

GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEWING UNACCOMPANIED
MINORS AND PREPARING SOCIAL HISTORIES

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INTRODUCTION

The guidelines for completing Histories and Assessments are presented in two parts. Part I includes sections on basic interviewing skills, culture and behaviour, working in the camps and children and trauma. Part II includes age-specific interviewing techniques and the completion of the Social History and Assessment form* itself. No one part can be considered more important than the other and understanding of the concepts presented in each one will be necessary to complete the form. A copy of the Social History form is included as Annex I.

Part I is divided into four sections. "Interviewing Skills" includes basic material for conducting an interview, as well as more specific examples of working with children. Experienced interviewers may find they are already familiar with this material. If so, it can serve as a checklist or as a training tool in teaching others to conduct interviews. It may also be useful in working with an interpreter or with interested adult caretakers for the minors. "Culture and Behaviour" provides a definition of culture, suggests the role it plays in an interview and gives some considerations for cross-cultural interviewing. This is followed by information more specific to the refugee situation and by suggestions for working with interpreters and adult caretakers.

"Children and Trauma" is a general discussion on the behaviour of children and young adults in times of stress. This explains briefly some of the ways in which children and young adults react to the stressful situation they are in currently, compounded by the often traumatic experiences they have had. This section goes into some detail about the reasons minors may give inaccurate information. This is not to say that minors do not frequently give misinformation simply to improve their chances of resettlement or of being presented to a particular country. However, since it is widely believed that such misinformation is always deliberate, this section attempts to balance this belief by offering a further explanation for such behaviour. At the time the minor is interviewed, s/he will most likely fall into the older age-range, but the interviewer must take into account the younger age of the minor during previous experiences of loss, disruption of family life, war experiences and dislocation.

Part II provides specific interviewing techniques for infants, young children and adolescents. The guidelines in this section have to be balanced against the interviewer's own experience with children and the particular situation s/he must work in, which seldom provides to the "ideal interviewing conditions" or allows for the luxury of much time in the preparation, interview and follow-up procedures. Instructions for the completion of the social history form are given on a question-by-question basis. Again, the interviewer must tailor his/her methods and the presentation of the information itself to the particular working conditions, time constraints and current situation, while trying to include as many of the items listed as possible.

* The documents include both social history information and assessments of the minors. In the remainder of the text "Social History" should be understood as including both elements.

Finally, it is most important that the interviewer realize that the guidelines are a framework for his/her approach to conducting an interview. It is impossible to present every possible difficulty that will be encountered or the technique to overcome it, but it is possible to build the framework of ideas and information the interviewer must have to conduct a successful interview under these difficult conditions. It will be up to the skill and experience of each interviewer to take these basic but necessary concepts and use them in a way conducive to gaining the necessary information. The single most important objective of these guidelines is that the interviewer understand and integrate into his/her work the following concepts:

- to understand the situation each unaccompanied minor is in and to record it;
- to understand that the form presents a picture of who the minor is and how s/he came to be that way;
- to realize that the form is simply the tool used to present this picture, it can be adjusted to fit a minor's needs, a minor's story is not altered to fit the forms.

WHY THE SOCIAL HISTORY IS IMPORTANT

- The Social History will give a description of the minor's past experiences and present situation for those who will be caring for the minor, both in the camp and in the country of resettlement.
- The interviews must take into account both short-term and long-term uses of the form for decisions concerning the minor's future.
- The bio-data form and the social history may well be the only record the minor will have of this period in his/her life and will be of great benefit to the minor as an adult (both emotionally and as a legal record).

It is often difficult and time-consuming to complete forms for unaccompanied minors; the cases are complicated and the information uncertain. The question is repeatedly asked "why?", particularly when a bio-data form has already been completed and the minor may have been in the camp for some time. Before presenting some thoughts on how children and young adults cope with stress and suggestions for the completion of the form, a few examples are given of how this form can be used in the future.

The most immediate uses will be obvious to those working with the minors on a continuing basis. Information on the minor, along with interviews of adult caretakers, can indicate the well-being of the young person or the need for further considerations as to the minor's present care situation. It will also serve to identify special needs the minor may have for future care and placement within the camp. In other words, it provides information for giving the minor the most appropriate care under the circumstances.

There are serious implications for the long-term effects of this information from a legal point of view and for future decisions concerning the minor. Most minors for whom the form is completed will be involved in resettlement proceeding. It will be one of the few (if not only) sources of descriptive information for those working with the minor after his/her departure to a resettlement country. It will be invaluable in assisting in the initial placement of the minor by providing information on the special

needs of the individual who is arriving without benefit of family support, parental guidance or the maturity of adulthood. Likewise, it will prove just as helpful for those working with the minor on a continuing basis after his/her initial placement.

It will also provide one of the few sources of information for possible tracing efforts which could result in the reunification or at least ongoing contact with family members, and for maintaining contact with other relatives and friends important to the minor. Of great importance to the minor in the more distant future is the fact that this may be the only record s/he will have concerning his/her personal history and family members during this period of time. It is the minor's right to have access to such information in the future.

PART I

A. INTERVIEWING SKILLS

- An interviewer must be able to convey certain qualities in the interview, such as personal warmth, empathy, understanding, concern and respect for the minor regardless of the child's age or behaviour.
- It is essential that the interviewer gain basic understanding of such tools as observing, listening, questioning, and recording.
- The interviewer is responsible for more than simply recording a minor's answers. S/he must be knowledgeable, not only about the minor but also about the present situation, the cultural influences and how these affect the minor's responses.
- The interviewer will have to integrate the minor's culture and cross-cultural communications into the records and distinguish between culturally-conditioned responses and individual responses to the situation, in order to assess the minor's coping abilities and personal resources.

Basic concepts

The following information covers some of the basic points of interviewing, a skill in which all of us engage to some degree when we seek or give information to others. While some guidelines can be given, it is impossible to present a complete set of step-by-step procedures for interviewing, as the people involved are much too individualized to be reduced to such a set of rules. Interviewing involves a close and subtle relationship between the interviewer and the minor, which can be improved by a knowledge of the fundamental factors involved. For an interview to be successful, both the fears and the expectations of the two parties, interviewer and minor, must be understood. A rapport must occur between the two, a relationship that will enable the minor to reveal the essential facts of his/her situation and that will enable the interviewer to be most effective in helping.^{1/}

The following points are summarized from an article, "The Nature of Interviewing", by Annette Garrett, which outlines some of the skills necessary for interviewing:

Observation - While the interviewer can record what s/he observes, it is important to remember that people do not always say what they mean or act as they feel. The interviewer will also note what is not said or significant omissions in the minor's story. Physical cues such as posture or eye contact can be significant cues to watch for, but must be interpreted according to the minor's cultural background.

Listening - This is one of the fundamental tools of interviewing. Quite often a good listener is a good interviewer. The difficulty is in learning to be a listener without giving in to the urge to give advice, relate similar stories, or pass judgment, all effective ways of stopping the person from telling you more.

Questioning - This is another crucial element of the interview. It is important to create a reassuring atmosphere for the interview to occur in. The point of questioning minors is to understand and assist them, and it is this attitude that the minors will respond to in your questioning.

Your manner and tone of voice are important in how you ask the question. In general, you will receive better results by being encouraging and sympathetic and allowing the minor to talk freely a by trying to drag information out of him/her or with a bombardment of questions.

Talking - As important as the questions asked are the comments made by the interviewer to the minor. Generally, the interviewer should limit his/her comments to those which put the minor at ease or, as questions do, encourage him/her to tell you more. For example, counsellors often use the technique of repeating a key phrase or feeling about what has just been said to encourage a minor to continue his/her story.^{2/}

Following these basic skills, a few more concepts behind experienced listening and interviewing are presented below:

- "While we may believe we possess an adequate working knowledge of human nature and behaviour, it is often a combination of 'old wives' tales' and generalizations based on our limited experience or distorted by our own peculiar 'blind spots'. We tend to interpret others in terms of ourselves, without realizing that our own view may be greatly influenced by concealed prejudices and emotions. The Greek maxim 'know thyself' applies particularly to interviewers whose attention must be divided towards himself and how to react as well as towards the client."^{3/}
- Much of human motivation can be expressed by the counselling term "unconscious" and is unplanned or unintentional on the part of the minor. The realization of this allows the interviewer to be more tolerant and less judgemental of the minor's answers. Instead of always looking for the rationalization or intellectual reasons behind an answer, look to the cause based on feelings and emotions which may well lead you to the source, one of painful anxiety, for the minor.
- Every situation has its objective and subjective sides and both are always present in the interview. For every objective experience there are the minor's subjective emotions and attitudes towards the experience. The interviewer attempts to understand as much of the inter-relationship of the two as s/he can.
- Although we can judge statements about objective matters to be either true or false, we must not pass judgment on these subjective attitudes. Likewise, the interview is not built along the lines of "right" or "wrong" actions. It is essential for the interviewer to keep from imposing his/her own moral judgments on the minors. An interviewer can only record what is observed as objectively as possible and without personal conjecture.
- A minor may react to an interviewer in an extremely positive or extremely negative manner. It is important to realize that this may have little to do with you as a person but with the anxiety of the minor him/herself and what they perceive as the outcome of the interview. If an interviewer notices such intense feelings on the part of the minor, s/he need not become upset or alarmed by the reaction. First, you can think back to any action on your part that may have led the minor to behave in such a way. If one is not evident, you can assume the minor's behaviour is motivated by his/her own needs and can respond in a reassuring and understanding way. In other words, as an interviewer you represent many things to the minors, especially the older ones, and may trigger off a lot of feelings in them that are a result of their stressful and uncertain situation, such

as fear, hope, anger or desperation. They are reacting to you, not as an individual personality but to the role you are in and how they interpret that role.

Good listening skills are essential, especially with children and young adults who will gain confidence from your ability to listen to them. You are listening to their experiences not only as refugees but as children who have undergone an experience that many adults do not survive. Cultural aspects of listening will be discussed in the next section but, regardless of culture, everyone likes to feel they are being heard. You convey to the minors that you are listening to them through your physical presence and manner, your ability to repeat accurately what they have just said, and how you reflect the feelings and ideas they have expressed in the information they tell you.

The minor will have to trust you to a certain degree, even under the most stressful interviewing situations. It may only be your ability to present an attitude of acceptance and reassurance that will impress the minors and encourage them to talk to you. The minor must sense that you, as the interviewer, are genuinely interested in his/her individual view. In other words, the minors must believe that you accept them and will respect what you are told. Qualities that express this acceptance and concern include: "warmth, empathy, desire to understand, sincere concern for others, honesty, respect for the dignity of others, and acceptance of others".^{4/}

Finally, the minor's perception or understanding of what the purpose of the interview is will play a role in how s/he will answer. This will be discussed further in the section on interviewing techniques for adolescents and young adults. It will not always be possible to dispel a minor's mistaken belief in why you want the information. For example, minors may be convinced that you are in a position of greater power in the decision-making process than you actually are and no amount of explanation may change their minds. If this occurs, rather than argue the point and alienate a minor even further, it may be necessary to proceed with the interview, making notes on the minor's perceptions. Alternatively, you may want to request that an adult caretaker or interpreter conduct part of the interview while you observe.

It is most important that you be as honest as possible in your dealings with the minors and answer all questions they ask extremely carefully, so as not to imply that you are in a position of decision-making concerning their future. This is very difficult to do but if you are consistently honest in your answers, make an effort to provide accurate and factual information to their questions, and discourage rumours that may circulate within a camp, the minors will begin to accept your position and integrate it into a more realistic picture. In other words, in the midst of constant change and uncertainty in their lives, the more consistent you can be in their eyes, the greater the level of trust they will have in you.

B. CULTURE AND BEHAVIOUR

- Interviewers must understand that culture is learned at a very early age. We are flooded with cultural beliefs, values, and ways of doing and thinking. Culture is an essential part of ourselves. Our sense of who we are is closely tied to our cultural identity.
- In cross-cultural communication, much of the message can be lost between the interviewer and the minor because basic assumptions about the world are not shared, roles within the family and community are different, values are not identical and beliefs about "reality" are not the same.

- The interviewer must be able to distinguish between a minor's personal or individual response to stress and one that is based on cultural influences. What appears as an unusual response to the interviewer may be quite natural and appropriate within the minor's own culture.
- In recording a cross-cultural interview, special attention must be given to the meanings of certain words that express ideas, values or philosophies, to ensure they are understood in the same way the minor understands them.
- Attention to such details as spelling and pronunciation of names and locations are necessary for accurate recording.

The information below on culture and behaviour is taken from Working with Refugees: A Manual for Paraprofessionals. It explains the general concept of culture:

Definition of culture

Cultures are sets of rules, norms, and beliefs shared by a group of people. These rules, norms and beliefs are concerned with how members of the culture should behave toward others, communicate with one another and think about themselves and their world.

Culture gives us our sense of what is right and wrong, good and bad, masculine and feminine, desirable and disgusting, and even what is real and unreal. What is considered delicious in one culture (fish sauce) may be considered repugnant in another; what is considered immodest in one country (women showing their legs) may be absolutely lewd in another or high fashion in still another. What in one country is a sign of mental illness (seeing spirits) may be a sign of godliness in another, and a common everyday occurrence in a third.....

We can answer the question "where does culture come from?" by considering how a child "gets" his culture. In each generation, culture is passed along to children by parents and other adults, such as priests, teachers or relatives. Children are taught what to do and what not to do in various situations; they are taught what to like, what to think is beautiful, and what to be afraid of.

Children who are raised a certain way and taught certain things, grow up to be different from people raised in other ways and taught other things. Culture continues because parents in the same culture share ideas about how and what to teach. One thing parents teach children directly and indirectly is how to raise children, and this ensures that culture continues from one generation to the next.....

Because culture is learned at a very early age, and because as we grow up we are flooded with our culture's beliefs, values, and ways of doing and thinking, culture becomes an essential part of ourselves. Our sense of who we are is tied to our cultural identity. Even if we don't like things about our culture, it is hard to change. It is impossible for us to separate ourselves as individuals from ourselves as Americans or Cambodians or Mexicans.

For this reason, when people move from one culture to another they are under considerable strain. It is hard to change our cultural beliefs and to give up our original cultural values and customs, because to do so is to give up part of ourselves: we would have to change our ideas about who we are.

CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR THE INTERCULTURAL WORKER

Whenever people communicate, one person (the sender) has a message which he sends to the other (the receiver) by choosing a word or symbol he thinks will convey his intended meaning best. The receiver must 'decode' the message to find out what it means.

In any communication something is lost, because no words, gestures, or signs are ever perfect copies of our inner feelings or thoughts. But in cross-cultural communication, things are even more difficult.

Basic assumptions about the world are not shared:

Recently an American woman complained to her Vietnamese friend that she had to manage all the money and arrangements to buy a new house. The Vietnamese friend failed to understand or even recognize the American woman's frustration with her husband, since Vietnamese women are expected to take care of such matters and would be insulted if their husbands tried to take over those duties.

Values are not identical:

Cambodians value controlling their emotions in public. An American hearing a Cambodian man describe the killing of his family was shocked and confused by the calm way he told his tragic story.

Beliefs about reality are different:

Many Hmong believe bad dreams are the result of spirits. Many Americans believe bad dreams result from unconscious conflicts.^{5/}

Given these explanations of culture and its importance, we can now relate them to the minors being interviewed. One of the primary purposes for preparing the Social Histories and other records of minors is to assess and present a picture of the minor's coping abilities and resources. It is important that the interviewer be able to distinguish between personal and cultural responses to stress. For example, does the minor tend to withdraw when s/he is upset or refuse to talk to the adult caretakers, which is a personal or individual response. Does s/he belong to a culture where stress is expressed by psychosomatic symptoms such as headaches or sleeplessness? What may seem to the interviewer as an unusual or even "abnormal" behaviour in a minor, may be quite natural and appropriate within the minor's own culture.

The interviewer must also distinguish between situational difficulties or those which are on-going problems. For example, is the minor's behaviour affected by his/her situation only or does the minor have a previous history of similar problems which occurred long before the current stressful situation? Your knowledge of the minor's culture and the behaviour of the other minors in the same situation will help you determine whether s/he requires additional support or help in coping.

The definition of culture above emphasized that an essential part of ourselves and our identity is linked to our cultural identity. Before anyone can assess a minor's behaviour or even record the minor's answers correctly, it is necessary to understand the culture of the child. The interviewer's familiarity with the minor's culture is essential to correctly interpret the meaning of the minor's responses. While it may be impossible for you to learn all there is to know of the minor's culture, there are some basic questions that must be answered, such as what role the minor has within his/her family, community, or society, what are the cultural roles for men and women in the minor's country, and what are the minor's expectations based on cultural beliefs.

If time or experience does not allow for acquiring extensive cultural information, the interviewer can at least discuss cultural differences with the interpreter, adult caretakers, elder members of the refugee group or those designated as group or camp leaders. For those working in South-East Asia, specific cultural information under the headings of The Family and Roles, Within the Family, Boy-Girl Relationships, Attitudes Towards Education, and Religion and Moral Philosophy are presented in Annex II. It is assumed that if these suggestions are followed, along with extensive conversations with ethnic workers or interpreters, the interviewer will gain some knowledge of the culture. Interviewers who are experienced in working with refugee minors, will already be aware of the need for accurate spelling of names, dates, locations and clear recording of this information in the script used in the minor's own language. Even more difficult to identify are the more subtle differences of culture, religious beliefs and lifestyles.

The interviewer is responsible for more than simply writing the replies of the minor. S/he will need to apply knowledge of the situation and also try to anticipate any future changes in the situation that might confuse those reading the files. Are the names, locations, camps, etc., likely to change or to be renamed or even relocated? Has this already occurred and, if so, which location is the minor referring to? Is a name or location called by a locally-known name or one used only in this area or is it known by a different name in other parts of the country/world? Most important is to record the material so that the minor's answers will make sense to someone reading the file in another country, at a different time, possibly with little or no knowledge of the situation. While the interviewer cannot change the content of the answers, s/he can include further information or descriptions which may clarify to someone else, what is meant by the minor.

This will also be true in the use of language and phrases as well. For example, in conversations a western journalist had with Kampuchean minors, the word "revenge" was used. The journalist noted that when asked the meaning of the word "revenge" it was quite different for some minors than that of his own culture. Had he been unaware of this difference, he would have recorded the mistaken idea that all the minors were discussing aggressive and punitive plans against their country when, in fact, to some of them the word was defined as "the need to make the best of their lives for their country", "to make a bad person better", and to "work for a better life".^{6/} In other words the lack of knowledge of just one word can change the entire meaning of the child's answer. Once the interviewer is aware of the cultural differences in the meaning of words used in the interview, or the way they are translated, it is his/her responsibility to record and explain this aspect of the minor's answer for the benefit of those reading the files later.

C. WORKING IN A REFUGEE CAMP

- The interviewer must be knowledgeable, not only in interviewing children but of the refugee situation in general, and the life and activities within the camp. This is necessary to understand how and why the minor's life in a refugee camp has affected the minor and will influence his/her answers.
- A good working relationship between interviewer and interpreter is essential to completing the forms, along with the support and cooperation of other adults who know the minor.
- The interviewer is responsible, not only for individual assessments of a minor, but a description of how the minor functions and responds to the world she/he is presently in.
- The interviewer can build part of the Social History by recognizing potential sources of information, selecting those that have the best potential for supplying useful information and identifying the appropriate questions to ask each person in order to obtain the information.

It is important that the interviewer be knowledgeable in two distinct areas. One is in the interviewing of children, which is the concern of these guidelines, and the other is the particular refugee situation. In this area, your knowledge or experience is a crucial element in how you assess the minors during an interview and one of the factors that make such an assessment particularly difficult. Due to the unique situation these children find themselves in, the normal methods of assessment and documentation based on behavioural patterns and developmental stages for children are quite often invalid. While some literature on refugee children is certainly available, each country and camp situation is a different experience with its own set of stress and demands for the individual.

It is necessary to look not only at the minor from a child-care point of view, but also with regard to the camp population as a whole and the role s/he has in that population. Minors reflect the worries and concerns of the adults around them, their information is taken from that available to the other adults in the camp and they are subject to the same rumours and speculations concerning the future as those of the adults caring for them are. This is increasingly so as the minor gets older and his/her awareness of the situation increases without benefit of parental guidance and reassurance. Depending on the situation, a minor's answers may reflect a childish logic based on fearful speculation and conjecture which escalates during times of tension in the camp. In other words, what affects the adults will affect the older minors and, to a lesser degree, all the minors in the camp.

Much can be said about the attitudes and effects on people of long-term stays in refugee camps. The refugee camps in Southeast Asia, while offering some services, are still restrictive in geographical, economic, social and civil status terms. The result is a somewhat artificial environment where a large number of people are held, some with no knowledge of how long they may be there or where they may be going next. Employment is very limited or impossible in most situations and the normal roles, cultural habits, and daily routines are gone, leaving people in a limbo of uncertainty and frustration. Such situations often result in a mentality of dependence and apathy. For men, a way to earn a livelihood and provide for their families is gone and for women the traditional ways of caring for and nurturing their family and children are not possible. This can lead to a great loss of self-respect,

motivation or interest in the daily activities around them. Limitations in space, movement, provisions and even decisions concerning their own future, add to this apathy and frustration. While the refugee community may function in a way similar to the former ones, underneath is the lack of security or even information concerning the present situation. Forced to move from familiar surroundings, uncertain as to the future and living in a somewhat unstable situation can not be considered a "normal" lifestyle for adult or child.

There is a growing need to examine the effects of long-term refugee stays, particularly on young minors, whose childhood and developing years may be spent as a refugee. With an increasing number of refugees worldwide, it is a complex situation and one which requires special measures to protect such groups as unaccompanied minors. For further information on the subject of social problems in refugee camps, it is suggested the interviewer review Chapter II UNHCR Handbook for Social Services on "Preventive Approaches to Social Problems" (see bibliography).

Effects of the camp on interviewing

In this wider context of the minor's life in the camp, the interviewer must remember to take into account the general mood and atmosphere of the camp itself. Very often, if older children are living in a group care arrangement, they will mirror a younger version of the anxieties and fears of the adults around them and the mood of the camp itself. While they may not fully understand the reasons, children and young adults are still very sensitive to the levels of tension and anxiety in their situation. During an interview you may hear rumours, stories and beliefs that are circulating through the adult population as well, but without the benefit of adult judgement in what may or may not be true.

Of even greater influence will be the minor's immediate adult caretakers or authority figures. This could include houseparents, foster family, teachers or other camp personnel. Having at least an impression of these adults will be helpful to you and so you may want to have met with the, even briefly, before your meeting with the minor. If this is not possible, you can ask the minor him/herself, whose opinions they value or agree with. This is discussed further in the section on interviewing adult caretakers.

It is obvious then that the information you receive from a minor may change, decrease or increase as the level of tension in the camp changes. Consequently, it is more conducive to the interview if it can be done at a time when things are relatively calm in the camp, when there are no major movements or unexpected events occurring and the minor has gained some degree of security and familiarity with the present situation. Certainly this is not within the power of the interviewer to ensure and often interviews must take place in just the opposite atmosphere of stressful or emergency situations. If this is the case, these factors of stress and attitude within the camp and the effects it may have on the minor must at least be within the awareness of the interviewer, taken into account in the minor's responses, and the conditions noted in the file for others' information.

Another common occurrence in refugee settings is that of working in a situation without benefit of language or subtle cultural awareness. This will closely link the interviewer with the interpreter and others who assist in communicating with the minors and those who work directly with the minors (such as adult caretakers, teachers or child care agency personnel). Some communication difficulties in working with interpreters while interviewing are

discussed below. This is followed by suggestions for interviews with other adults working with the minors.

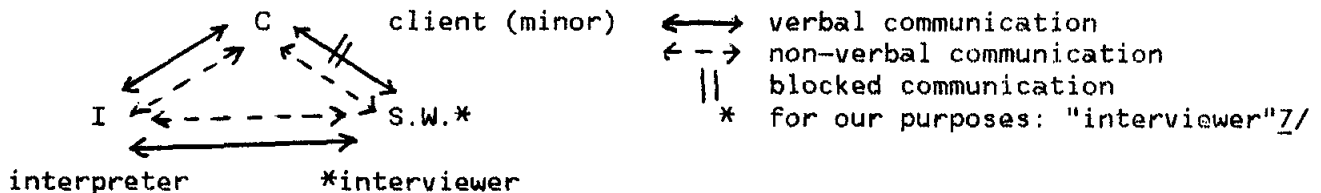
Working with an interpreter

Working with an interpreter can be a real benefit to the interview or a major hindrance, depending on how well the interviewer and the interpreter understand each other and work together as a team. When you can speak directly to the minor, the possibility of errors is greatly reduced as both verbal and non-verbal communication flows in only two directions between the interviewer and the minor. As it is so aptly pointed out in the paper "Working with Interpreters in Social Work Practice", achieving the "ideal" pattern of communication between three individuals is much more difficult:

The ideal pattern of communication and interaction

In an ideal interview situation, verbal communication and emotional exchange flow readily and easily between the three participants. The arrows indicate the direction in which most of the exchanges occur. The social worker communicates directly with the client, though the latter's understanding of verbal communications obviously depends on exchanges via the interpreter. Emotional exchanges are in some instances immediately and easily understood by the client, and in others will be readily translated by the interpreter.

The interpreter has an understanding of the language and culture of both the client and the social worker, and clearly translates in appropriate ways what each wants to know. Thus the client is able to make his needs known with little distortion and few obstacles. A working alliance is readily achieved in which the service required and the help being offered are clear.



The paper goes on to give examples. These are summarized below:

- Ethnic over-identification In this case, if the interpreter is of the same ethnic background as the minor s/he tends to identify too strongly with the minor's problems and then loses the necessary objectivity for his/her role. While there is a strong bond between the minor and interpreter, exchanges between the interpreter and interviewer are weak, and between the minor and interviewer they are blocked.
- Over-identification between interpreter and interviewer If the interpreter identifies too strongly with the interviewer, s/he may appear judgemental and patronizing to the minor. While communication is strong between the interpreter and interviewer, the minor will feel alienated and defensive.
- Interpreter dominance In this situation the interpreter abuses his/her position of "power" by restricting or changing the information to be translated. Communication is completely blocked between the minor and the interviewer.

- Rejection of interpreter by the minor For some reason the minor may reject or refuse to work with the interpreter. There may be an empathy and trust between the minor and the interviewer but no way to communicate due to the minor's mistrust of the interpreter.
- Lack of understanding between all three people Here, no contact is reached between any of the three people involved, possibly due to such things as role expectations, whether the three participants are male or female, and differences in cultural behaviour, etc.
- Finally, it is possible that the interpreter will have high language skills but not empathize with the minor or not convey an attitude of support and trust. Or the reverse can happen when the interpreter is presenting a supportive attitude and genuinely sympathizes with the minor but due to limited language ability is unable to translate correctly and explain what the minor is saying to the interviewer or the interviewer to the minor.^{8/}

Several possible problems between interviewers and interpreters have been presented. It should also be said that a skilled interpreter or even a sensitive person with a desire to assist the minors and a willingness to learn to work with the interviewer can be invaluable to the work of the interviewer and the quality of the interviews. The interpreter can be comforting and reassuring to the minor due to his/her ability to communicate directly, greatly increasing the trust level so necessary to the interview. Also, as the interviewer, you must be alert to not only the needs of the minor, the exchanges between the minor and the interpreter, but the needs of the interpreter as well. Translating is difficult and exhausting and information may be lost if the interviewer insists on long sessions or otherwise abuses the willingness and patience of the interpreter.

In more specific instructions for interpreters working with children, a few points are worth emphasizing. It is important to take the time to explain to your interpreter why you are conducting the interview and most importantly how the behaviour of the minor during the interview is as important to you as the actual information they are telling him/her. For this reason, you must insist on the more tedious method of "verbatim" translations of the child's answers without elaborating, explaining, summarizing, or altering them. How a child answers is a major source of information to you about the child's attitude and coping ability in the present situation. A child is trying to tell you something important about his/her feelings by the deliberate ignoring of the questions, avoidance of the answer, changing the subject or refusing to understand. This can often be mistaken as a misunderstanding on the part of the child by the interpreter who may then attempt to explain further or "correct" what sounds to him/her like a "wrong" answer in the interpretation to you. Consequently, you have missed an obvious attempt on the child's part to convey to you their distress at the questioning.

Finally, only through discussions with your interpreter will you be able to familiarize yourself with his/her opinions, views, and approach to the work. This is necessary to your impression of him/her and the work you do together. You will have a lot to learn from these discussions as well on such topics as culture and customs, child rearing practices, and their views and perceptions of the present situation. It will certainly be your responsibility to know what the interpreter's views are on the minor's future

and possible alternatives and how they are answering such questions from the minors. It is the shared empathy and knowledge of the other person between the two of you that will ensure the quality of your work together. Many of the same ideas concerning work with an interpreter will apply to your interviews with the adult caretakers or others working closely with the minors.

Interviewing adult caretakers and others

As the interviewer, you will be responsible for recognizing potential sources of information and then questioning other adults about the minors. You will then be able to compare your impressions of the minor with those of the adults. This will either confirm your opinions and observations of the minor or provide even more information. If the observations of others conflict with your own, it will be necessary to find out why. It is not so important that all opinions of the minor are the same but that you note the differences and the possible reasons why. In part, these differing opinions present the picture of the minors within the community, the ways in which they behave with others and how they conduct themselves.

Other than your interpreter or social workers working with the minors, your greatest source of information will be the adult caretakers. These may be the family a minor stays with, "houseparents" for or group care. While other situations may occur, these are the most common ones. The importance of enlisting the support and cooperation of other adult workers is discussed in the section on interviewing techniques. Who to approach and what kinds of questions to ask will be discussed here. First, possible sources of information are:

- Anyone involved in the daily care of the minors within the living situation. It is assumed this will be other refugee adults from the minor's culture.
- Education personnel, or anyone involved with the minor in a school, religious or technical training, language programmes, camp activities, sports, etc.
- Those listed by the minor as people s/he wishes to remain in contact if they are within the camp or if the minor is in some way communicating with them.
- Other refugee adults who may not be working daily with the minors but see them on a regular basis such as para-social workers, camp staff or refugee organizations, refugee workers for NGO agencies, etc.
- Refugee families or adults whom the minor sees on a regular basis, parents of minors, friends, those living near the minor whom s/he knows or spends time with.
- For older minors, some discussion with peers or groups of friends may be helpful.
- If minor has a history of medical problems, include medical personnel familiar with minor's problem and treatment.

Of all the adults you may identify the people you want to concentrate your time and efforts for interviewing would include:

- A refugee with the same ethnic background as minor.
- Someone who has had regular contacts with the minor on a long-term basis (for as long a possible in the situation).
- Someone the minor trusts and likes or otherwise indicates his/her confidence in the person.
- Someone who has taken the time to get to know the minor as an individual and expresses a genuine interest in him/her.
- Someone who seems willing and interested in discussing the minor with you (not reluctant or suspicious to share information with you).

After locating the adults you feel it is important to interview, what type of information do you need to know? It is impossible to list appropriate questions that will cover all refugee situations, but the principle behind such interviews will be discussed. In your work with each minor, you are concentrating on the individual child and observations of the more individual aspects of behaviour, development or trauma. In interviewing those around the minor, you are still collecting information of an individual nature but you are doing even more. By involving others, you are looking at the social aspects of the minor in a much broader picture. It is not just a description of his/her personality, but the next step of how that personality reacts or behaves in the world around him/her.

Practically all information known about infants will be from others' observation of how the baby or toddler functions in their world. For specific instructions on how to collect information from adults caring for young children, see Annex III. It provides questions concerning children's behaviour and can be asked of the adult caretakers to quickly pinpoint areas of difficulty. These questions concerning behaviour can be asked in private interviews with each adult or in small groups. Sometimes the use of adult group interviews produces more information as more people comment or remember actions of children that others didn't observe. The interviewer has the advantage of listening to the adult workers discuss and compare the minors which may provide him/her with an additional understanding of the children under discussion. These group discussions can also save a great deal of time for the interviewer.

Other groups of questions can be modified by the interviewer for use with those adults involved with different aspects of the minor's life. For example, appropriate questions for teachers, tutors or other training and educational situations would certainly be different than those asked of doctors, nurses, medical personnel in building a medical history, or of adult boat members or those who arrived with the minor. Once again, the basic situations and possible sources for the minor will be quite different, but the same general framework of how to find the information remains and the interviewer is collecting and recording information from:

- Those who share a common background or unique experience with the child (same ethnic background workers or boat arrival groups)
- Those who know the minor and see him/her on a regular basis (daily care and the child's role within his/her group)

- Questions appropriate to what the adults know of the child (for example, motivation and ability from teachers and educators)
- Comparison of opinions and observation of other adults

One last consideration in the area of interviewing those close to the minors is the importance of peers and the significant role peers play in their lives. For our purposes, it will be important not to overlook peer influences and observations concerning an older minor in the social picture of that young adult. This has particular significance for many refugee minors who are without families. The family typically supplies models for much of the behaviour during adolescence. For unaccompanied minors, information on male-female roles, attitudes toward work, play, occupations, marriage, etc. are missing. For those undergoing traumatic and dramatic changes in their lives, adult protection, comfort, security and advice are also missing. Thus, it is not surprising that strong bonds form between peers which may have a greater influence on the minor than they normally would. In talking to peers of a minor, you are not simply including childish opinions, but an important influence on the minor, regardless of the level of maturity expressed.

D. CHILDREN AND TRAUMA

- Children who have experienced severe trauma such as the loss of their parents or other family members may be unable to report on such events, may have changed the story or may deny that it ever happened, for their own emotional protection. In such a case the information should never be forced or pressured out of a child.
- An interviewer should find out as much as possible about the child before even beginning an interview.
- Children may appear quite normal and show no ill effects from previous trauma. However, this often causes problems for the child at a later time. It is very important for the interviewer to find out as much about the child's early life and experiences and record it for use by those dealing with the minor in the future.

It has often been noted that minors do not always give the correct answers to the questions asked in an interview. While it is true that minors, particularly the older ones, are aware of how their answers may influence a future decision, it is not always true that misinformation is given deliberately. It is important to have some understanding of how minors, especially younger ones, view the situation they are in and to what extent they feel responsible for what has happened to them. Apart from religious or cultural beliefs concerning their fate or karma, children tend to see the world from a "self" centred concept believing themselves to have a greater effect on what happens to them than is realistically true.

In other words, a child who has witnessed the death of a parent or been placed on a boat by a family who stayed behind, may feel that, in some way, this separation from the family is the minor's own fault. A great deal of time and thought may be spent in going over and over past events to discern what they did "wrong" or how they were not "good/obedient/clever" enough to have kept the lost parent with them. Another line of reasoning is to ask why the parent did not love the child enough to have stayed with them and consequently why are they so "unlovable" resulting in their present isolation from the family.

Older minors may experience a common phenomena found in adults known as "survivor's guilt". They feel tremendous pressure, as the one who is left alive or selected to escape, to conform to their understanding of their parents' wishes for them. Often minors talk of being visited by parents or relatives in dreams where they are instructed to follow their present course of action. This pressure, along with their belief in filial piety, may lead them to answer questions, not based on the knowledge and opinions they have now but based on what they feel is in the best interest of the family or on specific but inappropriate instructions by parents in the past. For some minors answers will be distorted by a combination of guilt and anxiety; guilt and remorse that they were not able to keep the family together, and anxiety in meeting the parents or their own expectations for the future.

Minors will react and respond to the stress of an interview based on how they perceive the interview and their individual coping ability. Whether a minor was involuntarily separated from the family or requested to depart, most have survived dangerous or life-threatening experiences before their arrival in the host country. Others may have memories of previous interviewing situations by authorities which presented a real threat to their personal safety and that of their families. In such situations "misinformation" may have become the norm. For example, Khmer minors arriving in Thailand quite frequently changed their names or were confused about family names that had changed frequently as a necessary survival tactic under the Khmer Rouge. Likewise, Vietnamese minors arriving by boat acted on instructions from parents in revealing limited family histories and reasons for fleeing the country until they felt it was safe to reveal further information. Many minors, having been on their own for some time, competing with adults for basic necessities, or in their anxiety to promote their family's case, will rely on "misinformation" as a precaution to the risk of losing the opportunities they have gained so far.

For younger minors, lack of accurate information may be based on their great need to deny the loss of their parents and family. Many children are not able to face the reality of such painful events and find it essential to change the story to one more acceptable for them emotionally. For example, a 10 to 12 year-old who has been separated from the family may not be able to bear the uncertainty and constant fear for the family's welfare. S/he may also feel somewhat responsible (as previously mentioned) for the event leading to the separation and this results in a burden of guilt, fear and grief too great for the minor to live with. It is much easier to state that the parent simply "died" when asked, than to continue to be questioned and reminded of their greatest fear and uncertainty. It can also be a childish response to the anger a child feels (along with the sense of grief and loss) at having been abandoned or lost by the family.

This type of response has frequently been heard during the process of arranging family reunification for minors who had perviously said that all family members were "dead". In a series of interviews, a child could go from refusing to recognize a photo of a relative, to admitting to knowing the person, to saying they were a distant relative or neighbour, and finally accurately identifying the person as an aunt, sister, or in a few cases, the parent. Along with the need to deny their believed loss was the overwhelming fear that the person would somehow be "lost" again. To admit that a person they had declared "dead" to them was alive, was to risk again the pain and grief of a future separation.

When a minor is interviewed over a period of time the story may begin to change, as in the example of the reunification attempts mentioned in the previous paragraph. This can indicate that a process of integration is occurring. If the minor is experiencing a certain amount of stability and security in their present situation, this may allow them the time and emotional recovery necessary to begin to approach the thoughts they have been denying. Slowly they will find a way to integrate or accept the true version of their experiences and begin to replace the unrealistic defences with the reality of the past. In working with children under normal circumstances, a counsellor would assist in this process by allowing the child to express these feelings though drawing, work with clay, or through play sessions with the counsellor. As this is not the case in most refugee centres, the use of such methods with children are not recommended and the risk to the child will be discussed in the following section.

In the process of denial, the opposite of the examples given can also occur. A child who has witnessed the actual death of a parent or whose family have forced them to leave the country in the belief it is in their best interest, may not accept this loss and claim that relatives are alive or are living in an unspecified location, or have resettled somewhere unknown to the minor. Sometimes these stories may change based on actual information the minor receives from others in the camp, such as a letter or finding a former neighbour with news of the family, while others will simply change as the child is better able to accept what has happened to them.

Given the above information on how minors cope with loss and grief, it is easier to understand the responsibility an interviewer has in questioning a child. From the adult point of view, you are merely requesting the minor to give straightforward answers concerning himself/herself and family members. From the minor's point of view, the questions may pose a threat to the very beliefs s/he has used to maintain stability and emotional control in the face of great loss, upheaval and dislocation. At the least, such questions provoke a great deal of anxiety as to their purpose or what the "right" answer might be to a minor who feels that their ability to manipulate the interviewer is the only means of survival or the achievement of his/her personal goals.

The difficulty for the interviewer is that the type of information needed is of the most personal and emotional kind and very often it is needed in a short period of time under tense conditions. It is crucial that the interviewer, who may be working under time pressures with a large number of interviews to do, understand that a minor must not be pushed to acknowledge something that he or she is not ready to. Minors will proceed at their own pace and the interviewer must trust them to know what this is in such personal matters.

Equally important is that an interviewer recognize the signs from a minor indicating that his/her personal limit has been reached. This can be done in several ways. One is to know as much about the child as your time and situation will permit before ever beginning an interview. Adult caretakers and others working with the minor, whether s/he is a small child or a teenager, can give you some idea of the minor's behaviour and attitudes in the current situation. If this is not possible, the minor's behaviour must be observed by the interviewer, consequently the initial "interview" will consist of reassuring conversations and material other than the family questions. This allows the interviewer time to acquaint him/herself with the minor before

proceeding. In fact, if time allows, this is not a bad example to follow with any child regardless of how much information you obtain beforehand. This session can serve the purpose of preparing the minor for what is to come and to decrease some of his/her fears concerning the actual questions.

If time and the situation do not allow for such preparations or observations, the interviewer must recognize signs of distress in the minor during the interview and go no further. It may be necessary to conduct a modified version of the questions based on the interviewer's opinion of the minor and the urgency of obtaining the information. For example, a minor's persistent silences, growing hysteria, outburst of anger, or lack of any emotions or personality in the responses are all signs to the interviewer that the minor is in distress. Certainly some emotions, tears, or outbursts of feelings are to be expected, but those out of character for the minor or to an extreme are obvious warnings to push the minor no further at this time. If time allows, the interviewer may be able to work with the adult caretakers and build a stronger relationship with the minor before continuing the interviews and then only by proceeding at the pace indicated by the minor. Unfortunately, refugee situations do not often allow the luxury of time and the ongoing counselling necessary for such work. This is why it is so crucial for the interviewer to remain alert to the minor's indications that more than a normal amount of anxiety and grief are being provoked.

In concluding an interview, there is the same responsibility to recognize the emotional turmoil this can cause the child, even though it is not always obviously expressed. It is the interviewer's responsibility to take the time at the end of the interview to talk with the minor and bring him/her back to a more secure and positive discussion. This can be greatly supported by the involvement in the discussion at this point of an adult caretaker close to the child who can follow up on the child's needs following the departure of the interviewer. A sincere expression of interest in the minor's ideas, friends, daily activities or hobbies on the part of the interviewer can help direct the minor away from the painful memories evoked by the questions. It provides the opportunity for the child to "gain control" of the direction of the conversation or to "interview" the interviewer which is of more importance than the actual content of the conversation. The interviewer may need to arrange for others to follow up on the minor later the same day or the next to note their behaviour and discuss any further support needed for the minor with the immediate caretakers.

PART II

A. INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES FOR DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

This section offers age specific guidelines for interviewing children. As of June 1985, the age breakdown of unaccompanied minors in South-East Asia showed that 72% fell into the 15-17 year age bracket, 17% were 13-14 years, 8% were 10-12 years, and only 3% were 9 years or below. Even though the majority of minors are adolescents or young adults, it is still important to discuss the younger children and present ideas of child development for two reasons. One is that those who are below 12 or 13 years old require more assistance than those who are older. The younger the child, the more vulnerable or subject to long-term effects from their experiences they are. This is not to say that all younger children will show serious problems simply because they are younger. In fact, they may appear to be quite happy and unconcerned in the present situation. Even so, the younger the child, the more childish the coping ability in the situation. Studies have shown that when young children live through the types of experiences the minors will have, this often doesn't manifest itself until they reach adolescence or beyond. Greater care must be given to provide a sense of security and stability for younger children before attempting an interview.

The second reason for discussing the development of young children is that so many of the older minors were young children when traumatic events occurred. The experiences of the minors when they were younger will affect how they are now. War, loss, dislocation, violence, and family separations have often been the "norm" for minors before their departure. The minors may have spent their formative years in unusual conditions for the families, communities, cultures and countries. While some rural areas may have been less affected than urban ones, all refugee children will have experienced some degree of trauma. This makes it important to know the age of the minor and what types of past experiences s/he may have had. This is not only for a record of their personal history but to simply understand how and why this may affect the answers they give or their behaviour at this point in time, regardless of the fact that they are young adults.

Finally, the interviewer must realize that there are many kinds of "ages" to be considered. When interviewing a minor, whether s/he is 5, 10 or 15, levels of maturity need to be assessed in the following areas:

- chronological age (the number of years lived)
- biological age (physical conditions and development)
- psychological/emotional age (emotional development and concerns)
- sociological age (roles and relationships in society)
- cognitive age (developmental level of thinking structures)
- experiential/historical age (events experienced in life)

In every culture, to a greater or lesser extent, at least some of these concepts of age are used to organize social relations and to give structure to individuals' lives. In all cultures people are expected to behave in an age-appropriate manner, to "act their age". Part of our socialization process is the learning of our culture's age norms (what our culture teaches is right and wrong, desirable and undesirable to do and not to do at different ages). As we grow up (become socialized), these age norms become part of us (internalized), and we increasingly use age to help us know what to expect of ourselves and of others.^{9/}

1. Interviewing for infants and pre-verbal children

- Photographs of the infant are a very high priority and worth the pre-planning, time and effort it may require to arrange for them to be taken.
- An infant loses not only his/her family, but personal history as well. A record of the infant through observation of physical health, daily habits and schedules, disposition and attachment to others is a crucial part of a baby's Social History Form.
- Immediate information on the location, time, circumstances and events of an abandoned infant could prove invaluable at a later time for tracing or legal purposes.
- Likewise, a search for any adults in the area who may have cared for the child, have seen the child with an adult or family, or is even casually acquainted with the infant's family needs to be done as soon as possible before people disperse or move away from the area.

While they are the smallest percentage of minors, infants certainly require more individual care than any of the others. Information to be collected for very young children will be discussed in two equally important parts. The first will be what you can actually find out from the child and the other, what you must try to find out from those around the child.

What the infant can "tell" you

The importance of photographing an infant as soon as possible following his/her arrival can never be repeated enough. This is one of the few hopes for any tracing attempts as infants change so drastically in such a short period of time. This is made even more dramatic if there is evidence of malnourishment and the infant is now being well-fed under nutritional supervision. While the baby's mother may be able to "pick him out in a crowd" this will not be the case of a distant relative or neighbour who may be able to provide important family information were they to recognize a photo of the child. While a photograph is important to the record of any minor, speed is of the utmost importance for the infant due to their rapid growth and development and due to the need to circulate it quickly before those who recognize the child move out of the area. Ideally, pictures would be taken every 2-3 months for a photo history of the changes the child undergoes.

Not only has an infant or young child lost his/her family, s/he has lost his/her history as well. Without knowing anything of previous health, illnesses, likes and dislikes, it is important to begin building a picture of the child's personality for the records. This can only be done by the observation of the child's health, his/her patterns of sleeping, eating and other routines, moods and behaviour. An example of an Infant Health Form is included as Annex IV. It serves as a guide for the information that needs to be recorded frequently to establish a record for the child. Medical records and comments of caretakers must also be included on a regular basis.

Another way of looking at the connection between childhood experiences and their consequences in later life is through an understanding of the stages of child development. By knowing the series of stages a child goes through and comparing the individual child to these stages we can see how the infant is progressing in his/her growth at many levels. An interviewer responsible for preparing the social history of an infant should seek the assistance of

medical personnel with pediatric experience. A basic chart on the steps or stages of infant development is included as Annex V. Without some knowledge of these steps you will be unable to assess the infant's progress and should limit your comments to strict observations of the baby's behaviour. If you do have some background in childcare or understand the basic theory you may be able to make comments on the progress of the infant as compared to the steps as well as the circumstances of the baby which may be affecting this progress:

It is important to understand that the theory of child development presented came from observations in Western countries. The desire to evaluate performance is a Western characteristic and a child's desire to achieve in such an assessment is extremely Western in origin. Infants from other cultures will follow different versions of this pattern. However, from an evaluation of performance, conclusions about the infant's ability can be made. While all infants develop through the same stages, the timing is different and what appears as being normal for one group may be slow or accelerated for another. It is your responsibility to know what the cultural variations might be for the minor's culture. It is also necessary to take into account possible setbacks in development caused by early or prolonged malnutrition, early separation from the mother, or other factors which will affect the child's performance and development. In other words, knowing the stages of development is of no use to you unless you can integrate the necessary cultural information. If no such information is readily available it will be necessary to establish an idea of the norm in the camp and the child-rearing practices of the infant's culture. This can be done by contacting those responsible for pediatric services, supplementary feeding units, mother-child health care programmes, visiting nurses or hospital personnel. From this information, two comparisons can be made: that of the minor and the minor's age group under normal conditions in their culture, and also the minor compared with other infants in the camp with their families. Thus you can comment on the minor's progress based on his/her past history and based on his/her current care arrangement.

What the infant's situation can tell you

While it may seem difficult to obtain much information on an infant or child who does not talk yet there are certain efforts that can be made to present a more complete picture. It is crucial to obtain as many details as possible on young minors. In the case of an abandoned infant found alone (more appropriate to Thailand), it is necessary to have a record of the exact location where the baby was found, the time and the circumstances of who and how the infant was found, and also the events of the day. For example, a baby found by a medical team in a border area, noting that shelling occurred to the east of the location, could indicate that adults who may have been with the child fled in a particular direction or to a certain location. It might then be possible to find someone who recognizes the child or knows something about the family. Obviously, time is extremely important as the longer it takes to begin the search for adults who have information, the more likely it is that they may have moved or been relocated and the information will be lost. In other words, the sooner the information on location, time, circumstances and events is known, the greater the chance of finding additional information for successful tracing. While you, as the interviewer, will not be the one looking for or discovering abandoned infants, you are responsible for the information collected on them and may need to discuss the type of details you need with those who will be in a position to locate the minors.

A more common occurrence in camps is for a baby to be brought forward by a non-relative caretaker who is no longer able or willing to care for the child. Again, they are the interviewers' only link to information on the child and an interview needs to be done as quickly (and as detailed) as possible. For example, a caretaker may say the child was left with them by a woman who fell ill and was hospitalized, died, felt unable to care for the child, etc. Obviously, the sooner this can be verified, before the child's parent or relatives have been moved or relocated again, the greater the chance of reunification or additional information that can lead to it. Even the slightest knowledge of the adults with the minor previously, if recorded, could later on be invaluable in obtaining further information.

If it is possible and provides adequate care for the child, it may be preferable to leave the child with the non-relative caretakers if they are willing. This not only prevents an additional move for the child but it is possible that the parents may come back to the family when they are able. If they have purposely abandoned the child and have selected this family, they may later inquire or want to visit the child. It is also possible that there is a closer relationship between the child and the selected family than was reported.

Obviously, if an infant is abandoned on a maternity or hospital ward, the medical personnel, patients near to the bed of the mother, or records of the mother's previous address can be recorded for the infant. There is also the situation where a child may become orphaned within the camp and again, the need for interviews with those adults who knew the parents or relatives of the child is crucial. Possibly there is a relative or close friend who may be willing to care for the child within the camp. If the parent died in hospital, again, the medical personnel or other patients may be able to supply information on the family.

The examples of situations that have just been discussed will, obviously, vary from camp to camp and country to country but they provide some idea of the information that needs to be recorded with small children and how to go about obtaining it.

2. Interviewing young children

- You must first have a basic understanding of child development before you can comment on a child's behaviour in an interview or on the reports from others about the child.
- It is very important not to resort to "labels" or one-word descriptions of a child's behaviour. You must observe, describe the behaviour, and note the frequency of the behaviour for a useful record.
- Altering your style of questioning and spending time discussing with the child and helping him/her to reconstruct his/her daily schedule before the separation from the family will provide important information on who the child is and how he may cope with the stress of camp life and resettlement.

The section discussing Children and Trauma has already given examples of why children give deliberate misinformation in answer to questions. Now the problem of interviewing children who are confused or too young to know exact details of their personal histories will be discussed further. Once you have established as much of a trusting relationship as possible in the circumstances, have gained as much information about the child and his/her

behaviour from others as you can, and have assessed the level of stress and how the child is coping, how do you sort out the answers you receive to questions that still make no sense?

We can once again consider the stages of development established for children, this time in the area of "cognitive thinking". This is concerned with intellectual development or how biological maturity is related to cognitive functions, or more simply, "ideas" that the child uses to make sense of the world around him/her. According to Piaget, the various stages in the development of a child's intelligence are broken down as follows:

"0 - 2 years	Sensorimotor	The child is concerned with his body, with what he can touch and manipulate, and with the real objects in the world around him.
2 - 7 years	Pre-operational	The child begins to use words and images to think about reality. He tends to think he is the centre of the world and has difficulty imagining himself in the place of another.
7 - 12 years	Concrete operational	The child begins logical thought and can see things in relational terms; he is able to see the reverse of things and put himself in the place of other.
12 years and up	Formal operations	The child can think in abstract terms, reason by hypotheses, and generalize. He becomes interested in ideas, the future, and political, religious, and social problems.

Piaget's work is important because it shows that children of various ages cognitively are not just ignorant versions of adults but rather have distinctive ways of thinking about and interacting with their world."^{10/}

Interviews with children of ages 2-12 years (verbal-adolescence) must take into consideration the level of intellectual development of the child and the major shift in thinking that occurs between "pre-operational" and "concrete operational" within this age group. From the time children can express themselves verbally until about seven years of age their world is much more "self" centred. Within the Indo-Chinese cultures, the ability to focus on others is highly regarded and is evident in the individual's devotion to family, clan or community. Regardless of cultural influences, children will still begin with the feeling that they are the focal point of all around them and the controlling factor in their lives and then shift to the realization that others are different in feelings and actions than they are and begin to imagine themselves in the "shoes" (place) of others, an important step in the child's thinking abilities.

Along with cultural influences there are many other significant factors in the child's life which affect the "learning rate" or variations in development. The interviewer's assessment of a child's ability to think logically and to see the relationship between cause and effect is extremely important in how s/he will record the child's thoughts and answers. In other words, the level of intellectual development (thoughts and ideas) in comparison with emotional maturity (feelings) will affect the minor's answers and as a child grows older the ability to recall events in a logical way or understand the meaning of some details will improve. The continuing development and growth of these areas in a child may, in time, even alter his/her answers to questions s/he was asked at an earlier age. Without going into further detail in the area of developmental theory, it is important that the interviewer grasp the basic concept and integrate it into his/her framework for assessing a young child.

Observations of the child

Your impressions of the minor and how s/he responds in the interview is a major source of information. You will need to be attentive at two levels throughout your meetings with the child. There is the recording of information and memories from the child on the family and the past. The other is observing the child and his/her reactions to the questions, to you or the interpreter and how the child is able to cope with the interview as it proceeds. Your assessment of the child's maturity and comprehension along with your comments on his/her personality and coping ability will add enormously to the recorded answers. It is the critical quality needed to fill in the picture you are building of who the child is, as an individual.

With young children, speech will not necessarily be your main source of information on their behaviour. Some of the more obvious signs of anxiety in a child have been discussed already. In your interview with the child's caretakers, they will point out to you such ongoing problems as frequent nightmares, sleeplessness or lack of appetite. You will be watching for other signs in the interview itself such as avoidance in answering, obvious misinformation, or a child who is too aggressive or too quiet. Without making assumptions as to why the child is acting in such a way, you will need to take into account cultural aspects and record your observations carefully.

Here, it is worth mentioning, the extreme importance of avoiding the use of "labels" in your reports. While it may seem to save time or to accurately describe the child to use the words "depressed", or "neurotic", etc., it is a great disservice to the child. Everyone reading such a term will interpret it differently or, even worse, accept your label without actually observing the child to see if it is still true. It is extremely important that you do not label but observe and describe what you observe. For example, if you are tempted to label a child as "depressed", instead explain what the behaviour is and how frequently it occurs. You would do this by reporting that the minor does not speak freely with the other minors or play with them, is not doing well in school and is found crying and unresponsive three or four times a week by the houseparent. This or other descriptions of behaviour are of much greater use professionally than any of the labels you might use that will prove worthless. Examples of such words to avoid are "neurotic", "psychotic", "depressed", "manic", "schizophrenic", "abnormal", "mentally disturbed", etc.. If a child appears to be seriously disturbed, an assessment of the child needs to be done by qualified mental health personnel and not the

interviewer. An inaccurate description of the condition or inappropriate diagnosis recorded in the child's records can seriously damage resettlement options. At the same time, attempting to ignore an obvious problem and leaving it undiagnosed can lead to an inappropriate placement for the child.

Information from the child

While observation supplies a lot of information, it will not fill in the unknown details of a child's past history. How does an interviewer find out these answers from a child too young to remember distances, locations, names or relationships? While some questions will remain unanswered you can attempt to rephrase some of them to a child to gain some idea, if not the exact answer. For example:

- a child may not be able to tell you what relatives s/he has or how many brothers and sisters her mother had. However s/he can tell you who stayed in his/her house or who used to come and visit, if they came often or brought along children. Did s/he go to stay with other people? Was it far away or nearby? Did she see the people s/he stayed with every day? Every week? Only once in a while?
- A child may not know his/her father's or mother's occupation and socio-economic conditions but s/he may be able to tell you if the father worked in an office/store/field/school, etc. If the mother was at home during the day or if she stayed at the market/store/field too. Did the child "help" them at work? The child can also describe the family's house, what it was made of, running water, in town, out of town, did they have animals, a garden, etc. What kind of transportation did they use, a car, a motorbike, a bicycle, walked, took the bus, etc.? What sorts of things did they have in the house: electricity, radio, television? Did others in the neighbourhood have these things too?
- On questions of education and literacy, did the child's mother or father like to read the newspaper, magazines, books, at home? Did s/he have books at home? Did s/he, her brothers or sisters go to school? If s/he did, what did s/he do each day? What was the schedule and what did s/he study?
- On locations, while a child may not know the exact name, s/he may be able to describe it to you or to point out something unusual or special about it. For example, did s/he live near a river/lake/beach? Was there a paved/dirt road/highway near the house? Was there a special temple/market/landmark nearby? Were there mountains or fields? Farms or buildings, etc.?

You must also remember that children do not have the same concept of time as adults do. You may need to find significant events, seasons, etc. to help pinpoint a reference to time and its passage for a child. (Time concepts are also influenced by cultures and may vary.)

The interviewer can use his/her own imagination in following the style of questioning presented in the examples. While it may not give an exact location, name or relation, it will add greatly to the picture of the child's previous life and fill in much of the missing history in terms of lifestyle and things or events that were familiar to the child.

While it may not be of significant use in tracing or current care, it is extremely important information on the future care of the child. A minor faces a great deal of internal conflicts and conflicts of loyalty in a resettlement situation. When a child has lost a parent, it is not unusual for him to rely on the parent image s/he carries within for comfort and security. When faced with the pressure of forming new attachments and with supporting adults, this parental image from the past is threatened. The more a future caretaker knows of the child's past lifestyle and history, the more they will be able to help the child adjust in the new situation and assist him/her in the struggle to integrate the past with the present.

Psychologists or counsellors who work with children suffering from trauma, or emotional disturbances often use play sessions, drawing or working with clay to encourage a child to express his feelings and thoughts. In the Kampuchean camps, it became quite popular for children to produce drawings and paintings of life under the Khmer Rouge. These methods are not recommended as useful with minors, especially if the person has no professional training in such areas. These are clinical tools for treatment of disturbed children and are not methods to be used in an interviewing situation. If a child asks that you look at drawings s/he has done, that is different. In fact, it may be helpful to the child to talk about them with someone whom s/he trusts. In such situations, the focus should be on what the child needs to tell you about the drawing and not on what you might be able to find out by questioning the child. It can be quite harmful to the child if such sessions are mishandled. There is often a fine line between interviewing and counselling but this is one area the interviewer should not attempt to enter with a child without professional guidance.

How others observe the child

You will gain information on children depending on how old, how mature and how willing to talk with you they are. Often your answers may need to come from others who see the child on a regular basis or who care for the child daily. Whatever the role, we can stress again the importance of these caretakers, interpreters, teachers, etc. to assist in completing the form. As the interviewer, you will question other adults about the child. You will then be able to compare your impression of the minor with those of the adults. This will either confirm your opinions and observations of the child or it will provide important information if they conflict. If the observations of the others conflict with your own, it will be necessary to find out why (as discussed in Section V).

It is possible that the caretaker of a young child will have observed the child playing with others and acting out family scenes of an everyday nature. S/he may have overheard or observed the child giving some family information during play that the child is too shy or frightened to talk about in an interview. It is always worth asking what they may have heard or seen in a child's play that provides useful information. Also, these caretakers will be able to give information on the child's social patterns and interactions, closeness to other minors, adults, etc. and behavioural patterns on a daily basis.

3. Interviewing adolescents and young adults

- In most cultures, adolescence is a period of "crisis" for a young person even in the best of times as they suffer from a crisis of identity, separation, sexual feelings, and abstract thought. They bring to the interview a personality undergoing rapid changes in a relatively short time.
- Refugee adolescents also must include a disrupted childhood in countries plagued by war and the stressful living conditions of growing up in a refugee camp situation.
- An older minor may appear mature and see the world through the eyes of an "adult" while still operating with childish responses, defenses and belief in the situation.
- The interviewer is facing a more complicated interviewing situation as s/he will need to record the minors' opinions and request in the answers and then try to gain enough information about the minor to indicate whether such wishes are based on reality or fantasy, a result of factual information or peer pressure and family loyalties.

This age group is by far the largest throughout South East Asia and is predominantly male. Unfortunately it is also one of the most difficult to assess. While it may be difficult to complete histories on young children due to lack of information, the older minors are more complicated in the types of information and validity of their answers. These teenagers are unique for the very fact that they are entering young adulthood now, after growing up in stressful and disruptive times within their countries. For these adolescents there is no set of guidelines or stages of regular development to measure against a childhood of war, dislocation and loss. It is not at all surprising that their past is reflected in their lack of trust, understanding and acceptance of the purpose of your interviewing. We can add to their unusual background, the normal difficulties of reaching puberty and the ensuing development of identity, self-confidence and peer pressures. While not all cultures will follow the traits of adolescent development that will be discussed, most have some form of ritual or custom which marks the passage from childhood to adulthood. It is your responsibility to know what the customs are for the adolescents you are working with to accurately assess their present adjustment.

"Psychologists do not all agree on the reason the stage of adolescence is so difficult. Eric Erikson said the critical issue is identity, or role confusion; Peter Blos said the critical issue is separation; Freud said it was dealing with maturing sexual feelings; and Piaget said it is the development of abstract thought".^{11/} It can be said that adolescence, for a variety of reasons produces confusion, uncertainty, aggressive or barely controlled emotions, to an already stressful living situation for a refugee teenager. Add to that the loss of family and the possible move to a new country and it is no wonder the interviewer has difficulty in getting coherent information from some minors.

Listed below are some general comments on the effects of adolescence on behaviour under normal circumstances. This will be followed by the more practical considerations of a refugee minor's experiences:

Adolescence is usually defined as beginning with puberty. Puberty describes the combination of physical changes boys and girls go through relatively suddenly as they become physically mature. These changes are produced by hormonal changes...

The effect of these male and female hormones is not only physical but emotional as well. Studies show, for example, that the male hormone, testosterone, increases emotional drives for sex and aggression. Female hormones have similar direct links to the emotions. The sudden increase in hormones which occurs with puberty results in adolescents having very strong feelings that they often find difficult to control or understand...

The adolescent's emotional upheaval is made even more difficult by the problems of having to get used to his new body. It takes them a while to get adjusted to their new shapes and to develop a good body image. They often feel awkward or ugly in their newly matured bodies. Also, their new bodies produce a change not only in how they see themselves but in how they are seen and treated by others...

[T]hese changes force the adolescent to deal with the challenge of identity. As boys and girls become men and women, they must develop a stable identity, a sense of who they are. This involves developing a secure sex-role identity and a work identity.

Around twelve or thirteen years of age most children develop and solidify their ability to think abstractly. This means they can now think about difficult moral and intellectual questions and argue effectively with adults. As they grow older they will continue to gain knowledge but their ability to think and reason will not change...

Because of the emotional, physical, and cognitive changes brought on by puberty adolescents are often[*] in conflict with their families and society...

They (then) turn to peer groups such as clubs, cliques, sports teams, and gangs for support and identity. Their new ability for abstract thought mixed with their desire to differentiate themselves from their parents and other adults often lead them to be very critical of society. They are often very reflective, original, and idealistic in their feelings about social change. At other times they are very short-tempered, self-righteous, and destructive.^{12/}

In working with adolescents it is helpful to keep a few suggestions in mind. Due to the emotional needs of the adolescent it is best to approach them in a non-threatening way in your interviewing:

- The refugee adolescent struggles to balance his old culture and his family's ways with the demands and attractions of life in a new culture.
- "Many of the extreme feelings, opinions, and behaviours are normal at this age and will pass if we respond patiently... Confrontations with adolescents will usually just aggravate the problem and will seldom lead to mutual understanding.

* While such conflicts do occur in most cultures, they may be less common than in Western societies.

- Don't back adolescents into corners. They feel things strongly, and they tend to see the world in black and white, right and wrong terms. They will not back down easily and will feel that it is a matter of pride and independence not to back down...
- They need adults as role models and they need a chance to sort out their generational differences with adults...
- They need to be with other people going through the same kinds of things." 13/

Along with this very basic background on the growing pains of adolescents, we will discuss the particular difficulties for refugee minors and your attempts to prepare Social Histories for them.

The fact that these minors have the disadvantage of an unusual childhood and are living in an artificial situation, that of a refugee camp, makes an accurate assessment of them quite difficult. These two factors must be taken into account in the course of the interviews, the second complicating factor is that of the minor's age and experiences. You must now take into consideration the minors own feelings, opinions and beliefs in your answers along with his/her expectations, anxieties and hopes for the future. Along with your observations on behaviours and opinions of the minor, those of the interpreter, and adult caretakers, you now have the opinion of the minor to consider also, regardless of how immature or unrealistic it may be.

It is not your role to dispute what the minor has told you or to educate him/her about your opinions of their future choices. You can provide as much factual information as possible to the minors and/or adult caretakers. However, if a minor's belief in the prosperous life or educational opportunities of another country lead him/her to request resettlement there, no matter how unrealistic, it is not likely you can persuade him/her to change his/her mind at this point. While the minor may retain some childish traits, they are able to view the world around them as young adults and like many refugee adults, they depend heavily on the hopes of the future to sustain them through the current difficulties. It is not very feasible or even wise to attempt to dissuade them from their beliefs at this time and in the interviewing situation.

In talking with a minor who appears mature for his/her age, the interviewer will be inclined to take his/her opinion more seriously. Partly this is due to your observation of behaviour. It will be necessary to look also at the minors past experiences and the length of time s/he has been separated from the parents. What sort of adult supervision has the minor had and how has s/he coped? Despite the minors mature presentation and your opinion of past experiences, it is good to keep in mind that this is a period of uneven development. In this age range, minors may have been forced through circumstances to learn the behaviour of adults without time to develop the underlying maturity in decision making or perception. In other words they are functioning in an adult world but may have the emotional tools of a younger person. They will show flashes of maturity one moment and respond childishly the next. In the tension of an interview, adult or controlled behaviour may mask an enormous amount of hope and child-like expectations as to the outcome of the answers. Certainly the minor will attempt to decipher what s/he considers to be the "right" answer you must be seeking.

Sometimes the interviewer may choose to ask the minor what his/her greatest fear about the interview is or what his/her greatest disappointment would be, in an effort to allow the minor to talk about this anxiety and hopefully reduce it somewhat before the questions. This same anxiety may leave the minor with a feeling of not knowing how to act with you. S/he may choose a typical adolescent response of silences, anxiety, distrust, or false sincerity. Others, in their anxiety to effect the outcome may give opinions or ideas in a show of bravado to hide their own uncertainty over their choice of answers. While still others will feel childishly justified in giving false information if they feel it will improve their answers to the questions.

One of the hardest things to know is if the minor is telling the truth or not. This, along with the great pressure to detect incorrect age limits and false information given for purposes of resettlement, can put the interviewer in an extremely difficult position. Several methods have been tried to convince minors of the importance of telling the truth but some will always hold a childish hope that they are the ones who will not be suspected or that the stories will not be found out. The only aspect of this problem that will be discussed here is that of determining chronological age. Some interviewers bluntly ask the minor, "have you ever been forced to lie about your age?". The surprise element and straight forwardness of such a tactic may lead some minors to tell the truth. In Thailand, however, the following questions are used to routinely determine a minor of questionable age:

- What is the believed age?
- What is the age stated by the minor?
- How did the minor determine his/her age?
- What does the minor say is the "Animal year of birth"? (from the Chinese system, in which every year has an animal)
- How many years has the minor attended school?
 - Before 1975 -
 - After 1975 - (for S.E. Asian only - 1975 refers to political events)
 - In the camp -
- What is the minor's physical appearance?
- What is the interviewer's general impression of the minor's age?14/

Finally, as an interviewer you will need to realize that your role is charged with fear, hope or even anger for the minor. S/he will see you not as a person but a symbol of something else. It may be as an oppressive, or dictatorial adult, as their only hope of a future, or as the symbol of a world that is uninterested and uncaring about them personally. They may act out or express strong feelings toward you that they are unable to express to others they depend on for their survival. As a sympathetic and unknown stranger, you may receive the outpouring of frustration, grief and loss they are experiencing inside but are unable to express in their new "adult" role. Your response should be a professional rather than a personal one as the outburst by the minor is not directed at you personally but at the situation at large. Consistent acceptance, understanding and interest expressed by you and repetition of the real purpose of the interview are much more likely to gain positive results than a reprimand, angry confrontation, or a fearful or hurt attitude from you. Other minors may "over identify" with you, fill in blanks

in their answers in an effort to please you or put high and unrealistic expectations on what you can actually do for them and it will be difficult to present an understanding attitude without encouraging false hopes and results based on fantasy.

There is no way you can "force" a minor to tell you the actual facts of his/her experiences if they choose not to, anymore than you can get the past family history from an infant. A few suggestions for improving your chances of a successful interview are given:

- Explain the purpose of the interview and the form to the minor before beginning any questions.
- One great power of persuasion would be that of peer pressure. If you can convince one minor of the importance of telling you the truth without exaggeration or misinformation, then it is possible the friends of that minor can also be convinced. If a group of minors can be convinced, you are building a core of supporters and a growing pressure on those not yet interviewed to do the same.
- How you present yourself to them is important. Minors separated from families and adults familiar to them are seeking role models. Through your expression of interest in them and your consistent efforts to provide true information and answers to their questions or to assist them if you can, you will also have an influence on them.
- Find out who is respected and trusted by a minor and ask that person to introduce you or explain what is happening to the minor before your arrival.
- Information from one question, such as age, can possibly be confirmed through the replies to other questions. For example, the history of education and the number of years a minor says s/he has attended school will indicate an age. Childhood memories of past events or moments may also indicate a certain time frame. Your knowledge of the minor's culture may provide other methods of cross-checking the information the minor gives you.
- It is important, particularly for older minors, to record accurately the minor's desires and views on his/her future, recollections of past events, and feeling about the present care situation as objectively as possible.
- You may wish to include your opinion on how realistic the minors were in their understanding of their personal situation and how practical their approach was in anticipating future problems they will encounter. This gives some indication of how informed and prepared they are to face the problem that will arise for them.
- In dealing with a minor who is reluctant to talk with you, you can try allowing the minor to "take control" of the interview for part of the time. Ask his/her opinion of how to best conduct an interview with "a friend", or their opinion on other matters important to them, allow him/her to ask you similar questions and answer as truthfully as you can, or better yet, take the opportunity to express the feelings s/he must be having and talk about a frightening or anxious experience you have had in the past.

- Fewer options are available to the minors, the older or the closer to the age limit they are, and it is best that you take an honest and realistic approach with the minors on this point. You may want to include questions that allow the minors to tell you how they plan to support themselves in the future, who they might be able to depend on for support or who their friends are who face the same problems and what their plans are. Explore with the minors what alternative choices they might make regarding their future, what special skills or vocational interest they have, or what future contacts with friends or family they anticipate.

There is no set of rules or guidelines to convince an older minor to discuss openly the personal and intimate details of his/her life with a complete stranger in a camp situation that generally requires a great deal of caution or even survival skills for every day living. As an interviewer you can only present an open and accepting attitude but they will make the decision of whether to talk to you or not or more importantly, what and how much to tell you. Once again, a great source of information will come from those who know the minor and have contact with him or her on a daily basis. Older minors are likely to have more contacts within the camp to utilize as a source of information. The caretaker's observations of the minor's behaviour with others, and social ties and patterns among his/her friends or with adults will tell you about his/her ability to face the every day difficulty of the situation.

B. COMPLETING THE SOCIAL HISTORY AND ASSESSMENT FORM

The previous sections have been concerned with establishing a framework for the interviewer to work within. General guidelines, pre-interview information, and age specific materials have been presented. Keeping in mind, the guidelines that have been presented, specific recommendations for completing each question on the Social History form are presented.

Pre-interview checklist

Suggestions for the kinds of information you need to obtain before beginning an interview have already been mentioned. A few more practical points will be listed here that have to do with setting the mood of the interview and beginning to establish the level of trust and reassurance necessary for the interview itself:

- In a group or on an individual basis, introduce yourself to those caring for the minors and explain fully the reasons for the interviews and the form itself. Enlist their assistance in preparing the minors for the interview to help reduce tension and false expectations.
- Introduce your interpreter or anyone else who may be involved in the interviews, so the caretakers are fully informed of who each person is, who will be asking the questions.
- Explain to the caretakers that you will need to meet with them concerning each minor's form for additional information and impressions at a later time. Ask them to think of any other possible sources of information you may have overlooked for the children they care for (i.e. friends in the camp or anyone who visits the minor, etc.).

- Find out if any of the children they care for are particularly anxious or frightened and arrange for a person the minor trusts to be present at the beginning of the minor's interview to introduce you to the child (but not during the questioning).
- To continue the level of trust and communication, remember to ask frequently if the adults have any questions concerning the interviews, the minor's answers, etc. and frequently ask if they feel there is anything else you need to know about the minor. It is necessary for you to be available and willing to discuss the children with them and to enlist their help in your work.

Once you have met one or more times with the adult caretakers, the minors will be well-aware of the upcoming interviews. While you want the minors, regardless of age, to be somewhat prepared for the interview, it is not a good idea to inform them too far in advance. The time in between will be spent in anxiety, growing expectations, speculations and rumors among the minors, particularly in the older age range. For younger and older minors, one or two days is sufficient notice. While the "ideal situation" would be to complete the interviews of all minors within a few days, this is not likely to be realistic given the situation. It will be obvious in the course of interviewing, if a common belief is circulating and each minor responds with the same answer to a particular question. If this occurs, steps will need to be taken to discuss this with the minors, as it occurs in the interview, or as a group if the minors are older. It will not be possible to dispell all expectations about the interview, but it is very important to do so as much as you can.

Finally, the timing of when an interview is done in relation to a minor's arrival and length of stay in the camp is important. If a minor has recently arrived, obviously, sections on his/her past history in the camp must be recorded at a later time to be of any value, while information of the minor's experience before his/her camp arrival is best done as quickly as possible. Likewise, if in the interview, a minor is unable to talk about a particular event, but can supply answers for other questions, you may need to leave out that event for the moment, tell the minor you understand his/her difficulty and will talk with them about it "later". This allow the minor time, if s/he is able to gain control of their emotions and discuss it with you. "Later" can mean at a later point in the same interview, asking if they can discuss it at the end of the interview, or it may need to wait for a second interview a few days or weeks later. Possibly, the minor would be able to tell a caretaker or another adult the minor feels closer to and the adult can then give the information to you at a later point. While this is not ideal, it is preferable to pressing a minor who is not emotionally ready to answer your questions. Other points to remember at the beginning include:

- If the basic bio-data form was completed in a previous interview, review this (and any other relevant drocumentation already prepared) before the interview and have it with you to cross-check where necessary.
- The interviews need to be conducted in private with no other minors or adults around. In the case of younger children who are extremely frightened, it may be necessary to include an adult who can reassure the child in the beginning. However, in no circumstances should the adult answer any questions for the child. (An interview with the adult can be done later.)

- Introduce yourself to the minor and explain carefully what the interview is about, what kind of questions you will be asking and why. You may wish to simply say what organization you work for and not identify the country you are from so there is less speculation about the purpose of the interview, especially if you are from a country involved in resettlement.
- It is worth your time to put the child at ease before beginning, with you and with the interpreter. Although you will be conducting the interview with the interpreter, questions are directed to the minor and you must appear attentive and interested in the minor's answers, not simply what the interpreter says. In this way you are focusing on the minor. S/he will not see you as "talking about" him/her with the interpreter but directly to the minor. You can learn a few words or simple questions of greeting, asking the name or age in the language of the child, if you do not know any, to help in this contact.
- Encourage the minor, now and through-out the interview, to ask you questions also.
- Stress the importance of giving correct information and being as accurate as they can but also stress that there is no "right" or "wrong" answer, only the story of what has happened to them.

Finally, since there will be previous documentation on most of the minors, you may come across conflicts in the answers to basic information. In record-keeping it is generally not a good idea to alter or change completely information that has been previously recorded. If there is a discrepancy you need to try to find out, what, when and why before accepting the validity of new answers. If you find the previous answer to be untrue, be sure and point this out when recording the new information and explain why the new information is seen as being accurate.

If you are not the person who completed the previous documentation but can arrange to meet with him/her, it will be to your advantage in helping to clarify the answers. Not that the previous interviewer can be expected to remember the details of each interview, but s/he may be experienced in the attitudes of the minors in general towards interviewing and be able to explain why the answer to that particular type of question may have changed at this later date.

Question-by-Question Guidelines

Question 1 - "Basic data on minor"

- Be sure the minor's name and other basic data match that on the UNHCR registration (bio-data) form.
- It is important to record the child's name and other names not only in Roman letters (eg. "San Nang") but also in the script of the child's language, where this is different (eg. Khmer, Lao, Chinese).
- Be sure to include any other names the child may have been called by family, friends or in the course of his or her travels. Indicate where, when and by whom these other names were used.
- If there might be any difficulty locating the minor in the camp, under "Address", add the name of anyone likely to know how to locate him/her (particularly for older minors) if s/he is not at this address. (i.e. best friend, teacher, etc.)

- D.O.B. If the minor is claiming a new or different one than that recorded on previous records, include explanation or minor's reasons for doing so. If there is some question as to the validity of these reasons, add your own comments.
- Accurate recording of sibling names will avoid a lot of confusion, even though separate forms will be completed for each. Individual interviews should always be done, concluding with a group one.
- Underline the name of the minor or the sibling listed as the "Applicant" on the UNHCR registration form. It will make it easier to match a given Social History form with the right registration form.
- In general, decide how you will go about the interview and completion of forms for sibling groups and be consistent with all groups. Consistency in recording at this stage will prevent a multitude of errors later on. For example, under whose name/number will the sibling group be filed and how will all the records show that this minor is part of a sibling group?

Finally, to avoid confusion, some reference needs to be made at the beginning of the form to indicate that there are other forms with information on the minor. While the minor is in the camp, this may seem unnecessary and the need to mention the bio-data form other documents may seem obvious. However, once these records have left your hands, you have no idea how they may be divided in the future. As the Social History forms do not include some key information regarding the minor (i.e. religion, language skills, ethnic background, etc.) it is very important to indicate at the start that this form is one of a set of documents and does not include all information concerning the minor.

Question 2: "Describe the minor's life in his/her country of origin both before and after 1975. Include such information as home village and province whether this was rural, urban or in a town, with whom the minor lived, occupation(s) of parents or guardians, the place and time of the minors last contact with them. If one or both parents are missing or believed to be dead, include relevant details:"

Open questions which require a narrative answer have advantages and disadvantages in interviewing. The advantage is that the interviewer can record in the minor's own words what has happened, can incorporate details and information in a related sequence, and can add comments about what the minor said and how s/he said it. The disadvantage is that there may be some specific details that are essential to include that may be overlooked in the narrative. It is necessary for the interviewer to keep in mind that others, not familiar with the situation, events or past history of the minor's country and host country, will be reading the files and possibly attempting to make a decision based on the information recorded by you.

It is worth stating again the importance of accurate recording of locations and correct names of places the minor lived previously. The time sequence is also important if the minor can give this information. Occupations of parents and education level of minor not only gives family information but also an indication of the minor's former economic and social situation, early attitudes towards education and the lifestyle of his/her family. In recording with whom minor lived, extended or non-relative members can be included if they are people who played a significant role in the minor's life. While for purposes of tracing and immediate care this may seem unnecessary, a record of the minor's early life is important in understanding the kind of care and support s/he is likely to need.

Unless a parent died in the camp and direct confirmation is possible, it is best to record "presumed dead" when this is reported by a minor.

Other suggestions for details to be included in question 2 are:

- Questions covering family relationships (for older minors only) How well did you get along with your family? Did you ever stay away for long periods of time before now? Were you ever sent away or did you run away from them before? How do you plan to communicate with your family?
- Include details of any previous breakdown of normal life or reasons for break-up of the minor's family, i.e., political events, ethnic background, movements from one place to another, etc.
- If a minor lived with someone other than his/her parents, include this and indicate why.
- Questions about whether a minor's house had electricity, appliances, plumbing, etc., may give an indication of the family's economic status.
- Include information on family life and activities in the country of origin, including education, extra-curricular activities and interests to demonstrate the child's potential.
- If either of a minor's parents was ever sent to a re-education camp, include this information.

Question 3: "Describe the circumstances of the minor's departure from his/her country of origin and journey to the country of refuge including how, when and with whom the minor travelled:"

As in question 2, the need for the inclusion of key details must not be overlooked. As well as "how, when, where" you can also include information on:

- Did the parents send the minor out? If so, why? What special instructions did the parents give the minor? If the parents are unaware of his/her departure, why? Has s/he contacted parents since departure or received a letter from them? How and when does s/he plan to contact them?
- Have there been any previous attempts to leave the country, if so, give details for each.
- Was anyone responsible for the minor during the journey? Did the minor know them before that time? What is the relationship at present?
- What was the special need or motivation for leaving the country?
- Were there any special hardships or difficulties during the journey to the country of asylum?
- Where this is available, check relevant details against the boat history.

Question 4: "Date and place of arrival in present country of asylum." Be sure to cross-check with the bio-data form.

Question 5: "Relationships:"

It is necessary to distinguish this relationship chart from the bio-data form chart. Keep in mind, while tracing is a major factor of documentation of minors, the Social History is the minor's opportunity to include and explain others who are significant in his/her life. Also, while the chart may not necessarily be used to keep the minor in a living situation with the people listed, it can help the minor to establish contact with them. The people included could be from several groups:

- Any relative not already included in the bio-data form or supplementary information on those who are.
- Adults from a "spontaneous" (ie unplanned and occurred by the agreement and desire of the minor and the family) foster-care arrangement which occurred after the separation of minor from his/her own family.
- Designated guardian by instruction of the parents before the minor's departure or someone who took responsibility for the minor during the journey to the country of first asylum.
- Friends among peers to whom the minor has become close.
- Designated guardian by instruction of the parents before the minor's departure.
- "Sponsors" or those offering support in countries of resettlement.

Concerning the "current/last known address", the following questions may be useful:

- Does the minor have any addresses, current or otherwise for the people listed?
- Has the minor made any attempts to contact any of the people on this list? Before arrival in the camp? After arrival in the camps? If so, what happened?
- Does the minor receive letters or correspondence from anyone? If so, whom and how often?
- Does the minor receive money, clothes, medicine, etc. from anyone? If so who?
- When was the last time the minor saw the persons mentioned above and how well did s/he know them?

Use the "comments" space to describe the nature of the minor's relationship to any of the persons included in the bio-data form or the "Relationship" chart of the Social History. Include any explanations or justification that might be useful in evaluating the importance of these relationships to the minor. If the minor says that s/he wants to live within the camp or to be resettled with someone listed in the bio-data form or the Social History, be sure to record this in the space for "Comments".

You may wish to review the chart with a minor asking him/her to indicate important relationships with either adults or children, other than immediate family members in country of origin/the camp/country of asylum/other countries. Ask the minor to talk about the people s/he indicates. Why is this person important? What is the minor's special interest in this person? This can indicate the future potential the contact may have for further information about the minor, important contacts for the minor, or even a possible caretaker or foster family.

As this question covers so much information, the recommendations are broken down into an outline in a suggested sequence. At this point it is worth mentioning that the interviewer's sense of timing in conducting the interviews is very important in producing good Social Histories. There are two ways in which timing must be considered: when the different questions within the form itself are presented and when the form is completed in relation to other documentation. For example, question 6 on Camp history cannot be done until the minor has been in the camp for at least a few months and becomes a part of the care system and should be updated as close as possible to the time the minor departs from the camp. On the other hand, information concerning the minor's life in the country of origin and journey to the first asylum country should be recorded as soon after arrival as possible, preferably at the time the bio-data form is completed. By completing the initial part of the Social History, together with the bio-data, the minor is less likely to have forgotten important information and unnecessary repetition of questions about the minor's background, family and departure can be avoided.

If much time has elapsed (2-3 months) you may wish to go through the bio-data form with the minor to confirm that s/he has no more information to give or has received no further information. If six months or more have passed it would be good to conduct a re-interview for your assessment of the minor's behaviour and as we have previously pointed out, the minor may be better able to talk about what has happened to him/her and provide more accurate information.

As in other sections, the following meant as a framework for the interviewer to review several times before actually interviewing. It is a style of questioning and a reminder not to overlook potential sources of information.

Question 6 - "Describe the minor's participation in any academic, vocational or non-formal training, both in the country of origin and in the camp. Include information on attendance patterns, attitudes and achievements.

Before arrival in the camp:

- Grades minor completed
- What does s/he remember studying?
- Any special, unusual or major changes in minor's education in country of origin?
- If the minor left school sometime before his/her departure, indicate the reasons and whether it was voluntary or not.

In the camp:

List and describe the minor's participation in any of the following (may include more than one). Briefly describe the levels achieved in each in a way that will be clear to someone not familiar with the camp:

- academic education
- vocational training (specify area)
- language study
- religious training or education
- any other tutoring or study arrangements

Describe the minor's attendance patterns and any special achievements.

- Does the minor like school, his/her teachers, other students?
- What is his/her easiest subject, most difficult, favourite?
- Does the minor plan to continue his/her education? What areas are of special interest?
- What were his/her career plans in the country of origin?
- What would be the minor's plan in a country of resettlement?

Question 7 - Part A "Camp History"

Specify dates (month and year) for camp or locality in which the minor has lived in the country of asylum. Describe the minor's living arrangements (eg. children's centre/barracks, caretaker, family, lived independently) in each place and include the names of persons who cared for the minor or with whom the minor developed particularly close ties. If the minor wishes to maintain contact with them, their names should also be included in the chart for Question 5.

In providing the information requested in the chart (Camp/Locality, Dates, Living Arrangement and Caretaker/Other), note the following:

- As those using the Social History may not be familiar with the camps, indicate the country where it is located.
- If the minor stayed in a locality other than a regular camp, include not only the country but also under "Comments" information on why the minor stayed at this place and what the general conditions were like.

Question 7 - part B: "Describe briefly any significant health problems the minor has had in the camp or reports having had previously."

Review the minor's medical records. If no medical information is available, you need to make a note of this for the file and request that someone follow-up on this and find out how the medical history for the minor can be gathered. If, due to the circumstances, no medical records are provided and none will be in the near future, you can ask the minor and any caretakers additional questions regarding the past and present health of the minor until the medical records are prepared.

Question 7 - part C: "Describe the minor's participation in any recreations, sports or other activities."

Include not only reference to the specific activities in which the minor has been involved, but also describe the degree of importance these have had to the minor.

Question 7 - part D: "Describe the minor's participation in religious activities and/or traditional cultural practices. To what extent does the minor see these as important in his/her life."

You may want to consult the caretakers of the minor as well as the minor himself/herself.

Question 7 - part E: "Describe the minor's development in camp including social patterns, interests, likes and dislikes, and behaviour"

One approach to this part would be to divide the response into what the minor has told you, what others have told you about the minor, and your opinions and observations of what has been said. Following the record of his/her educational, medical history, etc. this is an opportunity to include more on the minors' opinions, feelings and expectations about their lives, both present and future. Mention of positive as well as negative attributes is necessary for a balanced picture. A description of day to day behaviour and personality can be just as helpful as the account of isolated or unusual behaviours to those who will work with the minor in the future. Describe the minor's social patterns within the camp, his/her ties to others in the community and the overall picture of how s/he has adapted and fits into the current situation. If there have been specific instances of unusual or negative behaviour that you feel significant for future placement, these must certainly be explained here to bring attention to the area of difficulty.

Question 7 - part F: "Explain any special needs of the minor that may require attention in the future."

This question might best be utilized as an opportunity to include a particular need or request of the individual minor that has come to your attention in the course of the interview. It is important to be specific about what is meant by "special needs". While the interviewer may want to note an immediate need of a minor, it might be more appropriately brought to the attention of those who care for the minor, rather than recorded on the form. For example, a minor may repeatedly request a material need such as clothing, shoes, school supplies, which may be important to fulfill but not necessarily appropriate to list in the permanent Social History. It would be appropriate to record such "needs" as what types of special considerations or attention might the minor, in your opinion, benefit most from if it were possible to provide. For example, did the minor express a great deal of enthusiasm for a certain topic such as art, mathematics or other skills s/he might possess that are a particular source of pride and self-confidence? This might be worth noting so that others caring for the minor can encourage or praise this interest in the future. Does the minor repeatedly express a strong opinion or desire about future plans, location, relations, etc, that could realistically be met? This type of information is of greater concern to the older minor. Also important would be information concerning any medical, physical or disability needs the minor may have, in not already detailed.

Question 7 - part G: "What are the minor's hopes, aspirations and expectations concerning the future?"

This question should be asked again, once a minor has been accepted for resettlement as the answer may change significantly over time. Of major concern to older minors, it would be ideal if this question were actually the last thought on the minor's mind in the interview. Experience shows that it is just this area of hopes, aspirations and expectations concerning the future that influence every nuance of the minor's answers to the questions and is the source of their greatest anxiety. It is the understandable fear of the future that leads to the misinformation, lack of truthful answers and deliberate age changes found among the minor's answers. The interviewer may consider asking this question early in the interview and allowing the minor to discuss this with you at length to relieve the fear and pressure they may be feeling to convey this information to you. Once this question is answered and the minor feels you have understood him/her, they may be better able to listen to what you have to say and answer the other questions you need to ask concerning the past. Certainly, this question is for the benefit of the receiving agencies rather than the minor, and should be treated as such. It gives the agencies a picture of how realistic the minor's expectations are.

Question 7 - part H: "Other remarks or impressions."

If time allows, it might be helpful to put aside the interview for a while before providing additional information. It will certainly need to follow a review of all the information you have observed, compiled, condensed and reported on the minor. Is there any point you feel has not been mentioned or did not seem appropriate to include in other areas? Sometimes it may be just a feeling or idea you have about the minor that you think should be included. Even though this may be an impression you have, not founded by a reason you can pinpoint, it may be important to include as long as you clearly explain that it is your personal impression or feeling. It is better to express it now than to wonder months later if you should have done so or not. You may also want to think in terms of both overall impressions and how the minor functions in the present situation, along with your information of individual behaviour and personality. This will cover both psychological and social abilities of the minor.

Finally, be sure you do include your name, agency, professional credentials (if you have any) and the date, month and year clearly. Those working with the minor, especially the younger age group may wish to contact the agency or individual completing the forms. Also, the dated signature will indicate the completion date of the form for a minor, which may be helpful to know both in the near future and later on.

Ending the interview

Once the interview is completed, you need to spend some time talking to the minor or having the interpreter talk with him/her for a few minutes to assess the minor's emotional state and mood. While it is understandable to expect the minor to feel upset, depressed, or discouraged following discussions of the past and separation from the family, there are some steps you can take to bring the conclusion back to a more positive level. Now is the time, even briefly, to move your focus away from the form and focus entirely on the minor with you. A few suggestions have already been given in the sections on age-specific recommendations but some are worth repeating here.

For younger minors, an attentive attitude must be taken regarding the follow-up to the interviews. While the interviewing schedule may not allow you to follow-up personally on each minor, it is your responsibility to see that someone does. It would be most helpful to enlist the assistance of someone the child knows and trusts and who can be with him/her for a few hours or follow-up regularly for a few days. This offers the child someone to talk with about the feelings and memories the interview will evoke.

One small minor but important detail is the time of day you interview younger children. It is better to conduct the interview early in the day when it will be followed by other activities and routines. It is thoughtless to ask a child to recount painful memories late in the day and then leave him/her to a night of sleeplessness or nightmares.

For older minors, some of the same rules hold true. Your awareness of their daily schedule may point to a particular time for conducting interviews that will allow them to return to the daily routines they are accustomed to and you want to help them put the interviews and the feelings and memories behind them. This advice would be just the opposite in a counselling situation but here it is important to stress once again that this is not a counselling session. You will do the minors a great disservice to probe unnecessarily into feelings and memories without the necessary support, skills and follow-up required for counselling in a stressful situation. Again someone should be telling you how the minor is doing a few days following the interviews if it is at all possible to arrange.

If counsellors or social workers are available to the minors, the interview itself may assist them with their work with the minors. You may be able to suggest follow-up work for the counsellors, based on information you have obtained. This could relate to individuals you feel would most benefit from counselling, or it could relate to reoccurring fears or topics of concern expressed to you by several minors. If you note repeated expressions of a particular problem or fear of the minors, the counsellors or social workers may want to follow-up with group meetings or discussions to assist the minors in this area.

Finally, if you are feeling particularly ill at ease, depressed, anxious, etc. at the conclusion of the interview, it is very possible that the minor is feeling that way also. It is your responsibility to bring the interview to an agreeable conclusion or to see that someone takes responsibility for being with the minor after your departure. In the beginning, while conducting the interview, and in its conclusion, your first priority and responsibility is to the feelings and well-being of the minor.

Using of the guidelines

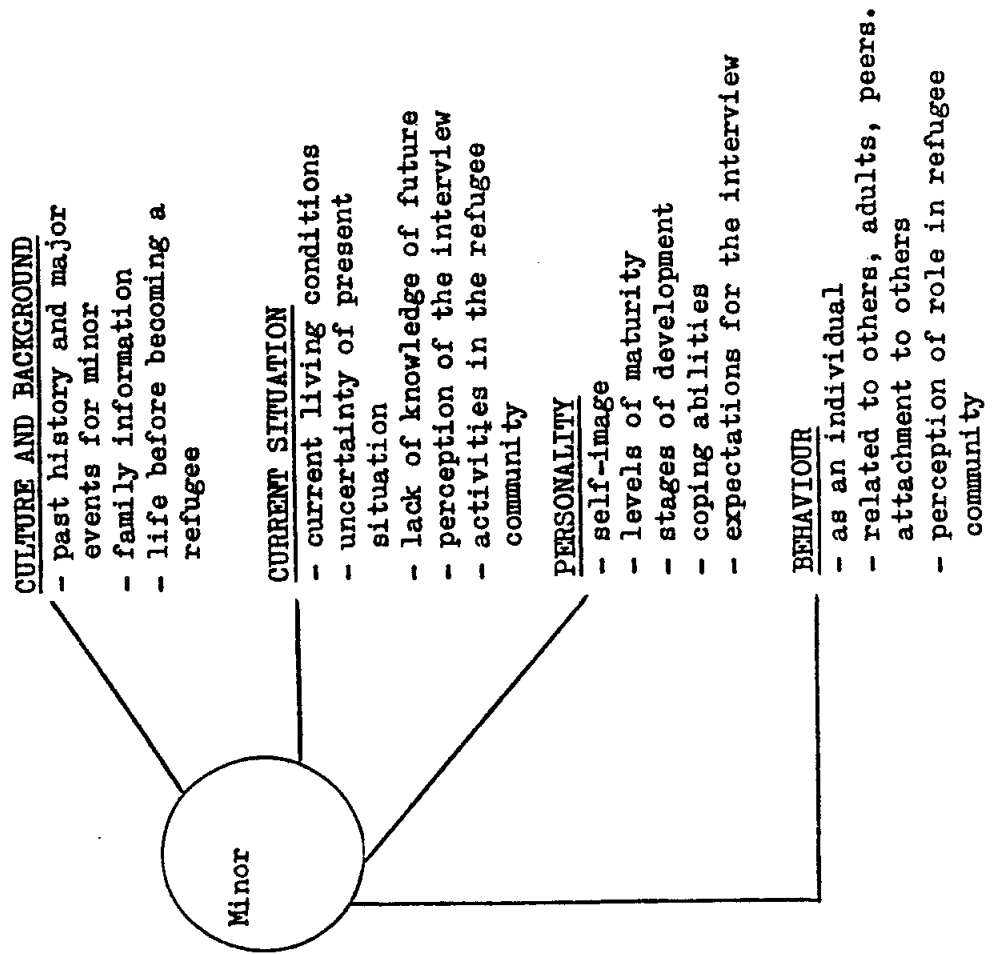
Obviously, it is not possible to include every detail suggested in every record of every minor. The interviewer must be sensitive and selective in his/her choice of what is important for the minor and what best portrays a picture of the minor. While all major points in the questions have to be included, the interviewer must adjust the length and depth of each answer according to the individual minor's needs, the interviewer's personal assessment and the conditions of interviewing. Individual skills will affect the style and outcome of the interviews.

It is also impossible to include every possible situation that may occur and what to do about it, let alone accounting for the complexity of cultural and situational influences in the case of each minor. This makes it extremely important that the interviewer understand the following point, if nothing else, about using the guidelines. It is meant to present a structure for the interviewer to build on. Professionals obtain an understanding of the theories and concepts that define their profession through the study and application of principles. For the unskilled interviewer or the para-professional, the guidelines are meant as the framework for the study and application of interviewing skills in the field.

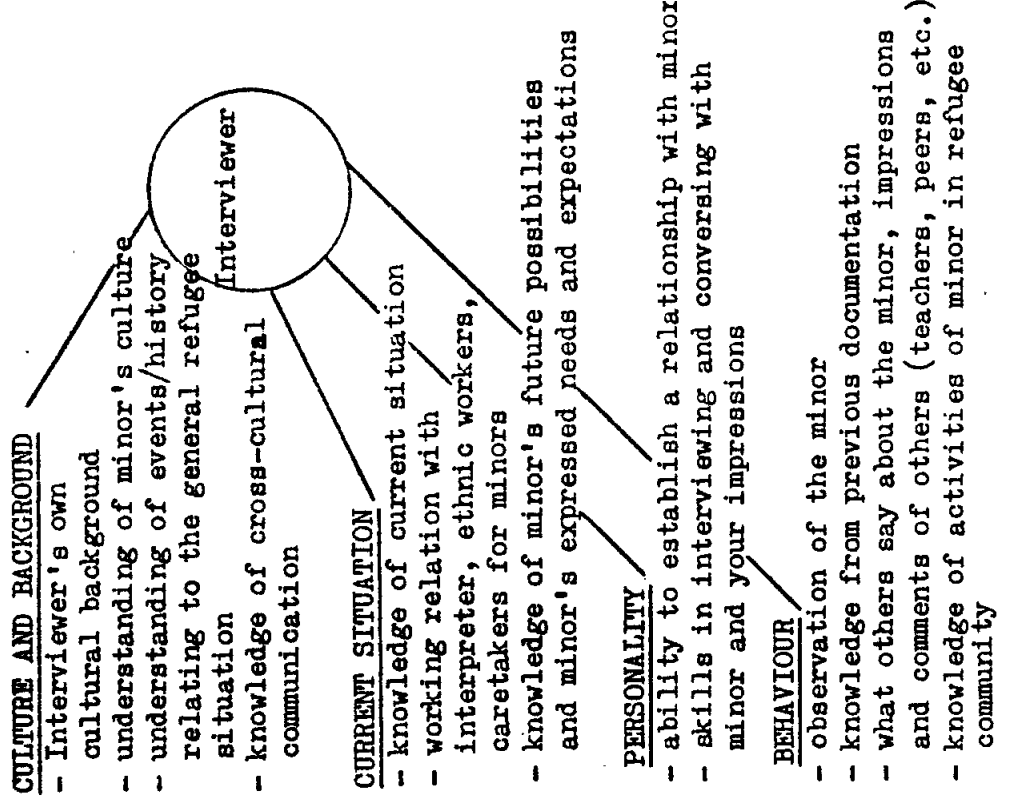
The purpose of the text is to present relevant theories and concepts in as practical a way as possible and, hopefully, one which can be further modified by the skills and experiences of the interviewer for use in his/her particular situation. It is suggested that anyone wishing to use the guidelines read through the text beforehand, with the idea that this is not the final instruction but a starting point for the development of the interviewer's own skills and experiences. This position is emphasized because in the actual interview it is going to be the personality of the interviewer and the relationship s/he is able to establish with the minor that will determine whether the interview is a useful one or not.

Finally, a brief overview of the guidelines is presented as a summary of what has been said, with the key points to remember in the field. The following chart attempts to point out the main influences at work during an interview and the skills the interviewer utilizes to his/her advantage:

The minor brings into the session a multitude of factors that influence the answers given to your questions. At each of these points information may be blocked or may provide valuable insight into who the minor is :



The interviewer is attempting to use the skills s/he brings with him/her to the session and establish a positive contact with the minor, determine the appropriate approach to gain information about each of the factors which influence the minor's answers :



Brief overview of the guidelines

The following are key points to remember:

- The task of the interviewer is to understand the situation of each unaccompanied minor and to record it.
- A completed social history should present a picture of who the minor is and how s/he came to be that way.
- The interviewer must remember that the form is simply a tool used to present this picture; it can be adjusted to fit a particular minor's needs, but the minor's story should be altered to fit the forms.

The Social History is important for the minor because:

- It will give a complete description of the minor's past experiences and personality and present it to those who will be caring for the minor, both in the camp and in the country of resettlement.
- The bio-data form and the Social History could well be the only records the minor will have of this period in his/her life and may be of great benefit (both legally and psychologically) to the minor in the future.

As with any skill, there are basic things to be learned about interviewing, such as:

- An interviewer must be able to convey certain qualities in the interview, such as personal warmth, empathy, understanding, concern and respect for the minor, regardless of the child's age or behaviour.
- It is essential that the interviewer gain basic understanding of such tools as observing, listening, questioning, commenting and recording.
- The interviewer is responsible for more than simply recording a minor's answers. S/he must be knowledgeable, not only about the minor but also the present situation, the cultural influences and how these affect the minor's responses.
- The interviewer will have to integrate the minor's culture and cross-cultural communications into the records and distinguish between cultural responses or individual responses to the situation, in order to assess the minor's coping abilities and personal resources.

Following interviewing skills, cultural considerations are the greatest influence on the minor's answers and how you record them:

- Interviewers from another culture must understand that culture is learned at a very early age and we are flooded with cultural beliefs, values, ways of doing and thinking. Culture is an essential part of ourselves and our sense of who we are is closely tied to our personal identity.
- In cross-cultural communication, much of the message can be lost between the interviewer and the minor because basic assumptions about the world are not shared, roles within the family and community are different, values are not identical and beliefs about "reality" are not the same.

- The interviewer must be able to distinguish between a minor's personal or individual response to stress and one that is based on cultural influences. What appears as an unusual response to the interviewer may be quite natural and appropriate within the minor's own culture.
- In recording a cross-cultural interview, special attention must be given to the meanings of certain words that express ideas, values or philosophies, to ensure they are understood in the same way the minor understands them.
- Attention to such details as spelling and pronunciation of names and locations is necessary for accurate recording.

Working within a refugee camp setting complicates the interviews and affects the outcome of the forms:

- The interviewer must be knowledgeable, not only about interviewing children but also about the refugee situation in general and the life and activities within the camp. This is necessary to understand how and why the minor's life in a refugee camp has affected the minor and will influence his/her answers.
- A good working relationship between interviewer and interpreter is essential to completing the forms, along with the support and cooperation of other adults who know the minor.
- The interviewer is responsible, not only for individual assessments of a minor, but a description of how the minor functions and responds to the world s/he is presently in.
- The interviewer builds part of the Social History by recognizing potential sources of information, selecting those that have the best potential of supplying useful information and identifying the appropriate questions to ask each person to obtain the information.

Finally, children experiencing stressful conditions following the separation and loss of their families need special considerations in how interviews are conducted. It is essential to keep in mind that you are conducting an interview and not a counselling session. It is also necessary to know what kinds of information you need to complete the forms and how to get the information with the least amount of emotional upset for the minor:

- Children who have experienced severe trauma, such as the loss of their parents or other family members, may be unable to report on such events, may have changed the story or may deny that it ever happened, for their own emotional protection. In such a case, the information should never be forced or pressured out of a child.
- An interviewer should find out as much as possible about the child before even beginning an interview. Adult caretakers, teachers and others in the camp can provide you with information on the child's behaviour and personality.
- Children may appear quite normal and show no ill effects from previous trauma. However, problems may arise later in the child's life. It is very important for the interviewer to find out as much about the child's early life and experiences and record it for use by those dealing with the minor in the future.

In compiling the most appropriate information concerning the minors there are many age-specific considerations to take into account. Some of these for the interviewing for infants and pre-verbal children include the following:

- Photographs of an infant are a very high priority and worth the pre-planning, time and effort it may require to arrange for them to be taken.
- An infant loses not only his/her family, but personal history as well. A record of the infant through observation of physical health, daily habits and schedules, disposition and attachment to others is a crucial part of the baby's social history form.
- Immediate recording of information on the location, time, circumstances and events of an abandoned infant can prove invaluable at a later time.
- Likewise, a search for any adults in the area who may have cared for the child, have seen the child with an adult or family, or are even casually acquainted with the infant's family needs to be done as soon as possible after arrival, before people disperse or move away from the area and the information is lost.

Obviously, there are different considerations for children who are still too young to remember accurate names of people or places. Your understanding of how children of this age think, develop, and perceive the world around them will improve the interview greatly:

- You must first have a basic understanding of child development, before you can comment on a child's behaviour in an interview or on the reports of others about the child.
- It is very important not to resort to "labels" or one-word descriptions of a child's behaviour. You must observe, describe the behaviour, and note the frequency of the behaviour for a useful record.
- Altering your style of questioning and spending time discussing with the child and helping him/her reconstruct a daily schedule before the separation from the family will provide important information on who the child is and how s/he may cope with the stress of camp life and resettlement.

While older adolescents and young adult minors can provide more detailed information concerning their previous background and experiences, getting correct information and recording an accurate picture of their feelings and expectations complicates the completion of the forms:

- Adolescence is a period of "crisis" for young people even in the best of times, as they suffer from a crisis of identity, separation, sexual feelings and abstract thought. They bring to the interview a personality undergoing rapid changes in a relatively short time.
- Refugee adolescents also must include a stressful childhood and the stressful living conditions of growing up in a refugee camp situation.
- An older minor may appear mature and see the world through the eyes of an "adult", while still operating with childish responses, defenses, and beliefs in the situation.

- The interviewer is facing a more complicated interviewing situation as s/he will need to record the minor's opinions and requests in the answers and then try to gain enough information about the minor to indicate whether such wishes are based on reality of fantasy, a result of factual information or peer pressure and loyalties.

KEY POINTS FOR COMPILING THE SOCIAL HISTORY FORM

The overview of the guidelines summarized the concepts behind the social history form. The following pages will highlight the main points to keep in mind during the interview and completion of the form itself.

- Attention to details and accuracy of spelling, ages or addresses, cannot be stressed strongly enough, particularly if the interview is being conducted in less than ideal circumstances, and with time pressure due to the number of forms to be completed. There is also the possibility that, due to ever-changing conditions in the area, no other interview will take place or the opportunity to review and correct errors may not be possible in the future.
- For narrative questions, be sure all details requested are included in the completed answer. Review the answer to be sure no other details, vital to the minor's story, have been left out or are not clearly explained. Be sure the narrative follows a logical time sequence and indicate dates or lengths of time where possible.
- Be sure names of countries, camps, locations are clearly written, spelled correctly and necessary information for identifying a particular area is given. Names, pronunciations, even locations of camps can change, so anticipate this possibility, if you can, and provide any additional information that may be relevant.
- In recording family members and relatives of the minor, note which people are of special significance to the minor. Explain relations, family structure and family unit minor was with as clearly as possible and within the cultural context of the family.
- Following family information, are there other people the minor may wish to stay in contact with? What was the connection of the minor to them (the foster parents the minor lived with for a period of time, etc.) and how can the minor contact them in the future?
- Clearly state the sequence of events in the camp history that is recorded for the minor. Others reading the files will not be familiar with camp names and locations. Length of time in various locations is important to their understanding of this part of the minor's history.
- Define clearly and describe what is meant by such terms as "group care, spontaneous fostering, independent living, etc". Explain what is meant by the terms as the definitions vary greatly from country to country and even from programme to programme. Give an accurate description of the living arrangement, with particular attention to those closest to the minor or any losses the minor may have experienced.
- It is helpful to highlight particular health problems noted in the minor's records or reported by the minor, particularly if the minor has a medical or physical handicap. Medical forms should be done for the minors and the interviewer should not have to go into great detail concerning a minor's health.

- A camp history should include the opinions of others concerning the minor and describe the minor's adjustment and integration into the life of the camp. It is a valuable part of the interview and provides an overview of social activities which indicate the minor's ability to cope with the present stressful situation and with those around him/her.
- The interviewer can be an advocate or "voice" for the minor in his/her description of the minor's development, special needs, and expectations. While the focus is mainly on the minor's history and family, or the opinion of others, the latter part of the form allows for the minor's personality and feelings to be expressed.
- Describe carefully any problems or "special needs" you may list and specify what action is required at the present time or in the future.
- Include a "frame of reference" for the files when recording a minor's hopes, aspirations, and expectations. In other words, describe the expectations of the adults around the minor, the atmosphere of the camp, or how realistic the ideas of the minor are given his/her abilities.

FOOTNOTES

- 1/ Garrett, Annette, "The Nature of Interviewing", pp 8 and 9. (The publisher is unknown, but the article can be found in the Social Service Resource Library, UNHCR, Geneva.)
- 2/ Ibid, pp. 30-41.
- 3/ Ibid, pp. 9-12.
- 4/ Ibid, p.
- 5/ Koschmann, Nancy Lee; Tobin, Joseph Jay; Friedman, Joan; Working with Refugees: A Manual for Paraprofessionals, Volume I: Introduction to Refugee Resettlement Work. (Chicago: Travelers Aid/Immigrants Service, 1981), pp.12-14. (This is one of a 3-volume set.)
- 6/ Rosenblatt, Roger, Children of War (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1984), p 135
- 7/ Baker, Ron; Briggs, Jennie; Working with an Interpreter in Social Work Practice, p 3.
- 8/ Ibid, pp 3-8.
- 9/ Koschmann, et.al., op.cit, Volume II: The Life Cycle, Mental Health and Mental Illness, p 22.
- 10/ Ibid, p 9.
- 11/ Ibid, p 16.
- 12/ Ibid, pp 16-20.
- 13/ Ibid, p 20, (excluding the first point on culture added by the author).
- 14/ Questions taken from an "Age Assessment Form" developed and used by the Resettlement Unit, UNHCR, Bangkok, Thailand.

Of special interest to those doing training for para-professionals or for further reading in this area is the material referred to in the footnotes as a three-volume manual by Nancy Lee Koschmann, Joseph Jay Tobin and Joan Friedman. It is entitled Working with Refugees: A Manual for Paraprofessionals.

Included are:	Volume I:	Introduction to Refugee Resettlement Work
	Volume II:	The Life Cycle, Mental Health and Mental Illness
	Volume III:	Intercultural Counselling and Interviewing Skills

As the name implies, it was written for the training of ethnic workers in resettlement in the United States. However, the presentation of materials, format for training purposes, and much of the ideas presented can be applied with some creative revisions for work in the field.

Published by: Travelers Aid/Immigrants Service
Refugee Resettlement Service
1046 W. Wilson
Chicago, Illinois
USA 60640

The Social Services Resource Library maintained by the Social Service Section of UNHCR, Geneva, lists many articles and references under the various headings, some of which are footnoted in this paper. Requests for materials from the Social Services Resource Library can be made through UNHCR Social Service Officers in the field.

For additional reading in the area of cross-cultural counselling, you can request a catalogue from the following address:

East-West Centre Books
The University Press of Hawaii
2840 Kolowalu Street
Honolulu, Hawaii
USA 96822

ANNEXES

- ANNEX I - Copy of Social History Form
- ANNEX II - Additional culture information for South East Asia taken from:
Students from Indo-China: Educational Issues - A
Resource Book
by: Paula Kelly and Robert Benoun
Published by: Australian Centre for Indo-Chinese Research
- ANNEX III - Adult Caretakers' Questionnaire for Young Adults
- ANNEX IV - Infant Health Assessment Form Questions
- ANNEX V - Infant Development Evaluation Unit

SOCIAL HISTORY AND ASSESSMENT FORM FOR INDOCHINESE UNACCOMPANIED MINORS *

This is a confidential document. It is to be forwarded to the agency responsible for the care and placement of the minor. It is intended to supplement the information on the UNHCR registration (biodata) form.

1. BASIC DATA ON MINOR :

(For Laotian, Khmer and ethnic Chinese minors write all names in these scripts as well as in Roman letters)

A. NAME D.O.B. SEX CASE NUMBER ADDRESS IN CAMP

B. NAME(S) OF ACCOMPANYING SIBLING(S) IF ANY : (Complete separate form for each)

C. UNDERLINE THE NAME IN A OR B ABOVE-LISTED AS THE "APPLICANT" ON THE REGISTRATION FORM

2. DESCRIBE THE MINOR'S LIFE IN HIS/HER COUNTRY OF ORIGIN BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER 1985. INCLUDE SUCH INFORMATION AS HOME VILLAGE AND PROVINCE, WHETHER THIS WAS RURAL, URBAN OR IN A TOWN, WITH WHOM THE MINOR LIVED, OCCUPATIONS(S) OF PARENTS OR GUARDIANS, THE PLACE AND TIME OF THE MINOR'S LAST CONTACT WITH THEM. IF ONE OR BOTH PARENTS ARE MISSING OR BELIEVED TO BE DEAD, INCLUDE RELEVANT DETAILS.

* Documents or records concerning the minor's medical history, education or other matters that may be useful for the agency concerned with the minor's care and placement should be attached to this form unless forwarded separately.

NAME :

2. (continued)

B. After 1975

3. DESCRIBE THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE MINOR'S DEPARTURE FROM HIS/HER COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND JOURNEY TO THE COUNTRY OF REFUGE INCLUDING HOW, WHEN AND WITH WHOM THE MINOR TRAVELLED : -

4. DATE AND PLACE OF ARRIVAL IN PRESENT COUNTRY OF ASYLUM :

NAME :

6. EDUCATION HISTORY

DESCRIBE THE MINOR'S PARTICIPATION IN ANY ACADEMIC OR VOCATIONAL TRAINING OR NON-FORMAL TRAINING, BOTH IN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND IN THE CAMP. INCLUDE INFORMATION ON ATTENDANCE PATTERNS, ATTITUDES AND ACHIEVEMENTS.

7. CAMP HISTORY

A. SPECIFY DATES (MONTH AND YEAR) FOR EACH CAMP OR LOCALITY IN WHICH THE MINOR HAS LIVED SINCE HIS/HER DEPARTURE FROM THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN. DESCRIBE THE MINOR'S LIVING ARRANGEMENTS (e.g. CHILDREN'S CENTRE/BARRACK, CARETAKER FAMILY, LIVED INDEPENDENTLY) IN EACH PLACE AND INCLUDE THE NAMES OF PERSONS WHO CARED FOR THE MINOR OR WITH WHOM THE MINOR DEVELOPED PARTICULARLY CLOSE TIES. IF THE MINOR WISHES TO MAINTAIN CONTACT WITH THEM, THEIR NAMES SHOULD ALSO BE INCLUDED IN THE CHART FOR QUESTION 5 :

<u>CAMP/LOCALITY</u>	<u>DATES</u> From - To	<u>LIVING ARRANGEMENTS</u>	<u>CARETAKER/OTHER</u>

COMMENTS (Include whether the minor is satisfied with the current living arrangements and, if not, what change is requestd) :

NAME :

F. EXPLAIN ANY SPECIAL NEEDS OF THE MINOR THAT MAY REQUIRE ATTENTION IN THE FUTURE :

G. WHAT ARE THE MINOR'S HOPES, ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS CONCERNING THE FUTURE ?

H. OTHER REMARKS OR IMPRESSIONS :

FORM COMPLETED BY :

(Name)

(Agency)

(Place)

(Date)

STUDENTS FROM INDO-CHINA: EDUCATIONAL ISSUES - A RESOURCE BOOK

pages 37-43

Paula Kelly & Robert Bennoun

Published by Australian Centre for Indo-Chinese Research

The Family and the Roles within the Family

Throughout Indochina the family is the most important unit of society. Family honour is a paramount concern. A by-product is that adults are always to be respected by children and youth and this respect intensifies with the age of the adult. Each of these cultures treat age as an honour and worthy of respect.

Roles are mapped at birth and are dependent on class, birth order and sex. Measures of wealth can be the number of children, especially boys, that the marital union produces and also the educational standard the children achieve.

Each society of Indochina has a tight class structure and social mobility is rare. The father, who becomes an adult at marriage, is the true head of the family and he should have complete control over the major decisions for his family just as high father had within his generation. The women are in control of the day-to-day activities of the household and the caretaking duties of the younger children. The feminine and moral development of her daughters is her domain.

The most important child in the family is the first son. It will be his responsibility always to ensure a suitable standard of living for his parents as they age and his wife, on marriage, will move into the family home and share the responsibility of the husband's parents for better or worse. This role in Khmer society could also be for the daughter.

This extended family situation is often viewed as "ideal" and almost "romantic" by many Westerners. However, it is not without some tensions. Quite often the mother views (as does the older sister) the daughter-in-law as being unworthy of her son, accusing her of slothfulness and even, in an extreme case, of infidelity. The old western "mother-in-law" jokes have their counterparts in the cultures of Indochina but respect for the mother from her son sees the situation resolved by the submission to the will of her mother-in-law.

Of these cultures, it is the Khmer whose family is more likely to have been a nuclear one with very strong extended family ties, than an extended family living arrangement. In times of marital trauma, the mother-in-law is important. The wife can complain about her husband to his mother, and it is the mother who will "pull him into line". The wife can also complain about her husband and in-laws to her mother, as the mother remains her teacher and confidante throughout her life.

Children are not considered in other than those terms until they marry. There is no identity crisis because roles are prescribed for them and they are secure within the family structure. Any child who is a "problem", who falls foul of the law or obtains low grades is a disgrace to the family and in extreme cases is disowned by the family. Whilst the mother tends to the young child's day-to-day needs, the grandmother is often allocated the task of baby

sitting, and the older children, especially the girls, are expected to mind the younger siblings. They have to feed, entertain and generally replace the mother, for period of time depending on what the mother deems as appropriate time spans. Some youth have complete care of the child, others for periods after school or on holidays.

The following case study highlights the changes which took place in a Vietnamese family 1977-1983 from life in Viet-Nam through family reunion in Australia and resettlement. It is not unique.

Joan Knowles, Department of Anthropology, University of Western Australia, presented this case study at A.N.U. of a Vietnamese extended family in Perth entitled "Continuity and Change in Vietnamese Families in Perth, W.A." at the Australian Family Research Conference (Nov. 23rd-25th 1983). Her paper discussed "the manner in which one family coped with the new environment". The first arrival of this family at 20 years of age felt the "need to create a substitute family network. It was both emotionally, practicably unthinkable for him to live alone". He moved into different living situations each a little closer to his original "Vietnamese" family situation. When his family and extended family arrived he and his family moved through two entirely different stages.

The study highlights the changing roles within the family over the resettlement period. "The issue of traditional Vietnamese attitudes of thought and behaviour has caused the most change and created the most conflict within the family, fragmenting the overall structure of the family. While the six older members continue to keep the old conventions and customs, they become increasingly disturbed and disappointed by the younger people's rejection of traditional values such as: respect and obedience towards one's elders, subservience to one's husband, one's duty to one's family, modesty in dress and behaviour."(2)

These changes include the demise of the father as head of the family, the decrease in reliance on the family for emotional support, guidance and practical assistance, the diminishing importance as a source of information to the young women of the mother and the independent thinking of the youngest adult women of the family.

Boy-Girl Relationships

Generally in the countries of origin there is little mixing of the sexes at adolescence. It was, however, more acceptable in the capital and large provincial cities, but no so in the rural areas. Sex instruction was never taught in school and in many families, sex was never mentioned at all. It was felt that such things would be learnt at the appropriate time at marriage. Boys and girls gathered information informally from their older brothers and sisters and their peers. Often, this information was not correct. Sexual experimentation occurred, but for girls it was considered wrong by both the family and the society as a whole.

There was a double standard, however, where girls should be virgins on marriage and boys can play the field, but are expected to settle down and marry a virgin, not unlike the West of yore. Some village areas continue with early arranged betrothal of the girls but this rarely happens in the cities.

Many family boys and girls view with absolute horror the sexual mixing in the Australian schools. The sexual freedom allowed some cultural groups in Australia is quite well accepted by the man and women in their early twenties and eventually by the majority of youth. But this causes conflict within the family and widens both the generation gap and the cultural gap.

Joan Knowles (1983) cites the following example: (3)

"The three youngest adult women in the family began to adopt some western ideas in both dress and behaviour. This created problems between these women and the rest of the adults. The most significant issue at the time was the relationship which developed between the single daughter and her boyfriend. He had been visiting the household for several months, meeting the young woman only in the company of members of her family. However, at this time the relationship intensified and although the young woman's parents clearly expressed their disapproval, the couple began courting like a western couple. When the situation between the daughter and her family deteriorated the couple eloped to the eastern states."

Many parents fear what could happen to their girls with their exposure to the opposite sex as well as to the behaviour of other girls of different ethnic origins. This fear is the reasons why sometimes they do not agree with permitting girls to attend school camps, etc.

RELIGION AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

The three countries of Indochina have a variety of religions and philosophies within their borders. These teachings have influenced every aspect of traditional life of the people. The religious codes of the countries are interwoven and it is not unusual to find individuals who practice more than one religious ritual - such is the blending of the religions and philosophies - the harmony of the nations.

It can be said that no matter which belief the peoples of Indochina hold as "truth" their lifestyle takes all beliefs into account. This is less like the western Christian belief of one "true" church, and those who are not of the faith being eternally outcasts. There is little black and white in their religions and philosophies, more a kaleidoscope of worthy ideals interwoven in all aspects of life.

Ananism

The belief in the world of the spirits and worship of these is held by a large percentage of the people in all three countries and it was the basis on which many religions were built.

Ancestral Worship

This is a belief in the necessity of showing one's respect for one's ancestors (in life and in death). It is linked with the spiritual continuum on which all people in life and death must travel. What you are is very much dependent on what your ancestors were and what they did in their lives for you. It is not uncommon to find an ancestral altar in the home of the Christian Vietnamese. Ancestor worship, as with ananism, has been blended with other religions and philosophies.

Budhism

This is perhaps the religion which westerners see as the most influential one in South East Asia and, to a large extent, they are correct. But it must not be viewed in isolation. The majority of people of Indochina follow the four truths of Budhism.

1. The world has suffering everywhere
2. Suffering is the result of desire
3. Life's task is to overcome desire
4. A pure life will overcome desire which leads to suffering.

There are two Buddhist schools - Theravada (Laos, Kampuchea and Southern Viet-Nam) and Mahayana (North and Central Viet-Nam). Both schools of through are based on the concept of a continuous life, death and re-birth cycle, which will only be broken when one's spirit reaches the state of enlightenment, terms "Nirvana". Some people who have reached this state continue on in the cycle as spiritual leaders for others.

Christianity

Under French rule Christianity was revitalised especially in Viet-Nam. Missionaries, who were less successful in Theravada areas, converted people to Christianity. However, today it is not unusual for a Vietnamese family to pray at the ancestral altar before going to Mass, or to attend an audience with an astrologer prior to making a major decision. Viet-Nam had the largest Catholic following in the area prior to 1975.

Taoism

This philosophy has environmental overtones. It deals with the order of nature and the need for harmony achieved by the maintenance of positive and negative elements in the universe. It has had a strong influence in the daily life of the peoples of Indochina.

Confucianism

This philosophy is a combination of Taoism, ancestral worship and Buddhism entailing filial loyalty, piety and obedience. "Influence by Confucianism, the Vietnamese people are expected to act in certain ways. The Vietnamese man must follow three fundamental lords, king and his subjects, father and son, husband and wife. Likewise he must possess the five cardinal virtues: benevolence, righteousness, propriety, knowledge and sincerity. Similarly, Vietnamese women must practise the three degrees of dependence: dependence upon her father first, then her husband, later on upon her son; and four virtues: proper employment, proper demeanour, proper speech and proper behaviour."(3)

Hoa Hao

This is also a combination religion of Viet-Name with strong Buddhist roots. It rejects notions of material religious needs and expensive ceremonies. Instead, the religion is one of spiritual contemplation.

"It is better to pray with a pure heart before family altar than to perform a lot of gaudy ceremonies in a pagoda with an evil heart."(4)

Every aspect of the life in Indochina has been influenced by these philosophies and religions. They are not aggressive but more a flowing with the natural tide, fitting into the order of the universe, adaption and the striving for inner peace.

The strength of the influence of these attitudes on the youth from Indochina will depend on how young s/he was when s/he left the country of origin, how long s/he was in the refugee situation, how strongly the western component in the camp promoted new ideas about religion and whether or not s/he has the guiding influence of the family here in Australia.

It is wrong to believe that if a Khmer youth says he is a "Baptist" that automatically it can be assumed that he holds certain ideals taught by that strain of Christianity. He may have found it easier to join them whilst in the camp because of his pliable philosophical approach to life. He may hold inside strong beliefs in Buddhism which he feels are not "suitable" in Australia because of his camp experience, and the interest shown in him by Christians here. The very philosophy of life which had given him the strength to survive the war and refugee trauma is presented to him as a "lesser" philosophy. This lowers his self-esteem and his pride in being Khmer. This is part of the refugee tragedy.

Many western cultures view life as having a beginning and an end. The cultures of Indochina, in contrast, see life as part of an eternal continuum which runs in cycles or spirals but with no real end. The finite aspects of western philosophies are difficult to grasp and uncomfortable to live with, if one has lived in the world of life phases and re-birth where one is important to the flow of the universe.

RACIAL ATTITUDES

Historical reasons underlie the deep mistrust each ethnic groups has for each other. The Khmer and the Vietnamese have had a long history of wars with each other. The Chinese, who dominated Viet-Nam for one thousand years, and have been in control of the economies of the three countries for decades, are viewed with suspicion by the Khmer, Lao and Vietnamese and, in some cases, with hatred. The Lao, who have more in common with the Khmer, have for centuries felt that their culture was superior to the Khmer who they viewed as a backward race. The Khmer, on the other hand, feel the same about the Lao culture. Some Lao feel superior to Mhong and vice versa. Suffice to state that each race tends to have ethnocentric attitudes. A recent visit to Indochina by the writers showed that the arch rivalry still existed and ethnocentric sentiments were openly stated throughout the countries and in the refugee camps.

Of course, not all students of Indochina have strong racist attitudes, but what must be understood is that they do not view themselves as a homogeneous group and the cultures do not necessarily have empathy with each other. Some youth have been taught racist attitudes as children by parents and propaganda in the newspapers, the parallel education systems and from the history books. This has been fuelled by the wars in each country.

An example of attitudes, although anecdotal, can be seen in the early problem of children from Viet-Nam in some schools of one state not having literature and their mother tongue. They were the first children from Viet-Nam and the teachers sought the advice of an ex-student from Viet-Nam who had lived in Australia for a number of years. He was asked to advise the authorities on what books were appropriate. He obliged and Vietnamese language books were made available. However, the problem was not solved. The children did not wish to take the books home and seemed reluctant to read them. A Chinese speaking Australian teacher solved the problem. She noted that the children were mainly of ethnic Chinese origin and could not read Vietnamese. The Vietnamese ex-student would not concede to this fact.

At first (1975) some Chinese from Viet-Nam who arrived in Australia as refugees, felt obliged to say they were Vietnamese but as time went on and more and more Chinese arrived, pride in their ethnicity grew in Australia. It has been said on many occasions that Austrians are "used" to Chinese and are more accepting of them; one is "luckier to be a Chinese refugee and not a Vietnamese refugee".

"The Vietnamese think that they are best, but we Chinese know we are" (19 year old Chinese from Viet-Nam).

Relationships in the schools are not helped when school teachers call over the microphone "would the Indochinese students please..." or a teacher tells a group that "they all look the same anyway" or "Asians are all the same" (quotes from interviews).

It must also be remembered that some individuals have assimilated into the mainstream culture of their country of origin even though they are of a different ethnic origin to the mainstream culture. Vietnamese from Laos or Kampuchea, Chinese from each of the countries, especially if they have lived in the country areas rather than the main cities and attended local rather than Chinese schools, Khmer from Viet-Nam, all fall into the category of being accepted as part of the mainstream culture. Some have dual culture, but others have suffered cultural attrition which has been their ticket into the realms of the accepted people in their country of origin.

Teachers of, and workers with, Indochinese youth must not, however, make assumptions about long standing attitudes permanently affecting relationships forever in Australia.

VICRA, since 1976, has enjoyed a history of ethnic group liaison and working together of the five ethnic groups in all projects in the areas of education, research, welfare, recreation, cultural promotion and information dissemination. Being aware of possible conflict and placing all experiences into the multicultural context, has resulted in the promotion of working relationships between all the ethnic groups from Indochina.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS EDUCATION

Education is viewed as the means by which the family assures itself of social status and a comfortable life. Women who become part time street hawkers often do so to enable at least one child (usually the eldest son) to reach the highest educational standard possible. The Indochinese recognise that education means information and this equals power - power over others or

simply over one's life. Families are willing to go through enormous sacrifices to give this gift to their children. Some unaccompanied youth were put on boats by their parents to go to another country specifically to "further their education". For those who had to pay for a place on a boat, a son could have been sent alone because, with insufficient money for the whole family, the son is the best possible choice, as he would send money back to keep his family on his graduation.

This is a mammoth task to give a youth. The future comfort of his respected family is at stake. This is the burden carried by many of the single youth or sibling groups who arrive here and enrol in the Australian educational institutions. Often remaining at school (even without a living allowance) is the parents' wish.

For the Indochinese, school traditionally teaches values accepted by the parents. The Khmer schools taught the girls moral living code and the boys male living code off by heart so that a youth, under pressure, could quote the appropriate piece to give him or her direction and confidence in this or her chosen path. Discipline at school reflected that of home and there was no conflict in either the measures taken or the attitudes taught. Parents had confidence in the education systems available to their children prior to 1975.

The teacher is the person given the task of continuing the work of the parents in the moral development of the child, was held in high esteem and he was feared and respected by the students. Creativity and individuality in the western sense were not deemed worth preserving or encouraging in the education of students because they were not of great value in the world of work, or the world of family life. The western concept of "the individual" or "creativity" is not well respected in these countries and, within their cultures, are not pre-requisites of any form of public life in isolation.

After the changes of government in the three countries of Indochina, parental attitudes towards the education system changed, especially amongst those who eventually left their country. Many felt angry and fearful of the new curriculum and have often cited examples of indoctrination. Some parents chose to keep children away from school. Others who were serving under the old regimes, found their children deprived of schooling. Kampuchean parents saw the closing down of all schools and the destruction of any person or group who attempted to continue educating in any way.

The older children, now the youth in our schools, remember the respect they had for teachers prior to 1975 and their parents undermining of the teachers' authority after 1975, as this was their first experience with a home/school conflict of values. A number of Vietnamese adults add to this, the idea that the youth themselves refused to attend school because of their own ideology.

"... because of their unwillingness to participate in the education system that the communist regime established. These young people saw it as indoctrination."(5)

Whilst we have no evidence of this amongst current school students we know that this attitude was strongly supported by most of the parents who became refugees, and this supports the fact that some students could have problems translating old values into our classroom situation without upsetting traditional values held by the parents.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP INTERVIEWS OF ADULT CARETAKERS

Jan Williamson

These questions were used in the Khao I Dong camp in Thailand in 1980 for group interviews with Khmer refugee workers about the children in their care:

- Do you have any children who have trouble sleeping at night?
- Do you have any children who have had dreams/nightmares? (if yes, how often per week?)
- Do you have any children who frequently wet the bed during the night?
- Do you have any children who cry a lot?
- Do you have any children who seem unhappy or depressed?
- Do you have any children that don't talk to the house-parents?
- Do you have any children that don't talk or play with the other children?
- Do you have any children who fight a lot or play too rough with the others?
- Do you have any children that have problems in school?
- Do you have any children with difficulty eating? (too much - too little)
- Do you have any children that act differently from the other children or that you think act strangely?
- Have you ever taken any children to be treated at the spirit ward or for treatment by the Krou Khmer?*

* Originally used for Khmer children, this question would need to be rephrased using the appropriate name for spiritual, traditional or religious treatments of unusual behaviour.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM AN INFANT HEALTH ASSESSMENT FORM

Jan Williamson

1. How old does the housemother think the infant is at this time?
How old was the infant upon arrival?
How long has she cared for the child? Any previous caretakers?
2. How would she describe the present health condition of the child?
What was the infant's health upon arrival?
Is the infant presently taking any medications?
How often has the infant been to the hospital/clinic/been seen by a medical person in the past month? Previously? Please explain why.
3. What is the current feeding schedule for the infant?
Is the infant breast-feeding only?
Is the infant receiving any formula or milk part of the time?
Is the infant receiving any formula or milk all of the time?
If so, please specify the ingredients/brand/mixture.
Is the infant receiving any other foods or liquids? If so, how often and how much?
How often is the infant being fed and how much daily/night time?
Has the infant gained weight/lost/stayed the same in the past two weeks?
Can the housemother describe any difficulties in feeding (does the infant cry during feedings, spit up more than usual, is hard to feed, etc.?)
4. Sleeping habits:
How long does the infant sleep at one time throughout the day?
Does the infant sleep through the night? If not, how often does the infant wake up and what does the housemother do to get him/her back to sleep?
5. Does the infant have diarrhea? If so, how often? Has the infant had diarrhea in the past month? If so, has the infant seen a medical person?
Does the infant vomit or spit up frequently? If so, when (after crying, eating, sleeping, etc.) and how often?
Does the infant have trouble adjusting to new foods or liquids?

Can the housemother give her opinion of the emotional health of the infant at this time? Does she think the infant cries too much? Is the infant too quiet? Afraid of other people? Listless or unresponsive? Please describe any comments the housemother may have concerning the infant in her care.

Can the housemother say approximately what age the infant was when s/he did the following?

- Began to smile and vocalize noises. React to loud noises.
- Respond to voice of caretaker. Reach for objects. Laugh.
- Imitate sounds. Try to feed self. Recognize caretaker.
- Say two or three words. Stand without support. Understand some words.
- Walk without help. Feed self. Point to own nose, eyes, etc. when asked.
- Follow simple directions. Name familiar objects. Run well.

Please include any additional information that might contribute to an overall description of the infant at this time.

This chart is taken from Working with Refugees: A Manual for Paraprofessionals, Volume II: The Life Cycle, Mental Health and Mental Illness

By Joseph Jay Tobin, Joan Friedman and Nancy Lee Koschmann
(Chicago: Travelers' Aid/Immigrants Service, 1981), page 10.

INFANT DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION CHART

3 MONTHS

strong cry
sucks and swallows well
reacts to sudden noises
begins to vocalize sounds
smiles

9 MONTHS

waves bye-bye
understands "no"
imitates sounds
recognizes parents
feeds self cracker
plays "peek-a-boo"

1 1/2 YEARS

understands simple questions
identifies objects by pointing
points to own eyes, nose, etc.
uses two-word phrases
walks unassisted
feeds himself with spoon

3 YEARS

holds up fingers to show his age
can count to three
can tell how objects are used
vocabulary of 500+ words
can stand on one foot for a few seconds
can draw a circle
can play imaginatively with others

6 MONTHS

laughs aloud
eats a cookie
plays with a toy (rattle)
turns to a voice
reaches for objects

1 YEAR

listens with understanding
imitates a variety of sounds
knows "mama" and "dada"
stands without support
marks with a crayon
inserts a spoon in a cup

2 YEARS

can point to doll's eyes, etc.
follows directions
names familiar objects
answers, "What does a dog say?"
makes a tower of three blocks
runs well

4 YEARS

can count to five
knows colors by name
vocabulary of 1500 words
can hop on one foot
can draw a man