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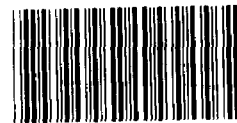
# General Accounting Office

## Greater Emphasis On Early Employment And Better Monitoring Needed In Indochinese Refugee Resettlement Program

Although the Refugee Act of 1980 establishes the goal of quick self-sufficiency for refugees, its achievement has been impeded by problems in the Indochinese refugee resettlement program including

- continued placement of most refugees in a few areas of the United States;
- lack of employment assistance given to refugees soon after their arrival, coupled with the large number receiving public assistance;
- limited monitoring by voluntary agencies to assure that refugees receive services needed to help them become self-sufficient; and
- fragmented Federal management of the resettlement program and poor program direction and oversight.

Much corrective action has been taken through recent reauthorizing legislation and administrative action. GAO is making additional recommendations to the Secretaries of the Departments of Health and Human Services and State that would (1) place program emphasis on quick employment for refugees and (2) improve direction and oversight of the refugee program by key offices involved in resettlement activities.



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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

HUMAN RESOURCES  
DIVISION

B-179183


The Honorable Romano L. Mazzoli  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Immigration,  
Refugees and International Law  
Committee on the Judiciary  
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This report is submitted in accordance with your request that we review Federal and State refugee assistance programs authorized under the Refugee Act of 1980. The report contains recommendations to the Secretaries of the Departments of State and Health and Human Services for improving program management.

Copies of the report are being sent to the Secretaries of Health and Human Services, State, and Labor; the U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs; the Director, Office of Management and Budget; appropriate congressional committees; and other interested parties.

Sincerely yours,

  
Philip A. Bernstein  
Director



GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE  
REPORT TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE  
ON IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES  
AND INTERNATIONAL LAW,  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

GREATER EMPHASIS ON EARLY  
EMPLOYMENT AND BETTER MONI-  
TORING NEEDED IN INDOCHINESE  
REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

D I G E S T

At the request of the Chairman, Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and International Law, House Committee on the Judiciary, GAO reviewed Indochinese refugee resettlement programs authorized by the Refugee Act of 1980, concentrating on the initial resettlement services provided by voluntary agencies under the State Department's auspices and social services funded by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). (See pp. 1 and 3 to 6.)

Many interrelated and complex problems have adversely affected Indochinese refugees reaching the act's goal of self-sufficiency as quickly as possible. Foremost among these problems has been the continued placement of most refugees in a few locations in the United States and the lack of employment assistance given to newly arrived refugees, the majority of whom go on public assistance. Other serious problems have been the limited monitoring by voluntary agencies to assure that refugees have received needed services and the fragmented Federal management of the resettlement program.

The results of GAO's review were presented during House and Senate hearings on reauthorizing refugee assistance funding. Many of the problems identified were addressed in the Refugee Assistance Amendments of 1982 (Public Law 97-363), enacted in October 1982. Additionally, corrective actions have been taken by HHS and the State Department.

PLACEMENT OF MOST REFUGEES IN FEW  
LOCATIONS HAS CREATED PROBLEMS

The emphasis on reunifying refugees with relatives and friends has resulted in most refugees being resettled in a limited number of areas and has raised many concerns by State and local

governments about the availability of jobs, housing, and community support services. (See pp. 7 to 13.)

Moreover, this concentration has made it more difficult to obtain traditional American sponsors and has resulted in voluntary agencies' increased reliance on former refugees to help sponsor new arrivals, often with little assessment of the former refugees' capacity to be sponsors. (See pp. 9 to 13.)

In July 1982, HHS' Office of Refugee Resettlement finalized a refugee placement policy calling for closer scrutiny of placement decisions before placing distant relatives in impacted areas. The Refugee Assistance Amendments of 1982 also restricted, absent unusual circumstances, the placement of distant relatives in high impact areas. The amendments also require regular meetings between voluntary agencies and State and local governments to coordinate the placement of refugees. (See pp. 14 and 15.)

#### HIGH WELFARE DEPENDENCY AMONG REFUGEES

Welfare dependency for Indochinese refugees has been high and has occurred almost immediately upon arrival. Of the employable age refugees in this country 4 to 6 months, which were included in GAO's five-county sample, 71 percent had been or were receiving cash assistance. Of those, 88 percent registered for this assistance within 30 days of arrival. The high dependency occurred despite the view commonly shared by voluntary resettlement agencies that public assistance should be used only as a last resort. (See pp. 17 to 20.)

Various reasons were given for high public assistance rates for Indochinese refugees. However, high rates are apt to continue unless refugees are resettled in areas conducive to their attaining quick self-sufficiency and more emphasis is placed on early employment. (See pp. 20 and 21.)

#### INSUFFICIENT EMPLOYMENT EMPHASIS

The Refugee Act, the State Department's Refugee Bureau, and the Office of Refugee Resettlement had provided only limited guidance on ways to

achieve self-sufficiency as quickly as possible. The Refugee Act, while emphasizing quick self-sufficiency, had also exempted refugees from work registration requirements for the first 60 days after they arrived in the United States. This provision was deleted through amendments passed in October 1982 which strengthened the emphasis on early employment for refugees. (See p. 22.)

The Refugee Bureau's funding agreements with voluntary agencies have required that the agencies assure that job counseling and job placement be provided, but those agreements have been vague as to who must provide those services. Voluntary agencies and other service providers funded to help refugees become resettled and self-sufficient placed limited emphasis on quick employment, often neither providing employment services nor assuring they were provided. Only 14 percent of the employable age refugees sampled in GAO's five-county review were known by voluntary agencies' staff to have been employed any time during their first several months in the United States. (See pp. 23 to 28.)

Office of Refugee Resettlement guidelines have required work registration, but a greater emphasis on job development and placement services was needed if refugees were to attain quick self-sufficiency. Service providers have often given greater priority to English language and other training than to employment or to employment concurrent with training. This occurred although English-speaking ability did not appear to be an insurmountable barrier to employment. Voluntary agencies' staff described 40 percent of those refugees known to have been employed as having little or no English ability when first employed. GAO believes that employment concurrent with English and/or other training should be emphasized. (See pp. 23, 25 to 28, and 33.)

The Refugee Assistance Amendments of 1982 make clear that employable age refugees should be placed in jobs as soon as possible after their arrival in the United States. Committee reports resulting from congressional hearings on those amendments make clear the committees'

views that the lack of English language ability is not a basis for postponing employment. (See p. 22.)

Voluntary agencies often did not have extended contact with refugees whom they sponsored, and refugees were often not adequately referred to service providers. A system to monitor and track refugee progress toward self-sufficiency was lacking to ensure that refugees receive needed services. Congressional committees, in considering the Refugee Assistance Amendments of 1982, stressed that voluntary agencies should monitor the self-sufficiency efforts of their clientele as closely as possible. (See pp. 30 to 33.)

#### FRAGMENTED PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Three offices at the Federal level have key but overlapping responsibilities for domestic refugee resettlement; none has clear responsibility and authority for the program. For example, both the U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs and HHS' Office of Refugee Resettlement are charged by law with consulting with State and local governments and voluntary agencies concerning the sponsorship process and placement of refugees. Yet, it is the State Department's Refugee Bureau that has administered voluntary agencies' funding for initial reception and placement activities. (See pp. 35 to 37.)

Program direction and monitoring by the Refugee Bureau, Office of Refugee Resettlement, and State Coordinators need improvement. (See pp. 37 to 40.)

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

GAO is making recommendations to the Secretaries of the State Department and HHS regarding the need to (1) clarify voluntary agencies' responsibilities, (2) place greater emphasis on employment services and monitor refugees' progress toward self-sufficiency, and (3) increase program direction and oversight. (See pp. 33, 34, and 40.)



COMMENTS ON THE REPORT

Four Federal agencies, five State Refugee Coordinators, and 11 voluntary agencies were asked to comment on this report. (See ch. 6 and apps. V through XXIII.)

Those commenting addressed GAO's review methodology and findings on family reunification, refugee services, and administration of the refugee program at the Federal level. The two key Federal agencies responsible for ongoing program management, HHS and the State Department, generally agreed with GAO's recommendations to them for program improvements and greater employment emphasis.

None of the comments received, in GAO's view, provided a sufficient basis for altering conclusions and recommendations. Further, in some areas where those commenting disagreed with GAO, the Congress has acted to strengthen the program in accordance with GAO's recommendations.



## C o n t e n t s

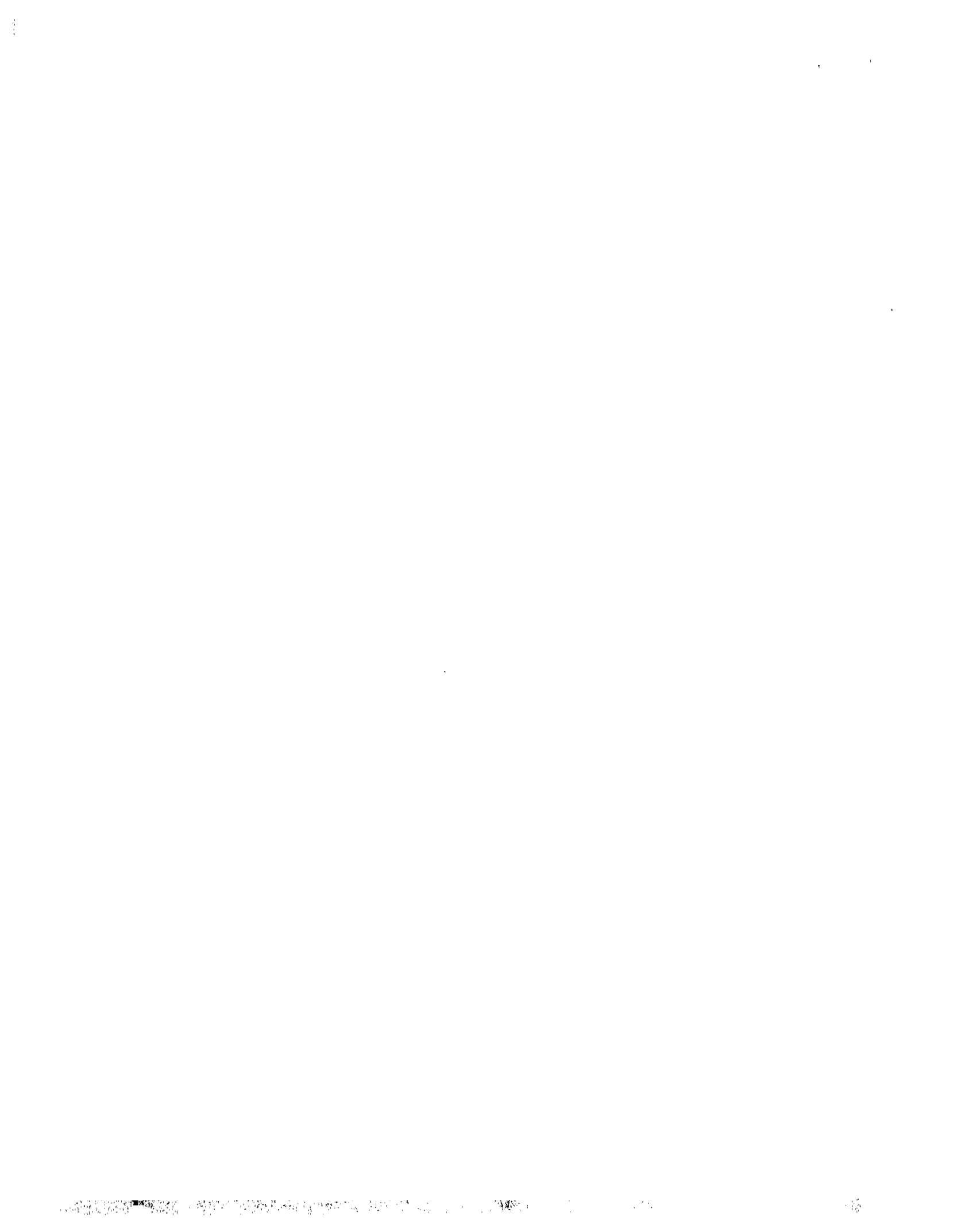
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#### ABBREVIATIONS

ACVA	American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Services, Inc.
ESL	English as a second language
GAO	General Accounting Office
HHS	Department of Health and Human Services
ORR	Office of Refugee Resettlement



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

On February 26, 1981, the Chairman, Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and International Law, House Committee on the Judiciary, requested that we review refugee resettlement programs authorized under the Refugee Act of 1980 (Public Law 96-212, 94 Stat. 102). As agreed with the Chairman's office, our review was limited to Indochinese refugee programs.

### OVERVIEW OF REFUGEE ASSISTANCE

The United States has a longstanding tradition of providing a haven for persons fleeing persecution in other countries. The first immigration programs specifically admitting immigrants under the category of refugees were established during World War II. Since then the numbers of refugees resettled and the dollars spent on various types of refugee assistance have increased dramatically.

Indochinese refugees resettled in the United States between 1975 and November 30, 1981, totaled 560,333, reaching a peak of 14,000 per month and totaling 167,900 in fiscal year 1980. In fiscal year 1981 the number dropped to 131,139, and for fiscal year 1982, the number of Indochinese refugee admissions was about 73,500.

During the early years of refugee programs, nonprofit voluntary agencies assumed the primary responsibility for resettling refugees in the United States, usually by using their own resources. In recent years, particularly since the Cuban refugee movement in the 1960s, these agencies have been receiving Federal assistance to aid in their work. Additionally, Federal agencies provide funding for refugee resettlement activities through grants to the States. However, State and local governments have voiced their view that Federal funds do not adequately reimburse them for costs they incur.

A report submitted to the Congress by the Office of the U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs estimated that Federal and non-Federal refugee assistance program costs were in excess of \$2.1 billion for fiscal year 1981.

In the past, assistance was provided to different refugee groups under an assortment of legislative programs. These programs were characterized by resettlement agencies; service providers; and others as ad hoc, piecemeal, or stop-gap in nature and as having much uncertainty regarding continued program funding. Administration was spread over a number of agencies and

offices, and a comprehensive, coordinated approach for providing aid to refugees resettling in the United States was generally agreed to be lacking. Many of the organizational and management problems involving refugee programs were identified in congressional hearings, by GAO and others, particularly in the late 1970s.

Two reports issued by GAO in the past several years describe problems in resettling refugees. In "Domestic Resettlement of Indochinese Refugees--Struggle for Self-Reliance" (HRD-77-35, May 10, 1977), we noted refugees' increasing dependence on public assistance and other problems relating to refugees' progress toward self-sufficiency. We also identified weaknesses in resettlement contracts between the State Department and voluntary agencies.

In "The Indochinese Exodus: A Humanitarian Dilemma" (ID-79-20, Apr. 24, 1979), we pointed out that domestic problems in resettling refugees persisted. For example, social service and job training programs were found to be inadequate and voluntary agencies were not monitoring refugees' progress toward self-sufficiency. We concluded that the lack of a consistent refugee policy had made it difficult for voluntary agencies and service providers to plan for and establish programs for the effective resettlement of refugees.

Against this backdrop, the Congress enacted the Refugee Act of 1980 on March 17, 1980, to provide a permanent and systematic procedure to admit refugees of special humanitarian concern to the United States and to provide comprehensive and uniform provisions to effectively resettle the refugees and help them become self-sufficient as quickly as possible. The Refugee Act specified key positions at the Federal and State levels to carry out these objectives.

The position of the U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs, previously established by an Executive order, was given a legislative mandate. The Coordinator is appointed by the President and, among other duties, is responsible for (1) developing overall refugee admission and resettlement policy and (2) coordinating all domestic and international refugee programs.

The Refugee Act mentions the role of the State Department, but does not specify the organizational entity within the Department responsible for refugee program operations. Currently, the responsibility is held by the Bureau for Refugee Programs (hereafter referred to as Refugee Bureau), which was created in 1979 as the Office of Refugee Programs to consolidate many of the Government's domestic and international refugee assistance programs. Among other responsibilities, the Refugee Bureau



administers funding agreements with voluntary agencies for providing initial reception and placement services to refugees. Under these agreements, voluntary agencies have received per capita funding for resettling Indochinese refugees. In fiscal year 1975 the rate was \$500 per refugee and is currently \$525 per refugee. The Refugee Bureau's cost for resettling 131,139 Indochinese refugees was about \$68,848,000 for fiscal year 1981.

The Refugee Act also assigned the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) responsibility for administering (1) domestic refugee resettlement and (2) assistance programs, such as social services, employment services, health and mental health services, and cash and medical assistance. These programs had been administered by the Office of Refugee Affairs within the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HHS' predecessor agency) just before passage of the Refugee Act and earlier by a special programs staff within HHS' Office of Family Assistance. Most of the assistance is provided by the States while the remainder goes directly to other public or private agencies. In fiscal year 1981, payments to the States for cash and medical assistance were about \$488,724,000, and about \$82,469,000 was spent on social services. In fiscal year 1982, ORR expected to provide the States about \$467,338,000 for cash and medical assistance and \$67,571,000 for social services.

As a condition for receiving assistance from ORR for domestic resettlement services, the Refugee Act requires each State to designate a person responsible for coordinating public and private resources used for refugee resettlement.

#### OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Our review of the Indochinese refugee assistance programs was directed toward determining

- whether voluntary agencies provided initial resettlement services to refugees as required under their State Department funding agreements,
- whether social service providers funded by HHS provided employment-related social services to refugees to help them become self-sufficient,
- whether State employment offices provided job assistance to refugees,
- the extent to which newly arriving refugees were dependent upon public assistance,

--the roles of the public and private sector regarding the refugee sponsorship process and initial placement decisions and strategies for reducing the impact on communities with large numbers of refugees, and

--overall management practices of the refugee program at the Federal and State levels.

These objectives were developed on the basis of the Chairman's request, as further defined in subsequent discussions. The Chairman also asked that we review medical screening and followup provided to refugees to ensure that medical conditions were identified and treated. This issue was covered in a separate GAO report entitled "Improved Overseas Medical Examinations and Treatment Can Reduce Serious Diseases in Indochinese Refugees Entering the United States" (GAO/HRD-82-65, Aug. 5, 1982).

Our basic approach in accomplishing the first four objectives was to use a data collection instrument in conjunction with interviews to obtain resettlement information covering a statistically valid sample of 306 refugee cases settled in five counties during April and June 1981. Those cases represented the placement of 1,011 individual refugees, of which 594 were of employable age (between 16 and 64 years of age).

The sample was stratified to be representative of cases resettled by voluntary agencies in those five counties during the 2 months. Consequently, the sample included cases from all voluntary agencies resettling refugees at that time except for one agency, the Buddhist Council, which resettled few cases during fiscal year 1981 in the areas we reviewed. All figures quoted from sample data pertain only to the sample reviewed and have not been projected to a larger universe. See appendixes I and II for a summary of the number of cases by county and voluntary agency and other information regarding our sample.

Our review was not designed to be a longitudinal study of refugees nor did we expect all refugees sampled to be self-sufficient at the time of our review. Rather, our review was designed to provide information on what services were provided to refugees during their first months in the United States and what emphasis, if any, was being given to quick employment and self-sufficiency, a major objective of the Refugee Act.

As requested by the Subcommittee, we selected areas impacted by high numbers of refugees. Additionally, we chose areas from among the 10 States which had received about 70 percent of the Indochinese refugee placements. (See app. III.) We also included States with both high and low cash assistance payments.

Information was obtained by reviewing case files and other documentation at voluntary agency affiliates, public assistance offices, HHS-funded service providers, and State employment offices. Because of limited case file records, we relied heavily upon interviews and voluntary agency caseworkers' recollections for information concerning what services were or were not being provided or the current employment status of the refugees. The data collection instruments were pretested for relevancy, comprehensiveness, and accuracy. Modifications were based on the pretest results. Additionally, to complement the information obtained regarding specific refugees sampled and to obtain a broader perspective on refugee resettlement practices, we obtained general information from the aforementioned offices on their operations, policies, procedures, and philosophies of refugee resettlement.

To understand the mechanics of the sponsorship process and initial placement decisions, we obtained information from officials of the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Services, Inc. (ACVA) and voluntary agencies' national offices, and we attended an allocation meeting where refugee cases were being distributed to participating voluntary agencies.

Since family reunification was being given priority in determining where refugees would be settled, we determined the extent of and types of family relationships between refugees and individuals in the United States by examining biographical information of a statistically valid random sample of 227 out of 45,100 cases assured for sponsorship during fiscal year 1981. Our sample was designed to be projectable to the total number of cases for which sponsorship was assured during fiscal year 1981 at the 95-percent confidence level with a maximum sampling error of 6.5 percent.

In addition, to add broader perspective to the information gathered concerning our sample refugee cases, we interviewed State Coordinators and voluntary agency affiliates operating in the five States/counties included in our review. We also obtained information from officials at ORR, the State Department's Refugee Bureau, and the Office of the U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs to determine their roles in the placement process and to identify current strategies for alleviating burdens on communities impacted by high numbers of refugees.

To assess the overall management of the refugee program, we reviewed and analyzed the roles and responsibilities of the offices mandated by the Refugee Act to determine direction and oversight being given to programs authorized by the act. We

performed audit work at ORR's headquarters and at regional offices having oversight responsibility for the five States reviewed, the Office of the U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs, the Refugee Bureau, and the State Coordinators in the five States included in our review.

Our review was made in accordance with generally accepted government audit standards.

## CHAPTER 2

### PLACEMENT OF MOST REFUGEES IN FEW

#### LOCATIONS HAS CREATED PROBLEMS

The process by which refugees are sponsored and resettled in the United States has emphasized reunification of refugees with relatives and friends. As a result, most refugees have been resettled in a limited number of areas. Also, a decline in traditional sponsorships has led voluntary agencies to rely increasingly on former refugees to help resettle new arrivals, often without adequately assessing the former refugees' economic status.

State and local officials have expressed concerns about the strain on local resources, such as employment, housing, and community support services associated with continued placements of large numbers of refugees in certain areas. Some recent actions have been taken to address these problems. A refugee placement policy has been adopted that recognizes the importance of reuniting close relatives, but, absent unusual circumstances, calls for limiting placement of distant relatives and friends in areas affected by high numbers of refugees. The recently enacted Refugee Assistance Amendments of 1982<sup>1</sup> includes this restriction. However, a strong working relationship between Federal, State, and local governments and the voluntary agencies is needed if the placement process is to be improved.

#### PLACEMENT DECISIONS HAVE BEEN HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY REUNIFICATION EMPHASIS

Emphasis on reuniting refugees, not only with close relatives, but also with distant relatives and friends, has resulted in 70 percent of all Indochinese refugees residing in 10 States. The following overview of the allocation process illustrates this reunification emphasis.

The process begins overseas in refugee camps where voluntary agency representatives prepare biographical data sheets for all refugees who have been ruled admissible by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The bio-data includes demographic information on the refugees who are designated as the principal applicants and accompanying family members, names and addresses of the principal applicant's family members and friends living in the United States, and his or her preferred resettlement location, if any.

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<sup>1</sup>Public Law 97-363, enacted October 25, 1982.

The bio-data sheets are sent to ACVA in New York, the umbrella organization for voluntary agencies. ACVA's Committee on Migration and Refugee Affairs serves as a clearinghouse, allocating Indochinese refugees to individual voluntary agencies for placement in communities. This is done under a funding agreement with the State Department's Refugee Bureau.

In determining where new refugees will be settled, priority is given to reuniting refugees with close and distant relatives and friends. ACVA's Refugee Data Center staff searches its files to identify and locate (1) relatives and/or friends listed on the bio-data sheets and (2) relatives or friends previously resettled including those who may have expressed an interest in having the refugees join them, regardless of whether they are listed on the bio-data sheets.

The matching process generates four classes of resettlement cases which are distributed once or twice weekly to the voluntary agencies during allocation meetings:

- Family reunification cases - where only one voluntary agency was involved in resettling earlier arriving friends or relatives. These cases are generally assigned to the agency that handled the family member or friend.
- Family reunification cases - those involving more than one voluntary agency; they are discussed among the interested agencies who decide which one will take the case.
- Geographic cases - where the refugee designates a relative or friend in a particular location on the bio-data sheet, but ACVA has no record of the relative or friend or the sponsoring voluntary agency. These cases are distributed to voluntary agencies with support services in the designated areas.
- Free cases - where the refugee has indicated no relatives, friends, or geographic preference on the bio-data sheet and none are found by ACVA's file search. These cases are divided among the voluntary agencies.

Following these allocation meetings, each voluntary agency must still confirm its sponsorship of the individual cases with its local affiliates. Sponsorship assurances must be relayed to ACVA's Refugee Data Center and then overseas.

Although each voluntary agency decides where to place the refugee cases it has accepted, the general resettlement location has often been predetermined for many refugee cases since they involve reunification. Reunification emphasis has been given

priority in placement decisions over other considerations, such as trends in welfare dependency, the availability of employment opportunities, and the success of resettlement services in individual areas.

We examined a sample of refugee cases assured for sponsorship during fiscal year 1981 to determine the extent to which arriving refugees had relatives living in the United States. (See table 2-1.) About 67 percent had relatives in the United States; however, only about half of those were close family members including parents, children, siblings, grandparents, and spouses of the principal applicant. Many of these relatives resided in areas already impacted by high concentrations of refugees. A similar statistical breakdown also existed among the refugee cases we sampled in 5 of those 10 high impact States.

Voluntary agencies believe that limiting family reunification to close relatives would encourage secondary migration. The validity of this is unclear since studies on this subject are limited. In our five-county review, 9 percent of the refugees in our sample cases migrated to other areas within a few months of arrival. Of those migrating, 44 percent had originally been sponsored by a relative or friend. Those migrating did so to join other relatives and friends, for jobs and training opportunities, and other reasons. They went to a variety of States. Our data, while limited, indicate that initial reunification itself does not always deter secondary migration.

#### TRADITIONAL SPONSORSHIP ON THE DECLINE

Historically, voluntary agencies, which were the sponsor of record for newly arriving refugees, either resettled refugees in communities using paid caseworkers or recruited such local sponsors as American families, civic groups, and churches to help sponsor the refugees. Today, these traditional models of sponsorship occur less frequently and the voluntary agencies rely heavily on Federal assistance to fund agency-provided services. While the voluntary agencies are still the official sponsors, in many cases, the agencies now use former refugees (relatives and friends) as local sponsors to provide many of the resettlement services for which these agencies are responsible for providing, or assuring they are provided, under funding agreements with the Refugee Bureau. These services include meeting the refugees at the airport; providing temporary accommodations; arranging for permanent housing; and providing food, clothing, and other assistance. Relying on former refugees as local sponsors has resulted not only from an increased difficulty in obtaining traditional American sponsors, but also from a preference by some voluntary agencies' affiliates to use former refugees to sponsor new arrivals.

Table 2-1

Types of Relationships Between Refugees Assured  
for Sponsorship and Individuals Living  
in the United States--Fiscal Year 1981

<u>Close relatives</u>			<u>Distant relatives</u>			<u>Friends</u>		
<u>Rela- tionship</u>	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Percent- age</u>	<u>Rela- tionship</u>	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Percent- age</u>	<u>Rela- tionship</u>	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Percent- age</u>
Sibling	a/57	25.1	Cousin	26	11.5	Friend	16	7.0
Parent	7	3.1	Aunt/uncle	21	9.3	Former		
Daughter/son	7	3.1	Other			employer	1	.4
Spouse	3	1.3	relatives	15	6.6			
Grandparent	1	.4	In-law	12	5.3			
			Nephew/ niece	4	1.8			
Total	<u>75</u>	<u>33.0</u>		<u>78</u>	<u>34.4</u>		<u>17</u>	<u>7.5</u>

a/Married siblings comprised 21 of the 57 siblings in our sample. If married siblings sidered as distant relatives rather than their current designation of "close relative age of refugees in the close relative category would drop from 33 to 23.8 percent.

Source: A statistical sample of 227 out of 45,100 cases assured for sponsorship during was drawn from Sponsorship Assurances and Arrivals Reports. Relationships to applicant were obtained from bio-data sheets and from followup with voluntary natives to see if they had identified relatives in the United States not liste sheets. The sample was designed to be projectable to the total number of case 1981 at the 95-percent confidence level with a maximum sampling error of 6.5 p



Former refugees sponsored 57.5 percent of the refugee cases in our sample. As indicated in tables 2-2 and 2-3, the percentage of such cases varied by county and voluntary agency. Even some voluntary agencies having ties to church congregations or parishes, such as the U.S. Catholic Conference and the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, often used former refugees to help resettle newly arriving refugees. For example, 91.5 percent of the cases resettled by the U.S. Catholic Conference were sponsored locally by former refugees.

Voluntary agencies often used former refugees in the sponsorship process without adequately assessing whether or not they were economically self-sufficient or on public assistance. Some agencies did minimal checking to determine the financial capacity of former refugees to provide sponsorship assistance. Some agencies did not give much importance to the former refugees' financial capacity since the agencies, not the former refugees, were considered the real sponsor. Yet, voluntary agencies often relied on former refugees to provide services which the agencies were responsible for providing or assuring were provided. However, as discussed fully in chapter 4, the length of time voluntary agencies remained in contact with their refugee cases was frequently quite limited, making it difficult for them to know how well the services were provided.

Many voluntary agencies passed a portion of the \$525 per capita funding they received from the State Department to refugees and/or local sponsors. The amount varied by agency and by the needs of individual refugees. For example, one agency generally did not pass any funds to the refugees, but provided funding for some services while another passed an average of \$300 per case member. Some voluntary agencies gave the money for specific purposes while others placed no restrictions on its use. Either way, however, the funds were limited. Without the continued financial or other tangible assistance from voluntary agencies, and/or other local sponsors, the refugees can easily become dependent on public assistance until they or members of their families are able to obtain employment and become self-sufficient.

Recognizing that former refugees on welfare will inevitably have a major influence on the resettlement of their relatives, in September 1981, the State Department reiterated in writing its policy that voluntary agencies should not use welfare recipients as sponsors. The letter further stated that, in cases where an incoming refugee joins a family on welfare, the agency should ensure some other means of providing resettlement services. Shortly thereafter we checked, on a limited basis, several agencies' reactions to the directive. We found generally that agencies which had previously used former refugees (rela-

Table 2-2

Usage of Former Refugees As Sponsors by Counties Reviewed

<u>County</u>	<u>Total cases in sample</u>	<u>Number and percent of cases with refugee sponsors (note a)</u>	
		<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Ramsey	32	26	81.3
Arlington	34	23	67.6
Harris	87	52	59.8
San Francisco	89	53	59.6
Cook	<u>64</u>	<u>22</u>	34.4
Total	<u>306</u>	<u>176</u>	57.5

Table 2-3

Usage of Former Refugees As Sponsors  
by Voluntary Agencies Reviewed

<u>Voluntary agency</u>	<u>Total cases in sample</u>	<u>Number and percent of cases with refugee sponsors (note a)</u>	
		<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
U.S. Catholic Conference	82	75	91.5
Tolstoy Foundation	5	4	80.0
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society	28	20	71.4
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service	22	14	63.6
International Rescue Committee	38	22	57.9
American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees, Incorporated	17	8	47.1
American Council for Nationali- ties Service	45	18	40.0
Church World Service	23	9	39.1
World Relief Refugee Services	20	3	15.0
Young Men's Christian Associa- tion	<u>26</u>	<u>3</u>	11.5
Total	<u>306</u>	<u>176</u>	57.5

a/Sponsors are those identified by voluntary agency affiliate staff as such and/or those considered to be such by GAO staff based on their providing significant resettlement assistance to refugees.

tives and friends) as local sponsors and had maintained records designating them as sponsors, simply intended to stop recording those persons as sponsors, yet continue to use them to provide resettlement services. Others continued using former refugees as sponsors to further family reunification irrespective of the former refugees' self-sufficiency.

STRONGER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR WORKING  
RELATIONSHIPS NEEDED TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT  
NEW PLACEMENT POLICIES

The Refugee Act of 1980 directed both the U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs and the Director of ORR to consult with State and local governments and voluntary agencies concerning the sponsorship process and placement of refugees.

ORR and the U.S. Coordinator's Office have met with representatives of these groups nationwide during the past 2 years to obtain State and local views on the refugee program. However, representatives of State and local governments and their national organizations (such as the National Governors' Association, the National Association of Counties, and the U.S. Conference of Mayors) have often not viewed these meetings as giving them significant or meaningful input into the sponsorship and placement process. Many of these representatives believe that the Federal Government has not adequately consulted with them on their communities' abilities to serve and to absorb additional numbers of refugees. They are concerned about the overconcentration of refugees in some areas which has strained local resources and exacerbated local unemployment, housing shortages, and community tensions.

State and local government officials have voiced these concerns and said that their communities have absorbed many costs associated with the refugees' resettlement that are not reimbursed by the Federal Government. Good overall estimates of these costs are difficult to obtain. Although the Refugee Act of 1980 made an effort to eliminate funding uncertainties by authorizing program funding for 3 years, much uncertainty has remained, particularly for social service programs. This uncertainty has been due to budget cuts; priority given to cash and medical assistance; and delays in awards to States, hampering their program planning.

House and Senate Judiciary Committee reports<sup>2</sup> of the committees' actions in considering the Refugee Assistance Amendments of 1982 were critical of the administration's budget requests for refugee social service funds. They noted that budget requests had never approached the amount authorized by the Refugee Act of 1980. The reports stated that the administration must reevaluate its policy for determining the level and allocation of funding for social services.

Some voluntary agency affiliates have made attempts to lessen the impact on local resources by accepting only close family reunification cases for resettlement or placing refugees in clusters in peripheral areas away from heavily impacted areas. In November 1981, ACVA, in response to community concerns over the impact on local resources the continuing large numbers of Indochinese refugees were having, formally designated a number of areas as impacted by refugees where member agencies would temporarily limit placements or refrain from placing "free cases."<sup>3</sup> Since then, two additional areas have been added to the list of areas to refrain from placing "free cases." (See app. IV.)

In the past, refugee placement decisions were left up to the voluntary agencies with ad hoc policy guidance from the State Department and the U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs. In October 1981, the administration gave responsibility for developing a refugee placement policy to ORR while the State Department's Refugee Bureau retained administrative and fiscal responsibility for voluntary agencies' initial reception and placement activities.

In July 1982, ORR finalized a placement policy which outlined strategies to reduce further impact on communities. This policy calls for voluntary agencies to give closer scrutiny before placing distant relatives in impacted areas. The policy states that free cases should not be resettled in high impact areas except under special circumstances. The policy statement also calls for ORR--in consultation with the voluntary agencies, the State Department, and State and local officials--to develop alternate sites for refugee resettlement consistent with certain agreed upon standards of acceptable conditions for resettlement.

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<sup>2</sup>House Report 97-541 (May 17, 1982) and Senate Report 97-638 (Sept. 29, 1982).

<sup>3</sup>"Free cases" are those not involving reunification with a relative or friend.

Our April 22 and September 13, 1982, congressional testimony before Subcommittees of the House and Senate Committees on the Judiciary, respectively, had supported deemphasizing reunification of distant relatives and friends when they would otherwise go to areas of high refugee concentration, particularly where employment conditions and other factors are not conducive to self-sufficiency. The House and Senate Committees on the Judiciary, during their deliberations to reauthorize refugee program funding, concluded that refugee maldistribution had hindered the achievement of self-sufficiency in many cases and, therefore, was responsible to some extent for high welfare dependency rates for some refugee groups. Later, the Refugee Assistance Amendments of 1982 also stipulated that to the extent practicable, and except under unusual circumstances, a refugee is not to be initially resettled in an area already highly impacted by refugees unless the refugee has a spouse, parent, sibling, son, or daughter residing in that area.

While the new placement policy indicates that local needs and concerns will be considered, a concerted effort by all parties involved in refugee resettlement will be necessary to ensure its successful implementation. Our draft report, completed before passage of the Refugee Assistance Amendments, recommended that the Secretary of HHS periodically assess the effectiveness of the placement policy by considering the comments and concerns of affected agencies at the Federal, State, and local levels and of private resettlement organizations. That recommendation is deleted from this final report since the Refugee Assistance Amendments require that the Director of ORR develop placement policies and strategies in consultation with representatives of voluntary agencies and State and local governments. The legislation also requires that a mechanism be provided whereby representatives of voluntary agencies regularly meet with representatives of State and local governments to plan and coordinate, in advance of their arrival, where refugees will be placed.

## CHAPTER 3

### PUBLIC ASSISTANCE HAS PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE

#### IN INITIAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

While the Refugee Act of 1980 authorized Federal funding for cash and medical assistance to refugees, it also specified that cash assistance be made available in such a manner that would not discourage economic self-sufficiency. Generally, voluntary agencies have maintained that public assistance should be used only as a last resort. However, the welfare dependency rate for Indochinese refugees was high and many refugees went on welfare soon after their arrival in the United States.

#### PROGRAMS FOR CASH AND MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

The Refugee Act of 1980 continued authority to reimburse States up to 100 percent for the cash and medical assistance provided to refugees. However, unlike previous legislation which placed no restriction on the period of full Federal reimbursement, the Refugee Act of 1980 limited full Federal reimbursement to the refugees' first 36 months in the United States.

As implemented by HHS, the program is aligned with existing Federal and State programs of cash and medical assistance. Refugees who meet regular eligibility requirements receive assistance under Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Supplemental Security Income, and Medicaid programs. These programs normally involve a Federal/State sharing of costs. For refugee participants, HHS reimburses States for what would normally be the States' share of the cost. Special eligibility for cash and medical assistance has been provided for refugees who do not meet family composition and other requirements of these programs, but who would be eligible based on income. The Federal Government provides full funding of costs involving special refugee eligibility. Benefit levels for all refugees are based on States' regular cash and medical assistance programs.

A 36-month limitation on full Federal funding of cash and medical assistance for all refugees was in effect from April 1981 through March 1982. In April 1982, HHS implemented new regulations that more closely align the benefits received by refugees with those available to nonrefugees. Under the new regulations, full Federal reimbursement to States continues up to 36 months for refugees who meet regular Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Social Security Supplemental Security Income Insurance, or Medicaid eligibility criteria.

However, the refugees receiving cash assistance under special eligibility provisions now receive public assistance on the same basis as other State residents after their first 18 months in the United States. Thus, the new policy authorizes States, where general assistance programs are available, to seek reimbursement for costs incurred through these programs during the second 18 months refugees are in the United States.

#### HIGH WELFARE DEPENDENCY AMONG REFUGEES

Cash assistance use by newly arrived refugees has been high and has occurred almost immediately upon arrival. Contrary to voluntary agencies' general resettlement philosophy that public assistance should be a last resort, some of their local offices and sponsors were quick to help newly arriving refugees apply for cash assistance. Although some refugees may need continuing public assistance, it can create a disincentive for others to seek early employment.

Based on a survey of selected States, HHS projected a nationwide welfare dependency rate of 67 percent for refugees here less than 3 years as of June 1, 1981. As shown in table 3-1, 71 percent of the total employable age refugees in our five-county sample were receiving cash assistance, and 88 percent registered for assistance within 30 days of arrival; the majority within 2 weeks. As shown by table 3-2, the percentage of employable age refugees in our five-county sample who received cash assistance ranged from 52 percent in Harris County, Texas, to 87 percent in San Francisco County, California.

Table 3-1

Employable Age Refugees Receiving Cash Assistance in GAO's Five-County Sam

Voluntary agency	Number of employable age refugees	Number of employable age refugees on cash assistance	Percent on cash assistance	How soon after arrival employable refugees registered for cash assistance		
				1-14 days	15-30 days	31-60 days
				(percent)		
U.S. Catholic Conference	163	119	73.0	52.9	29.4	15.1
American Council for Nationalities Service	90	77	85.6	71.4	22.1	5.2
International Rescue Committee	75	50	66.7	54.0	24.0	22.0
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service	51	37	72.5	75.7	24.3	-
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society	49	33	67.3	54.5	39.4	6.1
Young Men's Christian Association	48	23	47.9	69.6	13.0	8.7
Church World Service	46	30	65.2	60.0	26.7	13.3
World Relief Refugee Services	33	21	63.6	47.6	38.1	14.3
American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees, Incorporated	32	27	84.4	88.9	11.1	-
Tolstoy Foundation	<u>7</u>	<u>7</u>	100	28.6	71.4	-
Total	<u>594</u>	<u>a/424</u>	71.4	61.6	26.7	10.4

a/All but five of those sampled were receiving full rather than supplemental cash assistance.



Table 3-2

Employable Age Refugees in GAO's  
Sample Receiving Cash Assistance

<u>County</u>	<u>Employ- able age refugees in sample</u>	<u>Number and percentage who received cash assistance (note a)</u>	<u>Number and per- centage still receiving cash assistance 4 to 6 months after arrival (note b)</u>
Arlington, Va.	70	45 (64%)	44 (63%)
Cook, Ill.	131	99 (76%)	86 (66%)
Harris, Tex.	157	82 (52%)	64 (41%)
Ramsey, Minn.	56	41 (73%)	39 (70%)
San Francisco, Calif.	<u>180</u>	<u>157 (87%)</u>	<u>152 (84%)</u>
Total	<u>594</u>	<u>c/424 (71%)</u>	<u>385 (65%)</u>

a/Based on sample of refugees arriving in April and June 1981.

b/Based on sample receiving cash assistance as of October 31, 1981.

c/The percentage would be several percentage points higher if the universe on which it was based were adjusted to eliminate those who left the area of initial resettlement without applying for benefits or by eliminating those for whom we could not determine whether they had received cash assistance. A similarity of names and the absence of other identifying information precluded our obtaining information on some individuals.

Sixty-five percent of the employable age refugees we sampled were receiving cash assistance as of October 31, 1981, 4 to 6 months after arriving in the United States. While the percentage of refugees on cash assistance dropped an average of 6 percentage points within 4 to 6 months, the largest reduction, 11 percentage points, occurred in Harris County, Texas, where benefit levels were the lowest among the five counties. Table 3-3 shows the maximum cash assistance payments for a four-person family in each of the five States.

Table 3-3

Cash Assistance Payments in Selected States

<u>State</u>	<u>Maximum monthly cash assistance for a four-person family (note a)</u>
California	\$601
Minnesota	520
Illinois	368
Virginia	360
Texas	141

a/Source: Congressional Research Service, November 1981.

Table 3-3 also shows that payment rates vary considerably between these five States. These are States that have sizable refugee populations resulting from both initial placements and secondary migration. A common perception has been that refugees migrate to areas with high cash assistance payments. Within our sample, the percentage of refugees migrating from their areas of initial resettlement within their first few months<sup>1</sup> in the United States averaged 9 percent, and of those migrating, a significant number moved within the same State or to States with similar cash assistance payments. It is unknown what long-term impact on secondary migration will result from the recent change in Federal reimbursement to the States for cash and medical assistance, which will cause some refugees to become ineligible after 18 months. Recently, this has been reported as having caused some secondary migration.

REASONS FOR EARLY AND  
EXTENDED CASH ASSISTANCE

Many reasons were cited for the high percentage of Indo-chinese refugees on public assistance and their tendency to apply for assistance shortly after arriving in this country. One reason given is that many of the more recent arrivals are poorly educated and therefore are expected to have more difficulty in getting jobs. This problem can be compounded when there are severe job shortages and competition for available jobs is keen. Another reason often cited by those involved in resettlement was that newly arriving refugees are well versed in available welfare benefits--they sometimes view these benefits as entitlements--and prefer to receive cash assistance and take training rather than seek employment.

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<sup>1</sup>Many voluntary agencies told us that refugees who migrate elsewhere frequently do so within a few months after arriving at their initial resettlement locations.

The limited job assistance provided to refugees by State employment offices also contributed to the problem. Unless otherwise exempted for reasons applicable to any other public assistance recipient, or for attending training programs, refugees in our sample were required to register with State employment offices in the five counties as a condition for initially receiving or continuing to receive public assistance. Many employment offices did not consider refugees job ready without English-speaking skills. Further, the employment offices did not have either special programs or extra resources, including translators, to assist refugees in finding jobs. Very few of the refugees in our sample registering with State employment offices received any services or employment offers. Welfare agencies frequently acknowledged work registration as being a perfunctory exercise.

Two philosophies predominate among those involved in refugee resettlement regarding refugee self-sufficiency. One philosophy places emphasis on early employment. The other places initial emphasis on helping refugees adapt to their new environment and obtain English language and other training as a basis for becoming employed and self-sufficient. The latter view, when held by voluntary agencies and affiliates, other service providers, and refugees themselves, usually results in some form of interim cash support for refugees while they take such training--particularly where employment concurrent with training is not emphasized.

## CHAPTER 4

### INSUFFICIENT EMPHASIS ON EMPLOYMENT HAS IMPEDED

#### REFUGEES ACHIEVING SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Although the Refugee Act of 1980 emphasized the goal of self-sufficiency as quickly as possible, only limited guidance on how soon self-sufficiency should begin to occur was embodied in the Refugee Act and program guidance provided by the two key Federal agencies involved in refugee resettlement activities. In the five counties we reviewed, few refugees found employment shortly after arriving in the United States and there was frequently no focal point for ensuring that refugees were provided the services necessary for quick self-sufficiency. Voluntary agencies provided only limited employment services, and other service providers did not emphasize employment services.

#### INCONSISTENT AND VAGUE STRATEGY FOR ASSISTING REFUGEES TO BECOME SELF-SUFFICIENT QUICKLY

The Refugee Act, Refugee Bureau-funding agreements with voluntary agencies, and HHS/ORR program instructions addressed the timing of self-sufficiency to some extent, but did not make clear whether employment should be an immediate goal or something to be sought following the completion of available training.

Until amended in October 1982, the Refugee Act had emphasized economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible, yet authorized funding for English language and employment training without specifying whether training should precede employment or whether efforts should focus on both concurrently. Also, the act had exempted refugees from work registration requirements during their first 60 days in the United States. The Refugee Assistance Amendments of 1982 eliminated the 60-day work exemption provision and required that English language training be provided in nonwork hours where possible. The amendments also specified that cash assistance shall not be made available to refugees who are full-time students in institutions of higher education. The amendments made clear that employable age refugees should be placed in jobs as soon as possible after their arrival in the United States. Committee reports resulting from congressional hearings on those amendments make clear the Committees' views that the lack of English language ability is not a basis for postponing employment.

The State Department's Refugee Bureau requires that voluntary agencies ensure that job counseling and placement assistance is provided to refugees on their arrival and/or thereafter as necessary and appropriate. HHS/ORR program instructions state that the inability to communicate in English does not prevent refugees from being employed. HHS/ORR program instructions require registration with an employment service as a condition for receiving cash assistance, but authorize delayed work registration for refugees in approved training programs.

HHS/ORR issued revised program guidelines that became effective August 1, 1982, which tighten employment requirements for cash assistance recipients by no longer (1) recognizing attendance in a college program (for a person age 18 or over) as a reason for delaying work registration and (2) exempting persons attending part-time training from accepting employment. Additionally, on August 16, 1982, ORR, in compliance with section 412(a)(6)B of the Refugee Act of 1980, issued a statement of program goals, priorities, and standards to be effective in fiscal year 1983. That guidance, to be used by States in planning the use of ORR social service funds, emphasizes that services are to be provided which are most likely to result in the earliest possible movement of refugees from cash assistance to economic self-sufficiency. It also specifies that States need to insure that services are available in a manner or at a time which does not prevent refugees from seeking or holding full-time employment. We see these as steps toward providing stronger and much needed program emphasis on employment.

Differences of opinion have existed among the various groups involved in refugee resettlement as to what strategy for quick self-sufficiency should be pursued first, employment or training. Our review showed that the latter has been more prevalent and that frequently neither early employment nor concurrent employment and training had been emphasized for recent refugee arrivals by Refugee Bureau-funded voluntary agencies and ORR-funded service providers.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROVIDED BY  
VOLUNTARY AGENCIES HAVE BEEN LIMITED

Few employable age refugees in our five-county sample were known by voluntary agencies to have been employed since arriving in the United States (see table 4-1). Although voluntary agencies were required, through funding agreements with the State Department's Refugee Bureau, to ensure that employment services are provided to refugees, the agreements did not specify who should provide these services. Agency-affiliates in our sample provided limited employment services, often referring refugees

Table 4-1

Employable Age Refugees Known By Voluntary Agencies  
to Have Obtained Employment Within  
4 to 6 Months After Arrival in the United States

Voluntary agency/ county	Employable age refugees	Number of employable age refugees known by voluntary agency to have ob- tained a job	Percent of employable age refugees obtaining jobs	Number of days after arrival employed refugees obtained jobs				
				30 days or less	31 to 60 days	61 to 90 days	Over 90 days	Un- known
Voluntary agency:								
U.S. Catholic Conference	163	10	6.1	2	0	1	6	1
American Council for National- ities Service	90	3	3.3	0	1	0	2	0
International Rescue Com- mittee	75	14	18.7	6	3	0	3	2
Lutheran Immi- gration and Refugee Service	51	11	21.6	3	3	0	4	1
Hebrew Immi- grant Aid Society	49	5	10.2	2	1	1	1	0
Young Men's Christian Association	48	24	50.0	17	0	1	5	1
Church World Service	46	3	6.5	1	0	0	0	2
World Relief Refugee Services	33	10	30.3	1	3	2	1	3
American Fund for Czecho- slovak Refugees, Incorporated	32	3	9.4	0	0	0	1	2
Tolstoy Foundation	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	<u>594</u>	<u>83</u>	14.0	<u>32</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>12</u>
Percent of total employed				38.6	13.3	6.0	27.7	14.5
County:								
San Francisco	180	5	2.8	0	3	1	1	0
Harris	157	41	26.1	26	4	2	4	5
Cook	131	25	19.1	4	3	1	12	5
Arlington	70	9	12.9	2	1	0	4	2
Ramsey	56	3	5.4	0	0	1	2	0
Total	<u>594</u>	<u>83</u>	14.0	<u>32</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>12</u>
Percent of total employed				38.6	13.3	6.0	22.7	14.5

to ORR-funded service providers for such assistance. While affiliate staff told us they relied on others to help provide employment assistance, they did little to assure that such assistance was provided.

Based on information provided to us by voluntary agencies' staffs, only 10 percent of the employable age refugees in our sample were provided with job placement assistance. Job counseling, however, was provided to 41 percent of the employable age refugees. Some voluntary agencies' staffs told us they were not providing employment services to newly arrived refugees because refugees need English training to be competitive in the job market. Others indicated they did not have sufficient resources to provide employment services. Yet, of those refugees known to have been employed, in our sample, 40 percent were described by voluntary agencies as having little or no conversational English ability when they got jobs.

The most predominant reasons given to us by staff of the agencies' local affiliates for unemployment among our sample's employable age refugees were that they needed more English instruction or that they were currently receiving such instruction.

Other reasons cited by voluntary agencies' staffs for unemployment among our sample of employable age refugees were that refugees (1) received no offers of employment, (2) were not aggressively seeking employment, (3) were caring for dependents at home, and (4) needed additional training.

As shown in table 4-1, only 83 of the 594 employable age refugees (or 14 percent) in our sample were known by voluntary agencies' staff to have been employed since their arrival in the United States. Of those employed, 80 percent were from Harris County, Texas, and Cook County, Illinois. The table further shows that over half of the employed refugees obtained jobs within 60 days of their arrival.

Funding agreements with the Refugee Bureau require voluntary agencies to ensure that refugees receive, as needed, job counseling and job placement assistance. In fiscal year 1981, these employment services were to be made available for 1 year. In fiscal year 1982, the period was reduced to 90 days to better distinguish initial reception and placement services funded by the State Department from social services funded by ORR.

While the agreements' purpose is to ensure that voluntary agencies "will perform or arrange for the performance" of resettlement services, including employment services, the agreements have been vague as to who should provide these services. The agreements charge the voluntary agencies with the responsibility

"to insure, either from the per capita grant or from other sources" the availability of services. However, the specific section of the agreement discussing employment services states that the voluntary agency will provide "job counseling and assistance in placing employable refugees in jobs on arrival and/or thereafter as necessary and appropriate." Whether voluntary agencies should directly provide employment services is subject to interpretation; that they should at least assure the services are provided is clear.

STATES AND THEIR SERVICE PROVIDERS  
HAVE PLACED LITTLE EMPHASIS  
ON QUICK EMPLOYMENT

While States are funded by ORR to provide social services to refugees to achieve economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible, most social service providers in the five counties did not emphasize early employment for refugees. Few refugees in our sample obtained jobs through social service providers.

The Refugee Act requires States to submit plans to assure the effective resettlement of refugees and to promote self-sufficiency as quickly as possible. The act and ORR regulations require State plans to describe how language training and employment services are to be provided. ORR program instructions authorize the States to provide various social services.

We contacted the ORR-funded social service providers in each county who provided what the State refugee coordinator considered to be employment-related services to determine (1) whether the providers served newly arrived refugees and (2) the number of refugees for which these service providers were able to obtain employment.

Within the five counties, the provision of employment-related services generally had a much broader meaning than job development and placement and included English language training, orientation, social adjustment counseling, vocational training, and job placement assistance. Further, less emphasis was placed on job development and placement activities than on other services.

As shown in table 4-2, counseling, orientation, and English language instruction were provided more often than job placement assistance. Many refugees in our sample had not received services from these providers and had not registered with them. Since we contacted only ORR-funded service providers, we are uncertain as to how many refugees received services through such other organizations as community colleges and the use made of such funding sources as basic educational opportunity grants.



Table 4-2

Total Number and Percentage of Employable Age Refugees Receiving  
Social Services and Employment from ORR-Funded Social Service Provider

<u>County</u>	<u>Total number of employ- able age refugees</u>	<u>Number of employable age refugees receiving social services from ORR social service providers</u>					
		<u>ESL</u>	<u>Orienta- tion</u>	<u>Job counseling</u>	<u>Job training</u>	<u>Job placement services</u>	<u>Other counseling</u>
Arlington	70	28	28	17	0	1	0
Harris	157	41	33	46	6	24	32
Cook	131	76	5	83	12	32	25
Ramsey	56	36	43	9	6	3	0
San Francisco	<u>180</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>2</u>
<b>Total</b>	<u><u>594</u></u>	<u><u>207</u></u>	<u><u>109</u></u>	<u><u>170</u></u>	<u><u>27</u></u>	<u><u>72</u></u>	<u><u>59</u></u>
<b>Percent of total served</b>		34.8	18.4	28.6	4.5	12.1	9.9

Note: This schedule reflects ORR-funded social services provided to employable age refugees in our sample. Some of the social service providers contacted were voluntary agencies which also provided services under Refugee Bureau reception and placement agreements. Refugees shown may have received more than one type of social service, as the percent of those served does not equal 100 percent. We inquired as to whether age refugees included in our sample were on waiting lists for ESL, job training, counseling, and placement services. Some providers did not retain such lists after a period of time, however, where such lists were available to us, we found very few refugees in our sample.

There were indications that this limited emphasis on jobs by ORR-funded providers was generally the case even outside of our sample. For example, in Arlington where Virginia had funded a single employment-related service provider, the emphasis was clearly on English language training over job placement, and the provider did not actively attempt to place refugees in jobs until they were nearing the end of their English language training and had a certain proficiency. This provider furnished English language training to a significantly larger number of refugees in fiscal year 1981 than it placed in jobs.

Information provided by an official in Minnesota's Refugee Coordinator's office indicated that in the past little emphasis was given to helping refugees obtain jobs as long as they had access to federally reimbursed cash assistance. Emphasis was given to English language training and other social services. In fiscal year 1981, only one provider was funded by the State in Ramsey County to provide job placement assistance to refugees. However, it primarily served those refugees nearing their termination of cash assistance and was successful in placing refugees in jobs. In fiscal year 1982, the State funded additional service providers in the county that emphasized job placement for refugees.

While English-speaking ability is important and can increase chances for successful long-term employment, our inquiries at service providers indicated, as they did for our work at voluntary agencies, that lack of English-speaking ability was not an insurmountable barrier to employment. Only 7 percent of our sample refugees for whom ORR-funded service providers obtained employment were rated by the service providers as having good English-speaking ability, and 47 percent were rated as speaking English poorly or not at all.

According to voluntary agencies' and other service providers' knowledge of refugees who had obtained jobs, few were employed while attending ESL or other training programs. This was true even though these training programs were often part time or scheduled at times which would not interfere with part-time employment.

A greater emphasis was placed on employment services in some counties during fiscal year 1982 than in fiscal year 1981. However, since our fieldwork was completed midway through fiscal year 1982, we did not evaluate the extent or effect of this increased emphasis.

Approaches offering potential  
for quick employment

Several service providers used approaches which can be successful in obtaining employment for refugees. These examples illustrate how quick employment for refugees can be stressed, even for those with limited English-speaking ability and for those who attend part-time training.

Young Men's Christian Association in Harris County, Texas, an ORR-funded service provider and also an affiliate of a Refugee Bureau-funded voluntary agency, successfully placed newly arrived refugees in jobs. Social services were provided to refugees while they resided in a half-way house run by the agency. Under its social services contract, the agency provided such services as job counseling, job-related English training, job location and placement and employer followup, as well as various supportive services, such as crisis intervention and instruction in household management, health care, and nutrition. Our sample showed that about one-half of the employable age refugees resettled by this agency were employed.

In Ramsey County, Minnesota, Catholic Charities' Refugees In Search Of Employment, the ORR-funded service provider which provided job placement assistance to refugees in fiscal year 1981, was successful in placing refugees in entry level jobs. Most of the placements were welfare office referrals who were nearing their 36-month benefit limitation. The provider had eight full-time job developers providing job-related counseling, training, and placement to refugees, with emphasis on job placement. This service provider successfully placed refugees with little or no English-speaking ability in jobs by using "cluster placement employment"--placing a number of refugees in the same company with a refugee leader who was fairly proficient in English. The provider also sent bilingual staff to accompany refugees on job interviews. This provider was not funded until April 1981 and during its first 6 months in operation, placed 370 refugees in jobs, mostly in entry level service industry and factory positions.

A potentially successful approach was used by a San Francisco County service provider, Chinatown Resources Development Center, in fiscal year 1982. This provider modeled its refugee social service program after other reportedly successful job training programs which combine vocational English training with job training. The provider had two job developers who placed clients with private businesses, with no cost to the businesses. Clients usually received 4 hours a day of job training and experience in a work environment, and 4 hours of vocational English training and job orientation. According to the project

director, the job placement rate has been high and most employers hired the refugees after their training period--which usually lasted from 13 to 27 weeks.

#### FOCAL POINT NEEDED FOR REFUGEE REFERRALS AND SERVICES

If quick self-sufficiency for refugees is to be realized, more attention needs to be given to monitoring refugees' progress toward that goal. This includes the establishment of a focal point for ensuring that refugees are referred to and receive the proper employment and other services. With so many organizations involved in providing services to refugees, coordination problems can occur. The following describes the problems we found together with attempts at improvements which occurred generally during our fieldwork.

Voluntary agencies have the initial contact with refugees and are responsible under their funding agreements to ensure that refugees receive services that will facilitate resettlement. Procedures by voluntary agencies in our sample to follow up with sponsors and check the refugees' progress towards self-sufficiency were either absent or not strictly enforced in many cases. Some voluntary agencies used formal followup procedures which consisted of oral or written communication with either the refugee or the local sponsor intermittently up to several months after the refugees' arrival. This followup, however, often had not been completed for refugees in our sample until our inquiry. Irrespective of formal followup procedures, voluntary agencies' contacts with refugees were generally for a short time. Overall, voluntary agencies had no contact with 30 percent of our sample cases after 30 days and no contact with over 50 percent after 90 days. Table 4-3 shows the difference by agency.

Extended contact between refugees and voluntary agencies did not necessarily mean that the agencies' staffs knew whether the refugees were receiving social services important to achieving self-sufficiency. Voluntary agencies' staffs frequently told us of referring refugees to other service providers, particularly for employment-related services. However, ORR-funded providers we contacted turned up no record of registration for many of the refugees. Both the House and Senate Committees on the Judiciary, in considering the Refugee Assistance Amendments of 1982, stressed that voluntary agencies should monitor their clientele's progress toward self-sufficiency as closely as possible.

**Table 4-3**

**Duration of Voluntary Agency Contact With Refugee Cases Sampled (note a)**

Voluntary agency	Number of cases per voluntary agency	Number of days voluntary agency remained in contact with cases after arrival in the United States					Un-known
		Less than 14 days	14 to 30 days	31 to 60 days	61 to 90 days	Over 90 days	
U.S. Catholic Conference	82	15	17	10	4	36	0
American Council for Nationalities Service	45	7	4	5	3	23	3
International Rescue Committee	38	6	7	6	8	8	3
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society	28	0	1	2	7	18	0
Young Men's Christian Association	26	5	1	6	6	8	0
Church World Service	23	11	2	1	1	3	5
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service	22	9	2	0	3	7	1
World Relief Refugee Services	20	4	1	4	5	6	0
American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees, Incorporated	17	0	0	1	0	13	3
Tolstoy Foundation	<u>5</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>306</u></b>	<b><u>57</u></b>	<b><u>35</u></b>	<b><u>35</u></b>	<b><u>37</u></b>	<b><u>127</u></b>	<b><u>15</u></b>
<b>Percent of total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>4.9</b>

a/The cases represent a statistically valid stratified random sample of total cases settled by voluntary agencies within the five counties reviewed for April and June 1981.

Note: This schedule reflects the length of time each of the voluntary agencies remained in contact with each of the cases and the respective percentage for the total number of cases in our sample resettled by the agencies.

Welfare offices can refer public assistance applicants to appropriate service providers; however, this was often not done. Welfare offices frequently required refugees to register with State employment offices in conjunction with their application for cash assistance. Despite recognizing that State employment offices in the five counties were providing little assistance to refugees, the welfare offices generally did not refer refugees in our sample to other service providers.

Four of the five counties took some action to alleviate some refugee referral problems. Cook County, Illinois, instituted a system in July 1981 that requires refugees to register with one of the ORR-funded service providers offering employment services before registering for cash assistance. Ramsey County, also in July 1981, ceased requiring refugees to register with the State employment office and established a work and training unit within the welfare office to facilitate refugees receiving needed services. In the Autumn of 1981, two counties, Arlington and San Francisco, began operating central intake and referral systems to better assist new arrivals. Arlington began requiring refugees to register with a service provider before registering for cash assistance. The San Francisco system, part of a statewide effort to integrate and coordinate service delivery, provided central screening and development of a refugee service plan.

The newness of these changes did not permit us to evaluate them. We view these changes as much needed improvements toward assuring refugees receive needed services. But beyond this a more uniform and clearer strategy is required if priority is to be given to placing refugees in jobs soon after their arrival in the United States.

ORR issued a program instruction, effective August 1, 1982, requiring State welfare agencies to contact refugee sponsors or resettlement agencies as part of determining (or redetermining) refugees' eligibility for cash and medical assistance, to determine whether the refugees had refused employment offers or voluntarily quit a job without good cause. These program changes can only be effective to the extent that voluntary agencies remain in contact with refugees, and voluntary agencies and other service providers are actively engaged in offering job development and placement assistance to refugees.

In congressional testimony during 1982 hearings on reauthorizing refugee program funding, we had recommended that the Refugee Act be amended to require that (1) priority attention be given to quick employment and economic self-sufficiency and (2) this priority be adhered to notwithstanding provisions for

attendance at language and other employment training. Additionally, we recommended repealing that portion of the Refugee Act that exempted refugees from employment registration and acceptance of job offer requirements during the first 60 days after entering the United States.

The Refugee Assistance Amendments of 1982, in addition to repealing the 60-day work registration exemption, also required that ORR social service funding for refugees emphasize employment services, ESL (in nonwork hours where possible), and case management services.

ESL and other training are important, but we believe emphasis should be placed on training concurrent with employment to the extent possible. We believe that improved followup and tracking of refugees' progress should also be emphasized.

### CONCLUSIONS

If self-sufficiency for refugees is to be a meaningful goal, greater emphasis on employment is needed. An important step was taken with the passage of the Refugee Assistance Amendments of 1982 which emphasized employment. Other administrative actions have been taken which, if successfully implemented, should also result in greater emphasis on quick employment. Services need to be better prioritized and better linked to securing employment opportunities for refugees, even while they are receiving training. Voluntary agency funding agreements and State plans need to place greater emphasis on employment.

A system to monitor and track the refugees' progress is needed to assure refugees are receiving needed services. This system should be geared toward (1) ensuring that the refugees' major needs are identified and (2) developing a plan for addressing those needs.

### RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE

We recommend that the Secretary revise funding agreements with voluntary agencies to clarify the activities that the agencies and their affiliates are expected to provide under those agreements versus activities using their own resources, those of local sponsors, or other Federal resources. We also recommend that the Secretary specify in the funding agreement that voluntary agencies will place high priority on job development and placement assistance for refugees and on monitoring refugees' progress toward self-sufficiency.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE  
SECRETARY OF HHS

We recommend that the Secretary monitor and assess the services provided through ORR social service funding to assure greater emphasis on job development and placement services to newly arriving refugees and that emphasis is given to employment concurrent with training to the extent possible.

AGENCY COMMENTS

HHS and the State Department generally concurred with our recommendations. Their views and the actions taken or planned are discussed more fully on pages 46 and 47.



## CHAPTER 5

### FRAGMENTED PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

The process of resettling refugees and helping them become self-sufficient as quickly as possible is more cumbersome and fragmented at the Federal level than it needs to be. Three key offices have responsibilities for domestic refugee resettlement, yet none has clear responsibility and authority for the program. Improved program direction is needed at the Federal level and improved monitoring is needed both at the Federal and State levels.

### KEY FEDERAL AGENCIES

The three offices having key responsibilities for domestic refugee resettlement include the Office of U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs, the State Department's Refugee Bureau, and HHS' ORR.

The U.S. Coordinator's office was established by a presidential directive in February 1979 and subsequently given a legislative mandate by the Refugee Act of 1980. The functions of that office are wide ranging and involve foreign and domestic refugee activities. The Coordinator is responsible to the President for:

- Developing refugee policy; more specifically, recommending to the President and the Congress policies, objectives, and priorities relating to refugee admissions and resettlement in the United States.
- Representing the administration before the Congress on the overall refugee policy and the relationship of agency refugee budgets to that policy.
- Developing effective communications between Federal, State, and local agencies and private organizations.
- Reviewing refugee-related regulations, guidelines, requirements, criteria, and procedures of Federal agencies.
- Developing budget strategy and coordinating programming and budgeting of Federal refugee programs.
- Consulting regularly with States, localities, and voluntary agencies concerning the sponsorship process and the distribution of refugees.

--Negotiating with foreign governments on refugee matters under direction from the Secretary of State.

In 1979, the State Department created an Office of Refugee Programs, consolidating many of the Government's domestic and international refugee assistance programs. Later it was designated as the Bureau for Refugee Programs. It performs functions previously carried out by the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs and the Agency for International Development. Among other responsibilities, the Refugee Bureau administers funding agreements with voluntary agencies for sponsorship and placement of refugees in the United States.

ORR was established by the Refugee Act of 1980. Previously, the refugee program had been administered within HHS and its predecessor agency (the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare) by an Office of Refugee Affairs and earlier by a special programs staff within the Office of Family Assistance in the Social Security Administration. ORR administers domestic refugee resettlement and assistance programs, such as social services and cash and medical assistance. Such assistance is provided to Indochinese refugees through grants to the States.

#### FRAGMENTED AND OVERLAPPING MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The roles of the three Federal offices involved in domestic refugee resettlement activities are fragmented and overlapping without any one having overall authority. Both the U.S. Coordinator and ORR are charged by law with consulting with State and local governments and voluntary agencies concerning the sponsorship process and the placement of refugees. Yet, the Refugee Bureau administers the program for sponsorship and placement activities. These activities have been basically carried out by the voluntary agencies with little input from State and local governments.

While the State Department's Refugee Bureau administers voluntary agencies' funding, ORR provides program direction and other funding for social services to facilitate refugees' resettlement. These programs are executed primarily through grants to States which in turn contract with local organizations to provide social services. These are sometimes local affiliates of voluntary agencies. As recommended in chapter 4, clarification of responsibilities and funding is needed concerning services provided by voluntary agencies under Refugee Bureau funding versus services provided using private resources and other Federal resources. Services provided by ORR-funded social service providers are often interrelated and, in some cases, overlap those provided by voluntary agencies under Refugee

Bureau funding agreements. We believe that a single Federal agency could better sort out these program responsibilities and establish clearer strategy and program guidelines for refugee resettlement.

Some responsibilities of the Coordinator's office involving international negotiations and policy formulation overlap operating responsibilities of the Refugee Bureau and ORR. The Coordinator is charged with representing the United States and negotiating on its behalf with foreign governments and international organizations concerning refugee matters. At the same time, the Refugee Bureau, headed by the equivalent of an Assistant Secretary, administers the Government's international refugee programs. The Coordinator's responsibilities in developing policies and budget strategy overlap the normal management functions of the two operating offices, the Refugee Bureau and ORR.

In our 1982 congressional testimonies and our draft report, we recommended that the Congress give total responsibility for the program of initial refugee resettlement to the Secretary of HHS. We also recommended that the Congress consider whether a separate office of the U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs is needed.

The Congress in enacting the Refugee Assistance Amendments of 1982 provided only 1-year funding, in part, so it could consider these and other important issues in light of the results of several studies expected to be available by the spring of 1983. Thus, we have deleted those recommendations from this report. We believe the question of how the Federal level is organized to carry out the refugee program is worthy of further congressional consideration.

#### MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED AT THE FEDERAL AND STATE LEVELS

In addition to the need for eliminating fragmented management, specific improvements were needed in program operations and monitoring of domestic resettlement activities, including sponsorship and placement activities, funded by the State Department and social service programs funded by HHS.

Beyond clarifying voluntary agencies' responsibilities, the need existed for effective management of the voluntary agencies' federally funded sponsorship and placement activities. The Refugee Bureau had not:

- Required proposals before awarding funding as required by the Refugee Act. We believe proposals, including a description of the agencies' abilities to perform required services, could be beneficial in terms of clarifying services voluntary agencies are prepared to provide using Refugee Bureau funding versus their own resources, other Federal funding, and other resources including local sponsors other than agency affiliates. Further, proposals could be used to help assess the capabilities of voluntary agencies and their affiliates in terms of the numbers of refugees they are prepared to resettle and are capable of resettling in accordance with sound placement policies.
- Adequately assessed or reacted to the growing impact of large refugee concentrations in selected communities. Oversight of voluntary agencies' placement decisions jointly by the Refugee Bureau and U.S. Coordinator's office was limited until the middle of fiscal year 1981, when an approach was developed for tracking refugee placements and the extent to which new arrivals had relatives in those areas.
- Performed adequate financial and program monitoring and evaluation of voluntary agencies' performance. Beginning in fiscal year 1981, the State Department, for the first time, required a combination semiannual program and financial report; however, inadequate instructions and unclear reporting criteria made these reports of little use. The State Department's inadequate oversight of voluntary agencies' performance was reflected in a first-of-its-kind study that it contracted for in late fiscal year 1981 to have described what voluntary agencies do in resettling refugees. A State Department official acknowledged in April 1982 congressional hearings that the Department had never audited the voluntary agencies' use of Federal funds. Currently, the Refugee Bureau is developing procedures for monitoring service delivery of voluntary agencies under its funding agreements. We will be making further reviews of the State Department's auditing and monitoring of voluntary agencies as required by the Refugee Assistance Amendments of 1982.

The effectiveness of any future evaluations and the ability to establish clear measures of accountability will for the most part be impacted by the extent to which the voluntary agencies' responsibilities are clarified.

## CHAPTER 6

### AGENCY COMMENTS AND OUR EVALUATION

A draft of this report was provided for comment to the U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs; the Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, and State; five State Coordinators; and 11 voluntary agencies. All responded except one State Coordinator and one voluntary agency. In addition, comments were received from ACVA, the umbrella organization of all voluntary agencies. (See apps. V through XXIII.)

Comments were solicited before the passage of the Refugee Assistance Amendments of 1982. Corrective actions for many problems pointed out by GAO and others in congressional hearings and elaborated on in our draft report are mandated in that legislation. Consequently, some recommendations contained in the draft have been deleted from this final report. Also, many of the problems we identified have been or are being addressed administratively by HHS/ORR and the State Department's Refugee Bureau.

This chapter evaluates the more significant issues raised dealing with our review methodology and our findings on family reunification, refugee services, and administration of the refugee program at the Federal level. Some comments are addressed in GAO notes at the end of individual agency comments and in a few instances, we made clarifying comments or added footnotes in the report. These comments did not cause us to alter our conclusions and recommendations.

#### METHODOLOGY

Concerns about our methodology and resultant findings and recommendations were raised by four voluntary agencies and two State Coordinator offices. Views were expressed that (1) we were making significant recommendations for program changes based on sampling a limited number of refugees, and (2) in concentrating on recent refugee arrivals, we were not allowing sufficient time to obtain an adequate view of social services provided, or not recognizing that it is infeasible for all refugees to be employed upon arrival in the United States.

Given the mandate of the Refugee Act calling for quick self-sufficiency, we wanted to determine what steps were being taken to assist or assure that refugees were assisted in securing employment or striving for that goal. We also wanted to determine the emphasis given to employment versus training in the short run as well as the emphasis on employment and training

States' reporting required information, was not finalized or approved by the Office of Management and Budget during our review.

Also, ORR awarded contracts in fiscal year 1981 for program evaluation studies of (1) the effectiveness of services within the refugee program to help refugees achieve self-sufficiency and (2) approaches to and the quality of English language training. These studies have the potential to provide valuable program information.

### CONCLUSIONS

A great deal of organizational complexity has existed at the Federal level regarding domestic refugee resettlement activities. This has included overlapping and duplication of roles and responsibilities. State Department oversight of voluntary agencies' activities has been inadequate. Some improvements are being made, and the Congress has made it clear it intends to consider these issues when reauthorizing refugee assistance funding.

### RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE

We recommend that the Secretary require the Refugee Bureau to undertake program and financial monitoring on an ongoing basis and to assure that periodic audits of voluntary agencies' activities are performed. We also recommend that the Secretary comply with the requirement of the Refugee Act which requires the voluntary agencies to submit proposals as a prerequisite to being funded for providing initial reception and placement services to refugees.

### AGENCY COMMENTS

The State Department concurred with our recommendations. The actions taken or planned are discussed more fully on page 47.

area highly impacted by refugees unless the refugee has a close relative residing in that area.

The U.S. Refugee Coordinator warned against extremes in placement decisions by stating that he would not want to see the geographical distribution of refugees so spread out that it would weaken the principle of clustering placements in numbers sufficient to continue viable ethnic communities. He expressed the view that less emphasis should be given to problems of family reunification and more emphasis given to finding better ways of matching private and public resources in a community to the number of refugees it receives.

We agree with the sentiments expressed by the U.S. Coordinator. At the same time, as our report points out, there appears to be much room for improvement in refugee placements.

#### RESETTLEMENT SERVICES AND WELFARE DEPENDENCY

Those responding to our draft report provided a wide range of comments regarding our findings of high welfare rates and the lack of emphasis on employment for newly arriving refugees.

The U.S. Coordinator, the State Department, and HHS generally concurred with our recommendations aimed at emphasizing employment and quick self-sufficiency. Both departments discussed several initiatives being taken to achieve these ends.

The U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs cited our finding of too little emphasis on helping refugees obtain early employment as perhaps the most helpful aspect of our study. He also commented that the failure to recognize and act on this most important priority of the resettlement program was present at all levels in both the government and private sector. The Coordinator also said that our report should have stressed welfare dependency less and placed more emphasis on the need for better coordinated methods for helping those who need such assistance to use welfare only as a temporary means to self-sufficiency.

In our view, the report deals with factors affecting refugee resettlement. The high rate of welfare dependency stood out to us as a significant problem and one not unrelated to the lack of emphasis on employment.

The Department of Labor outlined past activities of State employment services to assure the availability of employment and training information to refugees and suggested its overall record of assisting Asians and Pacific Islanders (a grouping which

concurrently. By design, we limited our sample to recent refugee arrivals. By limiting our review to recent refugee arrivals, we did not expect that all refugees should be employed at that time.

Our methodology is fully discussed in chapter 1. The sample, including what it is designed to do and its projectability, is also discussed as well as the limitations on the use of the data. In addition to determining services provided to a sampling of refugees, this review also encompassed work at the Federal, State, and local levels that greatly supplemented the information gathered pertaining to the refugee cases sampled. The report, including conclusions and recommendations, is based on all that work.

#### FAMILY REUNIFICATION EMPHASIS

Comments received from a majority of the voluntary agencies strongly endorsed reuniting refugees with relatives and friends. The agencies commented that family reunification has long been the cornerstone of refugee resettlement and that limiting it, besides not being philosophically desirable, could also cause an increase in secondary migration.

We do not suggest that family reunification no longer be the cornerstone of refugee resettlement, only that limitations be imposed, where needed and feasible, so that refugees are not placed in areas of high refugee concentration where employment conditions and other factors are not conducive to self-sufficiency. Our draft report acknowledged the concerns of voluntary agencies that limiting family reunification could cause an increase in secondary migration. Data on secondary migration are limited; ours included. However, our data were adequate to indicate secondary migration can occur irrespective of initial reunification for various reasons, including joining other relatives and friends, and responding to employment and training opportunities.

Problems associated with the continued placement of large numbers of refugees in limited areas led to the Government's development of a refugee placement policy, finalized by ORR in July 1982. It calls for voluntary agencies to give closer scrutiny before placing distant relatives in impacted areas. The policy states that free cases should not be resettled in high impact areas except under special circumstances.

The Congress, also recognizing the seriousness of the problem, addressed refugee placements in enacting the Refugee Assistance Amendments of 1982. The amendments prohibit, except under unusual circumstances, the placement of a refugee in an



told us that the only significant change the affiliate had made as a result of the memorandum was to begin designating the agency as the sponsor of record for paperwork purposes rather than other local sponsors. The official told us they intended to continue using relatives on welfare as sponsors if they felt these sponsors were progressing toward self-sufficiency.

Tolstoy Foundation, International Rescue Committee, and U.S. Catholic Conference stated that they had always been in favor of giving precedence to employment over English language training and other training programs, but the latter two agencies stated that circumstances beyond their control prevented them from doing so. For example, the U.S. Catholic Conference questioned refugees' interest in early employment, particularly entry level positions. They pointed to our information on welfare payment levels and continued welfare dependency as indicating a direct correlation between welfare payment levels and continued welfare dependency. An affiliate, commenting through the U.S. Catholic Conference national office, stated that a voluntary agency is powerless if a refugee wishes to pursue training instead of employment. This same affiliate stated that, to assume a tighter monitoring system would have an impact on early employment is naive, that voluntary agencies have no authority over which philosophy (employment or training) a refugee chooses to follow nor authority over employment service providers.

We recognize there have been limitations on the extent to which voluntary agencies and others can stress employment when there is a preference on the part of refugees to participate in approved training programs. On the other hand, as our report points out, efforts made by voluntary agencies and other service providers to provide employment services to recent refugee arrivals have been limited.

Two State Coordinator offices, California and Virginia, supported increased emphasis on job development and placement. Two others, Illinois and Texas, expressed concern that we were overlooking the importance of English language training in favor of early employment.

We recognize that English-speaking ability and other training can increase one's chances for obtaining and retaining successful long-term employment. We did not overlook that in completing our review. However, since the Refugee Act emphasizes the goal of self-sufficiency as quickly as possible, we concentrated on determining the emphasis placed on reaching this goal.

It should also be noted that the Refugee Assistance Amendments of 1982 state that employable refugees should be placed in

includes Indochinese refugees) is better than the experience cited in our report. Labor also commented that, since it does not know in advance where Indochinese refugees will be located and how many will need employment assistance, it is not feasible to have translators and other special assistance available at State employment offices.

We recognize that the extent of employment assistance provided by State employment services can vary between and within individual States. However, for those refugees we sampled, services were limited. We find incongruous Labor's argument that it does not know where refugees will be placed. Those areas having continuously received large numbers of refugees are well known.

Two of the voluntary agencies, the U.S. Catholic Conference and the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, acknowledged and expressed their concern over the increased reliance on relative sponsors and said they are making efforts to rekindle voluntary congregational support. On the other hand, ACVA, the American Council for Nationalities Service, the American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees, Inc., and the Tolstoy Foundation disagreed with our use of the term "sponsor" regarding resettlement assistance provided by former refugees. They pointed out that the voluntary agency is the sponsor, assisted by affiliated agencies, churches, and individuals.

We found that the term sponsor has a dual meaning and use. The term is used with respect to voluntary agencies which are the official sponsors and which agree to provide or assure that certain basic reception and placement services are provided to refugees. The term is also used to describe local individuals and groups other than voluntary agencies and their affiliates which often help resettle the refugees. We agree that voluntary agencies, as grantees, have ultimate sponsorship responsibility for providing resettlement services to refugees, and we are not opposed to relatives or others providing assistance. However, the fact remains that, in many cases, former refugees were increasingly being used by voluntary agencies to assist in the sponsorship process and provide resettlement assistance. More importantly, this was being done without the voluntary agencies maintaining contact with the refugees to provide employment assistance or related services or to assure that they were received elsewhere.

An official of a U.S. Catholic Conference affiliate, commenting through its national office, stated that we had not mentioned in our report their enforcement of the State Department's memorandum asking voluntary agencies not to use welfare recipients as sponsors. However, this same official had previously

regulatory changes and a formal statement of standards, goals, and priorities for the State-administered refugee program.

The State Department concurred with the recommendation that it require voluntary agencies to submit proposals as a prerequisite to receiving funding and indicated they will be required for all placement agreements issued on or after April 1, 1983. The State Department also concurred with and indicated it was taking actions to implement our recommendation to undertake program and financial monitoring and assure periodic audits of voluntary agencies.

The State Department generally concurred with the recommendation that the Secretary specify in the funding agreement that voluntary agencies place high priority on job development and placement and monitoring refugee progress toward self-sufficiency. The Department said it had made many changes in the cooperative agreements starting October 1, 1982, to (1) clarify goals of early employment and self-sufficiency and (2) require a plan for monitoring local affiliates and service delivery by other organizations to which referrals were made. However, the Department did not believe that the cooperative agreement should spell out who provides or funds each of the core services since services vary among refugees, depending on the situation and the availability of other resources in the community.

We believe that each voluntary agency should spell out what services it will provide, how each of the services will be provided, and what part of these services will be provided under cooperative agreement funding versus other funding sources. We believe this is a key way for the Government to know what services it is going to pay for and which agencies are most capable of providing needed services irrespective of funding sources.

Comments from two voluntary agencies, World Relief Refugee Services and International Rescue Committee, strengthened our belief that this clarification is needed. Both questioned how they could be expected to provide increased services with limited funding from the State Department.

We recognize that State Department funding of voluntary agencies' operations is limited, and we also recognize that overall, there has been an increased reliance by voluntary agencies on Federal funding to assist them in resettling the numbers of refugees which they have been called upon to resettle in recent years. At the same time, according to both a State Department official and even the funding agreement itself, the

jobs as soon after their arrival in the United States as possible. In their deliberations on this legislation, the House and Senate Committees on the Judiciary were emphatic that the inability to speak English does not constitute a basis for postponing a search for employment and stressed that training be provided in a manner or at a time which does not prevent refugees from seeking or holding full-time employment.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service stated that increased emphasis on employment by voluntary agencies is needed; however, where there are existing ORR-funded employment services, referrals seem to be the most appropriate course of action for voluntary agencies. Further, often the problem is not the lack of service provision, but a lack of coordination among various providers.

We agree that improved coordination is desirable; however, a key to effective resettlement is to make sure that needed services actually get provided by someone; something voluntary agencies are required to do, but frequently we found was not happening.

The U.S. Catholic Conference attached supplemental comments from its San Francisco affiliate asserting that we had failed to recognize that it referred all refugee cases to a State-funded employment assistance program connected with the local voluntary agency affiliate. We did, in fact, contact that provider and found that none of the employment age refugees in our sample had been served; the program gave priority to refugees whose eligibility for public assistance had expired.

#### MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL

HHS and the State Department and those State Coordinator offices responding to management issues agreed with our recommendations for improving Federal level management of the refugee program. Comments received from Federal, State, and voluntary agencies provided varying degrees of agreement/disagreement with two recommendations made to the Congress in our draft report and earlier congressional testimony for organizational realignments designed to simplify and improve the complex management structure of domestic resettlement.

HHS concurred with our recommendation that the Secretary should assure greater emphasis on job development and placement services to newly arriving refugees through ORR social service funds and employment emphasis concurrent with training. The HHS comments discussed several initiatives being taken, or being considered, in support of this recommendation, including

Breakdown of Cases Sampled by Counties and Voluntary Agencies

Voluntary Agency	Counties										Total	
	Arlington County, Va.		Cook County, Ill.		Harris County, Tex.		Ramsey County, Minn.		San Francisco County, Calif.		Universe	Sam
	Universe	Sample	Universe	Sample	Universe	Sample	Universe	Sample	Universe	Sample	Universe	Sam
U.S. Catholic Conference	20	20	18	10	112	25	21	12	43	15	214	83
American Council for Nationalities Service	-	-	74	20	-	-	13	13	33	12	120	41
International Rescue Committee	3	3	-	-	68	20	-	-	54	15	125	31
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society	-	-	26	13	7	7	-	-	8	8	41	21
Young Men's Christian Association	6	6	-	-	61	20	-	-	-	-	67	21
Church World Service	2	2	4	4	10	10	2	2	8	5	26	21
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service	-	-	12	10	4	4	2	2	8	6	26	21
World Relief Refugee Services	3	3	5	5	1	1	3	3	16	8	28	21
American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees, Incorporated	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	42	15	44	11
Tolstoy Foundation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	5	9	-
Buddhist Council	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<u>34</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>141</u>	<u>64</u>	<u>263</u>	<u>87</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>221</u>	<u>89</u>	<u>700</u>	<u>30</u>
Percent of total cases sampled by county		11.1		20.9		28.4		10.5		29.1		1

Note: The cases reviewed represent a statistically valid stratified random sample of total cases settled by voluntary agencies within those five counties for April and June 1981 per ACVA refugee arrival reports.

voluntary agencies were to provide services using both State Department and other sources of funding. This is another reason that a clarification is needed concerning the services the agencies are expected to or will provide. In clarifying these responsibilities, the level of detail should be sufficient to reach a consensus but need not be down to the individual refugee level, a concern expressed by the State Department's comments.

The State Department and the U.S. Coordinator disagreed with our recommendation that the Congress transfer the responsibility for refugee resettlement to HHS. The Department stated that we had not recognized steps that the Refugee Bureau had taken to respond to domestic issues, improvements made in its grants management, and the necessity of a bridge between the domestic and international aspects of the refugee program. The U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs disagreed with our recommendation that the Congress consider the need for his office on the basis that our recommendation was based on organizational simplicity rather than on facts presented in the report.

We did recognize an important action by the State Department in our draft report that involved the Department starting to develop procedures for monitoring service delivery of voluntary agencies. The Congress has also acted to better assure adequate monitoring and auditing of voluntary agencies. Through a provision in the Refugee Assistance Amendments of 1982, GAO is responsible for yearly evaluations of the State Department's auditing of the voluntary agencies. Our views on the need to deal with the organization of refugee assistance at the Federal level were discussed on pages 35 to 37.

TEN STATES WITH GREATEST NUMBERS  
OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES

<u>State</u>	Refugees resettled between 1975 and 11/30/81	
	<u>Number of refugees as of 11/30/81</u>	<u>Percent of total resettled in United States</u>
Total, United States	560,333	
California	190,772	34.0
Texas	50,546	9.0
Washington	26,034	4.6
Minnesota	22,870	4.1
Pennsylvania	21,240	3.8
Illinois	21,095	3.8
New York	16,882	3.0
Virginia	16,686	3.0
Oregon	16,396	2.9
Louisiana	<u>12,629</u>	2.3
Total	<u>395,150</u>	70.5

Note: Data obtained from ORR Monthly Data Reports, November 1981. Data were revised to account for secondary migration through September 30, 1981.

INDOCHINESE REFUGEES INCLUDED IN  
THE FIVE-COUNTY REVIEW

<u>Voluntary agency</u>	<u>Number of Indochinese refugees in the five-county review</u>	<u>Percent of total refugees in sample</u>
U.S. Catholic Conference	283	28.0
American Council for Nationalities Service	150	14.8
International Rescue Committee	119	11.8
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society	88	8.7
Church World Service	82	8.1
Young Men's Christian Association	81	8.0
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service	79	7.8
American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees, Inc.	63	6.2
World Relief Refugee Service	48	4.7
Tolstoy Foundation	18	1.8
Buddhist Council	<u>-</u>	-
Total	<u>1,011</u>	<u>a/99.9</u>

a/Does not total 100 percent due to rounding.





UNITED STATES COORDINATOR  
FOR REFUGEE AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20520

October 8, 1982

Mr. Frank C. Conahan, Director,  
International Division  
United States General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Conahan:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft report on Indochinese refugee resettlement prepared by GAO's Human Resources Division.

On balance, I find the report useful although not accurate in all areas. My office has reviewed the comments made by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of State and in general concurs with them, but would like to offer some additional observations of our own.

Perhaps the most helpful finding in the study was the clear recognition that, at the time of GAO's field work last year, there was much too little emphasis given to assisting refugees to find early employment. The report also accurately notes that this relative failure to recognize and act on perhaps the most important priority in our resettlement program was present at all levels in both the government and the private sectors.

I believe that most of the offices in our diverse program were beginning to become aware of the need to readjust priorities at about the time your staff began to plan its work. HHS and State comments demonstrate that the Administration has taken some important steps since last year. I agree with GAO, however, that much more still needs to be done. I will continue to work closely with HHS and State to better establish the general policy directions for which I am responsible, and to assist them in planning and implementing the necessary program changes which are theirs.

Regarding the study's findings on placement policy and the impact of refugees, I would simply observe that I believe that the focus should be less on the problems of emphasizing family reunion and more on the central problem of finding ways to better match the private and public resources of a given community to the number of refugees it receives. While I agree that too much emphasis has been given to family ties in making placement decisions in the past, I do not wish to make an

IMPACTED AREAS AND AREAS OF  
SPECIAL CONCERN AS IDENTIFIED BY ACVA,  
November 5, 1981 (note a)

<u>Impacted areas (note b)</u>	<u>Areas of special concern (note c)</u>
California: San Diego County Orange County Long Beach Sacramento Fresno Monterey	California: Los Angeles County Santa Clara County The Bay Area Sonoma County
Hawaii: Honolulu	Colorado: Denver
Minnesota: St. Paul - (Hmong cases only)	Illinois: Chicago
Rhode Island: Providence	Louisiana: New Orleans
Texas: Gulf Coast	Pennsylvania: Philadelphia
	Oregon: Portland
	Utah: Salt Lake City
	Washington: Seattle

a/Subsequent to this date, Northern Virginia and Miami, Florida, were identified as impacted areas.

b/Areas where voluntary agencies are to refrain from placing "free cases."

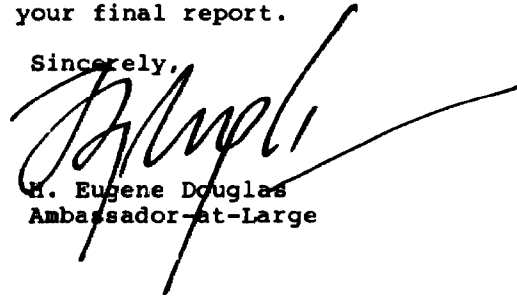
c/Areas where voluntary agencies are to limit "free case" placements.

The Congress knew what it was doing in establishing a high-level office which would be politically sensitive to inter-Cabinet coordination and which understands that policy leadership isn't always facilitated by having direct line management of all major activities.

I am comfortable that the cognizant House and Senate Committees recognize the distinct and vital role that the Coordinator's Office plays in guiding a balanced national refugee program.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my views on some of the of the more important problems of the U.S. refugee program. I look forward to your final report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. Eugene Douglas", written over the typed name and title.

H. Eugene Douglas  
Ambassador-at-Large

overcorrection of policy which would so spread out the geographical distribution of refugees that we would weaken the principle of clustering placements in numbers sufficient to continue viable ethnic communities and in some cases to build up new ones. Our practice of wide distribution was wrong in 1975 and it would be equally wrong now to revert to it.

Regarding the overutilization of welfare, I would suggest that less emphasis be given in the report to the early use of cash assistance and more to the need to find better coordinated methods for helping those who need such assistance to use it only as a temporary means to self-sufficiency. Some refugees can and should start jobs shortly after arrival, but others cannot. I am working with the prime operating agencies, HHS and State, to find possible alternatives to cash assistance linked to the mainstream welfare programs, but, for now, I think all of us can agree that some reliance on the present public welfare structure is inescapable.

I do not believe that this is the forum to give a full justification for my belief that, for now, authority for administering the reception and placement grants to voluntary agencies should remain with the Department of State. It may be that, after the Administration and the Congress complete our overall reviews of the refugee program in the coming year, we may wish to make such a change. I do not believe, however, that current knowledge supports making that transfer. Our American refugee program is indeed diverse and all of us would like to find simpler organization solutions, as GAO would. It does not seem to me now, however, that simplifying our Federal organization table by concentrating authority at HHS would necessarily benefit the overall program, particularly since I believe it should rely more, not less, on the private sector.

Finally, I would like to comment on the report's recommendation that Congress reconsider the need for a "separate Office of the U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs." As I have stated in my formal and informal consultations with the Congress, I would be pleased to dissolve the Coordinator's office, along with much of the HHS and State refugee-related bureaucracy - if it were reasonable to do so. It may be that at some future time we may find a way to restructure the program that will permit us to eliminate the Coordinator's position, but I do not believe that the Human Resources Division of GAO has made the case in this report. Its recommendation seems to have been made, again, largely on the grounds of organizational simplicity.

Comments of the Department of Health and Human Services  
On the General Accounting Office's Draft Report:  
"Indochinese Refugees—Changes Needed to Improve  
Resettlement and Decrease Welfare Dependency"

GAO Recommendation

The Secretary (of HHS) should periodically assess the effectiveness of the placement policy giving consideration to the comments and concerns of affected agencies at the Federal, State, and local level and of private resettlement organizations.

Department Comment

We concur. We believe close coordination with Federal, State, local and private resettlement organizations is an inherent feature of our new national refugee placement policy.

This policy was developed in response to State and local concerns about excessive concentrations of refugees in a few limited areas and the negative consequences of such concentrated resettlement. Prior to developing the policy, the Department's Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) consulted extensively with State and local government representatives, public interest groups, refugee organizations, and other interested parties. A concept paper and the draft policy were then circulated widely and the comments received were used to refine the draft policy. Final development was made in close collaboration with the Department of State and the voluntary resettlement agencies, which helped assure that the policy was acceptable to and adopted by the State Department.

The new refugee placement policy provides for the continued involvement of State and local groups in the placement and sponsorship process. The policy specifically states that the eight factors which the policy lays out for use in determining refugee impact are to be discussed with the Department of State, voluntary agencies, and State and local governments in order to determine appropriate responses and requirements for resettlement in areas of high impact. During FY 83, ORR intends to follow through on this provision by holding a series of consultation meetings with States and localities, interest groups and organizations to carry out a dialogue on issues of refugee placement and sponsorship. These meetings will also be for the purpose of assessing the implementation of the policy and to determine what adjustments may be necessary.

GAO Recommendation

The Secretary (of HHS) should assure greater emphasis on job development and placement services to newly arriving refugees through ORR social service funds and require emphasis on employment concurrent with training to the extent possible.

Department comment

We concur. ORR has undertaken several initiatives to emphasize job development and placement of refugees.



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH &amp; HUMAN SERVICES

Office of Inspector General

Washington, D.C. 20201

Mr. Gregory J. Ahart  
Director, Human Resources  
Division  
United States General  
Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Ahart:

The Secretary asked that I respond to your request for our comments on your draft of a proposed report "Indochinese Refugees--Changes Needed to Improve Resettlement and Decrease Dependency." The enclosed comments represent the tentative position of the Department and are subject to reevaluation when the final version of this report is received.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this draft report before its publication.

Sincerely yours,

*Richard P. Kusserow*  
for Richard P. Kusserow  
Inspector General

Enclosure

**U.S. Department of Labor**

Assistant Secretary for  
Employment and Training  
Washington, D.C. 20210



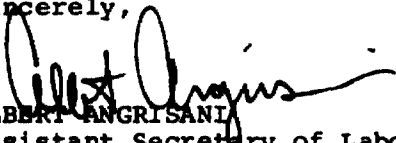
Mr. Gregory J. Ahart  
Director  
Human Resources Division  
U.S. General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Ahart:

This is in reply to your letter to Secretary Donovan requesting comments on the draft GAO report entitled, "Indochinese Refugees--Changes Needed to Improve Resettlement and Decrease Welfare Dependency." The Department's response is enclosed.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to comment on this report.

Sincerely,

  
ALBERT ANGRISANI  
Assistant Secretary of Labor

Enclosure

—First, the "ORR Statement of Program Goals, Priorities, and Standards for the State-Administered Refugee Resettlement Program," issued August 16, 1982 to all State refugee program coordinators and administrators, stresses that States should use ORR program funds in a manner that encourages refugees to accept early employment opportunities.

—Second, we are considering regulatory changes to the program to promote employment, emphasize training during non-working hours, limit further exemptions to refugees from their job search, and increase sanctions for refusing job offers.

—Third, we have proposed that Congress eliminate the section of the Refugee Act which exempts refugees from employment registration and acceptance of job offer requirements during their first 60 days after arrival in the U.S.

—Fourth, we have several new projects underway to promote job development and placement. They include a demonstration grant to involve community and corporate business leadership in refugee job development and placement programs; a demonstration grant to provide technical assistance to refugee mutual assistance associations in business development and business management; and a pilot refugee "outplacement program" to establish refugee job placement coordinators in public welfare offices who will assist refugees in finding jobs while they are receiving public assistance.

—Finally, employment will be given emphasis in the work of the Task Force on Follow-up Services, which ORR is chairing. This Task Force which is comprised of representatives of the Department of State, national and local voluntary agencies, States, refugee groups, and service providers, will be working to integrate initial refugee resettlement activities with the ongoing support provided through ORR's domestic assistance resources. Through the efforts of this Task Force we hope to bring about significant improvements in refugee resettlement activities leading to refugees' early employment and self-sufficiency.



Since the Department does not know in advance where Indochinese refugees will be located and how many will need employment assistance, it is not feasible to have translators and other special assistance available for these individuals at State employment offices. However, State employment offices do have a better record of providing employment assistance to Asians and Pacific Islanders, which includes Indochinese refugees and other non-English speaking groups, than the experience cited in the report. In the first nine months of FY '82, 37 percent of all Asians and Pacific Islanders registered at State employment offices were referred to jobs.

U.S. Department of Labor's Response To  
The Draft General Accounting Office Report  
Entitled --

Indochinese Refugees--Changes Needed  
To Improve Resettlement and Decrease  
Welfare Dependency

Report Content

The report cites the fact that Indochinese refugees in the study sample were required to register with State employment offices as a condition for initially receiving or continuing to receive public assistance payments. The report says that State employment offices (1) provided little employment assistance to the refugees, with work registration being a perfunctory exercise, (2) did not consider refugees job ready without English speaking skills, and (3) did not have special programs or extra resources, including translators, to assist refugees in finding jobs.

Comments

When the State Department, as the lead agency, initiated activities to assist Indochinese persons under the Refugee Act of 1980, the United States Employment Service (USES) was asked to arrange for State employment offices to assist in meeting the employment needs of these refugees. No special funds were provided by the State Department for the State Employment Services, but they made extraordinary efforts to work directly and cooperatively with the voluntary agencies which did receive funds from the State Department.

State Employment Service teams were sent to several State Department refugee distribution points (in Arkansas, California, Florida, etc.) and, with assistance of voluntary agency translators, identified the employment skills of refugees, and provided refugees with labor market information for the communities in which they were to be located. The USES provided a special directory to all State Employment Services, identifying the names and locations of all the State Department's voluntary agencies assisting refugees, and instructed local employment service offices to contact the voluntary agencies in advance and arrange to assist the refugees when they joined their sponsor in the community. Not only was considerable employment assistance provided to the Indochinese refugees, but the State employment office played a major role in helping to enroll them in training for basic literacy skills and vocational training (e.g., local training sponsors as well as Job Corps centers gave some priority to enrolling Indochinese persons referred by the Employment Service).

GAO DRAFT REPORT: "Indochinese Refugees -- Changes Needed To Improve Resettlement And Decrease Welfare Dependency"

The GAO draft report on Indochinese refugee resettlement makes three recommendations to the Department of State. We agree in principle with all of them, although we question some of the particulars therein. The Bureau for Refugee Programs has already taken action in many of the areas and within six months will have moved on all of them. Additionally, the report recommends to Congress that reception and placement grants be moved to HHS. We disagree. The recommendation was made without giving recognition to the many steps the Bureau for Refugee Programs has taken to respond to domestic issues. It also ignores the importance of the grants to the Department's foreign policy implementation, the numerous improvements the Bureau has made in its grants management, and the bridge between international and domestic information and processing the Bureau provides.

As a general observation before discussing the above matters in detail, it is very important to mention the enormous contribution which the voluntary agencies have made to our domestic resettlement program. Problems notwithstanding, the agencies have been the constant friend to refugees and represent the backbone of our system. The report fails to acknowledge this in any way.

Recommendations to the Department of State

(1) "We recommend that the Secretary revise funding agreements with the voluntary agencies to clarify those activities that the agencies and their affiliates are expected to provide under those agreements versus activities using their own resources, those of local sponsors or other Federal resources. We also recommend that the Secretary specify in the funding agreement that voluntary agencies will place high priority on job development and placement assistance for refugees and on monitoring refugees' progress toward self-sufficiency."



DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
*Comptroller*  
Washington, D.C. 20520


Dear Frank:

I am replying to your letter of August 26, 1982, which forwarded copies of the draft report: "Indochinese Refugees -- Changes Needed to Improve Resettlement and Decrease Welfare Dependency".

The enclosed comments on this report were prepared by the Acting Director in the Bureau for Refugee Programs.

We appreciate having had the opportunity to review and comment on the draft report. If I may be of further assistance, I trust you will let me know.

Sincerely,

  
Roger B. Feldman

Enclosure:

As Stated.

Mr. Frank C. Conahan,  
Director,  
International Division,  
U.S. General Accounting Office,  
Washington, D.C.

(2) "If the Refugee Bureau retains responsibility for the program of initial resettlement, we recommend that the Secretary require the Refugee Bureau to undertake program and financial monitoring on an ongoing basis and to assure that periodic audits of voluntary agencies' activities are performed."

Comment:

This spring the Bureau established the Office of Reception and Placement whose primary function is to monitor the voluntary agencies' performance under the terms of the cooperative agreement. The monitoring commenced in early August for one week with a pilot project, in Arlington Virginia, as the first site. The five voluntary agencies operating in Arlington were studied. Agency staff, refugees, and sponsors were interviewed and case files were examined.

Also, extensive interviews were conducted with county officials and service providers. The monitoring team subsequently spoke with each person interviewed to pass on preliminary observations. Upon completion of the Congressional consultations, the Bureau will make its next review and anticipates on-site monitoring no less frequently than every six weeks thereafter.

Regarding the recommendation for financial monitoring and auditing of the agencies, the Bureau is aware of the ambiguity of the current quarterly reports. We are currently reviewing the format with the Audit Staff of the Department's Inspector General to obtain its guidance for the development of clear and concise financial requirements. In view of the varied accounting systems of the voluntary agencies, we are arranging meetings early next month to discuss a revised format to be implemented with the execution of the new agreements by April 1, 1983.

Although the current agreements provide for the submission of the agencies' annual audit performed by their external auditors, we plan to require a specific review of the quarterly reports which will ensure the adequacy and conformity of the reported expenditures with the agencies' overall accounting practices. In addition, the Bureau will arrange for the Department's Audit Staff to perform periodic reviews.

**Comment:**

The cooperative agreements, to become effective October 1, 1982, for a six-month period, will contain a number of revisions which respond to the recommendation. The Bureau is currently working out the specifics with the agencies. (Further changes will be made at the end of six months.) Language will be added placing emphasis on the goals of self-sufficiency and early employment, more clearly defining local presence and moving towards a simple form of case management, requiring a plan by each national agency to monitor its local affiliates, and providing for a Bureau review of sub-contracting arrangements.

The new agreement also incorporates language which reflects policy in effect for several months, that sponsors cannot be on welfare. This does not mean, however, that close family members will not be reunited if the refugee already in this country is on welfare or that the resettled refugee may not assist the incoming refugee in some ways. Rather, the policy is intended to ensure that the voluntary agency or some other sponsor is fully prepared to provide the full range of core services.

We do not believe the agreement should spell out who provides or funds each of the services. This will vary enormously depending on such factors as the extent of the needs of the refugee, the type of sponsorship arrangement, the time when the refugee arrives, and other resources available in the community. The agencies must determine the most appropriate way to provide core services on a refugee-by-refugee basis.

However, other actions respond to the intent of the recommendation. The Bureau is also proposing a requirement that when a local voluntary affiliate refers a refugee to another individual or organization for delivery of a core service, the affiliate should determine whether the service was satisfactorily delivered. When coupled with a monitoring effort (to be discussed in response to Recommendation 2), this provides accountability while still allowing flexibility. Additionally, the specifics of each local voluntary agency's service delivery are described in the agencies' State plans, first required by the Bureau in FY '82, and which will be updated yearly hereafter.

**Comment:**

We disagree with this recommendation on two basic grounds. First, the report incorrectly implies a Department of State insensitivity to domestic matters including coordination, and uses that, among other things, to contribute to its argument for the grants to be transferred. In response, above and beyond the organizational changes, monitoring, and contract modifications already mentioned, we cite as examples the following areas where the Bureau has been active.

**Placement Policy** - The report questions ORR's ability to enforce placement policy while Department of State manages the grants. The Bureau has played and continues to play a very effective role in placement policy development and implementation. It was a key player in the formation of the current policy, developed under the leadership of HHS, and transmitted it to the resettlement agencies in July of this year. The Bureau has already applied the new policy for the Cuban political prisoners and has informed Florida of this fact, as well as of the estimated number of refugees to expect.

In support of the special placement project emanating from that policy, the Bureau is canvassing overseas Southeast Asia posts to determine how many free cases exist and the national or ethnic make-up of these cases. The Bureau met with two states, along with HHS, to attempt to work out the particulars of a planned placement and will be meeting with a third within the month.

In September 1981, prior to the promulgation of the current policy, the Bureau instructed the agencies to develop a list of areas where free cases should not be placed and the criteria for determination of impact. This resulted in the ACVA placement policy of November 1981, which was distributed to the states and which, until the new policy, governed placements.

(3) "We also recommend that the Secretary require the voluntary agencies to submit proposals and applications as a prerequisite to awarding funding for initial reception and placement services to refugees."

Comment:

In connection with the recommendation that proposals and applications be submitted by the voluntary agencies, we agree and will require individual proposals for all reception and placement agreements issued on or after April 1, 1983. It should be pointed out that the Bureau does require proposals for its other program activities. Since most of the agencies were already performing R&P services at their own expense prior to our involvement, our support grew from a very limited assistance program to the current substantial funding arrangements which now justifies a more formal treatment.

The report also makes a recommendation to Congress on the organization location of the reception and placement grants, on which we would like to comment.

#### Recommendation to the Congress

"In order to better organize the domestic refugee resettlement program, reduce unnecessary fragmentation of responsibilities for the program, fix accountability for domestic refugee resettlement, and better enable ORR to execute its responsibilities for developing and implementing placement policies, we recommend that the Congress amend section 412(b) of the Refugee Act to give total responsibility for the program of initial resettlement of refugees to the Secretary of Health and Human Services."



Second, the recommendation only attempts to examine the domestic aspect of the grants management location. Clearly the grant program has very strong foreign policy ramifications. Continued Department of State responsibility for this sensitive and significant function ensures the effective execution of those many critical Administration foreign policy decisions involving refugee programs. Additionally, the Bureau provides a continuity between the international and domestic activities of the voluntary agencies and acts as an information bridge between the international and domestic refugee arenas. Because the overseas and domestic aspects of refugee admissions and resettlement are being handled within one directorate of the Bureau, the exchange of such information is quick, coordinated, and accurate.



✓ James N. Purcell  
Acting Director  
Bureau for Refugee Programs

The Bureau has had a placement tracking system in operation for over a year, whereby it can determine the basis on which each agency places each refugee throughout the country. The Bureau periodically reviews the data to ensure that agencies minimize the numbers of refugees who initially resettle in areas with already significant numbers of refugees. It also monitors the process "front end" by overseeing the weekly allocations committee meeting.

Domestic Consultations - In the area of domestic consultations, the Bureau has been an equal participant with HHS and the Coordinator's office since the summer of 1980, when the whole process began. It has established an effective working relationship with each ORR Regional Director and with a significant number of State Refugee Coordinators.

Additionally, the Bureau, in partnership with ORR, is funding the ACVA Resource Center. The Center's objectives include providing information on the refugee resettlement program to the domestic community and enhancing coordination. One project of the Center was the two day conference in New York in August with the State Refugee Coordinators to explore a number of broad resettlement issues including case management.

Information Systems - Since July of 1980, the Bureau, drawing upon its extensive overseas operations, has been providing to the resettlement community information on projected refugee arrivals. Currently it provides to all State Refugee Coordinators reports with gross data on the numbers and geographic origins of projected incoming refugees. These monthly reports are then distributed by the Coordinators to interested individuals, including state and local governmental representatives.

SDSS RESPONSE

We concur with this recommendation in that it is important for VOLAGS to remain in contact with refugees and other agencies in order to ensure that program requirements are being met. One such recently issued program instruction requires State welfare agencies to contact refugee sponsors or resettlement agencies as part of determining or redetermining refugees' eligibility for cash and medical assistance and to determine whether the refugees had refused employment offers or voluntarily quit a job without good cause.

GAO RECOMMENDATION

Periodically assess the effectiveness of the placement policy giving consideration to the comments and concerns of those involved in refugee resettlement.

SDSS RESPONSE

We concur with the GAO's recommendation that the effectiveness of placement policy be assessed periodically. California has long been a proponent of the need for a national placement policy in order to ensure the effective planning, coordination and management of resources for refugee resettlement. We further support the placement policy that VOLAGS not use welfare recipients as sponsors. Refugee sponsors who are on assistance are limited in their ability to provide the many services needed for successful resettlement of new refugees. Continuing this practice will keep the welfare dependency rate high because these refugees are more likely to become dependent on cash assistance. We also recommend a system whereby VOLAGS would be required to submit annual placement plans which describe the areas, where they intend to settle refugees, which had been developed after consultation with the designated states and counties.

GAO RECOMMENDATION

Provide greater emphasis on job development and placement services to newly arriving refugees through the Office of Refugee Resettlement social service funds and require emphasis on employment concurrent with training to the extent possible.

SDSS RESPONSE

California recognizes the importance of services and training in assisting refugees in attaining quick economic self-sufficiency and supports the greater emphasis placed on this area. Further recommendation should be made to ensure that states receive adequate social services funds in lump-sum allocations at the beginning of each Federal Fiscal Year for the growing numbers of refugees needing these services. Additionally, the opportunity to begin the cultural orientation process and English as a Second Language instruction in the resettlement camps should be enhanced so that more refugees awaiting resettlement will benefit from placement services.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate our overall support of the report's conclusions and recommendations. We do have some concerns regarding the development of some of the data used in the report, and since findings in this report may be used for future reference or action, we recommend that certain conclusions or statements based on that data be deleted or modified. In that respect, we have attached further comments to be considered for inclusion to the final report.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND WELFARE AGENCY

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 445-7046

Mr. Gregory J. Ahart, Director  
Human Resources Division  
U.S. General Accounting Office  
441 G Street, N.W., Room 6864  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Ahart:

GAO DRAFT REPORT ENTITLED "INDOCHINESE REFUGEES - CHANGES NEEDED TO IMPROVE RESETTLEMENT AND DECREASE WELFARE DEPENDENCY"

This is in response to your request for comments on the above-cited draft report. We have reviewed the report, and found, overall, that it provided a comprehensive and informative review of major issues that impact successful refugee resettlement.

The recommendations in the report are directed to Congress, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Health and Human Services and focus on revisions to the Refugee Act, Voluntary Agencies (VOLAGS), placement policy and job placement services that will enhance refugees' quick attainment of economic self-sufficiency. There were several recommendations in particular that we would like to address. Those recommendations are:

GAO RECOMMENDATION

Amend Section 412(b) of the Refugee Act to give total responsibility for the program of initial resettlement of refugees to the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

SDSS RESPONSE

We strongly support this recommendation and have often recommended that the responsibility for refugee resettlement should be consolidated under one department at the federal level. This consolidation of responsibility would eliminate the confusion of roles and responsibilities and inefficient administration of services at the national level.

GAO RECOMMENDATION

Revise voluntary agencies' funding agreements to further clarify the agencies' responsibilities, place greater emphasis on employment services and ensure monitoring of refugees' progress toward self-sufficiency.

GAO notes: GAO responses to certain comments received are included as appropriate in discussion of agency comments in chapter 6. In some instances, agency comments are footnoted and addressed on the final page of the agency comments or on an attached page.

Page references in this appendix have been changed to correspond with the page numbers in the final report.

COMMENTS OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
ON THE GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE'S DRAFT REPORT,  
"INDOCHINESE REFUGEES - CHANGES NEEDED TO IMPROVE RESETTLEMENT  
AND DECREASE WELFARE DEPENDENCY" DATED AUGUST 26, 1982

GAO REPORT (PAGE 9, PARAGRAPH 3):

"Voluntary agencies believe that limiting reunification to close relatives would encourage secondary migration. The validity of this is unclear since studies on this subject are limited. However, in our five county review, 9 percent of refugees in our sample cases migrated to other areas within a few months of arrival. Of those migrating, 44 percent had originally been sponsored by a relative or friend. This suggests that reunification itself does not necessarily deter secondary migration."

SDSS COMMENTS:

While California supports the establishment of a placement policy that considers factors other than reunification in an attempt to provide relief to areas already heavily impacted by refugee resettlement, it is also important to address any impact upon secondary migration that may result pursuant to this placement policy. The causes for secondary migration are manifold and it should be acknowledged that the implementation of a new policy for placement of refugees has the potential to increase secondary migration and add to this growing problem. One of the major reasons this is of concern is due to the fact that there is no accepted standard for a national measure of secondary migration, and that the allocation of funds for social services is based upon a federally formulated population data base which does not adequately account for secondary migration.

The data presented in the review findings and in Table 2-1 is not strong enough to conclude that a placement policy based on reunification does not deter secondary migration because the number of cases involved in migration was too small to be significant. It is recommended that this opinion be modified or deleted from the report.

GAO REPORT (PAGE 13, PARAGRAPH 4):

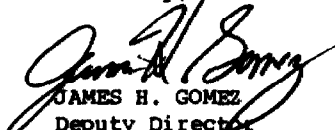
"Although the Refugee Act of 1980 made an effort to eliminate funding uncertainties by authorizing program funding for three years, much uncertainty has remained, particularly for social service programs. This has been due to budget cuts, priority given to cash and medical assistance and delays in awards to states, hampering their program planning."

SDSS COMMENTS:

Funding uncertainties in the refugee program continue to be a critical issue that hinders program planning and the delivery of social services. It is recommended that this issue be given more emphasis in the report as timely and adequate funding is the foundation necessary for effective and efficient delivery of services and assistance to refugees in attaining economic self-sufficiency. The following describes the major problem areas related to current federal funding methods:

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft report. If you have any questions, please contact Carol Rogers, Chief, Audits Evaluation Section, at (916) 445-7046.

Sincerely,



JAMES H. GOMEZ  
Deputy Director  
Administration

Attachment

This program change was made in an attempt to alleviate the Federal Government's funding shortage problem, however, the impact on refugees and state and local governments will be significant. First, because relatively few states have General Assistance programs, this means that refugees residing in those states that do not have GA programs will be terminated from any further special cash assistance after their first 18 months in the United States. Second, states that do have GA programs can expect an increase in secondary migration as refugees seek continued assistance in those states for their second 18 months in the United States. It has already been documented that states without GA programs have been advising their refugee population to relocate to states that have a GA program.

In California, the GA programs are administered solely by the individual counties, so the level of benefits vary from county to county. This situation is expected to have an impact on intrastate migration as well as interstate migration. Reference to previous comments on the impact of secondary migration as it relates to the placement policy and funding allocations will be further impacted by this recent program change.

GAO REPORT (PAGE 26, PARAGRAPH 2):

"Few refugees in our sample obtained jobs through social service providers."

SDSS COMMENTS:

This statement is incomplete and misleading. The implication is that a majority of the refugees in this sample had received services through social service providers, when, in fact, many of these refugees had no contact with ORR-funded service providers (as is mentioned later in the report).

In addition to the above comments, we would like to provide the following clarification of specific data contained in the report:

1. PAGE 24, TABLE 4-1: The data shown for San Francisco County in the "Number of Employable Age Refugees Known by Voluntary Agency to have obtained a job" column is not consistent with the San Francisco data shown in Table 4-2 (page 27). The number of refugees known to have obtained jobs in Table 4-1 was listed as "5", while the number of refugees who had received services and obtained employment in Table 4-2 was listed as "12." [See GAO note.]
2. PAGE 51, APPENDIX III: California estimates that the Indochinese refugee population resettled in this State as of November 30, 1981 was 211,265. This figure does not include other ethnic groups. California has officially commented in the past that ORR population data does not accurately reflect the impact of secondary migration to this State.

GAO note: The data in these two tables reflect two separate sources of information. Those refugees known by voluntary agencies' staffs to have obtained a job may have secured employment through various sources, such as the voluntary agency, a friend, social service provider, or on their own. In addition, voluntary agencies' staffs were unaware of many of our sample refugees' employment status. Table 4-2 shows those refugees obtaining employment through social service providers.

1. ORR provides the states with quarterly allocations which are normally not received until the middle of the quarter for which they are intended. In addition to the belated and irregular method of allocation, states often do not even receive a planning figure for their total annual allocation until they are well into the fiscal year.
2. The level of federal funding for special support services to California has steadily diminished from \$28 million in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 1980 to approximately \$16 million in FFY 1983, despite the fact that the refugee population has continued to grow. Inadequate funding for support services delays the goal of assisting refugees in becoming self-supporting and extends their dependency on cash and medical assistance.
3. Sporadic funding information created a workload impact on staff, who ordinarily would have been responsible for evaluating purchase of service contract compliance and effectiveness, and forced reduction of half of their time to the task of extending contracts and amending budgets and program goals.
4. Finally, this State is facing a \$67 million shortfall in federal money available to cover our FFY 1982 costs for refugee cash and medical assistance. Consequently, although the report states that priority is given to cash and medical assistance, the reality of the situation is that ORR does not have adequate resources to fully reimburse California for those costs for which Congress has made a commitment.

The report should emphasize that the Federal Government could expedite the attainment of self-sufficiency for refugees by accepting full financial responsibility for the funding of all aspects of refugee resettlement and by ensuring that states receive adequate social services funds in a lump-sum allocation at the beginning of each federal fiscal year.

GAO REPORT (PAGE 17, PARAGRAPH 1):

"However, those refugees receiving cash assistance under special eligibility provisions will receive public assistance on the same basis as other state residents after their first 18 months in the United States. Thus, the new policy authorizes States, where general assistance programs are available, to seek reimbursement for costs incurred through these programs during the second 18 months refugees are in the United States."

SDSS COMMENTS:

This section of the report does not fully describe the changes made in the federal program which shorten the period for which refugees are eligible for the special Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) Program, nor does it discuss the impact of the program changes upon refugees or state and local governments. The report should clarify that the eligibility provision for the RCA Program was shortened to the refugee's first 18 months in the United States and in order for the States to receive 100 percent federal reimbursement for the second 18 months the refugees must meet regular eligibility requirements for General Assistance (GA) programs, where available.

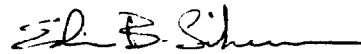


The Illinois case management system (formalized July 1, 1981) is an effort to strengthen the system. Although procedures are still being modified, we have realized a more concentrated emphasis on employment, earlier refugee access to services, and stronger follow-up on refugee progress.

The GAO testimony in the reauthorization hearings last spring cited our case management system. The Report makes lesser reference on page 32; our efforts also relate to discussion on pages 21 and 30. More importantly, we believe the Report should include a Recommendation to the Secretary of DHHS (page 34) that management guidelines be devised to secure better monitoring of service delivery and refugee adjustment progress.

In closing, we commend your staff for judicious treatment of an extremely complex program in a very short timeframe. Most certainly, the Report will foster responsible discussion and program improvement in the near future.

Sincerely,



Edwin B. Silverman  
Manager  
Refugee Resettlement Program

EBS:clr

cc: Phil Hatmaker

GAO note: Page references in this appendix have been changed to correspond with the page numbers in the final report.

STATE OF ILLINOIS  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AIDJEFFREY C. MILLER  
DIRECTOR424 SOUTH MICHIGAN AVENUE  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60605

September 21, 1982

Gregory Ahart  
U.S. General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Re: Proposed Report on Indochinese Refugees

Dear Mr. Ahart,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft report on "Indochinese Refugees." Within the parameters set for the investigation, it was fair and accurate. Unquestionably, the recommendations should receive careful consideration by Congress in deliberating reauthorization of the Refugee Act.

In general, the parameters of the study, in particular, limiting the case sample to six months of residence, do not permit an adequate view of refugee social services. First, service providers with reduced resources have been concentrating employment services on longer term residents, especially those approaching the 36-month (now 18 month) limitation on special refugee eligibility for cash assistance.

Second, resettlement is a process. In our experience, the majority of clients reach stable employment in the period of 18-30 months after arrival. The study seems to suggest (p. 26) that counseling, orientation, and ESL are unimportant to job placement activities. In fact, those services are almost essential for competitive job search and for effective, long-term employment. From our perspective we were pleased that the clients in Cook County had substantively entered services (Table 4-1) within the first six months and hence were moving toward self-sufficiency.

Third, there is a suggestion that "quick self-sufficiency" and public assistance as a "last resort" are realistic expectations for large numbers of new refugee arrivals. Given a faltering economy, clients with low skills in adaptability, diminished initial sponsorship support, and reduced social services, the rate of job placement in the sample (19% in Cook County) is quite good for the first six months. The refugee placement rate in Cook County's sagging economy was almost as strong as that in Harris County's thriving economy because of strong service delivery. Without deep private sponsor support, cash assistance is the only means of survival for the refugees in their transition to self-sufficiency.

That is not to say the resettlement system does not require improvement.

## COMMENTS

DRAFT GAO REPORT - "INDOCHINESE REFUGEES - CHANGES NEEDED  
TO IMPROVE RESETTLEMENT AND DECREASE WELFARE DEPENDENCY"

1. General

The purpose of this report, "changes needed to improve resettlement and decrease welfare dependency," reiterates an ongoing issue that is not considered at this time to be a major problem in Texas. The dependency rate for Texas is very low in comparison with some other areas. It appears to be stated as a fact in this study that the dependency rate is high in all sites reviewed. Also, we feel that the Volags in Texas are doing a good job.

2. Methodology/Standards

[GAO note 1.] The criteria or standards used in the study were not furnished nor did we have copies of the survey instrument. Without this information it has been somewhat difficult to assess or address the validity of the results of the study. It appears that the single most important criteria for measurement is "immediate job placement" against which all activities are judged. The Volags have rather wide flexibility concerning what they do for resettlement. Social Services consist of three priority services, not just one, i.e. English as a Second Language (ESL), job training, and job placement.

3. Harris County Data

Although Harris County comes out rather well compared to the other sites visited, the statistics shown do not in all cases appear to reflect an accurate performance. From our copy of the sample list, the following minor discrepancies were found:

- a) There were 156 names on the list, not 157. Thus, the sample size should be 156 unless a name has been added to the list. [GAO note 2.]
- b) Of those names shown to be active cash assistance recipients, five persons were on Type Program 07 - Four Months Post Medicaid - only for cases denied a cash grant because of earned income. As these persons meet GAO's "goal," they should not be counted as cash assistance recipients, as they receive medical assistance only. [GAO note 3.]
- c) Since this study addresses the ORR regulations and Volag activities, AFDC recipients should not be included in the sample. The AFDC-refugees are not referred to providers, do not receive the 60-day work

## Texas Department of Human Resources

State Headquarters Located at 706 Banister Lane  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2960 • Austin, Texas 78769

**COMMISSIONER**  
Marlin W. Johnston

September 24, 1982



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Mr. Gregory J. Ahart, Director  
Human Resources Division  
United States General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548


Dear Mr. Ahart:

Thank you very much for the copies of the draft of your proposed report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and International Law, House Judiciary Committee, dated August 26, 1982, concerning resettlement of Indochinese refugees.

In accordance with your request, we have reviewed your very excellent report carefully. I am enclosing my comments concerning the report. Please let me emphasize that many of my comments are based on my viewing the report from the viewpoint of Texas, which may not be applicable to other states. In a few cases, in order to be as helpful as possible, I have suggested some minor changes. In any event, these comments are aimed at being both helpful and constructive.

I hope that our comments will be of assistance to you. If you have any questions, or need additional information, please call me at (512) 441-3355, extension 2055.

Sincerely,

  
John D. Townsend  
State Coordinator  
Refugee Resettlement Program

Enclosure - Comments concerning draft GAO Report  
on Resettlement of Indochinese Refugees

cc: Governor William P. Clements, Jr.  
Commissioner Marlin W. Johnston

**GAO note:** GAO responses to certain comments received are included as appropriate in discussion of agency comments in chapter 6. In some instances, agency comments are footnoted and addressed on the final page of the agency comments or on an attached page.

Providers are required to serve other persons who are not refugees; yet they would be forced to create separate programs just for refugees who work during the day. An important factor which may have been overlooked, is the income eligibility criteria used for Vocational Training. In Texas, even an entry-level job would prohibit a refugee from being eligible for training. Many clients have begun training, gotten a job to exist while enrolled, then lost eligibility to continue their training. Not only is this a waste of Federal funds already expended for training that is not completed, but the refugee is forced to stay in a low-level job when training would have provided upward mobility.

Removal of the work registration exemption for training will result in a punitive treatment of refugees in comparison with AFDC recipients. As refugees do not have the other advantages of citizens looking for work, this will serve to increase the difficulty of placing refugees in jobs. There is a valid relation between training and job placement, as the goal of all training must be that it leads to employment.

#### 7. Time Required for Self-Sufficiency

Although many studies, hearings and debates have been held regarding how long it takes a refugee to become self-sufficient, and the Refugee Act allows 18 months to attain this, this study has used 4-6 months as the measure. The charts show recipients of cash assistance who are still receiving assistance after only 4-6 months. In Texas, cash assistance cases are only redetermined after six months, and with processing time, at least seven months should have been allowed to determine if denial occurred.

#### 8. Report's Recommendations

a) I concur with:

- (1) Repeal of the 60-day work registration exemption for refugees.
- (2) Clarifying the funding and activities of the Volags at the Federal level.
- (3) The giving of total responsibility for initial resettlement programs to HHS.
- (4) The creating of a single Federal office to deal with all refugee resettlement. (We believe that the office of the U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs and ORR should remain to operate program.)
- (5) The strengthening of overall management of the program at the Federal level with increased emphasis on program direction and oversight.

[GAO note 4.] registration exemption but are required to participate in the WIN program if they do not meet one of the exemptions. Since WIN was not examined, these persons should not be included in an examination of job placements. There were seven active AFDC recipients in this sample, and for the sake of accuracy, it is recommended that the seven AFDC and five TP-07 recipients be deleted from the totals of active cash assistance persons for accuracy.

#### 4. "Employable Age" Criteria

The only criteria used to judge refugee employability appears to be age. In the study, this is defined as a range of 16-64 years, which does not jibe with Federally defined "employability" criteria. The study apparently did not consider other important criteria, such as high school students, persons in poor health, mothers with children and persons in training or vocational schools who are exempt from employment registration in accordance with Federal regulations in both the Refugee and AFDC programs. Apparently, there also was not an examination as to whether the refugee was part of a two-adult household where one adult is working. These persons do not have to register nor be employed and the household income may meet all needs. An analysis based solely on age is not believed to be either valid nor representative of the Refugee population. There are twelve refugees in this study 16-18 years old and two who were under age 16. These are children who, according to Texas law and Federal exemptions, do not require work registration or employment if they are in school full time. Thus, these 14 persons should not be considered "employable."

#### 5. Invalid/Unverified Statements

There are a number of generalizations made such as, the "majority" of refugees receive cash assistance, states place "little emphasis" on employment, "few" refugees have obtained jobs through provider agencies, etc. I feel that blanket statements such as "welfare offices are not referring refugees to providers" and providers are "not emphasizing employment" need supporting data, particularly as they appear to apply to all sites studied.

#### 6. Vocational Training/ESL

It would appear from a General Accounting Office point of view that resettlement means something of a "quick-fix" solution. It has been our experience that ESL and vocational training have been successful in leading to employment and on-going self-sufficiency and self-support. Restricting these services to non-work hours (evenings) not only places a burden on the refugee, but also, on providers who must deliver these service programs. This is not mandated nor expected for AFDC recipients or non-recipients. [GAO note 5.]

- 2) The elimination of ESL and vocational training as priority services available during normal hours.

Recommendation: That these two aspects be re-considered and that they not be recommended for deletion.

b) I have some problems with the following, and comment briefly on each:

- (1) Greater emphasis on employment through Federal law.

The Refugee Act does emphasize employment as a condition for receiving cash assistance and is Texas' focus/goal of the three priority units of service in Social Services.

- (2) A monitoring and tracking system for Volags and use of ORR's Refugee Caseload Monitoring System (RCMS). [GAO note 6.]

We have expressed our problems concerning the RCMS and the MIS/case management system that this recommendation supports. Texas has a social services management system for in-house tracking and monitoring. The Volags and states would need massive amounts of federal funds to develop a complex system such as a new CM/MIS. I feel that the states can develop their own methods of monitoring with the Volags using reports or referrals to monitor services to recipients. We do not need a Federal system.

- (3) Require that priority be given to placement in unskilled, entry level jobs and to remove the exemption which excludes persons participating in language or training programs when part of the employability plan is accepting such employment.

It appears to be that the report feels that job placement is easily done without basic language proficiency or training for skills. I do not believe that this is really a valid assumption when the current economy and automation of activities in industry has severely limited the type of available jobs. For most entry level jobs some degree of skill is required to communicate or perform tasks. Training as defined by ORR and Texas, must lead to employment, provide skills needed in the job market and provide a reasonable level of self-sufficiency. Disallowing refugees the provision of skills to even compete on a minimal level for jobs will detrimentally impact cash assistance rates and the length of time assistance must be provided. Individual needs must be considered (as we do in our employment assessment and employability plans), not the assumption that all refugees have access to unskilled jobs. Another point relating to Texas is the large number of Mexican and other undocumented aliens who also compete for entry-level jobs.

#### Summary

Two major concerns arise from a review of this report. They are:

- 1) The use of tracking/monitoring systems developed at the Federal versus State level.



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WILLIAM L. LUKHARD  
COMMISSIONER

## COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

### DEPARTMENT OF WELFARE

Telephone (804) 281 9204

September 22, 1982

Mr. Gregory J. Ahart, Director  
United States General  
Accounting Office  
Human Resources Division  
Washington, D. C. 20548

Dear Mr. Ahart:

We appreciate your office sharing with us the draft of your proposed report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and International Law, House Judiciary Committee, concerning resettlement of Indochinese refugees.

The report is comprehensive. However, we question the information presented in Table 4-2 on page 27 for Arlington County. The table appears to give limited information. It does not indicate whether persons not receiving the services mentioned had received those services previously, were on a waiting list, or had not been in contact with the agency. The lack of this information encourages faulty interpretations. [GAO note 1.]

We would also like to present a more accurate picture of the monitoring effort for the Virginia program. Although monitoring is limited, it is performed through reviews of monthly and quarterly reports by the State Coordinator and the Bureau of Fiscal Management. The State Coordinator makes periodic on-site reviews of programs to address and identify problems and to give technical assistance. Informal monitoring is done through telephone contacts with the service providers. Please correct the material which appeared on page 39 of the report to indicate this ongoing activity on behalf of the program. [GAO note 2.]

The recommendations, if initiated, should greatly assist in streamlining the refugee program. Repealing the portion of section 412 (e)(2) of the Refugee Act exempting refugees from employment registration and acceptance of job offer requirements during the first 60 days after entry is strongly supported by Virginia. In our work with the refugee population, we find integration into the mainstream through employment is the best way to acculturate the refugee and to promote his self-sufficiency. The State also supports a greater emphasis on job development and placement services to newly arriving refugees. Employment concurrent with training and education in English have

**GAO notes:** GAO responses to certain comments received are included as appropriate in discussion of agency comments in chapter 6. In some instances, agency comments are footnoted and addressed on the final page of the agency comments or on an attached page.

Page references in this appendix have been changed to correspond with the page numbers in the final report.

- GAO note 1: The basic methodology used in our review is outlined in chapter 1. Applicable criteria and findings are cited in each chapter of the report. While a survey instrument was used, it was supplemented by numerous interviews with officials at the offices included in our review. The data collection instrument was not included in the report since it alone does not give a complete picture of what was examined.
- GAO note 2: The correct sample size of employable age refugees for Harris County is 157 as stated in the report. The original list of case members submitted to the Texas Department of Human Resources was later revised to include replacements for cases found to have been settled outside Harris County limits.
- GAO note 3: Those refugees whose public assistance benefits were terminated or reduced to only Medicaid before October 31, 1981, are not included in our statistics for refugees receiving cash assistance 4 to 6 months after arrival.
- GAO note 4: Our study focused on services provided all employable age refugees sampled, whether eligible for AFDC or special refugee cash and medical assistance. Information was collected and included in our statistical data concerning services provided all refugees by the State employment offices, including WIN (work incentive) participants.
- GAO note 5: It is not our intent that ESL be offered exclusively in the evenings since logically persons may be employed in the evenings or days. Our intent is to encourage greater emphasis on employment concurrent with training to the extent possible.
- GAO note 6: This pertains to a monitoring system being developed by HHS and to its funding of State services. We did not evaluate that system during our review.

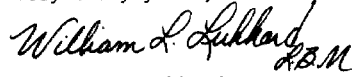
GAO note 1: Table 4-2 shows the number of refugees receiving services from ORR-funded social service providers at any time since their arrival in the county. The Arlington County employment related social service provider, Refugee Education and Employment Program, maintains waiting lists for ESL; however, none of our sample refugees were on waiting lists. The director told us that the maximum waiting time for ESL is 6 weeks.

GAO note 2: During our review, a key official in the State Coordinator's office told us that no onsite program monitoring visits were made in fiscal year 1981, but were planned for fiscal year 1982. This same individual was unsure of the types of reports submitted.

the most positive effect in assuring the refugee who is independent of the welfare system, a goal we want to promote.

Thank you for allowing us to comment on this report.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William L. Lukhard". To the right of the signature, the initials "W.L.M." are written in a smaller, blocky font.

William L. Lukhard

WLL/TW/jbg

We are uneasy with some of the underlying assumptions and definitions in the report, and the approaches to some of the subject matter. For example, in the discussion of early employment as a goal of the refugee program, it should be noted that early or "quick" employment is not necessarily to be equated with self-sufficiency, particularly if refugees assume entry-level jobs, that may not provide adequate support for a family. A data base which represents numbers of persons employed requires some interpretation, addressing such items as the permanency and adequacy of the jobs and salaries obtained, and in relation to the circumstances of the refugees.

Similarly, statistics representing refugees on public assistance require interpretation, with information and differentiation between short-term assistance and long-term dependency, the dollar amounts received, and the circumstances or reasons why the refugees received that help. This additional information would, we think, place the statistics into perspective, which in turn, might possibly alter any conclusions or recommendations.

We are concerned about the category of employable persons, defined on page 4 of the draft report as between the ages of 16 and 64. First, we question whether or not persons at either end of that spectrum are, in fact, employable. We normally expect, for example, that youngsters between the ages of 16 and 18 would be in high school, hence, part-time workers, at most. It seems unreasonable to expect school-age refugees to be full-time employees, when we in the U.S. hold more generous views for other young people in the same age group. Furthermore, we all know how difficult the job market is for young people in general, since youth unemployment in America reaches up to 50% in some urban areas for minority groups.

Certainly, persons between the ages of 60 and 64 would find it difficult, even if native-born and fluent in English, to gain "quick employment", which further points up that being of an employable age does not mean that a person is automatically employable. Statistics should, we think, take into account variations in the human condition, variations in economic conditions and job markets, suitability of persons' skills to the available jobs, not to mention individual preference.

Another concern that we share is the GAO report's perception of a sponsor, upon which a whole discussion is based. The voluntary agency itself is the sponsor, assisted by its affiliate agencies, churches or individuals. The voluntary agencies utilize a variety of resettlement models, including agency and case-work models, church and diocesan models. In the case of family reunion, the agencies do not use refugees' relatives as sponsors, however, whether these relatives are on welfare or not. At the same time, we believe it is a fundamental principle of sound resettlement, that a refugee's family be actively involved in assisting a refugee to resettle in his/her new country. This is confirmed by the history of the U.S. itself, which has witnessed the value of family-based support with the many groups and nationalities that have emigrated to this country.

GAO note: Page references in this appendix have been changed to correspond with the page numbers in the final report.

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# American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service, Inc.

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October 8, 1982

Mr. Gregory J. Ahart, Director  
United States General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Ahart:

The voluntary agencies in refugee resettlement have studied the GAO Draft Report on Indochinese refugees, and have discussed the report both within the agencies' networks and among the member agencies of the Committee on Migration and Refugee Affairs of the ACVAFS, some of who have written to you individually. We feel that it is important that we present to you, as well, some of our collective views on the report, and we appreciate the opportunity to do so.

First, the agencies appreciate the work of your staff in putting together the report, which presents a critical analysis, from the perspective of your office, of some of the aspects of the resettlement program, pointing up areas which could be improved, and upon which we would wish to act. In this respect, the report can be a valuable tool for all of those who are engaged in refugee resettlement.

There are certain assumptions and conclusions in the report about which we have special concern and want to comment. We are sure that you are aware that during the period that the GAO studied the situations that are described by your staff, the voluntary agencies were engaged in the resettlement of very large refugee populations, including Indochinese, the influx of 125,000 Mariel arrivals, plus refugees from other parts of the world. Representation of the larger picture at that time would serve, we think, to place the study of the 5 sample sites into perspective, and within the context of the agencies' total involvement in humanitarian programs. (During that period, the agencies were resettling the Mariel arrivals for several months before receiving any federal financial assistance, but, nonetheless struggled to carry out their commitments to the many groups of newcomers to the U.S.).

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October 8, 1982

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Mr. Gregory J. Ahart,  
Director  
U.S. General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Ahart:

Thank you for sending copies of the GAO draft Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and International Law, House Judiciary Committee, concerning resettlement of Indo-chinese refugees. ACNS welcomes serious attempts by the government and others to study and propose changes in the organization and administration of refugee programs.

In many ways, ACNS agrees with the general thrust of the GAO Report on Indochinese refugees, and acknowledges a need for more accountability on the part of all who participate in the refugee program. Since the initial summary of the GAO report was issued, ACNS has taken a number of significant steps to ensure that its member agencies uniformly document services provided. Among these are the introduction of a Core Services Checklist to document the delivery of services to all ACNS-sponsored refugees and the publication of Guidelines For Refugee Services which articulates principles and standards for refugee resettlement.

Still, we must take issue with a number of the assumptions and assertions found in the Report. Our objections concern its underlying theme and focus, the factual accuracy of some of its statements, and some of the conclusions and recommendations drawn.

On a general level, we are concerned with the Report's limited frame of reference. The Report approaches the refugee program as if it were established solely for the purpose of domestic assistance and its conclusions are almost unrelievedly negative. The opening remarks in the Report imply that the overall thrust of the Refugee Act of 1980 is to establish the goal of quick self-sufficiency for refugees. In point of fact, the Refugee Act begins by stating:

The American Council for Nationalities Service has Member Agencies as follows:  
International Institutes in Akron • Boston • Bridgeport • Buffalo • Cincinnati (Travelers Aid) • Detroit • Erie • Flint • Gary • Jersey City  
Lawrence • Los Angeles • Lowell • Manchester (N.H.) • Milwaukee • Oakland • Providence • St. Louis • St. Paul • San Francisco  
Toledo • Youngstown • Nationalities Service Centers in Cleveland • Philadelphia • Immigrants Service League of Travelers  
Aid in Chicago • American Civic Association in Binghamton • and also Affiliates in Albany • Fresno  
Honolulu • San Jose • Santa Rosa • Washington, D.C.

**GAO note:** GAO responses to certain comments received are included as appropriate in discussion of agency comments in chapter 6. In some instances, agency comments are footnoted and addressed on the final page of the agency comments or on an attached page.

A further concern that we share is that from a study of a sampling of domestic resettlement for Indochinese, the report has drawn broad, general conclusions and recommendations for a program which is international in scope, and involves movements of peoples from around the globe. Even assuming that the findings in the GAO report are valid for the Indochinese program, to draw conclusions which impact on the entire refugee program, without actually having included or studied the program beyond the Indochinese, is unsound.

We hope that these comments will be useful in drawing up the final GAO Report, and we thank you for sharing the draft proposal with us.

Sincerely,



Wells C. Klein, Chairman  
Committee on Migration  
and Refugee Affairs

WCK:me



that in some cases, concentration of ethnic groups generates its own economic activities that benefit both newcomers and the surrounding community. The Khmer Guided Placement Project operated on this assumption. The true task is to study what level of clustering provides optimal results that balance ethnic development and community concerns. We welcome and support further study of the newly implemented Placement Policy. Narrowly focused criticisms of placement issues merely distract attention from what really needs to be done.

Chapter 3: Public assistance plays a major role in initial refugee resettlement.

We acknowledge that public assistance plays a major role in initial refugee resettlement. However, it must be recognized that most refugees are not employment-ready immediately upon arrival in the United States and do require a period of interim support before they can be realistically expected to take and retain jobs. It is important to distinguish between welfare use and welfare dependency. Given the limited nature of the Per Capita Resettlement Grant, the limited availability of entry-level jobs in the current economy, the presence of the waiver of categorical relatedness which makes cash and medical assistance an entitlement to refugees for an 18-month period, a limited and controlled use of the public assistance system would appear inevitable. This does not imply that we seek to make refugees welfare dependent, which speaks to permanent and/or long-term reliance on public dollars, but rather, that we seek to use assistance as a safety net while preparing them for self-sufficiency.

Secondly, the Report makes much of the 67% welfare dependency rate. As Susan Forbes of the Refugee Policy Group pointed out in recent Congressional testimony, the perception that this represents a significant rise in recent years is due to statistical rather than empirical considerations. Like any statistic, the 67% rate is figured as a share of a base population, in this case, poorly educated refugees in the most vulnerable years of their residence in the United States. Rather than dwelling on this figure, efforts should focus on identifying a realistic expectation for self-sufficiency times and rates, and toward gearing programs to achieve this goal. Again, this requires serious analysis of a set of complicated factors, and not suggesting quick answers or pat solutions.

Chapter 4: Insufficient emphasis on employment.

We acknowledge that relatively few refugees find employment shortly after arriving in the United States, and that concerted efforts need to be expended on the part of all involved parties including voluntary agencies, state employment services, and other service providers. There is, however, a methodological question to be raised with regard to the statistics cited in Table 4-1. This table makes no distinction between "employable age" refugees and refugees who are in fact employable. In Cook County, for example, we understand that there is a considerable discrepancy between the number of refugees GAO implies are employable, and those which the Illinois Department of Public Aid (IDPA) had designated as such. Unfortunately, because there was no final debriefing between the GAO auditors and the voluntary agencies and IDPA, it was not possible to rectify this seeming discrepancy in fact in the draft document.

"...the historic policy of the United States is to respond to the urgent needs of persons subject to persecution in their homelands, including, where appropriate, humanitarian assistance for their care and maintenance in asylum areas, efforts to promote opportunities for resettlement or voluntary repatriation, aid for necessary transportation and processing, admission to this country of refugees of special humanitarian concern to the United States, and transitional assistance to refugees in the United States."

Over the past decade, voluntary agencies have rescued over ½ million Indo-chinese refugees as well as hundreds of thousands of others, including 125,000 Cuban Marielistas who unexpectedly arrived on our shores. As partners with the Federal government, we have responded quickly and effectively in many crisis situations. In citing these facts, we do not mean to deny that problems in the refugee program exist. But, it is necessary to place these short-comings within the context of the humanitarian nature of the program and its success in achieving its major goal of rescue. This, the GAO report totally fails to do, and thus distorts the purpose and performance of all parties involved in refugee resettlement.

In addition to these contextual concerns, we would like to take issue with several of the over-riding themes of this document. We will reference our comments to specific chapters of the Report.

Chapter 2: Placement of most refugees in few locations...

The GAO report makes reference to the fact that placement decisions are heavily influenced by emphasis on reunification of families and friends, without fully acknowledging that reunification has been the cornerstone not only of the refugee program but of our country's entire immigration policy. It is true that 70% of refugees resettled reside in ten states. It must also be remembered that 80% of our regular immigration flow goes to these states, and that a majority of the total U.S. population also resides there. This means that refugee distribution is not abnormal, and in fact, corresponds with other demographic statistics.

The Report also makes reference to the fact that "traditional sponsorship is on the decline." It would appear that there is some semantic confusion between the word Sponsorship -- a formal responsibility exercised by the voluntary agency -- and the term Help -- an informal yet essential ingredient in the resettlement process. Since ACNS became involved in refugee resettlement, its member agencies have assumed sponsorship responsibility for all cases, whether additional family members reside in the community or not. However, we have always welcomed and encouraged the participation of family members in the resettlement process, particularly in such areas as locating housing, securing furnishings, etc. In cases where such tasks are delegated to willing relatives, we have asked relatives to document their ability to provide these services, and such documentation is included in case records.

[GAO note.]

Implicit in this chapter is the assumption that placement clusters are bad and that efforts should be made to disperse new arrivals. This is an odd approach for an accounting report to take. Surely, there are advantages as well as drawbacks to clustering, and the real challenge lies in assessing the salience of each and developing a cost-benefit analysis. Research has shown

## American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees, Inc.

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212-385-1819

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October 7, 1982

Mr. Gregory J. Ahart  
Director  
Human Resources Division  
United States General Accounting Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Ahart:

Thank you for sending to us copies of the draft of your proposed report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and International Law of the House Judiciary Committee, concerning the resettlement of Indochinese refugees. I am sure your report will be helpful not only to the Chairman, who requested it, but also to all other departments that will share it and to all national resettlement agencies.

The Refugee Act of 1980 was an important step on the way toward unifying and controlling the humanitarian and political (foreign) policy of the United States in helping persecuted and suffering humanity. It is, however, unfortunate that the expenses connected with the carrying out of the law increased tremendously in comparison to the actual financial help to the refugee. The responsibility of implementing the law rests primarily on voluntary national resettlement agencies. They give services and funds to refugees which are only partially covered by grants. The monitoring and control of this work, however, is carried out by the authorities that provide grants to other private organizations and agencies to report on the activities of the resettlement agencies - reports that are often superficial and incorrect and are considered bona fide.

I would like to comment briefly to some of the findings that concern the AFRC:

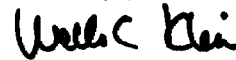
1. I believe that the number of refugee cases used in your survey is not large enough to give a conclusive picture as to the results and quality of performance of individual national resettlement agencies.

GAO notes: GAO responses to certain comments received are included as appropriate in discussion of agency comments in chapter 6. In some instances, agency comments are footnoted and addressed on the final page of the agency comments or on an attached page.

Page reference in this appendix has been changed to correspond with the page numbers in the final report.

If you would like further clarification of our comments on these important issues, please do not hesitate to contact us. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the conclusions and recommendations found in this draft prior to the submission of a final document.

Sincerely yours,



Wells C. Klein,  
Executive Director

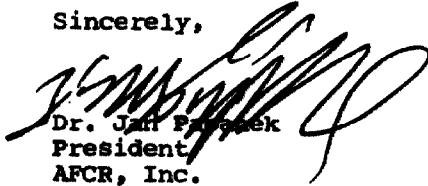
WCK/ETM/jrd

**GAO note:** We neither stated nor intended to imply that placement clusters are bad; on the contrary, we recognize their benefits. Our position is that greater efforts need to be made to seek new areas for placements not already overly impacted by refugees. This does not mean isolating a few refugees in widely dispersed areas and avoiding the buildup of ethnic clusters. Our report quite positively states that some voluntary agency affiliates have clustered refugees in areas peripheral to heavily impacted areas.

We agree that resettlement agencies should do their best to assure that employment opportunities and counseling are at least provided, if not secured by themselves. We know that it is being done, but much more is involved in this difficult problem, one of the most important elements being availability of jobs in certain localities where families want to be together.

I believe that some of the recommendations contained in your draft report will improve the service to refugees, increase employment and reduce the dependability on cash assistance of refugees.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jan F. Frank  
President,  
AFCR, Inc.

JP/ssb

GAO note: In citing reasons for unemployment among employment age refugees in our sample, voluntary agency staffs cited health problems as a factor for only 5 percent of the refugees. We recognize, however, that refugees arriving in the United States often have health problems requiring treatment. This subject is covered extensively in a separate GAO report entitled "Improved Overseas Medical Examinations and Treatment Can Reduce Serious Diseases In Indochinese Refugees Entering The United States" (GAO/HRD-82-65, Aug. 5, 1982).

2. As far as "TABLE 2-2" (Usage of former refugees as sponsors) is concerned (AFRCR 47.1%), I would like to point out that the American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees is an "Agency" type resettlement agency and as such, is doing direct resettlement in most cases and does not fully rely upon the support of former refugees - relatives, or anchor relatives in its activities. The relatives (former refugees) are actually being used for placement purposes only since family reunions represent at least 80% of refugee cases; family reunions cannot be disrupted (distant relatives, friends come into the same category to a large extent) if secondary migration has to be reduced or eliminated. Because of this principle, the AFRCR assists financially all refugees, whether the sponsor is a former refugee or not. Our average initial financial assistance is \$300.00 per capita. This, of course, does not mean that we do not encourage the former refugee - sponsor to assist the newly arrived refugee in any possible way to supplement our assistance. His assistance, however, will in most cases, consist of "legwork".
3. Table 3-1 "Employable Age Refugees Receiving Cash Assistance..." The AFRCR does not register refugees for cash assistance within the first 14 days after arrival as a rule. San Francisco, however, presents a special situation. As you probably found out, the high cash assistance is the result of the local "system", which is followed by all agencies. Your Table 3-2 (page 19) indicates that out of your sample of 180 employable refugees, 157 (87%) receive cash assistance and 152 (84%) are still receiving cash assistance 4-6 months after arrival.
4. Table 4-1 "Employable Age Refugees Obtaining Employment Within 4-6 Months After Arrival." Here I wish to question your considering refugees 16 to 64 years of age to be "employable". Many 16 year olds go to school and could possibly be employable only part-time. Most 60 to 64 year old refugees are to our knowledge not employable.

[GAO note.]

According to reports from our regional offices, the majority of adult refugees is, on arrival, in such a poor state of health and physical unfitness that they need up to 3 months to become physically fit for any manual jobs. I would also like to point out that you yourself note in your report that there are some serious questions as to whether early employment of newly arrived refugees offers the best solution to the problem of dependency and self sufficiency.

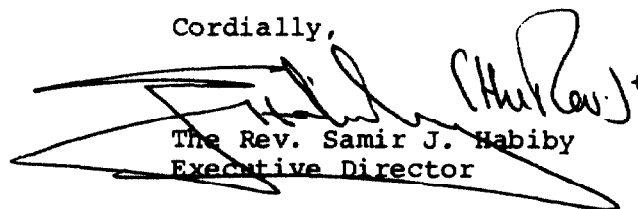
While the report suggests changes in government regulations which might remove some of the factors encouraging lack of employment, it generally promotes a centrist regulatory approach to programming as the answer. Mandating identical approaches is frequently chosen as the ideal road to monitoring/accountability. The latter is vital, but such a uniform approach has the capacity to weaken and destroy the very essence of what the voluntary "traditional" sponsors have traditionally contributed to the refugee program - individual caring based on initiative and problem solving ability which enabled refugees to become self-sufficient. The sponsors of refugees take pride in enabling others to regain self reliance and provide human resources in volunteers because of their own commitment and investment in the program.

Several approaches the report has suggested vis a vis the voluntary sector may serve to run up the costs of the voluntary resettlement agencies in complying with federal government regulations. It is important to allow for flexibility and the use of individual resources of various groups in refugee programming. The essence of what the PBF/WR endeavors to enable newly arriving refugees to become is individuals who can exercise initiative and creativity within a responsible framework. It is essential to demand accountability, but not discourage the effective use of private resources.

I regret that time does not permit a lengthy and more detailed reply.

This comes with an expression of appreciation for enabling this brief response.

Cordially,



The Rev. Samir J. Habiby  
Executive Director

cc. The Rev Samuel Van Culin, Jr., D.D.  
Marion M. Dawson (Mrs. Robert J.)

SJH:MMD:di



The Anchor of Hope

## THE PRESIDING BISHOP'S FUND FOR WORLD RELIEF

The Episcopal Church Center, 815 Second Avenue, New York, New York 10017  
(212) 867-8400 • Cable Address: Fenalong, N.Y.

October 7, 1982

Mr. Gregory J. Ahart  
Director  
United States General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Ahart,

This letter comes in response to your letter dated August 26 but received September 15, 1982 inviting the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief (PBF/WR) of the Episcopal Church to submit written response to points of view expressed in the U.S. General Accounting Office "proposed report" on Indochinese Refugee Resettlement and welfare dependency. I am pleased at the opportunity to respond, but regret that the lack of sufficient lead time did not allow a more detailed analysis.

The PBF/WR's response to refugee needs has continually emphasized the need for self-sufficiency. The PBF/WR acting for the Episcopal Church in U.S. Refugee Programming fully agrees with your thesis that newly arrived refugees should be employed as a priority emphasis and that public assistance dependency is not desirable. While this point of departure is a good one, some of the remedies you propose are far less desirable and show a rather limited understanding of the forces inducing public dependency and lack of emphasis on early employment.

A number of "traditional sponsors", parishes of the Episcopal Church, have become "disenchanted" with welcoming refugees only because they feel government programs conspire to undo the emphasis they place on self-sufficiency, while they have been using their own resources and employment opportunities to prevent dependency and reliance on public assistance. They feel a number of government programs are directly counterproductive to private efforts and thus wasteful. In a pluralistic society, such as the United States, volunteers take a great deal of pride in their abilities to care for and help others through their own institutions and systems, which are time tested and do not need government established regulations to be efficient.



respectful of the constraints placed on states and localities which are heavily impacted by refugees. Moreover, we are in constant communication with our affiliates as to the employment conditions and resettlement capacity, etc., of the city and agencies. If our affiliates in non-impacted cities report a perceived difficulty at a given time in these areas, we will not refer to them free cases or possibly distant relatives. Consequently, we are most supportive of the HNS Placement Policy Paper.

When our affiliate receives a referral for relative reunion, the local relatives are immediately contacted and interviewed, not only to assess their current social and economic circumstances, but also to determine their interest in reunion. We view this aspect as extremely important, as it is in the highest of Jewish traditions that families help one another. Former refugees assisting their newcomer relatives is viewed as a positive, constructive contribution. Helping one another and sharing responsibility for resettlement encourages a greater sense of self-reliance and independence rather than dependence upon public or private facilities. The support network of the refugee population is invaluable in the resettlement of newcomers. The assistance which is given in terms of socialization, emotional and monetary support, translation, job assistance, etc., is a great asset to a newcomer's adjustment and integration. Notwithstanding our encouragement of the involvement and participation of the local relative, our cooperating agency is the sponsor and has overall responsibility for the resettlement of the newly arrived refugee. Our strength and success in resettlement comes from our professional case management approach whereby resettlement planning is done prior to arrival of the refugee and individually directed during the resettlement process.

I hope that I have clarified HIAS' policy with respect to sponsorship and placement. In terms of several other points raised in the draft, we support your encouragement of greater emphasis on job development in those employment agencies assisting refugees, and hope that such programs will be monitored more closely. We support the need for monitoring of all refugee programs concerned with the initial resettlement phase, i.e., state and local, public and private.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to respond to the draft, and we hope that many of your positive recommendations become realities.

Sincerely,

  
Leonard Seidenman  
Executive Vice President

LS:at



World Headquarters  
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October 7, 1982

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Mr. Gregory J. Ahart  
Director  
United States General Accounting  
Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Ahart:

Thank you very much for sending us copies of the GAO proposed report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and International Law, House Judiciary Committee, concerning resettlement of Indochinese refugees.

HIAS, along with the other national voluntary resettlement agencies, has responded to the draft in an ACVA letter with our collective comments. However, there are several areas of concern which we feel important to respond to individually.

HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) has been in existence for over one hundred years, specializing in the areas of migration and refugee resettlement. As the official migration agency of the organized Jewish community, we work in conjunction with a very large network of professional Jewish communal social service agencies. Over the many years, we have reunited thousands of refugees with their families and have also found homes for those individuals without any American contacts. Our local affiliates, working on behalf of the Jewish community, have always been the sponsor for each HIAS processed refugee, regardless of ethnic or religious background. This policy has been and continues to be our tradition. In sum, each HIAS processed refugee is sponsored by our professional cooperating agencies, not by former refugees.

Since our cooperating agencies are the sponsors, placement will generally occur only in those areas where we have affiliates. Each new bio-data sheet is initially evaluated at our national office for the most appropriate referral. Clearly, efforts are made to reunite families. However, we have always been

*Worldwide Jewish Migration Agency — Rescue, Reunion, Resettlement*

Combining the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), United Service for New Americans (USNA),  
and the migration services of the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC)

toto in the initial phase, the length of time we can support a refugee is obviously limited. What with payments for housing, furniture, food, clothing and other incidentals, the length of time an agency can keep a refugee going financially without other outside help is limited.

[GAO note.]

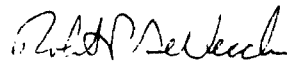
--The amount of time it takes to enroll a refugee on public assistance-- that is the time between the initial request for an appointment at public assistance and the receipt of the first check--varies from place to place. In San Francisco, for example, it has been as much as six to eight weeks. Thus, unless a refugee is "job ready" on arrival and a job is available, the resettlement agency must give serious thought to enrolling the refugee on public assistance shortly after arrival, especially if it is going to take up to two months before the first check comes. Here again, the question of how far \$525 or even \$700 can go is important.

--There is an additional problem that refugees face in some parts of the country. Newly arriving refugees often have medical problems, or are at least concerned about future medical needs that may arise with themselves, and particularly with their spouse and children. Most of the jobs available to refugees, especially entry level jobs, have no medical insurance coverage. A refugee who wants to accept a minimum wage job but needs medical insurance not provided by his employer faces a dilemma which is too often resolved by not accepting the job, but opting for public assistance, in large part to qualify for Medicaid. Given the high cost of medical services in this country, he is faced with going to work with no medical insurance, or going on welfare and being covered by medicaid. Too often the refugee is obliged to opt for the latter.

4. The IRC welcomes the stress in the draft report on social service programs which have an employment orientation. Many varied social service programs have been available to refugees which have not been coordinated with the sponsoring agency. These programs have been predicated on the refugee being on public assistance. All too often, the agency loses contact with the refugee once he is on welfare and enrolled in a program of some sort. In large measure the refugee no longer needs the agency at that point. This is especially true when the agency concerned stresses employment instead of public assistance and social service programs. This is one of the reasons the resettlement agencies have been pressing for greater control, or "case management" in the resettlement process.

These are the principal elements of the draft we would wish to comment upon. We thank you for the opportunity of doing so.

Sincerely,



Robert P. DeVecchi  
Program Director

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October 12, 1982

Mr. Gregory J. Ahart  
 Director Human Resources Division  
 United States General Accounting Office  
 Room 6864  
 441 G Street, N.W.  
 Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Ahart,

We are pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the draft proposed report, "Indochinese Refugees--Changes Needed to Improve Resettlement and Decrease Welfare Dependency".

The basic emphasis of the report on early employment is most welcome and corresponds with the IRC's resettlement policies over the years. It has long been our contention that refugees do not need fluency in English before becoming employable. Indeed our experience has been that refugees make the best adjustment when early employment is combined with language study after work hours.

There are several areas in the draft report, however, where we feel a greater appreciation and understanding of objective conditions would lead to more constructive conclusions. These major areas are listed below:

1. As can be seen from the report, certain parts of the country have developed resettlement patterns with a strong bias towards public assistance. This is particularly true on the West Coast. These patterns often reflect the relatively high levels of welfare benefits available as well as ready accessibility.
2. In the same vein, the availability of jobs varies from place to place. While emphasis on early employment is desirable, jobs for which refugees are qualified are harder to come by in San Francisco, for example, as compared to Harris County.
3. The draft report makes the point that voluntary agencies tend to put refugees on public assistance shortly after their arrival. While this is indisputable, there are two practical reasons why this is all too often based on prudent management.

--The first stems from the level of the reception and placement grant, presently \$525 per capita. (The IRC has been spending over \$700 per capita in direct assistance and service costs, the difference being made up by privately raised funds.) Even using these amounts in

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GAO note: GAO responses to certain comments received are included as appropriate in discussion of agency comments in chapter 6. In some instances, agency comments are footnoted and addressed on the final page of the agency comments or on an attached page.

**LUTHERAN COUNCIL IN THE USA**

Department of Immigration and Refugee Services,  
Division of Mission and Ministry

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September 24, 1982

Mr. Gregory J. Ahart  
Director  
United States General Accounting Office  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Ahart:

I am writing to discuss the draft of your proposed report on Indochinese refugees. I want to commend you and your staff for your dedicated work and to say that your report was very interesting and valuable. It is helpful to us to see our resettlement work from your perspective and I hope that the report will serve as a tool for improving certain aspects of our operation.

Having studied the draft in some detail, I would like to share a few thoughts with you about your findings.

Cash Assistance Dependency

Although 71% of the employable refugees in your sample were found to be receiving cash assistance, the percentage varied from 52% in Harris County to 87% in San Francisco County. Your study suggests, and I agree, that such variance is a result of local factors such as availability of cash assistance, the attitude of state social service workers towards refugees receiving cash assistance (it is my understanding that some states and localities actively encourage refugee welfare clients), and the refugee community's own feelings about cash assistance. Many of these factors are beyond the voluntary agency's control.

Your study does not make any distinction regarding the level of cash assistance received. We have found that many refugees receive cash assistance payments to supplement income from jobs. Furthermore, in many states refugees are not eligible for medical assistance unless they also receive cash assistance. To put this issue into further perspective, a longitudinal study of the bearing of transitional use of cash assistance on later employment potential and upward mobility would be helpful. It would also be interesting to look into the nature and length of cash assistance dependency among the general population as compared to the refugee population. Our country's economy is currently depressed and many Americans rely on cash assistance now who once held jobs.

Finally, a distinction among the various Indochinese ethnic groups would probably show variance in dependency rates according to the difficulty ex-

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A COOPERATIVE AGENCY OF THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH, ASSOCIATION OF EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCHES, LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA AND LUTHERAN CHURCH-MISSOURI SYNOD

GAO note: GAO responses to certain comments received are included as appropriate in discussion of agency comments in chapter 6. In some instances, agency comments are footnoted and addressed on the final page of the agency comments or on an attached page.

GAO note: In April 1982, we inquired about the processing time for refugees' applications for cash assistance at the San Francisco County Welfare Office. We were informed that the processing time generally takes 2 to 4 weeks from the date a refugee applies for cash aid to when the cash payment is received. An exception to this general rule occurred in October 1981 when the number of refugees admitted to San Francisco nearly doubled and processing time took 2 months.

The traditional congregational model remains our preferred mode of sponsorship to this day. We are quite concerned about the increase in anchor relative sponsorships as you are, and we are taking measures to reverse the trend by continuing to actively reach out to our congregations, by placing refugees in non-impacted areas with congregational sponsors, and by arranging congregational back-up sponsors for anchor relatives.

#### Monitoring

LIRS has traditionally relied on congregations to sponsor its refugee case-load. Many of these congregations have remained in contact with the refugees they sponsored for years and have taken in additional relatives and friends as they were admitted to this country. Constant monitoring of these congregations has usually not been necessary, although our regional offices have served as a contact and a resource for them through the years.

As the number of anchor relative sponsorships has grown, the onus for frequent monitoring has fallen increasingly on our regional offices. We surveyed the cases you had studied recently and found that our offices were still in touch with most of them. The following chart indicates our results.

#### LIRS Contact With the 22 Refugee Cases Sampled by the GAO

<u>Month of Last Recorded Contact</u>	<u>No. of Cases</u>
9/81	1
11/81	1
1/82	3
2/82	2
4/82	1
6/82	6
8/82	3
9/82	5
Total	22

Although it is possible that these cases were more closely monitored than others because they had been selected by the GAO, it is not likely. The local offices in question have their own monitoring systems which extend beyond the 90 days specified in our cooperative agreement and are applied to all cases sponsored.

In 1980, LIRS conducted a study of Indochinese women one year after arrival. All the sample cases were sponsored by LIRS and had arrived in September 1979. For the purpose of this breakdown, all women who were living with their Indochinese relative sponsor were eliminated. We found that of the total sample, 8% were no longer in contact with their sponsor, 16% were in infrequent contact, and 76% were in "daily, weekly, monthly or bi-monthly" contact.

perienced in the acculturation process.

#### Employment

Your study is correct in pointing out that voluntary agencies should place increased emphasis on employment services. However, where there are existing ORR-funded employment services, referral seems to me to be the most appropriate course of action for the voluntary agency in order to avoid a duplication of efforts. In such cases, the problem is not lack of employment service provision on the part of local voluntary agencies, but a lack of coordination among the various actors, specifically ORR, the local voluntary agencies, and state governments, which direct the use of ORR funds. In addition, where ORR funds are used for employment services, perhaps more responsibility for follow-up to ensure that adequate services are being received should be placed on ORR or the contracting service provider rather than the voluntary agency. Under the \$525 R&P grant, the voluntary agency has responsibility for core services beyond employment. Your study mentions the fact that the per capita grant is limited. Therefore, it should be used more effectively with the awareness that certain areas of responsibility are in some cases more appropriately handled through other channels. It is not my intention to deemphasize employment services, but merely to point out that all actors on the local level of refugee resettlement should assume proper responsibility for their funded services, try to avoid duplication, and above all emphasize coordination among all agencies, service providers, and funding sources involved.

I agree with your study that the Chinatown Resource Development Center in San Francisco is extremely effective. The model is an old one, and the reason we have not applied it widely is that it is prohibitively expensive. Should the federal government be willing to provide additional funding to the voluntary agencies to begin similar projects, LIRS would certainly be supportive of such a move.

#### Secondary Migration

We have found that refugees migrate to be closer to family members, friends, or their ethnic community. According to your study, only 9% of your sample moved and 44% of those who moved had been sponsored by relatives. That is, only 4% of your total sample moved who had been sponsored by relatives or friends. Your findings substantiate our belief. Very few (9%) of your sample moved because they had been placed in areas where they could identify with an ethnic group and in spite of variance in cash assistance availability, and even fewer (4%) moved if they had personal connections in such an area. In our experience, the rates of secondary migration are much higher in non-impacted areas. It would be enlightening to conduct a "control" study of five non-impacted counties and their rates of secondary migration.

#### Sponsorship Models

Some increase in anchor relative sponsorships is natural since Indochinese refugees began to arrive in 1975. At that time, there were no ethnic communities to assist newcomers in acculturation as there are now. Even in congregational sponsorships, the involvement of friends, relatives or the ethnic community is common and often invaluable.



GAO note: Many of these 90-day reports for refugees in our sample were not completed until GAO's inquiry, 6 to 8 months after the refugees' arrival in the country.

[GAO note.]

Although our regional offices have always emphasized monitoring and have attempted to remain in contact with refugees throughout the resettlement process, I believe there is a need for increased monitoring by local voluntary agency offices as more refugees are sponsored by their ethnic communities and individual sponsors. We have been placing growing emphasis on the monitoring process for some time now. As you know, we use a "90-day report" to determine progress towards self-sufficiency and to alert us to any existing or potential problems. In addition, most of our regional offices have a thorough monitoring system of their own, best suited for their particular situation.

Management on the Federal Level

The current cooperation between the U.S. Coordinator for Refugees, Department of State and the Department of Health and Human Services is not perfectly orchestrated, but it is very effective. Refugee resettlement is both a foreign policy and a domestic issue. Refugee admission decisions are made on the basis of foreign policy decisions and the voluntary agencies become involved with the refugees from the time they are in camps overseas. Channeling the Reception and Placement grants through the Department of State makes the expeditious implementation of foreign policy decisions possible and ensures that refugee movements are in line with these decisions. The Department of State has also been concerned about domestic resettlement and has actively monitored its cooperative agreements with the voluntary agencies.

As the GAO correctly points out, the Department of Health and Human Services is more suited to be responsible for the ongoing aspects of resettlement on state and local levels. The office of the U.S. Coordinator for Refugees is needed to synchronize the roles of the two Departments as well as the foreign and domestic factors involved.

I have a final reservation about the validity of your survey. The counties studied were chosen on the basis of large refugee concentration and not randomly, although the subsequent selection of cases was random. The following statement is excerpted from your study: "All figures quoted pertain only to the sample reviewed and have not been projected to a larger universe." That is as it should be, since five impacted counties in all probability do not represent the state of refugee resettlement throughout the country.

Given the nature of the sample and the above statement, I question your general conclusions and your recommendations for major programmatic revisions on the basis of such a limited study.

Thank you for your attention to these comments. I appreciate your courtesy in sharing the draft with us. Please call me if you wish to discuss any aspect of your study or this letter further.

Sincerely yours,



Mrs. Ingrid Walter, D. Hum.  
Director  
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee  
Service

ZS:hn



## TOLSTOY FOUNDATION, INC.

250 West 57th Street, New York, N.Y. 10107  
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### NOTES ON THE DRAFT OF THE GAO REPORT ON INDOCHINESE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

1. Cover summary - We have always been in support of giving precedence to employment over ESL, orientation and other programs. Such programs should be kept as evening courses, not in classes during working hours, but in the homes.
2. Page i - ORR programs increase welfare rolls and show inaccurate statistics since these are not really welfare recipients, but beneficiaries of HHS approved projects for Indochinese refugees.
3. Page ii - Placement of refugees "in few locations" is the result of their own choice; they wish to state together with their friends or relatives. This might disrupt our resettlement plans, but on the other hand, protects the sanity and morale of the refugees, thus avoiding mental breakdowns and complications of a social and emotional nature, and lessens secondary migration. After a certain time, with more self-assurance the refugees are prepared to look for other opportunities. The GAO report is based on a small number of cases (5 to 7 for TF) which cannot be used for general sweeping conclusions on the whole operation (page ii, par. 3). The comparatively large family reunion percentage is partly due to the request made by the State Department to TF, not to take open cases (page iii), emphasis on employment although an important factor, cannot always be achieved, when there is general unemployment and refugees lack American experience and language. Lower paid jobs do not provide for a family budget of a couple with children. Certain degree of dependency is then unavoidable.

#### Recommendations to Congress - page 37

The reasons for keeping placement-reception with DOS are well known and documented and do not support the GAO proposal.

#### Recommendations to the Secretary of State - page iv

Advance planning can be only made in general terms. Resettlement depends on too many factors to allow detailed planning. As an experiment, it would be interesting to plan the time of arrivals, volunteers, sponsors, jobs, health situations and compare with what really took place, after a while. There are too many unknown factors in resettlement which prevent adequate planning. With the help of computers it could be possible to program a large variety of combinations.



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•As of March 3, 1982

Mr. Gregory J. Ahart, Director  
Human Resources Division  
United States General Accounting Office  
441 G Street, NW - Room 5077  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Ahart,

We thank you for sharing with us the draft of your proposed report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and International Law, House Judiciary Committee, concerning resettlement of Indo-chinese refugees.

The report was mailed on August 26, and was received on September 15, which is in part the reason for our delay in preparing our comments on time, as requested.

Enclosed are our notes on the subject and a sample of our follow-up form.

Sincerely yours,

Teymuraz K. Bagration  
Executive Director and  
Chief Executive Officer

Enclosures

TKB:hy

cc: Mr. Berry Holman ✓

GAO notes: GAO responses to certain comments received are included as appropriate in discussion of agency comments in chapter 6. In some instances, agency comments are footnoted and addressed on the final page of the agency comments or on an attached page.

Page references in this appendix have been changed to correspond with the page numbers in the final report.



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**MIGRATION AND REFUGEE SERVICES**  
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 CABLE ADDRESS: NYCATHWELL

September 23, 1982

Mr. Gregory J. Ahart, Director  
 United States General Accounting Office  
 Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Ahart:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your draft report on the resettlement of Indochinese refugees in the United States.

Naturally, much of the information contained in the report is well known to us. We believe you have identified many of the major problems in Southeast Asia refugee resettlement and will comment in your findings and recommendations within. Some of the problems have been evident for some time and we have been trying to find solutions to them. We found some of your statistics rather dismaying. We believe they would look better in another perspective, but that at this point, even the raw statistics are improving.

We solicited comments on the draft from our diocesan offices in the areas studied. Most felt that their perspectives were not reflected in the report. One wrote that if in the cash-assistance section you had substituted "County" for "Voluntary Agency", the report would have been more accurate. We brought your findings, as expressed in testimony before the House Committee, to the attention of a number of our diocesan directors at a meeting. Some were stung by your remarks and those of Chairman Mazzoli, and reacted sharply. I am enclosing relevant parts of their comments with this letter. [GAO note 1.]

We would like to make some comments on the major sections of the report, but first would like to point out that in bringing refugees into the United States, we are bringing people into the lower-income mainstream of our country and that in seeking solutions to their problems, we are dealing in microcosm with most of the intractable socio-economic problems that our society has been grappling with for decades: unemployment, incentives, Medicaid, equity, unskilled workers, etc.

GAO notes: GAO responses to certain comments received are included as appropriate in discussion of agency comments in chapter 6. In some instances, agency comments are footnoted and addressed on the final page of the agency comments or on an attached page.

Page references in this appendix have been changed to correspond with the page numbers in the final report.

Page 4 - We would hope that the GAO final-form report could stress the fact that the survey was made with a restricted number of cases, out of the large number of refugees whose numbers will be mentioned and therefore, cannot provide sufficient evidence to evaluate the whole program. (TF 7 cases out of 594 in the area).

Page 9 - Traditional Sponsoring - This existed more in theory than in fact. The Irish, Italian, Jewish, German and Polish migrants, who were sponsored by Anglo-Saxons in the Mid West and in the South, were a minority. The majority went to their own people and the lobby for legislation on admission of "brothers and sisters" is strong today, as it has always been. The same should be accepted for Indochinese as a natural phenomenon.

Pages 11-13 - The decision to use local Volags to support Indochinese family-reunions where the anchor relatives were on welfare, was an open decision agreed with DOS and HHS, and not a device to bypass the ruling of DOS. The agencies continue to be the sponsors, and are pledging full support in resettlement of family reunions where those already in the USA are on welfare or unable to support. "Open" cases are not allowed to be sponsored by dependent former refugees.

Page 16 - Registration on welfare is used sometimes as a safe-gap measure in case something might go wrong, as in many areas it takes three months before it becomes effective.

Page 30 - TF has a system of monitoring and follow-up. The criticism of GAO does not apply to TF, but this fact is not mentioned in the report.

Page 33 - There are several degrees of "self-sufficiency". The definition of what is "self-sufficiency" should be made clear before the proposal of what to do about it will be made.

Page 37, Par. 2 - The important factor in reference to the Coordinator's job is to have an overall responsible head of the Refugee Program with access to the President and the authority for administrative decision-making at the highest level.

September 29, 1982

TKB:hy

GAO note: The San Francisco affiliate staff informed us that they do not have followup systems with sponsors. The affiliate depends on informal communication channels to keep in touch with refugees and their sponsors. However, as shown in table 4-3, the length of time that the San Francisco affiliate remained in contact with all of their refugees whom we sampled was over 90 days.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE SECTOR RELATIONSHIPS

After a long and continuing period of role clarification, we believe that, in general, relationships are improving in most areas at both the State and local levels. This definition of roles will be accelerated at the local level with the current emphasis on case management.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

There is no question that cash assistance among the refugees is far too high. We have analyzed, met, and written about this major problem almost endlessly over the past several years. As I am sure you would agree, it would take a separate volume to go into the problem in detail, but, as you found, some comments can be made. First, a question: Should the public Cash and Medical Assistance (C&MA) program be used for refugees initially? We would prefer not, at least not for employable refugees. We believe a workable interim support program could be worked-out--in fact, we implemented such a system briefly in the Twin Cities--with a higher Reception and Placement Grant. If the public C&MA system is to be used, however, case management is essential. By this we do not mean such facades as the WIN program or any other existing fantasies, but a comprehensive, refugee specific program with instant and effective sanctions, and with all elements in the system of the same philosophy and support of the case manager. Only through case management can we distinguish one refugee's employability from another's, a failure to do which has been one of the major faults of the present system. Under these conditions, the C&MA system might work. The problem is not the going on welfare, but the not getting off.

I don't know whether you noted it or not, but (p. 19-20, Tables 3-2, 3-3) your statistics show an exact and direct correlation between the cash benefit levels in the sites studied and the percentage of refugees remaining on welfare 4-6 months after arrival.

EMPLOYMENT

You found that few refugees find employment soon after arrival and that voluntary agencies provided only limited employment services and that State-funded providers emphasize employment services but not employment. You also recognized that one of the great shortcomings of the Refugee Act of 1980 was that although it ostensibly aimed at self-sufficiency, it provided ample alternatives to early self-sufficiency. The problem was that both the refugees and the implementers of the act came to regard

## COMMENTS:

PLACEMENT

By now the voluntary agencies and the involved government agencies have worked out a placement policy. It should not be imagined that this was imposed on the voluntary agencies. Many of these agencies were implementing a placement policy similar to the one agreed on before the agreement was negotiated. The voluntary agencies have long felt the need to place refugees where they could attain early self-sufficiency. However, we seek to minimize secondary migration. Your finding (p. 9) that about 5% of the refugees resettled with relatives and friends migrated is not very meaningful without knowing the specific reasons for the migration. The migrants might have discovered closer relatives elsewhere, sought a better climate or a better opportunity, all of which might override the ties that led to the placement. Also, in discussing impacted areas, it is well to remember that not only are refugee populations skewed, immigrant populations are even more skewed, and our population as a whole, is quite skewed geographically. In 1975, the refugees were deliberately scattered, but by 1980, many had concentrated in areas where there were jobs, where the climate was congenial, or where benefits were good. This movement has and undoubtedly will continue.

RESETTLING REFUGEES WITH RELATIVES

We agree this practice is bad if the refugee relative is welfare-dependent and the sole sponsor, and we are and have been making efforts to prevent this. We believe, however, that relatives, who inevitably provide much of the meaningful orientation the arriving refugees receive, play a key role in resettlement. Our efforts are aimed at making that role contribute to our goal of early self-sufficiency for the arriving relative.

As you may know, USCC has in the past year made strenuous efforts through its "Back-to-Basics" program to rekindle the voluntary support which is vital to effective resettlement.

Your statistics show that USCC places a higher percentage of refugees with relatives than other agencies. This is because, as a result of the allocation system, USCC's caseload contains by far the highest percentage of family reunification cases of any of the agencies. Approximately 95% of USCC's caseload is family reunification.



- 2.) We also endorse repeal of the 60 day exemption from employment registration. We doubt that that has been a real problem because where refugees seek to avoid employment, no one dreams they would go to work within 60 days of arrival. Still, repeal is the right signal to send.
  - 3.) We are doubtful about giving total responsibility for initial resettlement to the Secretary of the Department of Health & Human Services (HHS). While this appears only logical at first glance, experience has shown that refugee movements often require rapid response and it is doubtful that a rapid response could ever come out of DHHS. Apart from the foreign policy restraints this would impose, the recommendation seems to suppose that the Department of Health & Human Services can devise a program independent of its welfare program, which is the very mire in which refugee resettlement is now stuck and from which we seek to extract it. We see little evidence that this is possible and believe this is exactly the wrong way to go, unless there is some clear way in which this program can be handled differently within the DHHS system. If the program should be entirely C&MA, we foresee the high per capita costs continuing, the Congress continuing to be frustrated, and the nation's response to refugees crippled.
  - 4.) We believe a Coordinator is necessary and wish he had more authority, especially over the Immigration Service component of the program.
  - 5.) We strongly endorse emphasizing employment in State Department-voluntary agency agreements and we also support State Department monitoring of voluntary agency performance.
  - 6.) We are apprehensive about requiring proposals and applications from the voluntary agencies. We would be against the highly elaborate proposals required by the Department of Health & Human Services. These create inflexibility in a program requiring maximum flexibility, they require increased bureaucracy on both sides and in most cases are more focused on accountability than results. We realize we have to be accountable for government funds, but we do not believe resettlement policy should be made entirely or even primarily in government Requests for Proposals.
- [GAO  
note 3.]

the three-year cash reimbursement provision as an entitlement to three years of preparation for self-sufficiency.

We strongly believe that strong steps must be taken to correct this situation. Unfortunately, at this point we cannot assume that the refugees are interested in early employment, especially if the available jobs are at the entry level. Therefore, one of the first steps in getting refugees into employment quickly may have to be a further curtailment of eligibility for cash assistance for employable refugees. As mentioned earlier, we believe an alternate interim support system for keeping employable refugees out of the C&MA system altogether would be preferable. Case management and close cooperation among the case manager, the welfare eligibility workers, and the social service employment components are essential. Lacking this cooperation we have found that in welfare-rich areas, voluntary agency efforts at early employment range from marginal to futile.

A note for your statistician. We find the headings on Table 4-1 (p. 24) misleading. We are not certain how you gathered your statistics on this, but it appears that your column "Per cent of employable age refugees obtaining jobs" is derived from the previous two columns. At least as it is entitled, that seems a non-sequitur. In concept, "The number of employable refugees known by the voluntary agency to have obtained a job" is, unfortunately, not necessarily the same as the number of refugees that have obtained jobs. [GAO note 2.]

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.) You recommend that Section 412(a) of the Refugee Act be amended to require that: 1.) priority attention be given to quick employment and economic self-sufficiency including placement in unskilled, entry level jobs and 2.) this priority be adhered to notwithstanding provisions for attendance at language and other employment training.

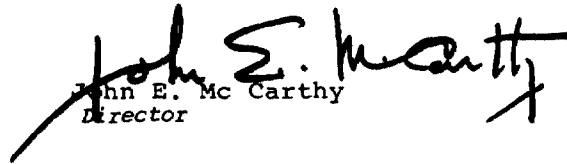
We regard this as essential, but you may have noticed that at one point in the full House debate, a Congressman exacted a commitment from the Subcommittee Chairman that no refugee would be forced into employment before he could earn a GED certificate. If that should become policy, we will be worse off than before.

- GAO note 1: The enclosures pertained to both our draft report and congressional testimony presented before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and International Law. Some of the comments received were from affiliates in areas not included in our review. The enclosures have not been included in this appendix; however, they were considered in preparing our final report and significant points are presented in the discussion on agency comments and our evaluation in each chapter. The comments are available on request from GAO.
- GAO note 2: Table 4-1 shows the number of employable age refugees known by voluntary agencies' staffs to have obtained employment within 4 to 6 months after arrival in the United States. The title to the table has been revised accordingly.
- GAO note 3: The requirement for proposals is cited in section 412(a)(4) of the Refugee Act.

As you pointed out in the draft, the voluntary agencies were in resettlement before government funding and, if the government should reduce its funding, we would still hope to continue. There are only three areas we feel we cannot cover. We cannot resettle most unemployable refugees, we cannot cover most medical costs, and we may not always be able to resettle refugees as rapidly as needed without some help from the Government.

I have already gone on too long and feel that the first point is a good one on which to end. I hope these comments will be helpful.

Sincerely,

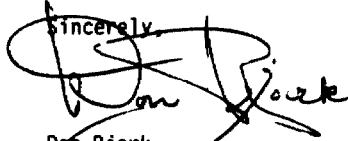
  
John E. Mc Carthy  
Director

4. Sampling Validity

In speaking for World Relief alone, we are not questioning the overall validity of the study, but we would question the validity of a review of only 20 cases out of the many thousands that our agency has resettled since 1979. To see such a small number as "representative" may not really prove statistically significant in making generalizations about the performance of a voluntary agency over a period of time.

We hope that these comments have been helpful. If we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to seeing the "official" copy of this report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Bjork". The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and is positioned above the typed name.

Don Bjork  
Associate Executive Director/  
World Relief Corporation

DB/j1

P.O. Box WRC Nyack, New York 10960 Phone: 914/266-4135 or 800/431-2808 Telex: 646313

# World Relief

Jerry Ballard, executive director

## Refugee Services Division

September 24, 1982

Mr. Gregory J. Ahart  
Director  
United States General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Ahart:

In response to the draft of the proposed Report to the Chairman Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and Internal Law, House Judiciary Committee, World Relief wishes to make the following observations:

1. Per Capita Grant

Page 3, paragraph 1 states that "In fiscal year 1975 the rate was \$500 per refugee and is \$525 per refugee today." This statement appears to be the one and only reference to the per capita grant.

We find it incomprehensible, therefore, that the GAO is recommending better voluntary agency performance and more employment services without a corresponding recommendation for an increase in the per capita grant.

2. Secondary Migration

Despite the statement made on p 9, paragraph 3, that "reunification itself does not necessarily deter secondary migration," we would underscore the prior statement in that same paragraph that claims "the validity of this is unclear since studies on this subject are limited." We believe that the GAO is not in a position to draw conclusions regarding secondary migration since they have not done, nor drawn upon, adequate research on the subject.

3. Refugees Sponsoring Refugees

Page 11, paragraph 2 (continuing on to p. 13) would seem to suggest that the only consideration for refugee's involvement with sponsoring other refugees is financial. We wish to strongly emphasize that financial capability does not prohibit anyone from assisting with orientation, medical and dental help, used furniture, household items, clothing, employment, etc. It is more than probable, therefore, that voluntary agencies will continue to call upon former refugees in helping to "sponsor" new refugees, at least in that sense.

The international relief and development arm of the National Association of Evangelicals, USA

GAO note: Page references in this appendix have been changed to correspond with the page numbers in the final report.





September 28, 1982

YMCA of the USA  
101 North Wacker Drive  
Chicago, Illinois 60606  
(312) 977-0031

Mr. Gregory J. Ahart  
Director  
U. S. General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Ahart:

We accept your report and find it representative.

"Y" ingly yours,

Boris Kazimiroff  
Director  
Refugee Services

BK/cml  
cc:

*Egie Huff*  
*President, National Council*  
*Dale Vonderau*  
*Chairman, National Board*  
*Solon B. Cousins*  
*Executive Director*

(104133)



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