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RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCERNING PROPOSED FIELD ORGANIZATION

OF THE COMMISSARIAT FOR REFUGEES

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Vietnam Technical Assistance Project
Saigon, Viêt-Nam

September 20, 1955

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At the request of the Commissariat for Refugees, the Michigan State University team has continued its study of the organization of the Commissariat. In the general interest of an efficient field service in the Vietnamese government, we have been observing the Refugee Commission in its operations throughout the country. This period of research has proceeded with the full cooperation of the Commissariat and of the Resettlement Division, USOM, and it was initiated upon the request of the Commissioner General. The suggestions included in this report are offered in the hope that they will be helpful in organizing the field staff of the Commissariat so that it can discharge its responsibilities to resettle and rehabilitate refugees from communism in an efficient and expeditious manner.

The information upon which these suggestions are based was collected through a period of intensive research. Forty-three villages were visited throughout the various regions of Viet Nam. Officials concerned with refugee affairs were interviewed in ten provinces in Central and South Viet Nam and the P.M.S. It was discussed with two governors. In each village and in each province, information was gathered through the use of a formal interview as well as through direct observation and informal conversation.

The suggested organization is best understood in the context of several basic assumptions. We assume, first of all, that the Refugee Commission is an organization created to handle a particular emergency which will come to an end with the re-integration of the refugees into normal social, economic, and governmental channels. We also assume that the basic method of solving refugee problems in the future will be through the use of "projects," i.e.,

carefully planned work programs which will result in the rehabilitation of various segments of the refugee population.

Finally, we assume that the general recommendations of our report on Refugee Commission Organization of August 6, 1955, will be put into operation. It will be recalled that a central theme of that report was the need for decentralization in the activities of the Commission.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUGGESTIONS

One of the most striking facts about the Refugee Program is the differing nature of the problem in various parts of the country. In view of this it seems wise to recommend a flexible organization for the Commission in all provinces. Since the problems of the Commission are most severe in South Viet Nam, our first suggestions apply to this area.

1. The Refugee Commission Field Officer. We recommend the creation of a Refugee Commission field office in each of the provinces concerned with refugee problems in the South. This field office would be headed by a Field Officer; and in the provinces where the problems are most acute, he would be assisted by a field staff of technicians, administrative personnel, and survey teams. Five provinces in the South justify a field staff of some proportions—Bien Hoa, Gia Dinh, Tay Ninh, My Tho, and Cholon. These five plus Binh Thuan in South Central Viet Nam, making a total of six provinces, require special treatment and should have adequate field offices created. The other provinces where the refugee population is much smaller would not require large staffs.

The Field Officer and those under his supervision would be employees of the Commissariat and responsible to it. On the other hand, he would be located in the province headquarters, and he would be in close contact with

the Province Chief and the heads of services in the province. We suggest that administrative relationships and communications be as follows:

- 1) The Refugee Commission Field Officer should serve as Executive Secretary to the provincial committee for refugees which should be under the chairmanship of the Province Chief. The size and composition are to be determined by the Province Chief.
- 2) The Provincial Committee should meet weekly and have responsibilities as follows: (a) Decide general policy matters for the refugee situation in the province. An example of the type of policy to be established would be the minimum standards for judging a village as self-sufficient within the province. (b) Provide for the coordination of provincial technical services so that they could be of maximum use in solving the refugee emergency. (c) Accept into provincial jurisdiction as self-sufficient integrated villages the refugee camps in which rehabilitation projects have been completed.
- 3) The Province Chief should have authority to recommend to the Commissioner General removal of refugee office personnel in his province. Furthermore, he should be consulted on the appointment of the Field Officer.
- 4) The Province Chief acting through his committee or individually as he desires should have authority to recommend approval or disapproval of projects submitted by the Field Officer to the Central Office of the Commissariat. In no case should action by the Province Chief unduly delay the submission of a project plan since the Field Officer should be authorized to submit a project proposal after a specified period no matter what the Province Chief's action may be. In other words, consultation and communications between the Province Chief and the Field Officer on each project must be assured, although no bottleneck can be allowed to develop.

As can be seen from these specific suggestions, the Field Officer would generally follow the policy guidance of the Provincial Chief in general matters concerning refugees. However, in his work he would be clearly responsible to the Commissioner General. The Commissioner General should call monthly meetings of the Province Chiefs in these six provinces and use this meeting as an advisory council on refugee matters in these key provinces. Only through continual, sincere, and close cooperation between provincial

authorities and refugee personnel can the refugee emergency be alleviated for the country as a whole.

Specific functions and responsibilities of the Field Officer include:

- 1) The development and stimulation of projects for rehabilitating refugees throughout the province.
- 2) The processing of project proposals. He would serve as the channel for preliminary approval and through which projects would pass to the planning office in Saigon.
- 3) Serve as executive secretary to the provincial refugee committee. As such he would keep the provincial authorities informed at their weekly meetings and relate the overall policy of the province to the specific actions of his staff. He would maximize the usefulness of the provincial technical services through his relation to the province administration.
- 4) The scheduling of work of survey teams in the province.
- 5) The expenditure of funds in line with approved project budgets and the maintenance of records in connection with project implementation.
- 6) The classification of villages as self-sufficient in cooperation with provincial authorities as projects are completed and integration can occur.

It should be clear from the scope of these specific functions that the Field Officer will be the crucial figure in provincial refugee affairs. He will have overall responsibilities for Refugee Commission matters in the province, and he will become familiar with all facets of refugee affairs in the province.

2. The Field Office. In the six provinces having a substantial refugee population, the field office must include sufficient personnel to develop and process rehabilitation projects, to deal with routine refugee matters, to carry out projects after they have been approved, and to reclassify villages as self-sufficient when the projects are completed. These activities will require different types of organization in the six provinces. We suggest that

the following be considered as a typical field office organization. (See Appendices A and B.)

- 1) The field office in all its activities should be under the control of the Refugee Commission Field Officer in the province.
- 2) The field office should contain a planning division (for the development of projects), and an implementation division (for the carrying out of approved projects). Each of these divisions will be in close touch with its corresponding divisions in Saigon. (See Appendices A and B.)
- 3) The field office should contain a pool of technicians who will be available in the development and execution of rehabilitation projects.
- 4) The field office should contain a division of administrative services. Included in this division would be the accounting office which would keep records on the various projects being carried out in the province, the personnel office which would handle personnel matters in the field office, the transportation office, and other administrative service offices which might be important in the specific province.

The field offices in the six most important provinces would be of substantial size, but the field offices maintained in the other provinces would be skeleton organizations with most of the work being done by the field officer himself. Even in the six primary provinces (Bien Hoa, Tay Ninh, Gia Dinh, Cholon, Mytho, and Binh Thuan), the size of the organization should be kept in check and personnel shifted when necessary from one province to another. The field office should not limit itself to headquarters, and it should not hesitate to establish temporary branch offices in the midst of the refugees to gain a better understanding of the progress being made.

3. Survey Teams and Technicians. One of the main sources of project proposals should be the operation of survey teams under the administrative control of the field office. We suggest that survey teams need not be composed of a group of technicians. It seems that more effective use could be

made of the limited number of technical personnel and projects could be developed more rapidly if the following system be established for survey operations:

- 1) A survey team should consist of one or possibly two men of general competence. The team members would be thoroughly familiar with all types of village problems, and the team would be in constant touch with the villages within its area.
- 2) The survey team would have as its main purpose the stimulation of project proposals. It would work with village leaders and try to get their ideas into specific proposals.
- 3) The team would be able to draw on the pool of technical experts available in the province field office when the project being proposed required technical knowledge. These experts would be brought together from provincial and Saigon sources.
- 4) As many survey teams as needed should be operating in assigned areas of the province at one time. Most of their time would be spent in temporary field offices which they would establish in the midst of refugee areas.

One of the problems which came to our attention during our observation of refugee affairs was the shortage of technical personnel. Our survey team suggestions are intended to maximize the usefulness of existing technicians. We further suggest that a similar pool of technicians be maintained in Saigon and that they be coordinated and made available on short-term assignments to provincial field offices as needs dictate. This central pool can be made up of technicians on one-year assignment from the technical ministries in Saigon or from other borrowed sources. By pooling technical help at the provincial level and coordinating their use within the province through the field office and by establishing a similar well-coordinated pool in Saigon, the shortage of technicians can be overcome.

4. Village Self-Help. One of the most encouraging aspects of the refugee program is the extent to which some of the villages were found to be

thinking through their own problems and developing plans for their improvement. We suggest that the Refugee Commission encourage this type of self-analysis and self-help by taking the following steps:

- 1) The survey teams and field officer in each province should see that each village establishes the equivalent of a self-help committee.
- 2) The survey team would work with this committee in stimulating its thinking and planning for a self-sufficient village. The team or other representatives of the provincial field office would visit the committee regularly and bring to its attention successes that have been realized in neighboring villages.
- 3) The committee should be encouraged to draw up specific plans and submit them through channels for rehabilitating the village.
- 4) The committee should study the existing legal requirements that a refugee camp would have to meet to become a regular village. This should hasten the movement of authority from the spiritual leaders to the civic officials.

The field personnel should be encouraged to develop in every way possible a philosophy of encouraging and assisting those who are trying to help themselves. If this philosophy can be developed, the refugee situation will improve very rapidly throughout the country.

5. The Situation in Other Provinces. Most of our suggestions up to this point deal with the six heavily populated provinces in South and South Central Viet Nam. If the problem could be solved in these six provinces, containing two thirds of the total refugee population, the national refugee emergency would largely disappear. However, some attention must be devoted to other areas as well. The following suggestions apply to the areas which do not have as severe problems as the six provinces.

- 1) In the PMS and Central Viet Nam (with the exception of Phan Thiet), the problems are such that the present system of administration should be continued. It should be made clear, however, that during the next six months a gradual transition

should be made to turn over the administrative responsibility of the Refugee Commission to existing provincial and/or regional authorities.

- 2) In both Central Viet Nam and the PMS, specific procedures should be established for processing and developing projects. These procedures should be well publicized among the refugee camps and Refugee Commission personnel, and thinking should be oriented toward the project approach.
- 3) In the provinces of South Viet Nam that do not have large refugee populations, the field office will be a very small but active agency. The Field Officer will have responsibilities similar to those in the six provinces, but he will not have the staff needed for the larger operations.
- 4) A large share of the time in the provinces of the South which do not have large refugee populations would be spent in examining resettlement possibilities and working through coordinators in Saigon who would be arranging resettlement of refugees from heavily populated provinces.

Some of the provinces which do not now have large populations of refugees will increase their number of refugees as the months pass and resettlement continues. However, as each village is resettled, the project design should be complete. It should cover not only the transfer of refugees but also specific plans for rehabilitation so that within a reasonable length of time the village can be classified as self-sufficient and the village integrated into the regular provincial structure.

6. Responsibilities of the Commissariat in Saigon. Certain activities of the Commissariat in Saigon are related directly to the suggestions for a field organization. The following suggestions are offered as a supplement to our report of August 6, 1955, in view of the fact that a field organization must depend heavily on the central office if it is to be effective.

- 1) In both the Directorate of Planning and the Directorate of Resettlement, there should be created several "roving coordinators" or "expeditors" who spend most of their time outside Saigon, though they would be responsible to the central office.

- 2) The "roving coordinator" would be in constant touch with the province Field Officers and survey team personnel and the refugees themselves, and he would get to know their problems and activities thoroughly.
- 3) His function would be to facilitate communications, assist in breaking bottlenecks as they occur in the field or in the central office in Saigon, speed up the refugee program in any way possible.
- 4) Since he would be in constant touch with both the central office and the field personnel within his area, he would be able to keep both informed of the activities and thinking of the other. As an expeditor, he could be held responsible by his Saigon office for prolonged slow-downs in the work occurring in a specific province because of poor administrative action along the line of communications.

In addition to suggesting the creation of the "roving coordinator" position, we suggest several other matters which would have to be worked into the Saigon office of the Commissariat. For example, the Director of Planning should have responsibility for thinking through the overall marketing and manufacturing situation relative to refugee rehabilitation projects. If he finds that too many refugee villages are planning to undertake a certain type of handicraft project or small-scale manufacturing enterprise, he should inform them of the overcrowded market conditions that he has discovered and suggest alternatives to them. This type of overall planning function should be attended to by personnel in the Saigon office since it can be done at no other level. Another matter which can be handled only through the central office is the inter-provincial resettlement project. The Saigon office of the Commissariat must see to it that facilities continue to exist for resettling refugees from one province to another since this job could not be done without central coordination. Perhaps the "roving coordinator" could help here.

PROCEDURAL SUGGESTIONS

In addition to the above suggestions which relate directly to the organization of the Commission in the field, our observations of the past three weeks suggest certain procedures that should be encouraged in the Commission.

1. The Use of Specific Schedules. Since the work of proposing and implementing rehabilitation projects of necessity requires action at several levels of the refugee organization, it is important that the project activity does not slow down unduly at any one point in the communications chain. We suggest the use of routing slips attached to each proposal with dates of action required at each point. The Commissariat should establish realistic maximum periods for action on project proposals, and it should see that these deadlines are not violated.

2. Flexibility. As was mentioned in the August 6 report, flexibility in use of personnel should be a rule in the Commissariat. Assignment of technicians on a short-term basis out of the central pool, transferring of personnel from one field office to another as problems change, and increasing or decreasing the size of a provincial field office staff to meet needs as they develop should be part of the regular operating procedure of the Commissariat. This would not only make most effective use of personnel, but it would also assure against any field office growing merely for the sake of growth.

3. Emphasis on Field Activities. Field personnel should work in the field. We suggest that Field Officers in the provinces stimulate through their own activities the type of thinking which will encourage their personnel to view a normal day's activity as a day working outside his office with refugee problems in the field. This is particularly true of the survey

teams, but it is true of technical personnel and personnel engaged in implementing projects as well.

4. Emphasis on Channels. Perhaps the most important procedural suggestion that we can make is the need for the use of regularized channels of communication in the refugee program. The Commissioner General and his staff should see to it that refugee affairs flow through the field offices to their attention and that refugee leaders do not consider it normal to come directly to Saigon with their problems. This can be done only if all central office personnel realize the need for regularized channels and perhaps the best way to impress them with this need is by example of the top level personnel in the Commissariat. Since the "roving coordinator" provides an extra channel as it is, the establishment of other informal channels would create unending administrative difficulties.

5. Records and Inspection. In a sense the "roving coordinator" provides a means of inspection that can be used to great advantage. In addition, however, the Inspector General will be able to inspect project implementation by examining the records maintained in field offices. Since each project as it is approved will have an approved budget attached to it, the Inspector General will have little trouble in examining financial controls and records. Furthermore, performance will be a main element in the total inspection scheme. That is, provinces which are showing results in terms of completed projects and completely rehabilitated refugees within the budget limits assigned to them are obviously doing a good job.

6. Personnel Reassignment. The Commissariat should take steps immediately to reduce its central office staff. Every effort should be made to utilize these experienced personnel in the newly created field positions.

The Refugee Commission will have a unique personnel problem as it becomes more and more obvious that the harder people work, the closer they come to the end of their jobs. Since the Refugee Commission will reduce in size as the refugee problem becomes less severe, the Commission must give some thought to building incentives and stimulating good morale among its employees. We suggest that as good employees approach the end of their jobs, the Commission locate appropriate positions elsewhere in Saigon or the provinces. These reassessments should be well publicized so that employees of the Commission realize they will be well treated if they do a good job.

7. Putting These Recommendations Into Effect. The Field Administration team of the Michigan State University technical assistance project is prepared to review these recommendations from time to time to clear up possibly obscure points as well as to discuss and work out previously unanticipated problems that might develop as implementation begins. Moreover, the team is prepared to spend time working directly with the Commission to help implement these recommendations. An important part of implementation may be the in-service training of Commission personnel, and the team can provide help on personnel training and retraining problems. In addition, the team is ready to review, in collaboration with the Commission, the implementation of these recommendations at any time within the next six months in order to lend further impetus to putting the accepted recommendations into effect.

It has been clear from our observations of refugee villages and officials that a large job has been done with a good deal of skill and ability. The refugees represented a challenge to the government which it has met to date in an admirable manner. We sincerely hope that our suggestions may assist in the continuation of an excellent job as it enters a new phase of its operation.