



Overseas Development Institute

**THE CHANGING ROLE OF NGOS
IN THE PROVISION OF RELIEF
AND REHABILITATION
ASSISTANCE:**

CASE STUDY 2 –

CAMBODIA/THAILAND

Charlotte Benson

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Preface

This study is one of five case studies being prepared as part of a larger study on the changing role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the provision of relief and rehabilitation assistance. It is now widely recognised that NGOs play a much enhanced role in relief and rehabilitation operations compared to ten or fifteen years ago. However, the rate of growth of NGOs in this field of activity and the factors contributing to such growth have not previously been studied in a comprehensive manner. The primary objectives of the overall study, which is funded by the UK Overseas Development Administration, are:

- a) to quantify the relief and rehabilitation resources handled by NGOs since 1979, so as to analyse both the extent to which the role of NGOs undertaken in the provision of such assistance has increased and the ways in which the functions undertaken by NGOs have changed;
- b) to make a preliminary examination of the practical and policy implications of the increased role of NGOs in relief operations both for donor organisations that use NGOs as channels for the provision of relief and rehabilitation assistance and for the NGOs themselves.

Three of the five case studies are to be published in the ODI Working Paper series. As well as the present case study the two others to be published in this format will include the provision of relief and rehabilitation to Afghan refugees in Pakistan and within Mujahideen-controlled areas in Afghanistan during the period 1979 to 1992, and the provision of relief and rehabilitation assistance in government and 'rebel'-controlled areas of Ethiopia during the period 1983 until 1991.

In many relief and rehabilitation operations the role and contribution of NGOs is poorly understood. Among the principal factors contributing to this situation are the large number of agencies involved, the frequent lack of centralised sources of information, the complexities of the different types of resource flows through the system and the relationships between the various organisations involved and, in some cases, the deliberate secrecy of agencies involved in activities that are either covert and/or threaten the safety of the agency personnel involved. The purpose of the individual case studies therefore is to examine the role and contribution of NGOs in the provision of assistance in a selection of the largest relief operations to have taken place since 1979. The case studies focus on key aspects of NGO involvement in such operations, i.e. changes over time in the numbers involved, the different characteristics of the NGOs involved, the range and scale of activities undertaken and their relationship with other organisations involved in the operation, in particular UN agencies, donor organisations, government agencies, and the Red

Cross Movement. Given the involvement of many different NGOs in relief operations, co-ordination is an important activity and so the studies also examine the coordination mechanisms which developed within the NGO communities.

The case studies are not intended to be exhaustive studies of the role of NGOs in the selected relief operations. The highly disparate nature of the data sources and the lack of institutional memory of activities undertaken more than three or four years previously within many organisations involved in the provision of relief and rehabilitation assistance mean that exhaustive studies are difficult and extremely time consuming to undertake. In those relief and rehabilitation operations which have been underway for several years exhaustive studies may simply not be possible. Given the limited time available for the case studies (each involved only a two to three week visit to the countries involved) they can therefore only be regarded as provisional assessments of the role of NGOs in such operations. Neither are the studies intended to assess the impact and effectiveness of the assistance provided by NGOs. Such assessments or evaluations would require much more detailed investigation and involve seeking the views of a sample of the recipients of the assistance provided for either all the NGOs involved or at least a representative sample.

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Acronyms

ACR	Australian Catholic Relief
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AFFHC	Australian Freedom from Hunger Campaign
AFSC	American Friends Service Committee
AIDAB	Australian International Development Assistance Bureau
APHEDA	Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad
ARC	American Refugee Committee
ARRK	Agricultural Relief and Rehabilitation in Kampuchea
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ATVs	Affected Thai villages
AVENIRS	Association Humanitaire pour la Santé, l'Education et le Développement
BASE	Belgian Aid to Southeast Asia
CAMA	CAMA Services Inc.
CARE	Co-operation for American Relief Everywhere
CCC	Cooperation Committee for Cambodia
CCDP	Cambodia Canada Development Program
CCSDPT	Committee for Co-ordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand
CCT	Church of Christ in Thailand
CCTD	Catholic Council of Thailand for Development
CCU	Church of Christ in Udorn
CEAR	Comité Européen d'Aide aux Réfugiés
CGDK	Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea
CIDSE	Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité
COERR	Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees
COR	Christian Outreach
CRC	Cambodian Red Cross
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CWS	Church World Service
CYR	Caring for Young Refugees
DCG	Donor Consultative Group
EDP	Extended Delivery Point
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESF	Ecoles Sans Frontières
FAO	(United Nations) Food and Agriculture Organisation
FFFM	Finnish Free Foreign Mission
FHI	Food for the Hungry International
HI	Handicap International
ICA	International Christian Aid

ICMC	International Catholic Migration Commission
ICORC	International Committee for the Reconstruction of Cambodia
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IRFF	International Relief Friendship Foundation
JANGO	Joint Australian Non-Governmental Office
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Service
JSRC	Japan Sotoshu Relief Committee
JVC	Japan Volunteer Centre
KPNLF	Kampuchean People's National Liberation Front
KSM	Khmer Self-Management
KWA	Khmer Women's Association
LRC	League of Red Crescent Societies
LRCRCS	League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
LWS	Lutheran World Service
MCC	Mennonite Central Committee
MCH	Mother and Child Health
MHD	Malteser-Hilfsdienst Auslandsdienst E.V.
MOI	Ministry of the Interior
MSF	Médecins sans Frontières
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OHI	Operation H.E.L.P. Inc.
OHFOM	Oeuvres Hospitalières Françaises de l'Orde de Malte
OMF	Overseas Missionary Fellowship
OSB	Overseas Service Bureau
OSRSGUN	Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General United Nations (Kampuchea)
PADEK	Partnership for Development in Kampuchea
RBT	Redd Barna Thailand
RCIR	Rescue Committee for Indo-Chinese Refugees
SAO	Southeast Asian Outreach
SAWS	Seventh-Day Adventist World Service Inc.
SCF	Save the Children Fund
SCFA	Save the Children Fund Australia
SIPAR	Soutien à l'Initiative Privée pour l'Aide à la Reconstruction des Pays du Sud-Est Asiatique
SNC	Supreme National Council
SPM	Scandinavian Pentecostal Mission
TBM	Thailand Baptist Mission
TBMF	Thailand Baptist Missionary Fellowship
TCRS	Thai-Chinese Refugee Service
TDH	Tom Dooley Heritage Inc.

TDHG	Terre des Hommes Germany
TDHZ	Terre des Hommes Zurich
TOV	The Ockenden Venture
UN	United Nations
UNBRO	United Nations Border Relief Operation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Administration
VOLAGS	Voluntary agencies
WCI	World Concern International
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
WICRR	Wisconsin Indo-China Refugee Relief Inc.
WRFF	World Relief Friendship Foundation
WSURT	Welfare Services Unit for Refugees in Thailand (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)
WVFT	World Vision Foundation of Thailand
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWAM	Youth with a Mission
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association
ZOA	Zuid Oost Azie Refugee Care Netherlands

1. Introduction and method

This study examines the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the provision of relief and rehabilitation¹ assistance to Cambodian Refugees in Thailand and within Cambodia² itself over the period 1979 to 1992.

The preparation of this case study involved a visit by the author of just under three weeks to Bangkok and Phnom Penh in September 1992. During the visit interviews were held with personnel of UN agencies, international and local NGOs, NGO coordinating bodies and donor organisations. Interviews were held with the personnel of as many NGOs as possible in the time available. Whilst some NGOs were able to provide quite detailed documentation describing the NGO's activities for all of the period covered by the study, in most cases such information was not available for all years. For the international NGOs, UN agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and donor organisations, additional information was sought through correspondence with personnel in their Head Offices.

¹ Most, if not all assistance provided by NGOs between the early 1980s and 1992 can justifiably be classified as 'relief and rehabilitation' rather than 'development' assistance, because it entailed the restoration of the country after the devastation left by the Khmer Rouge years of 1975-79, as well as fighting in parts of the country since 1970.

² The name Cambodia is used throughout this report, as an abbreviation of its current full name, the State of Cambodia. Since 1970 the country has also been known under three other names: the Khmer Republic (1970-75), Democratic Kampuchea (1975-9) and the People's Republic of Kampuchea (1979-1989).

2. Background

2.1 Origins of the crisis

The origins of the crisis on the Thai-Cambodian border date back to 1969 when Cambodia first became drawn into the Second Indo-China War by permitting Northern Vietnamese and Southern opposition forces to store and transport supplies within Cambodia (see, for example, Shawcross, 1984). As a direct consequence, in 1970 the Royal House of Sihanouk was overthrown and replaced by the US-backed Lon Nol Government. Over the following three years, there was continued fighting between Lon Nol, Cambodian opposition and Khmer Rouge forces, as well as bombing and cross-border raids by the US and South Vietnamese forces. In 1973, US forces withdrew from Cambodia and ceased their bombing raids, under a Congressional mandate. The withdrawal of troops greatly weakened the strength of the Lon Nol forces but fighting continued. Finally, in April 1975, the Khmer Rouge gained control of Phnom Penh and a new government, led by Pol Pot, took power.

Many Cambodians initially viewed the Khmer Rouge as liberators. Five years of political and social chaos had severely disrupted the Cambodian economy. Over a million people had been killed and over half the population internally displaced. However, the Khmer Rouge immediately pursued an extreme agrarian programme, resettling the whole population into rural areas, entailing massive population transfers and separating families. For the following four years, the country underwent a period of most severe repression, during which a further one to two million died as a result of starvation, disease and hard labour or were executed (see, for example, Shawcross (1984), Mysliwiec (1988)). The Khmer Rouge also launched a number of attacks against Vietnam, as part of their plan to rebuild the old Angkorean empire, part of which had been lost to Vietnam at the beginning of the 19th century. Vietnam did not retaliate initially. However, in 1978, following intensification of these attacks, Vietnam invaded Cambodia, overthrowing the Pol Pot Government in January 1979 and replacing it with a government headed by Heng Samrin. Despite being the traditional enemies of Cambodia, Cambodians now viewed the Vietnamese as their new liberators. The Vietnamese-backed Heng Samrin Government was put in power. The resistance groups were forced into bases along the Thai border, from which they conducted continued fighting against the Heng Samrin Government, covertly supported by the Chinese and US governments. In 1982 the three resistance factions, including two new groups, the Kampuchean People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) and the FUNCINPEC (Sihanoukists), as well as the Khmer Rouge, formed a coalition, the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK), to gain international recognition (see section 2.2) and to unite their forces in driving the Vietnamese-backed Heng Samrin Government in Phnom Penh from power.

The succeeding eleven years since then have been marred by a continuing civil war. Following protracted peace negotiations since 1987, the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops in 1989 and the subsequent withdrawal of US military support to the border factions, peace agreements were finally signed on 23 October 1991 in Paris. Under the peace settlement, a Supreme National Council (SNC) made up of the four Cambodian factions was formed, under the Presidency of Prince Sihanouk, to act as an interim government until elections scheduled for May 1993. A United Nations Transitional Administration (UNTAC) was also created to enforce a ceasefire and disarmament, to arrange the repatriation of displaced persons from the border camps and to arrange free and fair elections. Repatriation began in March 1992, with all displaced persons repatriated in time for the May 1992 elections. However, despite a ceasefire agreement signed in July 1991, sporadic fighting has continued and it would be premature to conclude that the Cambodian civil war is over.

2.2 Diplomatic relations and international assistance to Cambodia

The Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia in 1979 was viewed by most members of the United Nations (UN) as an invasion by a foreign power and as such was condemned. The UN therefore voted to allow the Khmer Rouge Government in exile to maintain its seat at the UN and permitted only the provision of emergency aid to Cambodia. At the beginning of 1982 the UN declared the emergency period over and most UN agencies withdrew from Cambodia, accompanied by a massive decline in indirect bilateral support via the international institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). A trade embargo and a general ban on development aid was imposed on the country by the UN and the West although Cambodia continued to receive substantial flows of assistance from Eastern bloc countries.

Cambodia remained politically isolated from the west for the succeeding seven years, until the Vietnamese withdrawal in 1989. Although the Khmer Rouge's seat at the UN was taken over in 1982 by the CGDK (following international pressure arising as the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge during the period 1975-79 came to light) the Khmer Rouge also continued to represent the country at the UN. This was due to the structure of the coalition, under which the various ministries were divided between the factions, with the Khmer Rouge controlling Foreign Affairs.

Finally, in early 1990, following the Vietnamese withdrawal from the country and in expectation of the peace settlement which would follow, the UN Secretary General asked the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to field the first mission to assess Cambodia's infrastructural needs. This mission was followed by several further fact-finding missions from other UN agencies and international financial institutions to facilitate the drawing up of extensive aid programmes.

However, most multilateral and bilateral agencies did not intend to actually begin their own aid programmes until after the elections in 1993. Instead, in the interim, they were indirectly providing considerable assistance through NGOs, many of whom are relatively new to the country. Meanwhile, Cambodia stopped receiving large scale assistance from the Eastern bloc, particularly the USSR, in 1990.

2.3 The Royal Thai Government³

The Royal Thai Government is not a signatory to either the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or the 1967 Protocol on Refugees. Persons entering the country who might be considered to be refugees are, in fact, classified as illegal immigrants or displaced persons. According to Rabe (1990), the Royal Thai Government 'usually describes its policy as one of temporary asylum pending durable solutions, such as resettlement or voluntary repatriation'.

The Royal Thai Government's response to events on the border over the past thirteen years was primarily motivated by its concern for national security. Thus, its principle concern was to maintain a buffer between itself and Vietnam and Vietnam's (ex-) communist allies. This was implemented initially by not allowing Cambodians to cross the border into Thailand and then by only granting most of them temporary asylum in Thailand, in camps located near to the Cambodian border (see section 2.4). These camps were closed camps, strengthening the buffer by leaving the civilians accessible as a support base to the Khmer military factions rather than permitting them to move to a more neutral environment further into Thailand (Reynell, 1989).

The Royal Thai Government also restricted aid provided at the border to emergency assistance. Facilities such as secondary education were not permitted in the displaced persons' camps (see section 4.3). In large part, this reflected the Royal Thai Government's anxiety to avoid having to absorb potentially high costs of the relief operation and thus, as, for example, Rabe (1990) calls it, the Government's 'humane deterrence policy'. Throughout the duration of the Thai-Cambodian border operations, Thailand was also host to considerable numbers of asylum seekers and displaced persons from other neighbouring countries, although as already indicated it is not party to the two international agreements on refugees. It is also a developing country itself. Thus, two secondary concerns of the Government were to maintain conditions in the camps at such a level as to prevent the large scale attraction of Cambodians to the border, and thus hold down the cost of the relief operations, and also to maintain the relief efforts as a clearly international, rather than Thai, effort. Reynell (1989) also argues that the Royal Thai Government was also partly motivated in this regard by its security concerns, with the limited

³ See, for example, Reynell (1989) for further details.

assistance intended to increase support for the resistance as offering the only long-term means of improving living conditions. However, some have argued that the size of international response did, in fact, create a 'draw factor'.

2.4 Refugee/displaced person movements and encampments

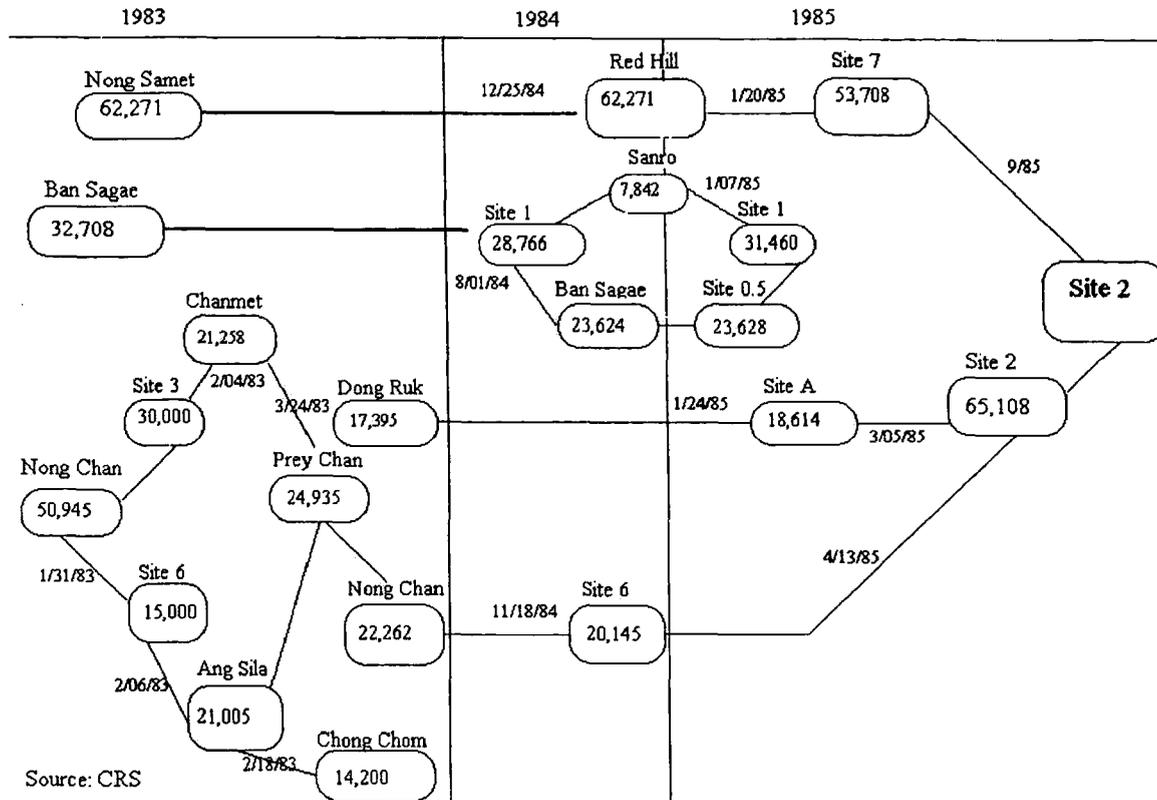
Movements

The first movement of Cambodians displaced to the Thai border began in 1970-5 when some 34,000 Cambodians, mostly well-educated and relatively affluent, fled to Thailand. A further 20,000 arrived during the Pol Pot years. Between 1970 and 1979, some 470,000 persons also fled southwards to Vietnam where they were given assistance by UNHCR. The renewed fighting between the Vietnamese and Khmer Rouge forces in 1979 led to a new movement to the Thai border, of Khmer Rouge forces and displaced Cambodians. By the end of 1979, there were up to 700,000 Cambodians gathered at the border.

Thai policy towards the first flow of refugees in 1979 was inconsistent, allowing some to stay and sending others back. This changed in April 1979 when some 30,000 Cambodians, who had crossed the border following renewed fighting, were forced back. There were further forced repatriations in June, reportedly resulting in the deaths of thousands of displaced persons from mines and Thai gunfire. Finally, in October 1979, under international pressure and following a significant deterioration in the food situation of the Khmer Rouge, the Thai Government agreed to open its borders and grant asylum to Cambodian displaced persons, but on the agreement that a border relief operation would also continue to support the resistance movements against the Vietnamese and so provide a buffer (see section 2.3). Thus, the operation split in two, the holding centres and the border camps (see section 2.4). The border remained open until January 1980, during which time an estimated 180,000 to 200,000 Cambodian asylum seekers crossed the border into the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) holding camps. The majority were granted refugee status and were resettled to third countries. The remaining population at the border stayed in the border camps and subsequent new arrivals, after January 1980, were also detained in the border camps. Meanwhile, nearly 200,000 Cambodians returned from the Thai border to their homes in 1981 following economic improvements in Cambodia.

Until 1982, there was continual fighting between the border camps as each of the three military resistance factions fought for control of the camps and their populations, causing constant movements of camps. In 1982, the three factions formed the CGDK (see section 2.1), resulting in the cessation of inter-factional fighting. However, even after 1982, the border camps, which contained military personnel as well as civilians, faced annual dry season offensives from the Vietnamese. As a result, between 1982 and 1984, the United Nations Border Relief

Figure 1: Summary of the camp movements that formed Site 2 (1983-1985)



Operation (UNBRO) (see section 3.2) organised 85 camp evacuations. The constant process of splitting and reforming of camps is illustrated in Figure 1 for a particular group of camps over the period 1983-5.

Security in the camps finally stabilised in 1984/5, after the Vietnamese launched their biggest and most successful attack, forcing all of the 21 border camps which then existed into Thailand. The 'civilian' and 'military' populations were then separated by the Thai authorities, with the civilian population placed in 9 camps. The military camps also included women and children. The civilian camps, referred to as 'displaced persons' camps', were intermittently shelled by the Vietnamese until about 1990, but did not suffer the frequent offensives experienced by the border camps up to 1984. The number of civilian camps was gradually reduced over time to just 6. A more detailed explanation of the different types of camps is given below.

The Repatriation Programme

On 21 November 1991, the SNC, the Royal Thai Government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) signed a Memorandum of Understanding, giving the go-ahead for a programme to repatriate the 370,000 displaced persons at the Thai border. The repatriation programme was officially started in March 1992, with registration of new arrivals suspended at the same time. New arrivals were still permitted into the camps but were not eligible either for UNHCR reintegration packages or for food and other assistance whilst in the camps, although urgent medical needs continue to met. By the end of August over 100,000 Cambodians had been repatriated, with the operation completed before the elections in May 1993. As of September 1992, there were a further almost 200,000 internally displaced persons within Cambodia who also need to be resettled.

As well as movements into the camps outlined above, some 230-240,000 Cambodian refugees were resettled in third countries between 1980 and 1992. There were some movements from the holding centres to the border camps, some of which were voluntary and some involuntary, redistributing populations between the two types of camp. There were also some small scale movements of returnees back into Cambodia prior to the commencement of the large-scale repatriation programme in 1992. Furthermore there was a natural increase in the camp populations, which had a birth rate of some 5-6%.

Some 80,000 Thais were also directly affected by the movement of Cambodians into Thailand, with a further 200,000 indirectly affected. At the request of the Royal Thai Government, international agencies and NGOs extended their resources and services to help these villagers in 1980.

Encampments As indicated above, Cambodians at the Thai-Cambodian border were contained in several categories of camps. To avoid confusion, the exact nature of each of the camps is further clarified below. The total population in the UNBRO and UNHCR assisted camps over the period 1981-92 is shown in Table 1.

Border Camps Civilian camps on the Cambodian side of the border, administered and controlled by one of the three parties opposed to the Heng Samrin Government (see section 2.1) and which existed between 1979 and 1985. Camp inhabitants were classified as displaced persons and as such could not apply for third country resettlement. The population of the border camps, and the actual location of the camps themselves, fluctuated over time depending on military activities (see above).

Displaced Persons' Camps Civilian camps administered by Cambodians linked to, and directly answerable to, one or other of the three military factions, assisted by UNBRO on the Thai side of the border which existed between 1985, when the populations of the former border camps were moved into Thailand, and 1992. The camp populations had the status of displaced persons and so were unable to apply for third country resettlement. Prior to the repatriation programme, the military controlled the movement of populations into the civilian camps. The military and their families also had frequent access to the camps, including for medical assistance. The location of the displaced persons' camps and their political affiliations as of 1987 are shown in Figure 2.

Military or Hidden Camps Khmer Rouge administered satellite camps along the border, formed in 1985 when the border camps were divided into civilian and military populations. These camps were not formally recognised and so did not officially receive assistance or protection. There was virtually no access to them by relief workers (see section 4.6). However, they received food collected in the civilian camp through an in-kind tax on food rations imposed by the Cambodian camp administrators and took a proportion of the food grown in the camps (Reynell, 1989). The population in these camps were frequently moved by the Khmer Rouge.

Holding Centres Camps administered by the Thai Supreme Command and assisted by UNHCR, whose populations were classified as refugees by the Royal Thai Government and so are allowed to apply for third country resettlement. They comprised Cambodian asylum seekers who arrived in UNHCR camps before 1980 and those who surreptitiously gained later entry to the camps and were permitted to register at various times in the mid-1980s. The holding centres accounted for a relatively small, and declining, proportion of Cambodians receiving assistance through the border relief operations (Table 1). Khao I Dang was by far the largest, with two much smaller ones, Kab Cherng and Ban Thad.

Table 1 Mid-year population in the holding and displaced persons' camps (based on food distribution data)

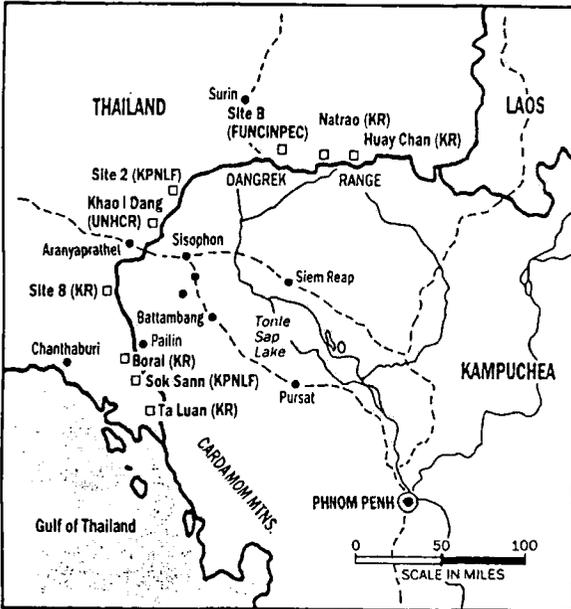
	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
UNBRO supported	175,142 ^a	215,407	208,445	241,947	225,865	242,925
UNHCR supported ^b	97,804	83,951	56,299	41,619	31,761	26,949
Total	272,946	299,358	264,744	283,566	257,626	269,874
	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
UNBRO supported	264,311	299,739	310,871	298,475	340,264	343,420
UNHCR supported ^b	22,974	17,152	17,971	15,460	15,480	14,962
Total	287,285	316,891	328,842	313,935	355,744	358,382

Source: UNBRO

Notes: ^a Camp populations supported by WFP/RTA and UNICEF in 1981, prior to the creation of UNBRO.

^b End of year for 1981-88.

Figure 2 Map of camps in Thai-Kampuchean border region



- Camps holding displaced Cambodians, under the control of:
- KR — Khmer Rouge
 - FUNCINPEC — National United Front for an Independent, Neutral and Cooperative Cambodia
 - KPRLF — Khmer People's National Liberation Front
 - UNHCR — United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- INTERNATIONAL BORDERS
— RIVERS
- - - ROADS

Processing and Transit Camps Camps administered by the Thai Ministry of Interior, accommodating refugees of a number of nationalities who have been approved resettlement in third countries, in which, at least in theory, no refugee is permitted to stay more than 6 months before departing. UNHCR was the lead agency in these camps. Transit and processing camps are not considered in this case study, although some NGOs were very active in these, because they contained relatively small numbers of Cambodians at any one point in time.⁴

2.5 The initial relief effort⁵

Events on the Thai-Cambodia border and within Cambodia itself over the past thirteen years have been partly determined by a complexity of political factors (see, for example, Shawcross (1984), Reynell (1989)). These factors significantly influenced the evolution of the initial relief effort.

In understanding events during this period it is necessary to first clarify the positions of the Heng Samrin Government and the Khmer Rouge. The Vietnamese-backed Heng Samrin Government's basic position was that assistance should only be provided through Phnom Penh. It was also opposed to the continued occupation by the Khmer Rouge of the Cambodian seat at the UN and was distrustful of the non-communist donor community. Meanwhile, the Khmer Rouge considered that any assistance should be delivered through it alone, via the Thai-Cambodian border, as the Khmer Rouge was the UN-recognised Government of the Cambodia.

The initial relief effort negotiations and actions were dominated by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and one NGO, Oxfam (UK). UNICEF and ICRC formed a joint emergency programme in mid-1979, known as the Joint Mission. UNICEF, by virtue of its unique mandate (amongst UN agencies), permitting it to operate in countries without the prior permission of the government and in countries whose governments are not internationally recognised, was appointed the lead UN agency in September 1979. In January 1980, the UN Secretary General appointed a Special Representative to cover operations within Cambodia, the border operations and the holding centres.

⁴ The types of services NGOs were involved in here were, by the very nature of the camps, somewhat different to those in other camps, with only minimal educational, social and recreational services due to the transient nature of the population and, instead, with particular emphasis placed on language and skills training relevant to the country of resettlement. NGOs also provided for the refugees' basic needs in the transit camps.

⁵ This section draws heavily on Black (1992); Mason and Brown (1983); and Shawcross (1984).

News about the deplorable conditions within Cambodia, where no NGOs or multilateral or bilateral agencies had operated since 1975, began to emerge from early 1979. Beginning in January, the ICRC and, later, UNICEF made repeated offers of help to supply relief to the country. Representatives from the two organisations were finally granted visas to visit Cambodia briefly in July. They immediately concluded that the country needed urgent assistance to prevent widespread famine and to improve appalling health conditions. As the Khmer Rouge retreated, they had taken a significant part of the rice harvest with them (estimated to be a quarter of the total harvest) and destroyed draught animals which they could not take. Continuing chaos, partly resulting from Cambodians attempting to return to their former homes and to recontact other family members, prevented normal planting in the summer of 1979. UNICEF's and ICRC's impressions were seemingly confirmed in July when the Heng Samrin Government appealed to the World Food Programme (WFP) for 129,000 tonnes of food aid to meet the needs of some 2.2 million Cambodians who, it stated, faced starvation.

However, the Heng Samrin Government was unwilling to admit that it required such assistance on the scale proposed by UNICEF and the ICRC. Thus although the first relief flight, carrying medical supplies, was organised in August, the Cambodian authorities refused visas, preventing a permanent Joint Mission presence in the country or the beginning of large scale food shipments. Meanwhile, due to the sensitivity of the situation, a news blackout was imposed and the Joint Mission's activities remained secret for several months, giving the impression that the international agencies were acting slowly. Subsequent NGO actions, particularly of Oxfam, were heavily influenced by this apparent inactivity. Oxfam's Senior Technical Officer also visited Cambodia for 10 days in August 1979, returning to the UK convinced that the country was in a state of acute distress, necessitating immediate large scale relief to prevent widespread death. Oxfam immediately began to make a preliminary list of materials required and in September the Disasters Emergency Committee made a television appeal for Southeast Asia (see Black, 1992, for further details).

Meanwhile, at the Thai-Cambodian border, NGOs had been providing small scale assistance since 1975. In May the Government had requested help from UNICEF to supply assistance to the affected Thai villages. Although the border remained officially closed until October, some NGOs and WFP were also allowed to deliver aid on the Cambodian side of the border, although outside the coordination of the Joint Mission. In August 1979, the Khmer Rouge themselves requested food and medical aid from UNICEF and ICRC. The ICRC, UNICEF and the Royal Thai Government responded positively to this request but no definite plans were made for delivery as the Joint Mission were still hoping to negotiate an agreement with the Heng Samrin Government to provide assistance to the interior. Following a deterioration in the food situation, the Joint Mission finally visited the Khmer Rouge areas in mid-September to assess the health and food situation and to offer some token assistance.

At about the same time, in mid-September, the ICRC and UNICEF also began a series of airlifts to Phnom Penh to relieve the perceived food emergency in the country while they continued to negotiate a formal agreement with the Heng Samrin Government. The Royal Thai Government was alarmed by this effort, fearing that it would strengthen Vietnam and that Thailand would then be attacked. It therefore drew up a list of conditions permitting the continued airlift of supplies into Phnom Penh from Thai territory including that if assistance was given to Phnom Penh then it must also be given to the Thai border region although the border would remain closed.

Thus, by September the Joint Mission had effectively committed itself to supplying aid to both sides; and in late September it issued a statement to the effect that it had reached agreements to supply aid to both sides. This prompted an immediate outcry from Vietnam who felt that the statement implicitly implied that the Heng Samrin Government had agreed to the provision of aid to the Khmer Rouge. The Joint Mission's negotiations were further setback by a vote by the UN in favour of the exiled Pol Pot Government maintaining its seat in the UN General Assembly. A document was issued stating that the Joint Mission would not be allowed to operate in Cambodia unless it complied with a series of conditions, including that it would not supply assistance to the Khmer Rouge. As a result, UNICEF and ICRC decided to halt assistance through the Thai border areas.

Meanwhile, in early October, Oxfam reached an agreement with the Heng Samrin Government allowing Oxfam to channel immediate aid into the country from a consortium of 35 NGOs, key partners of which included Dutch and German CARITAS, Lutheran World Service (LWS) and other Oxfams (US, Belgique). Oxfam promised to provide some £25m (US\$53m, or US\$81m in real 1992 prices) – a sum which it hoped to raise rather than actually had. However, by the end of the year Oxfam alone had raised £7m (US\$14.9m, or US\$22.7m in real 1992 prices) in Britain, including £3m (US\$6.4m) from a Blue Peter appeal, with further contributions from other consortium members. Oxfam also pioneered a sea-going route for delivering aid into Cambodia, with the first barge carrying food arriving at the Cambodian port of Kompong Som on 13 October. As part of its agreement with the Heng Samrin Government, Oxfam agreed not to provide any aid to areas controlled by Pol Pot; and to end all cooperation with the UN and the ICRC. Oxfam accepted these terms, despite the fact that it was in breach of Oxfam's own policy since it prevented it from providing relief to both sides of the victims of conflict, because it felt that other NGOs were already providing aid at the border and the need inside Cambodia was also great. The Heng Samrin Government, in turn, was keen to sign the agreement with Oxfam because it thought that it would pave the way for agreements with other agencies. It also did not fully comprehend the difference in scale of operation of NGOs and multilateral organisations, a factor which continued to influence its behaviour towards NGOs until the late 1980s (Black, 1992).

Finally on 11 October 1979, the Joint Mission revised its policy. In particular it decided to take steps to channel large scale assistance through Phnom Penh whilst at the same time supplying small quantities of assistance to the border. This allowed it to maintain its policy of supplying aid to both sides whilst at the same time, by keeping assistance to the border low and controlling other agencies delivering to the border, hoping to assure the Heng Samrin Government of its commitment to Phnom Penh.

In mid-October, airlifts by the Joint Mission to Phnom Penh were resumed, although problems continued, such as obtaining entrance visas. However, with the increasing flow of refugees to the border, following the launch of a new Vietnamese offensive against the Khmer Rouge and the opening of the Thai border, it became impossible to maintain assistance to the border region at low levels and the border programme grew dramatically as money and NGOs poured into the border region. Also, when it opened the border, the Royal Thai Government formally requested UNHCR to assist in the temporary care and maintenance of the camps situated on Thai territory. ICRC was requested to coordinate medical care of the Cambodian refugees and affected Thai villages, whilst UNICEF and NGOs were asked to assist it. According to Mason and Brown (1983), many of these NGOs would have preferred to operate from Phnom Penh, but could not get access to the country and so came to the border instead.

The Heng Samrin Government never formally withdrew its conditions for the provision of Joint Mission assistance to Phnom Penh but the two sides informally agreed to disagree; and thus operations began on both sides of the border. On 19 October, a joint UNICEF-ICRC appeal was launched for funds for Cambodia. In November, the estimated number of people in need in Cambodia was raised from 2.75 to 3 million, although no relief officials had yet been granted permission to visit the countryside and assess the situation themselves. However, many of the relief supplies sent remained undistributed. Relief officials finally began to travel in the country in December and although they found malnutrition, the situation was generally not immediately life threatening. Thus, the predicted famine never materialised. It later transpired that the country received Eastern bloc assistance in the first part of 1979, meeting its immediate food requirements, and domestic production was better than had been expected. Nevertheless, substantial other assistance was still required. Relationships between the Joint Mission and the Oxfam-NGO Consortium were also restored, allowing coordination and cooperation between the two groups.

ICRC's and UNICEF's policy throughout was to hold the mandate to provide assistance on both sides of the border. In hindsight, as Mason and Brown argue, it is difficult to assess the validity of this approach:

Had one set of organisations attempted to administer the border program while another set administered the Phnom Penh program, the Vietnamese might have

simply closed access to the border completely. The Phnom Penh authorities might have refused to allow a program to begin through Phnom Penh. By coordinating both programs, the Joint Mission kept the negotiation process going. On the other hand, both programs might have been freer to develop more adequate responses to their particular problems if different organisations had run the two channels (Mason and Brown, 1983).

3. The role of multilateral organisations

3.1 Overview

As already indicated, the international relief operation to assist Cambodians both at the Thai-Cambodian border and within Cambodia was begun in September 1979, in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 34/22. This Resolution called for the provision of emergency humanitarian assistance and the appointment of a Special Representative for the Co-ordination of Kampuchean Humanitarian Assistance Programmes, based in Bangkok and with overall authority for the programme.

During the emergency period (1979-81), multilateral assistance to Cambodia was organised through the UNICEF-ICRC Joint Mission, with UNICEF operating as the lead UN agency. ICRC and UNICEF were able to take the initiative in becoming involved because their respective mandates allowed them to act on humanitarian grounds alone, without taking other factors into account. Most other multilateral organisations can only respond to a request for assistance from a member state – in this case, the exiled Khmer Rouge Government. Once the Joint Mission's programme was underway, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), WFP and UNHCR also became active in Cambodia. Eastern bloc countries also provided considerable assistance to the country from early 1979.

At the Thai-Cambodian border, assistance to the holding centres was managed by UNHCR (see section 3.3), with WFP providing basic food rations. Between September 1979 and mid-1980, the Joint Mission coordinated assistance to the border camps and affected Thai villages, with WFP also providing food aid here. UNICEF played a major logistical role in general relief activities and assisted affected Thai villagers in the interior through the land bridge (see Box 5). ICRC had particular responsibility for providing protection and tracing services and for coordinating medical assistance in cooperation with the Thai Red Cross, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (LRCRCS), national Red Cross Societies and NGOs.

However, the ICRC withdrew from the border food distributions in mid-1980, following disagreements with UNICEF over the 'land bridge' operation (see section 4.3). At the same time, it relinquished its medical responsibilities to the lead medical NGOs in many of the border encampments, although remaining in charge of war surgery at Khao I Dang. Thus, although it continued to provide tracing services and protection services and, at Khao I Dang, some medical services, until the closure of the camps following repatriation, the ICRC had a much reduced role. As a result, Reynell (1989) notes that it had little influence on the border, lacking

'the bargaining power which UNBRO wields by virtue of its co-ordination of material aid and donor government backing'. However, it was the only international agency which worked in the Khmer Rouge military camps, visiting prisoners of war and political prisoners and pressing for the movement of all civilians out of the military camps. The ICRC also withdrew from Cambodia at the beginning of 1982, after the UN gave recognition to the CGDK (see section 2.2) although it resumed activities there in 1987.

At the end of 1981, UNICEF also withdrew from the border operations, in part because of its increasing concerns about the ethics of such operations and, in particular, the substantial amount of food aid which was going to the military in the Khmer Rouge controlled camps (Reynell, 1989). At the same time, it relinquished its lead agency role in Cambodia. However, it continued operations within Cambodia, albeit on a much reduced capacity, because it considered that basic rehabilitation in areas of particular concern to UNICEF had only been partly achieved during the emergency period. As already indicated, UNICEF, unlike most UN agencies, was able to have a presence in Cambodia beyond the Emergency period because of its special mandate, allowing it to work anywhere where women and children are in danger or at risk irrespective of whether the political group controlling that area or territory is recognised by the UN General Assembly. UNICEF was able to call on the expertise of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNESCO to provide short-term consultants to work in Cambodia. WFP and, on a very small scale, UNHCR also maintained a presence in the country but FAO withdrew. Other multilateral agencies, with the obvious exception of the specially created UNTAC, were largely not expected to commence operations in Cambodia until after the May 1993 elections (see section 2.2).

At the border, WFP was appointed as the lead agency at the beginning of 1982. As Reynell (1989) remarks, this was somewhat unusual. WFP normally works alongside UNHCR, providing food supplies whilst UNHCR is ultimately responsible for the relief programme. However, UNHCR was not involved in the border camps but only in the holding centres (see section 3.3) since the inhabitants of the former were not permitted by the Royal Thai Government to apply for refugee status. Thus, WFP took on the lead agency role in the border camps instead. As part of this role, WFP also took on the management of the newly created UNBRO (see section 3.2) which provides assistance to the border camps, and later displaced persons' camps and affected Thai villages. WFP continued as lead agency until 1988 when the role, together with the management of UNBRO, was transferred to UNDP as WFP felt that such a function was not strictly within WFP's remit. In November 1991, UNHCR, which had already been appointed the lead agency for the repatriation programme assumed this position instead.

3.2 UNBRO

The United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO) was established at the beginning of 1982 as a fully operational agency to provide material assistance and protection to Cambodian displaced persons at the Thai/Cambodian border and to affected Thai villagers in the border area. It was recognised by the Royal Thai Government as the coordinating body responsible for displaced Cambodians at the border. UNBRO was an *ad hoc* operation without its own autonomy or the status of a UN organisation. Indeed, until UNTAC was created in October 1991, UNBRO was the biggest *ad hoc* operation ever run by the UN. It was initially managed and staffed by WFP, by UNDP from 1988-91 and then, from November 1991, by UNHCR (see section 3.1). From 1982 to 1992, UNBRO reported to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations (OSRSGUN) for the Co-ordination of Kampuchean Humanitarian Assistance Programmes, who was also responsible for mobilising resources from the international community.

UNBRO was a unique and, according to most observers a highly successful, venture in response to the particular situation of the border camps. It was widely recognised as an efficient logistical operation. One of its greatest strengths, as acknowledged, both by those working within it and by NGOs, was its autonomy. Operational decisions were taken by UNBRO headquarters in Bangkok and did not have to be referred to UN authorities in Rome, Geneva or New York. As a result, UNBRO avoided much of the bureaucracy typical of a UN organisation. UNBRO also had offices in Aranyaprathet, Surin, on the northern border, and in Trad, on the southern border, keeping it in close contact with happenings at the border.

UNBRO Activities

UNBRO's programmes had to be approved by the Royal Thai Government but, most unusually in a relief context, the Government was willing to leave the day-to-day running of the operation to UNBRO. In its first few years of operation UNBRO was essentially a logistics organisation but, over time, it took on other activities as well, becoming a broad-based relief operation. As of September 1992, UNBRO directly undertook the following components of its programme:

- distribution of basic humanitarian relief supplies (food procured by WFP on UNBRO's behalf, drinking water, shelter materials and personal supplies);
- maintenance of a central border pharmacy;
- primary level education;
- information programme (begun in January 1992, to provide information on human rights, landmines awareness and repatriation information); and
- assistance to affected Thai villages.

It also provided material support for Cambodian-run social service facilities, including those for needy families and for a wide range of community based programmes such as adult literacy, early childhood development, Buddhist education and youth activities/sports. Various self-reliance activities were also supported. Technical assistance was provided by WHO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and other UN agencies.

NGOs

From its inauguration, UNBRO also largely funded and coordinated all NGO activities in the displaced persons' camps. As a result, NGOs effectively became implementors of UNBRO's programmes. NGOs operating in the displaced persons' camps entered into yearly contracts with UNBRO rather than with the Royal Thai Government, although they continued to require the initial permission of the government to operate in the country.

From the outset, UNBRO gradually streamlined and rationalised NGO activities, encouraging NGOs to specialise in the same activity across camps, ideally with only one NGO per activity throughout the camps. In part, this was intended to ensure standard provision of particular services across camps, eliminating earlier disparities in the level of services provided (see section 4.1). UNBRO also tried to maintain a good balance between nationalities of the NGOs operating in the displaced persons' camps. The process of streamlining and rationalisation was stepped up particularly in 1985 with the relocation of camps behind the Thai border. As a result, by 1987 UNBRO had successfully reduced the number of NGOs working in the displaced persons' camps to 12. This process was largely undertaken with the cooperation of NGOs although when the camps were relocated in 1985 some NGOs would have preferred to continue with the same groups.

Between 1987 and 1991, the number of NGOs active in the displaced persons' camps remained at about 12, although there were a few changes within this group. For example, the Japan Volunteer Centre (JVC) withdrew in 1987. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) withdrew in 1990, having gradually scaled back its programme since 1985. Meanwhile, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) began receiving UNBRO funds in 1988 and Oeuvres Hospitalières Françaises de l'Ordre de Malte (OFHOM) in 1991. With the start of the repatriation process in 1992, the number of NGOs gradually declined (see section 4.11).

The following services were provided through NGOs at various times, using materials supplied by and following guidelines developed by UNBRO:

- health care, including the running of hospitals and clinics, x-ray services, oral health services and mental health services;

- supplementary feeding, the pre-packing of food for distribution and other nutrition services;
- sanitation;
- physical rehabilitation services;
- special education for the handicapped;
- vocational training; and
- printing programme.

The initiative for new programmes generally came from UNBRO rather than from the NGOs. Any new programmes proposed by NGOs had to be approved by UNBRO before the agreement of the Royal Thai Government and the camp authorities could be sought. Generally speaking, when new programmes entailing UNBRO involvement were introduced, UNBRO tried to use the services of an existing NGO rather than introduce a new one into the camps. NGOs were meant to keep UNBRO informed of activities financed by sources other than UNBRO; and were not permitted to engage in any active political or religious programmes in the encampments.

Where more than one NGO was involved in a particular activity, UNBRO tried to ensure, as far as possible, that 'programmes undertaken by different NGOs are similar in terms of level of service, beneficiary selection criteria and cost per beneficiary, due allowance being made for differences which may exist between encampments' (UNBRO, 1992). Meanwhile, in earlier years, when camp evacuations were frequent, NGOs working in a particular displaced persons' camps were requested by UNBRO to provide similar services at the evacuation site in the case of the camp being attacked as a principle.

Finances

UNBRO received no funding from the regular UN budget. Instead, it held regular donor meetings, two or three times per year, to raise funds for the border operations, using its budget as its funding document. These funds were largely donated in cash by bilateral donors. As a consequence of these funding arrangements, UNBRO never had a full year's budget but had to operate within a limited planning period. This impeded long-term planning and periodically created cash flow problems. It also had a knock-on effect on NGO programmes since most NGOs' activities in the displaced persons' camps were 90-100% funded by UNBRO, with the notable exceptions of those undertaken by Christian Outreach (COR) and Handicap International (HI). Each NGO was given a two-month advance of funds by UNBRO at the beginning of the year, with subsequent funds disbursed on a monthly reimbursable basis. UNBRO funding included a stipend for NGO expatriate costs but a number of NGOs supplemented this, considering it to be too low.

Until about 1990, UNBRO managed to overcome periodic funding crises, threatening NGO activities, by eventually raising sufficient funds to cover its budgeted expenditure. Indeed, to some extent it used NGOs as a weapon to increase funding by informing them of shortfalls in funding and the repercussions for NGO programmes, which in turn spurred NGOs to lobby their home governments for increased donations to UNBRO.

However, over the last few years of its existence, UNBRO's financial difficulties intensified, forcing cuts in the level of funding provided to NGOs. In part, these difficulties arose as a result of improvements in the prospects for the repatriation of refugees, following the Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia, and so donors perceived a lessening of requirements for assistance at the border whilst simultaneously increasing funding of programmes within Cambodia. The world recession beginning in the late 1980s and increased demands on donor funding elsewhere also had an adverse effect on UNBRO's funding position. As a result, in March 1990, UNBRO announced a 25% cut in NGO annual budgets, although the eventual reduction was actually 20%. NGOs were requested to submit either their proposed programme cuts or alternatively to indicate whether they could meet the 25% shortfall themselves. Some medical NGOs were unable to make cuts on this scale, particularly as they coincided with some 30,000 new arrivals at the border, many with serious health problems, due to increased fighting. There was a further cut in NGO funding of 6% in 1991 in real terms. Some services provided directly by UNBRO were also cut back. For example, in 1991 water rations were briefly reduced from 20 to 17 litres per day, 3 litres below WHO standards in emergency situations.

Relationship between UNBRO and NGOs

The relationship between UNBRO and NGOs was always unique, as compared to relationships between UN lead agencies and NGOs in other relief situations. UNBRO's provision of a substantial part of NGO funding, coupled with its coordination and technical support of NGOs was most unusual. In addition, UNBRO had an informal and unbureaucratic structure, as reflected, for example, by the fact that NGOs did not need to request appointments with UNBRO staff well in advance.

Overall, relationships between the two parties were generally good, enhanced by UNBRO's openness and willingness to permit NGOs some autonomy. Although UNBRO provided guidelines for the implementation of programmes, which NGOs appreciated as allowing standardisation and commonality in NGO programming, NGOs ran their programmes with little operational interference from UNBRO. Relationships also improved over time, as channels of communications were developed and individuals got to know each other better. UNBRO's positioning of

staff at the field level, as well as in Bangkok, reflecting its 'hands-on' approach, further improved communications and relationships with the NGOs.

However, there was resentment in some quarters about the effective constraint imposed on NGOs by UNBRO's funding of their activities. As a result of these funding arrangements, Jackson (1987) argued that NGOs were 'effectively muzzled' from serving as a voice for the border population.

Some NGOs also resented UNBRO recruitment of their staff. A number of NGO staff, particularly medical officers but also others, were recruited onto UNBRO's staff. Some NGOs felt that UNBRO was luring such staff away with the offer of sometimes considerably higher salaries than the NGOs could afford. For its part, UNBRO was aware of the fact that its hiring of some of the NGOs' more experienced or capable staff had negative implications for the NGOs concerned and caused short-term disruptions and it claims to have held back on such recruitment precisely for these reasons. However, employment of former NGO staff gave UNBRO considerable insight into the workings of NGOs and increased communications between UNBRO and the NGOs.

To some extent, NGOs, particularly those working in similar areas of activity, competed against each other for UNBRO funding. However, this competition had little long-term impact on NGO relationships with each other.

3.3 UNHCR

UNHCR administered the holding centres, containing those Cambodians with refugee status, from their formation in 1979. WFP provided basic food rations, on a cost reimbursable basis. NGOs effectively acted as the operational arm of UNHCR within the camps, undertaking most activities with the exception of protection and security.

Until 1980, activities in the holding centres were allocated between NGOs on an *ad hoc* basis. There was a certain amount of confusion and overlap between different NGO's activities, in part because the Royal Thai Government, rather than UNHCR, had asked the NGOs to assist, somewhat weakening UNHCR's lead role (UNHCR, 1982). However, Cuny (1986) argues that this confusion was probably less than has been observed in other operations since UNHCR itself assumed an unusually operational role. Lead NGOs were appointed for each holding centre, with IRC as the lead agency in Khao I Dang. More durable holding centres were constructed in 1980 and, at the same time, UNHCR, in conjunction with the Committee for Co-ordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT) (see section 4.2), took the opportunity to formalise its relationships with the NGOs. As part of this process, each NGO was asked to submit short proposals containing their interest in a specific service at a site and details on project design,

funding and staffing. Tasks were then allocated between some 20 NGOs on a more rational basis.

UNHCR also decided, at the same time, that the number of NGOs working in any one camp should be kept to a minimum and that NGOs should try to consolidate their programmes into one camp. UNHCR maintained this policy of limiting the number of NGOs in any one camp throughout the duration of the camps. Although no NGO was ever requested to leave, there was a natural attrition of NGOs over time and, in such instances, if the programme the NGO had been involved in was to be continued, UNHCR tried to ensure that an existing NGO took over. As far as possible, UNHCR has tried to ensure that the new NGO would meet approximately the same part of the total programmes's financial costs as its predecessor, to prevent UNHCR becoming increasingly financially burdened.

UNHCR met each NGO annually to discuss their following year's programmes and UNHCR budgets. UNHCR financed some NGO activities. However, there was no hard and fast rule determining the exact levels of finance received for each activity, with both absolute and relative levels of funding for specific programmes provided by UNHCR varying between NGOs. For example, as of September 1992, Redd Barna Thailand (RBT) had a social services project in Khao I Dang for which it estimated that UNHCR met some 30% of expenditure. Meanwhile, the substantial costs of Construction Site Maintenance at Khao I Dang, which Christian Outreach was responsible for, were met entirely by UNHCR, excluding the costs of expatriate staff which Christian Outreach met. However, Christian Outreach entirely funded its much smaller Mother and Child Health Programme at Khao I Dang. NGOs generally covered most of their own administrative costs.

UNHCR provided guidelines for the NGOs to follow, including for supplementary feeding, intensive feeding and minimal space requirements for shelters. These guidelines were intended both to equalize services within the camps and to provide inexperienced NGOs with a guide for effective programme planning.

According to UNDP, the relationship between UNHCR and the NGOs was sometimes somewhat more sensitive than that between UNBRO and the NGOs, 'partly because NGOs perceive[d] a lack of trust on the part of UNHCR' (UNDP, 1990). During interviews conducted for the purposes of this study, one NGO representative also indicated that NGOs generally found UNBRO far easier to work with than UNHCR, in part because of the former's openness. Unlike UNBRO, UNHCR also lacked technical staff at the field level, implying that they had less contact with NGOs and, implicitly, a more limited understanding of matters entailed in the day-to-day running of the camps. Generally speaking, those NGOs which met the UNHCR standard guidelines in the implementation of their programmes received greater support and were assigned more responsibility than those which did not (Cuny, 1986).

3.4 Assistance flows to the Thai-Cambodian border

International assistance

Between October 1979 and 1990, an estimated US\$1,118m (in real 1992 prices) of multilateral assistance was provided to refugees and displaced persons at the Thai-Cambodian border (Figure 3). As already indicated, over the period 1979-81 alone, four international agencies – UNICEF, ICRC, WFP and UNHCR – were involved in the provision of assistance, together providing some US\$310m. From 1982, multilateral assistance was largely channelled through UNHCR and UNBRO, with some US\$70m provided per annum between 1982 and 1990 (Figure 4). UNBRO alone accounted for some 54% of the total. In the more recent period of 1988-90 alone, UNBRO accounted for 63% of multilateral assistance, despite certain financing difficulties (see section 3.2).

In per capita terms, assistance averaged around US\$326 (in real 1992 prices) over the period 1981-90, excluding assistance to affected Thai villages, with assistance as high as US\$450 per capita in 1981. Levels of assistance received in the earlier years were far higher than in other refugee situations, owing to the combined factors of the political context of the crisis, and thus donors' willingness to provide substantial support, and the logistical ease of the programme. For example, according to Cuny (1986), during the first three months of the operation, the Thai-Cambodian border operation received three times as much as Afghan refugees and eight times as much as the refugees in western Somalia. Indeed, during interviews conducted for the purposes of this study, one NGO official described the Thai-Cambodian relief operation as the 'Rolls-Royce' of relief operations. In later years per capita assistance declined slightly (Figure 3).

The sectoral distribution of international assistance is only available for UNBRO data for the period 1982-91. Until 1984, about two-thirds of the total was spent on food alone, with health and sanitation, including that channelled via NGOs, accounting for a further sixth of total expenditure. Between 1985 and 1991, around half of the total UNBRO budget was spent on food (purchased on UNBRO's behalf by WFP), with expenditure on health, sanitation, logistics, other relief supplies and encampment infrastructure accounting for around a third of the total. Inter-yearly fluctuations in UNBRO expenditure on food are partly explained by movements in the price of rice and other food commodities. UNBRO also often responded to financial difficulties by reducing expenditure on food supplies. UNBRO channelled around 12% of its total expenditure via NGOs between 1986 and 1991.

Figure 3

Total and Per Capita Assistance to the Thai-Cambodian Border, 1981-90

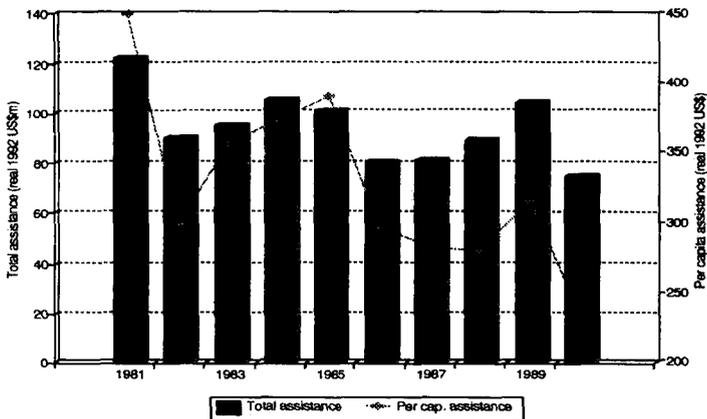
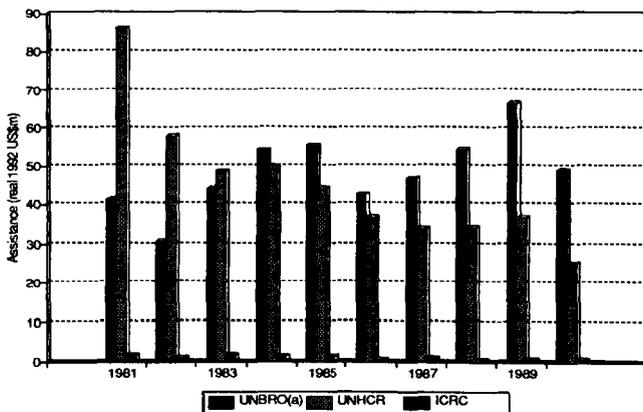


Figure 4

Multilateral Assistance to the Thai-Cambodian Border by Agency, 1981-90



a) Includes US\$6.3m assistance provided by UNICEF in 1981

NGO assistance

It has proved difficult to collate financial data on NGO operations on the Thai-Cambodia border. This is partly because most NGOs were active on more than one border, with reported expenditure often including programmes for Vietnamese, Laotian and Burmese, as well as Cambodian asylum seekers, refugees and displaced persons. Some NGOs also conducted development programmes with the Thai population, but did not distinguish in annual reports between funds provided for development and to assist refugee/displaced persons to the various categories. The data presented in this section are therefore largely approximates, with estimates of NGO assistance calculated by the CCSDPT also reported.

In 1979, NGOs contributed some Bahts 110 million (US\$5.4m, or US\$8.3m in real 1992 prices,) assistance to the Thai-Cambodian border operations, largely in the last quarter of the year. In 1980, NGO assistance is estimated at in excess of Bahts 500m (US\$24.4m, or US\$32.7m in real 1992 prices) (CCSDPT, 1982), including assistance channelled through NGOs by international agencies also active on the border. Some 80% was in the form of material aid, with the remainder meeting personnel costs. Assistance in 1981 was probably somewhat lower as the intensity of the crisis had lessened.

From 1982, bilateral funding of NGOs working in the displaced persons' camps was largely channelled through UNBRO rather than through the NGOs directly. Thus, in 1982, NGOs provided an estimated US\$13.9m (or US\$20.1m in real 1992 prices) of assistance, or US\$46.3 (US\$67 in real 1992 prices) per refugee, of which about 43% was met from their own funds with the remainder funded by UNBRO, UNHCR, governments etc (CCSDPT, 1983). In subsequent years, UNBRO and UNHCR have continued to meet well over half, and probably over three-quarters, of total NGO expenditure on the border operations. In the displaced persons' camps alone, UNBRO has provided about 90% of most NGOs' operating costs. Thus, given the fact already noted that NGOs received only 12% of total UNBRO funding, it would seem reasonable to assume that overall NGOs have probably accounted for well under 25% of total assistance on the border, including funds channelled through them by multilaterals and bilaterals. Meanwhile, NGOs probably provided under 10% of total assistance to the Cambodian refugees, displaced persons and affected Thai villages from their own private funding and from bilateral government donations directly to NGOs.

Data on total sectoral allocation of NGO assistance is only available for UNBRO-funded NGO activities and then only for the years 1986-92. Changes over time in the sectoral distribution of this assistance can be seen in Figures 5, 6 and 7. The most significant adjustments were the gradual reduction in the absolute and relative share of expenditure on supplementary feeding (see section 4.3) and the gradual introduction of new activities – namely, printing, special education, and a mental health services and monitoring project.

Figure 5

UNBRO-funded NGO activities, 1986

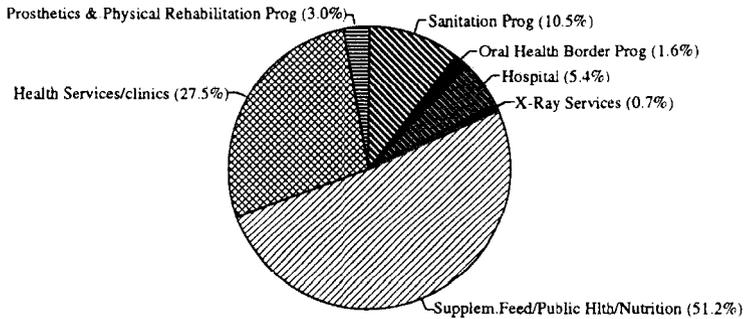


Figure 6

UNBRO-funded NGO activities, 1989

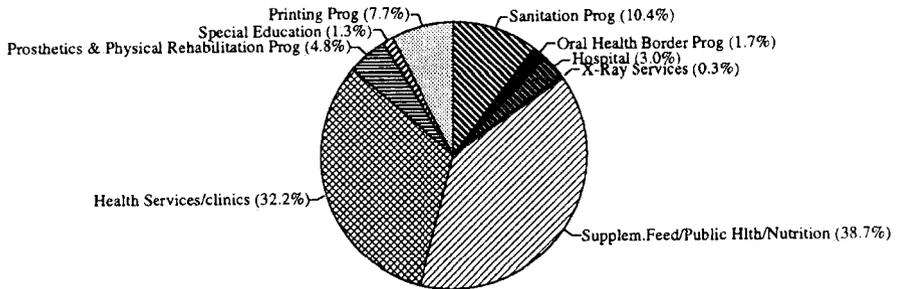
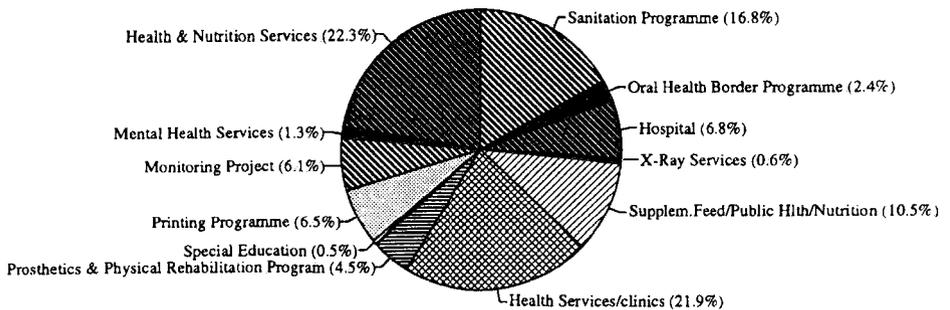


Figure 7

UNBRO-funded NGO activities, 1992



In terms of the distribution of UNBRO funding between NGOs, three NGOs – CARE, CRS and the Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees (COERR) – together accounted for 55 to 63% of total funding in all years 1986-90, prior to the withdrawal of CRS and CARE from the displaced persons' camps. This pattern of expenditure reflected CRS's and CARE's heavy involvement in supplementary feeding. Three other NGOs – the American Refugee Committee (ARC), Concern and Youth with a Mission (YWAM) – each received over 5% of total UNBRO NGO funding in all years 1986-92.

3.5 Assistance flows to Cambodia

Between September 1979 and 1981, total NGO expenditure in Cambodia amounted to some US\$110m (US\$150m in real 1992 prices), of which about 40% was accounted for by the Oxfam-NGO Consortium alone. Over the same period, UNICEF, ICRC, UNHCR, WFP and FAO provided US\$366m (around US\$515m in real 1992 prices) emergency assistance although development assistance was prohibited (Mysliwiec, 1988). Some bilateral western assistance was also received, channelled through the multilateral organisations and, to a lesser extent, NGOs. In per capita terms, total western assistance over this period amounted to around US\$210 (US\$295m in real 1992 prices) per annum. Cambodia also received well over US\$450m (US\$635m in real 1992 prices) assistance from Eastern bloc countries, principally the USSR, between 1979 and 1981 (OECD, various).

At the beginning of 1982, the UN declared the emergency period over whilst the ban on development assistance was maintained, resulting in the withdrawal of most multilateral agencies and a substantial decline in western assistance (see section 2.2). Thus, between 1982 and 1988, bilateral and multilateral organisations provided only around US\$150m (US\$205m in real 1992 prices) in assistance (OECD, various). Non-operational NGOs which had been channelling assistance through other NGOs also reduced their assistance substantially and most bilateral support of NGOs was also halted. US NGOs faced particular funding problems, since, until June 1991, they were restricted by law from having any financial dealings with Cambodia other than for travel-related transactions and trade in informational materials, making it difficult for them to get funding into the country. Furthermore, they were only permitted to import materials into the country for strictly humanitarian purposes. This definition varied between years, creating uncertainty in NGO programming. As a result of the decline in NGO funding, between 1982 and 1988 NGOs probably only provided around US\$60m (US\$82.3m in real 1992 prices) in assistance, based on data from a number of sources. However, in terms of total western assistance, the NGO contribution was substantial, amounting to some 30%. In per capita terms, total western assistance,

including that from NGOs, over this period was a mere US\$4 per annum, compared to receipts on the border of some US\$327 (in real 1992 prices).⁶

Instead, the Eastern bloc countries were the principle source of assistance to Cambodia during 1982-8, contributing around US\$700m (US\$960m in real 1992 prices) in total (OECD, various years). Projects undertaken included port and road development, renovation of a thermo-electric power station, rehabilitation of rubber plantations, rehabilitation of the Phnom Penh telephone exchange, rice research, meteorological assistance, provision of fishing nets and tackle and health and education support. The Eastern bloc countries also provided substantial technical assistance. However, aid from Eastern bloc countries began to decline in 1989, reflecting domestic economic reforms and increasing economic difficulties; and at the end of 1990, the USSR announced that future economic relation with Cambodia would be conducted on a purely commercial basis. All technical experts were also withdrawn.

Although there was a simultaneous increase in western assistance from around 1989 as the prospects of peace improved, as of September 1992 this assistance had yet to compensate for the cessation of Eastern bloc aid. The country was expected to receive no direct bilateral assistance and only very restricted multilateral assistance until the May 1993 elections. However, some bilateral donors had begun to channel aid into the country indirectly through NGOs. From around 1990, UNICEF had also begun to put increasing amounts of funding through NGOs. As a result, NGO assistance reached an estimated US\$20m (US\$22.6m in real 1992 prices) in 1989, US\$28m (US\$22.9m in real 1992 prices) in 1990 and US\$40m (US\$41.6m in real 1992 prices) in 1991, with the figure for 1992 expected to be significantly higher. The increase in bilateral funding channelled through NGOs began in about 1988, with the Australian Government at the forefront; and by 1989/90, these donors included Belgium, Canada, the EC, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK and the US. Bilateral funding of NGO activities picked up particularly after the Paris Conference in October 1991. Indeed, some of the NGOs which became operational in the country in the 1990s are 100% funded by bilateral donors although others, particularly some of the older ones, have been less willing to accept such funding and thus effectively become implementors of government programmes.

Average assistance per NGO actually declined slightly between 1990 and 1992, however. Also, although the average assistance provided by NGOs operating in the country pre-1987 remained above the overall average level of NGO assistance, it was not considerably higher, despite the fact that many of the longer serving NGOs

⁶ This per capita figure for the border is a slight over-estimate as it is based on population data excluding affected Thai villages but data on assistance which includes aid to affected Thai villages.

continued to operate nationwide projects rather than the much smaller-scale rural projects favoured by the newcomers.

Data on the sectoral allocation of NGO assistance to Cambodia over the past 13 years is not available.

4. The role of NGOs on the Thai-Cambodian border

4.1 Overview of NGO involvement⁷

Over the period 1979 to 1991, around 60 NGOs operated on the Thai-Cambodian borders at various times. NGOs began to become involved on a small scale with the first influx of displaced Cambodians in 1975. Most of these NGOs were already active in the country, working with Vietnamese refugees, which entailed the servicing of some 130,000 refugees in stable conditions, or in development and missionary projects. NGO involvement increased rapidly in late 1979, although the Joint Mission was not entirely happy about the involvement of NGOs in the early stages of the border operations, fearing that it would jeopardize the Joint Mission's neutrality and thus adversely affect its operation in Cambodia (WFP Internal document, reported in Mason and Brown, 1983). According to Mason and Brown (1983) the ICRC also questioned the motives of NGO involvement at the border, believing them to be, in the words of Mason and Brown, 'under the thumb of the US government'. Nevertheless, by the end of the year there were some 30 NGOs involved in the border operations, some two-thirds of which were non-secular. By the end of 1980, the number of operational NGOs had risen to 55–60. However, from about 1982, as the situation stabilised, there was a gradual decline of the number of NGOs involved, falling to around 25 by 1983 and remaining at about that level until repatriation began in late 1991. In 1991, about half of the NGOs were non-secular.

At least four NGOs were founded specifically to provide relief to the Thai-Cambodian border:

Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees (COERR) (a non-secular Thai organisation founded in 1979);

Caring for Young Refugees (CYR) (a secular Japanese organisation founded in 1979);

Comité Européen d'Aide aux Réfugiés (CEAR) (a secular French organisation founded in 1980); and

Association Humanitaire pour la Santé, l'Éducation et le Développement (AVENIRS) (a secular French organisation founded in 1980).

⁷ This discussion excludes NGOs active in the transit camps and ATVs, since data available for these do not distinguish between the Cambodian and other relief operations for refugees/displaced persons.

Box 1 Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees

COERR was established in 1978 by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand to give relief to refugees seeking asylum in Thailand and to assist the affected Thai population in the border areas. Its sister organisation, the Catholic Council of Thailand for Development (CCTD), had originally provided such relief but by 1978 assistance had reached such a scale as to justify the founding of a separate organisation. By the mid 1980s, COERR had extended its activities to support victims of local disasters and, in later years, to provide material support to victims of disasters worldwide as well as continuing its relief activities with displaced persons and refugees on various parts of the Thai border. COERR is currently setting up a programme in Cambodia.

COERR is largely staffed by volunteers. At the end of July 1991, there were 416 persons working for COERR, including Cambodian staff, of which 327 were lay people. COERR's staff includes seconded volunteers from the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), which does not have an official presence in Thailand.

COERR has had an annual budget of around US\$4m in all years since its inception. In recent years, COERR has received some 18-20% of its budget from the UN, 78% from overseas donations, both from Catholic and non-Catholic sources and 2% from home donations.

(See Box 4 for a description of COERR's activities.)

At least a further five NGOs were created to provide assistance to the Indo-Chinese refugees in Thailand more generally but were given major impetus by the Thai-Cambodian operations:

American Refugee Committee (ARC) (a secular American organisation founded in 1979);

Japan Volunteer Centre (JVC) (a secular Japanese organisation founded in 1980);

Thai-Chinese Refugee Service (TCRS) (a secular Taiwanese organisation founded in 1980);

Soutien à l'Initiative Privée pour l'Aide à la Reconstruction des Pays du Sud-Est Asiatique (SIPAR) (a secular French organisation founded in 1982); and

Handicap International (HI) (a secular French organisation founded in 1982).

A number of these NGOs have since begun operations in other countries, including in development work as well as relief operations (see, for example, Boxes 2, 3 and 4), of which 6 of them had set up offices in Cambodia by September 1992.

Box 2**American Rescue Committee**

The ARC was established in 1978, to assist in the resettlement of Indochinese refugees in the USA. In 1979, it became operational at the Thai-Cambodian border and its primary focus shifted to the provision of medical assistance to the Indo-Chinese refugees pouring into Thailand. In 1985, it expanded again to provide assistance to refugees in Somalia and Ethiopia. The ARC began a programme in Cambodia at the end of 1990, conducting small scale health outreach programmes, strengthening hospitals and operating a mobile health unit. Its operation in Cambodia represents an extension of its mandate to cover non-refugee issues. In 1988-90, it spent around US\$700,000 per annum on all its refugee activities in Thailand.

In terms of their nationalities, the NGOs were roughly evenly split between North American and western European NGOs, with several Japanese and one Taiwanese NGO. There was virtually no involvement of Australian NGOs although since 1979 they have always been relatively active inside Cambodia (see section 5.1). Only two Thai NGOs, COERR and the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT) were involved in the border operations, both since 1979. The Thai Red Cross was also active, operating a number of clinics such as an eye clinic, while the World Family Planning Federation of Thailand had a temporary involvement. The limited indigenous involvement reflects the facts that national NGOs were already heavily involved in development work with Thai nationals and had restricted funding sources. In addition, the Royal Thai Government was very keen to maintain the relief operations as an international effort (see section 2.3).

Some NGOs operated in only one camp whilst others were involved in practically all of them. Based on data available for members of the CCSDPT, which accounted for over 90% of NGOs active on the border, in 1979 NGOs were active in an average of 2.5 camps compared to 1.8 in 1982. In 1991, NGOs were active in an average of 2.8 camps, despite the fact that by 1991 there were far fewer camps in total. This partly reflected UNBRO's policy of encouraging NGOs to specialise by

Box 3**Japan Volunteer Centre**

JVC was founded in 1980 specifically to assist displaced Cambodian, Vietnamese and Lao in Thailand. It has subsequently expanded its activities to include community development and environmental programmes in Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos, as well as continuing its emergency relief work. It was the second NGO to work on both sides of the Thai-Cambodian border. It is funded by a number of Japanese charitable organisations, companies and individuals.

Table 2

Activities of CCSDPT members with refugee and displaced Cambodians, 1979*

	<i>Food</i>	<i>Medical</i>	<i>Educ- ation</i>	<i>Vocation</i>	<i>Orient- ation</i>	<i>Constr- uction</i>	<i>Water/ sanitation</i>	<i>Recrea- tion</i>	<i>Other services</i>
ARC		GJ							
BASE	E								
CAMA		D			B	D			BD
CARE	DGHJK	DGH	G						DG
CCT	DGJK		K			J			K
CCTD	DFGH	DFGH	DFGH	DFGH		DFGH	DFGH		DFGHJ
CCU	J								J
COERR	D	DFGHJ					D		
COR	ABCG		BC	BC	B				C
CONCERN	FG	GH	G	G					D
CRS	DGK	DGK		G		DGK			DGK
FFFM		D							
FHI	BDGJ			B					G
ICA									B
ICMC		FGH							
IRC		CDGJ							
MHD		G							
MSF		ACDFGLJ							
OMF		CDFGI		C	I				CDFGI
OSB		G							
RCIR		G							

continued

Table 2 *continued*

	<i>Food</i>	<i>Medical</i>	<i>Educ- ation</i>	<i>Vocation</i>	<i>Orient- ation</i>	<i>Constr- uction</i>	<i>Water/ sanitation</i>	<i>Recrea- tion</i>	<i>Other services</i>
SAWS		GHJ							K
SCF	BDH	H							
SPM	C								C
TBM	FHI	H			FI		F		FHI
TBMF	H	DH							
TDHG		DH	F						F
TDHZ	G	G	G	G				G	
WICRR			DFGH						
WRFF	DE								
WVFT	DI	ADGHI	H	DGJ		AFI	AFHIJ		DGHI
YMCA	J							I	J
YWCA			CF	F					
YWAM	G	G	G	G	I	G		G	I

Source: CCSDPT, 1979

Note: * Including NGOs working in the transit camps and ATVs, as indicated.

A - Buriram	B - Prasat	C - Aranyaprathet
D - Sa Kaeo	E - Khao Larn	F - Khlong Yai
G - Khao I Dang	H - Kamput	I - Transit centres
J - Affected Thais	K - Border areas	

Table 3 **Activities of CCSDPT members with the refugee and displaced Cambodians, 1985***

	<i>Banking /mailing</i>	<i>Construc- -tion maintenance engineering</i>	<i>Distrib- -ution</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Medical care public health & health education</i>	<i>Nutrition & supple- -mentary feeding</i>	<i>Recrea- -tion</i>	<i>Resettle- -ment language training/ & cultural orientation</i>	<i>Skills training</i>	<i>Social welfare</i>	<i>Water sani- -tation & public health</i>	<i>Voluntary repatr- -iation program- -mes</i>	<i>Others</i>
ADRA					DI	D					J		
ARC				I	AI					I	I		
AVENIRS					D								
CAMA			ABJ		C	B							
CARE			ACHI			ACH			H				
CCT			J		DH						A	J	
COERR Consortium		I	GJ	GJ	ABCDIJ	ADGJ	I	I	AGI	AJH			
COR		H		H	AH				H		A		
CRS			J		ABEJ	BEJ					B		
CYR				H					H				
ESF								I					
FHI			I		J	J			J				
ICA			IJ			IJ			J				
IRC				H	H		H			H	H		
IRFF			J		J								
JSRC				J			H		HJ	J			
JVC						A		I	H				
MCC								I	GI				
MHD					ABCH								
MSF					AH								
NCA			F										A
NRC		FJ							F		J	A	J

continued

Table 3 continued

	<i>Banking /mailing</i>	<i>Construc- -tion maintenance engineering</i>	<i>Distrib- -ution</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Medical care public health & health education</i>	<i>Nutrition & supple- -mentary health feeding</i>	<i>Recrea- -tion</i>	<i>Resettle- -ment language training/ cultural orientation</i>	<i>Skills training</i>	<i>Social welfare</i>	<i>Water sani- -tation & public health</i>	<i>Voluntary repair -iation -ation -ation -mes</i>	<i>Others</i>
OHI				ABCDEHJ									
OMF			I					I		I			
RBT										H			
SAO						I	I						
SCF/USA				I									
TBM			J		I	I			J		J	J	
TCRS				I			I		I	I			
TDH					J								
TOV									J				
WCI			J		IJ								
WSURT								I					
WVFT			IJ								I		
YWAM	HI	I	J	HI	A	J			HI		AIH		
ZOA									B				

A - Site 2

D - Other camps

G - Khao Lam

B - Green Hill

E - Kab Cherng

H - Khao I Dang

C - Site 8

F - Klong Yai

I - Transit camps (Phanat Nikhom & Suan Plu)

J - Affected Thais

Note: *Including NGOs working in the transit camps and ATVs, as indicated.

activity rather than by camp (see section 3.2). However, COERR and HI were active in virtually all camps. In the case of HI, this reflected the very highly specialist nature of its work, providing prosthetics and physical rehabilitation for the physically handicapped, largely mine victims (see Box 12). COERR by contrast, was very broad-based, involved in virtually all activities as well as all camps.

During the first few years, there was an enormous disparity in the distribution of NGOs and expatriate personnel between camps, in part because of security restrictions on NGO activities in the border camps. At times, over 500 foreigners worked in Khao I Dang yet the largest border camps, such as Mak Mun and Nong Samet, with populations comparable to Khao I Dang, seldom had over 50 relief workers and often had only 20 to 30 (Mason and Brown, 1983). For example, in Khao I Dang there were almost 100 medical personnel at the peak, with a doctor:refugee ratio of 1:1,500, compared to a ratio of 1:10,000 in another camp with only one physician (Susott, 1986).⁸ In Khao I Dang, this resulted in considerable rivalry between NGOs for various medical tasks before NGO activities were formalised by UNHCR in 1990. Even in the other holding centres and border camps where there was a smaller concentration of NGOs, there were also some instances of competition between NGOs which 'severely hampered the relief efforts and caused untold wastage in supplies and resources' (Cuny, 1986). However, UNBRO's rationalisation of NGO activities (see section 3.2), together with the better access and slightly improved security, ensured a more equitable distribution of NGO capacity between the border camps from 1982.

Some NGOs were highly specialist, particularly those involved in the provision of health services. Others were virtual 'jack-of-all-trades', involved in a wide range of activities. Based on CCSDPT's categorisation of activities for its members, in 1979 NGOs on average were involved in 2.8 activities, rising to 3.5 activities by 1982 as they began to introduce non-emergency activities (see below), and then falling to 2.5 by 1991, again reflecting UNBRO's policy of encouraging specialisation. Some NGOs, such as HI, operated standard programmes in all of the camps in which they were active, but others varied their programmes between camps. A more detailed breakdown of activities by camps of operation of CCSDPT members is shown in Tables 2 and 3 for the years 1979 and 1985, including activities in transit camps and in the affected Thai villages.

4.2 Coordination of NGO activities

During late 1979 and 1980, coordination of NGOs was particularly difficult due to the rapid growth in the number of NGOs involved in the border operations. NGOs

⁸ In 1984, Thailand had one physician for every 6,290 of its population (World Bank, 1992).

varied enormously in their motives, expertise and approaches, placing great demands on coordination, sometimes resulting in considerable inequities in the services offered to different camps or even different sections of the same camp (see section 4.1). The Joint Mission tried to assume coordination in the border camps but was not particularly successful, partly because most NGOs had their own funding rather than acting as implementors for the Joint Mission. The Joint Mission also attempted to restrict the participation of NGOs because it felt that it could not guarantee the security of personnel. However, some NGOs ignored these restrictions and operated alone, outside either NGO or ICRC coordination.

To improve coordination, in 1980 the CCSDPT instituted weekly NGO meetings to which Royal Thai Government and multilateral officials were also invited. However, attendance at some of these meetings exceeded 100 participants (Olson, 1981), leading to some criticism that they offered little more than a forum at which to make announcements. From 1980, the NGOs also instituted a system whereby new NGOs interested in providing services to the Cambodians at the border initially discussed options with the CCSDPT (see below) and other NGO staff and then submitted a proposal specifying the site and service to the Royal Thai Government. The weekly meetings were later changed to bi-weekly meetings, after the crisis had lessened slightly.

From 1980, UNHCR also assumed greater coordination of NGOs operating in the holding centres. With the formation of UNBRO in 1982, NGO activities in the border, and later displaced persons', camps also improved, owing partly to the fact that UNBRO controlled the larger part of NGO funding (see section 3.2). In 1982, bi-weekly meetings arranged under the auspices of the CCSDPT were also replaced by monthly meetings in Bangkok, which were continued until 1993. These were held on the first Friday in the month, in two parts. Firstly, a closed meeting was held, attended by the Directors of member agencies (or their appointed representatives), CCSDPT staff and occasionally representatives of external organisations. This was immediately followed by an open meeting at which attendance was unrestricted and normally included representatives from multilateral organisations, the ICRC and the Royal Thai Government. At the closed meetings, NGOs could discuss how to raise issues at the open session meeting and could attempt to reach an informal consensus on particular issues. From around late 1990, a separate monthly meeting between UNBRO and NGOs operating in the displaced persons' camps, known as the UNBRO Director's meeting, was also instituted. At this meeting, which was held on the first Thursday in the month, issues could be raised in confidence with UNBRO. Inter-NGO meetings were also held at the border at various times, on both a camp and sectoral basis.

The Committee for Co-ordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT)

The CCSDPT was founded in 1975 by a group of 17 NGOs, in response both to a perceived need by NGOs to coordinate their activities and to the Royal Thai Government's desire to register NGOs working on the borders. A medical subcommittee was formed in early 1976, reflecting the increasing involvement of members in this area. In late 1979, following the massive increase in NGO relief activities as a result of the influx of Cambodians across the border, a full-time Executive Secretary position was created.

Membership of the CCSDPT is open to all NGOs which have been approved by the Royal Thai Government to provide services to refugees; and probably at any point in time over 90% of eligible NGOs have been members. There are two types of membership: ordinary membership, which is open to operational organisations; and associate membership, which is open to non-operational organisations which contribute financially or in other ways to support the provision of services to displaced persons. Its membership reached an all-time high of 52 NGOs in 1981. It currently has 34 members and by mid-1993 will have 19 members. Prior to 1980, CCSDPT was supported by voluntary contributions for member agencies. However, in 1980 an annual subscription was introduced for NGOs. OSRSGUN, UNBRO, UNHCR, ICRC and some embassies have also subscribed to it.

The CCSDPT's objectives are to facilitate contact between, and organise regular meetings of, member organisations, the Royal Thai Government, international organisations, embassies and other interested parties; to facilitate coordination between NGOs to maximise the benefits of available resources and minimise unnecessary duplication of activities and services; to assist members in their work; and to compile data on displaced persons in Thailand as required by members. It operates at two levels: (i) technical and legal dealings with the Royal Thai Government and (ii) membership activities. The CCSDPT facilitates NGO coordination but does not coordinate them itself. Although it does not have a separate voice, it can represent NGOs' joint interests to the government, the UN and other international organisations and embassies. The CCSDPT is generally recognised by NGOs as having played a major role in ensuring NGO collaboration and cooperation.

The CCSDPT has also played an important role in maintaining a high international profile for refugees and displaced persons in Thailand and for NGOs working with them. In particular, the CCSDPT together with the Ministry of Information alternately organised annual conferences on services to displaced persons in 1977 and 1979-89, hosted by these two bodies and the Joint Centre of the Supreme Command. These conferences included important Thai Government officials among its key speakers, and were attended by representatives from NGOs, the Royal Thai Government, multilateral organisations and embassies. Conferences have not been

held since 1990 because it has been considered that the situation has not warranted it. CCSDPT handbooks were also produced for a number of years, the most recent one being for 1986, outlining the activities of NGOs in all refugee and displaced persons' camps in Thailand and including brief descriptions of the NGOs themselves as well as of multilateral institutions involvement.

The future of CCSDPT is currently under review. Its structure was largely dictated by events at the Thai-Cambodian border and adapted to meet the needs generated from other border operations. Some feel that such a structure would never have been adopted in the absence of the Thai-Cambodian relief operations. With the winding down of the Thai-Cambodian operations, the CCSDPT faces a large drop in its budget as the number of NGOs providing annual subscriptions and participating international organisations declines. CCSDPT is examining its structure and role, particularly given ongoing displacement on the Thai-Burmese border.

4.3 NGO activities

NGO involvement in the border operations was initially of an emergency nature, entailing the rapid construction of camps and then meeting the immediate humanitarian needs of the population. From about 1980, NGOs also began to conduct some form of formal and informal programmes of education, arts, handicrafts, recreation, skills training and self-help activities in all camps. Until 1982 continued attacks on the border camps ensured that these activities remained relatively basic. Indeed, since the border camps had unrestricted access, the camp populations could sometimes double in anticipation of a relief distribution or fall dramatically in anticipation of an attack, making the implementation of programmes difficult. Frequent fighting also made agencies reluctant to invest in camp infrastructure and long-term programmes and only minimal supplies were stored in the border camps (Cobey, 1986). However, NGOs broadened their activities in the more stable environment of the holding centres, where camp populations were fairly static. Indeed, conditions in the border camps, and later the displaced persons' camps, remained less attractive than those in the holding centres throughout their existence, partly reflecting the Royal Thai Government's concern not to lure Cambodians to the border.

NGO activities were expanded in 1982 after the uniting of the Cambodian resistance movements improved security in the border camps, although continued attacks from the Vietnamese forces continued to constrain NGO activities to some degree. During this period, NGOs increasingly began skill-training programmes, designed to serve the needs of a rural community and thus to be of use after repatriation. For example, integrated farming techniques, soap production, water jar making, traditional skills such as weaving and embroidery and appropriate

technology were taught. In about 1982, there was also a gradual reorganisation of the apportioning of activities between NGOs, due both to UNBRO's rationalisation and the withdrawal of some NGOs, with remaining NGOs taking over from them.

Following the relocation of the camps behind the Thai border in early 1985 and the simultaneous separation of civilian and military populations, the border operations moved into a new phase of relative stability. This enabled NGOs to concentrate particularly on equipping Cambodians with practical skills for use after their repatriation as well as shifting from an authoritarian to a more participatory approach. The importance of this new emphasis was increasingly recognised by NGOs as they began to consider the difficulties of reintegration faced by returnees, after over a decade of institutionalisation and an effectively urban life style. Over time, the camp populations had become used to trucked-in water and to food distributions. They had had virtually no contact with agriculture or with larger animals, such as draught cattle. They had become accustomed to free health care, to expecting quick relief from NGOs when confronted with problems and to having ample free time on their hands. Yet they faced a return to remote areas with very poor access to medical, health and education facilities and lack of access to clean water after years of very good access.

There was another clear switch in emphasis of NGO involvement in the camps following the signing of the Paris Peace Accord in October 1991 and the imminent prospect of repatriation. There was a noticeable decline of interest in training programmes, although short-term training programmes, particularly in the health sector, continued to produce skilled staff to meet needs arising as other trained staff were repatriated. However, demand for medical services, which are largely unavailable in Cambodia, increased.

Health

NGOs played a major role in the provision of medical and health care from the beginning of the border operations. Indeed, this was the prime NGO activity during the first year of operations. In 1979-80, some two-thirds of all expatriate personnel working in the camps were with medical (mostly surgical or curative) teams. Of these, some 400-600 medical workers were with NGOs, compared to 200-250 provided by the ICRC and about 100 by the Thai Red Cross (Cuny, 1986).

In late 1979 and early 1980, in addition to war injuries the main public health problems were malnutrition and malaria, with some 40% of refugees suffering from each. NGOs also ran some mobile medical and dental teams to service Cambodians not situated in camps. The health situation improved considerably from 1980. By 1982 only 3-5% of the population were estimated to be malnourished, with malaria almost completely eliminated; and the refugees were 'thought to be a very healthy population; much healthier than comparable local populations' (UNHCR, 1982).

Despite the changing needs of the population, in the first few years of operation most NGOs continued to field curative medical teams and placed far less emphasis on community health. For example, a UNHCR report commenting on conditions in 1982 noted that whilst NGOs had made 'tremendous progress' in improving the refugees health, 'encouraging volags [voluntary agencies] to increase preventive health care and outreach activities proved difficult' despite the fact that only a small proportion of refugees were coming to the hospitals (UNHCR, 1982). Part of the lack of interest in sanitation and other preventive health care measures can be explained by the fact that it was far more difficult to raise funds for such activities than for surgical and curative care.

However, over time, NGO health care priorities did gradually switch from emergency and curative treatment towards public health and community health awareness and the training of Cambodian health workers. Some emergency work also continued, such as with mine victims, but on a reduced scale. For example, HI had thought that it would be able to reduce its staffing levels after 1985 but instead the mining of the border led to a four-fold increase in its caseload of amputees requiring prosthetic devices.⁹

Distribution of relief supplies

From mid-1980 until 1981, NGOs were involved in the distribution of relief supplies in the border camps, on behalf of the Joint Mission. Initially, relief supplies had generally been delivered into the hands of the Cambodian camp leader, with distributions handled by his aides. The ICRC and UNICEF were severely short-staffed so welcomed this help. However, it soon became apparent that this led to large levels of leakage of supplies into the hands of the various Cambodian military factions. Also, relief workers were not always allowed to carry out proper monitoring of camp populations, instead having to rely on estimates supplied by camp leaders, which were soon revealed to be inflated. As a result, systems of direct distribution were gradually introduced into each camp from January 1980. In late June 1980, three NGOs – Christian Outreach, World Relief and CARE – joined UNICEF to conduct the first direct distribution to 15,000 refugees on the edge of Nong Chan border camp. The planning of the distribution was done by a Christian Outreach relief worker who knew the camp leadership fairly well. However, UNICEF only invited CARE to participate in further direct distributions at Nong Samet due to disputes with the other two agencies over the seed rice programme (see Box 5). After initial teething problems, the Nong Chan and Nong Samet direct distributions became routine operations. UNICEF and

⁹ HI did, however, manage to diversify its activities from about 1985 to include educational puppet shows and handicraft programmes in some camps as well as rehabilitation of the physically handicapped.

Box 4 continued

Its public administration, business, accounting and management training programme was particularly unusual. The Institute of Public Administration was set up at Site 2 at the request of the Khmer Central Administration to provide training in administration.

Subjects taught included law, economics and management. A Management/Commercial/Secretarial Studies centre was also established at Site 2. Meanwhile, vocational training courses included a Beautician, Aesthetic and Hygiene training programme for women. In 1990, COERR and UNBRO also set up a project to train lifeguards at Site 2, following a number of deaths by drowning in several of nine camp reservoirs.

From its inception, COERR also supplied medical assistance to ATVs. In the earlier years, this largely consisted of the distribution of emergency supplies and medical assistance through a mobile medical service to Thais who had to be relocated because of shelling.

COERR had a particularly close working relationship with CRS, prior to CRS's withdrawal from the border operations. This partly reflected their common faith as well as CRS's objectives of strengthening indigenous institutions. In 1985, CRS gave COERR \$2m explicitly to strengthen its management structure. As CRS gradually wound down its programmes from 1987, it handed some of them over to COERR. COERR also took over JVC's supplementary feeding programme when JVC withdrew from Site 2 in 1987.

Sources: COERR Annual Reports, various. Information gathered during interviews, September 1979.

CARE were able to reduce their working estimates of the camp population and nutritional status of the camps also improved.

One of the more innovative roles played by NGOs was the pioneering of the landbridge system. This was begun in December 1979 and continued until 1981, entailing a cross-border distribution of rice to Cambodians who came to the border on foot in search of food but who did not want to join the various Cambodian resistance movements, known as 'walkers'. The rice was then taken back to villages inside the border, the intention of the scheme being to prevent the build-up of a large population at the border. Between March and May 1980, the land bridge was extended to include rice seed and then agricultural implements (see Box 5). The distributions were well organised. A few hundred walkers received aid at the first distribution, in early December 1979; and, despite a temporary disruption due to a military attack on the camp, by January 10,000 walkers per day received rice. By the end of 1980, some 148,500 tonnes of rice had been distributed. However, monitoring of its end use was not possible and some rice undoubtedly made its way into the Thai market. Opinions of the land bridge were mixed: for

Box 5 The Cross-Border Rice-Seed Distribution Programme

The Rice-Seed Programme is an example of an initiative first proposed by an NGO and implemented by both NGOs and multilateral agencies. It is also a classic illustration of the way in which frictions were created between the NGOs and some of the multilateral organisations as a result of the conflict between the former's desire to step up relief operations and the latter's preoccupation with maintaining a balanced distribution of assistance on both sides of the border.

Representing a development of the 'land bridge' system, the Rice-Seed Programme involved the movement of some 22,000 tonnes of seed into Cambodia between March and June 1980 with the objective of promoting food production in Cambodia and so improving food security. Participants in the programme largely attributed the subsequent excellent harvest later that year in western Cambodia to the cross-border operation. However, there were some problems of hoarding of seed in the camps.

The Rice-Seed Programme was originally proposed by CARE to UNICEF in January 1980, to supplement the larger Phnom-Penh based seed programme which was proving unable to deliver substantial amounts of seed into the west of the country. It was agreed that initially CARE would purchase and deliver the seed and that the Joint Mission, which by Thai government mandate was in charge of all distributions of food, would distribute it. The pilot programme succeeded and so UNICEF decided to seek funding for a larger programme. However, it was slow in obtaining this and so both CARE and World Relief supplied some additional seed for the scheme. The US also approved a US\$2m grant for seed which was funnelled through WFP and partly distributed by CARE. CARE continued to attempt to cooperate with the Joint Mission when possible. However, World Relief began to implement its programme before it had been approved by the Joint Mission because it felt that the Joint Mission was moving too slowly, creating considerable high level tensions.

The Joint Mission, particularly the ICRC, was opposed to a large seed programme because it feared that it would attract farmers permanently into the camps, having made the initial journey to the border, although others argued that it was the only way to provide farmers with an incentive to remain on the land. The ICRC was also particularly wary about running a large-scale operation without first assessing the attitude of the Heng Samrin Government. ICRC therefore attempted to restrict hoarding and to keep the scale of the programme small by imposing ceilings on both the total quantities of seed that could be distributed and on levels of distribution in any one day. UNICEF and WFP initially shared ICRC's caution but became more relaxed after it became clear that the Heng Samrin Government had no strong objections to the programme and as fears of a possible famine in Cambodia increased. As a result, by May 1980, UNICEF and then other organisations had begun ignoring the ICRC ceilings.

Following considerable international dialogue, at the end of May the land bridge programme was officially expanded. The programme was finally wound down in mid-June, following reports that seed needs in the western provinces had been met.

Source: Mason and Brown (1983)

example, it has been described both as 'the single most important and effective element in the rapid and critically important restoration of Cambodia' (Porter, 1986) and as 'a well meant but unfortunate project which only served as a magnet to a population desperate for sustenance' (Ashton, 1989). Another commentator said of it: 'the landbridge took one of the biggest problems of the border and made it a strength; it used the mobility of the camp residents to pump aid into Kampuchea on the backs of refugees and in their ox carts' (Mason and Brown, 1983). In 1979 and 1980, some NGOs, such as CRS, also organised 'mercy convoys', trucking rice and other supplies into Cambodia, although on a relatively small scale.

Feeding programmes

NGOs were involved in feeding programmes from 1979 although in the initial period, according to one observer (Cuny, 1986), 'many' of them lacked the appropriate practical experience, leading to poor execution of nutritional programmes. As NGO activities became more formalised, they continued to implement feeding programmes on behalf of UNBRO and UNHCR, in both the holding centres and displaced persons' camps.

However, supplementary feeding was gradually phased out in the displaced persons' camps from 1989. The programme was incrementally reduced from covering all under-3s, to all under-2s, to all under-1s and then halting completely although special feeding programmes were continued. The rationale underlying this was that it was felt that the improved nutritional status in the camps no longer justified supplementary feeding. It also offered UNBRO a means of reducing operational costs. NGOs were quite critical of the way in which UNBRO handled the reduction and eventual elimination of the supplementary feeding programme. They felt that they had not been consulted properly and that UNBRO did not allow sufficient time before the programme was abolished to permit NGOs to train mothers in nutrition education, which was particularly important in the absence of a supplementary feeding programme. CARE, which had previously undertaken supplementary feeding as one of its principle activities, later withdrew from the border operations in 1991, partly because of these disagreements.

Education

Education programmes were established as the situation in the camps stabilised. In the displaced persons' camps, UNBRO together with the Khmer Women's Association (KWA) provided primary education and adult literacy programmes. UNBRO had chosen not to involve international NGOs in this, largely because it wanted to achieve a standard level of provision, including a common curriculum, in all camps. Secondary education was banned in the displaced persons' camps by

the Royal Thai Government (see section 2.3), although COERR unofficially provided it nevertheless from around the mid-1980s. However, there were a limited number of places and only children from the more privileged families attended. From 1988, UNBRO effectively began to provide some form of secondary education, in agreement with the Royal Thai Government, by increasing primary education to two further levels. By implication, it also effectively took over the administration of secondary education from COERR and also ensured universal availability of secondary education within the displaced persons' camps (Reynell, 1989).

In the holding centres, both primary and secondary education was permitted. The education programme was largely run by IRC. IRC also largely funded the secondary education element itself, as the UNHCR mandate only allowed basic education (numeracy and literacy). From about 1987, IRC also ran Special Education and Infant Stimulation Programme in both Khao I Dang and some of the displaced persons' camps. As part of this programme, IRC devised the first system of Braille and sign language in Khmer. Over time, the emphasis of IRC's Special Education Programme shifted from teaching handicapped children in special schools to integrating them into normal schools, with the intention of easing their reintegration following repatriation to Cambodia where special schools would not be available. In 1990, IRC also ran a Land Mine Awareness Programme, a programme which IRC originally devised for use with Afghan refugees, with refresher courses held in 1992.

4.4 Cambodian-initiated programmes

Beginning in the early 1980s, several programmes were initiated and run by the Cambodians in the camps. These include depression relief, mental health and traditional healing centres, as well as cultural programmes. The centres worked in close cooperation with the medical and social programmes in Site 2 and with a psychiatric unit in Khao I Dang; and had some expatriates attached to them. In 1990, UNBRO terminated its support for the Traditional Medicine programme, despite its cultural importance, due to budget constraints.

4.5 Difficulties arising from uncertainty over the planning period

During the first few years of the border operations, there was considerable uncertainty about immediate prospects for the camp populations, creating certain dilemmas for NGOs in planning activities. An example mentioned during interviews conducted for the purposes of this study was the issue of polio immunisation. During 1981, the CCSDPT medical sub-committee had a heated debate about whether or not NGOs should take action over the problem of tuberculosis, which at that time was quite widespread in the camps. The dilemma

rested on the fact that a course of TB treatment took 12 to 18 months and could do more harm than good if patients did not complete the course. It was finally agreed to offer a more expensive six month course of treatment, which in retrospect proved to be a good decision.

From about 1981 to 1991, as prospects for an early repatriation appeared unlikely, NGOs and other aid personnel were more confident in assuming a long planning period although in practice such planning was inhibited by funding constraints (see section 3.2). However, with the winding down of border operations since late 1991, NGOs are once again facing some uncertainties in planning programmes and offering longer-term medical treatments as it is not clear exactly when each camp will close (see section 4.11).

4.6 NGO access to the camps

Until 1985, and particularly until 1982, continued attacks on the border camps sometimes restricted NGO access to certain camps. This resulted in a noticeable bias in the distribution of NGOs between camps, with a particularly heavy concentration of them in Khao I Dang (see section 4.1). In addition, access to the Khmer Rouge camps was highly restricted. Only two NGOs, HI and COERR, had programmes in the camps but even these were very limited and direct contact with people in the camps was kept to an absolute minimum. It was commonly believed amongst NGO and UNBRO staff that standards of nutrition and health were far lower in these camps.

The displaced persons' camps created in 1985 for civilians were under the control and protection of the Thai military, which maintained strict control over entrance and exit of the camps. NGOs and others were no longer able to move in and out of the camps at will, with access by pass holders only permitted during the daylight hours of 8am to 5pm. Furthermore, only one of the Khmer Rouge civilian camps, Site 8, was accessible to the NGOs and other agencies. Food was delivered in bulk to the other camps but its distribution was not monitored. Reynell (1989) has contrasted the lack of monitoring in the Khmer Rouge camps with 'strict monitoring of the food distribution system in the non-Khmer Rouge camps'. Meanwhile, access to the populations in the Khmer Rouge camps was limited to intermittent entry into them by a few NGOs and to brief movements, by the Khmer Rouge, of some families between the military and civilian camps. This limited and intermittent access was unsatisfactory, as it inhibited follow-up health care. Furthermore, Cambodian medics trained by the NGOs to work in the camps were often drafted into the various Cambodian resistance movements fighting in Cambodia and so were unavailable to the camp populations (Reynell, 1989).

4.7 NGO staffing

NGOs varied in terms of their relative use of expatriate, Thai and Cambodian staff. Generally speaking, there was a significant reliance upon expatriates by NGOs in the early years although levels fell slightly after UNHCR requested NGOs to emphasize self-help measures and to increase participation by the beneficiaries. In the health sector, NGOs also soon realised that during periods of heavy attack, when expatriate staff access to the camps was severely restricted, the presence of trained Cambodian health workers permitted some continued provision of health care. As result, NGOs began to train Cambodians to fill an increasing number of staff positions. By 1983, a CCSDPT survey found that the 40 NGO members which responded were currently employing 464 expatriates, 645 Thais and around 11,000 displaced persons in their Thai-Cambodian border activities (CCSDPT, 1983).

However, throughout the duration of the border operations, NGO recruitment of Cambodian staff was somewhat inhibited by the Royal Thai Government's policy on the payment of Cambodian workers. The Government placed an upper limit on the wages paid by NGOs, constantly threatening the continued employment of Cambodian workers who could gain more lucrative employment in other activities, such as trading. In the displaced persons' camps, where Cambodians were paid in food rations, these difficulties were particularly great in later years, due to the deterioration in value of this payment-in-kind. For example, for a six-month period in 1990, Concern reported that it lost more than 33% of its sanitation inspectors, resulting in continuous re-hiring and re-training. Meanwhile, in Khao I Dang, Cambodians were paid a flat money rate (of Baht 300 (US\$12) per month in 1992) regardless of their level of skill. The Royal Thai Government's ban on post-primary training also created some problems for NGOs in finding qualified Cambodian health workers. The Royal Thai Government discouraged expatriate Cambodians from working in the camps for security reasons.

There was also variation between NGOs in their use of Thai staff, with CRS employing the largest number relative to its employment of expatriate staff. In 1990, the ratios of Thai to expatriate staff stood at 2.5:1 for CRS (Heidel and Hofknecht, 1991). Thai staff were more suited to local living conditions, had cultural and language advantages and tended to remain in their jobs for longer periods. However, they were perhaps less inclined to support the objectives of Khmer Self-Management (KSM) and of working themselves out of a job (Heidel and Hofknecht, 1991).

The repatriation programme created new problems for NGOs, particularly in the medical field, as trained Cambodian counterparts left the camps. This was exacerbated by the fact that UNTAC ran a major recruiting campaign of English speaking Cambodians in the camps, offering significantly higher salaries than could be earned in the camps. According to one NGO representative interviewed for the purposes of this study, loss of Cambodian staff resulted in reduced standards of

health care and a noticeable increase in the death rate in one camp. As part of its efforts to compensate for this loss, UNBRO created some new expatriate positions. For example, ARC was given four new expatriate positions (two medical doctors and two nurses) in September 1992. HI also recruited some more expatriates to replace Cambodians who had left. An alternative would have been to offer trained Cambodians a cash incentive to delay their repatriation and so prevent a disruption of programmes in the camps. However, UNBRO was unwilling to do this.

As of September 1992, NGOs were also attempting to obtain recognition by the Cambodian authorities of primary education certificates, training certificates and so on which were issued as part of training programmes provided in the border camps. This process was being complicated by the fact that until 1990 Khao I Dang was excluded from the process of standardisation of certificates and medical curricula which occurred in the UNBRO camps, reflecting the isolation of NGOs who worked solely in Khao I Dang (Houtart, 1991b).

4.8 Khmer self-management

The concept of Khmer Self-Management (KSM) was central to NGO activities in the camps from 1989, when UNBRO first introduced it. UNBRO perceived it as the next logical step in the training of Cambodian workers, defining it as:

‘a process or direction with the goal of Khmers running the health programs as much as possible in all areas, including needs assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation . . . (it aims) to strengthen Khmer capacity in providing, without external assistance, appropriate medical services and in developing public health care; and to recognise Khmer’s expertise in health care management in an attempt to evaluate their dignity in their own community and eventually prepare them for successful repatriation’ (UNBRO, 1992).

UNHCR also identified the concept of KSM as representing its basic philosophy in Khao I Dang. However, it was more difficult to implement here because of the constant disruptions created by refugees leaving for third country resettlement.

Prior to its official introduction by UNBRO, the basic concept of KSM was, in fact, already a central part of the philosophy of some NGOs, such as HI. In recent years, HI has taken the concept to its limit. By 1991, it employed just one expatriate covering all its workshops on the border, and with disabled Cambodians accounting for 95% of its staff by 1991, compared to originally having had one or two expatriate personnel working in each of its workshops. However, some other NGOs were very reluctant to implement KSM because it implied a natural attrition of expatriate involvement. As part of the process, it was intended that expatriate staff should gradually assume the role of advisors, trainers, and monitors, as long as it

was deemed necessary, rather than direct service providers or managers. Some longer-serving NGO expatriate personnel had developed close relationships with the Cambodians they were working with which they found difficult to break. Some NGOs, particularly those involved in the health sector, also felt that the adoption of KSM would result in a decline in standards of care. One NGO staff interviewed for the purposes of this study expressed the opinion that as expatriates relinquished some, but not all, responsibility this created problems of accountability. Reynell (1989) also remarks that the involvement of the CGDK in the camps placed 'limits on the degree to which the voluntary agencies feel they are willing to go in handing over administrative power to the Khmers'. Both Reynell (1989) and an NGO representative interviewed for the purposes of this study expressed the belief that the concept of KSM could never have been fully achieved because the very nature of refugee assistance labelled NGOs and other agencies as 'givers' and the Cambodians as 'receivers'.

4.9 NGO lobbying

A number of NGOs were active in lobbying UNBRO, UNHCR, other multilateral donors, bilateral donors and the Royal Thai Government on a number of issues. NGO lobbying against UNBRO cuts has already been discussed (see section 3.2). The other more important lobbying issues are outlined below. However, not all NGOs participated in this process. There were also divisions within some NGOs about the involvement of NGO personnel in lobbying. Those personnel active in the field were sometimes resentful of the lobbying activities of their directors in Bangkok and anxious to just get on with the work in hand whilst on other occasions field workers were more keen to become involved in lobbying than their respective directors. One NGO staff member also commented during interview that relief NGO personnel who worked on the border from 1985 onwards were generally less vocal and more willing to accept the status quo and, in the displaced persons' camps, to accept UNBRO's direction, reflecting the type of aid worker attracted to the types of work involved in the more stable border operations. As a result UNBRO began to consult NGOs less from the mid-1980s, although a hard core of the more experienced NGO personnel remained on the border, continuing to lobby on various issues.

Human rights abuses

Their close day-to-day contact with the camps enabled NGOs to monitor human rights abuse in the camps (see, for example, Reynell (1989) and Kiernan (1990)) and to lobby against them. For example, NGOs repeatedly campaigned against the forcible movement of populations back across the border by the Khmer Rouge, which occurred on a number of occasions. UNBRO supported the NGOs on this

issue, with both UNBRO and the NGOs stating on a number of occasions that they would halt cross-border work as a way of discouraging the movements.

Access to all Cambodian civilians in inaccessible camps

As already discussed, a number of civilian as well as military camps remained largely closed to the NGOs and international organisations (see section 2.4). However, despite their military nature, even the hidden camps contained large populations of women and children. This was clearly revealed during the 1989 polio epidemic in three 'hidden' camps near Site 8, when some 10,000 children under the age of 15 were brought out for vaccination. NGOs lobbied the international community in Thailand and elsewhere to secure immunisation and other basic health care for children in these camps.

Neutral camps

The creation of neutral camps – that is, under UN administration – were campaigned for by the NGOs from the mid-to-late 1980s. NGOs favoured such camps because they would secure three critical needs: safety and prevention of forced relocation; the right to self-determination; and access of information. However, the various military factions in control of the camps were opposed to neutral camps since they would effectively undermine their power by reducing the populations under their control. The military factions went as far as to obstruct a proposed movement of some displaced persons into a neutral camp by moving them themselves. The concept of neutral camps was also rejected by the USA for political reasons as they would no longer legitimise or provide a source of troops for the factions fighting the Vietnamese backed Heng Samrin Government (Jennar, 1991a).

Vacancy of the UN seat

Some NGOs also lobbied for the Cambodian seat at the UN to be vacated by the Khmer Rouge, allowing humanitarian assistance to be received more equitably on both sides of the border (see section 2.2).

4.10 Appropriateness of the level of assistance

International agencies and most NGOs tried to maintain levels of assistance at 'appropriate' levels. Thus, UNBRO's operational policy, which by implication was followed by NGOs, was to provide basic assistance on a scale and of a type which

was acceptable but did not reach a level such that the border became a 'magnet' for people living inside Cambodia. The standard of living in the camps was also intended to be on a par with that in the surrounding Thai villages. The Royal Thai Government also adopted a policy of 'humane deterrence', restricting certain activities, such as the provision of secondary education, in the camps (see sections 2.3 and 4.3).

However, the appropriate level of assistance changed over time as the nature and expected future duration of the border operations altered. NGO perceptions of appropriate levels of assistance also changed with shifts in the types of expatriate personnel working on the border. Until approximately 1985, operations were run by relief workers and primarily concerned with meeting basic humanitarian needs. But with the increased security in the camps after 1985, NGO activities began to be increasingly run by quasi-development workers. These workers had wider perceptions of needs, beyond meeting basic physical and humanitarian needs, which they were able to address in the more stable environment.

4.11 Ethics of the border operations

The humanitarian need for relief to displaced persons arriving at the border between 1979 and 1981 has never been doubted. After 1982, however, although continued dry-season shelling meant that operations continued to be of an emergency nature, NGOs began to question whether their involvement on the border was actually contributing to a perpetuation of the problem. Some NGOs had intense internal debates over this issue and came near to withdrawing. Indeed, many aid workers felt that had the relief operation stopped in 1982 when the CGDK was formed (see section 2.1), most Cambodians would have returned home (Mysliwec, 1988). However, instead, the formation of UNBRO in 1982 specifically responsible for the coordination of border operations, formalised the operations, indirectly indicating a possible medium-term presence of displaced persons on the borders. During interviews for this study, it was reported that some aid workers had argued at the time that the UN had 'resuscitated' the Khmer Rouge.

During the remainder of the 1980s and early 1990s, the majority of NGOs and UNBRO occasionally continued to question their role on the border. The fact that the civilian and military populations were never totally separated, even in 1985, meant that it was impossible to provide aid on a purely humanitarian basis, devoid of political concerns. Thus, Jennar (1991a) argues, 'the practitioners were faced with an impossible choice: either provide assistance and become partners in politico-military training (with the Khmer Rouge), or refuse humanitarian aid'. Furthermore, relief workers sometimes felt manipulated by UNBRO, UNHCR, the Royal Thai Government and, more generally, western donors. Mason and Brown (1983) remark that NGOs were 'inadvertently caught in a strategic game that ignored the refugees except when they were expedient to the cause of one side or

another'. These ethical issues became more pressing following the withdrawal of the Vietnamese from Cambodia in 1989 and the subsequent increase in fighting between government forces and the three military factions operating from behind the border. Meanwhile, some NGOs, particularly those operating within Cambodia since the early 1980s, stressed the bias resulting from the relative neglect of the needs of the far larger Cambodian population remaining inside Cambodia.

However, some NGOs have been far less concerned with such ethical questions, feeling that the mere existence of the displaced population, most of whom were unwilling victims, was in itself sufficient grounds to justify humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, in 1982, when NGOs most seriously questioned their continued role, NGOs were significantly less coordinated and professional than they are today and a collective withdrawal by all NGOs is unlikely to have been agreed to. It is also probable that other NGOs would have stepped in to fill the place of any which withdrew.

4.12 Repatriation

Repatriation began in March 1992. At the same time, registration of new arrivals at the camps and third country resettlement of refugees in the holding centres was suspended. By the end of August over 100,000 of the 370,000 Cambodians registered for repatriation had returned. UNHCR is the lead agency in the repatriation programme, which it considers to be one of the largest and most complex it has ever undertaken. UNHCR is meeting the full cost of the programme, estimated at some US\$116.3m, or approximately US\$390 per returnee, through a global appeal. UNDP has assumed the lead role for the full reintegration of returnees.

The various tasks entailed in the repatriation process, which is largely a logistical programme, were divided up between agencies. In 1990, UNHCR held three simultaneous technical workshops in Bangkok which were intended to permit all potential partners in the repatriation programme to become involved in the planning process. Some 14 UN agencies and 30 NGOs were invited to the workshops and, as a consequence, border NGOs which indicated their willingness to be involved were contacted to continue their existing services under the repatriation programme.

NGOs were included both in the preparation and implementation stages of the programme. During the preparation phase, UNBRO constructed three staging areas at Site 2, Site B and Site 8 whilst COR constructed a fourth one at Khao I Dang. COR also built four of the six reception centres inside Cambodia, with Concern building the remaining two. UNICEF drilled well holes at each reception centre and Concern constructed ponds in villages to which returnees are destined which have no ground water. NGOs were also involved in the massive mine-clearing operation.

Halo Trust, a non-profit making UK firm, was hired to survey land identified for resettlement for mines while HI was contracted to clear mines.

In terms of the actual repatriation itself, UNBRO cared for the returnees until they crossed the border. NGOs then cared for them for the week or so that they stayed in the reception centres, with the Cambodian Red Cross (CRC) handling the management of the reception centres and the accompanying health services. CARE International, operating through CARE Australia, then transported returnees and associated relief items to their new homes. CARE Australia together with JVC also provided vehicle maintenance. Until March 1993, WFP delivered food to five Extended Delivery Points (EDPs) in the country from where UNHCR, through contacts with CARE in the western provinces and mostly CRC in the rest of the country, transported food to distribution points. From April 1993, CRC, under an agreement with WFP, became responsible for transporting food from the EDPs to distribution points. At the same time, WFP also assumed responsibility for actual distribution of food to returnees.

It was initially envisaged that the repatriation programme would be completed by the end of 1992. However, the programme got off to a slow start due to both difficulties with land availability, because of the generally poor conditions of roads and bridges and because of lack of water and other basic infrastructure in the resettlement locations. The repatriation programme was finally completed in April 1993. It had originally been intended to offer each returnee family a package including 2 hectares of land. However, following the commencement of the repatriation programme, it quickly became clear that the extent of problem of mined land in the northwest, where some three-quarters of returnees had indicated that they wanted to return to, had been underestimated. It was thus not going to be possible to provide all returnees with the promised land. So, in early May 1992, a new set of options was presented offering alternative packages to overcome the land problem as well as to speed up the repatriation process and promote the return to people's places of origin where relatives and friends could provide help. The most popular of these new options was the 'cash option' of US\$50 per adult and US\$25 per child under 12 plus 12 months of food. The principle reason for the high uptake of this option was that people were anxious to leave the camps and so did not want to wait for land to become available. However, it has led to considerable concerns about the ability of the returnees to become self-supporting since it entails no direct means of income generation. Meanwhile, one by one the other options ceased to be available.

There has been considerable secondary migration by returnees within Cambodia, away from the original point of repatriation, as indicated by the percentage of returnees turning up for food distributions, which are held every 40-80 days. For example, in one distribution held in September 1992, only 50% of returnees turned up.

Repatriation and NGO withdrawal from the border operations

As of September 1992, NGOs varied significantly in the timing of their intended withdrawal from the camps. Some NGOs had begun to scale back operations in late 1991 and had already left. Others had increased their activities, at least in the short term, to further prepare Cambodians for repatriation. For example, in April 1992, HI (which began its programme in Cambodia in 1982) had intensified its training in autonomy for the disabled. Given the difficulties amputees will encounter in obtaining prostheses in Cambodia, HI intended to maintain operations either until the last camp closed or its last Cambodian staff returned to Cambodia. Meanwhile, IRC had adjusted its programme to concentrate particularly on the training of 'Extremely Vulnerable Individuals' (EVIs) who are expected to find repatriation especially difficult. IRC had also printed packages of training materials to give to the special education teachers it has trained, hopefully enabling them to carry on teaching after their return to Cambodia.

Some remaining NGOs were also taking over the activities of other NGOs as they pulled out. For example, from January 1993, IRC was intending to run COR's Construction and Mother and Child Health (MCH) programmes in Khao I Dang, although it had only previously been involved in the former activity. Indeed, certain NGOs, such as ARC, were remaining flexible about the timing of their withdrawal, precisely to adjust to possible needs arising as other NGOs leave. For example, if all NGOs involved in public health pulled out, ARC was willing to take on their programmes. UNBRO was also encouraging consolidation of NGO activities although this was not always successful as NGOs have widely varying philosophies and working practices.

The continued activities of each NGO and the timing of their withdrawal was partly determined by UNBRO's and UNHCR's own timetable of camp closures and cessation of particular activities and thus by funding availability. Some NGOs faced higher costs due to increased activities and, as repatriation increased pace, the replacement of departing Cambodian staff with higher-salaried expatriates (see section 4.6).

5. The role of NGOs in Cambodia

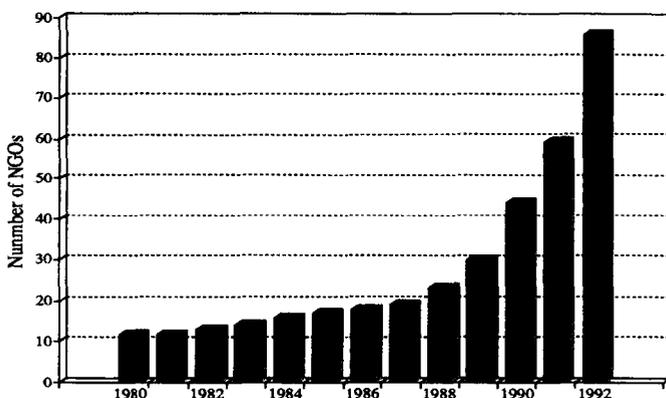
5.1 Overview of NGO involvement

Conditions in Cambodia in 1979 posed an enormous challenge to the new Heng Samrin Government and the international aid community. Mysliwiec (1988), writing on the situation, states that the Government had:

inherited a country whose infrastructure had been destroyed. Of 450 doctors before 1975, only 45 remained in the country after 1979. Of the 20,000 teachers in the early 1970s only 7,000 remained. Very few trained administrators survived so those who found jobs with the Heng Samrin Government were generally very young and inexperienced . . . Few archives and books were left so that at first books, schools and training curricula had to be restructured from memory. . . . The country by 1979 had no currency, no markets, no financial institutions and virtually no industry. There was no public transport system; no trains ran and the roads were damaged and unrepaired. There was no postal service, no telephones and virtually no electricity, clean water, sanitation or education (Mysliwiec, 1988).

NGOs began to provide emergency assistance to Cambodia from October 1979. Most NGOs initially operated as part of an NGO consortia (see below) although a few NGOs – such as American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and World Vision – chose to act independently. However, from 1981, most NGOs began to set up their own programmes. By the end of the emergency period, there were about 13 NGOs working in the country, increasing slightly to 19 by 1987. A number of NGOs also channelled funds for Cambodia through other NGOs but were not directly operational themselves. About two-thirds of the operational NGOs were Australian, French and American, with the remainder largely comprising other western European nationalities plus one Japanese NGO. Slightly over half of them were non-secular, including all the American ones.

Since 1987, following the Government's gradual relaxation of restrictions on the operation of NGOs, increased prospects of peace, and increased availability of NGO funding for Cambodia, the number of NGOs has increased dramatically. By September 1992 there were some 84 NGOs in Cambodia (Figure 8). Most of the NGOs entering the country post-1987 have been western European and North American. Until 1991, when the first Cambodian NGO, Khemara, was founded, there were no indigenous NGOs. However, the CRC, which had existed prior to 1975, was re-established in the emergency period and had continued to operate since then.

Figure 8**Number of NGOs Operational in Cambodia, 1980-92***NGO consortia*

A number of consortia were formed to provide assistance to Cambodia during the emergency period. Some 35 NGOs operated through the Oxfam-NGO Consortium alone, which existed from October 1979 to mid-1981 and provided over 40% of total NGO assistance during the emergency period (see section 3.4). American Church groups also formed a consortium, Agricultural Relief and Rehabilitation in Kampuchea (ARRK), which was disbanded in 1980. Catholic NGOs collaborated under Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité (CIDSE), a collaborative framework which already existed in other countries, with the first two delegations from CIDSE visiting the country in late 1979 (see Box 7). A one-off shipment of supplies was also provided by an Australian consortium, including ACR which subsequently joined CIDSE.

Subsequently, further consortia have operated at various times, including Partnership for Development in Kampuchea (PADEK), the Joint Australian NGO Office (JANGO) and, recently, the Cambodia Canada Development Program (CCDP). PADEK was formed in 1982 by a number of NGOs which had previously contributed to the Oxfam-NGO Consortium, including NOVIB, Oxfam America, Oxfam Belgique and Oxfam Hong Kong. Until 1990 it was administered by Oxfam (UK). CCDP was created in 1991, composed of 16 Canadian NGOs through which Canadian bilateral assistance is channelled.

Box 6**Oxfam (UK)**

Between 1979/80 and 1990/1, Oxfam granted a total of some US\$56m (UK£27.4m) to Cambodia including some US\$43m channelled through the Oxfam Consortium, largely as emergency relief. Oxfam's assistance declined significantly following the Emergency period, falling to a low of about US\$300,000 in 1982/3. For the period 1981/2 to 1985/6 Oxfam assistance averaged around US\$850,000 per annum in nominal terms. Higher levels of assistance were provided over the following five years, 1986/7 to 1990/1, averaging US\$1.7m. Since 1981/2 the bulk of Oxfam's aid has been in the form of assistance to the health and agricultural sectors. During the early 1980s, assistance provided by the Oxfam Consortium and then continued by Oxfam (UK) after the dissolution of the Consortium included the rehabilitation of factories (phosphate, jute, textiles); assistance to promote the restoration of agriculture, such as the provision of diesel pumps for irrigation; the donation of three large ferries across the Mekong (over which there are no bridges), providing a vital link between the east and the rest of the country; and the rehabilitation of the water system. From the early to mid-1980s, Oxfam also accorded increasing priority to sustainable development efforts. Oxfam's assistance to Cambodia is discussed further in section 5.4.

Box 7**Coopération Internationale pour le Développement
et la Solidarité**

CIDSE is an international network composed of various autonomous national Catholic Development Agencies which are recognised by their respective Catholic Bishops' Conferences. It has operated a programme in Cambodia since 1980, under which a number of non-CIDSE members as well as CIDSE members have participated. The former include Christian Aid (UK), the Asia Partnership for Human Development and the New Zealand Commission for Evangelisation, Justice and Development. Australian Catholic Relief also channelled its resources through CIDSE until 1988, when it established its own programme owing to increased Australian assistance in Cambodia and ACR's felt need for a specific Australian identity. CIDSE members are free to become involved in their own activities in Cambodia as well as operating through CIDSE, provided these are not detrimental to CIDSE's coordinated programme. Since 1983, Trócaire, the Irish Catholic NGO, has been the coordinating agency of the CIDSE programme in Cambodia.

Over the period 1986-92, CIDSE provided some US\$11.3m of assistance to Cambodia, equivalent to US\$1.6m per annum. From 1986-90, agriculture and rural development and emergency projects each accounted for about a third of its expenditure. However, over the past two years there has been a sharp increase in the proportion spent on technical assistance, training and adult education, which now account for some 60% of the total (Figure 4).

Box 8**World Vision**

World Vision is an international NGO, emphasising 'practical Christian caring' in its approach. It currently undertakes relief and development projects in about 85 countries. Its funds are raised by twelve World Vision Support Offices in fifteen countries throughout the world, mostly from individual donors and private organisations.

World Vision was one of the first NGOs to provide assistance to Cambodia in 1979. It had previously begun a programme in the country in 1972; and in 1975, just prior to the Khmer Rouge takeover, had completed a US\$1m Children's Hospital in Phnom Penh. One of World Vision's first tasks in 1979 was to restore this hospital, as well as to provide relief supplies such as food and irrigation pumps. By 1980, the hospital was functioning and the training of medical staff had begun. During the 1980s, World Vision continued to support the hospital as well as, for example, rehabilitating factories, such as soap factories, for supply at a national level; and assisting the Department of Animal Husbandry with its poultry programme. In 1984, World Vision began Rehydration, Immunisation, Nutrition and Education programmes, which UNICEF, Enfants Cambodge and MCC subsequently started as well.

One particularly unusual activity that World Vision has undertaken since 1989 has been the running of seminars on technical aspects of banking for the National Bank. These seminars have been presented by one of World Vision's staff, not resident in Cambodia, who is himself an ex-banker.

JANGO was formed in 1986 by Save the Children Fund Australia (SCFA), Overseas Service Bureau (OSB), Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad (APHEDA) and Australian Freedom from Hunger Campaign (AFFHC) to provide administrative and activity-coordinating services to the participating NGOs. AFFHC had been operational in Cambodia since 1980 and APHEDA since 1984 but the other two were new to the country. JANGO was finally disbanded in early 1992, following the earlier withdrawal of SCFA in 1990 as it considered that its programme had expanded sufficiently to justify its operating on its own. All four NGOs are now operating independently.

The impetus for the creation of consortia to provide assistance to Cambodia was very apparent: in the face of limited resources, they offered NGOs the means both to reduce administrative costs and to ensure greater coordination of assistance efforts, thus maximising their effect. The difficult operating conditions and dearth of knowledge of the country also discouraged NGOs from setting up programmes immediately on their own; and from having to make large initial financial outlays in terms of programme support staff at HQ level. With reference to the Oxfam-NGO Consortium, Charny and Short (1986) also note that by promoting the programme of the entire consortium, the members were able to raise more

Box 9**Australian Catholic Relief**

ACR originally became involved in Cambodia in 1980, as part of an Australian consortium (see section 5.1). It then joined CIDSE as an operational partner, contributing to its overall programme and working particularly in support of the Hydrology Programme, rebuilding irrigation facilities. It also assisted in the rehabilitation of two phosphate factories and a chalk making factory. One of the phosphate factories, the Touk Meas factory, was reopened at the end of 1986, alone meeting a quarter of the country's fertiliser needs.

In 1988, ACR started a programme of its own to give itself a more Australian identity. In 1989, it began a rural development programme in Srok Traeng District of Takeo Province, under which a community-based integrated approach to development has been taken, signifying a shift away from its previous top-down approach. However, work at the national level has also continued, with a programme to train Cambodian agricultural extension worker trainees to, in turn, train other Cambodians. ACR intends to continue this training programme until a multilateral or bilateral agency steps in to take over.

donations in their respective countries than they could have by promoting their own efforts alone.

Particularly in the emergency period, the Heng Samrin Government also viewed consortia as a particularly attractive form of NGO assistance. Given the Government's suspicion of foreigners, dealing with a single consortium was preferable to dealing with ten or even twenty NGOs, each operating their own programme. The sheer size of the Oxfam-NGO Consortium in particular, as measured in spending capacity, its number of members and its heterogeneity, increased its credibility and influence with the Cambodian Government as well as with the world press (Charny and Short, 1986).

5.2 NGO-government relations

During the emergency period, relationships with the Heng Samrin Government were 'open and collaborative' although the Government structure was extremely weak (UNDP, 1990). The Cambodian Government controlled the relief efforts centrally, but was relatively flexible, accepting all offers of assistance.

In the post-emergency period, the Government became more formalised its dealings with the NGOs and other agencies. Each agency was appointed a Government employee, known as 'le guide', who, at least in theory, an agency had to go through each time it wanted to arrange a meeting with any Government official. The guide also reported all agency activities to the Government, including conversations with any Cambodians. However, although the Government was

initially suspicious of NGOs, regarding them as potential capitalists and imperialists, it also recognised and was highly appreciative of the fact that they were genuinely concerned about conditions in the country. Over time, agencies began to develop good relationships with certain Government officials (see section 5.5).

In terms of aid, the Government continued to informally request provision of particular goods. However, the Government made little attempt to organise NGOs by sector, although it did encourage the involvement of agencies more generally in particular sectors (see section 5.2) and attempted to intervene on occasion to divert resources from one ministry to another. The Government also sought to ensure an equal distribution of resources between provinces although agencies could successfully argue the case against both this, and inter-ministry, reallocation.

During this period, despite some accusations that they were effectively supporting Vietnamese expansionism, an NGO representative interviewed for the purposes of this study reported that agency officials dealt with Cambodian, rather than Vietnamese, government officials and had the strong sense that it was the Cambodians who made governmental decisions. The Vietnamese advisors they did come in contact with were reported to be non-political, often highly qualified technical advisers.

Since 1987, there has been a gradual relaxation of government restrictions and an increase in the number of NGOs operating in the country. As the numbers of NGOs has risen, the Government has become less able to coordinate the aid, lacking a formal coordinating body or a plan for humanitarian aid. In fact, the Government has accepted virtually all assistance offered, without providing information to the proposer of a new project on other agencies already involved in that sector or province (Houtart, 1990).

There has also been a decline in the degree of Government access which older NGOs have been able to obtain, with the special relationship between the longer-serving NGOs and the Government being partly eroded. Some NGOs feel more comfortable now that less attention is being paid to them by the Government. But others hope to continue their special relationship with the Government built up over the past twelve years, which has won them the trust and respect of Government officials. Meanwhile, the new NGOs have little, if any, sway of influence on Government policy making.

5.3 Coordination of aid activities

The difficult operating conditions, the limited resources of NGOs relative to the enormous restructuring and rehabilitation tasks, the isolation from the west and the Government's own lack of experience or capacity to coordinate aid agencies

provided NGOs with a strong impetus to coordinate their own activities. During the emergency period, sectoral working groups were formed, under the leadership of the Joint Mission, to coordinate foreign aid and share information. From the beginning of the emergency period until 1988, all western aid agencies, including the multilateral organisations as equal participants, also held weekly meetings to share information and discuss problems. Indeed, relationships between the NGOs and the UN organisations were fairly informal and far closer than is normally the case. UNICEF, particularly, was also closely involved with NGOs at an operational level. By the mid-1980s, it had either direct or indirect cooperative programmes with almost all of the 13 NGOs then working in Cambodia. In addition it provided logistical and administrative support for a number of NGOs with no permanent base in Cambodia.¹⁰

As the number of NGOs increased in the late 1980s, however, weekly meetings became unfeasible. As a result, in 1989, monthly sectoral meetings were set up, with nine sectoral working groups in operation by August 1990. As with the weekly meetings, these groups have also provided a forum to share information and problems. In addition, each group has had unilateral relations with the relevant government departments, with government representatives increasingly being asked to participate directly in the meetings (Charny, 1992). However, by early 1990, the need for more formal NGO coordination had also become apparent, particularly as the government itself had no coordinating body or even a plan for humanitarian aid (see section 5.2). As a result, in April 1990, NGOs founded the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC) (see below). In March 1992, the NGOs also organised a workshop to embark on a dialogue between NGOs working in Cambodia, between the NGOs and the Cambodians and between the NGOs and other agencies working in Cambodia.

Recent arrangements have also been made by the multilaterals to coordinate overall flows of assistance into Cambodia, including the establishment of an International Committee for the Reconstruction of Cambodia (ICORC) and a Donor Consultative Group (DCG) (see below). UNTAC is also attempting to assume the role of coordinator of assistance within the country. NGOs have been requested to put all new project proposals through UNTAC to ensure that they fit into the overall aid framework, although in practice NGOs often do not bother. However, coordination of assistance at the provincial level remains virtually non-existent (Charny, 1992).

¹⁰ These included ADRAC (France), Terre des Hommes (Switzerland), Save the Children Fund (UK and Australia), SKIP (Switzerland), Redd Barna (Norway), Radda Barnen (Sweden), NOVIB (Netherlands), Solidarité Socialiste (Belgium), JVC, the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and Kaibigan International (India).

Cooperation Committee for Cambodia

The CCC was formed by the NGO community with two objectives:

- i) to serve as a mechanism for improving communications between NGOs and international organisations; and
- ii) to strengthen communications between agencies and the government.

It is based on the CCSDPT constitution and is not a lobbying group. Its membership has increased from 20 to over 40 NGOs by September 1992, representing about 55% of the NGOs with resident staff in Cambodia. However, CCC resources are also available to non-members.

The CCC holds monthly meetings to which some other donor as well as NGO representatives may be invited. These meetings facilitate the pooling of information and allow NGOs to share and discuss their experiences and difficulties. Since its inception the CCC has also provided meeting rooms for the NGO sectoral meetings, although these are independent of the CCC. The CCC also keeps copies of meeting minutes as part of its resource centre.

Relationships between longer serving and newly arrived NGOs

As the number of NGOs operating in Cambodia has increased since the late 1980s, certain tensions have risen between the longer serving and more recently arrived NGOs, although these tensions have lessened somewhat over the past year. Some of the longer serving NGOs feel a sense of frustration that the newer arrivals are able to start up projects immediately at the local level while they continue to operate at the national or provincial level. However, others are pleased that the newer arrivals, at least, can begin purely community based rural programmes. Nevertheless, relationships have not been eased by the fact that some more recent arrivals have established programmes with no prior consultation of either the Government or existing NGOs working in the same areas.

5.4 NGO activities¹¹

The basic aims of the relief efforts of 1979-81 were to provide the country with various material supplies to meet immediate humanitarian needs and to provide a 'jump-start' for the country's productive capacity. These objectives were also in accordance with those of the Heng Samrin Government A 'shopping list' approach was adopted, with national authorities drawing up lists of needs and presenting

¹¹ Further details of individual NGOs are given in Boxes 8 to 13.

them to the agencies (UNDP, 1990). Quantities of food, seed, agricultural implements, irrigation pumps, fishing nets, medical supplies, hospital equipment and school supplies were provided. Equipment and materials to rehabilitate irrigation and water supply networks, and, by the NGOs, to rehabilitate factories, such as those producing jute, textiles, soap and phosphate, were also supplied. Quantities of pens, typewriters and other office equipment were also made available to enable the restoration of some degree of government bureaucracy.

However, little attention was given to standardisation of inputs supplied. For example, different agencies supplied different makes of pump, each of which could be clearly identified as having been brought in by that particular agency. This created problems in later years in obtaining spare parts, exacerbated by the fact that, for example, one pump could not be cannibalised to provide parts for another. It also placed a strain on training capabilities. Furthermore, some supplies were imported which could have been produced locally, such as wood boards for reconstruction. However, local procurement would have involved a prior investment in domestic production capacity. Many NGOs could, and did, undertake, such investment but multilateral and bilateral agencies were prevented by their mandates, since it fell under their categorisation of development assistance.

The early relief efforts were also dogged by logistical difficulties, both in getting supplies into the country and then transporting them to the provinces. The Thai authorities would not permit the movement of ships or planes, unless assigned by ICRC/UNICEF, from Thailand to Cambodia. However, in September 1979, an Oxfam representative succeeded in purchasing food in Singapore, despite ASEAN's opposition to the Vietnamese-backed Government in Phnom Penh, and shipping it to Kompong Som, pioneering a sea-going route. Internally, much of the initial efforts of both the NGOs and the Joint Mission concerned logistical efforts, including programmes to rehabilitate the extremely poor infrastructure (roads, ports, airports) and to provide fleets of trucks. The Oxfam Consortium also provided three large ferries, providing a vital link across the Mekong to the east of the country. Previously, destruction of bridges had meant that supplies could only be got to the east by transporting them through Vietnam.

Until about 1984, NGO assistance continued to consist of the provision of supplies. Agencies then began to become less crisis-orientated and to begin to undertake longer-term planning of their assistance. But the nature of work remained heavily orientated towards rehabilitation and reconstruction rather than development. However, from around 1987, NGOs began to become active in rural development projects in the eight provinces surrounding Phnom Penh. As they acquired greater access to the provinces, they were increasingly able to identify needs themselves rather than responding to Government requests and so to gain greater control over the direction of their programmes. By 1990 most of the newer ones were beginning work immediately at the rural level, undertaking none of the national level programmes which older NGOs were involved in. There was also an increased

focus on self-reliance and the maximisation of local resources. However, NGOs remained largely unable to work through local NGO partners since, to date, only one, Khmera, exists and even this was only founded in 1991.

In terms of the sectoral distribution of NGO assistance, from 1982, longer-serving NGOs became particularly active in the health and agricultural, particularly hydrology, sectors. These areas of activity also reflected Government priorities. Several organisations, including Oxfam, AFFHC and UNICEF also worked on the Phnom Penh water and drainage systems. Until 1992, Oxfam and UNICEF were the largest agencies involved in water supply in Cambodia. This largely entailed deep well digging, using heavy machine drilling rigs, even at the provincial level; and thus constituted a large scale infrastructural project. However, with the entry of more multilateral assistance, Oxfam is reducing its role and has shifted to the use of more appropriate technology. Since 1990, it has increasingly concentrated on the construction of hand dug and bore hole wells.

NGO involvement in the industrial sector declined after the emergency phase and was further reduced in 1989, when some sixty of the state factories formerly under the Ministry of Industry semi-privatised. For example, LWS ceased its assistance of the factory producing oxygen for hospital use in 1989 (see Box 10). NGOs also

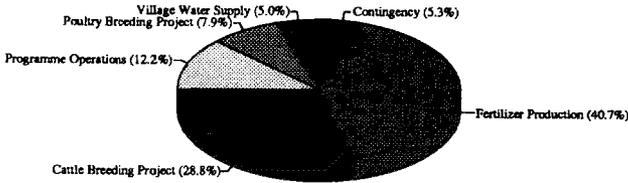
Box 10

Lutheran World Service

LWS initially provided assistance to Cambodia through the Oxfam-NGO Consortium. In February 1981 it was requested by the Government to support the National Draft Cattle Breeding Scheme, an involvement which has continued to the present day. It has also run a poultry project, aimed at improving the quality of free range chickens, again working on a national level. In addition, it has been active in some other areas at various times, such as industry (including the rehabilitation of and marketing studies for a phosphate factory), drinking water supply and education. It has also provided assistance to the internally displaced and has provided financial support to the Cambodian Mekong Committee. In 1992, LWS recruited an economist, seconded to the Ministry of Agriculture, to assist the ministry following the shift from a system of centralised budgeting to one where ministries are responsible for their own resources. Data available for the sectoral allocation of its 1986 expenditure, amounting to a total of US\$380,000, are presented in Figure 9.

At least in the short term, LWS has chosen to continue the national focus of its programme, believing that a national perspective is essential, at least until it can responsibly hand over its activities to other donors. It recognises the limited resources that the government itself has and so intends to continue operating through the government for the time being, to allow more equitable allocation of resources between provinces.

Figure 9

LWS Cambodian Programme
Expenditure 1986

showed only short-term and very specific interests in the education sector until the late 1980s, with UNICEF emerging as the Government's main partner in this sector instead. Since 1990, some twenty NGOs have also become involved in providing assistance to the 200,000 or so persons internally displaced by fighting.

5.5 NGOs as 'multilaterals'

Given the sheer scale of the requirements of the country, from the post-emergency phase until the late 1980s, NGOs were forced to attempt to fill the void created by the virtual absence of multilateral and bilateral donors, other than Eastern bloc countries, working on large scale projects. They adopted a role more akin to that of multilateral and bilateral donors, working at national or provincial, rather than district or grassroots level, and fitting into the workings of a centrally planned economy. NGOs' role was reinforced by Government perceptions: Government officials had had little experience in receiving humanitarian assistance and so were largely unaware of the distinctions between multilateral agencies, bilateral agencies and NGOs in terms of their approaches and budgetary resources. NGOs were thus treated more like multilateral agencies.

This special role gave NGOs direct access to high ranking officials and made them unusually influential, particularly from the mid-1980s as Government officials became more open to advice and proposals from the small western aid community in the country. Meanwhile, UNICEF and WFP were not given preferential diplomatic treatment which UN agencies normally receive; and on a day-to-day basis were treated in more or less the same way as NGOs. However, Charny (1992) argues that 'the isolation of individual projects and the difficulty of developing a collective analysis worked against significant NGO influence at the policy level in this and other areas of NGO activity'. Parliamentary delegations from a number of

Box 11**The National Mekong Committee**

One more unusual activity of NGOs since the late 1980s, typifying their role as 'multilaterals', has been their support of the activities of the Cambodian National Mekong Committee and some of its projects, such as river flow measurement. NGOs have also carried out liaison activities between the Cambodian authorities and the Secretariat of the National Mekong Committee in Bangkok. This committee was founded in the 1960s, originally composed of all four countries through which the Mekong river flows but currently excluding Cambodia. The goal of the committee was originally to jointly study and develop the potential of the Mekong River for irrigation, hydroelectric power generation and transportation. These projects are now being reassessed.

countries visited the country under the auspices of NGOs, another indication of the unusual role played by NGOs in Cambodia.

Since about 1989, longer serving NGOs have questioned their continued provision of financial and technical support of large scale enterprises. However, they are acutely aware of the need for a responsible relinquishment of these activities. Thus, they accept that, with the exception of rehabilitation projects, a handover is largely not possible until after the elections and the commencement of large scale western assistance. Indeed, some NGOs hope to retain some national perspective to their portfolio of projects. Nevertheless, at least one NGO, Oxfam, is coming under increasing pressure from its headquarters to speed up the move into more grassroots work, creating some tension between the field and headquarters. NGOs are also finding it difficult to explain to their Government counterparts that they are beginning to play a new role and that they are no longer willing to consider certain projects.

5.6 NGO access to the provinces

In principle, during the emergency period, agencies were allowed access to all parts of the country although continued fighting prevented assistance to some provinces. However, from 1982, access to the provinces was severely curtailed and it only became possible to visit eight provinces surrounding Phnom Penh. In part, this was due to security reasons, with the interests of NGO personnel in mind.

Travel restrictions finally began to be eased from about 1987. From 1988, aid personnel began to be permitted to stay overnight in district centres rather than provincial capitals. Some personnel also gained permission to live and work at the district level. By August 1989, some 25 of the total 163 expatriates in Cambodia were based at the provincial level, including 16 Red Cross medical workers.

Following the cease fire in July 1991, the Government also began to actively encourage the movement of NGOs to set up in provincial towns to enable them to respond to the needs of the internally displaced persons.

5.7 NGO staffing

Expatriate staffing

Until the late 1980s, NGO activities were hampered by the limited numbers of expatriate personnel permitted into the country, combined with a dearth of suitably trained local staff (see below). The number of expatriates each agency was allowed was strictly controlled through a system of visas, based on a number of factors including the agency's budget, past track record in Cambodia and general political persuasion. This led to sporadic difficulties in obtaining and extending existing visas. Indeed, the LRCS withdrew in 1982, after refusing to comply with the Government's request to reduce its strength by eight people.

NGOs were also largely not allowed to field technical staff until the mid-1980s. Instead, technical assistance, including training, was mostly provided by Eastern bloc countries. For example, even during the emergency period, medical personnel were not allowed into the country until mid-1980; and even then, they were mostly ICRC delegates from Eastern bloc countries. Some NGOs, particularly non-secular ones with strong links with the church in socialist countries, partly overcame these restrictions by hiring their expatriate staff from Socialist Non-Aligned countries. For example, the Church World Service employed Cuban technicians whilst the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) employed Indian medical personnel. Agencies also sometimes borrowed technical officers from each other.

From the mid-1980s, visa restrictions were eased slightly. As a result, the number of expatriates increased from some 34 aid workers in 1982, including non-NGO staff, to around 100 by the end of 1986 and 163 by 1989. By mid-1992 there were some 500 NGO expatriates alone. Part of the increase has been accounted for by the arrival of new NGOs but existing ones have also increased their staffing levels, doubling them between 1988 and 1991. Most NGOs now have far more expatriates than they would in other countries of similar programme size, reflecting the still enormous shortage of suitably trained Cambodians. Since 1988 expatriates have also been permitted to relocate to the provinces (see below) and in mid-1989, agencies were allowed to relocate their offices and living quarters from the two hotels where they had previously been into private rented accommodation.

From the mid-1980s, NGOs also began to be permitted to provide increasing technical assistance components as part of their programmes. However, initially, according to UNDP (1990), 'in view of scarcities of local cadres, their function was often seen to be that of practitioners rather than advisors, which reduced

opportunities for on-the-job training'. But, over time, NGOs tried to develop awareness amongst Government officials of the value of training, indicating that progress would be faster if NGOs could become involved in this. As a result, the Government gradually began to make requests to NGOs for training, with the first longer-term technical assistance placements made to the Ministry of Agriculture in 1986. Following the withdrawal of Soviet and other Eastern bloc technical advisors at the end of 1990, NGOs were allowed to play a substantially increased role in the provision of technical assistance.

Local staff

Until 1991, NGOs were not permitted to hire their own local staff. Instead, local staff were seconded from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a practice typical of Communist countries with western NGOs. Particularly in the earlier years, these staff often lacked the necessary experience and expertise, hampering agency activities, yet NGOs were largely not permitted to provide training. Turnover of seconded staff was generally low. However, seconded staff were temporarily withdrawn from time to time to work on teams in the malaria-infested areas of western Cambodia to build a bamboo wall as part of the Government's attempts to seal the rest of the country off from the areas controlled by the resistance forces (Charny, 1992). Expatriates were not allowed to socialise with local staff and close working relationships were restricted. Expatriates were not permitted to visit Cambodians in their homes until 1989.

However, from about 1990, NGOs were permitted to train their own local staff. It also became much easier for Cambodians to obtain visas to travel abroad to non-Socialist countries for vocational and advanced training courses. For example, in April 1990, Cambodians were permitted to travel for training to Thailand for the first time, under the auspices of Redd Barna.

In spring 1991, NGOs also became allowed to recruit their own staff, although some NGOs, such as Oxfam, still have seconded staff. Initially, there was pressure on the NGOs to maintain relatively low wages and thus not compete with Government for the best staff. However, more recently wage rates have been forced up through the effects of privatisation and the rapid growth in private enterprises. UNTAC has also absorbed a number of Cambodians with language skills, offering them high salaries. Nevertheless the NGO community have continued to maintain fairly uniform levels of pay.

5.8 Other factors affecting NGO operations

Until the late 1980s, NGOs faced a particularly difficult operating environment in Cambodia. As well as restrictions on entry into the country, movements within the

country and NGO activities, as discussed above, they were also very isolated. International telephone calls could not be made until 1987, when the Soviets made available a telecommunications satellite. Until 1992 there was also only one weekly international flight, from Phnom Penh to Saigon. Meanwhile, NGOs had to take money into the country in cash by person until mid-1991 when the Cambodian Commercial Bank was formed, enabling the transfer of funds from Bangkok.

The international embargo on non-emergency aid also hampered NGO activities, particularly US ones. One oft-cited example is that of the MCC's school kits campaign, consisting of pencils and paper, which were prepared by US school children for donation to Cambodian school children. When MCC initiated the programme in 1981, the US Government at first denied an export licence but the ban was lifted in 1982 following considerable public protest. US regulations also prevented the transfer of funds to Cambodia until mid-1991 (see section 3.5).

Until the later 1980s, monitoring of NGO activities was difficult owing to the limited numbers of agency personnel available and travel restrictions. During the emergency period, when NGOs were particularly stretched in terms of the ratio of expatriates to the size of programme, relief agency personnel monitored all programmes, not just those of their own agency, in the area to which they were travelling, simultaneously making a general assessment of provincial conditions (Charny and Short, 1986). Meanwhile, continuity and coordination of NGO activities was complicated by the relatively short length of stay of most expatriates in the country due to the hardship working and living conditions. During the emergency period, staff were rotated in and out on short-term contracts, whilst in remainder of the 1980s, most expatriate staff remained in Cambodia for only about two years (Charny, 1992).

5.9 Public advocacy

NGOs have been unusually active in the area of public advocacy on behalf of Cambodia. As already discussed, NGOs played a major role in alerting the world to the emergency situation in Cambodia at the end of the Pol Pot era. For the following few years, NGO lobbying activities were relatively low key. However, by the mid-1980s, many NGOs were becoming increasingly frustrated by the diplomatic stalemate over Cambodia. As they perceived it, they were bringing resources into the country for rehabilitation and reconstruction only to see the fruits of their efforts destroyed by a war which their own Governments were indirectly allowing to continue. NGOs felt that, from a humanitarian perspective, they could no longer ignore this state of affairs.

As a result, in 1986, some 20 European, Australian and North American NGOs joined together in an unprecedented international initiative to form the NGO Forum on Kampuchea. This Forum still exists, meeting annually in Brussels. The NGOs

comprising the Forum included about half of those active in Cambodia as well as a number of non-operational NGOs which were channelling funds through other NGOs operational in Cambodia. The focus of the campaign was to challenge the reasons commonly used for continuing to deny development assistance to Cambodia – namely that the Cambodian Government was a puppet government controlled by Vietnam; that the Vietnamese were imposing extremely harsh laws on Cambodia; that aid which the country was receiving was not being distributed; and that NGOs were not being allowed to monitor and supervise their assistance programmes. As part of their campaign, in 1989 the NGOs agreed to support a joint publication, *Punishing the Poor*, to increase international awareness about the plight of Cambodia. From 1988, the Forum also hired, and continues to hire, the services of a Diplomatic Consultant (Raoul Jennar) to provide advice on the diplomatic situation and on strategies for public campaigns.¹²

However, the NGO community in Cambodia were not united in these efforts. About 40% of the NGOs, including some of the medically orientated ones, had very narrow mandates concerned only with the provision of technical assistance. Others were not interested in, as they perceived it, strengthening the hands of the Heng Samrin Government. Indeed, one NGO representative interviewed for the purposes of this study indicated that some NGOs accused those most active in the forum, such as Oxfam and NOVIB, of never having tackled issues such as human rights with the Government. Instead, they were accused of sympathising with the Government, seeing it as a victim of circumstances beyond its control, and had unquestionably accepted conditions in the country and restrictions under which they worked. In fact, the more active NGOs had informally raised such issues with the Government, for example, in supporting Amnesty International's attempt to send a mission to Cambodia, although this failed. However, NGOs handled such matters very delicately, fearing that direct confrontation with the Government would most likely result in their expulsion.

Oxfam's role in the public advocacy campaign on behalf of Cambodia was also investigated by the UK Charity Commissioners in November 1989. The subsequent inquiry concluded that Oxfam's Cambodia campaign to change the UK and other Governments' policies on Cambodia in the late 1980s was conducted 'with too much vigour'. Furthermore, although Oxfam's 1983 booklet, *The Poverty of Diplomacy* (Bull, 1982) was considered 'borderline', *Punishing the Poor* (Mysliwiec, 1988), which Oxfam had supported as a member of the Forum, was viewed by the Commissioners as exceeding the guidelines in its political tone.

¹² In 1990 the Forum commissioned a study on *Development Planning in Cambodia* to begin addressing the development requirements of the country.

5.10 Consultation of NGOs in the provision of aid by multilateral and bilateral agencies

The achievements of NGOs in Cambodia since 1979 have been widely acknowledged by multilateral and bilateral agencies. Most recognise the important legacy of NGO involvement in the country and believe that they should draw upon NGO experience in developing their own far larger packages of assistance. Towards this end, in 1990, UNDP undertook a mission to Cambodia to examine the lessons of NGO assistance for the UN development system (UNDP, 1990). Since 1989, NGOs have also been consulted by a number of missions seeking to set up bilateral and multilateral assistance programmes.

In addition, NGOs have been included in a number of conferences and workshops. In particular, most unusually, a delegation of NGOs was included in the Ministerial Conference on Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Cambodia, held in Tokyo in June 1992 and a paper was presented in their name. In the joint declaration issued at the Conference, the following statement about the role of NGOs was also included:

'We appreciate highly the role of NGOs which have been extensively engaged in activities to meet the humanitarian needs in Cambodia. We express our strong hope that the experience and expertise of NGOs will continue to be utilized in the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction' (Ministerial Conference on Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Cambodia, 1992).

A Donor Consultative Group was also formed in 1991, consisting of UNTAC staff with responsibility for rehabilitation and the economy, multilateral agencies, bilateral agencies and three NGO representatives selected by the CCC (World Vision, MCC and ACR). This Group meets monthly to coordinate rehabilitation assistance and to discuss humanitarian affairs. Under the Paris Peace Accord, a consultative body called the International Committee on Reconstruction of Cambodia (ICORC) is to be established after the elections to coordinate international assistance to the country. NGO representatives nominated by the CCC will be welcome to present their views as observers at meetings of the ICORC, envisaged annually. A statement in the October 1991 Paris Agreements also underlines the past and future role of NGOs in Cambodia.

However, some NGO personnel interviewed appeared cynical about the extent to which they believe that the bilateral and multilateral donors will, in practice, consult them about more detailed aspects of their programmes.

5.11 Contacts between NGOs operating on either side of the border

During the emergency period, several NGOs provided assistance to Cambodia both through Phnom Penh and the Thai-Cambodian border. However, largely owing to the Heng Samrin Government's opposition to NGOs operating on both sides of the border, most of these NGOs were operational on only one side of the border and channelled assistance to the other through other NGOs. The one notable exception was World Vision, which was very active on both sides of the border until 1982. The Heng Samrin Government was willing to make an exception in this instance because World Vision offered considerable financial resources, including a large emergency grant of US\$3m from the US Government for the rehabilitation of the paediatric hospital in Phnom Penh (see Box 8).¹³ NGOs operating from Phnom Penh but providing indirect financial assistance through the Thai border during this period included Oxfam (UK), which donated £300,000 (US\$636,000) largely through UNHCR, for emergency relief work on the border. A number of CIDSE member agencies also provided indirect support to the border through CRS, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and church groups. Meanwhile, several NGOs working on the border channelled funds through NGOs in Phnom Penh, in some cases in their capacity as non-operational members of consortia operating from Phnom Penh.

Following the end of the emergency period, some border NGOs continued to channel funds through other organisations to Phnom Penh. However, the flow of funds from NGOs with programmes in Cambodia to those providing assistance on the border lessened considerably as it became increasingly apparent that the UN was not going to mount a major relief operation within Cambodia, so that NGOs, together with Eastern bloc donors would have to attempt to meet the enormous aid requirements of the country more or less alone.

From 1982, the Heng Samrin Government also became increasingly restrictive about NGOs being able to operate on both sides of the border. Between 1982 and 1987, only two NGOs operational on the border, HI and JVC, managed to set up operations in Cambodia as well. HI began operations in Cambodia in 1982. Although the Heng Samrin Government was aware of its continued involvement at the border as well, the Government felt, given the large number of amputees in the country, that there was a clear need for HI's presence within Cambodia. In 1985, JVC also began a programme in Cambodia. However, other organisations were denied this opportunity. For example, in 1985 Concern made some

¹³ The US Government granted this aid as emergency assistance, which it allowed Cambodia to receive until 1981. The US Government simultaneously put up some resistance to the school kits sent by the MCC because it deemed these to represent emergency rather than development assistance (see section 3.5). World Vision received no further assistance from the US Government until 1990.

Box 12**Handicap International**

HI was formed in 1982 to provide appropriate rehabilitation services to handicapped displaced persons in Thailand. It now operates in 23 countries which are at war or in a state of poverty. In recent years, HI has had a budget of about US\$160-180,000 per annum for its work at the Thai-Cambodian border (including ATVs).

HI began activities in Cambodia in 1982 under the auspices of the American Friends Service Committee, following an invitation by AFSC to share their skills and expertise in the production of low cost, appropriate technology prosthetic devices. In 1987, HI and AFSC began to operate as two separate organisations, undertaking complementary tasks although maintaining close collaboration. The HI programme currently covers prosthetic devices/mobility aids; physical therapy; and a leprosy programme. Its work continues to be very important, as it is estimated that there are some 15-20,000 amputees in Cambodia and a further 5,000 Cambodian amputees on the Thai side of the border. Some 200-300 Cambodians continue to lose limbs due to mine explosions every month, with a recent increase in the rate as people cross the border on their own (Handicap International, 1992).

preliminary enquiries about the possibility of setting up a programme within Cambodia but the Heng Samrin Government indicated that this would not be possible.

In 1988-9, two more border NGOs, Redd Barna and MSF (France) began operations in Cambodia. In 1990, following a considerable relaxation of restrictions, a further six border NGOs became active in Cambodia. By September 1992, only three of the NGOs operational at the border had not set up a programme in Cambodia (Table 4), two of which – Malteser-Hilfsdienst Auslandsdienst and Thai-Chinese Refugee Service – were specifically relief operations. In fact, a number of the border NGOs which have set up programmes in Thailand were themselves originally relief NGOs but have expanded their areas of operation to work in Cambodia as well, and not necessarily just with returnees and the internally displaced (see section 4.1). A number of NGOs which had previously been active on the border in the early 1980s but which subsequently withdrew from the border have also recently begun programmes in Cambodia.

One problem that certain border NGOs have encountered in setting up programmes in Cambodia is that they have initially been associated with the types of activities which they were involved with on the border and have been viewed as being more emergency, than development, orientated. For example, Concern was considered primarily as a sanitation NGO and few were aware of its development programmes in a number of sectors in other countries.

Box 13**Concern**

Concern began operations on the Thai-Cambodian border in 1979. In 1982, it began a camp Sanitation programme which subsequently developed into a much wider Site and Service programme as its main activity on the border. This has incorporated a wide range of activities such as family and communal latrines, rubbish disposal, vector control, camp drainage, sanitation education, fire service, and water jar and stove production. In 1989, the programme was budgeted at £583,00 (US\$956,000).

Concern became operational in Cambodia in May 1990, initially working with the internally displaced. Its current activities include a sanitation programme in four displaced persons' camps using experience gained at the border. However, it also has a community forestry programme; a squatters urban relocation programme; and two primary health care programmes at district level. In 1992 it also became involved in the repatriation programme whilst in 1991 it provided assistance to flood victims. As of early 1992, it was also planning an education programme.

5.12 Contact between NGO personnel on either side of the border

During the emergency period, there was some informal contact between NGOs on either side of the border, facilitated through the NGOs and other agencies which were involved, at least indirectly, on both sides. However, the withdrawal of UNICEF from the border operations at the end of 1981 terminated an important channel of communications between the two groups of NGOs. At around the same time, the Heng Samrin Government also tightened up its restrictions on NGOs working on both sides of the border and even refused entry visas to NGO personnel who were working at the border. As a result, during most of the remainder of the 1980s there was virtually no contact at all between the two groups of NGOs. Many false rumours circulated on the border about the draconian rule of the Vietnamese within the country, further alienating the two groups and leading the two groups to question each other's motives.¹⁴

However, from the late 1980s, as the early peace initiatives began to raise hopes of repatriation, the need for improved information sharing and coordination between NGOs on either side of the border was clearly recognised. As a result, a number of actions were taken to improve contact. One of the earliest efforts was a conference in mid-1989, organised by the Executive Secretary of the Economic

¹⁴ Some of these rumours were started by new arrivals at the border who had left Cambodia for economic rather than political reasons and so were trying to justify their actions.

Table 4 **Date of commencement of operations in Cambodia
by NGOs operational on the border in 1991^a**

<i>NGO</i>	<i>Date of commencement of operations in Cambodia</i>
WVFT	1979
HI	1982
JVC	1985
RBT	1988
MSF	1989
SIPAR	1990
COR	1990
CARE	1990
ARC	1990
FHI	1990
CONCERN	1990
ADRA	1991
JSRC	1991
YWAM	1991
COERR	1992
CAMA	1992
IRC	1992
ICMC	1992
CYR ^b	1992
MHD	Not yet operational
TCRS	Not yet operational
OHFOM	Not yet operational

Notes: ^a As of September 1992.

^b Operational under the name 'Caring for Young Khmers' in Cambodia.

and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and attended by NGOs from both sides of the border as well as international organisations to share information about current programmes as well as to discuss repatriation.

NGOs acting through the CCSDPT also created a one year Cambodian Liaison officer post, from April 1990 to April 1991, to establish contacts between NGOs on either side of the border. During her term of office, the Officer undertook a number of missions to report on sectoral needs in Cambodia; to participate as a member of a UN Inter-Agency Mission organised by UNHCR with the aim of preparing a repatriation plan; and to obtain information and respond to the

questions posed by expatriates and Cambodians at the border. Within Cambodia, the officer encountered mixed reactions from the NGOs:

some welcomed our interests, others felt that the plight of the border population was less significant than that of the country as a whole. Some could little conceal their idea that border NGOs were somewhat responsible for the continuation of the war (Houtart, 1991a)

In 1990 and 1991, a number of visits were also arranged through the CCSDPT by expatriates working in Cambodia to the border and vice versa. From the late 1980s, the Heng Samrin Government also began to encourage NGOs to visit the country.

6. Conclusions

Since 1979 NGOs have played a significant role in the provision of relief and rehabilitation assistance within Cambodia and to Cambodian refugees in Thailand.

In Cambodia, NGO efforts in the emergency period (1979-81) substantially strengthened and complemented the efforts of UN agencies, the Red Cross Movement and the Government of Cambodia. In the subsequent post emergency period (1982-8), when most western donor organisations severely restricted their development assistance to the country, the NGO sector played a substantial role in the rehabilitation and development efforts, even though the majority of the funding came from private rather than government sources. In Thailand, NGOs again complemented and strengthened the response by the Thai Government and the international community to the influx of Cambodian refugees and the plight of those remaining on, or just the other side of the border. Once the emergency period had ended, however, their role was essentially that of providing services in the camps on contract to the specially created UN agency, UNBRO, and was therefore substantially different from that of NGOs operating within Cambodia.

Assessing the contribution of the NGO sector in *quantitative* terms has proved difficult in both contexts primarily as a result of inadequacies in the available data and the difficulty of categorising expenditure on activities which may have involved NGOs, UN and host-government agencies in their implementation. In terms of the *value* of assistance provided, the study estimates that, of just over US\$650m (in real 1992 prices) worth of assistance provided to Cambodia during the emergency period from late 1979 to the end of 1981 by western donor organisations, UN agencies and NGOs, roughly 30% was either provided by NGOs from their own privately raised sources or was channelled through NGOs by bilateral donor organisations and UN agencies. During 1982-8, when development aid from western sources was severely restricted, the proportion provided by or channelled through NGOs appears to have remained at a similar level. Thus total assistance from western donor organisations, UN agencies and NGOs was approximately US\$300m (in real 1992 prices) during this period and of this amount some US\$82m (29%) was provided by or channelled through the 15 or so NGOs operating in the country at that time. On average during this period therefore, the NGO sector was involved in the provision of approximately US\$13.5m worth of assistance. Significantly, however, substantial assistance was provided to Cambodia from Eastern bloc sources. If all such assistance is included in the calculations then the relative contribution of NGOs appears to fall to around 12% for the emergency period (1979-81) and 7% for the subsequent rehabilitation period.

In terms of the value of assistance provided to the refugees and displaced people on the Thai-Cambodian border and within Thailand itself, the available data sources

suggest that NGOs, from a combination of their own privately raised sources or assistance channelled through them by bilateral donors and UN agencies, were responsible for providing between 20-25% the total assistance. Thus, during 1980 total expenditures were in the order of US\$150m, of which NGOs (some 55-60 of which were operating in the border area by the end of that year) were responsible for US\$33m. Once again, it appears that the proportion established during the emergency phase was more or less maintained in the period following the initial emergency phase. Thus the total value of assistance provided during 1982 was around US\$87m (in real 1992 prices) of which NGOs were responsible for approximately US\$20m (i.e. 23%). During the post-emergency phase, the 25-odd NGOs which continued to work in the displaced persons' camps and holding centres were heavily dependent on UN agencies for much of their funding. In the displaced persons' camps, UNBRO provided 90-100% funding for most of the NGOs, whilst in the holding centres UNHCR provided anywhere between 30% to 90% funding, depending on the activity and the NGO concerned. As a result, this study estimates that well over half the assistance provided by NGOs was resourced by UN agencies, with the remainder resourced either from privately raised funds or grants from bilateral donor organisations.

The study has highlighted the numerous ways in which political factors determined the environment in which NGOs were obliged to operate. The humanitarian emergency which became apparent to the outside world in late 1979 was the product of an extremist regime which had been pursuing a programme which included genocide against its own people and the destruction of infrastructure necessary for the provision of essential services. That this regime was ousted by a neighbouring country which had a communist government, which received substantial support from the USSR and which was the very nation which had fought and won a long war against the USA, strongly shaped the environment for NGOs operating in Cambodia. In late 1979, the climate of suspicion, secrecy and manipulation which surrounded the Heng Samrin regime, installed earlier that year by the Vietnamese, created a situation in which some western NGOs, believing there to be a nationwide famine within the country, launched high profile relief operations and funding appeals which snowballed into a massive international relief operation. The underlying political context did not change with the ending of the emergency period and Cambodia was effectively condemned to more than a decade of ostracisation by western nations. The severe restrictions placed on the provision of development assistance to the country by western donors in the post-emergency period strongly influenced both the role NGOs played in Cambodia and the volume of assistance that they were able to provide.

The policies pursued by the Royal Thai Government towards the Heng Samrin regime, the Cambodian opposition groups and the people displaced by the fighting in western Cambodia also strongly framed the operating environment for NGOs providing assistance to displaced Cambodians in Thailand. For instance, the Royal Thai Government's initial refusal to allow displaced Cambodians to cross into

Thailand and its subsequent change in policy in the face of international pressure had the effect of making the emergency needs greater and the influx more sudden than would have been the case if the displaced population had been allowed to cross the border in a more gradual manner. Similarly, its policy of only granting temporary asylum rather than refugee status to the populations in the border camps prevented UNHCR from providing fuller care and protection services to them and necessitated the creation of a unique *ad hoc* UN operation, UNBRO. Its policy of 'humane deterrence' whereby the level of services provided in the Displaced persons' camps was limited to discourage further influxes, determined the activities that UNBRO and the NGOs working in those camps were able to provide.

Not surprisingly the roles undertaken by NGOs in the two contexts differed substantially. In Thailand the principle role of NGOs was service provision to populations in both the displaced persons' camps and the holding centres, managed by UNBRO and UNHCR respectively in conjunction with the Thai authorities and representatives of the camp populations. Whilst the level and range of service provision in the Displaced Persons Camps was deliberately limited by the Royal Thai Government, the long-term nature of the holding centres and the fact that they were, at least in comparison with other refugee populations in Pakistan and the Horn of Africa, well resourced, meant that in these camps NGOs were involved in the provision of a broad range of services. As well as the typical basic services such as the provision of medical care, sanitation and supplementary feeding, NGOs were involved in education, skills training, banking, maintenance engineering and even the provision of recreational and banking and mailing services.

In Cambodia, the severe restrictions placed on the provision of development assistance to the country by western donors meant that many of the bilateral donor organisations and multilateral lending institutions normally present in a low income country were effectively absent. The same restrictions also limited the range of UN agencies present and the resources at their disposal. Simultaneously, there was a massive requirement for the rehabilitation of infrastructure which had been damaged or fallen into disrepair during the Pol Pot era and the subsequent Vietnamese invasion. In this unique situation, those NGOs actually working in the country were drawn, in the context of a centrally planned economy, into undertaking roles and activities normally associated with bilateral donors and multilateral lending institutions. During the post-emergency phase (1982-8), all NGOs became heavily involved in the provision of technical and financial support to large-scale infrastructural programmes and state-run enterprises. For instance, Oxfam and AFFHC were closely involved in the rehabilitation of the Phnom Penh water and drainage system, a substantial civil engineering programme, whilst LWS was involved in the rehabilitation and running of a factory producing oxygen for use in hospitals and fertiliser for the agriculture sector. How effective they were in this quasi-donor role cannot be answered on the basis of this study, but the experience does highlight the significant flexibility of NGOs.

In addition to their welfare provision and developmental activities, many NGOs also undertook lobbying on behalf of the Cambodian people to improve their situation either in the short term or in the longer term by addressing the underlying causes of their plight. In Thailand, the presence of NGOs in the displaced persons' camps and their proximity to the so-called hidden military and civilian camps enabled NGOs to monitor the human rights abuses perpetrated by the opposition groups, particularly those camps 'managed' by the Khmer Rouge. In addition, some NGOs lobbied for policy changes such as on the creation of Neutral Camps.

In Cambodia, NGOs played a crucial role in alerting the world to the severity of the situation in the country in late 1979. Later, efforts were focused on challenging the reasons commonly given by western donors for restricting development assistance to the country. This brought some NGOs into conflict with their own governments and created differences among the NGOs working in Cambodia. The fact that the most vocal NGOs appeared reluctant to raise human rights issues within Cambodia with the Heng Samrin regime increased these differences. In both Thailand and Cambodia, those NGOs which publicly advocated changes in the policies of the host governments risked censure and ultimately expulsion, and this resulted in reappraisal of the value of their programme to the population they were serving, and presumably of themselves as organisations.

UNBRO was a unique response by the UN and the main bilateral donor organisations to the particular situation of the border camps, principally determined by the inability of UNHCR to address the needs of the displaced, rather than refugee, populations. As an *ad hoc* operation, UNBRO enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy from other, more distant, parts of the UN. The Royal Thai Government also allowed it considerable freedom in day-to-day operations. As the principal channel for international assistance to the displaced population, UNBRO was responsible for funding most of the service provision activities of NGOs and therefore occupied a central coordinating position. It was organised around an effective logistics core capacity, having initially been established by WFP and staffed by WFP personnel. Many observers consider UNBRO to have been highly successful. Its apparent combination of the comparative advantages of a UN agency with those of the NGO community suggests UNBRO as a potential model for humanitarian operations elsewhere. UNBRO's ability to rationalise what were complex and probably inefficient arrangements within the NGO community in 1982 is attractive, particularly when compared to the chaotic 'many agencies, many funding sources' situation that often exists in other relief operations. UNBRO ensured a technically orderly and consistent programme of assistance. However, it has been argued that UNBRO's control of a substantial proportion of NGO funding resulted in an NGO community that was pliant and less prepared than it might otherwise have been to take a stand on issues such as human rights and the longer-term political solutions.

An interesting feature of the NGO sector in Cambodia were the consortia mechanisms, developed in both the emergency and rehabilitation phases. The Oxfam Consortium, which operated during the emergency phase, was the largest, being composed of 35 NGOs and providing 40% of the assistance provided by the NGO sector during the emergency period. Other consortia included CIDSE (the European Catholic NGO Network), JANGO (a consortium of Australian NGOs), and PADEK (formed in 1982 by many of the agencies which had participated in the earlier Oxfam Consortium). Several factors appear to have encouraged the formation of such consortia. These include the limited availability of both financial resources, due to the lack of funding from bilateral donor sources, and of staff resources, due to the Government's policy of limiting the number of western expatriates in the country, the difficult operating conditions prevailing in the country; and the attractions to the Government of dealing with a limited number of NGOs. With the relaxation of Government attitudes towards the NGO sector and the dramatic increase in the number of NGOs operating in the country from 1988, the motives for member NGOs to maintain such consortia have weakened and the majority of NGOs in Cambodia now operate independently.

Formal NGO coordination mechanisms were also developed both in Cambodia and Thailand. In Thailand, the Committee for Co-ordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT) was formed by NGOs in 1975. An effective mechanism for information sharing and for representation of the interests of NGOs to the Royal Thai Government was therefore in place well before the emergency period and the dramatic increase in the number of NGOs, proving invaluable during what was a potentially chaotic period. Thereafter, the reduction in the numbers of NGOs and the emergence of UNBRO as an important funder of NGO activities in the displaced persons' camps saw the focus of coordination shift towards UNBRO, though the monthly Directors' Meetings in Bangkok are held under CCSDPT auspices. In Cambodia, coordination during the emergency phase took place under the auspices of the ICRC/UNICEF Joint Mission. Thereafter, the presence of the consortia and the limited number of NGOs operating in the country meant that informal weekly meetings were adequate for the sharing of information among NGOs and UN agencies operating in the country. However, the increase in the number of NGOs and the flow of resources from western sources in the late 1980s increased the need for more formal coordination mechanisms and, in response to this need, the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC), which was closely modelled on the CCSDPT in Thailand, was formed in 1990.

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Appendix

NGOs operational in Cambodia as of September 1992

	<i>Date of formal establishment</i>
Lutheran World Service	1979
World Vision International	1979
World Council of Churches	1979
Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen der Schweiz	1979
Church World Service	1979
American Friends Service Committee	1979
Oxfam UK & Ireland	1979
Australian Catholic Relief	1980
Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité	1980
Australian Freedom from Hunger Campaign	1980
Mennonite Central Committee	1980
Quaker Service Australia	1980
Handicap International	1982
Enfance Espoir	1983
Enfants du Cambodge	1984
Australian People for Health, Education & Development Abroad	1984
Japan International Volunteer Centre	1985
Joint Australian NGO Office – Kampuchea	1986
Cooperative Services International	1987
Partnership for Development in Kampuchea	1988
Groupe de Recherche et D'Echanges Technologiques	1988
Overseas Service Bureau	1988
Redd Barna	1988
Cornell University	1989
24 Hour Television	1989
Médecins Sans Frontières Holland/Belgium	1989
Médecins Sans Frontières France	1989
Action Internationale Contre la Faim	1989
World Concern	1989
Maryknoll	1989
Help the Aged	1990
Save the Children Fund Australia	1990
Pharmaciens Sans Frontières	1990
Soutien à l'Initiative Privée pour l'Aide à la Reconstruction	1990
Jesuit Refugee Service	1990

continued

Appendix continued

Health Unlimited	1990
CARE International	1990
Caritas Internationalis	1990
Christian Outreach	1990
Assemblies of God	1990
American Refugee Committee	1990
Cambodia Development Research Institute	1990
Food for the Hungry International	1990
Concern	1990
Don Bosci Foundation	1991
Vétérinaires Sans Frontières	1991
Cambodia Trust	1991
Youth with a Mission	1991
Voluntary Services Overseas	1991
Cambodia Canada Development Program	1991
World Relief International	1991
Southeast Asian Outreach	1991
Japan Sotoshu Relief Committee	1991
Solidaritätsdienst International e.v.	1991
International Women's Development Agency	1991
Adventist Development and Relief Agency	1991
Save the Children Fund (UK)	1991
Action Nord Sud	1991
Khemera	1991
Private Agencies Collaborating Together	1992
Volunteer Service Overseas	1992
Stiftung Kinderdorf Pestalozzi	1992
World Education	1992
Services for the Health in Asian and African Regions	1992
Catholic Relief Services	1992
Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees	1992
GOAL	1992
IndoChina Project	1992
Holt International Children's Services	1992
Caring for Young Khmers	1992
Association Franco-Khmere de Coopération Technique et de Développement des Entreprises	1992
Association to Aid the Refugees Cambodian Committee	1992
Associazione per la Partecipazione allo Sviluppo	1992

continued

Appendix continued

CAMA Services	1992
Aviation Sans Frontières	1992
Missionaries of Charities	1992
Médecins du Monde	1992
Naomi Bronstein Children's Foundation	1992
Partage (Avec Les Enfants du Tiers-Monde)	1992
New Humanity	1992
Mani Tese	1992
International Mission of Hope	1992
International Catholic Migration Commission	1992
International Rescue Committee	1992
L'Association les Enfants d'Angkor	1992
Krousar Trust	1992

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