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## INTRODUCTION

In December 1989 there remain in Thailand nearly 400,000 refugees and displaced persons from the three countries of Indochina - Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. Since April 1975, more than 1,000,000 people have fled to Thailand, the major country of first asylum in the region. In the Thailand context, refugees may be considered as those seeking resettlement outside their country of origin; displaced persons are those who have moved across borders in order to escape hostilities within their own country.

There are three generally accepted "durable solutions" for refugees - repatriation to the country of origin, relocation in the country of first asylum, and resettlement in a third country. The relative importance of these varies according to the circumstances of each exodus. The situation for refugees from Indochina, however, is unique in the manner that resettlement to a third country has provided the primary durable solution. By international agreement reached during the Geneva Meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons from Indochina held in July 1979, countries of first asylum - Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Hong Kong - have provided a staging post and temporary shelter for Indochinese refugees. Many other countries, particularly the United States of America, France, Canada and Australia, have accepted refugees for permanent resettlement. Between April 1975 and November 1989, a total of 633,000 Indochinese refugees from within Thailand had found new homes in this way.

During 1988 and 1989, however, three important factors raised the profile of repatriation as a durable solution of potentially much greater importance. Firstly, access to the resettlement option became increasingly more difficult as annual acceptance quotas dropped and more restrictive selection criteria were introduced. Many of the refugees residing in the camps in Thailand were interviewed for resettlement and rejected - sometimes after repeated interviews by different embassies. Secondly, there were political and

