

CAMBODIA/THAILAND REPATRIATION AND REINTEGRATION OPERATION

AT A GLANCE



Main Objectives and Activities

Assist Cambodian refugees in Thailand to return home safely and ensure that their return is sustainable and durable by helping them achieve social and economic conditions comparable to those of communities in the areas to which they return, through the implementation of quick impact projects (QIPs) and by encouraging the presence and activities of organisations with a longer-term involvement in these areas.

Impact

- In 1999, about 36,200 Cambodian refugees returned from Thailand, bringing to 46,675 the total of those repatriated under UNHCR's auspices since 1997.
- Repatriation was conducted in safety and dignity. Although refugees were returning to some of the most heavily mined areas in the world, there were no landmine injuries reported in connection with the repatriations. All convoys reached their destinations safely, with a UNHCR escort.
- By the end of 1999, UNHCR had introduced some 15 new NGOs to the main returnee areas, funding activities including the supply of water, health, education and crop production. A number of other organisations not funded by UNHCR also moved into these areas.
- Returnees, particularly women and children, benefited from UNHCR assistance in key sectors such as food security (through the distribution of rice, vegetable seeds and agricultural tools), health (health services in returnee areas and the construction of health centres), education (with the establishment of schools, a district education office and the distribution of school supplies) and safety and access (through demining and the repair of roads and bridges).
- UNHCR's frequent field monitoring missions helped to ensure the well being of returnees and facilitated their integration. UNHCR helped resolve land disputes involving returnees and helped impress on district and commune officials the need for accurate land-ownership records and fair handling of disputes.

Persons of Concern

COUNTRY/ TYPE OF POPULATION	TOTAL IN COUNTRY	OF WHICH: UNHCR-ASSISTED	PER CENT FEMALE	PER CENT < 18
Thailand (Refugees)	110	110	-	-
Returned in 1999*	36,200	36,200	50	50

* Since the beginning of repatriation a total of 47,000 refugees have returned.



Income and Expenditure (USD)

WORKING BUDGET*	INCOME FROM CONTRIBUTIONS	OTHER FUNDS AVAILABLE**	TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE	TOTAL EXPENDITURE*
6,530,603	4,683,426	2,296,936	6,980,362	6,389,162

* Includes costs at Headquarters.

** Includes opening balance and adjustments.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The Context

Following the formation of a coalition government in Cambodia and the peace settlements between the Government and resistance forces, all refugees in camps in Thailand decided to return home before the end of the planting season period. Most returned with UNHCR's assistance. The year 1999 was the first full year in decades in which the country was free from armed conflict.

Following the arrest of some prominent Khmer Rouge leaders, a lengthy debate ensued on the holding of a war crimes trial. Continued political and military stability allowed the Government to pursue its plan to initiate a large-scale soldiers' demobilisation and reintegration programme.

Returnees will benefit from Cambodia's overall peace, stability and modest economic progress. However, returnees are disproportionately affected by the country's general problems. At the beginning of 1999, the main returnee areas lacked almost all basic services, due to the destruction of war. These areas were also among the most inaccessible in the country. NGOs, present in significant numbers in many other areas, found it difficult to move into returnee areas.

The success and durability of the reintegration operation depends on the wider prospects for sustainable development in what remains a fragile post-conflict environment. Future refugee outflows can only be forestalled by stability and a reduction of poverty. These conditions require good governance; an efficient and accountable public administration; a credible judiciary to safeguard basic human and property rights; and better access for the poor to basic social services and economic opportunities. Significant risks remain: political instability; weak institutions; potential social unrest and a renewed regional financial crisis.

Constraints

The first challenge was to ensure that refugees returned voluntarily to destinations of their choice. Once this was achieved, their reintegration was complicated by the fact that most refugees chose to return to areas of Cambodia where the infrastructure had been destroyed and where the presence of landmines posed a considerable threat. These areas were, furthermore, unstable border zones, prone to rebellion and conflict. Hardly any other humanitarian organisations were present in these areas at the start of 1999.

Thus, UNHCR played a leading role not only in protecting the returnees and monitoring their progress, but also in providing direct assistance and in mobilising other organisations to be present in these areas.

Although conflict has ended, Cambodia's institutions are still relatively weak. Public administration needs to be strengthened. The widespread destruction of human and material resources has resulted in severe constraints. Annual per-capita income in 1999 is estimated at USD 290. Over one third of the population lives below the poverty line, 90 per cent of them in rural areas. One in every 250 Cambodians is disabled. The proportion of amputees, one in 384 people, is the highest in the world. Lack of secure access to land is a major factor behind rural poverty.

Funding

Throughout 1999, donors maintained a keen interest in the repatriation and reintegration of Cambodian refugees. This was well reflected in the amounts contributed to the operation. However, some of the major contributions were heavily earmarked, not only by sector of activity, but also to specific locations. This hampered UNHCR's flexibility to implement necessary projects. Also in 1999, Cambodia collaborated with a Consultative Group of major donors to Cambodia through the UN Resident Co-ordinator System. This donor group established a review system whereby disbursement of international assistance is made conditional on improvements in economic management and governance, the rule of law and the application of human rights.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

Protection and Solutions

UNHCR ensured that all refugees who returned from Thailand did so voluntarily and were able to return to the destination of their choice in Cambodia. In particular, some 4,000 refugees from Phu Noi camp were assisted in returning to the remote North-Eastern provinces where they used to live before the Khmer Rouge regime. Assistance and protection were provided to the urban refugees remaining in Bangkok (approximately 100 persons by the end of 1999), and lasting solutions for this group were actively sought.

The protection situation in Cambodia benefited from a year of increasing political and social stability. UNHCR staff carried out extensive monitoring of

returnee areas. The main protection issue that emerged was secure access to land by returnees. UNHCR intervened in more than 20 specific land disputes in order to secure the rights of the returnees. The Office also advocated at national and provincial level a general improvement in the security of land tenure in Cambodia.

Activities and Assistance

Community Services: Two organisations were contracted to provide community services to vulnerable returnees who encountered difficulties in achieving self-reliance. In addition to counselling, appropriate material assistance was provided. This included household kits, shelter materials, seeds and transport to medical facilities. Three vehicles were procured to facilitate the work of operational partners in this sector.

Crop Production: Basic agricultural tools, rice and vegetable seeds were distributed through ten operational partners in the eight provinces where UNHCR was engaged in reintegration assistance. In one province, 25 irrigation wells were dug. Most of the agricultural activities also involved the training of beneficiaries.

Domestic Needs/Household Support: In Thailand, in order to prevent environmental degradation, charcoal was regularly distributed to camp residents until the complete departure of all refugees. Cambodian refugees in Bangkok received subsistence allowances. In Cambodia, 2,000 household kits containing 18 different items, including sarongs, nails, and mosquito nets were distributed to spontaneous returnees and IDPs in returnee areas. Two thousand blankets, 1,000 plastic water containers and water buckets, more than 1,700 five-litre kettles, and packets of vegetable seeds were also distributed to villagers in those areas.

Education: Eleven schools were constructed, two were repaired and a district education office established. Most of the schools were equipped with basic furniture and supplies, and school kits were also distributed. One operational partner provided text and resource books for 19 schools in two districts.

Food: UNHCR continued to distribute WFP food assistance to refugees in the camps before repatriation. Returnees received food boxes and water when repatriating on convoys. They also received cooked meals, rice packs and drinking water upon arrival in Cambodia.

Health/Nutrition: The health programme in Thailand was linked to repatriation, focussing on the vaccination of children prior to their return and on the identification of vulnerable cases in order to take special measures to assist them and compile medical files for follow-up in Cambodia. In returnee areas, UNHCR supported mobile health teams servicing eight health centres with the provision of medicines, motorbikes and staff training. Two ambulances were hired for use at the transit centre. Anti-malarial drugs were purchased and distributed in Samlot district, where malaria/TB wards were also constructed. Two district health centres were constructed or upgraded and five health posts were constructed and equipped. Some 2,046 impregnated mosquito nets were distributed to returnees and IDPs.

Income Generation: Ten rice banks were set up in Ratana Kiri province to store and distribute WFP food stocks to returnees and destitute farmers. Training was also provided to beneficiaries on how to operate the banks.

Legal Assistance: Mine awareness campaigns, focussing particularly on women and children, were conducted in most of the camps in Thailand prior to repatriation. In Battambang province in Cambodia, a series of land and human rights workshops for district and village leaders was held by a local human rights NGO with UNHCR support. A Cambodian Government Official was sponsored to attend a refugee law workshop in San Remo, Italy.

Livestock: Piglets and chickens were distributed to returnees in Ratana Kiri province and a scheme was set up to rent buffaloes to assist in land preparation for rice cultivation. One implementing partner provided veterinary training and animal vaccination.

Operational Support (to Agencies): Basic administrative support costs were provided to several operational partners. This support consisted of communication equipment, photocopiers, computers, office supplies, vehicle maintenance, and fragmentation blankets for the protection of vehicles against mines, and contributions for office rental, staff travel and salaries. Needs assessment costs were covered, as were translation and printing costs.

Sanitation: Until the closure of the camps in Thailand, latrines were maintained on a regular basis. Waste disposal and sewage services were provided at the Transit

Centre in Sisophon. Forty latrines were constructed in areas with large returnee populations.

Shelter/Other Infrastructure: In Thailand, site rehabilitation activities were undertaken in the three camps after closure. This included the rehabilitation of access roads affected by convoys, site cleaning and filling of latrines. In addition, trees were planted and QIPs implemented for neighbouring Thai villagers. In Cambodia, most activities in this sector involved demining. UNHCR supported the demining of reintegration project sites in the four major districts of return: Samlot in Battambang Province, and Samrong, Anlong Veng and Trapaeng Prasat in Oddar Meanchey Province. Three demining agencies were contracted to undertake site and road clearance, mine marking, mine awareness training and the disposal of mines and unexploded ordnance. Other activities included the repair of 18 bridges, the construction and equipping of a District Development Office and the expansion of the transit centre during the repatriation. Roofing materials were provided to vulnerable returnee families in Mondul Kiri province. A specialist was employed to produce a variety of maps for planning and reporting purposes. Nearly 90 kilometres of road were repaired to improve access.

Transport/Logistics: Voluntary repatriation convoys were organised from Huay Cherng and Phu Noi camps to the Cambodian border. Buses and trucks were rented to transport the refugees and their personal belongings. Fuel costs were covered for the convoy vehicles as well as accompanying government officials. For the Chong Khao Phlu camp population in Trat, UNHCR gave repatriating families a fuel allowance to enable them to drive their own vehicles across the border into Samlot district in Cambodia where they were received by UNHCR and other agencies. In Cambodia, UNHCR transported returnees to their final destinations. To facilitate the monitoring of returnees, a small aircraft was chartered for missions to inaccessible project sites.

Water: The refugee population in camps received an adequate supply of water for drinking, cooking, washing and sanitation. In Cambodia, 86 borehole wells with pumps were provided to returnee communities as well as training on safe water use and the establishment of maintenance committees. In addition, 64 shallow wells were dug and equipped with aprons and pulley systems. Potable water was temporarily delivered to a returnee site until water jars could be

provided. One thousand water jars were produced and distributed, as well as 400 household water filtration units.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management

In Thailand, the Trat and Surin field offices organised assistance in the camps and repatriation to Cambodia, under the supervision of the Regional Office in Bangkok and in close coordination with UNHCR Offices in Cambodia. Both field offices were closed in June 1999, following the closure of camps.

In Cambodia, extensive recruitment of staff took place at the beginning of the year, in particular at the Siem Reap field office and the Liaison Office in Phnom Penh. As of July, six internationals, one Junior Professional Officer, and 16 national UNHCR staff members were in place. Two national staff members were on secondment from UNHCR operational partners and one from the Government. An international consultant provided technical supervision for reintegration projects.

Working with Others

WFP was a major partner in the repatriation and reintegration operation, providing an initial 40-day food ration and food-for-work opportunities thereafter. The Liaison Office in Phnom Penh participated actively in the Resident Co-ordinator system, e.g. in the preparation of the UN Development Assistance Framework 2001-2005. UNHCR played an indirect co-ordinating role in assistance in returnee areas, mainly supporting existing and potentially longer-term co-ordinating mechanisms. An important achievement in this regard was to initiate and fund inter-agency needs assessments in the main returnee areas with UNDP and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). In matters of protection and refugee law, UNHCR worked closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

UNHCR Cambodia co-operated closely with and supported both national and international NGOs. In 1999, implementing agreements were signed with 17 partners. The largest of these agreements was with the World Learning Consortium, which was established as an umbrella partner to administer QIPs. Relationships with NGOs proved very cordial and constructive. No formal UNHCR/NGO Partnership

in Action (PARinAC) meetings took place though there were frequent co-ordination meetings between UNHCR and NGOs.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Using an umbrella implementing partner to manage reintegration projects brought speed and flexibility to the operation. However, this arrangement proved to be costly in terms of overheads and impeded direct dialogue between UNHCR and its operational partners. As a result this arrangement has been discontinued in 2000.

Formal inter-agency needs assessments (carried out with the Government, the UN and NGO partners) were the basis for successful co-operation and co-ordination. UNHCR organised and partly funded such exercises in the main returnee areas.

The shortage of NGOs as operational partners in returnee areas has led to UNHCR's substantial reliance on local authorities. This has been positive in terms of capacity building and project ownership for the longer term, but necessitated intensive UNHCR monitoring of projects where local authorities lacked relevant expertise.

The provision of assistance to vulnerable returnees proved particularly difficult. In the eastern part of the country, returnees are scattered in areas that are relatively inaccessible for much of the year. Many local NGOs lack expertise in the design and implementation of assistance projects. Through its implementing agreement, UNHCR endeavoured to build their capacity by providing training and close monitoring.

UNHCR plans to phase out its humanitarian assistance to returnees by the end of 2000. This decision is based on the assessment that, by then, the problems of the returnees will be similar to those of other Cambodians and not associated with their former status as refugees and recent returnees. It is felt that the solutions to their problems lie in long-term development, rather than humanitarian assistance. In returnee areas, UNHCR has indeed helped several NGOs establish themselves well enough to translate short-term assistance into longer-term development. UNHCR will nevertheless maintain a reduced presence in Phnom Penh for continued monitoring as well as direct assistance and protection to asylum-seekers and refugees.

Offices

THAILAND

Bangkok

Surin (closed in June 1999)

Trat (closed in June 1999)

CAMBODIA

Phnom Penh

Battambang

Siem Reap

Sisophon (closed in June 1999)

Partners

Government Agencies

Provincial Department of Health

Provincial Rural Development Committee

NGOs

Action Against Hunger

Action Nord Sud

American Refugee Committee

Association to Aid Refugees (Japan)

Cambodia Family Development Services

Cambodia Red Cross

Cambodian Mines Action Centre

DEEP Village Water Supply Programme

EMERGENCY Life Support for Civilian War Victims

Halo Trust

International Federation of Red Cross and

Red Crescent Societies

International Rescue Committee

Malteser Hilfsdienst (Germany)

Mines Advisory Group

World Learning/Consortium (USA)

ZOA Refugee Care (Netherlands)

Other

United Nations Development Programme

United Nations Volunteers



Voluntary Contributions (USD)

Donor	Income	Contribution
Australia	325,521	325,521
France	163,222	163,222
Japan	1,530,000	1,530,000
Norway	381,340	381,340
The Philippines	1,350	1,350
United Kingdom	640,000	640,000
United States of America	1,000,000	1,000,000
European Commission	540,326	528,055
Mainichi Shimbun Social Welfare Found. (JPN)	1,667	1,667
The Kadoorie Charitable Foundation (China)	100,000	100,000
TOTAL	4,683,426	4,671,155

Financial Report (USD)

Programme Overview	Current Year's Projects			
		notes		
Opening Balance	1,722,022	(1)		
Income from Contributions	4,683,426	(1)		
Other Funds Available	574,914			
Total Funds Available	6,980,362	(5)		
Expenditure	6,389,162	(1) (5)		
Closing Balance	591,200	(1) (5)		
Expenditure Breakdown			Prior Years' Projects	notes
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination*	1,758,252		38,664	
Community Services	211,564		19,739	
Crop Production	239,474		(13,627)	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	91,913		86,135	
Education	25,665		0	
Food	124,585		(30)	
Health / Nutrition	196,768		354,555	
Income Generation	8,940		0	
Legal Assistance	11,371		4,632	
Livestock	17,139		1,592	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	635,469		371,995	
Sanitation	31,588		77,709	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	399,678		9,226	
Transport / Logistics	354,807		(113,605)	
Water	176,279		205,770	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	1,194,506		(310,064)	
Combined Projects	60,645		(60,645)	
Sub-total Operational	5,538,643		672,046	
Administrative Support*	639,422		284	
Sub-total Disbursements/Deliveries	6,178,065	(5)	672,330	(6)
Unliquidated Obligations	211,097	(5)	0	(6)
TOTAL	6,389,162	(1) (5)	672,330	
Instalments with Implementing Partners				
Payments Made	3,381,647		1,478,695	
Reporting Received	2,187,141		1,788,759	
Balance	1,194,506		(310,064)	
Outstanding 1 January	0		399,006	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		151,499	
Currency Adjustment	0		72,422	
Outstanding 31 December	1,194,506		9,865	
Unliquidated Obligations				
Outstanding 1 January	0		1,096,249	(6)
New Obligations	6,389,162	(1) (5)	0	
Disbursements	6,178,065	(5)	672,330	(6)
Cancellations	0		423,919	(6)
Outstanding 31 December	211,097	(5)	0	(6)

* Includes costs at Headquarters.

Figures which cross reference to accounts

(1) Annex 1 to Statement 1

(5) Schedule 5

(6) Schedule 6