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WAR VICTIMS, AND ~~SOCIAL WELFARE~~ RELIEF AND REHABILITATION

UNITED STATES ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO VIET NAM, 1954-1975

VIET NAM TERMINAL REPORT

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AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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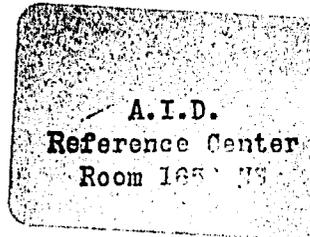
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U.S. ASSISTANCE TO WAR VICTIMS, RELIEF AND REHABILITATION
SOUTH VIETNAM, 1954-75

The largest component of USAID's humanitarian assistance program to South Vietnam was refugee relief and rehabilitation. The refugee program during the period 1954-1975 can be described in time frames which correspond to changing conditions in South Vietnam and the nature and magnitude of the refugee problem which the country faced. U.S. assistance began in 1954, which for our purposes can be considered the beginning of the first phase of the program. The initial stage, which was brought about by the mass migration of 900,000 refugees from North to South Vietnam following the 1954 Geneva Accords, lasted about three years, until 1957. This was followed by about six years of relative calm in which the early refugees were integrated into and became productive members of South Vietnamese society. The movement was propitious. There was peace, relative prosperity, and some lands were made available by the withdrawal of some French owners. Thus the period 1958-1963 did not require a refugee assistance program separate and distinct from the overall economic development assistance program of USAID. Beginning in 1964, however, intensified fighting and deteriorating security created a mounting problem. At first it was handled as part of the (get correct name) provincial representative's field program, but with the steep rise of

American military involvement following the Tinkin resolution in 1965, pressure mounted for a discrete program focussed on assistance to the mounting numbers of refugees. Congress--in particular the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Refugees and Escapees--held hearings which attested to the growing need. It also soon became evident that U.S. military "search and destroy" operations were resulting in flight to the GVN side of whole parishes and even villages. AID Washington's response was to set up a new USAID Office of Refugee Coordination in October 1965 under an Assistant Director with considerable past experience in the refugee field. A small staff was selected for Saigon to provide liaison with other units of USAID the American military, the GVN offices concerned with refugees, and the voluntary agencies, and to provide technical guidance to the newly recruited cadre of provincial refugee advisors. Advisors were appointed for about half of South Vietnam's 43 provinces, those in which there were at least 10,000 refugees. (In '65-'66--possibly later--the GVN regularly issued statistics showing the distribution of refugees; USAID made maps of these, and one or two should be used to illustrate this report.) These advisors received technical guidance and information from ADRR in Saigon but they were responsible administratively to the Provincial Representatives. This led to some difficulty in a number of provinces where the Provincial Representative was more interested in other aspects of his program than in the problems of refugees. While he generally had an assistant Provincial Representative to help perform these duties, he was occupied with many concerns and after found the Refugee Advisor a

convenient extra hand. ADRR began to get complaints from the advisors that they were being diverted from refugee activity. Even after agreement was reached at the USAID that refugee matters were top priority for the advisors, the condition persisted in some locations. (The writer left Saigon in '66 and did not return until 1974. By that time the four regions were under Consul Generals. But when he went on a field trip one of the first comments he heard, from a seasoned refugee advisor, was that he (the advisor) was kept so busy writing economic/political reports and analyses for the Consul General that he was forced to neglect pressing refugee assistance needs.)

In 1968, the Communist Tet offensive suddenly generated a million new refugees. The period 1968-1971 therefore saw a refugee program almost totally devoted to the relief and reestablishment of the war victims created by the Tet offensive and its aftermath. The final stage of the program of U.S. assistance can be said to date from the massive North Vietnamese offensive of 1972 through the collapse of the government in 1975. This period of time was characterized by continual upheaval and disruption caused by North Vietnamese invading forces and displacement and resettlement of war victims, often many times over.

The war in South Vietnam created suffering and grief in many ways. Nowhere was it more self-evident, than in the disrupted

lives millions of Vietnamese who found themselves suddenly and violently displaced from their homes and possessions. Because the war created several distinct types of dispossessed people, USAID developed a series of programs, in conjunction with the Government of Vietnam, to deal with these categories.

The United States Government assisted the Government of Vietnam to care for and reestablish refugees from 1954 until the collapse of the government in April 1975. The USAID Office of Refugee Coordination (ORC) with much the same duties for more than eight years, went through a number of name and organizational changes to emerge as of February 1, 1973, as the USAID Associate Director for Relief and Rehabilitation.

While there was never a nationwide census of refugees, it was estimated that some eight million Vietnamese were displaced from their homes at some time since 1964. Of these, about five million participated in the emergency relief and/or long-range rehabilitation programs of the GVN.

For several years prior to the fall of Saigon, the Ministry of Social Welfare (MSW) was the major GVN agency in this field. The Directorate General for Land Development and Hamlet Building (LDHB) was chartered in March of 1971 and began to plan an increasingly active role in resettlement beginning in 1972. The two were joined in February 1974 under the leadership of Dr. Phan Quang Dan, Deputy Prime Minister, who had previously served as Director of LDHB. Under his vigorous leadership *only* 100 resettlement sites were developed to provide alternative homes for refugees unable to return to their villages.

The overall goals of the GVN relief and rehabilitation effort were to provide for the welfare of refugees and other victims of the war and to restore them to a normal, productive role in society. Toward these aims, four broad programs evolved over the years:

- (1) Temporary Relief, designed to provide food, shelter, and other necessities at official GVN temporary camps established wherever necessary throughout the country when refugees were forced from their homes.
- (2) Return to Village (RTV), an opportunity for displaced persons to return to their home areas and receive a number of special government allowances that gave them a much-needed first step toward becoming self-sufficient. They received funds to construct new houses, food allowances to help them survive while new crops were being planted, and development benefits (such as the construction of schools, dispensaries, roads, markets or wells) to assist in the rehabilitation, or further growth of viable communities.
- (3) Resettlement, an opportunity for those who could not return home to farm land in secure areas elsewhere, establish new homes, and once again become self-sufficient. Allowances were similar to those provided through the RTV program. /RTV allowances which varied with condition of area to which they returned. Should be checked. Actually, resettlers received more than they returned.
- (4) In-Place War Victims, a program to assist people who suffered house damage or the death or injury of a family member as a result of military action, yet were forced to leave home for only a short time, if at all.

1954-1957: Migration and Resettlement Following the Geneva Accords

About 900,000 people were evacuated from North to South Viet Nam. resettled and restored to economic self-sufficiency in three and one-half years' time--from 1954 to 1957. During this time the U.S. Government,

through the United States Operations Mission (USOM), assisted the Government of Vietnam in three major operating stages: moving a large segment of the population, temporarily sheltering them, and finally permanently resettling them and integrating them into their new surroundings. These stages cover roughly the period from June 1, 1954, to December 31, 1957, when the GVN "Commissariat General aux Refugees" (COMIGAL) was disbanded. It should be noted that the resettlement/integration effort was extended beyond this cutoff date as part of overall economic development programs in Vietnam, but it was not an identifiably separate refugee program after 1957. The cost to the U.S. in the initial year alone was \$55 million, including \$11 million for sealift operations of the U.S. Navy.

From the earliest moment of the war in Vietnam - and particularly during the period from December 19, 1946 to July 21, 1954 - large numbers of innocent civilians lost their homes and rice fields during military actions conducted by Communist or French Forces. The state of insecurity which prevailed in the countryside caused substantial numbers of refugees to move toward urban areas. Even before 1954, cities such as Saigon and Hanoi sustained five to eightfold population increases compared with pre-World War II figures.

The large-scale population movement, which began in May 1954, however, occurred after the battle of Dien Bien Phu, and made it obvious that the French security perimeter in North Vietnam would be confined to the Hanoi-Haiphong lifeline in the Red River Delta. Large Catholic areas in the

hinterland were thus exposed to Communist occupation. Hundreds of thousands of Catholics trekked out to the new defense perimeter and the great exodus of 1954 began.

The Geneva cease-fire agreement in July 1954 provided for free movement in both directions for 300 days. Many friendly countries and voluntary agencies made significant contributions towards evacuating people from North to South Viet Nam. Some countries, including France, also assisted in transporting southern-based Vietnamese families to the North, but the numbers were never high. Initially, the French Government undertook this effort alone but it soon became evident that the number of people moving in both directions surpassed its capabilities. The U.S. and other friendly governments, plus a host of privately-financed voluntary agencies, joined the effort in response to an appeal from President Diem. COMIGAL reports indicate that the U.S. financed over 90 percent of the aid to refugees at this time. France was the next largest contributor, followed by Great Britain, Australia, West Germany, New Zealand, and the Netherlands. A partial list of voluntary organizations includes the National Catholic Welfare Council, the Junior Chamber of Commerce, CARE, Operation Brotherhood (organized by the Junior Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines), the International Rescue Committee, Church World Service, and the Protestant Evangelical Church of Vietnam. UNICEF also played a significant role.

The exact number of refugees in this movement is unknown because COMIGAL records were destroyed in a fire which burned down its headquarters in 1955. Nine hundred thousand is the generally accepted estimate. Farmers made up about 80 percent of this total. The rest included fishermen, artisans, businessmen, and military personnel with their families.

When the refugees arrived in the South, they were sheltered in transient quarters in and around Saigon. Many of them remained in this status for some time while the GVN sought sites elsewhere for their permanent re-settlement. It should be remembered that at this time the GVN was a nascent government without any substantial administrative strength. Moreover, it was faced with formidable, hostile elements in the countryside--the armed Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and Binh Xuyen insurgent sects. It was only after the GVN subdued these dissidents that progress could be made in finding sites for resettling refugees permanently.

COMIGAL's task, assisted and supplemented by USOM and the voluntary agencies already mentioned, was to feed and house the refugees and then find regions capable of accommodating and supporting them according to their preferences. To accomplish this, prospecting commissions made up of ^{land} experts and refugee representatives were sent to the provinces to find re-settlement sites with the necessary requirements: arable land for farmers; favorable coastal fishing grounds for fishermen; and sites near towns and cities for artisans to set up their shops. Once these locations were determined, the Planning Office proceeded to design projects according to guidelines established by the prospecting commissions. With COMIGAL's recommendations, the plans were sent to USOM or to the French Technical and Economic Cooperation Bureau for approval and allocation of funds.

Refugees were moved to resettlement centers as soon as projects funds were transferred to the COMIGAL account and advance site preparations were completed. Centers varied in size to accommodate population / ^{groups} ranging from 200 to 600 families. Whenever it was possible, whole villages, which had migrated intact from North Vietnam, were resettled at the same site. Then

they began clearing land, planting their crops, electing their officials and building their schools and dispensaries, and ultimately integrating their administration into the structure of local communities. Integration started in April, 1956, and was completed by mid-1957 when all refugee villages were absorbed into the local administrative structure.

A total of 319 resettlement villages were created in this manner--288 ~~of them~~ for farmers, 26 for fishermen, and five for artisans. Geographically, 207 were located in southernmost Viet Nam, 50 on the central coastal plains, and 62 in the central highlands.

Only about half of the million or so ^{evacuee} farmers, fishermen and artisans went to resettlement villages. The rest--who were mostly merchants, military men and government employees--resettled with their families in places of their own choosing, in cities and in the countryside, with their own resources.

By 1958 ^{the} refugees from the north by and large were assimilated into the social fabric of South Viet Nam. Intensified fighting and the deterioration of security beginning in 1964, however, would see many of these people uprooted again.

1964-1967: A New Refugee Problem as the War Intensifies

From 1958 until 1964, assistance to refugees was an integral part of the overall economic development program of South Viet Nam. The U.S. contributed primarily by providing commodity and technical assistance in health, education, agriculture and industry. The displaced population which resulted from the 1954 Geneva peace agreement was by 1964 completely

integrated into South Vietnamese society. The growth of a new refugee problem in South Vietnam corresponded, quite naturally, with the increasing level of military activity during the second half of the 1960s. Ironically, the refugee problem once again became urgent in the fall of 1964, not by an act of war but by the most devastating flood in modern Vietnamese history, which inundated vast areas of the countryside in the northern coastal provinces of South Vietnam and left about one hundred thousand people homeless. The relatively stable government of President Ngo Dinh Diem ended with his assassination in 1963. It was followed by a series of governments of which none seemed to be able to mobilize the nation. The South Vietnamese Government, weakened by coups d'etat and political and military disintegration, was unable to keep the ravaged areas from being occupied by the Viet Cong. Consequently, these flood victims, who did not return to their homes, formed the nucleus of a hard-core refugee population which would continue to command the attention of the Vietnamese Government and USAID until the end.

To help provide some feel for the complexity of the refugee problem from this point on, it is worth noting the differences between the refugee population which grew out of the 1954 Geneva Accords and the refugee population which emerged in the 1960s. "Operation Exodus", the Southward trek as it was called, faced in a new direction; its refugees abandoned their former lives and settled quickly on new soil. Most entered South Vietnam as complete families, often as parishes and hamlets with strong religious (usually Catholic) or secular leadership. Occupationally, they were a cross section. Above all, they came to a land where combat had ceased, with many fertile acres available for cultivation.

By contrast, the refugees of the 1960s were essentially rural people, largely women, children and old men. Many were forced to flee without warning, and relatively few escaped in hamlet or parish groups. There was much less cohesion and leadership than there was in 1954. Finally, and more significantly, most of the new refugees lived temptingly near their former homes. Some even farmed their fields by day, returning to their secure areas by nightfall. Most, in fact, took refuge in government areas with the initial expectation of returning home as soon as security would permit. These displaced persons, although called "Refugees from Communism" by the GVN, were more apolitical than were refugees during the 1950s. A more accurate description of the new refugee was "war evacuee" inasmuch as he had fled from a combat zone in search of security and, furthermore, had not crossed any international boundaries. Thus the uncertain security situation would have made planning more difficult even if Saigon had more area under its control. But it became increasingly difficult to find land that fielded the three indispensable conditions, i.e., it was (1) available, from the standpoint of ownership, (2) sufficiently arable to support life, and (3) secure. The third condition was perhaps the most difficult to meet. Military realities not only greatly limited land settlement but also created a situation in which some people were displaced for a second and third time. Many of the refugees of a decade earlier were uprooted yet again.

The guerilla war had become so fierce by the end of 1964 that the United States began considering its earlier contingency plans to place combat troops in South Vietnam. By 1965, the build-up began and as U.S. troops and planes began engaging the Viet Cong, the number of refugees

increased proportionately. In many areas, military leaders concluded the tactical situation was such that civilians would have to be cleared in order to get at the Viet Cong. These areas were declared free strike zones. People living in such areas were usually given advance notice, often by dropping leaflets. After a specified date, the area was subject to air strikes and artillery strikes without notice. They had no choice but to leave their homes. Almost all fled to the Government side. ORC made many attempts to obtain advance information as to the number and location of civilians likely to be displaced by a planned military action, so that food and other relief supplies could be pre-positioned in secure asylum areas, but the military was chary about tipping its hand on prospective strikes lest the ever-irgilant V.C. receive forwarning of the intended action.

Early in 1965, a USAID special study group was appointed to recommend ways of coping with what threatened to become a runaway problem. As a result, a USAID Office of Refugee Coordination (ORC), created in October 1965, became the focal point for U.S. assistance to refugees. This office was established with a staff of about 40 in Saigon,

At that time there were nearly a half million refugees in temporary shelter. At that time the responsibility for refugee assistance was divided in the GVN. The Ministry of Welfare dealt with temporary refugees in camps; the Ministry of Rural Construction (later Revolutionary Development) an entirely unrelated unit of the GVN under General Thang, helped refugees who had opted for resettlement. There was no real connection between the two, no consistent policy line, no transition from one stage to the next.

Social Welfare Minister Lieng had other priority concern and regarded the refugee problem as a kind of unnecessary encumbrance. There was very little contact between him and General Thang who was capable of far more vigorous action. Coming into the picture at this juncture, ORC recognized a great need for the creation of one coordinated Ministry which could deal effectively with the refugee problem. There was a requirement for a clear cut budget for refugees. As matters stood, there was very little money in the government available to help them except for the absolutely bare essentials, and there certainly was no consistent plan for establishment of resettlement sites. After some months of quiet campaigning our recommendation was finally accepted, and a commissariat of refugee affairs was established. This was a form of organization that had been adopted back in '54 when the refugees came down from the North.

The man selected to head the new commissariat as its Commissioner was Dr. Nguyen Phuc Que. Dr. Que was a medical man with the rank of major who had been in charge of medical services for the Marine Corps. He was a very bright and imaginative person and breathed new life into the whole operation. One accomplishment was getting the first budget for refugee activities, including both relief and resettlement costs, even though the amount provided was not large. Dr. Que had some disadvantages. He was a new boy in the bureaucracy; he didn't head a ministry and a commissariat was of a lower hierarchical order, and, of course, he was a major operating among generals. But he was a good

man, and under him the refugee program for the first time began to take on some new meaning. In the early days of ORT we came to a rather startling realization that we needed to learn more about the refugee program, that we were dollar rich but piaster poor, that is, we had ample dollars for purchase of supplies and for employment of ORT personnel in the provinces. But we had little to say about the use of the vast amounts of piasters generated by the commodity import program. These were needed to pay more attractive salaries to Vietnamese and most important, to increase the meager allowances for refugees on relief, returning to village, or resettling in a new location.

Dr. Que was quite receptive to expansion of the resettlement program. Early in his new assignment he considered an AID proposed scheme to resettle a pioneer group of refugees quite near the ocean shore in Ninh Thuan province. When Dr. Que first visited the proposed site he thought it was too sandy and that refugees could not successfully farm there. But he was shown how other settlers had been able to raise onions, garlic and "sugar baby" watermelons, all of which commanded a high price in the Saigon market. With some irrigation and use of fertilizer these refugees were soon making incomes considerably beyond what they had been able to do in their villages before they became refugees. Still other refugees, many of them fishermen, were relocated on Phu Quoc island in the extreme south western part of

South Vietnam. Another group of several hundred families, after long months in camps near Phu Yen, were moved by a U.S. Army ship, the "Pages", from Phu Yen down the Coast to Cam Ranh where employment opportunities abounded. Sections of the deck were partitioned to accommodate the pigs, chicken and other livestock. A baby was born on the overnight voyage. These resettlements were all accomplished in 1966, the first year that Dr. Que was in office.

Dr. Que who came to office in March 1966 succeeded in putting together a 1966 budget of over 1.3 million piasters--roughly \$12 million--the first consolidated budget for refugee purposes, while the U.S. contribution rose to about \$20 million. He established standards for sanitation and medical attention in refugee camps. With the help of the United States, he authorized construction of new shelters to replace the poorest housing and of classrooms for refugee children unable to attend regular schools. Mindful that many refugees could not go home in the foreseeable future, he expanded vocational training instruction and the development of handicrafts and cottage industries. In addition, new short-term classes for refugees were set up in such trades as building construction, engine maintenance and repair, basic electricity, tailoring, and typing at six vocational-training schools whose U.S.-financed equipment had

been used up to this point only for more formal extended training. Nevertheless, 1966 was a particularly trying time for the Commissariat. Much of its initial effort was spent establishing itself organizationally. Its staff was, to a great extent, recruited on a volunteer basis from other GVN agencies and it did not, for the most part, represent an elite corps of Vietnamese administrators. There were special problems in relating to the Province Chiefs and Welfare Staff in the field.

Other problems developed as the intensified military operations in 1965, 1966 and 1967 confronted under-manned and ill-equipped provincial staffs with a flood of newly generated refugees. During this period, hundreds of thousands streamed into the towns and cities, many of which were isolated and difficult to supply. Some of the new refugees were also initially viewed with suspicion as they had largely emerged from areas of VC influence. This, plus the press of more urgent tasks, resulted at the beginning in a low priority for assistance to them.

Meanwhile the USAID refugee assistance program continued to grow. The Office of Refugee Coordination provided technical assistance to Dr. Que's Commissariat and attempted to coordinate the different American groups aiding the refugees. The first requisite was a close working relationship with the military. Army civil affairs companies assigned to tactical units in the field were concerned with refugees fleeing battle areas. Special Forces camps often provided security and an assistance lifeline to refugees

in remote locations that could be reached only by helicopter. Scabees taught refugees motor mechanics, electric wiring, and carpentry in Da Nang's technical school. When not actually engaged in combat, Army and Marine units spent many hours in civic action programs--distributing foodstuffs, providing medical services, and constructing schools, dispensaries, wells, playgrounds, and other refugee camp facilities.

During 1967, in the climate of close military and civilian coordination, and as awareness of the size and scope of Viet Nam's refugee problem grew, several organizational changes were made within both the U.S. and Vietnamese governments in an attempt to strengthen the refugee program. First, the U.S. refugee operations were moved from USAID to the civilian Office of Civil Operations (OCO) and later to the Military Assistance Command's Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS). In addition, in November 1967, the Special Commissariat for Refugees was amalgamated with the Ministry of Social Welfare, which remained under the direction of Dr. Que as the Ministry of Social Welfare and Refugees. The latter step was in recognition of the inseparable objectives of the Welfare Ministry and the on-going refugee relief effort.

At the end of calendar year 1967, USAID reported that more than two million refugees had come into secure areas controlled by the Vietnamese Government since 1964. Of this number, 450,000 had returned to their homes, about 670,000 had been resettled in new areas, and roughly 800,000 remained in refugee camps run by the Vietnamese with the support of the U.S. Government and voluntary agencies.

By late 1967 the CORDS/Refugee Division staff numbered more than 70 and was projecting a need for up to 100 during 1968 (about 20 in Saigon and 80 in the field). The Ministry of Social Welfare and Refugees had a headquarters staff of approximately 200 in Saigon and more than 1,000 field personnel. The field staff included 30 ten-man mobile refugee teams, 135 camp workers, and a refugee service in each province. Some 161 temporary camps and 727 resettlement centers were established during the year. The AID funding for refugee relief in Vietnam ran about \$20 million, which included nearly \$12 million in PL 480 Title II foodstuffs to support GVN and voluntary agency feeding programs. That year the number of voluntary agencies in Viet Nam increased from 18 to 33, with most of them engaged primarily in refugee relief and related social welfare activities. AID had contracts with several of these voluntary agencies and was planning to sharply expand this relationship in the coming year which would involve approximately 200 voluntary agency personnel in programs of relief assistance, including refugee camp management, child care, vocational training, recreation and development of cottage industries. Broad commodity support was being provided for such things as cement, roofing, cloth, tool kits, emergency rations, tents, mess gear, clothing and farm tools. This, roughly, was the outline of the U.S. program of assistance to Vietnamese refugees on the eve of the Communists' Tet offensive in early 1968.

1968: The Tet (Lunar New Year) Offensive

During the first half of 1968, the refugee situation changed drastically as a result of two major VC/NVA offensive actions. Both offensives were directed primarily against urban centers thus adding a new dimension to

the refugee problem which previously involved mainly residents of rural areas.

The Tet offensive beginning 29 January and the post-Tet attacks beginning 5 May forced approximately one million persons from their homes. The victims of these attacks, identified as "Tet and post-Tet evacuees" to distinguish them from the regular registered refugees, were mostly residents of urban areas whose homes were destroyed or damaged or who fled from the fighting in their neighborhoods. The number of Tet evacuees reached a peak of 892,454 and an additional 179,164 evacuees were involved in the post-Tet attacks in May, mostly in the Saigon metropolitan area. The Vietnamese Government and U.S. Mission immediately gave top priority to the emergency needs of the evacuees and civilian casualties.

The Ministry of Social Welfare and Refugees (MSWR) responded within hours of the initial Tet attack in the Saigon area to provide emergency shelter and commodity support for the victims. President Thieu quickly established a Central Recovery Committee (CRC) which issued orders and directives initiating recovery measures including directives to province and municipal authorities to form counterpart relief committees. The CRC also undertook coordination of the Vietnamese-American civilian and military efforts and resources. This interministerial coordination group was later redesignated the Central Pacification and Development Committee. It operated from the Office of the Prime Minister and became the leading force in rural programs until the country's fall in 1975.

Communication with province staffs in some cases was not re-established for

many days, but they too moved immediately to provide relief to the evacuees in their areas. In most provinces warehouses were well stocked with food and other commodities and assistance from central storage points such as Saigon was not necessary in the first emergency phase.

As soon as local recovery committees were formed, they were provided funds by the Central Committee. These were augmented by additional funds from the MSWR, USAID, and MACV, as well as generous donations from private individuals and organizations. American, third country, international and Vietnamese voluntary agencies provided personnel and other forms of support, and an untold number of Vietnamese volunteers nationwide contributed their services. Also, in response to the GVN's special appeal, at least 24 Free World countries, UNICEF, the Vatican, and World Health Organization contributed emergency assistance.

The new problems of assisting the Tet and post-Tet evacuees were met more readily than those of the regular registered refugees. More than half of these evacuees who sought temporary shelter were able to return to their homes as soon as the fighting ceased and security was restored to their neighborhoods. In contrast to the regular refugees who were mainly farmers and had lost their livelihood as well as their homes, the Tet and post-Tet evacuees primarily needed rehousing and subsistence allowances for relatively short periods of time until they could return to their employment, or resume their commercial, trade or other activities from which their incomes were derived.

As a result of the energetic action by the Vietnamese Government following the VC offensive, the majority of the evacuees were speedily re-established.

This was made possible partly by the government's "triple-ten" formula program under which families whose homes were damaged or destroyed were issued ten bags of cement, ten sheets of roofing and VN\$10,000 in Saigon and Hue or VN\$5,000 in the rest of the country to repair or rebuild their houses. In addition to this self-help program, the Vietnamese Government, USAID, Vietnamese Army, the U.S. Army Engineers and the city of Saigon were engaged in a massive program of building both temporary and permanent new housing in Saigon. Through Free World Assistance, several other countries contributed funds or materials for the permanent housing program.

Regular Refugees

Contrary to the projections at the beginning of 1968, the number of regular refugees continued to increase. Implementation of the regular refugee program was decidedly hindered during the early months of the Tet offensive due to emergency conditions prevailing in most provinces. Contact was intermittent with many temporary refugee centers and support of the regular refugees was difficult because of interdiction of communication and supply lines and transportation. This was particularly the case for those isolated from province and district towns. Moreover, many refugees were forced to flee from temporary shelters due either to military actions or VC terrorism. By the end of June, however, contact had been re-established and in most provinces regular refugees were receiving their allowances on a pre-Tet schedule; plans were made to speed up resettlement of those not able to return to their original homes and to resume vocational training specialists ^{were added} to each corps refugee staff.

Refugee Statistics

The reporting of data on the movement of regular refugees during the early months of 1968 was interrupted by the Tet offensive but end-of-the-year statistics indicate that 1,288,000 (of which 794,000 were carried over from 1967) were assisted during the year. Of these, 302,000 returned to village and 148,000 were resettled. Many remained in camps.

The peak number of Tet and post-Tet evacuees totalled 1,071,600. Of this number, all but about 490,000 had been re-established by the end of

The number of regular refugees and evacuees in temporary status, receiving assistance, at the end of the year was 1,329,000.

Organization and Staffing Changes

1968

1. Vietnamese Government. In May¹ when the new Prime Minister made changes in the Cabinet of the GVN, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Welfare and Refugees were combined into the Ministry of Health, Social Welfare and Relief (MHSWR). Dr. Tran Lu-Y, the former Minister of Health, was appointed the Minister of the new organization. For operational purposes, the structure for health activities was retained separate from that for social welfare and refugees and the province services remained as they were previously constituted.

During the first weeks of the Tet offensive, the entire staff of the MSWR in Saigon was organized into relief teams to meet emergency needs of evacuees. Similarly, teams were constituted from personnel from other Ministries

and available RD cadre men.

The regular refugee staff of the MHSWR was further augmented by additional ten-man mobile teams trained by the Community Development Foundation of which a total of 60 were in the field. (However, the Vietnamese general military mobilization caused the MHSWR to lose upwards of 30 percent of its trained refugee personnel.)

2. USAID. Four significant developments further strengthened the U.S. support for the refugee program.

(a) In April, Mr. John F. Thomas was appointed as Chief of the Refugees Division of CORDS. As former Director of the Cuban Refugee Program of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Mr. Thomas brought to this assignment more than twenty years of professional experience in national and international refugee programs.

(b) In May, the authorized professional staff level of CORDS/Refugee Division was increased from 96 to 116 including specialists in vocational education, resettlement and social welfare. Of the total, 86 were assigned to the field. The professional staff was assisted by 34 clerical employees.

The voluntary agency personnel working full-time on refugee programs totaled 704, consisting of 278 American, 242 Vietnamese, and 184 third country nationals.

The amount of manpower and other support by the U.S. military, Vietnamese military and other Free World Forces during the year was substantial, particularly for the Tet and post-Tet evacuee relief and reconstruction program.

(c) On May 29, the activities of the Social Development Division of USAID were transferred and established as the Social Welfare Branch in the Refugee Division of CORDS. This arrangement re-enforced the U.S. advisory support for refugee resettlement including re-integration of refugees and displaced persons into a normal life situation as well as restoring community cohesion and strengthening the national society which represented the biggest problem confronting refugee and social welfare officials.

(d) After the first weeks of the Tet crisis, the MSWR transferred responsibility for evacuee programs in the Saigon metropolitan area to the municipal authorities in Saigon and Gia Dinh. To facilitate coordination between the Mayor's office and Free World civilian and military assistance programs for Saigon war victims, a liaison office was established in the Office of the Mayor of Saigon. An American staff of 12 to 14 civilian and military personnel was assigned from USAID and CORDS with advisory functions in areas which were of interest to the municipal government. CORDS/Refugee Division assigned an evacuee (refugee) advisor and a social welfare advisor to this office.

Voluntary Agencies

Vietnamese voluntary agencies, private organizations, student groups and individual volunteers came forward in large numbers in all areas of the country to assist the Tet victims in the emergency phase and many, such as student groups and youth organizations, continued to help in the construction of temporary shelters and reconstruction of houses damaged or destroyed.

Similarly, American, third country and international voluntary agencies provided personnel and resources to supplement the Vietnamese relief efforts. Many of their on-going programs were temporarily interrupted by the Tet offensive, and for security reasons, and, some of their activities were directed to the massive problem of Tet and post-Tet evacuees.

Although a few voluntary agencies reduced their personnel, especially those involved in activities in insecure areas, other expanded their programs. Several additional agencies initiated programs for refugees for the first time during the year; for example, the New Zealand Red Cross and the International Salvation Army.

Under extended contracts with A.I.D., the American Red Cross, Community Development Foundation, International Recreation Association and Catholic Relief Services expanded their programs for refugees and urban evacuees.

Major Problems

In spite of the notable achievements indicated in preceding sections, certain of the problems that plagued the GVN refugee program in 1967 were intensified and new ones were created during 1968, mainly as a result of the Tet and post-Tet offensives. The unforeseen increase in the magnitude of the refugee population and the crisis situation in urban areas calling for massive emergency relief and reconstruction placed heavy new demands upon the personnel and resources of the MHSWR in Saigon and those of the province services. They also imposed major new responsibilities

upon municipal authorities, particularly in the Saigon/Gia Dinh area and Hue which ^{had} previously provided no assistance for refugees.

The major problems impeding progress toward the refugee program objectives and targets were:

(1) The shift in focus of the VC/NVN attacks to urban centers beginning with the Tet offensive added a new dimension to the refugee problem previously concerned mainly ^{with} persons from rural areas. As a consequence, the GVN was confronted with the necessity of establishing emergency relief and reconstruction programs for massive numbers of urban evacuees which called for concentration of U.S. and GVN refugee personnel and required greatly increased resources.

(2) Plans for accelerating resettlement of regular refugees were hindered due to: accentuated problems of security outside of urban areas; limited availability of land in secure areas; disruption or delays in expanding vocational and handicraft training; the interruption during the early months of 1968 of transportation and communication with temporary refugee centers as well as diversion of efforts of province and district refugee personnel from the regular refugee program to the emergency situation in the capital cities or larger urban centers.

(3) The general military mobilization ordered by the Vietnamese Government had an impact upon the GVN refugee staff, particularly the trained mobile teams and the province and district personnel.

(4) The problem of reliable statistical data persisted, although CORDS/REF, in cooperation with the MHSWR, instituted a census of all regular refugees receiving temporary assistance which provided more accurate statistical reporting.

(5) In spite of improvements in logistics and management control, the problems of distribution from the province level to the recipient refugee were not fully resolved.

Events and priorities in the relief and rehabilitation field between 1969 and 1975 were sharply /affected by the North Vietnamese offensive which began in late March 1972. In the several years prior to the offensive, major emphasis was placed on helping refugees re-establish themselves in their home areas or, if that was not possible, assisting them to resettle. In all of 1971, fewer than 136,000 new refugees were generated, and only 20,000 more joined their ranks in the first quarter of 1972.

Then came the offensive, abruptly interrupting and reversing this encouraging return to normal life and productivity. Nearly 1.3 million people from 28 provinces fled their homes in the last nine months of 1972. At the peak, 758,000 evacuees were taking refuge at official GVN temporary camps, 35 percent of them in the Danang area alone. Some 675,000 people were still in camps on December 31, 1972. Through major RTV and resettlement programs, the camp population was reduced to 234,000 by the end of 1973 and to 41,800 by July 24, 1974. About 26,000 of the latter group were Cambodians or ethnic Vietnamese from Cambodia.

The GVN reaction to 1972's massive influx of refugees was commendable. Government officials and innumerable Vietnamese private groups and individuals, religious organizations and business groups provided food, clothing and a wide variety of services. Through the Vietnamese Government, the U.S. Government provided funds and surplus commodities for refugee relief. A special national tax was raised to aid refugees, and many

third countries and voluntary agencies also contributed commodities and funds.

The final major category of relief assistance was that provided to in-place war victims. The Vietnamese Government, with U.S. support, determined that a new type of aid was necessary following the battles of Tet, 1968. Although more than a million South Vietnamese civilians were caught up in the nationwide fighting at that time, suffering property damage or the death or injury of a family member, the majority quickly returned home to rebuild. For the most part, their crops were still in the fields and some of their goods could be salvaged. They did not require long-term support, just a small amount of food to tide them over and government help in rebuilding their homes. The government began providing this type of assistance. Because of the widespread hit-and-run fighting experienced in many areas of Vietnam at or following ceasefire, the in-place war victims program was very important in 1973. While 246,000 people submitted claims in 1972, the number doubled to nearly half a million in 1973. Compensation was provided to some 600,000 people during the year for claims submitted in 1973 or in previous years.

With the ceasefire, and despite continuing military activity which created large numbers of new war victims, the government turned refugee emphasis once again to Return-to-Village and resettlement programs. About 350,000 people, the great majority of them displaced during 1972, returned home in 1973 and received at least a portion of the allowances to which they were entitled. Since the majority of people able to return to their secure home areas did so by 1973, the 1974 RTV program was much smaller.

One of 1973's largest and most successful Return-to-Village programs involved the return of some 80,000 people to the southern districts of Quang Tri Province. Only a very few houses or buildings in all of Quang Tri Province escaped destruction during the massive fighting there in 1972; fields and villages were littered with the refuse of the war. Yet many refugees were anxious to go back and start the clean-up work. Thanks to their industriousness and to the on-the-spot assistance provided by the Interministerial Committee for the Relief, Resettlement and RTV of war victims; Vietnamese military units, which worked on land clearing, road repair, construction, and many other activities of benefit to the community in addition to providing security; Rural Development cadre; and numerous other groups and individuals, thousands of new homes were built, and farm plots were planted and producing.

1973 and the first half of 1974 was primarily a time of rebuilding and return to a normal life for the nation's refugees. Program emphasis during the remainder of 1974 was focused on new resettlement movements and the improvement of those sites already established, plus continued assistance to in-place war victims. A number of international voluntary agencies and other nations, in addition to the Vietnamese and American, assisted in reconstruction efforts and pledged continued material and financial support to the overall relief and rehabilitation program.

About 214,000 people were resettled in 1973, and some 207,000 additional joined their ranks during the first five months of 1974.

Some resettlement programs involved interregional moves from the crowded camps of Region 1 to unused land in Regions 2 and 3. With almost all of the in-camp Vietnamese refugees resettled or returned home by June 30, 1974, emphasis in the resettlement program underwent a gradual change. The main target groups for resettlement during the remainder of 1974 and in 1975 were unemployed city dwellers and former refugees currently living in inviable areas.

Resettlement was voluntary and leaders of resettlement groups usually took part in the choice or approval of sites. A longer period of time was required for resettlement communities to become viable than for RTV communities. While refugees returning to RTV sites reoccupied land which was once in use, and some roads, wells, etc., still existed, the resettlement site started from zero. Clearing land for farm plots often proved to be a community's biggest, most time-consuming problem because some sites were located in such areas as government forests which had never been farmed. Thus, the regular six-month food allowance was often extended several months for resettlers, and, before they were able to plant crops on their new land, settlers sometimes made charcoal or engaged in other work to earn additional money to support their families.

These long-range programs of return and resettlement--both strongly supported by the U.S. Government--provided major humanitarian and economic benefits to South Vietnam as a whole as well as to the individual refugees. The programs offered the country an efficient, effective, and popular method of increasing agricultural production. Abandoned and virgin land was put to use, as was excess manpower which

might otherwise have required continued welfare assistance for many years.

Dr. Dan had originally hoped to close the last refugee camp by April 1974. To accomplish this, he scheduled camp closings throughout the early months of 1974. The schedule slipped a few months, but as seen in the figures quoted above, only about 15,000 Vietnamese remained in camp at the end of the fiscal year. There was some criticism of the program on the ground that refugees were being "pushed" out of the camps, without sufficient choice as to their next destination. But Dr. Dan believed it was essential to end defilitating, non-productive camp existence and restore refugees to self-sufficiency. And in most cases they were given a choice. For example, refugees from Quang Tri who could not face the prospect of returning to that beleaguered province whose capital was a ghost town, and much of whose land had been yielded to the enemy, were permitted to resettle farther south in Region 3. In February 1974, refugees in the Binh Duong camps were given the option of resettlement in two Region 3 sites or to accept a one-time 100,000 piaster per capita grant with which they could settle on their own in any location they chose.

All during 1974, Dr. Dan was visiting the four regions in quest of new resettlement sites. In the latter part of the year, with the strong encouragement and participation of the USAID, he was seeking alternative placement for resettled refugees who were living in non-viable sites. A survey made in the Fall of 1974 indicated that of 150 sites,

34 were completely viable, 23 were non-viable by any definition, and 93 were potentially viable, that is, they could be brought to viability either by additional land clearance and infrastructure or by reducing the current population, or both. Steps were being taken to transfer refugees from the non-viable sites (which were almost all in Region 1) and to correct deficiencies in the potentially viable sites, when the final collapse came in April 1975.

The final surge of refugees occurred in the early months of 1975, beginning with the fall of Darlac Province, the subsequent loss of Ban Me Thuot and the flight of thousands from the Central Highlands provinces toward the sea. In the succeeding days, as the enemy closed off Hue and other town and districts in Region 1, half a million refugees crowded into Danang. As it gradually became clear that Danang could not hold out, evacuation of refugees got underway by sea and air. Some was spontaneous, some assisted by the GVN and U.S. Governments, but as the situation grew more tense many refugees panicked and there were scenes of wild disorder both at the port and the airport. Meanwhile the GVN's strategy was to concentrate the Central Highlands refugees as well as those escaping from Region 1 in several provinces farther down the Coast. It was thought that Nha Trang, Cam Ranh, Ninh Thuan, Binh Thuan and Vung Tau would provide safe havens for the evacuees. But the course of events moved too swiftly, and early in April it was apparent that these areas, too, would be overrun.

Dr. Dan made a trip to the Delta to explore possibilities for asylum there, but although some sites were located, this plan, too,

aborted as the North relentlessly closed in. Some ships proceeding from Cam Ranh and Vung Tan made for Phuc Quoc island some miles off the South-Western province of Kien Giang and when Saigon fell there was some 40,000 refugees receiving temporary assistance on that island. But after Saigon's capitulation, the North moved quickly to secure this last refuge of the evacuees. Refugees who flocked to Khanh Hoa, Bien Hoa and other locations in Region 3 were similarly overtaken by events.

A table showing numbers of newly registered refugees, registrants returned home and registrants resettled from 1964-1974 is shown in the appendix.

For CY 75, AID requested \$76.5 million to meet the costs of assisting some 100,000 refugees to return home and 550,000 to resettle on new land and to compensate approximately 150,000 people who were affected by the war, including death of family members, injury or damage to their homes. In addition, \$30 million was requested for resettling on productive land 300,000 displaced persons who were living in overcrowded urban areas. The Government of Vietnam had received applications from more than 600,000 families, many of which had moved from farms to cities in their own, without a period of dependency in refugee camps.

Section D in the appendix gives a fairly comprehensive picture of assistance given after the ceasefire by donors other than the U.S. Government. The Government of Japan with \$20 million heads the list, but substantial aid was also given by Canada, West Germany, South Korea, France and others as well as a large number of voluntary bodies.

It will be noted that the International Red Cross made substantial inputs. UNICEF's greatly expanded program in South Vietnam was expected to reach \$10.5 million for the three years ending in 1975. The Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was also seeking some \$4 million in funds to help finance a proposed program of refugee resettlement for 60,000 families. This was a special program for UNHCR whose mandate normally extends only to refugees who are border-crossers, not to those who are refugees within their own country.