to the Donors' Review Meeting

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

25 February 1993

The NGO community welcomes the opportunity to reflect on progress made since the Tokyo Ministerial Conference of June 1992 and sincerely thanks the organizers of this Review meeting for inviting NGO participation.

NGOs wish to commend the "Report on Rehabilitation and Development in Cambodia", prepared by the UNTAC Rehabilitation Office for realistically depicting the achievements and weaknesses in rehabilitation efforts and for clearly highlighting the tremendous gap between the intent expressed in Tokyo, and the translation of that intent into concrete action.

The overwhelming support, expressed in Tokyo, to the rehabilitation of priority sectors such as food security, health, housing, training, education, transport, public utilities and basic infrastructure, had raised hopes that the reconstruction effort would contribute to creating the more neutral environment necessary for peace and stability. It is disappointing to note that the limited concrete response to these sectors, which reflect the immediate needs of people in **all parts** of Cambodia, has led to a further deterioration of the public service sector and further erosion of the confidence and motivation of Cambodians.

Yet, in spite of the difficult political environment and limited resources, there are successes and signs of recovery, fragile as they may be.

- Over 270,000 refugees have been repatriated to Cambodia. UNHCR is to be commended for its flexibility in modifying their original plan and for the implementation of a highly difficult and complex operation. This could not have been achieved without the generous support and commitment of the donor community.
- Deliberate efforts to stabilize the economy have resulted in a GDP growth of approximately 8% and reflects the increasing participation of the private sector in reconstruction. However, concern remains over the sustainability of this economic growth and its concentration limited to Phnom Penh.
- Rural development and rural credit programs have increased and expanded to reach a greater number of rural communities in numerous provinces.
- Efforts to encourage and support local initiatives have led to the emergence of over 20 officially registered local NGOs and civic associations.
- Legislation and control measures have been adopted and put in place in order to curb excessive exploitation and to protect Cambodia's natural resources.
- Positive strides have been made in the Human Rights field, especially regarding education and extension activities.

In the last eight months, since the Tokyo conference, NGOs have responded to newly created opportunities to expand their activities both in scope and in geographic location. NGO involvement in Cambodia thus spans a diversity of sectors, all recognized by the Declaration on the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Cambodia and by Cambodians themselves, as a priority for the well being of the Cambodian people. These sectors include among others:

- community development and rural credit
- the provision of humanitarian assistance to displaced persons
- de-mining
- training

the SNC, the current government administration and the future Cambodian government — take the lead in determining their development objectives and priorities.

- water supply
- health, agriculture and education
- macro-economic management
- the resettlement and reintegration of returnees

In these activities NGOs have focused on strengthening local capacity and on encouraging local initiatives.

Committed to the spirit of cooperation, NGOs have also made a significant impact in their work as project partners of the multilateral and bilateral organizations. Experience has shown that large scale funding inputs do not of their own ensure project success; more positive results could be achieved through proper attention to PROCESS.

As the international community pauses to take stock of the achievements to date, it seems appropriate to also review what movement has been made in response to concerns raised last June by the NGO community over initial trends in the rehabilitation process.

As a relevant guideline by which to measure progress, we wish to reinvolve, once again, the basic principles embedded in the Declaration on the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Cambodia, which is part of the Paris Accords.

Of particular importance are:

1. **Sovereignty:** which assigns to the Cambodian people and the government decided after free and fair elections, the primary responsibility for determining reconstruction needs. It states further that “no attempt should be made to impose a development strategy on Cambodia from any outside source”.
2. **Respect for local capacity:** Assistance to Cambodia should “complement and supplement local resources”.
3. **Balance:** Assistance to Cambodia should benefit all areas, “especially the more disadvantaged”.

The need for PEACE and for the creation of a neutral environment were unanimously recognized and underlined by the donor community in Tokyo, as an absolutely essential prerequisite for the rehabilitation and development of Cambodia. Yet it is painfully obvious that Peace remains elusive and that the consequences of prolonged war affect all sectors of society. The future and social security of demobilized soldiers is crucial to creating a neutral environment.

In order to avoid further deterioration of public service delivery and to insure that fragile progress made to date not be reversed, we strongly urge that the international community reaffirm, through concrete activity, their commitment to the rehabilitation, reconstruction, and development of Cambodia and that the pledged assistance not be further postponed.

As regards **Sovereignty**, we acknowledge the positive efforts made through the Technical Advisory Committee to ensure that Cambodians have the opportunity to review and approve projects which respond to their needs. However, the process of project appraisal and consultation with Cambodians must be further strengthened. The Cambodians most directly involved must participate from the very beginning in the definition of guidelines and criteria for these projects.

We wish to encourage the donor community to support in depth studies for each sector, which recommend a number of different options and alternatives for addressing the problems.

Without information and choices, Cambodians are constrained to accept whatever the donors wish to offer.

Immediate donor support to infrastructure and public administration would decrease the pressure on Cambodians to accept loans which might be avoided if more time were available to identify alternative solutions.

As regards **Respect for Local Capacity**, we endorse a number of recent Mission reports that attest that, “skills do exist in the administration to carry out much of the rehabilitation exercise”, (World Bank report, June 1992). However, the concern over “limited absorptive capacity” has too conveniently been invoked as a reason for delaying urgently needed assistance and has not been supported with the commensurate investment in training and capacity building projects. Of particular importance are the need to strengthen Cambodian planning capacity and Cambodian coordination of aid.

The rehabilitation program is weakest in its efforts to include Cambodians in the design and planning phases of projects and in facilitating the transfer of information technology so necessary to the process of decision making. Information relevant to project planning and project appraisal, as well as information technologies themselves appear to be concentrated in, and under the control of, the expatriate community, while Cambodians are relegated more and more to the role of passive actors in the rehabilitation process. Too often Cambodians are the last to be informed regarding new developments. More efforts to provide essential documentation and reports in the Khmer language would help to increase Cambodian participation in all aspects of the rehabilitation and development process.

In a similar vein, it is disconcerting to note that key Cambodian officials and planners were advised of this donor’s review meeting only a few days prior to the meeting itself.

Another concern in the rehabilitation phase is the propensity of donors to create new structures more easily identifiable as their own, rather than to upgrade existing educational institutions and strengthen on-going programs. We therefore strongly urge the SNC and Cambodian decision makers to assume more responsibility and assertiveness in directing international assistance towards appropriate ends.

As regards **Balance**, a number of unfavorable trends have developed and must be reversed if more serious social and economic consequences are to be averted. Some of these imbalances can be observed in the following areas:

- Imbalance regarding the populations to which aid is being directed, i.e. disproportionate assistance to returnees vs. the large proportion of other needy Cambodian people and internally displaced persons.
- Geographical imbalance, i.e. a concentration of international assistance to the three northwestern provinces of Pursat, Battambang and Banteay Meanchey, and within those provinces to areas of returnee relocation.
- Sectoral imbalance, i.e. a disproportionate investment in urban areas vs. rural areas, where a majority of the Cambodian population resides.
- Disbursements thus far made also demonstrate a preponderance of assistance for relief vs. longer term reconstruction and development programs, especially for the rehabilitation of infrastructure and training.
- Women, who make up the majority of the adult population, are most often bypassed when new work or training opportunities are created through projects.

The consequences of these imbalances are self evident. Favoring returnee communities while neglecting other needy populations further complicates the already complex task of

reintegration of the returnees themselves. This is not an argument for decreasing assistance to returnees but rather to provide the same level of assistance to other groups and geographic areas.

Neglecting the rehabilitation of the rural and agricultural sectors, which employ the majority of the Cambodian population, leads to an influx of people to urban centers where infrastructure and public services are already inadequate to respond to existing needs, and further widens the gap between rich and poor. An uneven distribution of the resources to limited geographic locations and sectors inhibits the development of the country as a whole.

Priorities requiring urgent attention

1. Public administration and infrastructure

As we have earlier drawn attention to some of the positive achievements realized since the last Tokyo meeting, we also wish to draw special attention to a number of setbacks requiring immediate intervention; foremost is the deteriorating capacity of the public service to deliver essential services.

Support to public administration and infrastructure were recognized in the Secretary General's Appeal as not only crucial but indispensable for the successful implementation of every other aspect of the rehabilitation program. Yet, these two sectors have received the least attention and financial resources.

We urge the international community to make resources immediately available to support public administration in the delivery of essential services and to allow the post-election administration to make a smooth transition without further disruption of those services.

At the same time we ask that the resources also be made available to restore the necessary civic and physical infrastructures so that they can function adequately and facilitate other aspects of reconstruction and development.

2. Reintegration of returnees and displaced persons

The resettlement of over 270,000 returnees is undoubtedly a major accomplishment. Yet, it is not an end in itself. A more formidable task still lies ahead — reintegrating the returnees and ensuring that they possess the necessary resources, material and skills, to become productive and self-sufficient. We are concerned to see in the “Report on Rehabilitation and Development in Cambodia”, that “resettlement related activities including, food security and agriculture, will be phased out quickly.” We therefore urge the international community to show the same type of commitment, flexibility, and responsibility for the reintegration of returnees as they have already shown for the relocation of those populations.

At the same time we are deeply concerned by the neglect of efforts to reintegrate 180,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs). While they have received some food and agricultural assistance, de-mining of their home villages has not been recognized as a priority and other basic necessities are still lacking. Finally, we are deeply troubled that the needs of IDPs have not been addressed in the UNHCR/UNDP/WFP appeal.

3. De-mining

Four to five hundred Cambodians per month continue to be maimed or killed by mines. Over 700,000 hectares of prime rice land is made unusable by the presence of mines. Per capita, more Cambodians have been injured by mines than in any other country in the world.

The Cambodian Mine Action Center (CMAC), in collaboration with NGOs and Cambodians are to be applauded for the commendable and highly hazardous work they are doing in mapping, training, and de-mining.

The work of CMAC and collaborating agencies is limited mainly by lack of financial resources and lack of supervisors for the large number of newly trained personnel.

Additional resources can be absorbed and well utilized by CMAC and a number of NGOs willing and able to participate in this field of activity.

We strongly appeal to donors to make a long term commitment to the de-mining operation and to make the financial resources available so that the critical work of mapping and surveying can be expanded and de-mining activity extended under adequate supervision.

4. Human resource development

It is heartening to see in the UNTAC report prepared for the Donor's review meeting, the importance attached to Human Resource Development. Shortage of human resources, spanning every sector in society, remains the foremost constraint to the reconstruction and development of the country.

Recognizing this, we urge the international community to strengthen existing human resources through the support of training activities in every profession and especially through the upgrading and rehabilitation of existing educational institutions.

Particular attention needs to also be paid to develop the human potential of the adult population that has been deprived of educational opportunities in the last two decades.

Women, who constitute a valuable resource in Cambodia, must be given access to skills and training opportunities in non-traditional sectors.

Programs for skill training of the handicapped must be expanded and special considerations must be adopted for their employment.

Charting the available human resources, as well as the human resource requirements for the country's future, is a prerequisite for undertaking any rehabilitation of the education sector and requires urgent attention and financial and technical support.

5. Agriculture and rural development

The importance of the agricultural sector, in which over 80% of the Cambodian population are engaged, cannot be emphasized enough. However few of the resources promised by the international community have been disbursed for agricultural rehabilitation and development.

While recent land and economic reforms have encouraged farmers to improve land and production capacity, insufficient availability of resources is still a major constraint to increased production and self-sufficiency.

Furthermore, adequate resources invested today in making the rural areas a more hopeful place for the younger generation will help to prevent the urban disasters which are so prevalent in a number of the world's capitals today.

We therefore recommend that promised assistance to the largest and poorest sector of Cambodia's society be disbursed immediately. Assistance to rural development and agriculture programs must respect the social, economic and environmental concerns of the participants. Economic interests of donor countries should not take precedence over sustainable local development priorities.

We also recommend that the Donor's Appeal be adjusted to recognize the distinct difference between food aid and agricultural aid and separate the two categories accordingly.

6. Aid coordination and ICORC

As we prepare for the next phase of reconstruction it is important that NGOs, multilateral and bilateral agencies seek to improve communication and coordination between themselves and particularly between themselves and the Cambodians. The mechanism for mutual consultation and dialogue, which has deteriorated in recent months, needs to be further developed and strengthened. In order to enhance the NGO contribution to this dialogue the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC) is preparing to engage a development analyst.

We also ask that the necessary resources be made available to Cambodian policy makers at the national and provincial levels to enhance capacity for planning, appraisal, monitoring and coordination of the process of rehabilitation and development according to Cambodian aspirations. This would ensure that Cambodians have the opportunity to participate more fully and more competently in the development process.

At the same time it is important that available donor resources for all sectors be more equitably distributed to all parts of the country and over a longer sustainable period of time.

NGOs welcome the establishment of the International Committee on the Reconstruction of Cambodia (ICORC) and look forward to a close and fruitful cooperation with this international planning and coordination body.

However, it has become clearer in the last eight months that there is also a pressing need for a **Cambodian** mechanism to address the day to day functions related to the planning of international assistance, project screening and coordination. Such a body, working in close consultation with the international organizations and NGOs, would identify priorities for international assistance and ensure that the assistance provided appropriately responds to national priorities. We strongly urge the international community to fully support, with the necessary resources, the establishment and functioning of a central Cambodian aid coordination and planning unit.

Most important of all, the well being of Cambodians and the future of Cambodia depends on Peace. The NGO community takes this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to cooperate fully with all partners involved in the Peace process. We ask the international community to implement more effective measures for dealing with the Khmer Rouge problem. At the same time we ask all Cambodian parties to make a stronger commitment to reconciliation and peace.

Appendix 2: Partial List of Organizations Working in Cambodia

April 1993

Action Internationale Contre la Faim	AICF
Action Nord Sud	ANS
Adventist Development and Relief Agency	ADRA
American Friends Service Committee	AFSC
American Red Cross	AR Cross
American Refugee Committee	ARC
Assemblies of God	AOG
Association to Aid the Refugees	
Cambodian Committee	AAR.CC
Australian Catholic Relief	ACR
Australian People for Health,	

Education and Development Abroad	APHEDA
Australian Red Cross Society	AUST RC
Cambodia Canada Development Program	CCDP
Cambodia Development Resource Institute	CDRI
Cambodia Humanitarian Foundation	CHF
Cambodia Trust	CT
CARE International	CI
Caring for Young Khmer	CYK
Caritas Cambodia	CC
Catholic Relief Services	CRS
Christian and Missionary Alliance	CAMA
Christian Outreach	COR
Church World Service	CWS
Community Aid Abroad	CAA
Concern	
Cooperation Committee for Cambodia	CCC
Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité	CIDSE
Cooperative Services International	CSI
Cornell University Library	Cornell
Don Bosco Foundation of Cambodia	DBFC
Educational Services International	ESI
Enfance Espoir	EE
Enfants du Cambodge	EDC
Food for the Hungry International	FHI
GOAL	
Groupe de Recherche et d'Echanges Technologiques	GRET
Halo Trust	HT
Handicap International	HI
Health Unlimited	HU
Help the Aged	HTA
Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen der Schweiz	HEKS
HOLT International Children's Service/Cambodia	
Indochina Project	IP
International Catholic Migration Commission	ICMC
International Committee of the Red Cross	ICRC
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies	IFRC
International Medical Corps	IMC
International Rescue Committee	IRC
International Rice Research Institute	IRRI
International Women's Development Agency	IWDA
Japan International Volunteer Center	JVC
Japan Overseas Christian Medical Cooperative Services	JOCS
Japanese Red Cross Society	JRC
Japan Sotoshu Relief Committee	JSRC
Jesuit Refugee Service	JRS
Khemara	
Khmer Buddhist Society	KBS
Lutheran World Service	LWS
Manitese	
Maryknoll	
Médecins Sans Frontières France	MSF FR

Médecins Sans Frontières Holland Belgium	MSF Hol/Bel
Mennonite Central Committee	MCC
Overseas Service Bureau	OSB
OXFAM UK and Ireland	
Partage	
Partnership for Development in Kampuchea	PADEK
Pharmaciens Sans Frontières	PSF
Private Agencies Collaborating Together	PACT
Quaker Service Australia	QSA
Redd Barna	
Save the Children Fund Australia	SCFA
Save the Children Fund United Kingdom	SCF UK
Services for the Health in Asian and African Regions	SHARE
Southeast Asia Outreach	SAO
Soutien à l'Initiative Privée pour l'Aide à la Reconstruction	SIPAR
Stichting Adviesgroep Waterbeheer	SAWA
Stiftung Kinderdorf Pestalozzi	SKIP
Swiss Red Cross	
24 Hour Television	24 Hr TV
United Cambodian Community	UCC
United Nations Children's Fund	UNICEF
United Nations Development Programme	UNDP
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	UNESCO
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	UNHCR
Vétérinaires Sans Frontières	VSF
Voluntary Service Overseas	VSO
World Concern	WC
World Council of Churches	WCC
World Education	
World Food Programme	WFP
World Health Organization	WHO
World Relief Cambodia	WR
World Vision International	WVI
Youth with a Mission	YWAM

5. Women, Children and Returnees — Eva Arnvig

Introduction

Since the signing of the Paris Peace Agreements in October 1991, the Cambodian people have lived in a kind of no-man's land: caught between their hope for lasting peace and a deeply ingrained cynicism nurtured by years of immense suffering. The international community entered the country with a similar attitude, hoping for the best, but prepared for the worst. United Nations troops and UNTAC dollars poured into Cambodia accompanied by foreign investors seeking short-term profit opportunities.

More than two decades of international, regional and civil strife, combined with a history of poverty and lack of foreign development aid, have left Cambodia's economic and social structures in shambles. Cambodia is one of the poorest countries in the world. According to UNDP's combined index of life expectancy, income and education, it ranked 136 out of 160 countries in 1990 (UNDP, 1992).

The first Western experts entering Cambodia just after liberation from the Pol Pot régime in 1979 seriously questioned whether Cambodia, as a country and a culture, could survive. Hospitals, schools, pagodas, industries, roads, communication systems, universities, libraries, etc. were destroyed (Curtis, 1989). In 1989, Cambodia received Official Development Assistance (ODA) of only 4 dollars per capita (UNDP, 1992), since the country was then blacklisted in the West.¹

The years from 1969 to 1991 — spanning the bombings during the Viet Nam war, the Pol Pot régime and the subsequent 12 years of civil strife — claimed the lives of millions of Cambodians (mostly men) and left the country with a highly unbalanced sex ratio. Almost two thirds of the adult population of Cambodia is made up of women and they head approximately 30 per cent of all households (Curtis, 1989).

It is said that behind the most disadvantaged man in society you can usually find one person who is even worse off — his wife. Cambodia is no exception. Women, especially widows from the wars, have carried the major part of the burden of rebuilding Cambodia while enduring the consequences of poverty and social disintegration that resulted from the multiple forms of conflict that ravaged their country. If anything has been achieved in the struggle that led to the Peace Agreements it was achieved on the backs of women and children (Curtis, 1989). If anything is to be gained by the implementation of the Peace Agreements, it will be gained because of the work and, predictably, the suffering of the Cambodian women and children.

This chapter examines the situation of women, children and returnees in Cambodia and the social impact of the large-scale United Nations presence. Following a brief description of certain general aspects related to family traditions, the position of women in the economy, education and health, the chapter examines a number of social and socio-psychological problems that have risen to the fore in recent years. These include post-war trauma, the reintegration of refugees, prostitution, drugs and street children. Particular attention is focused on the extent to which the behaviour of United Nations peace-keeping and security personnel may have contributed to certain social problems as well as the souring of relations between UNTAC and the host population.

Family Traditions

A Cambodian girl grows up dominated by her father, later to marry and subordinate herself to her husband (Jensen, 1985). She is normally raised to be gentle and soft-spoken, walk without noise and have a friendly manner (Ledgerwood, 1992). She is expected to dress decently, wear her skirts long and see that her blouse covers her elbows.

Traditionally, the Khmer girl, from a very early age, helps in the household and looks after her younger sisters and brothers. She seldom spends more than a few years in school while waiting for her parents to find her a suitable husband and is married off at age 18 or earlier. To be unmarried is considered socially unacceptable.

Within the family, it is traditionally the Khmer woman who manages the household economy. The husband hands over his earnings to his wife, keeping just a small amount for himself to spend. She manages the family budget. In situations of economic difficulty she takes the decision to borrow money. Only for large expenditures do husband and wife make a joint decision (Redd Barna, 1993).

¹ For countries not ravaged by war such as Bahrain, Jamaica and Samoa, ODA in the same period was 196, 113 and 308 dollars per capita respectively.

The importance of the woman's role in the economic management of the home and the rearing of children is supported by some laws which favour women. For instance, unlike certain neighbouring Asian countries, women in Cambodia can own and inherit property from their parents and spouses. However, the traditional social conventions and female roles assigned by the society have entered a period of crisis due to the social/economic realities resulting from more than 20 years of conflict and societal disintegration (Jensen, 1985).

The imbalance in the male/female ratio makes it impossible for many young women to find a husband and, therefore, they are unable to have children within a conventional family unit. The consequences are a dramatic rise in the number of single female-headed households, polygamy (which is forbidden by law) and illegitimate children. In addition to being socially marginalized, a woman who chooses not to have children has to worry about who will take care of her in her old age (Curtis, 1989).

Men's attitude towards women's education and work outside the home seems to have changed more in the towns than in rural areas. However, most men still think that a woman's place is at home taking care of the children and doing the housework, rather than going out to work. Many Cambodian men are said to question why women should want extra work. The so-called "Women's Liberation" is not a liberation, they say, since it gives women more work than they had before (Redd Barna, 1993).

The Constitution of the State of Cambodia affirms that men and women are equal and that women should participate fully in political, economic, cultural, social and family life. The Constitution further indicates that the position of women as citizens, workers, wives and mothers should be enhanced; it guarantees women equality in life and before the law; three months of compulsory maternity leave are ensured in order to advance socio-economic equality; and it promises that child care will be provided for all working women (Redd Barna, 1993).

But in real life this is seldom the case. Equal pay for equal work and child care facilities only exist in the state sector and only state employees have access to these benefits. As a result, the health of women and children is affected as women cannot avail of appropriate leave either before or after childbirth (Redd Barna, 1993).

Women and the Economy

Cambodia is an agrarian country. Of the economically active population 90-95 per cent is engaged in agriculture (Redd Barna, 1993). Women make up approximately 60 to 65 per cent of the national workforce. Because of the shortage of men, women have had to assume many of the more physically demanding aspects of agricultural work such as digging and ploughing. Sometimes the female farmers need to hire male help. Payment of male farm workers is made either in cash or by repayment with longer hours of female labour. Whichever form is chosen, the woman's burden of work is increased just in order to survive.

The workday of many women is long, arduous and without fair economic or social compensation. Often a woman will leave her home before 5 a.m. — taking her children with her as there is no child care available — and will not return until after sunset when the household chores have to be done. She will generally work longer hours for less pay than her male counterpart (Curtis, 1989; Redd Barna, 1993).

The economic situation of women and children is further complicated by the growing number of poor families which depend completely on the income of a single woman. This situation aggravates the already precarious position of the Cambodian child and burdens even further the overworked Khmer woman.

The economic effect of the Peace Agreements combined with the programmes and foreign investments associated with the United Nations presence in Cambodia has been dramatic. The Australians, who masterminded many of the conceptual and practical aspects of the peace process, also gave a warning in their document, **Cambodia: An Australian Peace Proposal**:

“Given that Cambodia already has an over-stretched economy, is suffering from inflation and has relatively few expatriates and foreign business enterprises, the economic impact of a large UN presence could be very significant. It could set in train a series of economic and social pressures having long-term adverse structural consequences for the economy and the Cambodian society. The larger the UN presence, the more difficult will be this problem” (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1990).

The exchange rate in January 1992 was 754 riels to 1 US dollar.² By 19 March 1993 it was 4,200 riels.³ A consumer price index showed a tenfold increase over a five-month period in 1992. Rice, the Cambodian staple, increased by almost 250 per cent; one kilogram of fresh fish rose five and a half times (CDRI, 1992; UNCTAD, 1992). Within 60 days of the signing of the Paris Agreements the prices for land increased 400 per cent. The arrival of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) greatly affected the urban real estate market as rents increased 400-500 per cent (UNCTAD, 1992). A normal monthly salary for a working Cambodian is approximately the equivalent of 15-20 dollars a month — not enough to support a family in the midst of such inflationary pressures and dramatically rising values for housing and basic necessities.

Studies made on the effects of inflation upon the different economic sectors indicate that those who live in the cities and have dollar incomes have been affected less than those who depend upon local currency. The latter include, for example, many women, youth and children working as small vendors in the local markets, as state employees or as employees in local businesses. Women in the rural areas working in agriculture and exchanging their products for other products, have generally suffered less. Large imported cars in the capital attest to the fact that a growing number of businessmen have become quite rich.

The economic position of the vast majority of women has been worsening and, as a consequence, so have their health and the future prospects of their children. Unemployment is a grave problem and women have to compete with men for the few job opportunities available. As most women have only very basic schooling and little or no professional training, they cannot compete equally. They usually end up doing housework, sewing and mending clothes, selling coconuts, cigarettes or 1-litre bottles of gasoline from small stands in the streets or selling food in the market. Outside Phnom Penh women may be able to get work with one of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in road building projects for UNTAC. To crush stones a woman gets a salary of half a dollar a day. Such jobs are considered attractive and village leaders often draw up lists to make sure everyone gets their turn.⁴ Men may also get jobs in road construction but are paid 1 dollar a day.

The Peace Agreements and the prospect of a more stable, less violent environment have created hope for widening the scope of job opportunities for women. One area could be the tourist industry. In a country like Indonesia, for example, tourism creates one full-time job for each hotel room rented. Women in Cambodia make up 67 per cent of state factory labour (UNIFEM, 1993) and the possibility of a new industry coming into the country would increase their employment opportunities (Jensen, 1985). Women already dominate small-scale enterprises and their participation in this sector should increase.

² All references to dollars are to US dollars.

³ “Economic warfare”, **Phnom Penh Post**, Cambodia, 26 March-8 April 1993a.

⁴ Personal communication, Danish Cambodia Consortium, Battambang, Cambodia, December 1992 and April 1993.

It would be logical to assume that the presence of UNTAC would increase women's prospects for economic progress. To date, however, there have been few positive signs of such progress. The presence of UNTAC professional foreign staff would potentially offer greater possibilities for local women to get domestic work. In practice the chances are less given that many staff live in prefabricated houses supplied by the United Nations and equipped with imported washing machines and other modern amenities.

More importantly, the UNTAC monthly salary for locally recruited staff is twice as high as that offered by the NGOs and ranges from 90 to 175 dollars a month, thus offering greater economic opportunity. But women are not well represented in professional jobs offered by UNTAC. As of November 1992, only 10-15 per cent of the 6,000 Cambodians working for UNTAC were women (UNIFEM, 1993). Part of the reason why these lucrative jobs were given mostly to men was that early recruitment was mainly for serving military units. In general, UNTAC did not consider it suitable for women to be involved in military activity.⁵ In a report quoted by Redd Barna, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children has criticized UNTAC for discrimination against women in general. It reported that there were no women among the top 10 positions in UNTAC or employed as their deputies (Redd Barna, 1993).

The fact that few women have been employed by UNTAC has consequences reaching beyond the job itself and the use that women and their families could make of the income. As an internal UNCTAD report clearly states in a section entitled "Investment in human capital":

"Through training by UNTAC, locally recruited staff benefit directly from skills improvement, in such areas as secretarial, administration, computer literacy, language training, etc." (UNCTAD, 1992).

Women with advanced education are underutilized and mostly placed in traditional jobs such as book-keeping, typing or tea-making (Redd Barna, 1993). In the political arena as well, women are not very visible. There are no women in the Supreme National Council and only 5 per cent of the candidates for the Constituent Assembly elections were women (UNIFEM, 1993).

Education

Less than a quarter of all school teachers — that is, a total of 5,000 — survived the Pol Pot régime. Schools, universities, pagodas and libraries were destroyed. The Khmer Rouge educational system was based on the dictum, "the school is the rice paddy; the pen is the hoe" (Curtis, 1989). The country therefore had to start to rebuild its education system after the formal end of the Pol Pot régime in 1979. Rapid progress was made (Metzl, 1993) and, by 1981, more than 1.5 million children were attending primary and lower secondary classes. But getting the children back in the classroom was not enough; keeping them in school was more difficult to accomplish. In 1989 only 35-40 per cent of students completing primary school continued on to lower secondary school level (Curtis, 1989). Countrywide only 22 per cent of these students were girls (World Bank, 1992).

After the Khmer Rouge period, 1.1 million of the population between the ages of 13 and 45 were illiterate. The number of illiterate girls was twice that of boys. A literacy campaign which mobilized almost 35,000 volunteers, each providing 150 hours of instruction, brought many citizens back into functional literacy and raised the general level of education (Curtis, 1989).

In quantitative terms the schooling system made impressive progress in the 1980s. The numbers of primary and secondary school teachers increased to 53,500 and the overall

⁵ Personal communication, UNTAC staff member, March 1993.

national enrolment rate was reported by the Ministry of Education to be as high as 82 per cent. However, while the enrolment rate in urban areas can reach as high as 90-95 per cent, that in rural areas can be as low as 30 per cent (World Bank, 1992).

Despite the impressive statistics, actual educational quality and opportunity are much less impressive. Approximately two thirds of the population is now thought to be illiterate. Cambodia continues to suffer from poorly trained teachers, inadequate facilities and supplies and lack of a basic curriculum. In recent years the number of primary school students who either drop out or are forced to repeat a grade has increased significantly, especially among girls (Metzl, 1993).

As in other areas of cultural, social and economic life, in education, too, women are greatly disadvantaged. According to the Women's Association, only 1,317 females have graduated from secondary school in the last 10 years (Redd Barna, 1993).

There is also a history of contradictory policy in regard to language. Before the Pol Pot régime, the educational system was French oriented. Under the Khmer Rouge, knowledge or use of a foreign language could earn someone a death sentence. After 1979, Russian was introduced into the curriculum. When the United Nations entered the scene in 1991, English became fashionable. The French have now promised millions of dollars in support of the school system and universities on the condition that the use of the French language is expanded (Thayer, 1993; CDRI, 1992).

Health

Less than 50 doctors survived the Pol Pot régime (Curtis, 1989). Hospitals, equipment and the human resource infrastructure of the health care system were destroyed. Life expectancy at birth was 35 years — the lowest in the world (World Bank, 1992). Today, almost 14 years later, the average life expectancy is 50 years. Child mortality is still very high. One child out of five will not live to see its fifth birthday. Each woman has an average of five children. The limited number of professional medical staff cannot attend to the needs of pregnant women who often prefer to be attended by an old relative or traditional healers. Only 53 per cent of the population has access to health services and 18 per cent to safe water.

Cambodia had 303 doctors in 1988 — approximately 1 per 26,700 inhabitants. Of these doctors 73 per cent lived in Phnom Penh. Medical assistants, nurses and midwives accounted for another 9,759 persons. Medicine is in short supply. According to World Bank figures, locally produced and imported medicines cover hardly 20 per cent of the hospitals' needs (World Bank, 1992). Malaria and dengue fever, both of which spread through mosquito bites, pose a major health threat. Dengue seriously affects children. Initiatives to address this situation, supported by UNTAC and United Nations agencies, have been introduced.

The crowded slum areas surrounding Phnom Penh and other major cities are breeding grounds for infectious diseases. However, it is HIV/AIDS that seems to be increasing most rapidly. The Cambodian Red Cross found the HIV infection rate to be 0.39 per cent in donor blood from Phnom Penh — the same level as in Thailand. Other estimates for 1992 put the figure as high as 0.8 per cent (Curtis, 1993).

Recent information indicates that child prostitution and paedophilia are both on the increase in Cambodia (Channo, 1993b). A sexual relationship between an HIV carrier and a child, because of the physical traumatization generally involved, carries an extraordinarily high risk of infection for the child.

Cambodian authorities are particularly concerned about the health and socio-economic impacts of an AIDS epidemic. A warning has been officially distributed by the Ministry of

Health which states: “Because of its growing population and the influx of tourists, businessmen and UN forces since 1991, the city of Phnom Penh is particularly vulnerable to the spread of AIDS” (Phalla, 1993).

It is said that Cambodia has the world’s highest proportion of disabled persons. Each month, an additional 300 people join the ranks of the disabled. The number of mines buried in Cambodian soil is estimated to be in the millions. Many have been removed but new ones are laid every day in areas not yet pacified. On the whole, these mines are designed to handicap people, not to kill. They explode half a metre above the ground destroying legs or hands, or blinding the victim.⁶ Those most often killed by this weapon of terror are children (ECPAT, 1992; Human Rights Watch and Physicians for Human Rights, 1991). According to Said Aga, Head, Mine Clearing Plan for Afghanistan based in Peshawar, it should only take two to four years to make most of the land usable, but, it would take about 30-40 years to make it safe. This is likely to be the case in Cambodia as well.

The Post-War Trauma

The repercussions of the Pol Pot régime have lasted far beyond the three years of terror inflicted upon the Cambodian people. A UNICEF report presented in September 1992 describes the effects of this period:

“Every family has experienced loss of loved ones. The majority of adults have experienced or witnessed torture and have lived with extreme deprivation of food and water. Many adults have witnessed brutal murder, including instances where their own children were the victims and others at the hands of children. The country suffers the loss of the majority of their professional and educated classes who were targeted for elimination” (de Monchy, 1992).

The report goes on to state the implicit challenge of this reality: “The effects of such tremendous loss and violation on social networks and on human behaviour must be understood and addressed” (de Monchy, 1992).

Psychiatrists Mollica and Jalbert were asked by the United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO) to look into the socio-psychological situation of the camp population in Site Two, the major refugee camp at the Thai border housing 160,000 people. They described the camp as presenting every kind of human vice that can be imagined: from manslaughter, rape and robbery to gambling, trafficking of children and prostitution. Every evening, according to rules made by the Thai authorities, all UNBRO personnel had to leave the camp until the following morning and no legal authority was present in the dark hours, when guerrilla soldiers came for recreation and new supplies (Mollica and Jalbert, 1989).

The refugees in Site Two showed signs of severe psychological and social dysfunction. The report also draws a picture of the post-traumatic disorder threatening all survivors of the Pol Pot régime:

“The Khmer community suffered a dramatic destruction of its culture, values, traditions and healing practices during the 1975-79 Khmer Rouge regime. Torture and concentration camp experiences — punishing hard work, humiliation, and starvation — were used by the Khmer Rouge regime (as they have been by other totalitarian regimes in this century) to break down the individual’s resistance to social control by destroying his/her cultural identity. This attempt at cultural annihilation has profoundly affected the traditional Khmer concept of self-care (i.e. individual and community attitudes and behaviors toward their own emotional, spiritual and physical well-being).

⁶ Personal communication from Ea Fuur Nielsen, Center for Amputees, Phnom Penh, November 1991 and November 1992.

“... Similar to World War II’s concentration camp survivors, the Pol Pot regime survivors in Site Two have developed coping strategies to prevent new and equally detrimental traumas from penetrating their protective defenses. Many of the Khmer in Site Two have developed what they call in Khmer *Tiing Moong*, a ‘dummy’ personality — i.e. a state of psychological ... withdrawal — which began under the Khmer Rouge Regime and has continued to exist in Site Two ... The ‘dummy’ personality is often mistaken by Western providers as Khmer ‘toughness’, ‘stoicism’, ‘callousness’, ‘dishonesty’ or ‘corruptness’.

“Many Khmer now stable in Site Two will experience psychological collapse when they are resettled or repatriated. Present resettlement experiences are a harbinger of the future emotional stress and social disability which they will experience once they leave Site Two. Forced dependency [on outside aid] and ongoing Khmer coping strategies for dealing with conditions in Site Two (e.g. ‘dummy’ personality) have failed to provide them with the skills necessary for adapting to the pressures of ‘normal’ existence.

“... Many Khmer children and adolescents have been highly traumatized, especially the survivors of the Pol Pot children’s groups. These young people will attempt to mask their depression and intellectual deficits through denial, indifference, poor school performance and anti-social behavior. Unless their problems are adequately addressed, they will become dysfunctional adults and eventually place enormous economic and social burdens on their future communities” (Mollica and Jalbert, 1989:46-48).

The general symptoms described in the report and first identified after the Second World War as Concentration Camp Syndrome have the following elements: learning and concentration problems, memory difficulties, disorientation in space and time, sleeping problems, depression, apathy, aggressiveness, violent behaviour. Many symptoms are similar to ones recognized after brain damage.

In some cases, these symptoms may take 15-20 years to manifest themselves (Milgram, 1983), creating a situation in which this syndrome could significantly affect Cambodian society for at least two decades to come.

Mollica and Jalbert describe the difficulties experienced by a significant number of women in coping with sexual assaults they experienced during the Pol Pot period and as refugees. They claim that:

“the Khmer community has suffered a degree of sexual violence unprecedented in modern Khmer history. All respondents indicated that rape and sexual violence were commonly practised under the Khmer Rouge, frequently occurred during the escape experience into Thailand and now constitute a significant problem in Site Two” (Mollica and Jalbert, 1989:39).

The same report indicates that these women are unlikely to admit their situation or seek psychological assistance. They are more likely to report gynaecological problems, request abortions or attempt suicide.

One action which has been recommended to deal with this problem is to involve the Buddhist temples in performing a “cleansing ceremony” which could assist women in regaining their self-esteem. Buddhist temples have responded positively to the problems (Mollica and Jalbert, 1989) and are also assisting torture victims.

The Khmer attitude toward rape and sexual abuse is an important element in the process of reintegrating women into society. The psychological reactions of women who have been victims of abuse should be an important factor in the design and implementation of

repatriation programmes especially since many of these women are repatriated in remote areas and often separated from their traditional source of protection, namely, their husbands.

The Mollica-Jalbert report was distributed to all United Nations agencies involved in the peace process and to the United Nations Secretary-General. Clearly the factors related to the history of sexual abuse of women and the resulting trauma should be of concern to UNTAC. Unfortunately, however, there have been reports of harassment and intimidation of Cambodian women by UNTAC troops and personnel (an issue which will be dealt with at greater length later in this chapter).

Refugees and Displaced Persons

When the Paris Peace Agreements were signed, approximately 360,000 refugees were living in camps on the Thai-Cambodian border and another 180,000 displaced persons in sites within Cambodia. Under the terms of the Agreements, all were to be resettled in Cambodia in time to register for the election in May 1993. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was the lead agency in this programme.

The initial plans for the repatriation were ambitious: two hectares of land for each family, a free choice of where to settle, assistance to all single women in building their houses, grants for housing material, food supplies and other short-term support. With the prospect of being given free land for farming, 90 per cent of the refugees in the camps accepted resettlement under the auspices of UNHCR. The two western provinces in the country, Battambang and Banteay Meanchey, were the preferred destinations for three quarters of the camp population (Healy, 1992).

By May 1992, UNHCR had to change strategy due to the lack of adequate quantities of mine-free, fertile and available land. Several new options were provided, each offering an assistance package comprising varying combinations of the following items: agricultural land, household plot, a kit of housing materials and agricultural implements, food for 400 days (200 in the Phnom Penh area), cash grants, specialized tool kits and employment with UNTAC.⁷ The lack of land was a decisive factor in the choice and implementation of options. Very soon Option A, comprising agricultural land, was exhausted and only an exclusive few actually received land. The vast majority of the returnees ended up choosing Option C comprising a cash grant of 50 dollars per adult and 25 dollars per child under 12, transport, a kit of housing materials and agricultural implements as well as food for 400 days.

By 1 April 1993, 339,091 refugees had been repatriated from the Thai border camps (UNHCR, 1993). From a logistical point of view, this was an impressive action. From a humanitarian point of view, it raised many questions — the most impelling being: Why the hurry? People had been living in the camps for almost 13 years. Would it not have been possible for the international community to mobilize sufficient diplomatic activity to persuade the necessary authorities to allow the refugees to live in camps until their promised land had been cleared of mines and was actually available? Such a delay in the repatriation need not have affected other aspects of the peace process. Voter registration, for example, and even elections, could have taken place in the camps.

Another question concerns the issue of how people resettled in the countryside, far away from any kind of assistance, were going to cope. Who would be there to help them? Also, given the failure of the Khmer Rouge to abide by the peace accords, what contingency plans existed in the case of a return to all out war?

⁷ For details concerning the contents of the assistance package offered under each option, see appendix 3 of the chapter by Geiger in this volume.

UNHCR accomplished much in terms of logistics and infrastructure: repair of roads and bridges, setting up transit camps, arranging buses, transport of food, etc., but the responsibility of repatriation lasts longer than merely getting people back across the border. The personal and communal consequences of the trauma of 13 years of exile, violence and psychological repression still have to be dealt with. The mental problems of people who have been through such deep crises will have a continuing, often powerful effect upon every aspect of life in the “new” Cambodia and constitute a real threat to the repatriates themselves and to their society.

The returnee population will live with both this heritage of accumulated fears as well as the real fears of their new living conditions: precarious farming conditions, fear of mines, violence, starvation, unsafe drinking water, sickness and disease (Healy, 1992).

To understand the reactions which appear in connection with resettlement it is necessary to understand the human reactions to being in jail and to the loss of loved ones; the reactions to living for years in closed refugee camps, deprived of basic human needs such as physical and psychological safety, freedom of movement; without the right to communicate, information and visits; and having no responsibility for providing for one's own existence (for example, food, water, money, health care). This is the syndrome of the Total Institution (Feldman, 1971; Beckmann, 1992; Cullberg, 1993).

One of the most crippling effects of this syndrome is the total dependency of the victim. In the institution (prison, refugee camp, hospital for long-term care) one is told where to go, what to eat, when to stay in and when to go out. Permission must be requested for any diversion from the normal schedules. Personal autonomy and the ability to assume and execute personal responsibilities are severely damaged in this environment. For returning refugees suffering from this syndrome autonomous survival is very difficult.

The Total Institution Syndrome has a serious affect on mental attitude and behaviour. It manifests itself in apathy, aggression, violent behaviour, abrupt changes of mood, depression and tiredness along with physical disorders such as headaches and stomach problems. Mollica describes these symptoms in relation to Site Two, and they are described in more general terms by hospital and prison psychologists as well. Thus it is not realistic to base a repatriation programme on the assumption that the returnees will leave the transit camps, energetically and purposefully, to rebuild their lives and those of their families (Beckmann, 1992; Cullberg, 1993; Sowder and Lystad, 1986).

There are other challenges and problems of a practical nature. Most refugees have not, since they came to the camps, participated in any genuine economic activity. The prices in the camps were either set by the camp authorities or by the black market. This is compounded by the fact that the Pol Pot régime banned money and only barter was permitted.

Some of the refugees who chose the cash option had rarely seen money since 1975. Suddenly they were expected to create a new life for themselves and their families with 200-250 dollars in hand.

This is not an easy task and the pitfalls are many. At the peak of the repatriation, UNTAC publicly described banditry on the roads as the worst security problem in Cambodia (Eng, 1992). No protection was offered to the refugees after leaving the transit camps, and no banks were available outside of Phnom Penh and a few other major towns. The first thing I witnessed when I visited a settlement of refugees was a real life problem pertaining to money. A 66-year-old man, a carpenter, was sitting on a box with all his belongings under a big tree. His wife (aged 38) and three young children (aged 11, 9 and 7) were preparing food on the

ground. All the other returnee families had left the area. He explained he was waiting for the district personnel to come and help him. Apart from the fact that no one knew he was there, there were no such persons in the area. He did not know where to go and he did not have any money. He had chosen the cash option C, but already in the camp the money had been lured away from him. However, the real victims were his wife and three children who were completely dependent upon his decisions. There was the risk that one or more of his children would venture into the city to become one of the growing number of street children, or be taken into prostitution. There was also the prospect of the old man selling one of the children.

Another problem that refugees face is the shift to an urban environment. Before their exile most were farmers. However, having been uprooted under Pol Pot, and having lived for more than a decade in closed camps, their lives had changed from being rice farmers to becoming urban dwellers. The repatriation programme called on them to develop what is now an almost new endeavour of making a living from agricultural production (de Monchy, 1992). Of the refugees, 47 per cent are under the age of 15 (UNHCR, 1993). Few have seen a rice field, a cow, a well or a forest. For them, rice is something brought to the camps in sacks, fuelwood and water on trucks, and vegetables and meat are something out of a plastic bag.

For most refugee children this is a dramatic change in their life and may well seem unbearable. Moreover, children who do not perform their duties well may be punished harshly. Estranged from their former life and not capable of coping with the new, they may simply leave their homes and go to the cities, with all the risks that this entails.⁸

During a mission carried out for the Danish Cambodia Consortium in December 1992, I visited settlements on the outskirts of Battambang and observed people overcome by the apathy so well described as being a consequence of the Total Institution Syndrome. The settlements, easily recognizable by the blue plastic sheets for roofs, windows or walls, appeared very different from the other villages. The striking fact was that there were hardly any men or children above the age of eight. Talking to the women, it seemed that they felt very isolated from their surroundings and most of them also seemed to be relatively far away from their families. This was due to the fact that even small distances were difficult to reach because of the state of the roads and bridges. Most of them dreamed of taking up some of the activities which occupied them in the camps, such as sewing, weaving or pottery, but lacked the necessary means.

Such aspirations present a special challenge to the NGOs specializing in small-scale industries and income-generating activities. It is vital that whatever economic activities are introduced should be on a small scale in order to succeed. Proper follow-up training and technical assistance should be provided to ensure that the beneficiaries do not suffer yet more disappointments in their lives.

At first sight, the small villages appeared adequate with vegetables growing around the houses. Some women had invested in pigs or chickens. A closer look, however, revealed a lack of basic facilities such as latrines, access to potable water and health care clinics (Healy, 1992).

There were many female-headed households or women who were alone. This is explained partly by the fact that more women survived the wars, the mines and the fighting than men. Also many men had migrated to the towns and cities in search of jobs, leaving their families behind. Others continued to be incorporated into the armed forces and returned only now and then to visit their families, leaving the women as breadwinners.

⁸ See United Nations, 1993c.

According to information from local NGOs, many newly resettled women were abandoned by their husbands in the camps just before the repatriation. One explanation is that they married young in the camps, often without any other family present. Faced with prospects for a better future, some men simply claimed the marriage to be illegal, on the grounds that approval had not been granted by the parents.⁹

And what happens to the children? In a few cases they might be at school, but many have already left for the cities, trying to earn some money doing odd jobs in the informal economy, begging or selling products in the market-place.

“But they are doing dirty business, too”, said a woman in one of the larger settlements. She continued, “and some are sold. But that is mostly the children aged between 8 and 10 years”. None of the women wanted to discuss the subject further, but apparently girls are sometimes sold by their parents to do housework for rich people in the cities. Some of these girls may end up either in brothels or as child labourers. According to one report, some are also sold to people in foreign countries such as Thailand.¹⁰

An evaluation of the impact of the repatriation programme on people’s lives would no doubt reveal both success stories and failures. Two resettlement sites outside Battambang in the areas bordering the Khmer Rouge-controlled regions appear to be developing into real villages; a development that will be further enhanced with the construction of feeder roads and bridges which were due to be completed by the end of March 1993. Markets, permanent houses, a health clinic and a school were under construction. Increasing economic interaction with the Khmer Rouge might be an important development for national reconciliation following the elections. The Khmer Rouge come to the new markets to sell materials for constructing roofs. The settlers go to Khmer Rouge territory to buy timber for construction.¹¹

Joan Healy of the Australian Overseas Service Bureau, who travelled extensively in the region, visiting many of the settlements, severely criticized the repatriation programme, which she felt had not achieved its goal (Healy, 1992). In her papers, **Towards Understanding and The Return of the Border People**, she refers, for example, to the problem of land:

“Structural injustice and racism continue to be inflicted on the ordinary people by those with power. For example, the poor are dependent on land for subsistence and frequently don’t have enough. Among the powerful are many who are involved in corrupt land deals. Property is power. There is indication that land which is theoretically available to returnees is in some places being withheld by the local administration, and that in some places returnees are told that they will have use of the land only while ‘the UN’ is there to supervise. In this connection it is interesting that some officials refer to the returnees as ‘The people who took the wrong path’ ” (Healy, 1992).

Her reports tell of poverty, hopelessness and need. Infant mortality in the new settlements is very high and there are numerous cases where children and adults have died, because they could not get to a doctor. In many repatriation areas it takes half a day to travel by ox cart to the nearest main road. The refugees cannot afford to pay the farmer for this. Nor can he afford to use a working day to transport the sick to the road without payment.

⁹ Personal communication, Danish Cambodia Consortium, Battambang, December 1992 and April 1993.

¹⁰ United Nations, 1993c.

¹¹ Personal communication, Danish Cambodia Consortium, Battambang, December 1992 and April 1993.

In one case, the villagers had just enough money to get a child suffering from dengue fever to a doctor. However, since they only had money for one day's treatment, the child was brought back to the village the following day and subsequently died.

UNHCR has been unable to fulfil its commitment to repatriate people in conditions of safety and to provide them with land. In practice, there is no peace, civil rights are being violated and very few refugees have received land. Those who did are often located so far from markets and communication and transportation centres that they have become extremely isolated.

Healy reports that returnees in isolated areas often only see UNHCR representatives when the food rations are being distributed. It is also difficult for many to reach the designated distribution centres. Furthermore, upon arrival some will find they have arrived on the wrong date. For single women in these remote settlements, the situation often becomes so complicated that they give up, sell their land and migrate to the cities with their children.

UNTAC and the Cambodians

More than 20,000 people from approximately 100 countries form part of the UNTAC operation. After one year in the country, local attitudes towards the United Nations presence have soured considerably. According to **The Sunday Times**, United Nations troops are the target of the same sort of criticism that United States soldiers suffered in Britain during the Second World War — “overpaid, oversexed and over here” (Swain, 1992).

When the first 300 UNAMIC (United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia) soldiers arrived in Phnom Penh in November 1991, there were no serious traffic problems. There were few cars and those that were on the streets knew how to deal with cycle rickshaws, motorbikes and pedestrians. Street children and beggars were virtually non-existent except for those who gathered outside the hotels and restaurants where the expatriates were arriving.

It was suggested to UNTAC to immediately implement educational programmes for incoming UNTAC staff and military personnel that would include cultural sensitivity training and AIDS education. This was not, however, considered a priority.¹² In the mean time, UNTAC personnel poured into the country. Soldiers were to be stationed in the major cities and in rural areas. UNTAC staff in the capital received 145 dollars in daily mission allowance — equal to the average yearly income of a Cambodian.

Many working under the UNTAC umbrella were placed in large villas rented for sums similar to the prices prevailing in Geneva — 3,000 to 4,000 dollars a month was not unusual. Local landlords, eager to enjoy their piece of the UNTAC pie, broke contracts with old tenants, many of whom had been residents for years, and forced them to move.¹³

Doctors of the German Field Hospital on the outskirts of Phnom Penh reported a sharp increase in the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases and serious traffic accidents. Senior UNTAC staff reported that traffic accidents involving UNTAC vehicles were as many as 10-20 a day during the first months of 1992 — some involving the loss of life.

The Educational and Information Division of UNTAC did look into some of the problems affecting UNTAC's relations with the host population. Two of the major problems identified in a report dated 18 September 1992 (see appendix 1) concerned the poor treatment of

¹² Personal communication, UNTAC staff member, September 1992.

¹³ Personal communication, Norbert Klein, head of Lutheran World Services, Phnom Penh, December 1992.

Cambodians seeking compensation and assistance following traffic accidents involving UNTAC vehicles, and sexual harassment of women. On these two points the report notes:

“The most important problem in this regard concerns traffic accidents. Cambodians expect immediate compensation. This is extremely important because the funeral services must be conducted immediately and families often do not have the resources to pay for these services. But even more important is that people expect to be treated with respect when they come to talk with UNTAC officials after the accident, particularly if that accident involves a death.

“UNTAC personnel are not showing proper respect for Cambodian women. Perhaps because many UNTAC personnel only have contact with Khmer (and Vietnamese) women through prostitution, there is a tendency on the part of some personnel to treat all women as though they were prostitutes. This includes grabbing at women on the street, making inappropriate gestures and remarks and physically following or chasing women travelling in public. UNTAC personnel should be briefed on the fact that gender conceptions in Khmer culture are different from their own. Physical contact between the sexes in public is NEVER acceptable. If a woman laughs when she is touched, this laughter is probably a sign of embarrassment or fear and not encouragement. The problem is not exclusively one between Khmer women and male UNTAC staff, but is a generalized problem. Female UNTAC staff have similarly expressed problems with sexual harassment. The problem is not a small problem.”

The report also notes that the general population blamed UNTAC for the rapid increase in street crime. People were critical of UNTAC for having encouraged the release of certain prisoners, for not ensuring that Cambodian troops in cantonment sites gave up all their weapons, and for not protecting human rights, investigating wrongdoings and taking corrective action.

Under “General comments”, the report notes:

“The general population of Phnom Penh still expresses some optimism about UNTAC’s ultimate goal: bringing peace to the country. However, they are faced with the grim reality that since UNTAC arrived in their country, their lives have gotten worse. And now it has reached the stage where they are literally afraid for their lives. This was NOT the case for city residents before. The war was in the countryside and the most direct problem was how to keep your own son out of the draft. Now they are faced with prices so high in the market that they have trouble buying food, cuts in their wages, and a terrible fear of being attacked on the streets or in their own homes”.

The report demonstrates that UNTAC was in fact committed to understanding some of the social problems which had arisen in the context of the UNTAC operation. It is unfortunate, however, that serious measures were not taken to correct several of these problems.

Lapses in UNTAC behaviour were also discussed in a general staff meeting in September 1992 in Phnom Penh. UNTAC soldiers were requested not to visit places of ill-repute in uniform or park United Nations vehicles in front of them.¹⁴ Shortly after, personnel from UNTAC and the NGO community sent a letter to the head of the UNTAC mission highlighting the issue (see appendix 2). While the somewhat defensive response they received was not what they had hoped for, UNTAC did appoint a liaison officer to the Cambodian community who was assigned the task of facilitating the transmission of complaints. This action came one year after the first United Nations soldiers had arrived in Cambodia and just six months before the UNTAC mission was due to terminate.

¹⁴ Personal communication, UNTAC staff member, October 1992.

Prostitution

Prostitution was not introduced to Cambodia by the peace process and the influx of more than 20,000 United Nations employees, but both have contributed to its explosive growth. The number of new restaurants and small hotels that have appeared in the capital since the arrival of the United Nations — a number too large to justify simply on the grounds of the increased need for eating, drinking and sleeping — attests to the growth in activity related to prostitution.

Thai-style massage houses have also sprung up in Phnom Penh. Cambodia has not yet become a specific destination for sex-tourism, but there can be little doubt that well-informed tourists have already heard of this new hot spot pioneered by United Nations troops (Channo, 1993a).

Women and children are often seen begging on many Phnom Penh street corners and in bars frequented by expatriates. Contacts can be made in many cafés. One United Nations employee, eating breakfast in one of the large hotels, was offered a 14-year-old virgin for a week. When he asked “what for?”, the woman who was with the girl answered that men usually know what to do with a little girl like that. The woman selling the virgin was thrown out, but presumably just took the girl somewhere else to sell.¹⁵

Poverty and social disruption, brought on by two decades of war, are the main reasons for the spread of prostitution; but, health authorities in Phnom Penh also point to the free-for-all economy that has developed since the signing of the peace accords (San, 1993).

The prostitutes come mostly from the poorest sectors of society, says the Office of Combatting Prostitution at the Ministry of Social Affairs:

“Some have been expelled from their families for having premarital sex, while others choose to go into prostitution themselves because they have made a mistake or are upset with their lives. Others have been raped by a neighbor and have no possibility of marriage” (San, 1993).

One health official of the State of Cambodia estimated that the number of prostitutes in Phnom Penh had increased from about 6,000 in 1991 to approximately 20,000 by the end of 1992 (Channo, 1993a). Furthermore, brothels were also beginning to appear in provincial towns. A senior UNTAC official explained that more new shelters were being built every night in front of the UNTAC soldiers quarters. Pimps and girls stand waiting for an offer.¹⁶

The price for a virgin girl is between 400 and 700 dollars (the equivalent of 3 to 5 days per diem), but already after one week the price would fall to 5-15 dollars per visit (Channo, 1993a). This is still somewhat expensive. In the small coffee houses or in the red light area behind the Boeng Kak lake a couple of dollars will do. Young girls are a little more expensive. Phala, a 14-year-old girl, was sold to a brothel for 400 dollars by her sister. “She told me it was not a bad thing, but after a week I wanted to go home. But the brothel owner told me ‘Don’t be ashamed, everybody is selling themselves now and the money is good’. Now I think they were right”, the young girl concludes (Channo, 1993a).

At a Human Rights seminar in Phnom Penh in November 1992, Mr. Chea San of the Social Section Office in Phnom Penh gave the following case histories:

- A girl, who had lost both her parents, was invited by a friend of the father to come and live with him in Phnom Penh. It turned out that he had a brothel; she was raped and forced to

¹⁵ Personal communication, UNICEF, Phnom Penh.

¹⁶ Personal communication, UNTAC Chief Medical Officer, Phnom Penh, September 1992 and December 1992.

receive customers. At 17 years of age, she now sees no other option but to stay a prostitute, since no one will marry her as she is not a virgin.

- A young girl leaving Kandal province to go to Phnom Penh to learn English was to stay with an uncle outside the city. A woman, a friend of the family, invited the girl to stay with her, closer to the school. One day she took her to a restaurant where she was raped and pressured to receive customers. She still works as a prostitute (San, 1993).

The Social Section Office confirms that Cambodian children are sold to brothels in Thailand. Many are tricked into going to Thailand for jobs. The tragedy of Cambodia becoming a part of the Asian sex-market is that the victims will as always be the children and it comes just at a time when the country is, supposedly, on its way to building a “new” society after more than two decades of violence, destruction and repression (UNICEF, 1993).

Businessmen, expatriates and the United Nations soldiers have now entered the scene, and Cambodia is now on the map just as Bangkok, the Philippines and Saigon were as centres for servicing the American soldiers during the Viet Nam war.

The figures for child prostitution in the region, according to available statistics for 1990, are as follows (San, 1993):

- 200,000 to 800,000 in Thailand;
- at least 20,000 in the Philippines;
- 100,000 Nepalese girls smuggled into India every year;
- 300,000 to 400,000 children in India;
- and now Cambodia.

Shortly after the German field hospital was set up in Phnom Penh in the summer of 1992, it was reported that sexually transmitted diseases were a very serious threat to the soldiers.¹⁷ According to some estimates, 80 per cent of the prostitutes in Cambodia are infected with some form of sexually transmitted disease, including HIV.

Before coming into Cambodia all soldiers and policemen are required to obtain a medical clearance and are tested for diseases like gonorrhoea, syphilis and tuberculosis but not for HIV. This was explained on the grounds that it would offend human rights, and donor countries would not approve if their soldiers were required to be tested for HIV. According to UNTAC medical authorities, however, soldiers can now be tested before returning home. This would seem to imply that it is appropriate to protect the folks back home but not to protect the host population.

ECPAT (End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism) and UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund) indicate that there is an increasing demand for young prostitutes in Cambodia. The younger they are, the less chance they have of being HIV carriers. If they are virgins, so much the better. Young boys are also being recruited into prostitution. A leading international AIDS expert explained that young children and virgins are in a high risk group for contracting HIV since they will almost unavoidably experience physical traumas, as a result of which the virus is introduced directly into their body fluid system.

It is not surprising that the UNTAC operation contributed to an increase in prostitution. It is highly regrettable, however, that preventative measures were not taken in time, particularly given that UNTAC was aware of the potential magnitude of the problem in January 1992, when there were only 300 soldiers in the country (Arnvig, 1992b).

¹⁷ Ibid.

In order to control prostitution, the soldiers should have been given well-defined rules for socializing, such as those given to United States soldiers in Iceland. Acceptable recreation areas — not just the streets and bars — should have been designated. Finally, everyone, before arrival, should have received information and education on HIV infection and sexually transmitted diseases. A plentiful supply of condoms and adequate AIDS information and education in Cambodia are sadly lacking. Today, Cambodia is facing a wave of prostitution, similar to that in Bangkok and Saigon in the 1960s, with the added dimension of the AIDS problem.

Drug Problems

There is a real danger that the production, trade and use of illicit narcotic drugs will increase sharply in Cambodia. Marijuana grows wild and can be bought, unprocessed, in every market-place for a couple of dollars per kilo — it is used for cooking. Of more concern is the fact that, by accident, UNTAC military forces found a village in the jungles close to the Thai border producing heroin (UNDCP, 1993). It had 700 inhabitants. But, as no law forbids drugs or drug trafficking in Cambodia, no action was taken.

In December 1992, UNDCP (United Nations International Drug Control Programme) concluded that the situation in Cambodia was changing rapidly. Cambodia has to be considered a high risk area as it has no anti-drug laws or controllable borders, and because of the high levels of poverty and the fact that it has the right climate to grow illicit drug crops.

Furthermore, the report points out that Cambodia has excellent lines of communication with neighbouring countries for export activities. The Mekong river, the eighth largest in the world with its myriad of tributaries, runs from China via Myanmar to Lao PDR, Cambodia and Viet Nam, ending in the South China Sea (UNDCP, 1993).

As in Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand, drugs may soon become a major problem in Cambodia. Such a development constitutes a major risk for the many Cambodian children living in especially difficult circumstances who can be exploited by the drug traffickers.

Children on their Own

One of the saddest consequences of the war in Cambodia is the street children. Some maintain contact with their families — others do not, preferring to live in groups or gangs on the streets. In the last year, street children have emerged in Phnom Penh and the larger Cambodian cities in numbers hitherto completely unknown.

After the Pol Pot régime, children could be seen roaming round the country looking for their relatives. Many were reunited, while others had to go to public institutions which could accommodate a couple of thousand (UNICEF, 1993). Some of them — now young adults over 13 years of age — still live there.

The State of Cambodia estimated that Cambodia had more than 200,000 orphans in 1992. According to the definition used in the country, this figure also includes children of single parents (UNICEF, 1993). Many children are expected to end up on the streets as a result of the repatriation of refugees from the camps in Thailand, of whom, according to UNHCR's own reckoning, half are under 15 years of age. To this should be added children of the many internally displaced families.

In the cities the children are at risk of becoming involved in crime and becoming victims of prostitution, sexual abuse and drugs. Street children are sometimes used for theft, smuggling and drug trafficking.

While individuals and governments the world over are concerned by the increasing number of street children — estimates worldwide tend to vary between 10 and 100 million (WHO, 1992) — there is a tendency to view this problem as a statistical phenomenon, rather than a human one. UNICEF, in co-operation with CHILDSHOPE,¹⁸ made a study of street children in Cambodia (CHILDSHOPE/UNICEF, 1992). Comments from the children fighting to survive are revealing:

“I want to go to school but my mother does not allow me to study. She said, if I go to school how can we get the money for the family’s expenses?”

“How do you spend your money?”

“I spend it all.”

“Why don’t you save some?”

“I’ve saved some but a group of boys always persuaded me to play cards with them. If I refuse they beat me.”

These are the children who sleep on the streets of Cambodia, covered in dirt and hiding in corners to make themselves less vulnerable. As in all countries with street children, a substantial number begin “sniffing” — normally, glue, shoe polish, solvent or petrol — substances that, very quickly, cause incurable brain damage (WHO, 1992; CHILDSHOPE/UNICEF, 1992; Emblad, 1992). Apart from the effects of brain damage on their future development there are the additional problems of many who become maladjusted and aggressive (Arnvig, 1992a).

The problem concerning street children has far wider implications. After a few years many street children become street parents, responsible for new human beings. These offspring are likely to remain on the streets, not only because they grow up among people outside the mainstream of society, but because their street children-parents themselves have been deprived of a normal childhood and are incapable of caring for them.

Conclusion

UNTAC has been working in Cambodia for more than a year. Roads have been built and bridges constructed. Nevertheless, as admitted in UNTAC’s own internal paper on public perceptions of UNTAC, the Cambodians’ feelings for United Nations forces have cooled considerably.

Many of the problems encountered in Cambodia vis-à-vis the UNTAC operation are likely to arise in other poor and vulnerable countries where mega peace-keeping activities take place. Such operations, due to their mandate, only deal with specific tasks in these countries. However, the very presence of thousands of United Nations personnel unavoidably influences the whole local environment. In solving one problem, the United Nations may risk creating another. Steps to prevent many of the problems discussed in this chapter could be implemented without major costs.

As the new United Nations humanitarian missions offer much hope and are a very important step forward, it is essential to make sure that the negative effects that compromise the reputation of the United Nations in these countries are reduced to a minimum.

Only by analysing the mistakes and the merits of United Nations peace-making operations can decisive steps forward be taken. The United Nations has, for years, praised itself for being the honest broker when international problems needed to be solved. In the case of mega operations, the United Nations should act like the well-behaved guest, who respects the values and the wishes of the host. It should not be all that difficult.

¹⁸ CHILDSHOPE is an international NGO dealing with street children.

Appendix 1: Report on Public Perceptions of UNTAC in the City of Phnom Penh
Information/Education Division
Analysis Report
18 September 1992

A Khmer-speaking information officer conducted over fifty conversations and interviews with Cambodians in the city of Phnom Penh over a three week time period from 27 August to 18 September. Persons spoken to included government workers, Cambodian local staff of UNTAC, Cambodian staff of NGOs, street sellers, university students, cycle and motorcycle taxi drivers, business people and teachers. The findings are disturbing and seem to the information officer to require urgent attention.

I. The general population is angry at UNTAC

A. They are angry because of insecurity on the streets of the city. It is now extremely unsafe to travel on the streets of the city after dark. Thieves stop people and take cash, possessions and motorcycles. This has escalated sharply in the last few days and the thieves now sometimes kill their victims.

The reasons according to which this is blamed on UNTAC are as follows:

1. UNTAC and the human rights of prisoners
 - UNTAC “let all of the prisoners out of the jails”. Many of these are believed to be thieves who are now robbing people again.
 - UNTAC will not let thieves be beaten or shot (as some Cambodians think that they should be); thus thieves are not afraid.
 - SOC authorities are afraid to shoot or beat the thieves for fear that they will be accused of human rights abuse by UNTAC, so people say that they have simply stopped patrolling at all.
 - UNTAC police are not patrolling to look for these thieves.
2. UNTAC and cantonment
 - People say that the thieves are CPAF soldiers who have been cantoned and are now on agricultural leave.
 - Thus UNTAC is stupid because they were fooled into thinking that the CPAF soldiers who entered cantonment sites really gave up their weapons. They gave up old and broken weapons and kept their good ones which they have now turned on the population of the city.
3. UNTAC and the Vietnamese
 - The issue is linked to the Vietnamese issue because Cambodians think that many thieves are ethnic Vietnamese. This is because of traditional animosity and the notion that Vietnamese are immoral, but is also related to the fact that many recently arrived Vietnamese who are working as construction laborers are very poor. And people are accepting the KPNLF and PDK propaganda to the effect that the Vietnamese should go home, but UNTAC is protecting them.

However, PLEASE NOTE that the shootings are NOT being blamed on Vietnamese, but specifically on ex-CPAF soldiers.

B. The population is angry at UNTAC because UNTAC says that they are here to protect the rights of citizens and will investigate wrongdoing and take actions to correct these. Many Cambodians see UNTAC as completely ineffective in this area.

1. **Charges of corruption:** Cambodians see no results. In some cases investigations may be ongoing and Cambodians do not know that this is the case. In other instances, investigations took place and the results said that there was no evidence of corruption. The

most important case in this regard concerns the Ministry of Education, because it affects virtually every family. For UNTAC to NOT see the corruption when EVERYONE pays, or alternatively could not pay and had their child fail his or her examinations, seems to them ridiculous. For UNTAC to not see either makes it a laughing stock or confirms for people the perception that SOC is pushing its media campaign — that UNTAC and SOC are working in collusion with one another.

2. **UNTAC and land dispute cases:** No need to elaborate. Civil Administration offices are swamped with these. Cambodians are impatiently waiting for results. Rumors abound that people are being killed over such disputes.
3. **UNTAC and information/financial control:** SOC administrative structures still do and say what they like and the population has no means of recourse. Examples:
 - State workers; teachers, health workers, office workers, etc. were again paid partly in small denomination riel notes. These notes cannot be exchanged for full value. If people are lucky, they can find someone who will take them for 60-70% off their face value. Even provincial SOC banks will not accept the notes. So, in effect, the workers have just had a significant pay cut. The fact that SOC radio and press continue to say that the notes must be/are accepted makes UNTAC information/financial control look foolish.
 - People have heard that UNTAC is regulating electrical rates and that the rates have now been fixed (at 220 riels?). However, this month (August) electricity bills jumped dramatically to 270, 300 or 350 riels per kilowatt. People say, “why does UNTAC say that it is doing things when it is not?”

C. People are angry because of **personal treatment** of Cambodian civilians by UNTAC personnel.

1. **UNTAC and traffic accidents:** The most important problem in this regard concerns traffic accidents. Cambodians expect immediate compensation. This is extremely important because the funeral services must be conducted immediately and families often do not have the resources to pay for these services. But even more important is that people expect to be treated with respect when they come to talk with UNTAC officials after the accident, particularly if that accident involves a death.
 - The information officer talked with a Khmer-speaking foreigner who accompanied a Cambodian family to meet with UNTAC officials after the death of their three year old child. The person was appalled at the treatment they received. In this case, they had money for the service and really wanted someone to tell them officially that UNTAC was very sorry and to sit with them and listen to their sorrow. No one would take the time to make this expression of shared grief.
2. **UNTAC and women:** UNTAC personnel are not showing proper respect for Cambodian women. Perhaps because many UNTAC personnel only have contact with Khmer (and Vietnamese) women through prostitution, there is a tendency on the part of some personnel to treat all women as though they were prostitutes. This includes grabbing at women on the street, making inappropriate gestures and remarks and physically following or chasing women travelling in public. UNTAC personnel should be briefed on the fact that gender conceptions in Khmer culture are different from their own. Physical contact between the sexes in public is NEVER acceptable. If a woman laughs when she is touched, this laughter is probably a sign of embarrassment or fear and not encouragement. The problem is not exclusively one between Khmer women and male UNTAC staff, but is a generalized problem. Female UNTAC staff have similarly expressed problems with sexual harassment. The problem is not a small problem.

II. General comments

The general population of Phnom Penh still expresses some optimism about UNTAC's ultimate goal: bringing peace to the country. However, they are faced with the grim reality that since UNTAC arrived in their country, their lives have gotten worse. And now it has

reached the stage where they are literally afraid for their lives. This was NOT the case for city residents before. The war was in the countryside and the most direct problem was how to keep your son out of the draft. Now they are faced with prices so high in the market that they have trouble buying food, cuts in their wages, and a terrible fear of being attacked on the streets or in their own homes.

Three other general points deserve mention: People are talking about the Vietnamese civilian population as being a serious problem. The KPNLF and PDK media lines on this topic are being taken very seriously. People who never previously voiced anti-Vietnamese sentiments in the two to three years that this Information Officer has known them are doing so now.

In a directly related point, this Information Officer thinks that many more people are now tuning in to PDK radio than before. People bring up things in general conversation that were just on PDK radio broadcasts, not necessarily saying where they heard the information. It is likely that they have not stopped listening to SOC or Voice of America or other broadcasts, but are now turning on PDK radio as well.

Finally, there is no sense, especially among students and other educated people who might be likely to do so, that it is now possible to be active in other political parties. Students say flatly that if they were known to have joined a political party that they would be thrown out of school. State employees similarly say that if they are known to have participated in the meetings of a political party, they will lose their jobs. If you suggest to them that they now have freedoms: of speech, assembly and so on, they would find your suggestion absurd.

Appendix 2: An Open Letter

To Mr. Yasushi Akashi, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General, United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Dear Mr. Akashi,

On behalf of the community of women living in Phnom Penh we would like to thank you for encouraging the Supreme National Council to adopt the "Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women". We hope that it becomes a document referred to often by the current and future governments of Cambodia and that it is utilized to benefit the status of all Cambodian women.

We, as a group of women and men living and working in Cambodia, feel a sense of outrage at the unacceptable behavior of some male UNTAC personnel. We would like to express concern regarding mistreatment of women, and in light of your statements made at the meeting of NGOs on the 24 September would like to call your attention to some of the experiences shared by women in this community on a daily basis:

- 1. **Sexual harassment** occurs regularly in public restaurants, hotels and bars, banks, markets and shops to the point where many women feel highly intimidated.*
- 2. Women feel **restricted in their movements** in social and professional settings because of the inappropriate behaviors they receive from some male UNTAC personnel while there.*
- 3. Cambodian and other Asian women are the victims of **stereotyping** and often are forced into subservient roles. These women deserve the same respect as the sisters, mothers, daughters and wives of UNTAC personnel.*

4. **Inappropriate behavior** by male UNTAC personnel often leaves women with a feeling of powerlessness. These men hold positions of authority on behalf of the international community and should be setting an example for others. Women have little access to redress when they experience such behavior. One incident that helps to illustrate this point was when a 6-year-old Khmer American girl was invited into the yard at the house of some UNTAC civilian police who regularly invite a steady stream of prostitutes into the same house. The child described the experience in these words, “... mommy, they called me over and hugged me and then they wouldn’t let me go ...” Regardless of the intentions this is not appropriate. Her mother felt helpless because if she confronted these men it could lead to further problems.

In other cases, Cambodian women who have been sexually assaulted are too frightened to allow their stories to be told in a public way.

5. There has been a dramatic increase in **prostitution** since UNTAC’s arrival and a noticeable absence of condoms and education about their use. It is not surprising that HIV has reached an “emergency” level of at least **0.75%** among voluntary blood donors, a rate of infection that is comparable to the rate of neighboring Thailand. It is the responsibility of all of us as citizens and guests of Cambodia to prevent the spread of **sexually transmitted diseases**. The legacy of UNTAC in Cambodia should not be these modern-day plagues.

In addition to the importance of safe sex, prostitutes are voicing concern about the need to have means of redress when any form of violence is used against them.

6. There are very **few women represented** in high level positions in UNTAC. In addition, there are few women working in mid and lower level positions such as civilian police, electoral personnel and interpreters. Cambodian women, who represent 60-65% of the population of this country, are not being offered a positive example of full participation in decision-making by UNTAC.

UNTAC personnel are here to keep the peace and to ensure a neutral environment for free and fair elections. This means they serve as role models for Cambodians. However, we see evidence of what can only be described as “frontier behavior”, that is, a kind of “no-rules-anything-goes” attitude. Given that UNTAC is here as the body of ultimate authority, even to assist in drafting a constitution, it would seem a wise practice to demonstrate exemplary conduct.

We would like to work with UNTAC in a positive manner to address these concerns and suggest the following actions:

- *Education for all UNTAC personnel in gender awareness and cross-cultural issues*
- *Appointment of an ombudsperson for women, with authority and direct access to the Force Commander of the military component and the UN Secretary General’s Special Representative*
- *Development of a process of redress for women who have experienced sexual harassment and other inappropriate behavior by UNTAC personnel which should be widely disseminated in both Khmer and English*
- *Establishment of a code of conduct for UNTAC personnel including the means to enforce the code, and in extreme circumstances to repatriate the perpetrator; this code should be made available in the primary languages of all UNTAC personnel*
- *Release of the number of complaints of women who have been mistreated by UNTAC personnel both inside and outside of UNTAC*

- *Creation of a women's advisory committee to UNTAC which must include Cambodian women*
- *Provision of data regarding the employment of women within UNTAC; and intentional efforts to hire more women, both Cambodian and expatriate, at all levels*
- *Implementation of a broad campaign to provide education to UNTAC personnel and Cambodians about sexually transmitted diseases; this must include increased distribution of condoms*

We look forward to your reply and to working in cooperation with UNTAC on these issues. It can only be beneficial to all of us living, working and hoping for peace and a better future for Cambodia.

Sincerely yours,

[Signed by 170 persons]

cc: Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Lt. General John Sanderson

6. The Return of the Border Khmer: Repatriation and Reintegration of Refugees from the Thai-Cambodian Border¹ **— Vance Geiger**

Introduction

The violent events of the late 1970s and 1980s forced many Cambodians to flee the country. Over a third of a million people found refuge in camps along the Thai-Cambodian border. Under the terms prescribed in the Paris Peace Agreements of October 1991, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was to facilitate the return of this population within the relatively short time frame of less than a year.²

It is generally agreed that the repatriation of some 370,000 refugees during 1992 and early 1993 constitutes one of the most successful aspects of the entire United Nations operation in Cambodia. The repatriation of Khmer refugees from the border camps was extensively planned and programmed (UNHCR, 1990a, 1990b; Lynch, 1989).

Determining the efficacy of the Khmer repatriation, however, involves more than an assessment of the logistics of moving a large number of people in a prescribed period of time, as immense a task as that might be. It is also important to assess the conditions under which such a large number of people were repatriated and the ease or difficulty with which their reintegration took place.

This chapter examines these issues, looking, in particular, at the question of voluntary repatriation and the socio-economic, cultural and psychological problems and tensions which characterized the process of reintegration. The chapter has two parts. Part I discusses a number of issues which have a bearing on voluntary repatriation. Part II presents data on reintegration that I collected during field work carried out in July-October 1992.

¹ A longer version of this chapter, containing more detailed information, was submitted as a report to UNRISD. This report is referenced as Geiger, 1993. Copies may be obtained from the author.

² The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in conjunction with UNTAC, was supposed to have all the refugees back in Cambodia before the elections. The repatriation began in March 1992. The elections were originally scheduled for January 1993 but were eventually held in May 1993.

Part I: Voluntary Repatriation

Among the basic principles that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has established for refugee repatriation programmes are that the decision to return must be made freely by the refugees and that they must be able to return safely and with dignity (UNRISD, 1993b:13). This section assesses the extent to which such conditions prevailed in Cambodia. The discussion centres on four key issues:

- The extent to which repatriation was voluntary.
- Types of assistance to returnees.
- Vulnerable groups within the returnee population.
- Refugee dependency.

The extent to which the repatriation was voluntary

Several factors can affect the voluntary character of the refugees' decision to return. Particularly relevant in the case of the border Khmer were the issues of return to a dangerous situation (a conflict zone, areas with unexploded munitions and mines), the information the refugees had, the influence of the three border political factions which controlled the different camps, and the refugees' lack of direct participation in the repatriation planning process.³

Security concerns. Under what circumstances can and should refugees be returned to a conflict zone and who determines whether it is safe for refugees to return? In the case of the border Khmer the Paris peace accords were supposed to ensure that Cambodia would be at peace when the refugees returned. This, however, was not the case. Significant fighting was still taking place between the Khmer Rouge and the State of Cambodia in north-western and central Cambodia. The decision to begin the repatriation was taken at a time of relative peace and optimism as UNTAC was establishing its presence and when it appeared that all four factions would adhere to the provisions of the peace accords. It is pertinent to ask whether or not the repatriation should have continued given the deterioration in security conditions. Considering the level of involvement of the United Nations in both Cambodia and the repatriation of the border refugee population it would have taken a decision by the United Nations to halt the repatriation and, possibly, postpone the elections on the grounds that the situation was too dangerous. This, however, did not occur.

Another factor detracting from the voluntary character of the Khmer repatriation was the deterioration of security in the camps. Incidents included a major fire on 1 May 1992, a riot that began on 1 June 1992 and lasted several days, attacks by bandits, and the repatriation of the Khmer police which left the camps unpoliced (*Asia Watch*, 1992:39-40; Lowman, 1992:10-11; CCSDPT, 1992). As the situation in the camps became less secure the refugees' willingness to repatriate increased.

Another major problem concerns the risks to people returning to former conflict zones where mines and other unexploded munitions abound. This was an important consideration in the repatriation of the border Khmer because of the extensive placement of mines throughout north-western Cambodia. Areas where the greatest risks were encountered were often those where some of the most intensive conflict had occurred and, consequently, some of the largest displacement of people. As a result, these areas remained relatively uninhabited up to the time when the repatriation started. The returnees, returning internally displaced persons and local residents who did not leave, all began the process of reoccupation on an equal basis. This

³ Other factors, such as length of exile, may also influence the refugees' decision to return. In the case of the border Khmer, the effects of a long period of exile in Thailand on their reintegration remain to be seen. My impression was that the long period in exile did not appear to have dampened the desire to return, given satisfactory conditions in Cambodia.

situation was not encountered in other areas where people who did not flee may have occupied land abandoned by those who did and had a more secure claim than the returnees.

The UNHCR established certain no-go areas because of security risks, the presence of mines, difficulty of access, high incidence of malaria and other health risks, lack of potable water and other sanitation problems (UNHCR, 1992a:5). Where returnees wanted to go to these areas the UNHCR held briefings and interviews in the camps in Thailand on the risks involved and counselled them to consider other destinations. The UNHCR, however, could not prevent them “under the principles of free choice and freedom of movement embodied in the Paris peace agreement” and thus would take them to the nearest “go” area (UNHCR, 1992a:5).

In such situations the only satisfactory solution would be to remove the risks, for example, the mines. The presence of mines in Cambodia was an important issue addressed in the initial planning of the repatriation (UNHCR, 1990a:32-42). De-mining, however, was subject to decisions and policies made by UNTAC and the Supreme National Council (SNC), and not UNHCR. There were serious problems, however, with the implementation of the de-mining programme. One of the sites where I conducted research (Tippadey) was mined but no de-mining was taking place.

Choice of destination. Should refugees always be free to return to the destinations of their choice? This was an important issue in the repatriation of the border Khmer. The returnees were initially allowed to return to destinations of their choice but this was changed to place of origin early in the repatriation process. In practice, however, large numbers of returnees chose their final destination through secondary migration, leaving the locations to which they had initially repatriated to resettle elsewhere (see section on secondary migration in part II of this chapter). As a result of this process, many incurred additional hardship due to their inability to change the distribution point where they received food rations.

There is a lesson to be learned from this experience. In cases like that of Cambodia where society has been severely disrupted over a long period of time, a significant amount of secondary migration will take place as people seek to re-establish the location of family and relatives and to find places where they can resettle. In cases where similar conditions prevail and if refugees are repatriated into a situation where their ability to engage in secondary migration is constrained, the hardships incurred in secondary migration after repatriation could be lessened if the refugees’ choice of destination is given higher priority.

Information. Of critical importance for achieving voluntary repatriation is the refugees’ access to information concerning conditions in the country of origin. From discussions with NGO personnel who worked in the border camps, it would appear that the issue of information about conditions within Cambodia was not only crucial but also contentious. In August 1989, in an address to a United Nations-sponsored seminar of NGOs and international organizations on the future of assistance to Cambodia, Susan Walker, Director of Handicap International, placed information as one of the critical issues to be tackled. She stated that the issue of information was “sensitive” and resisted by the Khmer camp administrations which represented different political factions. As a solution she argued that the refugees should be given access to a neutral camp from where they could repatriate (Walker, 1990:40). She also listed information among the major issues raised by the Khmer refugees in the camps (Walker, 1990:41).

The Committee for Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT) established a Cambodian Liaison Project and Cambodian Liaison Officer (CLO) to liaise between the border NGOs and the NGOs working in Cambodia. As the person directly involved in the collection and dissemination of information, the problems mentioned in the CLO’s end of mission statement concerning information are of note: “much work remains to

be done, particularly with respect to the information campaigns in the camp” (Houtart, 1991:11). Specific items that were mentioned as problematic were UNHCR’s reliance on information hand-outs instead of using other media more suitable to a largely semi-literate or illiterate population, and the concentration of information on the repatriation plan to the exclusion of information about conditions in Cambodia (Houtart, 1991:18). Another significant problem was that the “camp administrations have their own interests to protect and their own ‘information’ campaigns are thus geared to opposing the UNHCR repatriation plan. And so the ‘information’ war continues to be waged” (Houtart, 1991:17).

The issue of access to accurate information as a precursor to a truly voluntary repatriation only assumes critical importance when there is a real decision to be made by the refugees. In the case of the border Khmer the decision to repatriate the refugees was inseparable from the peace process. Agreement on repatriation was one of several necessary elements in the achievement of a peace accord. The negotiations — involving as they did the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, the leaders of the three border factions including Prince Sihanouk, the State of Cambodia government in Phnom Penh, and various regional governments including Australia, Indonesia, Japan and Thailand — essentially excluded the refugees on the border. The process especially excluded those who were non-political regardless of living in a faction-controlled camp. The specifics of the repatriation plan, subject to the UNHCR’s preference for tripartite agreements, represented an agreement between the UNHCR, Thailand and the Supreme National Council (UNHCR, 1991).

The issue of information is, however, critical when the refugees must make decisions as to how they will be repatriated and where they will go. Of particular concern in the case of the border Khmer was the information the refugees were receiving about the UNHCR repatriation plan from the camp administrations (**Asia Watch**, 1992).

Refugee participation. Another crucial issue concerns the extent and nature of refugee participation in the decisions taken in planning and implementing the repatriation. Crisp (1986) has argued against the reliability of tripartite agreements and for greater participation of the refugees and NGOs (see also Walker, 1990; Helton, 1991). In preparation for workshops on the repatriation held by CCSDPT, NGO personnel sought the opinions of the Khmer in the border camps on their concerns related to repatriation. This “indirect” input from the Khmer was presented at the 1989 CCSDPT workshop. The concerns expressed are listed in appendix 1. Walker presented six major concerns of the Khmer similar to those presented in the CCSDPT workshop. They included their safety, concern for the continued United Nations involvement in Cambodia after their return, employment in Cambodia and the recognition of training they had received in the border camps, as well as fear of forced repatriation (Walker, 1990:42).

In terms of the refugees’ fear of forced repatriation, one of the solutions they proposed was a neutral site where people wishing to leave the faction-controlled border camps could go, either in Thailand or in Cambodia.⁴ The suggested alternative in Thailand was Khao-I-Dang, a non-faction UNHCR-controlled camp (Walker, 1990:40). A combination of factors including logistical problems, possible problems with the Thai government’s co-operation, and the fear that an attempt to move people to neutral sites would lead to forced repatriations by the factions before steps could be taken to prevent them, led to a decision to maintain the existing camps and create staging areas within each camp.

Some steps were taken to deal with the other concerns raised by the refugees. Regarding the question of employment, UNTAC sought to employ qualified refugees in activities connected with electoral registration and to work as interpreters for the UNTAC peace-keeping

⁴ Personal communication with Sister Joan Healy, 1992.

operations and the UNTAC civil police. On the question of the recognition of training, UNTAC set up an office for establishing standards of equivalency between the border training programmes and health and education training programmes in Cambodia. Certain other concerns were addressed by the implementation of the repatriation plan and forms of development assistance. At the time when research for this chapter was conducted, it was too early to assess the effectiveness of these measures.

Types of assistance

The immediate assistance rendered to the Khmer returnees included a variety of household and agricultural implements (see appendix 2). The original assistance package also included land. By April 1992, however, the camp population had been informed that insufficient land was available and that consideration was being given to diversifying the options available to returnees. According to UNHCR many of the refugees had expressed a desire to return but did not require agricultural land (UNHCR, 1992b:3). As of May 1992 the decision was taken to introduce a number of options in the immediate assistance package. The returnees were given the choice of timber and building materials or a cash payment of 50 US dollars per adult and 25 dollars per child. The cash option also included the basic household kit and food ration.

While problems with identifying land continued, UNHCR had to meet the time frame imposed by the election registration deadline set for May 1993. By 27 July 1992, UNHCR finalized a range of resettlement options which the returnees could choose from. The options ran from the original assistance package, which included land (option A), to increasingly cash- or employment- (for qualified people) oriented options. Details of each option are provided in appendix 3. UNHCR data for October 1992 indicate that over 70 per cent of returnees had chosen the cash option (see table 6.1).

Table 6.1		
Repatriation options by percentage of returnees (October 1992)		
Option	Percentage	
	Persons	Families
A	6.0	6.0
B	10.8	14.0
C	74.4	71.2
D	0.0	0.0
E	2.3	2.2
F	0.1	0.1

Source: UNHCR, Battambang.

There were significant differences in the various immediate assistance packages. In the case of options A and B where the Cambodian Red Cross (CRC), the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and UNHCR were involved in the identification of house plots and agricultural land, some returnees were settled in sites where several families were clustered on land cleared and levelled for that purpose. Option C essentially involved self-settlement. Even though the returnees were supposed to return to food distribution points for their food ration, many did not as a result of secondary migration, and thus their departure from the reception centre in Cambodia also meant their separation from UNHCR. Self-settling returnees in rural areas had to rely either on ties with villages or migration to urban areas.

In refugee repatriations it is also crucial to address both the long-term reintegration needs of the returnees as well as the development needs of the areas they return to (Cuenod, 1989; Cuny and Stein, 1989; Crisp, 1986; Savané, 1991). In the repatriation of the border Khmer this issue was addressed by a combined effort on the part of UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to implement quick impact projects (QIPs). The long-term development needs of the areas most heavily impacted by the returnees, as well as returning internally displaced persons and demobilized soldiers, were addressed by UNDP through the

implementation of the Cambodia Reconstruction and Rehabilitation programme (CARERE) (see appendix 4).

The projects funded by the QIP programme included, for example, infrastructural improvements (roads, bridges, water supply and buildings); the provision of medicine for health clinics; primary health education; assistance to the vulnerable elderly; and a centre for unaccompanied minors (UNHCR, 1992c:6).

The implementation of the QIP programme and the creation of CARERE appeared to be the result of a serious commitment on the part of both the UNHCR and the UNDP to address the reintegration needs of the returnees in terms of both short- and long-term development as well as targeted “zonal development” (Rogge, 1990 and 1991).

Vulnerable groups within the returnee population

The importance of reintegration assistance to especially vulnerable individuals (EVIs) was recognized by UNHCR (UNHCR, 1990a:188-194). Specific categories of EVIs included children, the elderly and handicapped persons. In July 1992, UNHCR set about identifying “EVI links”, that is, support families or individuals who would assist the EVIs in the repatriation process.

During registration for repatriation EVIs were identified and their specific condition listed on a separate form (see table 6.2). The information was then coded and entered into a computer. The computer generated lists of EVIs and their locations within the camps. The lists were distributed to NGOs, which had the responsibility of contacting the EVIs and counselling them on the conditions they were likely to face upon repatriation and the possibility of finding a support family to accompany them back to Cambodia. A list of the NGOs responsible for various categories of EVIs can be found in appendix 5.

Table 6.2 Number of especially vulnerable individuals (EVIs) registered and/or repatriated by category of vulnerability (as of 23 September 1992)		
Category	Number repatriated	Number registered
Asthma	116	365
Cancer	2	16
Cirrhosis	17	45
Diabetes	11	72
Epilepsy	45	132
Heart disease	65	206
Hypertension	50	214
Leprosy	27	152
Nephritic syndrome	14	43
Psychiatric illness	103	359
Rheumatoid arthritis	14	78
Stoma/catheter	1	4
Tuberculosis	102	933
Thyroid disorder	6	22
Blindness	84	232
Cerebral palsy	44	116
Double amputee	40	111
Disabled needing transportation assistance	67	193
Neurological damage	144	434
Paraplegia	9	73
Tetraplegia	0	12
Elderly	155	698

Female-headed household	83	632
Other	443	1,080

Source: UNHCR, Aranyapathet.

EVI's who were called up for repatriation before an EVI link had been identified were referred to a UNHCR officer who counselled them to wait. If the EVI refugee chose to wait the officer would then notify the appropriate NGO to contact the refugee and possibly establish an EVI support family. The EVI could choose not to wait and continue the repatriation process.

Female-headed households (FHHs). The UNHCR repatriation planning report recommended against considering women as a “vulnerable” group. Instead the report advocated dealing with women’s issues in all sectors and that they should be “taken into account in the design of projects in key sectors of the economy” (UNHCR, 1990a:217). The report did point out, however, that FHHs could be disadvantaged in access to land, agricultural inputs and labour. In addition the report argued that reintegration assistance should ensure women’s access to vocational and technical training, including the provision of day care (UNHCR, 1990a:219).

In the implementation of the EVI link programme FHHs were considered a vulnerable group and constituted the largest vulnerable population (see table 6.2) with the exception of another category (“other”) which included orphans. At the time I conducted research in Battambang province there were no special programmes targeting FHHs being implemented in the sites or villages where interviews were conducted.

Statistics were compiled on the number of EVIs, those repatriating with EVI links and their destinations. This information was useful for organizations like World Vision which conducted research on the post-repatriation situation of handicapped EVIs and on village reintegration.

Refugee dependency

Many Cambodians have experienced such upheaval in their lives, and such insecurity and fear that they suffer serious psychological problems. These problems may be compounded in the case of the Khmer refugees who have spent years in camps. Problems of mental health figure prominently in the categories of EVIs listed in table 6.2 and constituted grounds for additional assistance.

The issue of mental health and voluntary repatriation, however, goes far beyond the question of identifying and assisting those suffering most overtly from psychiatric problems. Also relevant is the issue of the so-called “dependency syndrome” which is thought by many writers to impair the capacity of a significant proportion of the returnee population to take important decisions (Rogge, 1990 and 1991; Reynell, 1989).

General statements and descriptions of the conditions in refugee camps in which the decisions of refugees are constrained and their care and maintenance assured by external aid, often lead to an assertion that the refugees suffer from a dependent state of mind, or an inability to make decisions. Such assertions and descriptions should, however, be questioned. Further, the implications of assertions of dependency in terms of repatriation policy have not been well thought out.

The perception that the refugee population from the Thai-Cambodian border was prone to dependency and thus incapable of making decisions led to some inaccurate assumptions which had consequences in terms of policy and the well-being of the returnees. One of these assumptions was that the returnees would stay in the villages or sites where they were initially resettled. This assumption was based, at least partly, on the belief that they would be

dependent on the supply of food provided by UNHCR and the CRC. Consequently, no allowance was made for secondary migration and changing the food distribution points of returnees who chose to move. Once the repatriation began and the food distribution system was in place there was a reluctance to change the system. The returnees, however, did move, and in large numbers (see table 6.3). The consequence for the returnees was a net reduction in the amount of assistance they were given either as a result of the higher costs incurred in transporting their ration or in their failure to acquire it.

Table 6.3 Secondary migration of Khmer refugee returnees in the Sankhe and Battambang districts					
Battambang district as of 21 July 1992					
People who have arrived:					
Sub-district	w/UNHCR	Secondary migrants	Total	Stayed	Departed
Anlong Run	27	0	27	23	4
Bansay Treng	26	72	98	82	16
Boeung Pring	51	30	81	59	22
Chrey	149	55	204	129	75
Chroy Sdau	139	51	190	125	65
Kok Khmom	180	0	180	83	97
Otaki	117	5	122	63	59
Roung Chrey	141	5	146	104	42
Tamouen	478	28	506	262	244
Tapoung	15	57	72	64	8
Total	1,323	303	1,626	994	632
Sankhe district as of 27 July 1992					
Sub-district	Arrived		Stayed	Departed	
Vatt Tamim	310		112	198	
Otabam 1	161		68	93	
Otabam 2	69		77	+8*	
Noriea	86		27	59	
Tapun	149		62	87	
Roka	23		44	+21*	
Reing Kesei	57		20	37	
Kampong Prieng	48		53	+5*	
Kampong Prei	79		52	27	
Anlongville	405		77	328	
Total	1,387		592	795	

Note: *Where the number of families staying exceeded the number who came, some secondary migration had taken place to those sub-districts. It was not possible to determine if the secondary migrants were from within or without Sankhe district.

In general the issue of refugee dependency needs more specificity in terms of behavioural definition and more research. The research should address the conditions in which refugees live in camps and the long- and short-term psychological and social effects of such conditions. Further, the research should assess the policy implications of both ignoring dependency and overestimating its effects on refugee populations.

Part II: The Reintegration of the Border Khmer

This section presents data on the reintegration process gathered during field work conducted in July-October 1992. Certain methodological aspects pertaining to the research are discussed in appendix 6. The discussion centres on a number of issues which are crucial for assessing the ease or difficulty with which refugees reintegrate. These are:

- the importance of a supportive community and family/kin ties;
- vulnerability and the gender/age composition of households;
- accessing land and meeting basic needs;

- security; and
- secondary migration.

The importance of a supportive community and family/kin ties

Returnees that had, or discovered upon their return to Cambodia, family or relatives that were willing to help them reintegrate into a village were often more fortunate than those without relatives or whose relatives were unable or unwilling to help them. In the area where I conducted research, returnees without village, family or kin ties were generally resettled in sites.⁵

Returnees who resettled in villages were often helped by their village relatives to build their houses, were given some land for gardens and some may even have secured land for farming. Some returnees in villages, however, demonstrated greater dissatisfaction with their present situation relative to their life in the border camps. The lack of services available in villages relative to what was available in the camps sometimes outweighed the returnees appreciation of the greater degree of freedom they enjoyed outside the camps, back in Cambodia (see Geiger, 1993).

In a report on social functioning in the refugee camp known as Site 2 (Mollica et al., 1990) one finding of critical importance was that “the Khmer revealed a high degree of responsibility and care-taking for others in their community such as the elderly, sick, disabled and orphaned children” (Mollica et al., 1990:64). These findings support the contention that repatriation meant more than just leaving the camps and returning to Cambodia. In leaving the camps as individuals or even families the refugees were also leaving a community. The repatriation process represented the breaking up of a community in which many people had lived for almost a decade — a community in which many had found support.

Unfortunately, almost no provision was made for the refugees to repatriate as interpersonal (non-family) or interfamilial supportive groups. This appears to have been a major mistake which may have encouraged secondary migration as returnees attempted to re-establish some of the support networks disrupted by the breaking up of the camps. The reason given for rejecting any form of group repatriation was that the different political factions controlling the camps may have used any group repatriation policy as a means of coercion. One of the benefits of a neutral site (discussed above) would have been the possibility of camp-based supportive groups to have requested repatriating together without the suspicion of political coercion.

In fact, one of the results of the way the repatriation programme was implemented was to break up families. The immediate assistance repatriation package was provided to the refugees according to their family card which was the refugees’ documentation while in the camps. The family card provided access to the services in the camp and was also used to determine the food ration for each household. Under the repatriation programme the family card was used as a basis for identifying households which, in turn, were eligible for the various types of assistance packages described above (see also appendices 2 and 3). The problem, in terms of the breakup of families, was that the refugees were called up for repatriation more or less randomly by household head on the family card.⁶ Thus some members of a family would go before others.

⁵ There were some exceptions to a totally random call up. There was an attempt to empty the smaller camps, such as O’Trau and Site 8, sooner. Especially vulnerable individuals were also supposed to be given priority.

⁶ In Battambang there was a preference to resettle returnees in sites during the initial stages of the repatriation. According to UNHCR this was not the case in all provinces. The placement of returnees in sites also slowed down as the pace of the repatriation picked up and more returnees chose to repatriate

The refugees also contributed to the breakup of family units via strategies they adopted to maximize the amount of assistance they received upon repatriation. Because the immediate repatriation assistance was given by household and the household was determined by the family card, it benefited the refugees to maintain separate family cards, e.g. adult married children on a separate family card from their parents. In some, possibly many, cases people split their family cards. Having more than one family card allowed one household to receive a combination of assistance packages. Having family members repatriate separately also made it possible for different members of the same family to go to different destinations within Cambodia to determine where conditions might be best.

The sites where returnees without village ties were resettled were on land provided by the provincial, district or sub-district authorities. The sites were usually at the end of side roads in the middle of rice fields. The site area was cleared and flattened before the returnees arrived. Within the site the returnees were granted the use of house plots for an unspecified period of time.

The data from the returnees in the resettlement sites were revealing in terms of the lack of ties the returnees had with the local community as well as the physical isolation of some of the sites (see Geiger, 1993). The placement of the sites, at the ends of roads on cleared land, and their resemblance to camps and not villages, also made them highly visible as returnee areas. As a result the sites tended to reinforce the perception of the returnees as different among both the returnees and local people. The attention that some of the sites received by United Nations agencies and NGOs also led to the perception that the returnees received a lot of assistance, more than was actually the case, and that they were better off than local people and did not need any help.

The lack of land and the isolation of the resettlement sites left the returnees with few options in terms of future livelihood. When the food ration stops it is doubtful that many of the returnees in the sites will be able to remain unless other options are developed.

Vulnerability and the gender/age composition of households

The composition of the household has important implications for the viability of returnee households, especially in sites specifically set up to resettle the returnees. The most common EVIs encountered during the course of the field work were female-headed households and the elderly.

Female-headed households (FHHs). It has been estimated that approximately 30 to 35 per cent of all households in Cambodia consist of FHHs (Sonnois, 1990:1). Women and children in such households often face serious problems in terms of access to resources, education and employment, as well as in terms of social status (UNICEF, 1990; Sonnois, 1990; ICMC, 1993). These general problems add to the reintegration difficulties of returnee women and FHHs.

In the returnee sites where research was conducted, many FHHs with children were especially vulnerable economically and socially. In four locations, FHHs accounted for 24 per cent of the total sample (see tables 6.4 and 6.5). Elsewhere, however, the figure was much higher. In Tapoung village, for example, FHHs accounted for 76 per cent of all households.

<p style="text-align: center;">Table 6.4 Average household size and household composition for four returnee locations</p>
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under the cash option. According to the UNHCR Desk Officer for Cambodia (personal communication) there were only about 10,000 returnees in UNHCR-planned sites by late April 1993.

	Location				Total
	Omahl	Otabam 1 and 2	Chamkar Samrong	Tippadey	
Average household size	3.6	3.9	4.6	5.0	4.0
Household composition:					
- MFHH	10	10	8	4	32
- FHH w/children	4	6	0	0	10
- FHH w/o children	1	0	0	0	1
- MHH	1	2	0	0	3

Notes: MFHH = Male/female-headed households where both a husband and wife were present. FHH w/ and w/o children = Female-headed households where no husband was present and there were (w/) or were not (w/o) children also present. MHH = Male-headed households where only the male was present.

Table 6.5 Household composition for four returnee locations (percentage)					
	Location				Total
	Omahl	Otabam 1 and 2	Chamkar Samrong	Tippadey	
Household composition:					
- MFHH	21.7	21.7	17.4	8.7	69.6
- FHH w/children	8.7	13.0	0.0	0.0	21.7
- FHH w/o children	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2
- MHH	2.2	4.4	0.0	0.0	6.5

Returnees who were interviewed were asked if they were happy where they were and if their life was better than in the camps in Thailand. In response to the former question, opinions were evenly divided (see table 6.6) and the responses of the FHHs were very similar to those of the total sample. In response to the question of whether their life in Cambodia was better than in the border camp, nearly two thirds of the FHHs said no (see table 6.7). Particularly significant is the fact that the responses of the FHHs were almost opposite to those of the total sample population, nearly two thirds of which preferred their life back in Cambodia (see table 6.7). Women as the primary caretakers of children were clearly more sensitive to the loss of access to health care and education in the move from the border camps. In both the villages and resettlement sites access to health care and education was more difficult, and in the case of health care far more expensive, than in the border camps.

Table 6.6 Returnees responding “yes” or “no” to the question: “Are you happy here?” by number of returnees’ responses and percentages of total responses for all households and female-headed households		
	Number of female-headed households	Total number of households
Yes	5	22
No	5	20
Do not know	1	3
	(percentage)	(percentage)
Yes	45.5	48.9
No	45.5	44.4
Do not know	9.1	6.7

Table 6.7 Returnees responding “yes” or “no” to the question: “Is your life here better than in the camp in Thailand?” by number of returnees’ responses and percentages of total responses for all households and female-headed households	
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	Number of female-headed households	Total number of households
Yes	4	28
No	7	17
	(percentage)	(percentage)
Yes	36.4	62.2
No	63.6	37.8

The elderly. Most of the elderly returnees I encountered also fell into the category of FHHs. Their situation varied considerably. In some cases it was deplorable, in others it was quite hopeful and uplifting. The major factor which accounted for these variations in the situations of the elderly was the existence of family, kin or village ties or whether or not they lived alone in sites.

Accessing land and meeting basic needs

Assessing the returnees' ability to meet such basic needs as food, water, wood, health care and education is an important indicator of the returnees' reintegration. Knowing or not knowing how to access the resources required to meet basic needs, and having or not having resources such as money for the purchase of food to supplement the UNHCR ration, are important factors in assessing the returnees' ability to sustain a viable existence.

Particularly important is the question of access to land. While still in the border camps in Thailand, the returnees had been promised up to two hectares of land for farming upon their return to Cambodia. As noted above, UNHCR was unable to fulfil this promise.

Agriculture, primarily rice farming, was the main rural productive activity in Battambang province where the field work was conducted. All of the resettlement sites and most of the villages where I interviewed returnees and long-term villagers were too isolated to be commercial centres of any size. Consequently, access to land for rice farming was an important factor when returnees were asked about their survival strategies and future plans.

Would the returnees ever get land? The answer was not clear. There was almost no chance they would get back any land they had abandoned when they fled to the border. As for the distribution of land that was not in use, the district chief would decide which land belonged to the commune (sub-district), the commune chief would decide which belonged to the villages, and the village leader would decide which land in the village could be used for returnees.⁷ For agricultural land, the situation was not clear. Furthermore, the issue of land tenure was not clear even for long-term villagers (see Geiger, 1993).

Several serious problems existed in meeting the basic needs of food, water and wood. Problems also existed for the returnees in accessing services such as health care and education. Such problems were partly due to the isolation of the sites and villages and a lack of community knowledge regarding local services and service providers.

During the interviews in the four initial locations the returnees were asked what their biggest problems were in their present location. The problems mentioned by the returnees and the numbers and percentages of returnees citing specific problems are given in table 6.8. The data were also disaggregated by site and village returnees (see table 6.9).

Table 6.8 Returnees' main problems in their present location by number of responses and location		
	Location	

⁷ Personal communication with Battambang Vice-Governor for Agriculture, Land Survey and Public Works.

	Omahl	Otabam 1 and 2	Chamkar Samrong	Tippadey	Total
Land	6	11	1	4	22
Water	8	7	0	1	16
Money	5	0	5	0	10
Medical care	7	0	0	0	7
House	0	6	0	1	7
Food	5	0	0	0	5
Animals	1	4	0	0	5
Wood	3	1	0	0	4
School	3	0	0	0	3
Security	2	0	0	0	2
Mines	0	0	0	2	2
Job	0	0	1	0	1
Local returnee relations	0	0	1	0	1

Table 6.9 Returnees' main problems in their present location by percentage of responses in sites and villages			
Problem	Sites	Villages	Total
Land	8.2	17.7	25.9
Water	9.4	9.4	18.8
Money	11.8	0.0	11.8
Medical care	8.2	0.0	8.2
House	0.0	8.2	8.2
Food	5.9	0.0	5.9
Animals	1.2	4.7	5.9
Wood	3.5	1.2	4.7
School	3.5	0.0	3.5
Security	2.4	0.0	2.4
Mines	0.0	2.4	2.4
Job	1.2	0.0	1.2
Local returnee relations	1.2	0.0	1.2
Total			100.1

Table 6.9 presents the list of problems mentioned by the returnees in descending order by the percentage of returnees citing the problem. The most commonly mentioned problems all involved access to resources and the meeting of basic needs. The three most commonly cited problems were land, water and money or income. There were some differences in the responses of returnees in sites and villages. Village returnees were more concerned about land. This is explained by the fact that a large number of returnees in the site sample from the Omahl and Chamkar Samrong resettlement sites had been given some land. Moreover, village resettlement among relatives did not mean that the returnees would receive land to farm.

The percentage of returnees citing water as a problem was almost the same for village and site returnees. This response reflected the similarity in the situations, and level of concern, of site and village returnees when there were no pump wells, as was the case in the Omahl resettlement site and the villages. Money was cited as a major concern by site returnees but not by village returnees. This difference is probably explained by the lack of community support for site returnees. The site returnees were more conscious of the need for money on a day-to-day basis because of the necessity of buying everything while the village returnees had relatives who could provide some of their immediate basic material needs.

Concerns not related to access to essential resources and immediate survival fell much farther down the list. The returnees expressed much less concern about education, relations with local villagers and security.⁸

Secondary migration

Since the research focused on the returnees' reintegration, I was interested in secondary migration patterns as a way of finding out what factors might inhibit or encourage reintegration. I discovered, quite by accident, that the police kept records of how many returnees came to their sub-district and how many were still there. According to the police records for Sankhe district, for example, as of 27 July 1992, 1,387 returnee families had come to the district but only 592 remained, a net loss of 795 families, or about 57 per cent. Police statistics for Battambang district indicated that 1,626 families had come to the district by 21 July 1992 — 1,323 with UNHCR and 303 as secondary migrants from other places — but only 994 had remained in the district, a net loss of 632 families or 39 per cent (see table 6.3).

I sought to corroborate these data by asking the World Food Programme (WFP) and the CRC how many people did not show up for food distributions. Unfortunately, neither agency was monitoring the number of no shows, though the man from CRC who was in charge of the food distribution for Battambang province did remember some of the numbers of no shows from recent food distributions in Sankhe district. For example in Anlongville sub-district he reported that 413 returnees failed to show up for their food ration at the last food distribution. What this meant was that returnees were leaving places they found unacceptable, opting to give up their food ration, selling or giving away their ration card or taking on the extra burden and expense of transporting their ration 40, 50 or more kilometres to where they had chosen to live.

Returnee perceptions and the ladder of reintegration

Following Hansen (1990 and 1991) a five-rung ladder was employed during the interviews to measure the returnees' perceptions of their present situation relative to both the long-term village residents living nearby and the returnees' own life in the border camps. The returnees were shown the ladder and asked two questions.⁹ In relation to the first question they were told that the life of the long-term local villagers was equivalent to being on the fifth rung of the ladder. They were then asked to place themselves, and their present life, on the ladder. The question was not an open one. The local villagers were placed at the top and the returnees could place themselves as equal or less than equal to the local villagers. The placement of the local villagers at the top of the ladder did predispose the returnees to place themselves

⁸ Security remained a major problem in many places in Cambodia during the repatriation, especially in the north-western provinces. The Khmer Rouge were still a viable military force and occupied a significant amount of territory. Large areas were mined including villages, forests, roads and fields. Roving bands of armed bandits attacked villages at night robbing and sometimes fighting with the local village garrisons.

During the research, the returnees were asked several questions related to security. The responses of the returnees indicated that security was not a major concern at the time the interviews were conducted. Security conditions, however, deteriorated after I left Cambodia and it is highly likely that many of the responses of the returnees would be different if the returnees were interviewed now.

⁹ The use of the ladder came at a different point in the interview than the questions related to whether or not they were happy where they were and if their present life was better or worse than life in the camp. In this way the use of the ladder served both as a check and provided additional information. In using the ladder I found it to be a more sensitive and informative tool than simple interview questions. Respondents would answer the questions about being happy or whether their life was better or worse than in the camps quickly, almost reflexively. These same respondents would hesitate, and appeared to be giving more consideration to where they placed themselves on the ladder. In situations where other people might be present — either other household members, other returnees or even local villagers (an unavoidable situation) — the ladder also provoked a lot of discussion.

somewhere lower on the ladder. This was intentional because I wished to follow up the returnees' placement on the ladder with questions concerning what they needed to achieve the same kind of life as the local villagers.

The second question had the returnees consider their life in the border camps as being on the third and middle rung of the ladder. They were then asked to place their present life on the ladder. The intention was to use the returnees' knowledge of their present circumstances and their knowledge of life in the camps to make a comparison.

The ladder scores for the returnees in four locations are given in table 6.10. When the returnees compared themselves to the local villagers, the average ladder score was 1.6, that is, the returnees placed themselves between the first and second rungs of the ladder, or three to four rungs below the local villagers. The variation between the different locations was minimal as was the cumulative difference between returnees living in sites and those living in villages. When asked what they would need to move up the ladder the returnees were very clear. The differences the returnees saw between themselves and the local villagers were largely in terms of access to specific types of resources. They said that if they had land, a buffalo and agricultural implements such as a plough and rake they would consider themselves at steps four or five.

Table 6.10				
Average ladder scores for returnees in Otabam 1 and 2, Chamkar Samrong and Tippadey by location and site versus village and household composition				
	Location			
Comparison	Otabam 1 and 2	Chamkar Samrong	Tippadey	Total
Village	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.6
Camp	1.6	2.4	1.7	1.9
	Village		Site	
Village	1.6		1.6	
Camp	1.6		2.4	
	Household composition			
	FHHs		MFHHs/MHHs	
Village	1.0		1.7	
Camp	1.3		2.1	

When the returnees compared their present life to that in the camps, they placed themselves, on average, very near the second rung (1.9), or one rung below parity with life in the camp. Significant differences appeared, however, when the responses were disaggregated by site and village location. The average score for returnees living in villages was 1.6 while that for returnees living in sites was 2.4, that is, almost at parity with the fixed level for life in the camps. Village returnees appeared to be more dissatisfied with their present circumstances relative to life in the camps.

Two points need to be made here. First, in comparing their life in Cambodia with that in the camp the returnees were weighing the factors of increased freedom against the relative lack of services and access to resources. It would seem that when asked to make a concrete comparative evaluation the majority of the returnees in both sites and villages found that their perceptions of relative deprivation outweighed their new found freedom. Second, the degree of perceived deprivation by the village returnees was greater than for the site returnees.

The data from the ladder scores were also disaggregated by household composition (see table 6.10). Female-headed households (FHHs) scored lower (1.0 and 1.3) on both comparisons than did male/female-headed households — MFHHs (1.7), and male-headed households — MHHs (2.1). This meant that when comparing their life to that of the local villagers FHHs

placed themselves on the first rung of the ladder, four rungs below parity with the local villagers. MFHHs and MHHs placed themselves approximately between the first and second rungs. The difference in the average ladder scores between FHHs and MFHHs/MHHs when comparing their present life to that in the camp was much greater. The FHHs placed themselves almost one rung on the ladder lower than the MFHHs/MHHs. This was an indication that single women as the primary caretakers of children and responsible for their health and education felt the decline in available services such as schools and health care more acutely than women with husbands present.

The residents in another location where research was conducted, the Tamoeun resettlement site, were asked to use the ladder in a different way as a result of a decision made by the Khmer interviewers. In this exercise, the top rung on the ladder (step 5) represented their life in the refugee camp in Thailand. All the respondents scored life in Tamoeun lower than life in the border camps (see table 6.11). The minimum score for those who answered was 1 and the maximum was 3. The most common reason given for scoring life in Tamoeun lower than life in the border camp was the lack of services in Tamoeun. The two most commonly cited deficiencies in Tamoeun compared with the border camps were the lack of health care and a school. The respondents also mentioned the increased difficulty they had in obtaining their food ration. The returnees had to travel some distance to get their food and pay to have it brought back to the resettlement site.

Table 6.11
Average ladder scores for Tamoeun returnees'
household composition and camp of origin
Average ladder score

Total average	2.4
Household composition	
- FHHs	2.2
- MFHHs/MHHs	2.5
Thai camps	
- Site 2	2.6
- Site B	2.2
- Khao-I-Dang	2.0
- Site 8	2.0
- Site K	n.a.

Interestingly, unlike the other locations, the responses of the FHHs (2.2) and the MFHHs/MHHs (2.5) in Tamoeun were almost the same. This may be explained by the greater isolation of the Tamoeun site. The difficulties experienced by all the Tamoeun returnees may have impacted everyone so heavily that differences in household composition were not a factor.

Conclusions

The United Nations sought to address many of the returnees' development needs. UNHCR successfully conducted a major repatriation, creating the logistical infrastructure necessary to move more than 370,000 refugees from the border into Cambodia. Measures were also taken to ensure that the repatriation was voluntary. UNHCR attempted to address both the immediate assistance needs of the returnees and, in conjunction with UNDP, longer term development and reintegration issues.

It is clear that in the initial period of the returnees' reintegration, which has been the focus of this chapter, the returnees had some significant hurdles to overcome and some major decisions to make. The extent of secondary migration indicates the lack of knowledge the returnees had about local conditions and the location of family and relatives when making the basic decision of where to return to. The inability of UNHCR to locate land and implement the original repatriation plan obliged the returnees to make even more decisions, such as

whether to choose the cash option or wait for UNHCR to identify land, a possibility that appeared increasingly unlikely. If the returnees chose the cash option, as most did, they then had to decide how best to use the cash resource. Did they, for example, invest in renting land for a house and possibly agriculture, or try to start some kind of small business? In many cases this decision was based on whether they could find relatives with whom to live. Many returnees, especially female-headed households with children, who did not have relatives or know where to find them, gave priority to a house and chose option B consisting of a house kit and a building plot. In the site where they were resettled, they often knew no one, not even the other returnees. The isolation of people in such circumstances was made worse by the uncertainty of their land tenure and security concerns.¹⁰

Without land for agriculture the returnees faced further major decisions as to what to do in the future. With every passing day the time drew nearer when the UNHCR food ration would end and they would have to find some way to secure an income. In isolated sites and villages the opportunities were very limited. Almost all of the returnees with whom I spoke simply had no idea what they were going to do. The only places where returnees seemed to be seeking solutions were the Omahl and Chamkar Samrong resettlement sites whose location made it possible for some returnees to get to the city of Battambang and find work in the construction of “stone houses” — the cement houses and buildings being erected in the city. The Tamoeun and Premek resettlement sites were much too far from the city, as were the villages in Otabam and Osalau. They were located on roads that were all but impassable during the rainy season.

In addition to the future, the returnees had to confront the present. They had to meet such basic needs as food, health care and the education of their children. Conditions in Cambodia in general, and particularly in isolated sites and villages, were not good. Additional data from Tamoeun indicated that returnees were not knowledgeable about, and possibly reluctant to access, the local health care providers (see Geiger, 1993). They were also reluctant to access the formal health care providers (see Geiger, 1993). The difficulty and cost of getting from the resettlement site to the nearest medical facility (a distance of 12 kilometres) was inhibiting. Once at the health clinic or hospital there were additional costs to be borne, costs that could be so high that decisions impacting on the whole family’s economic viability had to be weighed against the consequences of failing to treat a sick family member. The difficulty of such decisions led some people in Tamoeun to wait until it was too late, or to choose not to seek any treatment at all. As a result, children died. The Tamoeun returnees were equally lacking in knowledge about the local school and were apparently reluctant to send their children there. Even if the returnees had chosen to send their children to the school problems would have ensued. The school had three rooms, but only two teachers, and was already full. More children would only have taxed the school beyond its capacity.

¹⁰ The insecurity of land tenure was brought home to me when I went to visit the Premek resettlement site. I had seen the site from a distance on an expedition to gather secondary migration data from the Premek police station. When I went back to interview the returnees there I found the site had disappeared. All of the houses I had seen before, perched in the middle of a rice field, were gone. I asked some local people what had happened to the returnees and they directed me to another location. After walking about four kilometres I found the site.

The entire site had been moved. The explanation appeared to be because the old site had had no water. The new site had pump wells. However, the water from the pump wells was bad according to the returnees. One man demonstrated by filling a bucket of water. When he placed a scoop in the bucket, small bubbles formed and when he removed it a film had formed on the scoop. The returnees would not drink the water as they said it made them sick. Given the bad water in the new site I was not really sure why the site had been moved. The ability of local officials, however, to move an entire site, possibly with assistance from UNHCR (the road in the new site appeared to be new which was a sure sign of UNHCR involvement) was a demonstration of how insecure was the returnees’ hold on the land, even for land which served as house plots.

The worsening security situation has meant that the returnees have not only had to face more decisions, but have also had to question the basis of their decisions to repatriate to where they did, and even to have repatriated at all. Given the recent and tenuous ties to the places where they resettled, it appeared that many would consider leaving if the security situation continued to deteriorate.

For especially vulnerable individuals and families — the handicapped, female-headed households with and without children, and the elderly without a family support system — the problems of resettlement and the decisions they have to make are compounded by the constraints of limited mobility, child care, and increased health care concerns and expense.

It would seem to be the case that refugees and returnees were not constrained in their ability to confront the problems of reintegration upon repatriation as much by a “dependency syndrome” state of mind as they were by the very real social and economic circumstances in which they found themselves. In many respects, the circumstances the returnees faced upon reintegrating into local villages were unknown. The surveys and studies conducted to assess the situation in Cambodia in order to plan for the repatriation of the border refugees and longer term development omitted the most important component of the equation, the local villages. It was not just the returnees who had to cope with a lack of knowledge. Planners also faced a lack of knowledge of the dynamics of the local villages, in essence, what the returnees were supposed to reintegrate into.

Appendix 1: Concerns of the Border Khmer

Findings of the education working groups

The displaced Khmer perspective:

- Safety, both during return and on return.
- Whether certificates issued on completion of training by border
- agencies would have any value inside Cambodia.
- Mode of return, location, assistance provision, specifically:
 - Where will we go?
 - Where will we get food?
 - Who will take care of us until we can meet our own needs?
 - How will we get there?
 - Will we get our land back?
- Acceptance on return (CCSDPT, 1989:14).

Findings of the skills training working groups

The displaced Khmer perspective:

- What will be the political situation?
- How will we get to Cambodia — as individuals or in groups?
- Where will we go?
- Will training certificates issued in border camps be recognized?
- Will there be work?
- What are the arrangements for elections?
- What kind of services will be made available for returnees?
- Will the United Nations be there?
- Will the returnees be accepted by their compatriots or marked as “those that fled the country”?
- What is happening in all aspects of life in Cambodia, preferably as reported first hand by other Khmer (CCSDPT, 1989:17)?

Findings of the health working groups

The displaced Khmer perspective:

- Reluctance to discuss repatriation and their future.
- Short-term concerns (security, survival, money).
- Freedom of choice.
- Acceptability of Khmer camp staff within Cambodian government.
- Health services.
- Choice of languages to be used.
- Need for examinations to enter existing health services.
- Acceptability of certificates issued by camp agencies.
- Vietnamese withdrawal.
- Safety both during return and on return.
- Fear of Vietnamese and Khmer Rouge.
- Fear of forced repatriation.
- Concern about land availability and supplies.
- Tracing mechanisms (CCSDPT, 1989:20).

Walker (1990) also presented six major concerns of the Khmer as:

- Concerns for their safety during and after return to Cambodia.
- Questions regarding the modalities of an eventual return and worries as to whether or not there would be United Nations involvement during the process and upon arrival in Cambodia.
- Questions regarding how they would be accepted upon return, whether or not there would be work for them or places to live, and whether or not the training they received on the border would be recognized.
- Need for more information regarding present-day realities in Cambodia, preferable as reported first-hand by Khmer.
- Desire for a chance to trace relatives in Cambodia.
- Fear of forced repatriation and desire for freedom of choice in the process of voluntary repatriation (Walker, 1990:42).

Appendix 2: Contents of Returnee Household/Agricultural Kit Supplied by UNHCR

- 2 galvanized metal water buckets
- 2 steel hoe heads
- 2 steel curved sickle blades
- 1 steel spade
- 1 curved grass/bush cutting machete blade
- 1 nylon rope cut into 20-centimetre lengths
- 1 binding wire cut into 20-centimetre lengths
- 3 kilograms of 4-centimetre nails, 2 kilograms of 7-centimetre nails, 3 kilograms of 10-centimetre nails
- triangular metal sharpening file
- 1 steel hatchet head, 1 hand saw
- 1 steel post hole digger head
- 1 leaf-shaped knife blade
- 1 combination plier
- 1 plastic sheet
- 1 90-litre water container

Returnees were also given large ceramic water jars when it was decided that the 90-litre plastic water container was not adequate. The food ration consisted of:

- 20 kilograms of rice

- 6.5 cans fish
 - 400 grams of salt
 - 1 litre of oil
- per person (regardless of age) every 40 days.

Appendix 3: UNHCR Repatriation Options for Khmer Refugees

Option A: Agriculture

- Transport
- Agricultural land (up to 2 hectares per family)
- Wood for construction of a house frame and US\$ 25 to buy thatch and bamboo
- Household/agricultural kit
- Food for 400 days

Option B: Building a house

- Transport
- Plot of land for a house
- Wood for construction of a house frame and US\$ 25 to buy thatch and bamboo
- Household/agricultural kit
- Food for 400 days

Option C: Cash

- Transport
- Reintegration money: US\$ 50/adult, US\$ 25/child under 12
- Household/agricultural kit
- Food for 400 days (200 days in the Phnom Penh area)

Possible Option D: Specialized tools

- Transport
- Tool kit
- Household kit (includes water container)
- Food for 400 days

This option was being considered and CONCERN was attempting to identify possible tool kit combinations and composition.

Option E: Employment with UNTAC

- Transport, with family, to reception centre closest to place of employment
- Reintegration money US\$ 50/adult, US\$ 25/child under 12
- Food for 400 days (200 days in the Phnom Penh area)

Option F: Family reunion

- Transport to distribution point closest to where head of family is settled
- Reintegration money US\$ 50/adult, US\$ 25/child under 12
- Food for 400 days (200 days in the Phnom Penh area)

Spontaneous returnees: food for 400 days (200 days in the Phnom Penh area).

Returnees from countries other than Thailand: food for 400 days (200 days in the Phnom Penh area).

Appendix 4: UNHCR Programme of Reintegration Assistance to Returnees in Cambodia

Quick Impact Projects (QIPs)

Criteria

Location/Beneficiaries

- The location of the project should be in regions of Cambodia where substantial numbers of returnees have settled or are planning to settle.
- Beneficiaries of the project should be the inhabitants of regions, provinces, districts, communes, villages/settlement sites where returnees have settled or are planning to settle. QIPs should bring in a positive contribution to a region or a community by easing the added strain on that region's or community's meagre resources, resulting from the arrival of returnees.

Time frame/Implementation

- The nature of the project should be such that regions or communities begin benefiting from it within the shortest time period.
- Projects should be simple in implementation and easily replicable.

Development

- Projects should either be oriented in such a way as to be incorporated into government infrastructure and services to be in place after the spring 1993 elections, or directly or indirectly improve the employment and production capacities of communities, groups or individuals.
- QIPs should bridge short-term essential inputs with longer term development activities to be undertaken in the regions and communities where returnees will be settling.

Co-ordination

- Projects should not duplicate ongoing or planned activities and should fall within the co-ordination framework of the Director for Rehabilitation Assistance to Cambodia through the Provincial Support Units (UNHCR, 1992d:4).

Appendix 5: Non-Governmental Organizations with EVI Responsibilities in Site 2

- Khmer Women's Association: Female-headed households
- International Rescue Committee: Unaccompanied minors
- Handicap International: Handicapped
- Catholic Office for Emergency Refugee Relief (COERR): Elderly, mental health, social, medical
- American Refugee Committee (ARC): Medical
- Youth With a Mission (YWAM): Tuberculosis.
- Malteser Hilfsdienst (MHD): Leprosy

Also:

- United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO): Unaccompanied minors.

Appendix 6: Methodological Aspects

The repatriation of the Khmer refugees began in March 1992. I began conducting research on returnees in Battambang province for the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) in July 1992. At that time approximately 19,803 refugees had returned. I completed my research in early October 1992. By that time approximately 138,517

refugees had returned. The UNHCR planned to have all the refugees repatriated from the border by early 1993 in time to be registered and participate in the United Nations-sponsored elections to be held in May 1993.

The research was conducted in two ways. First, research was conducted independently in four general areas, two resettlement sites (Omahl and Chamkar Samrong) and two rural areas (Otabam 1 and 2, and Tippadey sub-districts). Second, research was conducted jointly with a Battambang-based NGO in the Tamoeun resettlement site.

The independently conducted research included semi-structured interviews, working from a list of 43 questions but allowing the interviewees to discuss any aspect of their experience they introduced. In addition there were non-structured interviews with returnees as well as observations during visits to both villages and returnee sites. Also included were interviews with village leaders, sub-district and, occasionally, district and provincial officials, and United Nations and NGO personnel.

In addition to the independently conducted research, I also worked with the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) on a survey of Tapoung village and the Tamoeun returnee resettlement site. The survey questionnaire had 320 questions and covered a wide range of topics. The questionnaire was developed in co-operation with ICMC Khmer personnel who also conducted the interviews.

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