Children of the killing fields: a study of Kampuchean adolescents in New South Wales

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CHILDREN OF THE KILLING FIELDS
A Study of Kampuchean Adolescents
in New South Wales

A thesis submitted in (partial) fulfilment of the requirement for the
award of the degree of
M.A. (Hons)
from
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By

Chanthou Boua, B. Comm., Dip. Ed.

Centre for Multicultural Studies,
This is to certify that the following work has not previously been submitted to any University. Except for references acknowledged in footnotes, the work is wholly my own.

Chanthou Boua

25th Oct. 1988
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Chapter One: Introduction**

1. Education .......................... 1
2. Employment .......................... 5
3. Psychological and Identity Factors .......... 7
4. Profile of the Kampuchean Population in N.S.W. 12

**Chapter Two: Migration and Kampuchean Refugees in Australia** 16

1. The Rich Countries .................. 16
2. The Benefits of Imported Labour ........... 18
3. The Poor Countries .................. 19
4. Post-War Australian Migration Policy ........ 21
5. Special Characteristics of the Kampuchean Refugee and Ethnicity 26

**Chapter Three: Kampuchea and the West** 32

1. French Colonisation ................ 32
2. The Post-Colonial Period .......... 36
3. Fleeing ................................ 43

**Chapter Four: The Situation Before and On Arrival** 46

1. The Interviews ...................... 46
2. Parents' Background ............... 48
3. Age .................................. 49
4. The Journey ........................ 53
5. Education in Kampuchea ............. 55
6. Education in Refugee Camps .......... 56

**Chapter Five: The Settlement Process** 62

1. Schooling ........................... 62
   Learning English .................... 63
   High School ........................ 66
   Problems at High School .......... 67
   Racial Attitudes
   Students and Teachers
   Subject Matter
   Assistance with School Work ......... 72
   The Financial Factor ............... 74
   Mother-Tongue Maintenance .......... 76
   Special Cases ...................... 77
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MAP OF KAMPUCHEA
A NOTE ON KAMPUCHEA

Kampuchea is a country which (before 1975) used to be known as Cambodia to westerners for easier pronunciation ('Cambodge' in French). The dominant ethnic group that makes up the Kampuchean population is the Khmer; others are Chinese, Vietnamese, Chams and hill tribes. The spoken language is known as Khmer. But all citizens of the country are known as Kampucheans, or until 1976, Cambodians.
CHILDREN OF THE KILLING FIELDS investigates the settlement process of Kampuchean adolescents in N.S.W. Kampuchean refugees have come mostly since the early 1980s, as political upheaval in their country drove them out involuntarily. In their process of searching for a new life in multicultural Australia, Kampuchean adolescents have come upon many obstacles. Backed by very little or no formal schooling (education during the Pol Pot time was completely abolished and the refugee camps in Thailand offered only haphazard schooling), Kampuchean adolescents found it extremely difficult to make headway at school in Australia. While this is not unique among the non-English speaking migrant groups in Australia, Kampuchean adolescents face other special problems. Many are illiterate or semi-literate in Khmer and have a low level of conceptual development as they have missed out on many basic concepts that children normally acquire at school. My study has found that illiteracy in Khmer seems to slow down their acquisition of English, which has generally hindered their social and educational development. Together with that, illiteracy in Khmer means that over time their ability to communicate in Khmer diminishes. This leads to misunderstandings within the adolescent's family as parents' values and cultural heritage cannot be passed on. This can create frictions in the family.

My research shows that Australia has failed to provide the Kampuchean adolescents with some of their basic needs, such as mother-tongue maintenance, assistance for adolescents with disrupted and limited education, work training, and English language skills. This failure leads to inequity in participation in society generally, as can be observed in the employment field.

As a result of their inability to make headway in education, many Kampuchean adolescents leave school to join the unskilled workforce. Having lived under the inhuman
regime of Pol Pot and as refugees in Thailand, the Kampuchean adolescents are not choosy with jobs. Adolescents who have been in Australia for a few years have found it easier to find work than those who have arrived recently, as the former group have had time to build up contacts and spoke more English. Nevertheless, my study shows that Kampuchean adolescents are quite capable of making a valuable contribution to Australian society, and some are already doing so.
1. INTRODUCTION

The legacy of over two decades of destructive wars and of the Pol Pot regime (1975-1979) has forced many Kampucheans to flee their homeland. Since 1975 about 15,000 have resettled in Australia. A substantial influx did not start until 1980. According to the 1986 census, there were 5,898 Kampucheans born in N.S.W., concentrated mainly in the western suburbs of Sydney. Among them were many adolescents who are the target of this study. Adolescents represent a big proportion of the total Kampuchean population. In N.S.W., over a quarter (25.72%) of the Kampuchean population are in the 15 to 24 age group. This age group was chosen because:

-- they are a group at risk

-- without proper settlement assistance their contribution to Australian society will be hindered.

This study will investigate the settlement process of Kampuchean adolescents in N.S.W. First it is necessary to look briefly at their participation in education and employment, the effect the Pol Pot era had on the psychology of those who lived through it, and the identity problem that usually occurs in young people as the result of migration.

To follow are my observations combined with a survey of the literature on these issues, and a profile of the Kampuchean population in N.S.W.
EDUCATION

When I was a teacher in high schools and language centres in Melbourne (1981-86) I observed that nearly all Kampuchean students at high school dropped out at age 16-20 years, after having been at school and other educational institutions for 2-5 years, but before acquiring useful qualifications. Nearly everywhere they were known as low achievers, but not because they were lazy and unmotivated. In fact the students were usually hard working and had arrived in Australia with high expectations. They wanted to succeed at school. Their parents too usually had a healthy respect for education. Having lived through four years of near total abolition of education their hunger for schooling was manifested by parents inside and outside of Kampuchea. In Kampuchea, in 1984, for example there were more children enrolled for the first four years of schooling than in the peace time of Sihanouk's rule in 1969 (Vickery, 1986:155). Identifying the factors which contribute to their eventual failure in the system is one of the purposes of this study.

What Kampuchean adolescents have experienced with the Australian educational system is not exceptional. In the Report of the Greek and Italian Youth Employment Study, the authors said: "It is generally agreed that a majority of immigrant young people from a non-English speaking background have experienced considerable difficulties in adjusting to life in Australia. These difficulties have included the acquisition of English, academic progress, satisfactory identity development and the achievement of ambitions" (Young, Cox, Daly, 1983:9). All the difficulties mentioned above are experienced by Kampuchean adolescents to a greater extent than other migrant groups, because of the traumatic experiences endured by them in their homeland prior to their departure and also to the nature of their departure, i.e. fleeing as refugees rather than migrating voluntarily. Their experiences include death in the family through assassination, starvation or disease; family separation; excessively harsh working conditions; malnutrition; lack of trust; lack
of compassion, lack of health care and absence of formal education or training. (More
details about the Pol Pot regime are given in chapter 3.)

Historical events have a great impact on the settlement process of the Kampuchean
adolescents. For example, it is nearly universally true that a newly-arrived 15 year-old
Kampuchean person has never received any formal education in Kampuchea but only
haphazard courses in the refugee camp in Thailand. This is because of the fact that for the
four years (1975-1979) when Pol Pot was in power, almost all types of formal education
were abolished. This means that the youth is illiterate or semi-literate in Khmer. He or
she is not accustomed to the basic formal learning environment, such as uncomfortably
sitting on a chair for a long period of time, and has a short concentration span.
Sometimes he or she demonstrates learning difficulties and is unable to retain information
taught.

Teachers have observed that literacy and basic education in the mother tongue is an
important contribution to success in learning English and for cognitive development. I
have found among Kampuchean adolescents that those who are more literate in Khmer
become more proficient in English and able to grasp the new concepts faster than those
who are illiterate or semi-literate in Khmer. My hypothesis therefore is that the more
literate they are in Khmer the faster they will become proficient in English and learn the
new concepts. Research in the area of underachievement among minority children
suggests that:

... the level of proficiency bilingual children attain in their two languages may be
an important intervening variable mediating the effects of bilingualism on
children's cognitive and academic development. Specifically, it has been
hypothesised that there may be a threshold level of linguistic proficiency bilingual
children must attain in order to avoid cognitive deficits .... If bilingual children
attain only a very low level of proficiency in one or both of their languages, their
long-term interaction with their academic environment through these languages,
both in term of input and output, is likely to be impoverished (Cummins,

Most Kampuchean adolescents do not reach that threshold level of proficiency in their
mother-tongue, therefore it would take them a long time, if indeed they ever manage, to
become proficient in English and to strive academically, i.e. to understand the content of the subject matter taught. Illiteracy in the mother-tongue is a phenomenon that the school system here has yet to come to terms with.

A study by the Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission, *Indo-Chinese Refugees in Victoria*, noted "(i) that all settlement difficulties are compounded at the secondary school level and (2) the Khmer group appear to be facing more problems in coping with the school curriculum" (1984:74). This is no doubt because of the disrupted or minimal schooling that the Kampucheans received before their arrival in Australia. It means that they have missed out on many basic concepts on which post-primary teachers base their lessons. Their task, therefore, is not only to learn the English language but to catch up with the concepts of the subject matter that children routinely acquire at primary and post-primary level.

Unlike their Australian peers, the Kampucheans cannot turn to their parents or elders for help in their school work or advice about their new society. Similarly they have no background knowledge of language and are unfamiliar with many subjects taught in Australian schools.

The amount of work they have to catch up on is unsurmountable. After a few years at school it becomes obvious to the students and to some teachers that the tasks of becoming proficient in English and catching up with the concepts are completely out of their reach. The situation is extremely desperate for those who arrived in Australia at an older age, i.e. senior-level high school age of around 15-16 years. The situation, however, is only a little more promising for those who arrived at junior-level high school age. As a study by the Commonwealth Department of Education called *English Language Needs of Migrant and Refugee Youth* said, "Language learning is not a rapid process. Hence, those students who have to learn English as well as learning content in English, having arrived as adolescents, have insufficient time to accomplish both tasks in the usual span of secondary schooling" (1986:24).
The situation is better for those who arrived in Australia at primary-level age. My hypothesis is that the younger they were when they arrived in Australia the better their chance of success in education. This is due mainly to the fact that when they arrived at a younger age (primary-level) they had more time to learn English, had access to the concepts taught at primary level, and therefore will be able to cope with the more complicated concepts at high school.

So it is usually those who arrived at secondary-level age who face problems. Their initial enthusiasm gradually melts. Schooling then becomes frustrating and unrewarding and it is right at that point, when they reach year 10 or 11, that they decide to leave school and look for work. They are armed with very few skills and little knowledge of this new society.

**EMPLOYMENT**

The depressed economic situation Australia has experienced since 1974 has been very unfortunate for the recently arrived non-English speaking migrant groups. During the time of economic recession migrant workers, especially the newcomers, have been badly affected. Unemployment rates among migrant workers are usually higher than the national figure.

In West Germany, for example, unemployment rates among migrant workers were usually lower than the national rate when economic conditions were favourable. (S. Castles, 1984:145, Table 5.12) However as soon as economic conditions began to deteriorate in 1974-75, the unemployment rate among foreign workers grew to be higher than the national rate. One of the reasons is that manufacturing industries, which mainly employ migrant workers, are hardest hit by the recession. Also built-in racism and low skill level ensures that the newcomers are first to go.
In Australia recently with shrinking numbers of manufacturing jobs, many newcomers have been unable to find work. In 1981 the highest rates of unemployment were experienced by Vietnamese (24.7%) and Lebanese (15.3%) as compared with the national rates 5.3% (DIEA statistical notes (no.23) Table 1, 1981). This disproportionate pattern continues. Migrant youth unemployment rates too have been very high and are considered "likely to get worse in the near future" (Castles et al., May 1986:67).

Non-English speaking migrant workers depend heavily on unskilled and manufacturing jobs. A study by the VEAC, *Indo-Chinese Refugees in Victoria*, found that "of both men and women who are employed, 77.5% are employed as unskilled labourers" (VEAC, 1984:64). This phenomenon is accentuated among Kampuchean adolescents who have not much skill behind them and are not proficient in English.

The Indo-Chinese refugees in Victoria have a workforce participation rate of 80% (VEAC:95), which reflects their readiness to establish themselves in the new country. This intention, however, is not fulfilled as competition for work is so fierce, even for unskilled work. Unemployment rates are very high, according to the above study: "65% of the total Kampuchean male sample and 86% of the Kampuchean female sample were unemployed" (VEAC:61). The study also stated that the prospect of employment improves with the length of residence.

My hypothesis is that while it is not so difficult for Kampuchean adolescents who have spent the last 3-4 years at school in Australia to find work when they leave school, it is difficult for those who arrived in Australia at age 16-20 and want to join the workforce immediately. This perhaps is the result of personal contact and the degree of confidence in communication that the former group have been able to establish during their residence here.

The above study also found that for the Indo-Chinese refugees, friends and kin networks play an important role in job-seeking (VEAC:97). The Kampuchean population in N.S.W., however, is very small (5,898) compared with Vietnamese (34,000).
Support from the community, therefore, is very meagre. The Kampuchean community, because of its small size, has not been able to form a cohesive support network. Also, because of the nature of their migration, many Kampuchean refugees are here without the kinship support that is experienced by Greeks and Italians who came to Australia under the chain migration.

Furthermore while many Vietnamese came with entrepreneurial skills, the Kampucheans are usually of lower middle-level civil servant and peasant background. The Vietnamese success in business ventures (restaurants, grocery stores etc.) means jobs for many Vietnamese adolescents who decide, for whatever reasons, not to go on with their schooling. This type of fallback is not available to Kampuchean adolescents.

Lack of suitable work training is another factor that usually hinders their success in job seeking. They have usually arrived with few suitable skills for an industrial society. Language difficulties, together with a low level of education, ensure that they are at the bottom of the employment list in many cases.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL AND IDENTITY FACTORS**

An important factor that needs investigation when studying the settlement process of Kampuchean refugees is the effect the Pol Pot era had on the psychology of those who lived through it. J.D. Kinzie, a psychiatrist working with Kampuchean refugees in the U.S., has suggested that Kampuchean refugees "suffered from some of the same symptoms -- referred to collectively as the concentration camp syndrome -- as Nazi victims" (Kinzie, 1987:333). Most of the patients who sought his treatment complained of major depressive symptoms, such as sleep disorders, insomnia, poor concentration and poor appetite. He now believes that as well as suffering from depressive disorder, most victims of Pol Pot's regime suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSS), delayed
type, i.e. the symptoms were only presented one or two years after they were freed from the Pol Pot regime in 1979. The study went on to say that:

... once the syndrome developed they stopped talking about their past under Pol Pot. On direct questioning most would reluctantly begin to describe the catastrophic horror they experienced -- forced migration from their home, forced long labour, separation from family, starvation, little sleep, random beatings, serious illnesses, and the sight of frequent, indiscriminate killings.... A unique aspect of these symptoms was avoidance of any events, even in an interview, that remind them of that part of their life in Cambodia (ibid:333).

The patients seem unable to discuss the events but experienced intrusive thoughts and nightmares about them.

Their suffering includes exaggerated startled reaction to stimuli that reminded them of events in Kampuchea, difficulty relating to their spouses or children, guilt or shame for having lived or for having left their relatives behind, poor concentration and memory and sleep disorders. These were the most universal symptoms (ibid:334-8).

Three case studies by Kinzie were of patients 56, 27 and 48 years old. It may be hoped, therefore, that adolescents were not so badly affected by the Pol Pot experiences which took place when they were young children.

Teachers of Kampuchean adolescents, however, are heard to complain about Kampuchean students' poor concentration, inability to memorise and day dreaming. This, of course, hinders their educational progress enormously. For the Kampuchean students, complaints of frequent headache are quite common and known jokingly as "the Cambodian disease". It is also observed that some Kampuchean adolescents are unable to let themselves go with joy. Perhaps they are not sure as to how far they are from the Pol Pot misery and hence their feeling of insecurity.

The above study, supported by earlier studies of concentration camp victims in World War II, suggested that physical trauma, tortures and malnutrition "contributed to the syndrome by weakening the victims and leaving them biologically vulnerable to the psychological trauma" (ibid:345). It is, therefore advisable, even though psychological
complaints among Kampuchean adolescents are not yet outstanding, for teachers and social workers to watch for their development.

A doctor of psychiatry, M. Eisenbruch, in his study of Kampuchean unaccompanied minors, has suggested that memories of the past "when powerful, interfered with the youth's capacity to concentrate on homework or other activities" (Eisenbruch, 1988a). For Kampuchean adolescents, memories range from very good to very bad. The good times were usually before the Pol Pot period when they could live together with their parents, brothers and sisters, ate as much as they wanted at whatever time, went to school, played with friends in the city streets or in the green ricefields, rivers or ponds where fish can be caught with bare hands. It is true that they usually idealise the good times. However, compared to what happened afterwards it is understandable. Among other terrible things that happened around them during the Pol Pot time, Kampuchean adolescents usually remember the amount of work they had to perform in the fields or village in order to get meagrely fed communally, twice a day. The work prevented them from playing and for some the word playing was not in their vocabulary.

I remember a complaint made by a primary school teacher to a mother of an eight-year old boy who was so keen on playing, with all the available toys he had not seen before, that he neglected all his school work and paid little attention to his teacher. He was labelled as a problem child who was easily distracted and disturbed others. This went on for nearly a year until he had had enough with the toys and became cooperative with the teacher and classroom activities.

Children remember the constant hunger and how they had to roam the forest for insects or roots or steal to get additional food. They also remember the price they or some of their friends had to pay when they were caught stealing. The disciplinary measures included beating, starving, forced labour and death. On top of that, many adolescents
remember watching their immediate family die of starvation, disease or simply being marched away never to return.

After the Pol Pot period came the refugee camps in Thailand where they lived behind barbed wire, possessed no basic human rights, and lived off handouts from international agencies. Violent crimes such as rapes, robberies, killings are common occurrences there. For many the refugee camp was a place where they and their families lingered without purpose for years, some up to 5-6 years.

How could anyone return to normal living after such experiences, not to mention having to adapt to a new type of environment and culture widely different from the Kampucheans'? This gap was expected to be bridged by the Kampucheans, especially the Kampuchean adolescents. Adolescents unlike their older compatriots, especially those who do not have to work (pensioners, widows with young children, the unemployed workforce), can to some extent live a Kampuchean way of life behind closed doors. Adolescents are put from the start into a situation where they must quickly adapt in order to survive. It is, as M. Einsenbruch said, in the midst of the maelstrom of acculturating to Western life that adolescents struggle to maintain core identity by reconnecting with the past, including both good and bad. This is recognised as nostalgia, which interrupts the concentration of adolescents and is annoying for teachers. M. Eisenbruch, however, said that "nostalgia, however distressing, can be viewed as an appropriate response" to acculturation (ibid).

It can be explained that as adolescents are submerged in a new culture (or forced to accept a new culture) there emerges an unconscious or conscious decision to look back and analyse carefully their original identity in the way that they never did before. This is done through discussion with their peers or friends and relatives, of the same nationality, about the host society's customs, values, codes of conduct, etc. This discussion is usually in the form of comparison of the two societies. It is through this process that adolescents strengthen their core identity by asking themselves questions like "Who am
"Where do I come from?", "Why am I here?", "Where am I going?", "Why do those children act differently from me?". Discussion with friends and family, attending traditional festivals etc., are important contributions to successful strengthening of core identity. It is only when they have a strong core identity that they will be able to accept the new culture at its face value, i.e. not feel alienated. Programs such as mother-tongue maintenance, study of Kampuchean history, literature, music etc., have important roles to play in consolidating the core identity and therefore, successful acculturation, which leads to a meaningful contribution to a multicultural society.

In his study of Kampuchean unaccompanied minors, M. Eisenbruch postulated that "rapid acculturation leads to alienation because it excludes personal and cultural bereavement" (ibid). While traditional wisdom has suggested that migrants or refugees should acculturate as rapidly as possible in order to get on with their lives in the new country, Eisenbruch implied that time should be allowed initially for them to mourn their personal and cultural loss. Personal and cultural bereavement, he suggested, is healthier when done collectively. These findings, he said, challenge the wisdom of some conventional approaches to refugee settlement, and suggest that ethnic enclaves may have a place in multicultural society.

This reminds me of a short (one year) experience I had as a bilingual teacher with a pilot program for post-primary students in Melbourne. The class consisted of six recently arrived Kampuchean students, a Kampuchean teacher's aide and myself. The students attended full-time intensive English classes except for the five hours per week they spent with me. For these five hours we spoke Khmer all the time, except for some translation work. The lessons included history, geography, science and maths, taught as much as possible in Khmer. Besides the above academic instruction we also discussed the Australian way of life, our past experiences, and what was happening around us. We read a number of works of Khmer classical literature, which allowed us to look at and analyse the structure of Kampuchean society, family structure and role, women's role, history, etc. Looking back, the classes served as therapy for collective bereavement
where a group of Kampucheans compared and contrasted the two societies, reminded each other of what we used to do in Kampuchea, and therefore consolidated our identity and at the same time learned new concepts in various subjects.

The students were mostly known to their English teachers as shy, quiet, lacking in confidence and mostly low achievers. In our class, however, as Khmer was the means of communication, the students were able to discuss subjects of substance confidently and happily as they did not have to worry whether they got the grammar right or the pronunciation correct. The bilingual class is a place where students can shed frustrations they accumulate in their English class through not being able to express themselves intellectually, explain their experiences and feelings or ask questions. Having a place where they can shed their frustrations is very important for the initial period, as learning English is a slow process and students can easily be discouraged.

A few teachers remarked that there was a lot of laughter to be heard out of the bilingual class. I congratulated myself as I believed that it is very important to keep them laughing and feeling human while learning English. Unfortunately the bilingual classes ended a year later as funding for MACMME and the School Commission was cut. In conclusion, it seems that educational programs such as mother-tongue maintenance, ethnic weekend classes, community languages and ethnic "ghettoes" serve as a means of collective grief for the loss of their culture, and help migrant adolescents to build a better sense of identity and therefore achieve a more meaningful acculturation.

PROFILE OF KAMPUCHEAN POPULATION IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Since 1975, when the three Indochinese countries, Kampuchea, Vietnam and Lao, fell into communist hands, there have been many Indochinese seeking a new home in Australia. For many Australians it is very difficult to distinguish the three peoples' physical features. All of them are known as "Vietnamese" to some Australians and
teachers. There are indeed a lot more Vietnamese than Kampuchean or Laotians. According to the 1986 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census there are 5,898 Kampuchean in N.S.W., as compared to 34,000 Vietnamese and 4,600 Laotians.

The three populations include numerous adolescents, aged between 15 and 24. They represent about a quarter of the Indo-chinese population, and among Kampuchean a bit higher, 25.7%; this is compared with 16% adolescents for the general population of N.S.W. The need for special attention to these groups of people is obvious.

Because of the nature of their migration, as political and economic refugees, the Indo-Chinese populations are very youthful. 90% of Vietnamese, 87% of Laotians and 85% of Kampuchean are under the age of 45, as compared with 69.3% of the general population. With a small community like the Kampuchean one, social life has been very restricted for the few aged in the population. Old women in particular are extremely isolated and hardly wield any influence within the community. Except as leaders in Buddhist festivals or weddings, there are few other roles for them to play. Some aged women help their children by looking after the grandchildren to allow the mothers to go to work. Their roles as providers of moral support and elderly direction as in Kampuchean villages have largely disappeared. This is due partly to the fact that their former experience is not relevant any more to decisions that must be made in the new setting. Most of them don't speak English and are usually placed at random in Housing Commission homes or flats. A 65 year-old widowed pensioner (mother of one of my sample) was recently given a new Housing Commission home of three bedrooms in Edensor Park, a new satellite suburb of Western Sydney; there is no other Kampuchean home within walking distance. The children all go to school, leaving her with not much to do. For her there is no day out for golf or shopping or at the hairdresser or visiting, as she doesn't speak any English, doesn't have much money, and the area is badly served by public transport, not to mention the cold winter climate that she is not used to. While she's happy with the progress the children are making at school, life generally is "boring" and "not like at home".
One of the major legacies of Pol Pot's mass killings is the high number of lone parents among the Kampuchean settlers in Australia, especially women. In N.S.W. alone there are 289 widowed Kampuchean females. This represents 12.2% of the female population over 15 years old (i.e. one in eight females over 15 years old is a widow) as compared with 4.6% for Vietnamese and 7% for Laotians.

According to the 1986 census the employment rate among the Kampuchean population of 15 years old and over is 59.1%. This means the Kampuchean employment rate is lower than the Vietnamese (62.88%), Laotian (75.4%) and the general population's rate of 89.9%. The low employment rate among the Kampucheans partly means that their skills are not compatible with Australian industrial society. This is largely due to the input of peasant and uneducated people, in a higher proportion among Kampucheans than among Vietnamese or Lao. Kampuchean women have a particularly low rate of employment. Only half (50%) of them are employed. Vietnamese, Laotians and women generally have employment rates of 56.4%, 72.97% and 89.62% respectively.

The Kampuchean unemployment rate is broadly typical of newcomers. With an unemployment rate of 35.71% (in 1986), it is perhaps the highest of all the ethnic groups. The unemployment rate for Vietnamese is 32.22%, for Laotians 21.73%, for Lebanese 28.83%, as compared with the general population of 8%. For the Kampucheans, the situation is quite serious when we look at unemployment rates by marital status. Single people have a lower unemployment rate (25.8 %) than married people (40.49 %) who have more responsibility as far as bringing up children is concerned. The fact that single people can find jobs more easily than married people, who are generally older, means that the single (and younger) people are more suitable for the Australian labour market. It is partly due to the fact that they speak more English as the result of their few years of education in Australia. For married people with four or more young children, the money earned from low paid unskilled work is usually not much more than their unemployment benefit. However it also means that they don't gain any work experience for the future.
Newcomers, however, have higher rates of labour force participation than the general population. The labour force participation rate among Kampucheans is 66.56%, among Vietnamese 71.67%, among Laotians 66.95%, as compared with the general population's participation rate of 59.4%. This means that the rate of people willing to work, actively looking for work and depending on work for a living is higher for newcomers than for the general population. This is partly due to the youthfulness of the population.

For Kampucheans, for example, this means that possibly 30% (100-66.56 = 33) of the population 15 years and over are still at school as there are not many Kampucheans living in retirement or on unearned income. If employment opportunities do not improve we can expect an even higher rate of unemployment among the Kampucheans in the near future when this group decides to join the work force.

As expected, the labour force participation rate among married people (75.6%) is higher than among the never married (58.51%). There are many young people still at school believing that this will improve their job opportunities.
A most remarkable phenomenon of the second half of the 20th century is the massive internationalisation of labour. The period has witnessed the movement of people across frontiers to work, mainly from poorer third world countries to the developed western capitalist countries where rapid economic expansion has been experienced. The uneven development of the capitalist system was the basic cause of this great human migration (S. Castles, 1984:7). While some western countries are expanding economically and need more labour, other countries are getting poorer and are glad (or forced) to shed some of their labour to the benefit of the countries that need them. Australia is one of the countries that benefited from such available labour forces after the Second World War. It is important, for the purposes of this study, to look at each of the two groups of nations in turn -- i.e. the reasons for the post-war boom, and the factors that compelled people to leave their homelands, with special reference here to Kampuchea (chapter 3). As for Australia, it is interesting to look at its migration policy, especially towards non-British migrants, and more recently to migrants from its Asian neighbours.

THE RICH COUNTRIES

The post-war economic boom in most western countries demanded more labour. The expansion was rapid, "with the world capitalist output doubling in the period 1952-69 alone" (S. Castles, 1987:20). The long boom was caused by the restructuring of financial and commodity markets and the reorganisation of large sectors of industrial production in western countries. These were made possible with capital from the US and the transnationalisation of material economies. Cheap raw materials and agricultural products from the newly-independent third world countries helped western countries to
accumulate capital and enabled them to concentrate on industrial production. A weak labour movement, in the aftermath of fascism and war, helped to keep wages low and therefore encouraged high rates of investment. Demand for goods was increasing as post-war reconstruction was underway. Rearmament, together with the Korean War (and later the Vietnam War) and the Cold War, all contributed to the sustaining of demand internationally. Private expenditure was expanding with the need to renew fixed capital with highly mechanised industries (ibid:21).

This period of expansion meant that "employment in the advanced capitalist countries grew by about one per cent per year" (ibid:21). At the early stage of the boom, employers managed to fill vacant positions with returning soldiers, women who joined the workforce for the first time, the existing unemployed and domestic rural-urban migration as agriculture became more mechanised. This domestic supply of labour soon became exhausted. With low birth rates during the war promising little relief from the labour shortage, employers were desperate for more labour, an essential precondition for further expansion and accumulation of capital. Competition for labour became fierce and it was suggested that employers would have to increase wages to attract labour, and look more towards women as a possible supply of labour power. However both suggestions would have led to lower profit as the cost of production would increase through wage rises, provision of child care, etc. These inflationary activities, together with their lower profitability, would have reduced investment incentive and therefore would have ended the boom at an earlier stage. But instead, the boom in western countries was prolonged as the result of the availability of foreign workers who were seen as a feasible immediate solution to the problem. It was then that governments of many western countries, without long-term planning for the possible consequences, became active in recruiting foreign workers as requested by employers, in the form either of the guest-worker system or immigration.
THE BENEFITS OF IMPORTED LABOUR

For western countries, foreign workers or migrants are the most convenient type of labour supply in times of expansion. They can make use of "ready made" (R. Miles, 1986:52) workers, and have not had to pay the costs of rearing and educating them. For countries using the guest-worker system, it was expected that the workers would return home when they were no longer required and this would eliminate the cost of sustaining them in old age. In West Germany during the mid-1970s recession, the total number of foreigners in employment fell by over 600,000 between 1973 and 1978, but the number registered as unemployed was only about 100,000 in the later year (S. Castles, 1984:145). This means that the West German government managed to avoid paying unemployment benefits to about half a million people, and therefore transferred the costs of the recession to the third world countries which had initially provided her with additional labour during the boom period. This is, "as the OECD experts put it, an attempt to redistribute the burden of unemployment from more advanced to less advanced countries" (ibid:36). During the period of economic depression, recruitment of foreign workers can simply cease. The fact that the tap of labour can be turned on or off at will is very much compatible with the cycle of boom and bust of the capitalist system.

In Australia, the migrant intake reduced substantially whenever the economy experienced recession. Australia also reserves the right to pick and choose the type (skilled, unskilled, rich, poor) of migrants it needs for its economy. Recently, with the economy moving from manufacturing industries to service industries, together with its migration intake, Australia has successfully built up a sizeable reserve of workers for the service industry. With 7-9% unemployment throughout the country, Australia (or at least the Federal Opposition) is now calling for a reduction in the numbers of migrants admitted under the family reunion category to increase those in the skilled and business category -- Asians or not, as long as they have the skill and/or money (Sydney Morning Herald, 16/5/88:1). Again Australia is looking for "ready made" people. People who can
immediately contribute or be beneficial to the Australian society. The 7-9% unemployed are considered "unemployable" and from the Opposition's point of view it is not cost-effective to retrain them. It is also convenient to have a reserve of labour whom employers can use to keep wages down and other workers under control. A reduction in family reunion means that the opposition does not take into consideration the emotional ties of the migrant family. This is not necessarily beneficial to Australia in the long run. As a Greek community leader said, "Family life is very important. If you want good migrants you need family reunions. Otherwise migrants will only stay a little while and then go back home" (ibid).

Coinciding with this sentiment was the recently released report of the FitzGerald Committee to Advise on Australia's Immigration Policies (CAAIP) which recommended that Australian immigration policies should have a sharper economic focus, that is, immigrants to Australia should be rich, young and skilled. While this recommendation is very much compatible with the interests of Australian employers and business groups, it is not usually welcomed by Australian migrant workers who are concerned that this might jeopardise the possibility of reunion with their families.

THE POOR COUNTRIES

A large proportion of immigrants, foreign workers, and refugees come from poor agricultural countries such as Turkey, Greece, Italy, Algeria, Jamaica, Pakistan, India, Poland, Yugoslavia, Spain, and more recently the countries of Indochina and Latin America. It is important to look at the reasons which compelled these people to leave their countries: among other things, unemployment, poverty, under-employment, social inequality, political upheaval, war, fear of political persecution etc. It is, however, even more important to look at factors which contributed to the occurrence of the above reasons. Some of the countries from which the migrants came had been colonised by
Western countries, for example, Kampuchea by France and Jamaica by the United Kingdom.

The process of colonisation enabled the western countries to become richer and to exploit the colonised countries. Resources were developed and transferred from the colonies to the metropolitan countries, where they were made into goods that could be sold back to the colonies at a profit. This type of capital accumulation has enhanced the development of many western countries since the 16th century. However this form of exchange has undermined the traditional system of production in what became the third world where, as a result, many workers were made redundant, and the countries have become poorer and economically more dependent even after independence was granted or obtained. Another type of capital accumulation under colonial rule was in the form of taxation, such as the head tax, land tax or tax on necessities, food etc., where money was transferred from the colonies to the metropolitan countries.

These practices created poverty, unemployment etc. in countries like India, Algeria and Jamaica, from where people needed to migrate to Western countries in search of a livelihood. Moreover in many countries such as Kampuchea, Vietnam and Latin America, foreign colonisation and domination accentuated social conflicts and injustices to the extent that it led to civil war which resulted in people fleeing their homelands as refugees, to (of course) the western countries. The western countries have, over many years of colonisation, created in the minds of the indigenous people the image of an ideal place to live. That many have ended up here to serve and enrich that same western civilisation is hardly fortuitous. Therefore, whether they came to Australia or other western countries as migrants or refugees, the historical factors that largely determined their destiny are sometimes very similar, that is, western colonisation and domination.
POST-WAR AUSTRALIAN MIGRATION POLICY

The Australian government, as well as having to fulfil the wish of employers for more workers, also had to convince the Australian people, most of whom were at the time very xenophobic and would welcome only British migrants because of the historical connection.

In 1945, Arthur Calwell initiated a grand plan for migration, to increase the population by 1% p.a. (as well as another 1% from natural increases) (Collins 1975:108), an average intake of about 80,000. To sell this policy to the Australian public, Calwell employed the fear tactic, making use of the near invasion by the Japanese in the Second World War to whip up Australian nationalism. He said, "we must fill our country or lose it" (ibid:25). Together with this, he assured the Australian public that "for every foreign migrant there will be ten people from the United Kingdom" (ibid:7). The plan was a success. It was accepted by nearly all sections of the community including trade unions and business. The recruitment was underway. But Calwell found out soon after that he could not fulfil his promise for there were not enough Britons willing to migrate to Australia as the situation there improved. So in the late 1940s, in order to meet the quota, the government found it necessary to recruit East European displaced persons. To satisfy Australian people, the first batch of them were all single, between 15 and 35 years old -- the working age -- and handsome and beautiful. As Calwell put it, "It was not hard to sell immigration to the Australian people once the press published photographs of the group" (Birrell and Birrell, 1981:46). So 200,000 displaced persons came to Australia from the Baltic States, Poland and other East European countries between 1947 and 1954 (ibid:46).

Priority was given to English people, although some came from Northern Europe, of whom many were of skilled or professional backgrounds. With the post-war expansion of western Europe and the formation of the European Economic Community (EEC), Australia had to compete fiercely for migrant labour. To fulfil the target it was
necessary initially in the 1950s and more so in the 1960s for Australia to extend recruitment to Southern Europeans, particularly Italians, Greeks and Yugoslavs. Later on the target was met by extending intake of refugees to the Middle East, mainly Turkey and Lebanon, and most recently Indochina and South America. Total migrant intake between 1947 and 1970 was about 288,000 of whom 43.9% were British, 12.7% were northern Europeans, 13.4% eastern Europeans and 23.5% were southern Europeans (Collins, op.cit.:109).

Since 1947 nearly 4 million migrants have entered Australia, of whom nearly 3 million have remained, to whom 2 million children have been born (D. Storer, 1985:1). By March 1973, immigration represented 60% of the population increase and had contributed more than 50% of the increase in the workforce since 1945 (J. Collins, op.cit.:111).

As in western Europe, the intake of migrants to Australia fluctuated with domestic economic conditions. For example, the early 1950s recession was followed by a sharp reduction of the intake to 80,000 for 1952-53 (Birrell and Birrell, 1981:48) -- from an average of 116,000 in the late 1940s. However, how the target intake was fulfilled depended in part on economic conditions in Europe. It is obvious that the desire to maintain racial purity was superseded by the need to meet the immigration target. (In 1947, 22% of migrants were of non-British origin, compared with 56% more recently) (D. Storer; 1985:1). This happened not because of a conscious policy for a more cosmopolitan society, but rather because of the government's desire to please employers who were in need of surplus labour to enable them to further expand their investment, as profit increased.

The racial factor has played an important role in shaping Australian immigration policy. While southern Europeans were accepted out of desperation to fulfil the fully immigration target, the door was only opened to Asians in the early 1970s when racial discrimination in immigration was removed. Before, it was only for those with
professional qualifications. Therefore large numbers of Asian migrants did not arrive until the late 1970s when Indochinese refugees looked for new homes. Asian migration has increased steadily from then on. Between 1977 and 1987 the number of Asian migrants increased from 10,700 to 38,200 which made Asians the largest single group of migrants in this decade. This phenomenon coincided with a decline in the prominence of immigration from the United Kingdom and Ireland and from Europe, as indicated in the following table.

<table>
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<th>Year ended</th>
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<th>Middle East</th>
<th>Asia</th>
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The acceptance of a large number of Indochinese refugees in the last decade has revolutionised Australian immigration history. However, as Nancy Viviani clearly demonstrates in her book The Long Journey (1984:38-81), the acceptance was not without reluctance. As the three Indochinese countries fell one by one into communist hands in early 1975, Australia did not have any concrete policy for refugees. Australia must have realised that there would be many people who were enemies of the new communist governments and therefore would want to settle elsewhere. It seems Australia
was hoping that it would not have to pay that courtesy, and therefore could avoid radically revising her migration policy. Given Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, and its proximity to Asia, it was naive to entertain such a hope. Throughout a century of French colonisation and later US domination, many Indochinese created an ideal image of the western world and looked to it as a place of resettlement. Besides the fact that their Asian neighbours, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines were unwilling to keep them, they don't see those countries as ideal destinations and intended to move on to western countries.

Nancy Viviani showed very clearly Australians' reluctance to accept Indochinese refugees, stating that only for the following reasons did Australia decide to admit substantial numbers of refugees:

1. International pressure especially from the ASEAN countries, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand in particular, who had intercepted a large number of refugee boat people. Numbers of arrivals increased from "400 a month in mid 1976 to over 2,000 a month in mid and late 1977". As the China-Vietnam conflict escalated, the numbers grew "to 6,000 a month in July 1978" and there was a "peak of 22,000 arrivals in the late 1978 sailing season, to be followed by a new peak of 55,000 arrivals in June 1979", after China had invaded Vietnam (Viviani, 1984:40-42). It became obvious to Australia that to maintain friendly and cooperative relationships with its Asian neighbours, Australia must take a fair share of the refugee burden. Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, for example, refused vehemently to accept any refugees as residents and suggested that he "would assist them and send them on to other destinations" (ibid:63). Indeed he did, which led to the second reason.

2. The arrival of the boat people on Australian shores. It was the first time in Australian history that the arrival of foreigners was beyond its control and supervision. These unexpected and "self-selected" migrants could be very
troublesome. They evaded health controls and character screening, and most of all it made the task of their reception very difficult. This together with evidence that more arrivals were forthcoming forced the Australian government to make a commitment to process and bring in refugees in substantial numbers from islands of the ASEAN countries.

It was indeed very difficult for Australian governments, Labour or the conservative coalition, to balance the complex and varied interests involved in the Indochinese refugee issue. They ranged from the White Australia policy, the yellow peril, "populate or perish", anti-communist refugees, the relationship with the new communist government in Vietnam, Australian involvement in the Vietnam War and its moral implications, Australia's relations with its Asian neighbours, Australia's international image etc. As Viviani has said, "community groups, carrying the prejudices and divisions not only of the 1960s but of two hundred years of Australian history, did vociferous battle, sometimes unaware that the choice not to take any refugees was not one available to Australia in practical terms" (ibid:55).

Vietnam, Kampuchea and Laos after the war are some of the poorest countries in Asia. The countries' infrastructures, road, railways, buildings, even economies, had been largely destroyed between 1965 and 1975. Cultivated land, draught animals and man-power were reduced drastically. Since the end of the war these countries have received very little assistance from the Western world (Mysliwiec, 1988). (In Democratic Kampuchea, western aid was not welcome during the Pol Pot time.) The US, in particular, refused to pay Vietnam its promised reconstruction costs. It is inevitable that these Indochinese countries will remain poor for a long time, and for this reason alone we can be certain that there will be more refugees seeking a new homeland. Perhaps the western world could have avoided a substantial amount of its responsibility for refugees if reconstruction aid had been given to these countries after the war.
SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF KAMPUCHEAN REFUGEES AND ETHNICITY

There are two types of migrants in Australia, those who migrated here voluntarily under peaceful circumstances, and those who fled from threatening conditions in their countries, known as refugees. The majority of migrants in Australia belong to the former group. While Australian employers rarely distinguish between the two groups, considering them merely as consumers or an additional supply of labour, several distinct features characterise the refugee group.

For most Kampuchean refugees, fleeing their homeland was a necessary step they had to take, for the security and well-being of their families. They had suffered under the most brutal form of inhumanity the world has seen this century. Their sufferings began in 1969 when the US started to bomb the country secretly, with the help of the US base in Pine Gap, in the Northern Territory. The bombing continued and over a period of six months in 1973 there were more bombs dropped in Kampuchea, which in size is smaller than Victoria, than on Japan in the whole of the Second World War. When the war stopped in 1975, the misery was to be surpassed by the atrocity of the Pol Pot regime. During its four years of power (1975-1979) over one million Kampucheans died of starvation, diseases or assassination. Also the very social and cultural fabric of Kampuchean life -- religion, traditions, family life -- was completely destroyed. Imperialist war together with self-destructive radical revolution and ongoing regional conflict left many scars on the general population and on those who have found refuge in Australia.

Kampuchean refugees in Australia came from very diverse social backgrounds. Everyone, regardless of their social status, was affected by the atrocity and the wars. Those who arrived in Australia in the early days between 1975 and 1978 included a few high-ranking civil servants who, during the war, had connections with Australia or to the war effort, and some ethnic Chinese merchants, who managed to escape first. Admission
to Australia was slow as there were strict criteria. Only "approximately 2000 Khmer refugees from the Pol Pot regime had been admitted into Australia" by the end of 1979 (Kiernan, 1988). This group are the more urban and more educated members of the Kampuchean population in Australia now. The major influx was not until 1980, when the overthrow of the Pol Pot regime by a Vietnamese invasion had given people more freedom to travel. Many decided to cross the border to Thailand where they could apply to go on to third countries to join relatives or to stay away from an insecure place, or simply to leave behind cruel memories.

With international pressure at the time, Australia loosened its criteria and accepted many more Kampucheans regardless of whether they had connections (sponsorship, relatives etc.) in Australia, or spoke English, or had special skills. The intake increased and "in 1980, 1300 Kampuchean settlers arrived in Australia. The annual intake rose to as high as 4,400 in 1983, but fell to 800 the next year. In all, about 11,700 Kampucheans arrived in Australia over the 1980-85 period, and by 1986 the total Kampuchean born population in Australia had reached 13,900" (Kiernan, 1988). This influx brought in Kampucheans of all social levels, with diverse social backgrounds and experiences, including middle- to low-level civil servants, teachers, nurses, soldiers and a number of peasants. This group generally have a low level of education, some are uneducated and even illiterate in Khmer. Their previous skills are usually not conducive to meeting the demands of employment in Australian industrial society. This means that most of them are employed, if at all, in unskilled or labouring jobs.

Besides the refugees, there is also a small group of Kampucheans (500 throughout Australia), who came before the social upheaval in 1975. They came as students, either private or under Colombo Plan scholarships, and trainees. After the events in Kampuchea in 1975 they could not return home and were compelled to take up residence in Australia. Many students and trainees managed to complete their education and some are holding professional positions.
Daniel Bell wrote in his article, "Ethnicity and Social Change", that: "Ethnicity has become more salient (than class) because it can combine an interest with an affective tie. Ethnicity provides a tangible set of common identifications -- in language, food, music, names -- when other social roles become more abstract and impersonal. In the competition for the values of the society to be realised politically, ethnicity can become a means of claiming place or advantage" (Bell, 1975:169). He argued that as a result of institutional change, i.e. from manufacturing to service industries where more white-collar jobs are created, class "no longer seemed to carry any strong affective tie".

For the Kampucheans their diverse social backgrounds mean that they have diverse social perceptions. Together with the ongoing factional and political conflict in Kampuchea this ensures that the Kampuchean community in Australia is less than united. The divisions are along the lines of previous and present status, level of education, caste distinctions during Pol Pot's time ("base" and "new" people: more about this in chapter 3) and the political factions that mark the present unresolved conflict. Given the size of the community and the divisions within it, it is nearly impossible for the Kampucheans to form an influential ethnic community. There are small community support networks here and there but they could hardly serve to wield political power and be effective in claiming welfare provision for the community. While there certainly are common identifications such as food, music, religion, language, history etc., there are limited signs of affective ties. Imperialist war, social revolution, the present political conflict, together with the past and present social positions, contribute to undermine the group's affection.

The Kampuchean community congregate 2-3 days per year, to celebrate Khmer New Year in April, and the Buddhist version of All Souls Day (Pachum Ben) in October, to mingle, to reminisce about food, music, history etc. However, at the end of the celebration they go their own way to their affordable dwelling and little interaction occurs between the poor and the wealthy. The working class usually want to get on with building their new lives and leave the issues of politics and ethnicity to the more privileged individuals who form the minority.
Because of the nature and reasons for their migration, the community is extremely youthful. In N.S.W. 85% of the Kampucheans are under the age of 45 and over a quarter are aged 15 to 24 years.

There are many cases of unaccompanied minors who have no close relatives in Australia to look after them. Their plight resulted from being separated from their parents to perform duties in youth brigades away from their villages and families. This policy was applied in many parts of Kampuchea during the Pol Pot period. When the Pol Pot period ended in 1979, they could not find their parents or relatives, either because they had died or had since had to move on to other areas. They drifted along and many arrived in Thailand. Some were adopted by foreign families (American, Swedish, Australian, French etc.), some were adopted by Khmer families, others arrived in third countries as unaccompanied minors. In Australia they live communally under supervision until they can manage on their own (Plant, 1988).

Now, a few years later, some have received news from their parents, brothers or sisters in Kampuchea or Thailand and will eventually have to consider rejoining their family in Kampuchea or bringing them to Australia under some sort of family reunion. In the future, when Kampuchea is recognised diplomatically by Australia, there will be many requests for family reunion by Kampuchean refugees living here.

Also alarming is the high number of lone parents among the Kampuchean settlers in Australia. Their husbands (or wives) died or were killed during the war and the social upheaval. In Kampuchea, too, this phenomenon has demanded urgent attention. In Kampuchea, women comprise about 65% of the adult population. Among them there are many widows. In Australia, as well as in Kampuchea, many widows are raising families and in some cases orphaned relatives as well. A higher number of men died, not only because they were soldiers. From various interviews with people in different parts of Kampuchea, it appears that women survived the starvation in the Pol Pot period better than men, and that men were looked upon by the Pol Pot cadres as a more dangerous
element to the survival of the regime. So men who used to serve in the former regime's armies or administrations, or men who considered resistance, were subject to greater suspicion and huge numbers were eliminated.

Now, in Australia, "in 1981, more than one in eight women aged 15 years and over were widows. Of these, 92% were unemployed or outside the work force" (Kiernan, 1988). They are struggling to bring up children, many of adolescent age, single handed. Besides recovering from the death of their husbands, they have to adjust to their new lives in Australia and at the same time ensure that their children are adequately looked after and their future is intact. The task is almost insurmountable given the unfamiliar environment.

Unlike their Greek, or Italian, or even Vietnamese counterparts, Kampuchean refugees have generally arrived in Australia empty handed. Very few manage to smuggle valuable possessions with them. As a result, the Kampuchean community is a poor one, with all members starting their lives in Australia from scratch. For most Kampucheans, their first encounter with "wealth" in Australia is their Social Security cheque. While some Chinese and Vietnamese counterparts excel in business ventures, Kampucheans have no capital to start such ventures except for the very few who have been here longer and managed to save up for such purposes.

Another distinction between refugees and migrants is that the refugees never consciously made up their mind to leave home. They left home out of necessity and many adult refugees hope to return when the situation at home regains "normalcy" as they perceive it. For some, this mentality interferes gravely with their effort to acculturate. For example, some see no point in putting energy into learning English which will not be very useful on their return home. So they may not try. On the other hand, it is also arguable that some Kampuchean refugees in Australia have found, after a serious unsuccessful trial, that life here is so alienating that they long to return home where they can once again be in charge of their life.
Whatever the case may be, this sojourner mentality is rather sad. Given the ongoing political conflict and uncertainty in the region it is very unlikely that most will ever return, nor be able to return as the children become older and life becomes more established. Also, there is no guarantee that modern Kampuchea will develop politically, socially and economically, as they have been hoping. This would sadly leave them high and dry, as in the case of refugees from Argentina and Uruguay who returned home after the overthrow of the military regimes to find their "resettlement materially and socially impossible" (Morrissey, 1987:27).

So most adult Kampuchean refugees will remain in Australia permanently. Their emotional feeling will depend very much on the achievements of their children. There exists already what is known as an "ethnic island" where the Kampuchean build themselves a self-contained social and cultural world that they share with their small cohesive group. I suspect, however, that most of them, at some point in time, feel frustrated, alienated, lonely and miss home gravely.

It is expected, however, that their children will become more acculturated as they are exposed to a wider social interaction through schooling, socialisation and the workplace. It is doubtful, however, that in social status they will rise above their parents, especially those who arrived here at an older adolescent age. Having been deprived of several years of schooling, during the Pol Pot period and the time they spent in refugee camps, their chances of success in education are very slim. It seems therefore, that the Kampuchean community will have to wait even longer to witness the rise in status of members of their community, i.e. they have to wait for those who arrived here at the age of ten or younger to achieve success and be able to benefit fully from the Australian educational system. Even then, like all Australians who come from working class backgrounds, the competition will be very fierce indeed for them.
3. KAMPUCHEA AND THE WEST

Some western writers often compared Kampuchea to a "paradise of the East". It was usually those who looked at the country superficially, i.e. the city with its pleasant, modern and peaceful setting. During the Vietnam War (until 1970), Sihanouk and some western journalists referred to Kampuchea as "an oasis of peace". In fact Kampuchea was far from a paradise during or after its colonisation. One did not need to go far beyond the city to experience the feeling of disenchantment, class division and poverty.

FRENCH COLONISATION

In 1863 a weak Kampuchea, terrorised by its expansionist neighbours Vietnam and Thailand for the last three centuries, agreed to accept French protection. Later on, in 1887, the three countries Kampuchea, Laos and Vietnam were formed into the Union of French Indochina. Kampuchea was colonised by the French for 90 years until 1953-54 when independence was granted. In 1941, the French had put eighteen year-old Norodom Sihanouk on the throne, and he became leader of the new independent Kampuchea.

Kampuchea has always been an agrarian society with 90% of the population living off agriculture. The Kampuchean peasants struggle with poor paddy soil; according to French economist Remy Prud'homme, their yields "have hardly increased beyond one tonne per hectare in the last half century. They are among the lowest in the world" (Kiernan, 1982:32). Not only do they have to be contented with poor soil; their equipment was extremely limited and according to French geographer, Jean Delvert, their implements were inferior in efficiency to the tools used by French peasants during the
Middle Ages (ibid:32). Even these tools were scarce, showing that the Kampuchean peasants rarely earned enough money to buy or make more efficient tools.

Despite such inefficient production, the Kampuchean peasants were obliged to pay a head tax to their colonial administrators. Unlike the European colonists who paid taxes according to their income, the Kampucheans paid a prescribed amount per person regardless of their income or production that year. The Kampuchean Marxist economist, Hou Yuon, wrote, "The operation called 'bringing in the taxes' is an epidemic for the masses of the people. During this period their main worry is where to find the money and how to do so". Yuon quotes from a contemporary French newspaper:

The taxes are in and without difficulty. This does not mean that all the peasants have paid, far from it. It is said that certain Mayors and notables advanced the money, recouping on the village property that they have controlled for many years and at an absurdly low rate ... The collection of the taxes has also been an excellent business for the Chinese; they have lent money at a phenomenal rate (ibid:51-52).

This accentuated the poverty of the population and made them easy prey for money-lenders and usurers. The collection of the head tax was not without coercion. Although provincial chiefs were always accompanied by their militia on such missions, there were uprisings against the taxes. For example, in 1925, Resident Bardez and his two assistants were killed by peasants while on tax-collection duty.

The Kampucheans were also asked to pay customs and excise on alcohol, salt and opium. French testimonies confirmed that the Kampucheans were forced to buy and consume a fixed amount of alcohol and opium per head. The French had the monopoly on sales of alcohol so they collected all the revenue generated from such sales. The fact that the population could not afford it and that it was harmful for their well-being were of little concern to the French administrators who used all means to ensure that they reached the quota prescribed by France.

The French also had a monopoly on the sale of salt, a necessity for the Kampucheans. In the fishing season everyone must have salt to preserve or ferment the
fish and keep it as the main source of protein for the year's consumption. Their monopoly meant that the French could fix the price as high as they liked. As a result, many Kampucheans had to do with less salt and therefore were denied the major source of food available. Hou Yuon quoted Colonel Bernard as saying, "From 1889 to 1906 the price of salt quintupled, but receipts hardly doubled, in other words the continual price rises were far from compensating for the lower consumption which was their consequence, and from that can be judged the frightful misery of a people which has come to be deprived of an indispensable commodity" (ibid:54).

On top of all this, the Kampuchean population was subjected to a system of recruitment called "Great Corvee" to build roads, bridges and railways. These constructions were mainly to serve the interests of the colonial administrators who wanted to consolidate "Indochinese Unity" and to open up the country to make it more accessible for tax collection purposes. Jean Ajalbert said in Au Retour d'Un Voyage, "Public works drains entire communities on to the worksites from which only a few will return" (ibid:55). So the Kampuchean people, especially the peasants, paid dearly for their existence -- financially, physically, and sometimes with their lives. Their sacrifice, however, was not compensated by any commensurate increase in living standards.

Little effort was given to modernising agricultural production. There were no subsidised loans, no introduction of chemical fertiliser or more efficient implements and most of all, while roads, bridges etc. were built, no attention was given to the construction of the irrigation system. All through the 20th century the Kampuchean peasants worked at the mercy of nature. Throughout the colonial period there was little sign of improvement of the cultivated land. Therefore the yields remained low. One exception was the development of rubber plantations in Eastern Kampuchea from the 1920s, based on a system of indentured labour on French-owned estates.

Compulsory taxes, together with low levels of production, and the lack of provision for government-subsidised loans all frequently locked peasants in the grip of
private (usually Chinese) usurers; interest rates were so high that once peasants started borrowing it was nearly impossible to escape debt. (Interest rates varied between 3 and 20% per month.)

Life was not so bad for those who lived in the urban areas. They were mostly civil servants serving the French bureaucracy, or Chinese and Vietnamese workers and shopkeepers. Modern education, however, was slow to be introduced. In the 19th century it was nearly non-existent with only seven teachers in 1900 for the whole country. The 20th century saw little improvement. By 1925 there were 160 modern primary schools with 10,000 students. Only after 1933 was there a high school in Phnom Penh offering a full secondary education and by 1954 only 144 Khmers had completed the full Baccalaureat (High School Certificate). In the meantime the traditional education provided by Buddhist institutions was discouraged and much of Khmer literature disappeared. Khmer intellectual circles were very small, and only in 1938 was the first Khmer prose novel published (Kiernan, 1985:xiii).

This slow improvement in education was due partly to the massive influence, during and after the colonial period, of the French system, including the organisation of the national schools, their curriculum and teaching methods. Children started to learn French in their fourth year of primary school (around the age of ten), and until 1968, when Khmer began to be introduced, French was the exclusive medium of instruction in the secondary schools. History, geography, biology, physics, chemistry, maths etc. were taught not only in French but as in France, with the students using the same textbooks as students in Paris or Marseilles. Often they knew more about the geography of France than of their own country; indeed, as Ho Chi Minh once complained, all school children in (colonial) Indochina used to open their history books and read: "Our ancestors, the Gauls...."

Although some Kampuchean students might have obtained a grasp of the French administrative structure and could recall road distances between provincial French towns,
they were scarcely educated to deal with the problems of their own country's economic or cultural development (Boua, 1982:54). French education was, therefore, largely irrelevant to the Kampuchean context.

THE POST-COLONIAL PERIOD

When independence was granted in 1954 Kampuchea was very much dependent on France, administratively and economically. The young Prince Sihanouk consolidated power by ruthlessly excluding the left and nationalist inclined groups who had taken up arms in the struggle for independence from France. France saw Sihanouk and his allies, a small group of educated elite, as a more suitable group to inherit power. They ruled Kampuchea, with close involvement by some French citizens, for many years after.

Most state and local affairs were in the hands of this small Khmer elite who continued to run the country in much the same manner as their former patrons. Like the French, the Khmer administration paid very little attention to the well-being of the masses.

Foreign aid which was intended for economic development and modernisation was used mainly to finance the extravagant lifestyle of the city elites. Revenue gained from the export of rural produce was used to pay for the importation of luxury goods consumed by the ruling city dwellers. Hou Youn said that, "The tree grows in the countryside, but the fruit goes to the city". Corruption among government officials was widespread. The balance sheets of the newly established state industries and nationalised enterprises were always in the red. The members of the small elite under Sihanouk's patronage took their turn to fatten themselves while the national economy became weaker and the people became poorer. This made the government increasingly unpopular among the masses (Vickery, 1982:100-102).
While much rhetoric about "democracy" and "socialism" emanated from Sihanouk in speeches to the nation, it was obvious to the people that the country was run by one political party, the Sangkum Reastr Nijum, officially translated as "Popular Socialist Community". Many members of the opposition were brutally and quickly put down. They could only survive underground or in the rural maquis. On the other hand, Sihanouk's major achievement, his policy of neutrality and non-involvement in the Vietnam War, was much appreciated at the time for its contribution to a peaceful life for his subjects. But that was swept away in 1970.

While the city was prospering with new buildings, restaurants, cars etc., the countryside was neglected and plans for agricultural modernisation stagnated. Landlessness among peasant families was increasing. By 1970, 20% of farming families were landless. The uneven distribution of land amongst the population had become more and more evident as urban elites, enriched by the newly available foreign capital and corruption, extended their interests to land ownership. The number of people who owned more than 20 hectares of land had increased from 1,191 in 1956 to 5,020 even by 1962 (Kiernan, 1982:5). This was not done without hostility. Some peasants were forced off their land as they could not meet their financial commitment; others were massacred as they refused to give up their land. Within the rural population, the situation was also one of imbalance. In 1962, 31% of the farmers owned less than one hectare (a family of five people need 2-3 hectares to live on) and this represented only 5% of the cultivated land, while 14% of the rural population owned over five hectares, representing 46% of the cultivated land (ibid:6). This situation together with the lack of agricultural modernisation meant that poverty among the peasant population became more and more widespread. Unemployment and underemployment in the city as well as in the rural areas rose. This caused increasing dissatisfaction among the whole population.

Disenchanted peasants and educated urban dissidents, together with old time independence-fighters, formed a small and largely ineffective guerrilla movement opposing Sihanouk's administration from 1967 on. However it was the dissatisfaction
among the urban elites, his allies, that finally triggered Sihanouk's fall from power in March 1970. Given the dependence of the economy on western aid, the cut-off of US aid in 1963 had left Kampuchea with serious economic problems. The elites, however, were hardest hit by the cut as their sources of finance dried up. In some cases the peasants shouldered the burden as the elites looked for alternative ways to finance their lifestyle. In the 1960s Sihanouk's policy concerning the war in Vietnam made him unpopular with the US while the Khmer elite saw their main enemy as Vietnamese and at any rate did not want to part with US dollar aid.

As the war between the National Liberation Front (NLF) and the US supported South Vietnamese government was expanding, Sihanouk was trying to balance his regional neutrality policy. Having broken off relations with the US in 1965, he resumed them in 1969. He also allowed the NLF to use Kampuchea's port and transport facilities and provided them with "sanctuary".

Using these NLF bases as an excuse, the US started to send B-52s secretly to bomb Kampuchean villages in 1969. This is now known as the "secret war". It was when peace in Kampuchea ended.

Domestically Sihanouk lashed out at the left. Three left-wing deputies (Hou Youn, Hou Nim and Khieu Samphan) and other French educated intellectuals, such as Saloth Sar later known as Pol Pot, fled to the jungle, where they joined up with other dissident groups, to avoid persecution.

When the elite realised that Sihanouk was no longer providing them with the goods they deposed him (in 1970), set up a new government led by Lon Nol and placed Kampuchea well and truly in the US camp.

Sihanouk joined the then fairly weak communist guerrilla movement which consisted of those who had escaped his persecution. The war in Kampuchea was born in full-scale warfare between the Lon Nol regime in Phnom Penh supported by the US and
the Khmer communist movement (known as "Khmer Rouge") headed by Sihanouk and supported by China and large numbers of Vietnamese communist troops. The movement expanded rapidly despite the US effort to neutralise Kampuchea by sending in 50,000 troops for several months in 1970. The US bombing, which continued, was very intense. Throughout the war over 540,000 tonnes of bombs were dropped on the nation, and as I have noted, during six months in 1973 there were more bombs dropped on Kampuchea than on Japan for the whole of the second World War. Hu Nim (a French-educated economist, former deputy and minister in the Sihanouk regime), then the minister of information for the communist government, recalled in his confession, before he was killed by the Pol Pot faction, that 1973 was "the year that the (US) enemies waged a big war in Kampuchea. All types of airplanes including the dreadful B-52 dropped bombs which shook the land and shook the water" (Boua and Kiernan, 1980).

It was a bitter war, with families and friends on both sides of the conflict. The Phnom Penh administration, well funded and equipped by the US, was very corrupt, with army officers drawing the salary of phantom soldiers or, worse still, stealing the salary of young, untrained soldiers sent off to battles. The Lon Nol regime was defeated in one battle after another as morale fell among its soldiers and public servants whose salaries could not cope with the rising inflation. By 1972-73 it became obvious that they couldn't win the war, but still the last bombs were to be dropped.

The US used the most modern and powerful weapons and ammunition. Provincial cities as well as the countryside were destroyed. Many civilians and Khmer Rouge cadres were killed and wounded. In 1973 alone the number of Khmer Rouge killed by the B-52 bombing was 16,000. This made them become very vigilant, so much so that internal suspicions surfaced and bred factions within the party. There were those in favour of early negotiations to put an end to bombing and those determined to reach final victory regardless of the human cost. The factions were to become even more inimical to each other after the war ended.
Civilian victims, their villages and means of production destroyed, joined the Khmer Rouge in large numbers. The strength of the Khmer Rouge forces increased from 15,000 to 200,000 in a three year period of time. For the Khmer Rouge the war was short, busy and fruitful. There was no time (or perhaps no intention) for Marxist political education. A 15 year-old Khmer Rouge commander, interviewed by a Swedish film crew at the Thai border in 1980, was reported to have said that the bombs, which destroyed his village in 1973 and left him the sole survivor of the conquest, had come from the city of Phnom Penh. The then 7-8 year-old boy was told by Khmer Rouge leaders that the city people had sent the bombs. He concluded that every city person was his enemy and deserved to be mistreated. This is one of the many explanations for the widespread hostility towards the city people after the war, whether they were teachers, nurses, workers, labourers, patients, soldiers or refugees from villages. It was a time of confusion on both sides as the war raged; it was fed by modern weapons and abundant funds from the US. The Phnom Penh administration was blind to the national interest and drowned in corruption while the Khmer Rouge ignored political unity and ruthlessly ensured that victory would bring their own domination.

Victory came quickly but not without cost. On 17 April 1975 the Khmer Rouge soldiers marched into Phnom Penh. Many radical policies were implemented quickly and harshly by elimination of all those who stood in the way. Policies such as evacuation of the cities, abolition of currency and religion, non acceptance of foreign aid etc. were not implemented without opposition from other factions within the communist party. They were got rid of, some like Hou Youn murdered as early as in 1975.

The population was divided into two groups: the "base people" (or "old people") were those who were liberated or had been living with the Khmer Rouge before April 1975, and the "new people" were those who were "liberated" in April 1975. The new people consisted mainly of city dwellers. The killings of the population also started in 1975, with city people and the Muslim ethnic minority suffering the greatest toll.
Factional purges went on and by 1977 the Pol Pot group emerged in total control of the party. This allowed them to introduce harsher and more radical reforms throughout the country, such as communal dining, separation of children from parents, defrocking of all monks and destruction of Buddhist temples, more killings of intellectuals and harder working conditions for the people. This led to more people being killed or dying of exhaustion, starvation and diseases.

With some Chinese backing, the Pol Pot group also started to wage a war on neighbouring Vietnam, apparently wanting to recapture territory "lost" many centuries ago. As the war became more and more serious, with thousands of Vietnamese villagers massacred in Khmer Rouge raids, administrators of the Eastern zone (bordering Vietnam) became more and more disillusioned with the fighting. The Pol Pot group accused them of treachery, arrested and killed tens of thousands of Eastern Zone soldiers and administrators, and started to evacuate all people from the zone. This was the bloodiest period of the Pol Pot era with over 100,000 killed in the Eastern Zone in 1978 alone (Kiernan, 1983:196-7). Many rebels, however, managed to escape to Vietnam where they regrouped. When it became obvious to Vietnam that the Pol Pot administration was not interested in negotiations or international supervision of the border, Hanoi assisted the regrouped Eastern Zone Khmer and a Vietnamese invasion pushed the Pol Pot administration to the Thai border in January 1979.

Back in Phnom Penh the Vietnamese installed Heng Samrin, a former Eastern Zone brigade Commander, as President of the People's Republic of Kampuchea. It was only then that the full scale of Pol Pot's atrocity was revealed as the new government allowed foreign journalists and visitors into the country for the first time since April 1975. Their findings astonished the world, with an estimate of over one million people dead of assassination, starvation, exhaustion and diseases.

The population, as the result of being moved around several times during the Pol Pot period, were scattered all over the country with nearly everyone missing husbands,
wives or children. It was the first time that they were allowed to move around freely looking for their relatives, to return to their home villages or, for some, to head to the Thai-Kampuchean border. The country's infrastructure lay in ruins with nearly every building and road destroyed or damaged. The people returned to their home villages usually empty-handed without any means of production or shelter. The task of rebuilding Kampuchea is enormous and rests mainly with women who as a result of the killings are now the majority of the labour force. For the population, however, being freed from Pol Pot the dictator was a liberation and they looked to the Vietnamese military as saviours. The new administration allowed the people to earn a living the way they knew best -- in farming, business, or as public officials.

The war, however, is far from over. The Pol Pot forces were helped by China, ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations), and other United Nations donor countries, and regrouped along the Thai border. In coalition with two weak anti-communist forces the Pol Pot group is still menacing the countryside and ten years later is threatening to regain power. The coalition government-in-exile is recognised by most western countries. Nearly 10 years since its overthrow, the Pol Pot group has never been punished for their crime against the people of Kampuchea, although there have been calls for it to be arraigned before the World Court for genocide.

The Heng Samrin government, despite having been in power for nearly ten years, is still not recognised by most western countries who see the Vietnamese presence in Kampuchea (100,000 troops in 1988) as an obstacle to regional peace. This means that Kampuchea is denied western aid and is struggling to survive on a rather moderate path to socialism.

It is obvious that Kampuchea is still very poor. For the last ten years natural disasters have thrown the country in and out of the tentacles of starvation. National security is weak and while the Pol Pot forces are still supported by China, the ASEAN countries and the western world, there is no guarantee that a full scale war will not break
out again, or that Pol Pot or his team will not return to power. While the Vietnamese are
the only forces that keep Pol Pot at bay there is a question mark as to how long they will
stay. They claim they will withdraw totally in 1990. There are ramifications if they leave
earlier, as well as if their stay is longer. The situation in Kampuchea is plagued with
uncertainties, which is the reason many people have left to search for a more secure
livelihood for themselves and their children.

FLEEING

Not many Kampucheans anticipated leaving the country as the communist army
approached Phnom Penh in early 1975. The people (including myself) were generally
quite optimistic about the new Khmer Rouge government, believing that any government
would be better than the corrupt, ill-managed government of Lon Nol. They were
unaware of the hostile policies that were to be implemented. However, soon after the
take-over some people realised the extent of the change and tried to escape. Unfortunately
security became very tight as they were not allowed to travel freely, and for the period
1975-78 only 35-40,000 could flee to Thailand, and 150,000 to Vietnam, representing the
first exodus of Kampuchean refugees. This group included some of Lon Nol's civil
servants, educated town dwellers of higher socio-economic status and professionals who
saw no role to play in the communist government or feared Khmer Rouge revenge. Also
included in the group were a sizeable number of ethnic Chinese and a small number of
peasants from towns near to the Thai border. Most of these refugees, especially those in
Thailand, were resettled in France, the United States, Canada and Australia in the three
subsequent years.

The next influx was not until 1979 when the Pol Pot regime was ousted by the
Vietnamese army. The new government, supported by Vietnam, allowed the population
more freedom to travel -- to return to their home villages or to search for relatives. In that
process many arrived in Thailand, to settle in the various camps erected along the Thai-Kampuchean border.

The situation along the border was complex. The refugees were of different backgrounds and left Kampuchea for different reasons. There were the defeated Pol Pot army, the ordinary people who came to look for food or were caught up in the war, the urban educated class who wanted to contact friends or relatives already abroad, business people who came to buy goods very much needed inside Kampuchea for resale there etc. For a long time the border was fairly relaxed. People moved in and out of Kampuchea fairly freely for business, or to live in the camps seasonally to take advantage of the food rations and/or the medical services provided. For those reasons the total refugee population fluctuated. In early 1980 with a threat of a severe famine inside Kampuchea the number rose to some 500,000. In 1982 the total population fell to 300,000 (Vickery, 1987:296) and the flow of refugees continued to decline as conditions inside Kampuchea got better.

It is argued by Vickery that except for some refugees (the Pol Pot army and those who left to avoid famine) "the vast majority of those who were to become refugees in 1979 and 1980 fit neither the 1951 Convention definition of a refugee nor even the expanded category of refugee by economic prescription" (ibid: 298). They were not fleeing from political persecution or starvation for most of 1979-80. The new government was relatively accommodating politically and religiously and no-one was denied the right to work. Vickery argues that the setting up of refugee camps by the Thai authorities with finance from United Nations donor countries along the Thai border, such as Khao-I-Dang "functioned as a magnet drawing off tens of thousands of people who would otherwise have remained to work productively in Cambodia. Through this drain of personnel, plus the gold, cash and other valuables which they bring, it has served to destabilise the already fragile Cambodian economy" (ibid).
Politics obviously played an important role in the Kampuchean refugee situation. The Voice of America, for example, broadcast news of Kampucheans finding freedom on the Thai border. Middlemen operated to smuggle people out of Kampuchea for a negotiated fee. The goal of these people was resettlement in a western country they had dreamt of as the result of western colonisation and domination. The open border and the waiting facilities provided by the camps in Thailand were too good to refuse.

The situation in Kampuchea, however, as I mentioned earlier, is plagued with uncertainties -- economically, politically and socially. The Kampucheans' unwillingness to stay and risk those experiences again is quite understandable.
4. THE SITUATION BEFORE AND ON ARRIVAL

THE INTERVIEWS

The sample of thirty adolescents, sixteen males and fourteen females, was chosen as my research progressed. (See Table A: Profile of the Sample.) They were introduced or made known to me by friends, relatives and their teachers. Most (26) of the interviews were done in the interviewees' homes; four interviews were done at a school. Another school I approached denied me access to students on the school grounds. The school's principal and administrator were worried about researchers and journalists, as the controversial issue of the alleged 'failure' of the settlement of Indochinese refugees was raging early this year. They were, however, prepared to give me the students' addresses and phone numbers.

According to the 1986 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census, in N.S.W. there were 5,898 Kampucheans, of whom 1,517 were adolescents aged between fifteen and twenty-four. The sample of thirty therefore, although small, represents nearly 2% of the Kampuchean adolescent population in N.S.W. Each interviewee was asked the same, approximately 130, questions.

Individual interviewing was the method used. Many interviews were done in the family living area where other members relaxed or watched T.V. I was very much regarded as a guest of the house and it was therefore not considered polite for the host to leave me on my own. As the interviewing went on, most of the times, it became obvious that only the interviewee was needed and the rest could go on performing their household functions as usual. However, some parents or family members were curious and liked to know what sort of questions were being asked. Humorous interjections often took place and sometimes I could sense that I was entertaining a group of people (family members
and neighbours) who were unemployed, with not much to do, and keen to meet a new person.

Parents very much welcomed my study and hoped that it would highlight the problems their children are facing and that changes would take place to help their children excel in schooling and employment.

I was frequently asked to join the family meal or have a drink or a snack as we compared notes on lives in Kampuchea and Australia. For this reason, even though each interview took one to one-and-a-half hours, I could only do two or at most three interviews per day. I usually left the family carrying bundles of prepared food and/or vegetables (chilli, lemon grass etc.) that they grew in their garden. We exchanged phone numbers and have remained in contact.

Each interviewee had to answer three separate sets of questionnaires (see Appendices 1, 2 and 3). The first contained 72 questions concerning the interviewee's personal information and history, his/her schooling outside Australia and in Australia, employment record and (Khmer) language ability.

The second and third questionnaires are called an Acculturation Scale and an Alienation Scale. The two scales were first developed by P.M. Nicassio of the Department of Psychiatry, Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Tennessee. Later, a doctor of psychiatry, M. Eisenbruch of the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne made an adaptation of the two scales to suit the Kampuchean cultural and social setting. The Acculturation Scale involves 27 potential problems of adjustment, of which 22 were provided by Nicassio. The interviewees were asked to evaluate the degree of seriousness of these 27 problems of adjustment. The Alienation Scale is a ten-item measure of alienation. Each item consists of two, three or four questions. For both scales probing questions were added and visual analogue scales were provided. The scales were converted into Khmer and translated back into English to ensure their accuracy.
The questionnaires are in Khmer. The interviewing was mostly conducted in Khmer except for a few interviewees with whom I had to jump from Khmer to English to Khmer as I detected their lack of understanding in Khmer. However, sometimes their English was not much better than their poor Khmer.

All the interviewees lived in Sydney's Western suburbs. A few lived in Marrickville, but most in the Cabramatta, Fairfield and Campbelltown areas. The travelling was time-consuming and sometimes frustrating, trying to catch one or two interviewees on several attempts. The end result, however, was always fulfilling.

PARENTS’ BACKGROUND

The sample of 30 interviewees came from 23 different families, as it included seven pairs of brothers and sisters (I limited myself to interviewing a maximum of two persons from a family).

Their fathers’ professions in Kampuchea can be divided into three groups. Eleven of the 23 were of middle-low level civil servant backgrounds, ranging from teacher, nurse, post office worker, customs officer, to soldier. Two were of small business background -- provincial or local rice dealer or distributor of food and utensils. Ten families were former peasants. Six families came from the city of Phnom Penh, while the other 17 families came from four provinces (Kompong Thom, Battambang, Kampot and Kompong Cham), mostly from Battambang, a province bordering Thailand.

Two families were of Chinese descent. Both interviewees spoke Chinese fluently. One of them learnt Chinese for two years when she was in a refugee camp. She also went to Chinese Saturday school for two years in Sydney's western suburbs. The other one had been attending Chinese Saturday school since he arrived in Sydney in 1982.
The sample consisted of sixteen males and fourteen females. My intention was to look at the 15-24 age group. However the inclusion of two interviewees aged 28 and 29 provided an interesting study of people with longer experience in Kampuchea who had started their education in Australia as mature-age students. The rest of the sample was between 14 and 24 years of age.

All of the sample left Kampuchea between the ages of six and nineteen years old. By the time they arrived in Australia they were between ten and twenty-one years old.

This is their real age as opposed to their officially stated age. (The officially stated age is the age that they adopted when they sought migration from refugee camps to a third country.) Reduction of one's age is quite widespread among Kampuchean (and Vietnamese and Lao for that matter) adolescents.

Parents and guardians responsible for this believe that it would allow their children a few more years of access to education in Australia. This is done largely to compensate for the four years absented from education during the Pol Pot time and time spent in refugee camps. It is assumed that would allow them time to catch up with language and other general knowledge of Australia. Sometimes age reduction was done mistakenly if a sponsor in Australia did not know their exact age while filling out immigration forms. My sample shows that, except for twelve people who did not adopt a new age, the rest reduced their age by between one and five years with a reduction of one or two years more common than of three, four or five years. Except for one female, who reduced her age from 21 to 16, large reductions mainly occurred with the males. It is obvious that obtaining a substantial education is seen to be more important for males than females, and to achieve that goal it is necessary for some to reduce their age substantially.

They don't, however, always achieve that goal by reducing the age. One of my male sample who had his age reduced from 21 to 17 dropped out of school last year when
he reached the end of year 11. When a job opportunity turned up during the summer holiday he decided not to return to start his year 12 in 1988. This could perhaps be attributed to his strong desire to be an adult, to be independent from his family like some of his friends (of his own real age) who were then working. His desire to be economically independent at least for a while was very strong as he did intend to return to do some more study after six months. It seems to me that he just wanted to find out what it was like to be 21, as opposed to being a 17 year-old schoolboy. His job as a marble cutter in a local factory serves this purpose. Perhaps he could save some money, learn to drive, buy a car -- a dream for many Kampuchean young men who are impatient with schooling. However, he recognised the importance of acquiring a skill for his future in Australia. This reflected his mature approach to life. He wanted to return to a technical school where he could learn motor mechanics. But that, of course, would depend on whether there was a place available for him for such training. It would also depend on whether or not his willingness to study will be superseded by his desire for more money and independence forever from his widowed mother. She is living in a rented, tumble-down Housing Commission home with his older brother and sister who are factory workers, and a younger brother still at high school. Schooling had not been easy for him. In response to the question of why he left school, he said, "I could not go on academically, even though I want to do more study." It is quite possible that he will remain an unskilled worker for the rest of his life.

While the above story is not very encouraging, another case of age reduction ends on a more successful note. A 24 year-old male, who had his age reduced to 21, is now attending a first year Bachelor of Science course at N.S.W. University.

While it is impossible to speculate, two females who had their age reduced from 16 to 13 and 21 to 16 respectively are quite happily attending year 7 and year 10 at Ambervale High School.
It is very difficult to gauge the advantages and disadvantages of age reduction. However it is certain that age reduction gives those who arrived in Australia at an older age more flexibilities and options to pursue, and allows them more time for socialisation and for schooling if that is what they wish. The 21 year-old girl, for example, arrived in Australia over three years ago (in March 1985) when she was 18. If she had not had her age reduced by five years she would have been pressured to attend Adult Migrant Education courses, or be placed at a higher level of education where she would not have coped academically, like her older sister (whom we will look at later). Instead, with an official age of 13 on arrival she was able to attend an Intensive Language Unit at Liverpool for one year before she started year 7 at Busby High School. The family moved a couple of times and in 1988 when the family settled in Campbelltown she was placed at year 10 at Ambervale High School.

With our system of education where pupils are vertically placed according to their age it is important to know what one wants out of it. For her, on paper, at least she has received a standard education if she resolves to stick with it for a few more years, during which time her English will become more proficient. Her performance at school is not very promising, as she expressed grave concern about the progress she made. Her complaints included "I don't understand the subjects very well", "I'm not familiar with the subjects", "I did not get good marks". However, if nothing substantial comes out of this round of education she will, at least, acquire a knowledge of what is available to her in the future, as a mature age student or whatever. She will be better prepared, supported by a general background of education and socialisation experiences.

These options are not open to her older (by one year) sister who did not have her age reduced. Arriving in Australia (in March 1985) at 19 years she was enrolled to study English at the hostel with the Adult Migration Education program for several weeks. In 1986 she enrolled in a course at Bankstown College where she learnt "every subject, Science, Maths, English". The course frustrated her tremendously, as she "couldn't understand the subjects and what the teacher said. It was too difficult and at the end of
six months I stopped". After living on unemployment benefits for one year she found a
job as a machinist in Cabramatta, and later on as a rag cutter with the Saint Vincent de Paul
Society in Sydney, where she is now working. Since she left Bankstown College she
has never done any post-school or work training despite her willingness to do so. It is
very unlikely that she will receive a decent job training that will qualify her for a better
position in the future as she still doesn't speak very much English and is due to marry an
Australian co-worker at the end of this year.

While it is hard to balance the advantage and disadvantage of age reduction one
thing is certain: it doesn't suit everybody. The person concerned should be consulted,
especially on a big reduction. Worse still, many parents reduced their children's age
without knowing the exact reasons or options available. They blindly followed other
people without considering their own situation. As a result many parents and adolescents
now want to reverse the process.

The psychological effect on someone who has to behave and think younger than
their age is indeterminable, especially after a big reduction. While some are happy with
the arrangement others are frustrated and alienated by it all. During the course of my
teaching it was heart-breaking to watch someone who was unhappily placed in a class
with 13 year-old pupils, when he was 18 and wanted to work and be independent.

Once a family arrives in Australia it is nearly impossible to change an adolescent
age back. A seventeen year-old girl who had her age reduced to thirteen by her adopted
Kampuchean parents sought to reverse her age change when she arrived in Melbourne.
Never having been able to get on with her adopted parents she had been hoping that when
she arrived in Australia she would be able to go to work (any type of work), move out of
home and be independent from them. However, she could not do that, as she was
officially still under school leaving age. In consultation with a Kampuchean social
worker, she was told that to regain her original age would require medical approval. This
involves medical processes such as the examination of her palm, bones, skull etc.
According to her previous experience the social worker said that this process could take up to five years. This disappointed the girl a great deal as she realised that she had to go to school for the next two to three years, whether she liked it or not, and put up with her adopted parents until she reached the school leaving age. It's a long time to wait for someone who is unhappy.

To my surprise three of my interviewees had had their age augmented rather than reduced. All three attributed this to the misunderstanding of their guardians or sponsors in the process of filling out immigration application forms. Guardians and sponsors in these cases did not know their ages. As forms had to be filled out immediately to accelerate their application, there was no time to wait for the return mail from the refugee camp in Thailand. This guess-work put their ages up by 2, 4 and 5 years. While it does not worry the man who had his age augmented by two years, it upsets the two women who had their ages augmented by 4 and 5 years. However there is little they can do about this. One of them is doing third year Bachelor of Science as a mature age student; the other is doing a C.E.S. clerical training course after she dropped out of school at the end of year 11.

THE JOURNEY

Most of the sample (23) left Kampuchea as early as 1979-80. It was the freedom gained soon after Pol Pot was ousted (January 1979) that enabled them to move about. The rest left Kampuchea in 1981-1983. All of them (except for two) went to Thailand, where they spent some time in a refugee camp called Khao-I-Dang. They spent anything between several months and six years before they were accepted to come to Australia. The duration spent in refugee camps depends very much on their contacts with the outside world. Four of my sample who already had relatives living in Australia as they walked out of Kampuchea spent less than one year in refugee camps. A mother with four children whose husband was studying in Sydney when the Khmer Rouge took over
Phnom Penh spent only five months in a refugee camp, as the husband worked quickly on the immigration papers. They were united in September 1980 after seven years of separation.

However, those who did not have access to relatives living overseas had to spend some time establishing friendships or seeking someone willing to sponsor them to a third country. Those of peasant backgrounds spent longer times in refugee camps. This was partly because of their limited contacts with the outside world, and partly to their delayed decision to depart from Kampuchea altogether, as some were hoping, for a while, to return to their land.

All of the sample were sponsored to Australia by friends and relatives except for three who were sponsored here by a Christian Church. Two of these are of peasant background, and had spent over four and five years in Thailand. Perhaps there is some truth in the belief that people are willing to be converted to Christianity in order to find their way out of a refugee camp after a long wait. None of them actually renounced Buddhism and now prefer to be affiliated to both religions.

Two of the sample (a brother and a sister) came to Australia via Vietnam instead of Thailand. In 1980 they went to Vietnam to live with relatives as their mother and sister had died of illness during the Pol Pot time. In the meantime their father, who came to Australia in 1974 as a government trainee and had lost contact with his family throughout the Pol Pot time, requested for them to come to Australia under the Vietnamese Orderly Departure Program (ODP). Not until November 1986 were they re-united in Sydney, as confusion over their nationality had delayed the paper work.

The sample arrived in Australia from as early as the second half of 1980 to as late as 1987, with many of them (13) having arrived in 1983. So they had been here between one and eight years at the time of this study.
EDUCATION IN KAMPUCHEA

As the majority (23) of the sample left Kampuchea in 1979-80, they did not receive any education provided by the post 1979 Heng Samrin government before they left Kampuchea. In fact only five of the others received formal education, for one or two years, provided by the Heng Samrin government soon after Pol Pot was ousted. There are another two who did not leave Kampuchea until 1981, but did not go to school. One was of Chinese background and her family probably did not value Khmer education much. When she arrived in Thailand she studied Chinese for two years before she came to Australia. However, there are other reasons for some people not having received any education under the Heng Samrin government. First, schooling was not compulsory; secondly, there was no school in their area yet; and thirdly, they were planning on leaving and saw no point in studying.

According to their age, about fourteen of the sample were old enough to have received some education before the Pol Pot time (before 1975). However only nine did. Seven out of the nine were from urban backgrounds, with parents working as civil servants. Five of those who did not receive any education, and two who did, were of peasant background. Even though education was nearly free, it is obvious that either schooling was not available in their rural area or that the need to cultivate the land overrode the desire for educational benefits. Among the nine who received some education before the Pol Pot time, the two adults received ten and twelve years respectively, while the other seven received only between one and four years each.

Only two of the sample studied English in Kampuchea, for one year each. One went to the only English school in Kampuchea, while the other studied English as part of the Foreign Language program at school.
EDUCATION IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS

Immediately before their arrival in Australia all of the sample (except for the two who went via Vietnam) had spent between several months and six years in refugee camps in Thailand, mostly in Khao-I-Dang. As the refugee population initially increased in the camps along the Thai border, schools were set up by UNICEF and other humanitarian agencies to provide education in Khmer for all school age children. Teachers and administrators were drawn from the human resources available in the camp.

Schooling in the camp was free and many parents sent their children to school. Out of the 28 of my sample who went to Thailand all but six of them went to school in the camp. The two adults found education in the camp at the time below their capacity, while the other four did not stay in the camp long enough to make schooling worthwhile.

The 22 interviewees of my sample who went to school in the camps received between one and five years of schooling. For most of them the skills of reading and writing Khmer were largely obtained in the camp. While schooling in the camp was essential socially and educationally, especially for those who stayed a long time, it was not possible to provide quality education in the circumstances. Not only were there shortages of trained teachers but teaching and reading materials and equipment for teachers and students were also in short supply. Classroom populations were unstable as some moved in and some out all the time as they arrived from Kampuchea or left to go to third countries. Intermittent fighting along the Thai-Kampuchean border also disrupted the classes, sometimes for a long time until order was reestablished. The prison-like situation in the camps, with soldiers and machine guns present everywhere, hindered the students' learning and exploring experiences.

The two of my sample who went to Vietnam went to school there for 5-6 years. They now read, write and, perhaps, speak Vietnamese better than Khmer. In fact the boy who is now in year 11 at Marrickville High School goes to Saturday school where
students are helped in maths and sciences by Vietnamese teachers. There are no such classes offered in Khmer, and so his knowledge of Vietnamese has indeed been very useful.

To learn English in the refugee camps, one needed to pay. English classes were offered privately by the few refugees who taught as a way of earning some money. Only four of my sample could afford to learn English and for only several months to two years (for one hour per day).

Their total education on arrival, therefore, can be described as follows:

1. All but six of my sample had no knowledge of English when they arrived in Australia. The six who attended some English classes in the camp or in Kampuchea did so for only a short time. Their English was barely usable.

2. Education in Kampuchea, before Pol Pot's time or later during the Heng Samrin time, which I regard as adequate education, was experienced by only half of the sample. However, except for the two adults who received ten and twelve years each, the rest (13) received only between one and four years of schooling.

3. While education in the camp was disruptive and academically ineffective, it provided the only education for twelve of the sample. Those who stayed in the camp for a long time (4-6 years) became quite literate in Khmer. However even for those who only stayed one or two years, the introduction to Khmer literacy had a significant impact on their lives.

4. Three of the sample missed out on education altogether (in Kampuchea and in the camp). They missed out on education in Kampuchea either because they were too young, to go to school before 1975 (two of the sample) or their parents couldn't afford to send them to school (one of peasant background).
None of the three stayed in Kampuchea (after Pol Pot was ousted) or in the camps long enough to take advantage of the education provided. Two of the sample however stayed in the camps for one-and-a-half and two years, but did not get around to going to school. This is not unusual as refugees were moved from place to place as directed by the Thai authorities and the Kampuchean factional leaders. They did not have time to settle down to education.

5. Even though only three of the sample had missed out on education completely before they arrived in Australia, I found that at the time of interview seven of the 30 were illiterate in Khmer. This was due to the fact that since they had arrived in Australia there had been no systematic reinforcement to maintain their knowledge of Khmer. The situation was particularly vulnerable for those who received only a little education in Kampuchea or Thailand. None of my sample had received any substantial mother-tongue maintenance at school (Community Language programme) or at Saturday school since they arrived in Australia. Obviously there is a danger that more will become illiterate in Khmer the longer they stay in Australia.

6. Thirteen of the sample are classified as semi-literate. I include in this category those people who can read (some quite well, others not so well) but cannot write. It includes people who said: "I can't write", "I can't write letters to my relatives", or "I can't make up sentences". This means that while they know the Khmer alphabet and how the letters are put together and can read moderately well, their knowledge of the Khmer written language is not usable.

7. Therefore 20 (7 + 13) of the sample (70%) are illiterate or semi-literate in Khmer. For this group the prospect is very depressing as I detected that some are losing their speaking skill as well. They could not understand some simple words and could hardly answer the questions in full sentences. For some of them I had to conduct the interview going back and forth in English and Khmer, as sometimes their English was no better than their poor Khmer. Even more depressing, I could not get through in either or both
languages in some cases. These people are really trapped between the two languages. They are not proficient in any language.

8. Only ten of the sample therefore are literate in Khmer.
Table A: Profile of the Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Parents' Employment in Kampuchea</th>
<th>Time spent in refugee camp</th>
<th>Date of arrival in Australia</th>
<th>Literacy in Khmer now</th>
<th>Time spent learning English outside Aust.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Post Office worker</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>08-10-81</td>
<td>literate</td>
<td>1 year in Kampuchea</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>27-09-80</td>
<td>semi-literate</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>literate</td>
<td>1 year in Kampuchea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Foreign Affairs officer</td>
<td>6 years in Vietnam</td>
<td>27-11-86</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Custom officer</td>
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<td>-10-80</td>
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<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Small business</td>
<td>2 years</td>
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<td>1 year in refugee camp</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
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<td>27-07-82</td>
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<td>1 year in refugee camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>-06-87</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>5-6 years</td>
<td>10-03-87</td>
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<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>7 months</td>
<td>25-11-83</td>
<td>illiterate</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>As above</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>illiterate</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>10-12-80</td>
<td>literate</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>illiterate</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>-08-81</td>
<td>illiterate</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Literacy Level</td>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>4.5 years</td>
<td>-12-84</td>
<td>semi-literate</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>26-04-83</td>
<td>semi-literate</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
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<td>18</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>As above</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>semi-literate</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>x</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Peasants</td>
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<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>25-11-83</td>
<td>literate</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>4.5 years</td>
<td>07-06-83</td>
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<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>-04-83</td>
<td>semi-literate</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Transport Department</td>
<td>2.5 years</td>
<td>10-01-83</td>
<td>literate</td>
<td>2 years in refugee camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>05-03-85</td>
<td>semi-literate</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>As above</td>
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<td>literate</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Civil servant</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>25-08-83</td>
<td>semi-literate</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>semi-literate</td>
<td>7 months in refugee camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>2.5 years</td>
<td>-11-82</td>
<td>semi-literate</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>none</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>24-06-83</td>
<td>semi-literate</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. THE SETTLEMENT PROCESS

The sample arrived in Australia between 1980 and 1987 when they were between 10 and 21 years old. One thing all the sample had in common as they arrived in Australia was that they all wanted to do some more study. How they went about it and where they started depended very much on their ages and on their educational, emotional and financial capacity.

SCHOOLING

Except for three older people, interviewees 1, 6 and 25, whom I will discuss later (in special cases), the rest of the sample went to primary school if they were of primary school age, or went to an Intensive Language Unit (ILU) or high school if they were of high school age. As many of them had had their age reduced, eleven of the sample whose official ages were between 8 and 13 went to primary school. Some of them started as low as year 4, and worked their way through the primary system and then went on to high school. (See Table B: Schooling)

Very few primary schools in Sydney provided an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher to help migrant children with their English. Only five of the sample who went to primary school were fortunate enough to be placed in such schools, where they were given English lessons separately from other children for 4 to 6 months. It is hard to imagine what it was like for the other six who did not speak any English (or little English) to be placed in a class full of strangers. It must have been quite horrifying.
LEARNING ENGLISH

The other 16 of the sample all went to an Intensive Language Unit (ILU). There are about 12 ILU and Intensive Language Centres (ILC) throughout Sydney. They are places where newly-arrived migrants of high school age are taught English before they move to high school. Other subjects are also taught such as Maths, Science, History, Geography, Chemistry, Music etc. It is the most effective way of learning English, i.e. applied English. It is also the most effective way of preparing students for high school, as these same subjects are taught there. It also provides a slow and quiet transition to high school as the class size is small (10-12 students) and students can become quite intimate with their teachers and are more inclined to ask questions. It is particularly useful for students who need to build up their confidence, to learn about new customs and ways of life. Overall, it is a time for newly arrived students slowly to get to know things around them, such as the schooling system, socialisation, shopping, banking etc.

In many ILUs, students are at the beginning placed according to their knowledge of English. They are then moved up the grades according to the progress they make. The teachers at ILUs together with high school teachers decide when the students are ready to start high school and at what level.

The time each student spends at an ILU depends very much on the progress he or she makes. A teacher at Cabramatta ILU said that migrant students spent an average of two to three terms (there are four terms in a school year) before they moved to high school. Kampuchean students, however, usually have to stay longer, he said.

According to my sample, among the 16 (only five had previous knowledge of English) who went to an ILU, the majority (12) spent one to one and a half years there. Three spent less than one year while one had to spend two years. That the Kampuchean students need more time at ILU is not surprising. Over and above their weak knowledge of English, which is shared in some cases by students of other nationalities, the
Kampuchean students have other problems such as learning difficulties, inability to retain information and a weak conceptual understanding of subject matter as the result of disrupted, brief, or no schooling, an experience we examined earlier.

Teachers at ILUs also attribute this slow acquisition of English to the fact that some Kampuchean students are illiterate in Khmer. Literacy in the mother-tongue, they think, is very important in learning another language. The mere fact that students can write down the meaning of each word in their own language helps them a great deal in memorising the words.

Other skills associated with learning the mother tongue also help. One ESL teacher said, "skills such as being able to use the dictionary, take notes and running translations in their language certainly help them with comprehension. The kids who are illiterate rely totally on their memories and understanding at the time... Things are harder to measure whether the development and literacy skills in your own language have some flowing effect on the development and literacy in the second language. I suspect it does."

For those fortunate enough to have been exposed to the Khmer written language, the experiences gained from learning the dynamics (sound, the art of putting pen on paper etc.) of the 33 consonants and 21 vowels that constitute the Khmer alphabet, must provide an impetus for learning English.

My sample shows that a substantial prior knowledge of English has speeded up the progress of two students who spent respectively only two months and three terms at ILU. They also received respectively four, and six and a half, years of education in Khmer, and are literate in Khmer. Another student who also spent three terms at ILU did not have any knowledge of English to start with, but was backed up by six years of education in Khmer in Kampuchea and refugee camp and is literate in Khmer. The other three students who had a previous knowledge of English but only had 2-3 years of education in Khmer, and are illiterate or semi-literate in Khmer, had to spend one year or
more at ILU. This means that a concrete knowledge of Khmer has a great influence on the learning of English regardless of previous knowledge of English.

It is interesting to note that students who spent more than one year at ILU are mostly characterised by their low level of education in Khmer. They had received only between one and three years of education in Kampuchea and mostly in a refugee camp. Except for one, they are either illiterate or semi-literate in Khmer. A student who was illiterate in Khmer spent two years at ILU. This shows that while a previous knowledge of English does not necessarily mean a short stay at ILU, the low level of education in Khmer certainly slows down progress at ILU.

All 16 of the interviewees who went to ILU thought that the time they spent there was useful at least for the improvement of their English. Given that only five of them had any knowledge of English before they started at ILU, their progress was good. At the end of the course they "could understand English", "could and dared to speak to the teachers", "could speak, read and write English". A then fourteen year-old son of a peasant from Battambang province said: "I didn't know a word of English to start with but one and a half years later I could write and speak".

English was not the only subject at which the students benefitted from ILU. Some students found that they improved their knowledge of maths, science, history, geography, chemistry etc. during their stay there. While learning to read, write and speak English grammatically was their main aim, ILU students also mentioned the learning of Australian customs and way of life. For many students, ILU was the first place they learnt about Australia and Australian history.

Compared with high school to which they later moved, some students reminisced about the ILU's slow pace of learning. As a place where students are prepared for high school, learning "without pressure" at ILU is perhaps not so successful. It is, however, complemented by the fact that "everything was explained properly", said a then 12 year-
old boy of peasant background who had had no English to start with but at the end of one year was given an award for English, and was even asked to tell a joke.

While nine students said that the time they spent at ILU was too long, five said "enough" and two said "too short". However only one said that "it was a waste of time". Other criticisms included: "too much emphasis on writing, not enough on speaking", "the subjects taught were easy, I had done them before", and "the rest of the students don't speak English correctly", which gave him no ground to practise or improve his English.

HIGH SCHOOL

The 27 interviewees who went to primary school or ILU to start with all went or intended to go on to high school. At the time of interview -- in the first half of 1988 -- three were still at ILU. They all intended to go on to high school later in the year. Nineteen interviewees were high school students ranging from year 7 to year 12; two were university students (first year science and third year medicine); three left high school, two at the end of year 11, one at the end of year 8 (and is now married with one child). There were altogether 24 interviewees who have been or are going through high school.

The 24 students are going or went to eleven different high schools in Sydney's western suburbs from Marrickville to Cabramatta and Campbelltown. The majority of the students (18) liked their school. Only one disliked it. The rest preferred to say, "it's alright" or "not much". More than anything else students and teachers are the determining factors of how one feels about school. The interviewees like school because "the teachers are kind and explain things clearly", "people are friendly" etc.

While having "many good friends" is an important factor, their ethnic composition doesn't seem to matter. A sixteen year-old girl liked her school because "I have many nice Kampuchean friends" at school, while a nineteen year-old boy liked his school even
though there were only two Kampuchean students in the whole school. I detect, however, that students who go to schools where there are many Kampucheans seem to feel more secure (happier, more outgoing, not worrying so much about doing the wrong thing, more relaxed) than those who go to schools with few Kampucheans. The former group feel that they belong to a group of people to whom they can turn for support, or when they are in trouble.

Liking school does not necessarily mean that they are doing well at school. Two interviewees left school at the end of year 11 because "I can't cope", and "school work is too difficult". However, they still liked their schools and thought they were good schools.

One student does not like his school because he does not like his chances of getting into university. The school has a reputation of being unable to deliver the goods: "not many students have been accepted to go to university", said a twenty year-old son (in year 11) of a former civil servant in Kampuchea (now a bus conductor). This problem is typical of an ambitious student with an ambitious background being brought up in an Australian working class setting. The rosy expectations of life in Australia slowly disappeared as he realised that there were many odds against him and his success. This disappoints and angers him as the issues of class and ethnicity, which were not his problems in Kampuchea, become the main barrier to his success. He is not the only one in this bind.

PROBLEMS AT HIGH SCHOOL

In response to the question what are/were your main problems at school, the students mentioned subject matter 23 times, racial attitudes seven times, students three times, and a teacher once. As subject matter is frequently seen as a problem it is obvious
that the students are concerned with their progress at school. Subject matters are certainly their main worries, and I shall discuss this in detail later.

Racial Attitudes

Five boys and two girls mentioned racial attitudes as their problem at school. Perhaps it is true that men are more racially vulnerable or are subject to more racial attacks than women. For most of these schools, Asian faces are a new phenomenon that students and teachers are still adjusting to. The situation has improved as more and more Asians arrive. An eighteen year-old boy, who is now in year 12 and has been attending his high school since year 7, said, "There were racist attitudes in the early days, but now with so many Asians ...". It could be that a racist attitude is still there but now with many Asians around he feels more confident in ignoring it than before, when all the racist remarks were aimed at the very few Asians present.

It seems that students who go to schools, where there are many Asians or Kampucheans, become more capable of coping with racial remarks than those who go to schools where not many Asians are present.

Interviewees who went to schools where there weren't many Kampucheans described racial attitudes rather bitterly. A year 12, nineteen year-old, good natured boy, who goes to a school where there is only one other Kampuchean boy (and not many other Asians), said, "They don't want to make friends with people with black hair,... they don't ask us to join a sports team or .... we won't get in unless we know somebody". Obviously he has been rejected by "the gang" and he is hurt by it.

Students who went to a school where there are many Kampucheans around seem to be able to ignore or disregard racial remarks, such as "go back to your home" or jokes at their expense. I admire them for this as it is not all that easy to ignore such comments. When I was told to "go back home" by a troublesome Australian-born student at a
working-class high school in Melbourne where I was the only Asian teacher, I was quite shocked. Some fellow teachers voiced the idea that the student be expelled but that was not what I wanted. When the teacher-in-charge talked the student into apologising to me, it was all over. A few years later when I was not at that school any more, a fellow teacher told me that the student had recently been expelled for other misdemeanours, I couldn't help feeling quite pleased.

Not only students display racial attitudes, teachers too were mentioned by one interviewee as "disliking Asian students".

**Students and Teachers**

Fellow students were mentioned as a problem at school by two male and one female interviewee. They complained about it being "hard to make sense" of the students or that "I dislike their vulgar behaviour ... they stamp on the table and I can't study". Cultural misunderstanding exists between fellow students of different racial backgrounds. There are so few complaints, however, that they need to be congratulated as we all know it takes time to understand fully the behaviour or expression of someone from another culture.

Teachers were mentioned as a problem once by an interviewee who is doing year 12. He said "some teachers are inexperienced,... can't teach and don't know their subjects very well". This comment is rather out of place as teachers are traditionally seen as unquestionable by Kampuchean students and parents.

**Subject Matters**

Twenty-three students out of 24 mentioned subject matter as their main problem at high school. Sixteen cited English as the most difficult subject. In N.S.W. migrant
students are doing the same English syllabus as the rest of the students throughout high school and for the Higher School Certificate. In some high schools there are provisions for English-as-a-Second-Language teachers to help migrant students with the subject but at the end they are faced with the same exam paper as the rest of the students.

The saddest thing is that their difficulty with English does not diminish the longer they stay in Australia. Complaints about English as a difficult subject come from those who have been here recently (one year) as well as those who have been here for a long time (eight years). It is obvious that eight years in Australia is not a long enough time to become proficient in English (I wonder how long it takes).

The degree of difficulty varies from student to student. A nineteen-year-old girl who came to Australia eight years ago is now in the top class of year 12. Having arrived in Australia when quite young (eleven years old) she went to year 4 (primary school) and conscientiously worked her way through primary school and high school. Family background, encouragement and support form the foundation of her success. Although only semi-literate in Khmer she was certain of passing her HSC, but at the same time she mentioned English, and among other subjects, Chemistry and Economics, as the most difficult subjects. Her older brother, who is literate in Khmer and is now a third-year medical student, said that when he was at high school English was his only difficult subject.

At the other end of the spectrum there is a twenty year-old girl, who is having difficulties with "every subject including English". She has been here for five years (this is her HSC year), and her teacher said, "she won't pass, she'll get 20%". The student knows this, but what can she do? She is a serious person who has been trying very hard for the last five years but things don't improve for her. There is nothing for her to do at home, there is no job available, her older brother, who failed HSC last year, is still looking for work. Her older unmarried sister is working in a clothing factory. There do not seem to be any eligible men around, so the only respectable place for her at the
moment is school. When I saw her she was happy enough and enjoying her time at school with friends even though she realised that the future is less than bright. In fact she is already set on the clothing factory at the end of this year.

While it is hard to assess how they are doing at school now and how they will do in the future, interviewees who have been here for four, five or six years and are doing year 9, 10 or 11 are worrying about their progress, or lack of it, in English. Many are cruising along waiting for a miracle.

While it is not so hard to make themselves understood through oral communication the students find it extremely difficult to put pen to paper. Worrying about sentence structure and grammar can sometimes retard their thinking as they know what to say but cannot formally put it on paper. Perhaps it will come with practice but it takes such a long time that, for many, their time at high school will pass unsuccessfully because of their inability to get on top of English in the meantime.

In addition to the writing and comprehension difficulties are cultural differences. A student who is doing year 12 and has been here for eight years said, "while I like reading (English) novels there are parts which I understand and parts which I don't". This is not so much because of unknown words but rather because his preconception is different from the novelist's. Writers usually assume certain knowledge, cultural or social, on the part of their readers -- knowledge that teenage Kampuchean students do not possess. Every piece of writing is loaded with cultural values and assumptions which are accepted as aspects of reality by the writers who have grown up in that culture. Thinking back to my time at the only English high school in Kampuchea when I forced myself to stumble through Shakespeare's Hamlet, I feel extremely sorry for the Kampuchean students who have to try to make sense out of David Williamson's The Club or worse still, Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice. There is nothing that a peasant boy or girl from Battambang can identify with in those novels. Well, how can they enjoy reading them?
Not that they will never understand western or Australian culture and its sense of humour, but time -- a long time -- is needed to capture them. I remember, for example, my parents' generation who could enjoy Voltaire's satirical works and could retell La Fontaine's folk tales to their children, even though it was rather out of place, but that was after over twenty years of exposure to French culture and at a time when Khmer literature was suppressed. If that is the duration needed, it will be too late for the Kampuchean adolescents in Australia who have to face their exams, HSC or whatever, in the next few years.

Other difficult subjects mentioned by the students are maths (ten times), science (three times), chemistry (five times) and physics (three times). Subjects such as geography, ancient history and Japanese are also mentioned sporadically as difficult subjects.

A twenty-one year-old girl told me that she finds science very hard to understand because "I haven't learnt about it before". This was not exactly the only reason as she later mentioned pollution as a science topic which is hard to understand. Coming from a peasant background there is no wonder that she is not familiar with industrial pollution.

There is also a problem associated with language. Subjects such as maths, science, biology, chemistry are made difficult because "it contains so many difficult, unfamiliar, and long words", "I don't understand the questions asked in maths, history and science". Also writing up chemistry experimental reports, for example, can be quite difficult for those without mastery of writing skills.

**ASSISTANCE WITH SCHOOL WORK**

Most of the 30 interviewees, at one stage or another, had problems with their school work. When asked to whom did they refer the problems, "teachers" score 25 times, "friends" score eleven times and "relatives" score six times.
Only six interviewees had parents, or an older brother, sister or uncle to whom they could turn when they needed help with their school work. This places Kampuchean students in a very disadvantaged position. It is, however, very difficult to assess the degree of disabilities as compared with their Australian counterparts because many Australian working class children too suffer more or less the same disadvantage.

Given however, that most parents of Kampuchean students don't speak English and the subject matters taught are culturally unfamiliar to them, it is almost impossible for the students to bring the subject matter taught at school home to be discussed or expanded (their thoughts) at the dining floor.

Teachers and friends are the only available people who can help the Kampuchean students with their academic work. However, as many interviewees mentioned later, "teachers are very busy", and "it is not easy to get hold of them". This leaves many students frustrated as they cannot turn to anybody for a quick or an extended consultation. In the course of my interviewing work I found myself helping the students with maths, answering social studies questions and helping with other school problems.

Very little "special attention" is given by the school to migrant students. It is either because the school does not realise the need of these students or the school does not have sufficient resources for that purpose. Only six out of the 30 interviewees mentioned the formal special arrangement where they were given extra tuition in maths or physics or English at lunch time or before school for half an hour or so. It is not known whether teachers do this as part of their duty allocation or over and above it. Some other interviewees mention the informal help they receive from teachers out of their good will, or personal sacrifice, such as encouraging the students to come to see them if they had any problem with their work. All this help is very much appreciated.

In response to the question, "are/were you ever elected or given a representative role at school", 25 said "No", one was elected as a prefect for two consecutive years, one
was a candidate for Student Council, one was a Public Relations Officer, and two were elected Captain of Softball.

"Representative role" at school as we all know is usually held by those with an outstanding academic record or those who are good at sport and popular with their peers. It seems that most Kampuchean students have not got those qualifications, as they are of a new and small ethnic group in the school, struggling with their academic work.

However there are some who, I think, are capable of representative roles but are shy, saying that these roles are not for them but for Australian students instead. It is rather revealing that racial dynamics work in such a way that it keeps each person in his or her own place. It is obvious that there is a feeling of animosity about this, but the Kampuchean students and many other migrant students have learnt to live with it.

THE FINANCIAL FACTOR

One thing on which the government needs to be congratulated, because it works as an incentive to keep many of my interviewees at school, is the introduction of AUSTUDY. Visiting from house to house, I seldom encountered high school age adolescents not attending school or living off their parents or on unemployment benefits. While other factors such as their "thirst" for education after the Pol Pot time and their parents' belief in education as a vehicle to success are important, AUSTUDY is undoubtedly the most practical means of keeping them at school. Whether they will complete high school successfully or unsuccessfully, they are, at least, given a one-and-only opportunity with financial backing. Also, if their schooling is unsuccessful this time, it will at least provide them with confidence and a socialising experience, and acquaint them with other educational courses available later on in their life.

AUSTUDY takes away the financial pressure on parents and students. Given the Kampuchean tradition of children, especially girls, living with their parents until they get
married, there is little urge for the children to live independently. So AUSTUDY provides an extra income for the family, it meets the educational and personal needs of the students, such as books, sports uniform, outings, clothes etc. Even though it is not much, AUSTUDY helps the students to be not so totally dependent on their parents financially -- a common reason for friction within the family. It provides both parents and students with financial room for manouevre. However, AUSTUDY will only continue to play these important roles if it is subjected to regular adjustment for inflation.

As it is now, many Kampuchean students are facing financial problems. In response to the question "do/did you ever have any money problems in meeting school requirements", 19 said "yes" and eleven said "no". While some cannot afford to buy or pay for the most basic school requirements such as textbooks, school uniforms, or school fees, others have to decline very important social activities, such as excursions or camping, which can cost quite a lot of money. (Camping, for example, could cost up to $30 a night for each student.) Some students said that they are exempted from paying certain fees but they have to live with that stigma which is not easy.

Interestingly, of the four students who had discontinued their study, all said "yes" to the above question. A then seventeen year-old girl said that it was financial problems that forced her to get a job as a machinist. It was at the time when her parents, who have five unmarried children including a young baby, had to struggle to meet high rent two years after their arrival in Australia.

Not only students with unemployed parents have problems with money; those whose parents are working do too. An eighteen year-old boy, whose father is a bus conductor and whose mother is a cleaner, with five children and two dependent relatives living with them, is having financial problems, because "I'm not entitled to AUSTUDY as both my parents are working."
MOTHER-TONGUE MAINTENANCE

All of the sample were born in Kampuchea before the Pol Pot time (1975) and experienced life right through the Pol Pot period.

They were between 10 and 21 years old when they arrived in Australia. They are the first-generation immigrants who have been here for between one and eight years.

On arriving in Australia three of the sample were illiterate in Khmer as they had missed out on education completely in Kampuchea or in Thailand. At the time of interview, however, I found that seven of them were illiterate. This is because there had been no systematic reinforcement to maintain their mother-tongue since they had arrived in Australia. Only two of the interviewees received one year of a Khmer literacy course provided by the Kampuchean community on the weekends in Cabramatta. A few more went for several months and discontinued, for various reasons.

When asked if they would like to be able to read or write more Khmer the answers were all positive. There is no lack of interest in learning Khmer. However, there has been very little encouragement. So far there has been only one weekend school operating in Cabramatta for the whole Kampuchean community of Sydney. The school is run by two volunteer teachers with very limited funding. Early this year when another school was established in Rosemeadow for the expanding number of Kampuchean residents in the Campbelltown area, 50-60 students were enrolled. The school, unfortunately, had to be closed down after two weekends of teaching because of an unresolved dispute with the school administrator over classroom maintenance.

Since they have been in Australia, their knowledge of Khmer literacy has receded. There is very limited use for it. They seldom write Khmer -- perhaps once a week or once a month or twice a year in terms of letters to their friends and relatives in Kampuchea and the rest of the world.
Reading, too, has been limited to the letters they received or a few books they have in possession. It is not easy to get hold of Khmer books. They are rarely found in local libraries or bookshops. There is no popular Khmer newspaper. The two monthly newspapers operating in Sydney are seen as serving one or another political ideology. Very few households, therefore, subscribe to them, especially among the peasant group who traditionally leave the issue of politics to the urban and "educated" dwellers.

All of the interviewees speak Khmer (except for one who speaks Chinese) at home. Some, however, said that they speak English to their brothers and sisters who are at school. While some older interviewees who received many years of education in Kampuchea can confidently speak or discuss various social or political topics, some young interviewees are running out of simple vocabulary. For them their knowledge of spoken Khmer is limited to the household usage only.

SPECIAL CASES

Three interviewees did not fit in with the rest of the sample as they did not go to a primary school, an ILU or a high school. Arriving in Australia in 1981, 1985 and 1980 with official ages of 26, 19 and 23 respectively, they were classified as adults (interviewees 1, 25 and 6 respectively).

Special Case One:

The first girl was sponsored by an unrelated Kampuchean resident in Sydney, who mistakenly augmented her age by five years. Having lost contact with the rest of her family during the Pol Pot time she arrived in Australia alone. Her intention to do more studies in Australia was not welcomed by her sponsor. A week after her arrival she was landed with a full-time job as housekeeper in a hospital. Realising the differences of
interest between her and her sponsor she gradually moved away from the family. She continued to work for three years before she could save enough money to enable her to go back to school full-time. However, in 1984, she started a part-time evening course at Sydney Technical School doing year 11 while working full-time during the day. In 1985, when she could afford to go to school full-time, she was accepted to do her HSC at Randwick Technical School, as a mature age student. She passed HSC with four unit Maths and was accepted in a Bachelor of Science course at Macquarie University. She is now in her third year. She looks back to the HSC year and says, "I tried very hard, and it was ambitious". Her achievement is grand, and it is useful to look at her background.

The daughter of a Post Office worker in Phnom Penh, she received a solid ten years of education in Kampuchea before Pol Pot came to power. During the Pol Pot time her father disappeared, and her mother and some of her nine brothers and sisters died of starvation and diseases. Most of the time she was sent to work, away from her family. In 1979 when Vietnam ousted Pol Pot from power, the chaotic situation brought her to the Thai border. Not knowing what had happened to the rest of her family, she made herself available to be sponsored to a third country. Australia became her destination.

With a very limited knowledge of English to begin with, her academic achievement in Australia was certainly enhanced by her education in Khmer. Her literacy in Khmer has no doubt helped to speed up her acquisition of English. Moreover it was obvious that she could apply the knowledge that she had acquired in Khmer into English and she did well in other subjects, such as maths, science etc. Here is another example of the usefulness of literacy and a general education in the mother tongue. In the HSC year, however, while other subjects were "allright", English was her most difficult subject.

Economically it has been a hardship for her. Her pursuit of an education means that there is little time left for socialisation. In order to support herself she has been working every weekend (two full days) for the last four years while she has been a full-time student. She cannot live on the government assistance scheme, AUSTUDY, so she
must work, which in this case makes her ineligible for AUSTUDY altogether, as she earns $150 per week.

Except for the first few months when she lived with her sponsor's family, she has been living in a rented flat with friends or on her own. The rising price of rental accommodation in Sydney ensures that she must keep on working at weekends. As a result, she said, "I've no time for socialising, I don't have many friends in the Kampuchean community or at University".

As may be expected, she looks at society rather bitterly, as no one has given her a hand. It's rather sad that there is no provision in our society to help someone like her -- a lone adolescent refugee who wants and has the potential to pursue an education. Without such determination, lone adolescent refugees could easily become vagabonds or destitutes.

She has recently learnt that some of her sisters are alive and well in Phnom Penh. She intends to reunite with them as soon as possible.

Special Case Two:

This case is quite a common one of someone who arrives in Australia too old to pursue an education through normal channels -- i.e. an Intensive Language Centre, then high school or other institutions -- but not old enough to confidently start working in a new environment where the language, the people and the work ethic is so strange. It is made worse by the fact that he or she has been living in a refugee camp, has never worked before, and therefore possesses no skills whatsoever. When I was a teacher in Melbourne I again and again met people who were aged between 17 and 22 on arrival and who were undecided whether to join classes with the Adult Migrant Education Services (AMES) or Child Migrant Education Services (CMES) to learn English. Enrolment with AMES means that you are an adult and on unemployment benefit while doing the course,
and intend to join the workforce at the end of the ten-week course. Enrolment with CMES or ILU in Sydney means that you are your parent's dependant and therefore not eligible for unemployment benefits, and intend to continue study at high school or other institutions. It is a difficult decision to make as one arrives in a new society. Factors such as previous education, personal views about schooling, relationship with parents or guardians, proficiency in English, skills, etc. must be taken into consideration in order to make a successful decision.

This young woman arrived in Australia over three years ago (March 1985) when she was 19 years old. Coming from a peasant background, her parents could not provide much valuable input into the decision-making process, and there was nobody in the Kampuchean community or welfare services to whom she could turn for career or educational advice; she enrolled, reluctantly, to do an English course at the hostel with other adults. Looking back she said she did not know exactly what she wanted and was not told what the outcome would be when she finished the course. Obviously it was a confusing time for her and her parents, who, then, have seven other unmarried children to worry about.

When the English course finished three months later there was no job she could begin. While pondering what to do next, she was told of a course at Bankstown College. The Access Course was set up to prepare young adult migrants like her for further education at TAFE or other similar institutions. For six months she was taught English, science, maths, history etc. The course was "far, far too difficult, I could not cope". Subject matters were her main problem, as "I could not understand what the teachers were saying". English and science were her most difficult subjects. When the course ended after six months she realised that further education was not for her. So she went on unemployment benefits for one year before she could get a job as a machinist in Cabramatta.
It should be noted that while the Access Course did not do much good for her, some Kampuchean students have benefited a great deal from the course. According to a teacher who has a lot to do with Kampuchean adolescents in the area, Access Courses have taken predominantly Kampuchean students. Those who successfully completed an Access Course could go on to do year 9 or year 10 at TAFE. The course, he said, "was aimed at providing extra education. The ones I know personally have done quite well, probably better than if they'd come to high school. One young man I know never went to high school because he was 20 years old when he arrived and went straight to do that course. He's now doing an electrical trades course. Another girl who did that course went on to do a further technical course and is now a public servant doing clerical work". He went on to give more examples of people who arrived at an older age -- in their early 20s for example -- but are "highly motivated" and "just refused to go to a factory" and ended up with a trade or a skill of some sort.

"Motivation", however, is not the only key to success for these young adults. Other factors such as educational background, family support, etc. also come into play in this struggle for social status. It is important, therefore, to investigate the reasons for the failure of our special case.

She was born in 1966 to a peasant family in Battambang, a wealthy province of Kampuchea, generally known as the country's "rice barn". When Pol Pot came to power in 1975 she was nine years old but had never been to school. Obviously the educational expansion of the Sihanouk and Lon Nol eras did not reach some peasant families either because of lack of interest or lack of resources. During the Pol Pot time she was placed in a Mobile Youth Working Brigade which was sent from place to place to fulfil particular projects, such as harvesting or building dams and reservoirs. She remembers digging and carrying earth and sowing ricefields with fertiliser. None of her family members was killed or died during the Pol Pot time, but by the end of 1979 her family was in a shambles with no home, draught animals or agricultural instruments. When all members of the family (parents and eight children) were reunited, they left Kampuchea and arrived
in a refugee camp in Thailand in 1980. (Again she missed out on an education in Heng Samrin's Kampuchea.) Without enough money to buy their way around, they were shuffled from one camp to another for two years before they could settle permanently in one camp where the children could go to school. So despite the fact that the family spent five years in Thailand she only received 2-3 years of haphazard education in the camp.

Obviously her educational background is very weak. She can read and write Khmer reasonably but her knowledge of history, science or maths is minimal.

Her parents were prepared to support her and wanted her to go on with study, but she said, "I wanted to stop because I knew that I could not go on academically".

She is now working as a rag cutter with Saint Vincent de Paul and is living with her parents in a three bedroom house with fifteen other members of the family, including two married sisters and their husbands and children.

Special Case Three:

This man was born in 1959 to a family whose father was a Customs Officer in Phnom Penh. When Pol Pot came to power he was 16 years old and had done nearly 12 solid years of education in Phnom Penh. His academic knowledge was of no use to the Pol Pot regime; instead he was sent off to the countryside where he toiled the ricefields for four years. "It was hard work", he said; he was not willing to elaborate any further and relive the bad memories. His father was killed in 1978, only a few months before the Vietnamese arrived to rescue him and the rest of his family.

Impressed with the idea of living in a Western country, he left his mother and younger brother and sister in the provincial town of Kompong Cham and headed off for Thailand with an uncle and his family in 1979, soon after Pol Pot was toppled. He lived
in a refugee camp for eighteen months, working as medical assistant to the Red Cross team in the camp. He did not go to school there as it was below his level.

He arrived in Australia in October 1980, sponsored by a relative already in Sydney. His age was augmented by two years (to twenty-three) as the relative did not know his exact age.

He had "hardly any" English when he arrived in Australia and immediately enrolled to do an English course with adults for ten weeks at Cabramatta Hostel. When the course finished he was on the streets for a while not knowing what to do next, work or study. Then he was told of an English course at N.S.W. University which catered for students who intended to do further education. The course was for three months and he did it in 1981. He was out in the cold for a while and was on unemployment benefits for a few months, before he was accepted to do matriculation at Sydney Technical School in 1982, which he completed successfully.

Money, then, became a problem as he intended to do a Computer Science course at the then N.S.W. Institute of Technology. He took 1983 off to work and save some money and started the course in 1984. He finished the course four years later, in 1987, gaining a degree from the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS).

Throughout his study in Australia he had "no problems, except financial ones". Here is another example of how a solid education in Khmer helped to enhance education in English.

He is now working as a computer programmer in Sydney and is sending money regularly to his mother, brother and sister in Kampuchea. He is yearning to visit them.
EMPLOYMENT

Only five of my sample of 30 are in the labour force, i.e. they have left school or have finished their education and are working or in search for work. They are:

1. A twenty-nine year-old male who completed his computer science course last year and is now working as a computer programmer. He has been here for eight years. (Interviewee 6)

2. A twenty year-old female who left school over three years ago at the end of Year 8, after she had been in Australia for two years. Since then she has been working as a machinist and is now married with one child. (Interviewee 28)

3. A twenty-two year-old female who decided not to continue her studies after she unsuccessfully finished a TAFE course in 1986, when she had been here for one year. She is now working as a rag cutter for St Vincent de Paul. (Interviewee 25)

4. A seventeen year-old female who left school last year, at the end of Year 11 after having been here for six years. When I spoke to her (in March) she was doing a three-month clerical training course with the Commonwealth Employment Services. She was hoping to get a job as a clerical assistant when she finished, or to do child care training at Bankstown College of TAFE. (Interviewee 15)

5. A twenty-one year-old male who left school last year, at the end of Year 11, after having been here for four years. He works as a marble cutter for the local factory and is hoping to return to Technical School to learn motor mechanics. (Interviewee 11)

The main reason for the last four persons' discontinuing their studies was their inability to cope academically. Financial, family and school problems are mentioned by one interviewee only.
While there is no foreseeable problem for the first person, as he possesses a highly marketable skill, the situation for the other four is far from satisfactory. It is true that three of them are employed but they do not have any particular skill. Their chance of getting a better job is very slim given their situation, unless some sort of work training is made available to them.

All four of them want to do further work training, such as motor mechanics, child care and hair-dressing. Since they left school only two (the second and fourth persons) have received further training, a CES clerical course for three months, and sewing at a Technical College for six months. They received unemployment benefits and AUSTUDY while they did these courses.

Except for the computer programmer (the first person) who found his job through advertisement and "rang the head of the department and asked for an interview", the other three found their jobs through friends and relatives who worked there or "just followed everybody else".

Only one of them (the third person) had ever been out of work for a lengthy period, and was on unemployment benefits for one year before she found her first job; the others seem to have been able to find work easily enough.

A possible reason why it was harder for the third person to find a job was that she, at the time, had not been in Australia for very long (one year) and therefore had not made the necessary contacts or learnt the art of job-seeking.

School leavers who have been in Australia for a few years have found it easier to find a job than those who want to join the work force on arrival. This is because, first, the former group speak better English; secondly, their time in Australia has allowed them to learn about the labour market and to make the necessary contacts that lead to employment.
They all like their jobs. However, except for the first person who thinks that his future prospects look good and that he'll "stick to it", the other three do not think that they will have a good future with their present job and are looking for better ones. They are doing now whatever is available to save money to build a house or get married.

The Overall Situation

As we know, over a quarter of the Kampuchean population in NSW is in the 15-24 age group. Most of the school-age adolescents are still at school, and few older ones are attending tertiary institutions or are doing work training courses of some sort. When they finish their courses or leave school either at the end of year 12 or earlier, they will fall into one of these four categories:

1. Those who successfully complete their tertiary or work training courses and look for employment.

2. Those who successfully pass HSC and will continue with their tertiary education.

3. Those who discontinue their schooling after HSC or before for employment - usually unskilled work.

4. Those who discontinue their schooling after HSC or before to join the unemployed, unskilled workforce.

As long as racial prejudice does not interfere with their employment opportunities, and their skill is marketable at a given time, there does not seem to be any problem associated with those in the first category. The situation is not so urgent for the second category as they will spend some years in tertiary institutions.

Most Kampuchean adolescents, however, will fall into the third and fourth categories, i.e. they are employed in unskilled jobs or are unskilled and unemployed.
Given that they are still very young, it is sad that they will spend the rest of their lives being unable to contribute fully to Australian society. It is very important, therefore, that some sort of work training programs be made available for these school leavers to acquire some sort of trade or skill which will give them wider prospects in the labour market.

THEIR FAMILIES

PARENTS' EMPLOYMENT

The thirty interviewees came from 23 different families which included eleven middle-low level civil servants, two of small business and ten of peasant backgrounds. Two interviewees, however, arrived in Australia without parents so there are only 21 sets of parents in the sample. (See Table C: Their Families -- Employment and Housing)

Among the 21, three are widows of whom two are on pensions (old age) and the other one works as a cutter for a clothing factory. This leaves 19 sets of parents in the labour force, of whom 13 breadwinners are unemployed (nearly 70%). Most of them have been unemployed since they arrived in Australia. Seven of the 13 unemployed came from a peasant background.

There are four families with one parent working and two families with both parents working. They work as cutters (clothing), gardeners, bus conductors, technical officers, factory workers, cleaners and machinists.

Bringing up children on unemployment benefits is not easy. Many unemployed families have to complement their social security cheque with secret jobs, mainly piece-work at home, such as sewing clothes. This work usually involves the whole family. Sometimes it can be quite disruptive for the children's study or recreation as the work is noisy, takes up space in the house and worst of all, the children can be asked to help meet deadlines or to improve the family's income.
HOUSING

Of the 23 families in my sample, eleven live in rented accommodation while twelve live in privately owned homes.

Four of the families rent their accommodation from the government housing scheme, the other seven from private agents. Having visited their homes, it is obvious to me that those who rent from the government receive a much better deal than those who rent from private agents. The latter group pay much more and live in worse accommodation.

A widowed pensioner with four children pays $115 per week for a three-bedroom tumble-down house which desperately needs a coat of paint. She has been on a waiting list for government housing since she arrived four years ago, as she knew that she could never afford to buy a house.

A working widow lives in a small run-down (peeling ceiling, tattered floor coverings) two-bedroom flat with her two school-age sons and her working brother. The rent is $95 per week. Working as a cutter with a clothing factory, she had hoped, in the early years after her arrival, to save enough money to buy a house. With the rising housing prices in the last few years, however, she has given up hope and is now on a waiting list for government housing.

It is the new comers who find housing problems most difficult to cope with as they are usually unemployed and are faced with the costs of setting up a new home. So they must live in the cheapest possible accommodation. Two recently arrived (one year ago) families, with six members each, live in a one-bedroom and a two-bedroom privately rented flat respectively. This unhygienically dense living is what they can afford. Both families are on the waiting list for government housing.
Government housing, on the other hand, is usually cheaper and in better condition. According to my sample the four families living in government housing have been in Australia for at least five years. The families only have to pay $30-$40 per week for three- or four-bedroom accommodation. Their overall financial situation is much better than those living in privately rented accommodation.

Twelve families of my sample have purchased a home. They are all families who have been here over five years, except for three families (three and four years).

Buying a house jointly, between parents and children or brother and sister, is not uncommon. For some it is the only way they can afford it. Another common practice is for someone in the family to buy a house and have the rest of the extended family live in it and help to pay the mortgage.

This practice leads, in some cases, to very crowded living conditions. One extended family of sixteen members lives in a privately owned three-bedroom house in Campbelltown. The owners of the house, an unemployed couple, have four young children. Living with them are her parents, a sister and her husband, three unmarried sisters and three unmarried brothers. It is obvious that the owners of the house need the contributions made by the other members of the family to meet the mortgage payment. Other members of the family too would have to pay much more for other rental accommodation.

Another example of crowded living is an unemployed couple living in a three-bedroom privately-owned home with eight children (some working, some still at school) and two relatives. The house was bought jointly with the working children.

Crowded living conditions, which are experienced by many Kampuchean families living in private or government rented accommodation or privately owned homes is detrimental not only to their health and family relationships but also to the children's study. Some of my interviewees complained about not being able to find a quiet space to
do their homework, or a place in the house for a desk. Many resort to doing their work in the lounge room, writing on their laps while the TV is on for the rest of the family.

Except for two families who own a house in the inner city of Sydney, the rest could only afford to buy houses in the new satellite suburbs of Sydney, such as Bossley Park or Campbelltown. In fact more and more Kampuchean families are moving into the Campbelltown area, where housing prices are cheapest. The movement has been very beneficial to the families concerned as the community now has become big enough to serve as an informal support network. They have created an ethnic island where they can freely visit each other, help each other when there is any problem, and provide each other with child care.

Buying a house, in many cases, means putting the family in heavy debt which they have to work very hard to pay off. To meet the mortgage payment of a three-bedroom house in Ambarvale, a couple with three children have to accept work at weekends whenever they are offered it. They also rent part of their house to their married daughter with one son.

To meet mortgage payments, many unemployed home owners have to take in piece-work, such as sewing. Payment for such work is usually so low that they have to work up to twelve hours or more per day to make sufficient money.

Owning a home, therefore, does not necessarily mean that they have no more problems or are wealthy or better off. For many families, to buy a house and share it with relatives is a cheap way of having a secure shelter. Also, unemployed couples with many children, which is quite common among the Kampuchean families, are not an attractive proposition to real estate agents who prefer employed and childless tenants. So for many there is no choice but to embrace the big mortgage.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Time spent learning English in Australia</th>
<th>Level of Education Reached</th>
<th>Difficult Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>None. Started part-time Year 11 at Sydney Tech</td>
<td>3rd year Bachelor of Science</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Started at Primary School</td>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>Chemistry, English, Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Two months at I.L.U.</td>
<td>3rd year Medical Course</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>One and a half years at I.L.U.</td>
<td>Wilkins I.L.U.</td>
<td>Science, Geography, English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>One year at I.L.U.</td>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>English, Chemistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Six months at N.S.W. University and with Adult Migrant Education</td>
<td>Completed Computer Science Course in 1987</td>
<td>No problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>One and a half years at I.L.U.</td>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>Everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>One and a half years at I.L.U.</td>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>English, Physics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Three terms at I.L.U.</td>
<td>I.L.U.</td>
<td>Social Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>One year at I.L.U.</td>
<td>I.L.U.</td>
<td>English, Maths, Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Two years at I.L.U.</td>
<td>Left school at the end of Year 11 in 1987. Now is a marble cutter.</td>
<td>English, Maths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Started at Primary School</td>
<td>Year 9</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Started at Primary School</td>
<td>1st year Bachelor of Science</td>
<td>English, Physics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Started at Primary School</td>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>Physics, Chemistry, English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Started at Primary School</td>
<td>Left school at the end of Year 11 in 1987. Now doing clerical training with C.E.S.</td>
<td>Economics, Maths, Geography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>One and a half years at I.L.U.</td>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>Everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Started at Primary School</td>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>English, Maths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Started at Primary School</td>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>Maths, English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Started at Primary School</td>
<td>Year 9</td>
<td>Japanese, Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Years at School</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Other Subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>One and a half years at I.L.U.</td>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>English, Chemistry, Biology, Ancient History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>One year at I.L.U.</td>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Started at Primary School</td>
<td>Year 7</td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Three terms at I.L.U.</td>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>Chemistry, English, Maths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>One year at I.L.U.</td>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>Science, Maths, Geography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Three months (with adult Migrant Education) at I.L.U.</td>
<td>Left Bankstown TAFE, now a rag cutter</td>
<td>Science, English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>One and a half years at I.L.U.</td>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>Science, English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>One and a half years at I.L.U.</td>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>One and a half years at I.L.U.</td>
<td>Left school at the end of year 8, now a machinist.</td>
<td>Maths, Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Started at Primary School</td>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Started at Primary School</td>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>Maths</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table C: Their Families - Employment and Housing (*F = Father, **M = Mother)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time their parents been in Australia</th>
<th>Parents' Employment in Kampuchea</th>
<th>Parents' Employment in Australia</th>
<th>Type of Housing</th>
<th>Number of people in the house</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 N/A</td>
<td>Post Office worker</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>rented flat</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 14 years</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Technical Officer (F)* Cleaner (M)**</td>
<td>private home 3 bedrooms</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 as above</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 14 years</td>
<td>Foreign Affairs Officer</td>
<td>Conductor (F) Cleaner (M)</td>
<td>private home 3 bedrooms</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 as above</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 N/A</td>
<td>Custom Officer</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>rented flat</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 5 years</td>
<td>small business</td>
<td>unemployed</td>
<td>rented home 4 bedrooms</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 6 years</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>unemployed</td>
<td>private home 3 bedrooms</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 1 year</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>unemployed</td>
<td>rented flat 2 bedrooms</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 1 year</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>unemployed</td>
<td>rented flat 1 bedroom</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 4 years</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>widow's pension</td>
<td>rented home 3 bedrooms</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 as above</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 7 years</td>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>widow's pension</td>
<td>rented government house - 3 bedrooms</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 as above</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Years</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Employment Status</td>
<td>Housing Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>unemployed</td>
<td>private home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>unemployed</td>
<td>private home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>small business</td>
<td>unemployed</td>
<td>private home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>as above</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>unemployed</td>
<td>private home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>unemployed</td>
<td>private home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>Factory worker</td>
<td>private home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>unemployed</td>
<td>private home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Transport Dept.</td>
<td>Gardener</td>
<td>rented government flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>unemployed</td>
<td>private home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>as above</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Civil servant</td>
<td>Cutter (widow)</td>
<td>rented flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>as above</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>Gardener (F)</td>
<td>private home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>unemployed</td>
<td>rented government flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>unemployed</td>
<td>rented government flat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. ACCULTURATION AND ALIENATION

ACCULTURATION AND PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH BEING REFUGEES

The 30 interviewees were asked to evaluate the degree of seriousness of 27 potential problems of adjustment (see Appendix 2). For each problem they were to mark a straight line scale which ranged from "a very big problem" to "no problem at all". The straight line was divided into three portions representing the seriousness of each problem, i.e.

- not serious
- somewhat serious, and
- very serious.

The 27 adjustment problems are presented in the following table in order of seriousness.

The first five problems, all "serious" in most cases, are associated with being refugees. Separation from family members, bad memories of war and departure, worrying about family members and friends in Thailand or Kampuchea, homesickness and feelings about leaving Kampuchea are serious factors that are still lingering in their minds. These factors can be seen as a result of involuntarily leaving Kampuchea and lack of control over their migratory behaviour. They may be an obstacle to a successful long-term adjustment to a new cultural environment as they may still have strong emotional ties with Kampuchea and therefore may find it hard to give a positive appraisal of Australian culture and country. It may also be disruptive to their education and employment as the above mentioned problems interrupt their concentration at school and at work.

Over three-quarters of interviewees regarded "learning skills for job" as either somewhat serious or very serious. This reflects their concern about their future. Other
personal factors such as racial prejudice, finance and schooling are also widely regarded as serious.

Environmental factors such as climate, food and neighbourhood, together with their contact with the outside world, do not concern them a great deal. This could be a result of many of them having been here for a long time, and therefore having developed some sense of familiarity with the environment.

### Problems of Adjustment in Order of Seriousness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Not Serious</th>
<th>Somewhat Serious</th>
<th>Very Serious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Separation from family members (worrying)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bad memories of war and departure</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Worrying about family members and friends you left behind (in Thailand or Kampuchea)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Thinking a lot about your homeland (homesickness)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Feelings about leaving Kampuchea (sadness, regret)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Learning skills that will help you find a job</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Australian racial prejudice and discrimination against Kampucheaans</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Having enough money</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Talking with boys/girls</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Keeping in touch (letters) with relatives and friends you left behind (in Thailand or Kampuchea)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Speaking English and make yourself understood</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Having other Khmer people to talk with (is it hard to find them?)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. School (Probe: trouble with school-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Median</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Work, teacher</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Having someone to talk with about personal problems</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Understanding what Australians are saying to you</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Getting medical care</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Finding help from Australian people for things like welfare, other financial assistance etc.</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Getting around town (Probe: too far away, no car, no buses, no direction)</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Getting along with other refugee groups (Vietnamese, Lao, Lebanese)</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Doing Khmer religious ceremonies (upset because no longer able to do them)</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Understanding Australian lifestyle (culture)</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Knowing how to get things done in Sydney (e.g. finding a house, shopping, banking, post office)</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Food (diet: getting the right Khmer food)</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Life in your neighbourhood (Probe: trouble with landlords, neighbour and roommate, privacy at home)</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Getting along with people in your family</td>
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ALIENATION FROM AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

The 30 interviewees were asked to respond to a ten-item measure of alienation. (See appendix 3.) This comprised questions concerning their feeling of social isolation, their future prospects, cultural estrangement and how much they think they are in control of themselves and their future while living in Australia. The direction of the visual analogue scale was randomised in order to avoid systematic error.

These are detailed questions attempting to draw out the adolescents' feelings. However many adolescents are very shy and are not willing to or do not respond freely to questions such as: "Do you ever want to do things the Australian way at home?" or "Do you think you might marry a Khmer person or an Australian?" It is hard to assess how accurate their responses are as the survey is subjective and the sample is small.

There are also questions which are too mature for some young adolescents and needed to be explained, such as, "How much of a contribution do you think you'll make, in the future, to Australian society?".

Keeping this in mind, the responses are quite revealing, and readers may even be pleasantly surprised at the low levels of alienation detected.

1. Feeling out of place in Australia

We take "feeling very out of place" as a starting point. On a scale of 0 to 10 the mean score was 7.6. Nobody felt "very out of place" in Australia. In fact the majority (16) scored between 8 and 10. The longer one has been here the less "out of place" one becomes. One interviewee said, "When I first arrived, I didn't understand people, I was not happy". Having been here eighteen months, he scores 5.5.
Having family here helps a great deal. If one feels a bit out of place at school one certainly does not feel out of place at all at home.

Some interviewees said they do feel at home in Australia.

2. Finding It Difficult to Make Australian Friends

With "very difficult" in making Australian friends as a starting point, the mean score is 6.5. Quite a number (7) of adolescents did score less than 5. The reasons for the difficulty in making Australian friends are: "different ways of thinking", "can't meet them because I'm not allowed to go to parties", or "they don't speak to me". There are, however, a substantial number of interviewees (10) who have had few problems in making Australian friends (scoring 8 and over).

3. Their Feelings about Going Back Home and their Future in Australia

Homesickness is widespread among the interviewees. They miss their village, their relatives etc. Most of the interviewees want to return to Kampuchea, "not to live but to visit". The memories of war and of Pol Pot talk them out of ever living in Kampuchea again, but they still care about Kampuchea and want to see with their own eyes what it is like now.

In response to how they feel about their future in Australia, most interviewees are very hopeful. With "feeling very hopeful about the future" as a starting point, the mean score is 2. They believe that by living in Australia they will receive a good education and will have a good life; however they still feel homesick and want to return home even just for a visit.
4. Contribution to Australian Society

Many interviewees did not know in what way one could make a valuable contribution to a society. Once that was explained, in response to "how much of a contribution do you think you'll make, in the future, to Australian society?", the mean score was 2.75, with "contribute a lot" as a starting point. Many, however, tend to think that their work or their contribution does not count as much as their Australian counterpart's contribution. This reflects the feeling that they are not totally accepted by their host society.

5. Khmer Customs and their Usefulness in Australia

The majority of interviewees do not feel free to do things the Australian way at home. They feel that they need to take their parents' opinions into consideration and test their level of tolerance as they go along. This is to maintain harmony within the family, as Kampuchean parents, especially those of peasant background, are very strict and adhere to Khmer customs. In most families there is a mutual understanding between parents and children that they have been uprooted and are now in a new place with not many support networks, and it is up to them to make the most out of the situation. They, therefore, must cherish each other.

There are, however, parents who complain about their children getting out of hand. Single mothers are especially vulnerable as their single voice of command is not strong enough to capture their children's respect.

In response to the question, "How useful and important to you are the Khmer ways (customs, values and manners)?", the mean score was 2 with "Khmer customs still very useful and important, here in Australia" as a starting point. The adolescents value the customs that their parents brought with them and do not feel alienated from them.
However, I could detect that some adolescents, especially those who were illiterate or semi-literate in Khmer, found it difficult to comprehend their parents' values and customs. This resulted from the lack of communication within the family as adolescents' provision of Khmer language became smaller and smaller to the point where meaningful conversation could not take place. Lack of understanding of the parents' culture usually creates frictions within the family.

6. Australian Way of Life

In response to "How difficult is it for you to understand the Australian way of life?", the score was 7.4, with "very difficult" as a starting point.

While it is not extremely difficult to understand the Australian way of life, Kampuchean adolescents could give clear distinctions between Australian and Kampuchean adolescents of the same sex. They said Kampuchean girls and boys are more shy, more sensitive, more obedient to their parents and less outgoing than Australian girls and boys. They feel that they are more responsible to their parents and families than their Australian counterparts are.

Australian customs in food, music and dress are not hard for Kampuchean adolescents to learn. However, language and behaviour with adolescents of the opposite sex are things to which they find it hard to become accustomed.

When asked who they will marry when they grow up, many shy away and said, "I don't know", or that they haven't thought about it. With some, however, I could detect a sentiment for cultural compatibility in their marriage. There was an impression that they tend to prefer Kampucheans. Marrying a Kampuchean means that "It's easy to talk and understand each other", as "Australian and Kampuchean customs are very different." One could postulate that, for some, after living here for a long time the need to marry a Kampuchean might diminish.
7. Feeling Different from Australians

When asked "How do you compare yourself with Australian people in general?", the responses were reluctant but wide-ranging as they had to consider the different ways of doing things and the differences in appearances. The mean score, however, was 3.7, with "I feel very different from other Australians" as a starting point.

They seem to be very aware of their different physical appearance. Given the ongoing controversial debate about Asian migration at the time, this was not surprising. I have observed that the debate has alienated many Asians, adolescents as well as adults.

8. Are They in Control of Their Lives?

In response to the question "How much can you make your life better (i.e. improve your life) here in Australia?", the answers are generally positive. With "I can do a lot to improve my life here" as a starting point, the mean score was 1.8. This shows that they are generally in control of their life.

However, many cited some discouraging and disappointing moments in the course of their study. Their test or exam results did not reward the effort they put in. Nevertheless, not many have given up.

9. The Feelings of Australian Children Towards Kampuchean Children

From the Kampuchean children's point of view some Australian children like them because, among other things, they are friendly, polite, don't play rough, are sensible and speak their language. Australian children admire and respect Kampuchean children for these qualities.
However, some Australian children don't like them, because: "they think we act stupid", "we have a different appearance", "they are jealous", "we work harder and get better marks", "they are racist" etc.

Many interviewees, however, think that it varies very much from individual to individual.

In response to "How much do Australian children like you as a person?", the score was 4.3, with "Australian children like me very much" as a starting point. This suggests that the question is complex and that the Kampuchean children were ambivalent about it. Very few (five) Kampuchean children were confident that Australian children like them. Again, the message is that they are not totally accepted by the host society and that they are still somewhat strangers.

10. Loneliness

In response to the question "How isolated and lonely do you feel in Australia?", the mean score was 7, with "I feel very lonely and isolated in Australia" as a starting point.

Most of the interviewees are living with their immediate family and for most of them loneliness, in terms of lack of friends or people to talk to, is not a problem. Loneliness, for most of them, is caused by being away from friends and relatives still living in Kampuchea, by not knowing when they will be able to see them again.
CONCLUSION

We have here a sample of adolescents who on the whole, appear to be coping, are quite well adjusted and hopeful about their future, and most of all, feeling in control of their lives. Their families and the "ethnic island" image that some of them have built for themselves are of no small significance in contributing to this generally positive feeling about themselves and their future here in Australia.

I could, however, still detect a feeling of being outsiders, of not having been totally accepted and being somewhat strangers to the outside world. This feeling could fade away or become accentuated depending on whether the adolescents are or are not allowed to contribute meaningfully to this society. Education, work training and language skill are, therefore, necessary steps to prevent these adolescents from feeling alienated from the Australian society. The feeling of loneliness, isolation, nostalgia, racism, hopelessness, on the other hand, will prevent these adolescents from becoming competent adults.
7. CONCLUSION

The Kampuchean social fabric was turned upside down as a result of western colonisation, domination and intervention, followed by a national radical revolution that took place between 1975 and 1979. When Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge were routed in 1979 by the Vietnamese, much of Kampuchea was on the brink of starvation. This was the final trigger. Kampucheans left their country in numbers never seen before in history as their farmlands were bombed out, their families broken down and their homes destroyed. Under a humanitarian banner hundreds of thousands of Kampucheans have resettled in the western countries in the 1980s. Australia accepted its share of international responsibility and has allowed over 13,000 (according to the 1986 census) Kampucheans to build their new life here.

In N.S.W., for example, there are about 6,000 Kampucheans. Their settlement, if evaluated in terms of employment, has been rather unsuccessful. Their unemployment rate of 35.71% (according to the 1986 census) is one of the highest among all the ethnic groups in N.S.W. This is due to the fact that many of them are uneducated and came from a peasant background which is not conducive to successful resettlement in the Australian industrial society.

Over a quarter of the Kampuchean population in Australia are adolescents, aged between 15 and 24. They are first generation, young, new Australians on whom their parents and community look as vehicles of social mobility. My study has found, however, that it is not going to be easy. Only a select group has managed to succeed educationally. Among other things their success depends on their educational background, motivation, family support and expectations.
It must be noted, however, that the general lack of achievement in education of Kampuchean adolescents is not unique. The phenomenon is in fact quite widespread among non-English speaking young immigrants. Kampuchean adolescents, however, possess a unique history in their home land prior to their departure. The traumatic experiences they went through before they left Kampuchea, especially during the Pol Pot time, accentuates this problem.

My survey found that among the 30 adolescents who arrived in Australia when they were between ten and twenty-one years old, only ten are now literate in Khmer. The other twenty are illiterate or semi-literate in their mother-tongue. This must have great implications for their educational achievement or lack of it in Australia.

The education of all Kampuchean adolescents was disrupted for at least four years (the Pol Pot period), and my interviewees' experiences were no exception. The abolition of schooling between 1975 and 1979 meant that some adolescents did not even have the opportunity to begin an education in Kampuchea. This disruption of schooling has resulted in some adolescents being illiterate or semi-literate in Khmer when they arrived in Australia. It has also resulted in adolescents having low-level conceptual development as they have missed out on many basic concepts that children normally acquire at primary and junior level secondary schooling. This means that Kampuchean adolescents have a lot of catching up work to do. Sometimes, it prevents or delays them from acquiring further, deeper concepts.

Illiteracy in Khmer also seems to slow down their acquisition of English. Out of the twenty interviewees who are illiterate or semi-literate in Khmer only two or three are said to be doing quite well at school. The rest are struggling along, citing English together with other subjects as their main problem at school. Among the ten interviewees who are literate in Khmer, three are attending university courses, one has finished a university course while the other six are also struggling at secondary level.
It seems that among those who are illiterate or semi-literate in Khmer, there is a better chance of success for those who arrived in Australia at a younger age, i.e. around ten years old or less, than for those who arrived older.

While it is possible for those who are literate in Khmer to excel in their education in a short time (interviewees 1, 3, 6 and 13) there is virtually no such possibility for those who are illiterate or semi-literate in Khmer. Among the later group only those who arrived in Australia at a young age have the time to start and catch up with the new concepts, and therefore reach senior secondary level with confidence (interviewees 2, 8 and 14).

The adolescents' inability to master the English language while at high school or during secondary education has had profound effects. The low language ceiling and the limited vocabulary they possess means that they had limited ability to put into words the various concepts. This inability to communicate at more than a basic level limited their thinking process and hindered their social and educational development. Very few adolescents managed to break that language ceiling and excel while at school. It seems that those who were literate in Khmer and had received a substantial education in Khmer were able to do that more often than those who were illiterate in Khmer and did not receive much education in Khmer before their arrival in Australia.

My study has also found that in N.S.W. there has been no systematic program to maintain adolescents' knowledge of Khmer. As a result, even though only three of the interviewees missed out altogether on their education in Kampuchea and Thailand, at the time of interview I found that seven of them were illiterate. This regression means that the adolescents' ability to communicate in Khmer had diminished. I observed that some of my sample and other adolescents in the Kampuchean community had difficulties in communicating with their parents. In some families, except for the everyday household exchanges, there was hardly any indepth conversation as there is no language provision for such discussion. As the range of home language became smaller and smaller, parents
were unable to pass on their values and cultural heritage. Lack of proficiency in Khmer, therefore, means that the adolescents can not understand their parents' culture. They find themselves trapped between the two cultures as their lack of English makes access to Australian culture difficult. This means that they are unable to identify with any cultural group. This difficulty is usually unperceived by the parents but it results in a serious lack of understanding which frequently creates friction or tensions in the family.

These adolescents are unable to identify even with their parents whom they perceive as belonging to another culture while they themselves are pulled towards the mainstream Australian culture.

Without systematic reinforcement to maintain these adolescents' knowledge of Khmer language and culture they will never be able to confidently accept a new culture. Lack of confidence and self-identification leads to insecurity and inability to cope socially. I observed the tensions and signs of the beginning of these social problems.

Given the importance of literacy in Khmer for general education and acculturation it is to be hoped that more can be done to maintain and improve their literacy in Khmer and reinforce their cultural heritage. Perhaps it would not be inappropriate to give Kampuchean adolescents a few years of general education in Khmer as this would expand their linguistic ability and build up their confidence. A surer knowledge of their own language and culture would improve their educational prospects generally.

As far as employment for these adolescents is concerned, there is ground for concern. Most of the school age adolescents are still studying but they will be soon joining the workforce. Having followed their trail of education, I think that only a few will be able to successfully begin and complete tertiary or higher education, while the majority will leave school armed with very few skills because of their inability to master the English language.
While many have not found it difficult to find an unskilled job, provided that they have built up the right contacts, it is going to be very difficult for them to move away from such jobs if opportunities for work training are not easy to come by. This means that the forthcoming Kampuchean generation will not be able to contribute to Australia to their full potential. This will also be a great disappointment to their parents.

My research found that adolescents who arrived here recently have more difficulty in finding jobs than those who have been here for several years. This is because the latter group had built up contact and spoke more English as a result of having been here longer.

Skills seem to be the stumbling block for employment. It is hoped that more work training type courses will become available for those who intend to join the workforce whether they have been here for a long time or not.

Because of the nature and reasons for their migration, I have come upon many cases of lone adolescents -- adolescents who have no close relatives, no guardians in Australia to look after them. These lone adolescents have had to battle through life on their own without much financial or emotional support. Their future depended very much on their individual determination. It is hoped that more can be done to provide them with some sort of support system that they can turn to when in need.

My research has found that many Kampuchean adolescents still have bad memories of the war, still worry about being separated from their families and friends, and still feel homesick. Despite all this, however, the adolescents appear to be coping, quite well adjusted, hopeful about their future and feel in control of their lives. During my research I did not encounter any adolescent with serious social problems. There are, of course, some adolescents who dress or behave in a way considered socially unsuitable in the eyes of Kampuchean elders. However, there has been very little serious delinquent behaviour and very few adolescents who roam the street aimlessly.
Their settlement on a whole has been a success even though not many excel with their education or win high places. It seems that the Kampuchean community will have to wait for a while, i.e. for those who arrived here at a young age (ten years old or younger), to witness the social mobility of their members. Even then, having come from a working-class background, their achievement will be limited as the competition will be very fierce indeed for them.

At present there are about 250,000 Kampuchean refugees living along the Thai-Kampuchean border. Most of them are under the control of the three political factions which oppose the Vietnamese-backed Heng Samrin government in Phnom Penh. These refugees have been living in camps for many years, some as long as ten years or more. They live on handouts of international agencies behind barbedwire and are banned from earning a living in Thailand. When I visited one of these camps in 1987, I met many children; the young ones were born and brought up in the camp. They have been living in such an abnormal environment that many of them don't even know what a banana or a mango tree looks like.

Many of these refugees are seeking a new home. Given the reasonable success of their settlement, Australia should help and can help to take them away from the plight they are in now. Help should be given soon as the longer they stay in the camps the more difficult it will be for them to resettle in Australia. The sooner those children and adolescents receive proper education and are allowed to live a normal life, the better.

Another way Australia can help the refugees is to be actively involved in seeking a political solution for Kampuchea, along the lines that former Foreign Minister, Bill Hayden, and his counterpart from Indonesia have initiated in the last few years. During my visit to the camp, dozens of refugees told me of their preference to return to their villages in Kampuchea, to be reunited with their friends and relatives. This can only happen when a political solution is found.
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Appendix 1

Questionnaire for Kampuchean Adolescents

1. Name:  
   (Address and Phone Number):

2. Age:  
   Real
   Unreal

3. Sex:

4. Current Occupation:

5. Number and composition of persons in the household:

6. Parent(s) or guardian occupation now:

7. Composition and total income of the household:

8. Type of housing, number of rooms, number of people:

9. Religious practice:

Personal History:

10. Place and date of birth:

11. Parents' occupation in Kampuchea:

12. Years of Education outside Australia:

13. Years of learning English outside Australia:

14. Number of years spent in refugee camp:

15. Number of immediate family died or killed during the wars and Pol Pot time:

16. Describe your life under Pol Pot:

In Australia:

17. Date of arrival in Australia:

18. Time spent in language centre or other English teaching institution:

19. How useful was the course?

20. Would you like to have spent more or less time there?
21. Describe what you benefit most from language centre:

22. When did you start school in Australia?

23. What was your first school in Australia? At what level?

24. What level are you in now?

Schooling: For those at school and not at school

25. Do/did you like school?

26. What are/were your main problems at school? (teachers, students, racial attitude, subject matter)?

27. What are/were the most difficult subjects?

28. When you have/had problems with school work who do you refer it to? (relatives, friends, teachers)?

29. Is/was it easy to approach teachers to help you with school work or to consult about future vocation or work training?

30. Are/were you given any special attention (extra tuition,...) at school?

31. Are/were you ever been elected or given a representative role at school?

32. What ethnic background were/are most of your friends at school?

33. Do you have any comments about Australian schools?

34. What about your parents -- what do they say about Australian schools?

35. Did you have long breaks or frequent absences from school, or change school a lot? What were these due to?

36. How do you think you will benefit from the things you have learnt at school?

37. During the past few years, what did each of the following people want you to do about continuing to study (at school or in a tertiary institution) or going to work?

   (a) mother
   (b) father
   (c) teachers
   (d) yourself

38. Have most of your friends continued with school (and further study) or left?

39. Are you looking for work?

40. What sort of work are you looking for?

41. How would you go about finding a job? Who would you refer to? (relatives, CES, Kampuchean Association, youth employment schemes, newspaper,...)
42. What are you known as to the people at school and outside school? (Vietnamese, Asian, Kampuchean)?

43. How do you feel about that?

44. Is there anybody in the Kampuchean community that you can consult or help you about future vocation, employment or school work?

45. Do/did you ever have any money problem in meeting school requirements? (excursion, books, sport equipment, .....

For those at school
46. How long do you intend to stay at school?

47. What type of tertiary institution (and course) do you intend to go to when you finish school?

48. Are you working part-time? Is this for money or vocation or as a helper?

For those not at school
49. When you left school what level did you reach?

50. Why did you leave school?

   employment
   financial problem
   family problem
   didn't like school
   see no future value in schooling
   to get married

51. Since leaving school have you done any post-school training (EPUY or TAFE courses, or English classes)?

52. Is there any (other) courses or training that you would like to do?

53. Did you ever work part-time while you were at school? Was this for money or vocation or as a helper?

54. Have you (and for how long) been on unemployment benefit?

55. How many jobs have you had since you left school?

Those employed
56. How did you find this job?

57. How long did it take you to find this job?

58. Do you like this job?
59. What is your future prospect with this job?
60. Are you looking for a better job with other organisations?

Language

61. How long did you study Khmer outside Australia?
62. How well do you speak, read and write Khmer?
63. Have you studied Khmer in Australia? Who conduct the classes?
64. How often are the classes?
65. Would you like to be able to go to Khmer classes more often?
66. Do the Kampuchean teachers at the Khmer classes help you with your school work?
67. What language do you speak at home?
68. Do you belong to any Kampuchean organisations (youth, ...)?
69. Do/did you speak Khmer in the classroom or the playground to other Kampuchean friends? Why?
70. How often do you read or write Khmer?
71. Can you easily get hold of Khmer books?
72. Would you like to read or write more Khmer?
Appendix 2

Acculturation Scale

(1) Speaking English and making yourself understood
A very big problem ________________________________ at all
No problem

(2) Understanding what Australians are saying to you
A very big problem ________________________________ at all
No problem

(3) Having enough money
A very big problem ________________________________ at all
No problem

(4) Learning skills that will help you find a job
A very big problem ________________________________ at all
No problem

(5) Getting medical care
A very big problem ________________________________ at all
No problem

(6) Finding help from Australian people for things like welfare, other financial assistance, ....
A very big problem ________________________________ at all
No problem

(7) Understanding Australian lifestyle (culture)
A very big problem ________________________________ at all
No problem

(8) Knowing how to get things done in Sydney (e.g. finding a house, shopping, banking, post office ....)
A very big problem ________________________________ at all
No problem

(9) Getting around town (probe: too far away, no car, no buses, no direction)
A very big problem ________________________________ at all
No problem

(10) Climate
A very big problem ________________________________ at all
No problem

(11) Food/diet: getting the right Khmer food (e.g. don't like Australian food)
A very big problem ________________________________ at all
No problem

(12) Having other Kampuchean people to talk with (is it hard to find them?)
A very big problem ________________________________ at all
No problem
(13) Having someone to talk with about personal problem
A very big problem __________________________ at all
(14) Talking with boys/girls (specify opposite sex of child)
A very big problem __________________________ at all
(15) School (probe: trouble with school work, teacher)
A very big problem __________________________ at all
(16) Life in your neighbourhood (probe: trouble with landlords, neighbours and room mates, privacy at home)
A very big problem __________________________ at all
(17) Getting along with other refugee groups (Vietnamese, Lao, Lebanese, Turkish ...)
A very big problem __________________________ at all
(18) Australian racial prejudice and discrimination against Kampuchean. Example:
A very big problem __________________________ at all
(19) Getting along with people in your family
A very big problem __________________________ at all
(20) Doing Khmer religious ceremonies (upset because no longer able to do them)
A very big problem __________________________ at all
(21) Keeping in touch (letters) with relatives and friends you left behind (in Thailand or Kampuchea)
A very big problem __________________________ at all
(22) Worrying about family members and friends you left behind (in Thailand or Kampuchea)
A very big problem __________________________ at all
(23) Thinking a lot about your homeland (homesickness)
A very big problem __________________________ at all
(24) Separation from family members (worrying)
A very big problem __________________________ at all
(25) Loneliness
A very big problem __________________________ at all
(26) Bad memories of war in Kampuchea (probe: both war and departure)
A very big problem ___________________________ at all

(27) Feelings about leaving Kampuchea (sadness, regret)
A very big problem ___________________________ at all
Appendix 3
Alienation Scale

(1) Most children can feel uncomfortable, awkward and out of place when they are in a new country.

How awkward, uncomfortable, and out of place do you feel, living in Australia?

I feel very out of place I do not feel out of place at all

(2) It can be hard to make friends in a new place. What kind of friend do you have?

How did you get to know them?

How much difficulty do you have in making Australian friends?

Very difficult Not difficult at all

(3) All people who come to settle in a new country worry about what will happen. What do you feel are the good things that will happen to you, in the future, here in Australia (education, work, Australian way of life ....)

What kind of worry do you have about your future in Australia?

Sometimes, Kampuchean people feel that they want to go back to their country. Do you ever feel like this? Why do you feel this way?

How do you feel about your future in Australia?

I feel very hopeful about the future I do not feel hopeful about the future at all

(4) Kampuchean children can feel that they will be able to make valuable contribution, in the future, to Australian society. In what way could you make a valuable contribution?

How much of a contribution do you think you'll make, in the future, to Australian society?

I will contribute a lot to Aust. society I will not contribute much at all to Aust. society
When people come to live in a new country they bring their customs (culture) with them. For example, the languages they speak, the food they eat, the music they like. Which of these things are important for you (i.e. as Kampuchean)?

Kampuchean children also learn how to do (other) things the Australian way -- like shaking, or eating Australian food. Do you ever want to do things the Australian way at home? (probe: which things in particular?)

What do your parents think when you do things the Australian way at home? (probe: are they encouraging, tolerant, or disapproving? Does the child need to take their opinions into account? Does he try to please them? Is he afraid of their reaction?)

How useful and important to you are the Khmer ways (customs, values and manners)

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<tr>
<th>Khmer customs</th>
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<tr>
<td>still very</td>
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<td>useful and</td>
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<td>important, here</td>
<td>here in</td>
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<td>in Australia</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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When Kampuchean children come to Australia, they learn (about) Australian customs (i.e. culture and way of life)

What kind of Australian customs are important for Kampuchean children to learn? (prompt with example, if necessary, language, food, music, dress, behaviour with opposite sex children).

Some Australian customs are easier for Kampuchean children to learn. Others are harder. Which Australian customs are easier to learn? (probe: why, and in what ways, are these Australian customs easier to learn).

Which Australian customs are harder to learn?

It is not the same to be a boy, or a girl, in Australia as (it was) in Kampuchea.

How are Australian and Kampuchean boys different? (probe: How is it difficult to be a Kampuchean boy in Australia?)

How are Australian and Kampuchean girls different? (probe: How is it difficult to be a Kampuchean girl in Australia?)

Children of your age sometimes wonder what kind of person they will marry when they are grown up. Do you think you might marry a Kampuchean person? Or do you think you might marry an Australian? (probe: What difference would it make to you?)

How difficult is it for you to understand the Australian way of life?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very difficult to understand Aust. way of life</th>
<th></th>
<th>Not difficult at all to understand Aust. way of life</th>
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</table>
(7) All people are a bit different from one another. Sometimes it is because we do things differently, other times it’s because we look different from others. How do you compare yourself with Australian people in general?

| I feel very different from other Australians | I don’t feel different at all from other Australians |

(8) All children who come to Australia want to have a good life here. Sometimes we try really hard to make our life better, and it can be very helpful. But sometimes it makes no difference what we do - life just doesn’t seem to get better. How has it felt for you? (probe: How effective are child’s effort? Does he feel discouraged, and in what ways? How does he deal with these feelings? Who does he talk to?)

How much can you make your life better (i.e. improve your life), here in Australia?

| I can do a lot to improve my life here | I can do nothing to improve my life here |

(9) We all like some children more than we like others. Sometimes, children like us because we look the same as they do. Sometimes, they like us because we speak the same language as they do. Or sometimes, they may even like us because we are a bit different from them. What things do Australian children like about Kampuchean children?

What things don't Australian children like about Kampuchean children?

How much do Australian children like you as a person?

| Australian children like me very much | Australian children don’t like me at all |

(10) Children who come to a new country sometimes feel lonely. Sometimes, children feel lonely because it can be hard to make new friends. Other times, children feel lonely because they think about their family. What sort of things make you feel lonely?

What do you do when you feel lonely? (probe: Who can you talk to? How much does it help?)

It can be very difficult when children feel lonely. How does it feel when you feel lonely? (probe: Does child feel suicidal, want to run away from home, or even want to go back to Kampuchea?)

How isolated and lonely do you feel in Australia?

| I feel very lonely and isolated in Australia | I don’t feel lonely or isolated at all in Australia |