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ABSTRACT

This document reports on the resettlement of Hmong refugees in Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas: what their employment experiences have been, which resettlement efforts have been successful, and how current resettlement efforts could be altered to improve the Hmong's long-term adjustment. The report is part of a larger, national project on Hmong resettlement. Much of the data was gathered through personal interviews with Hmong and individuals working with them in Dallas-Fort Worth. Section I gives general information about the area, the population, economic base, employment possibilities, welfare, housing, refugee services, and community relations. Section II gives brief information on the size and history of the Hmong population in Dallas-Fort Worth, which was estimated at approximately 360 in 1983. Section III describes employment (between 90 and 98% employed), economic self-sufficiency, welfare dependence, job training, education, and adult English-as-a-second-language programs. Section IV summarizes the findings specific to the Dallas-Fort Worth site, which include: (1) a very high level of employment and two-income families, meaning relative economic prosperity; (2) low rate of dependence on public assistance and refugee programs; (3) high rate of home ownership; and (4) a high percentage of young people completing high school and continuing on to higher education. The most serious problem found was the failure of some adults to learn English. The future of the Hmong in Dallas-Fort Worth looks generally positive and, aside from the language problem, is an example of a successful resettlement experience. (CG)

THE HMONG RESETTLEMENT STUDY

SITE REPORT: DALLAS-FORT WORTH, TEXAS

April 30, 1984

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PREFACE

The Hmong Resettlement Study is a national project funded by the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement. The study is the joint undertaking of Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (Portland, Oregon), the University of Minnesota and Lao Family Community (Santa Ana, California). The major purposes of the Study are to examine closely the resettlement of Hmong refugees in the United States, focusing on the following issues:

What has been the resettlement experience of the Hmong?

- How are the Hmong faring in terms of employment, dependence, and adjustment?
- Are there areas of employment in which the Hmong have been particularly successful?
- What do resettlement workers and the Hmong regard as the major impediments to effective Hmong resettlement and self-sufficiency?
- What role does secondary migration play in the resettlement of the Hmong? What are the reasons for secondary migration among this group? What are the implications for resettlement strategies?

What resettlement efforts and economic strategies have provided effective results for the Hmong?

- How are problems being handled? What kinds of solutions are being tried, by different resettlement communities and by the Hmong themselves?
- How many and what kinds of entrepreneurial economic development projects involving the Hmong are currently in operation, e.g., farming projects, Pa ndau cooperatives? How were they developed and how successful are they?
- What kinds of Hmong employment strategies have been particularly successful?

How might current strategies be changed to result in more effective resettlement and long-term adjustment of the Hmong?

- How might resettlement be conducted differently for the Hmong? What new projects and approaches are being considered by those involved in Hmong resettlement? How would the Hmong want resettlement to be done differently?

- How can the Hmong be resettled in a way that better utilizes their strengths and unique characteristics?

- What do the Hmong want for themselves? What do Hmong view as essential for effective resettlement? What are their goals for the future? For the next generation of Hmong?

Research conducted in the project included analysis of existing data about the Hmong, compilation of information gathered through numerous informal face-to-face and telephone conversations with Hmong informants across the country (in nearly every Hmong settlement which could be identified) and on-site observations, group meetings and personal interviews with Hmong individuals and families (as well as resettlement officials, service providers and members of the host communities). On-site case studies of Hmong resettlement were conducted in seven selected cities:

Orange County, California
Fresno, California
Portland, Oregon
Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota
Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas
Fort Smith, Arkansas
Providence, Rhode Island

Staff from the participating institutions worked as a team to conduct the overall project and the seven case studies:

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

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John Finck (also with State of Rhode Island)
Michael Sweeney (also with Portland Public Schools)
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The Project Officer for the Office of Refugee Resettlement was Ms. Toyo Biddle.

The results of the project are available to the public as a series of reports published by the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO). Copies may be ordered from:

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330 C Street, S.W.
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Reports

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Executive Summary (written in Lao)
Executive Summary (written in Hmong)

Site Reports: Orange County, California
Fresno, California
Portland, Oregon
Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota
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B. The Dallas-Fort Worth Site Study

Field work in the Dallas-Fort Worth Hmong community was done during the period February 11-28, 1983. The team members who participated were Drs. Bruce Bliatout, Bruce Downing, and Sarah Mason, with the assistance of Wayne T. Saykao, who served as local consultant.

The field work was carried out essentially according to the general work plan of the Hmong Resettlement Study. Group meetings of household heads, women, and young people were held (and recorded), and individuals in three categories were interviewed. Because of the small number of Hmong families in the Dallas area and the size of the area, which makes it difficult for people to come together, only one meeting of household heads was held, and this was combined with the planned "entry-meeting' on the first full day of fieldwork. Sixteen men attended this meeting. On the following day a meeting of Hmong young people was held. The third meeting, of women, was held in the home of one of the women two weeks later.

Interviews were held with two categories of Hmong individuals: ten with persons selected as "Hmong informants" and nine with "Hmong family members." The latter interviews frequently included more than one member of a family. Hmong informants included two college students, both male; six other male adults; and two female adults. Family members included two male and one female elder (one working, the others retired), five younger male parents (sometimes interviewed with their spouses), and one younger female parent.

We also held six interviews with American refugee workers, comprising nine individuals. Six other Americans were interviewed by telephone. A staff member visited the Dallas ORR Regional Office, the Dallas and Grand Prairie Chambers of Commerce, and Dallas City Hall. One staff member attended a Sunday morning church service of the Lao Mission's Hmong congregation at Gaston Avenue Baptist Church in Dallas. All three staff members were guests at social events in Hmong homes. No one we contacted refused to talk to us; on the contrary, all of our interviews were very cordial.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank a number of persons who assisted in the study reported here.

Dr. Bruce Bliatout and Dr. Sarah Mason participated with me in conducting the necessary field work in Dallas and Fort Worth, in February, 1983.

Mr. Wayne T. Saykao (also known as Chu Thao), who lives in Grand Prairie, Texas, was a local consultant for the study. It was he who arranged group meetings, scheduled interviews, collected background information, and selected and scheduled interpreters. He assisted in the selection of individuals to be interviewed. He also reviewed a draft of this report and supplied additional information to fill in some of the gaps.

Mrs. Mai Thao, Mr. Cha Thor, and Mr. Xiong Teng served as English-Hmong interpreters in group meetings and individual interviews as needed. Mrs. Thao also transcribed an audio recording of the young people's meeting. Mr. Vang Vang, a student at the University of Minnesota, transcribed and translated the Hmong language portions of the household heads' meeting.

Dr. Marshall Hurlich and Dr. Sarah Mason, as well as the Project Officer, Ms. Toyo Biddle of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, contributed many valuable suggestions for the improvement of earlier drafts of the report; Dr. Mason assisted in the actual revision.

Central to the success of the study was the willingness of many Hmong residents of Dallas and Fort Worth, as well as American refugee workers and others, to share their knowledge and their experience in resettlement. Especially appreciated was the hospitality of the many Hmong who invited us into their homes or gave up their time to attend meetings scheduled for the study.

The text of this report came together with the assistance of Ms. Hursha Wier and Ms. Ellen Klanderman, who labored skillfully at the keyboard of a CPT word processor.

The generous assistance of all who participated in this research is gratefully acknowledged. For whatever errors of fact or interpretation may remain, the author alone must bear responsibility.

Bruce T. Downing, Ph.D.

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I. GENERAL CONTEXT

A. Setting and Climate

The Dallas-Fort Worth "metroplex" is located on the Trinity River in northeast Texas. The climate is mild in winter with daily temperature averaging between 30 and 65 degrees. Summer days are usually sunny, with temperatures often in the low 90s during the day. The annual average temperature is 65.5 degrees, and average annual rainfall is 32.3 inches.

B. General Population

U.S. Census figures compiled by the Dallas Chamber of Commerce (January 1982) give the following information on the population of the Dallas-Fort Worth Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area:

Dallas-Ft.Worth SMSA	2,974,878
Dallas city	904,078
Fort Worth city	385,141

The two central city areas are 31 miles apart. Population density is low in comparison with other major urban areas, about half the density of Los Angeles, for example.[1] Grand Prairie, where a number of Hmong families live, is a suburban community between the two cities with a population of 71,462.

C. Other Minority Groups

The U.S. Census gives the following 1980 figures for minority groups in Dallas County, which includes Dallas and Grand Prairie but not Fort Worth:

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[1]Abler, Ronald, and John S. Adams, A Comparative Atlas of America's Great Cities: Twenty Metropolitan Regions. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976.

Spanish origin	154,560	10%
Black	287,613	18%
Am. Indian	6,487	0.4%
Asian/Pac. Islander	15,034	1%
Other	93,436	6%
Total minorities and other	557,130	36%
TOTAL POP.	1,556,560	

The number of S.E. Asian refugees in Dallas is not known with any certainty. According to a February 13, 1983, article in the Dallas Times Herald, Catholic Charities in Dallas has sponsored more than 4,000 Southeast Asian refugees and the International Rescue Committee office in Dallas has sponsored more than 5,000. "In addition, thousands of refugees from other parts of the country have made a secondary migration to Dallas in search of jobs." What these figures do not reflect, because no one knows, is the number of thousands who have left Dallas and gone elsewhere. The article notes that a 50-block area of East Dallas is where most refugees have been housed initially and that about 3,000 live in that area at present. (Only one Hmong family now lives in that part of the city.)

The director of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Dallas reported that Texas has a total of 65,000 refugees, 80% of them employed.

D. Economic Base

Dallas began its growth toward becoming a major urban center when the East Texas oil field was discovered in 1930. "As services and information processing activities became growth sectors of the national economy after World War II, Dallas, with better political and commercial connections (than Fort Worth) with the rest of the world, expanded its competitive edge".[2] Fort Worth, originally

[2]Abler and Adams, op. cit.

a military post, became a major livestock center by the turn of the century. While Fort Worth's economy has diversified, it has not matched the growth of Dallas. "In the southern United States, east of Los Angeles, Dallas (i.e. the Dallas ort-Worth metroplex) ranks first in manufacturing, wholesaling, banking, insurance, hotel facilities and postal receipts. Only New York, Chicago and Los Angeles have more headquarters of million dollar companies."[3] Two companies sharing in the recent growth in the electronics industry are centered in the area: Tandy Corporation and Texas Instruments.

E. Employment

Unemployment in the Dallas-Fort Worth SMSA has consistently remained lower than the national average over the past few years. During the period 1981-83, unemployment ranged from a low of 3.8% in April 1981 to a high of 7.2% in June of 1982. In January 1983 the Dallas-Ft. Worth jobless rate was 6.1%, up from 5.2 in December.[4] Yet with nationwide unemployment estimated at 11.4% in January 1983, employment in the area was obviously well above the national average.

Refugee resettlement workers in Dallas-Fort Worth agreed that employment opportunities for refugees, excellent earlier, have declined since the beginning of 1982.

F. Welfare Benefits and Regulations

The State of Texas provides very little in the way of public assistance. There is no program of general assistance or medical attention for the poor.

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[3]Adams, John S., ed., Contemporary Metropolitan America 4: Twentieth Century Cities. Cambridge: Ballinger, 1976.

[4]Monthly Economic Indicators 1981-1982, Dallas Chamber of Commerce.

AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) is available only to families with one parent either absent or disabled. Lack of English language proficiency does not qualify as a disability, as it does in certain other states.

For families that qualify, monthly AFDC rates in February 1983 were as follows:

Caretaker plus one child	$85/month
Caretaker plus two children	117
Caretaker plus three children	140
Caretaker plus five children	183
Caretaker plus seven children	220
Caretaker plus nine children	257

For children only, without an eligible caretaker, the amounts average $62/month less than the figures cited above. Texas Welfare Department policies have been described as discouraging people from public welfare even if they are legally entitled and in need of it.[5]

As the director of the Dallas office of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and other Americans interviewed reported, with approval, the Texas philosophy is "if you live in Texas, you work in Texas." By design, welfare in Texas is not an attractive alternative to employment.

This situation explains the statement of the same IRC official, quoted in the previously mentioned article in the Dallas Times Herald:

> [illegible] ive percent of the refugees handled by International (sic) Committee receive no public assistance beyond the initial relocation aid, usually several thousand dollars.

G. Low-income Housing

The City of Dallas has low-income public housing units in which refugees have been housed. One Hmong family initially paid $91 per month, but now pays

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[5]Saul Friedman, "Eyes of Texas Not on Needy," St. Paul Pioneer Press (Section D), March 27, 1983.

$200 because the household head is employed, even though their monthly income is just $900 for a family of seven. Some units are in inner city areas and others are located on the outskirts. Fort Worth also has comfortable public housing units in which Southeast Asian families, including some Hmong, live.

Most of the Hmong in Dallas-Fort Worth live in privately-owned rental units or houses that they own. Average rent in Grand Prairie (according to the Chamber of Commerce, 1983) is $354 per month, excluding utilities except water, for a two bedroom unit of approximately 950 square feet. Average sales price for an 1,800 square foot new house is $82,900, requiring a monthly payment of $725.

The information received in this study indicates that some Hmong have paid more than the average rent but most pay less (roughly $218 to 425 per month), and that the houses they have bought cost well below the average sales price cited; of six families interviewed, $59,000 was the most any of them paid (for a three-bedroom new house). Most bought older houses ranging in price from $37,000 to $45,000, with monthly payments of $458 to $604.

H. Refugee Services

The principal voluntary agencies (volags) providing refugee services in the Dallas-Fort Worth area are International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Dallas, Catholic Charities (USCC) in both Fort Worth and Dallas, and Church World Services (CWS) in Dallas. They have sponsored large numbers of refugees, but the Hmong feel that in general they have given few ongoing services to individual families.

In cases reported by Hmong still living in the area, the sponsor organization usually completely "weaned" the refugees within three or four weeks. The volag representative typically found the family an apartment and gave them some

groceries (usually little or no money). The Hmong reported much more assistance from individual sponsors (churches, families) assigned by agencies such as USCC and CWS than from IRC, which followed a policy of "direct sponsorship" and did not provide individual sponsors. In some cases the agency representative or sponsor found a job not requiring English or job skills for the head of household, but often refugees found their jobs with the help of relatives or friends. Instruction in English and other orientation was not offered by the volags. In Dallas the public school system received a contract to provide ESL classes for adults, but the contract was later withdrawn, and for a time there was no adult ESL program for refugees in Dallas.

At the present time El Centro Community College in Dallas is funded to provide ESL instruction for refugees. In Fort Worth the Adult Basic Education Center of the Fort Worth Independent School District has a contract to provide refugee education and placement services. Their Indochinese Vocational Rehabilitation Program offers vocational training and placement. Persons who need English before enrolling in vocational training and others desiring ESL instruction may sign up for classes offered by their Survival English and Orientation for Refugees program.

This ESL program is the only service organization that employs a Hmong staff member in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area -- they have a part-time Hmong interpreter. IRC had a Hmong bilingual case worker, but he was not replaced when he moved to St. Paul. One of the problems for Hmong who wish to use any of the services is that they do not find staff who speak Hmong. Lao staff of volags reported that they have difficulty serving Hmong clients because the Hmong frequently do not speak Lao. An American with USCC in Fort Worth stated that S.E. Asians employed by volags sometimes discriminate against members of

other ethnic groups, and there were unconfirmed reports of perceived discriminatory treatment by Vietnamese agency employees from two of the Hmong interviewed.

I. Community Receptiveness to Refugees

The Southeast Asian refugees in Dallas-Fort Worth, mainly Vietnamese, do not seem to have become a large enough segment of the population to arouse much resentment or discrimination. The refugees are subject to general discrimination directed toward Asians from some members of the community, but in areas outside of the inner cities community relations are reasonably good. Many employers have come to value very highly their Southeast Asian workers, including the Hmong, because of their reliability, hard work, and skill. The personnel manager of a large shrimp processing and packaging company in Dallas said that because the refugees were such good workers, he liked to employ them despite problems of communication.

On the other hand, several Hmong women reported their impression that there had been discrimination in the workplace, with White women receiving better jobs and more pay for the same job. Male Hmong household heads also said they felt discrimination against them in hiring and advancement.

There was a serious racial incident early in 1979 involving some of the Hmong who were originally settled in Dallas. At that time forty-six Hmong families, mostly of the Vue clan but including Hers and Vangs, lived in the Mill Place Apartments, a low income project in the city of Dallas. They began to be abused by young minority youths in the area, to the point that these youths would enter their apartments and threaten them, insult them, and walk off with their property. They were afraid to respond with force. Finally with the assistance of a priest all but one of these families decided to resolve the situation by moving away, migrating en masse to Lawton, Oklahoma. (Unable to

find jobs there, these families subsequently moved to Tulsa.)

Very few people in the Dallas-Fort Worth area know that the Hmong are there. Even teachers, landlords and neighbors do not recognize them as a group distinct from other Asians. This anonymity of the Hmong and other refugees is to some extent the result of a policy of the resettlement agencies, endorsed by the Hmong as well. Volag workers reported that they have deliberately avoided calling attention to programs for refugees. "We must be very careful about questions of equity with regard to other minorities," one said.

The general lack of public awareness of the Hmong in particular and of refugees in general has both good and bad consequences. It diffuses any potential racial antagonism such as Indochinese refugees have felt in other locations and in a sense allows them greater freedom. A young Hmong woman spoke positively of being able to go where she wants and do what she wants without the continual surveillance - by her own family and others - that she had felt elsewhere. On the negative side, the Hmong have not received voluntary assistance, foundation grants, or assistance from governmental programs in a way comparable to the Hmong in other areas such as St Paul, Minnesota, or Portland, Oregon.

II. LOCAL HMONG POPULATION

A. Size and Composition

Population

There were at least 46 Hmong families in the Dallas-Fort Worth area in February 1983, distributed as follows:

Dallas	13 families
Duncanville (a Dallas suburb)	1
Irving (between Ft. Worth and Dallas)	1
Grand Prairie (a Dallas suburb)	16
Fort Worth	14
Hurst (a Fort Worth suburb)	1
TOTAL	46 families

The above is based on actual names and addresses. The local Hmong consultant gave the following estimates:

Dallas	25 families	150 people
Grand Prairie	16 families	90 people
Fort Worth	18-20 families	120 people
TOTAL	60 families	360 people

Other estimates range as high as sixty-five Hmong families. A small number of additional families had moved into the area by August 1983.

Dispersion and Unity

The Hmong in the Dallas area are not only relatively few in number but are spread over a large geographic area, encompassing Dallas and Fort Worth (31 miles apart) and points between. This dispersion is in part a historical accident (different agencies sponsored families to Dallas or Fort Worth as separate localities) and in large measure a reflection of the distribution of housing appropriate to family income and family size. Hmong housing ranges from inner-city subsidized "project" housing in Dallas, and more desirable public housing

in Fort Worth, to suburban single-family owner-occupied houses in Grand Prairie and Fort Worth.

The Hmong in the Dallas area are not nearly as homogeneous as in other small Hmong communities such as that in Fort Smith, Arkansas. There are three distinguishable socio-economic groups of Hmong in the Dallas area. Some of them belong to one or another of two Hmong fundamentalist Christian congregations and are members of the Blue Hmong dialect group. Another segment of the population is characterized by generally higher levels of education and are in general of the White Hmong group. Yet others are traditionalists with little education. Members of both the "educated" group and the "Christian" group feel that their particular ties to Western culture give them some advantage in the process of adjustment. The Christians are able to help one another through their church membership. The educated young people are the leaders of the Hmong Student Association, which encourages young people to enter the world of American higher education and business. The kinship-based religious practices of the traditionalists tie them closely to one another but give them no ties to the non-Hmong community.

Perhaps because of these different loyalties and because of the geographic distance that separates them, the Hmong community in the Dallas area has not established any official mutual assistance organization. Some have deliberately sought to avoid the possible political conflict and rivalry that such an organization might encourage. On the surface at least, without an MAA, relations among all the Hmong in the community appear good.

In place of an MAA there has developed a students' organization, representing in its membership high school and college students from all segments of the Hmong community. This organization seems to have been effective in develop-

ing among the young people a sense of responsibility toward their community, a respect for education and a determination in pursuing goals.

B. History of Settlement

Direct Resettlement

Between 60 and 70 Hmong families were resettled in Dallas or Fort Worth directly from refugee camps in Thailand, according to the Hmong consultant for this study. Perhaps 70 percent of them subsequently moved away, to other locations in Texas, Oklahoma (see Chapter I) and elsewhere in the country.

Thus only 15 to 20 of the families presently living in Dallas - Fort Worth were among those originally sponsored in the area during the period 1976-79, primarily by USCC in Fort Worth and IRC in Dallas. A few of these have retained contact with a sponsoring congregation or family, but it appears that the majority received little direct help from a voluntary agency even during the initial weeks of resettlement.

Two of those interviewed claimed that after they were placed in a motel or apartment with a supply of groceries (but no cash), the sponsors left them to their own resources. In another case a family reportedly ran out of food and had nothing to eat for three days. The mother packed up their belongings and wanted to go back to Laos. The situation was taken care of only when members of a local church intervened, by contacting the agency's national office. Reportedly as a result of this incident the director of the sponsoring agency was replaced and policies were changed.

Not all experiences were so bad. A Hmong resident of Fort Worth was sponsored through USCC in October 1976 by a family in the Catholic Church which he still attends. This family helped with immediate resettlement needs and got him

a job at the end of his first week in Fort Worth. He still sees his sponsor regularly. A second family interviewed had an essentially identical experience. His family attended no ESL classes, but the sponsoring church sent a tutor to their home for three months. Members of the congregation still visit in his home every week.

A Hmong leader in Fort Worth reported an event that happened in early 1978, when he was president of the Lao Association (an organization serving Lao and Hmong in Dallas-Ft. Worth). He called a meeting with local officials to discuss problems of Lao and Hmong refugees. In particular, the Hmong wanted the resettlement agencies to hire persons who spoke their language so that Hmong families would have better access to existing refugee services. They were told that any person with a college degree could take the test required of applicants for a case worker position. If a Hmong passed the test, an offer of employment would be made. The person hired would handle all cases, not just refugees. But at the time there were no Hmong who met the requirement of a college degree. No improvements in services to Lao and Hmong refugees resulted from the meeting. As a consequence of that meeting and the pessimistic view it engendered, this man said, people became discouraged, and thirty Hmong families subsequently left the area and moved to St. Paul and other areas where services were believed to be better. (An American refugee worker in Fort Worth interviewed by the study team was unable to recall any meeting such as this Hmong described.)

Secondary Migration

The great majority of Hmong families presently living in the Dallas area (more than 45 families out of perhaps 60-65) have moved there a few families at a time over the past four years. They have come from various other states, seeking jobs and reunification with relatives. The places of origin include

Wisconsin, Minnesota, Louisiana, California, Oklahoma, Ohio, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Montana, and Washington, D.C. Many lived in two or more states before moving to Texas.

Rate of Settlement

There is no information on dates of arrival for the Hmong population as a whole, but conversations with local Hmong provide some data.

Of a sample of fifteen individuals interviewed, eleven came to the U.S. in 1976, and two each in 1979 and 1980. Four were originally resettled in Fort Worth and four in Dallas. Of these eight, five came to the area in 1976, two in 1978 and one in 1979. The arrivals of those who moved to the area from other parts of the U.S. were fairly evenly distributed over the years 1977 through 1982.

Especially since the economic downturn of the past year, the local Hmong have actively attempted to control the movement of refugees into the area. The 1983 population, as a result, includes some single young men and heads of household who have come alone to secure a job before bringing in their families or other relatives.

III. RESETTLEMENT ISSUES

A. Employment

Rate of Employment

Knowledgeable Hmong in Dallas-Fort Worth estimated that between 90% and 98% of Hmong who are available to work are presently employed. The exceptions, they said, are persons who have arrived recently and are still looking for work, some young people still in school, and persons over age 60. In February 1983 there were also, however, several persons not working as a result of recent layoffs. It is particularly significant that as many as 90% of Hmong households include more than one wage-earner. This high rate of employment is one of the most striking features of the Dallas-Fort Worth Hmong community.

Most Hmong working full-time are employed in manufacturing. Jobs range from assembly to engineering and design/management. Jobs held by Hmong women in Dallas and Fort Worth include deveining shrimp, sewing, light assembly work, housekeeping, and dishwashing. During 1983 a few Hmong women living in Grand Prairie were promoted to supervisory positions. Two or three hold clerical jobs. There are no Hmong employed full-time in social services or sales.

Specific information on Hmong employment in Dallas-Ft. Worth was obtained primarily through meetings with Hmong adults and teenagers. Of sixteen Hmong household heads attending one meeting all were employed. Fifteen of the sixteen (93%) reported that they were living in a household with at least one other employed person.

The types of work represented in this group were the following: machine operator (7), air conditioning technician (2), coating technician, optics technician, electronic assembly, quality control, large engine mechanic, maintenance

engineer, and plumber (one each).

All but one of these men received wages ranging from $4.00 to $7.00 per hour; one received over $11.00 per hour. All but two received partial coverage of health insurance costs (generally 80%) from their employer. The exceptions were individuals who had not yet completed the waiting period. One received coverage for family members as well. One enjoys profit-sharing and a retirement plan.

In a second meeting of eight Hmong women, all reported that they were currently employed. Two were unmarried students, working part-time in fast food service. One of them also worked part-time in a doctor's office. These part-time jobs paid $3.35 per hour with no benefits. The other six had full-time jobs paying $3.75 to $5.06 per hour, with 80% health insurance coverage by the employer. The full-time jobs held by Hmong women included production, assembly, dishwasher, housekeeper (2) and a hospital supply clerk.

One of the women explained that "in most cases, both husband and wife are working, one at night and the other during the day. It is necessary for both to work [despite having small children] in order to survive on their wages." The reason for working different shifts, she said, is that "babysitting is very expensive and they can't afford it."

The following information about individual employment was gleaned from interviews in Hmong households and with selected Hmong informants.

Sex	Age	Job
M	28	Machine press
M	c. 26	Machine press
M	45	Machine operator
M	42	laid off (assembly)
M	c. 18	Nurse's aide (part time)
M	43	Solder Assembly
M	c. 20	Typewriter assembly (demoted from electronic technician)
M	30	Machinist
M	65	Machine operator
M	32	Large engine repair
M	c. 40	Machine shop

M	c. 40	Machine operator
M	70	two jobs-one full-time, one part-time
M	c. 26	Maintenance engineer, Photomat Corp.
M	c. 25	Quality control
M	c. 24	Engineering, Tandy Speakers
M	c. 24	Design/management, Texas Instruments
F	c. 40	Assembly
F	c. 20	laid off after baby, Tandy
F	c. 30	Data entry
F	24	Accounts payable
F	c. 60	(full-time job)
F	c. 22	Quality control-Tandy Instruments
F	c. 20	Secretary
F	c. 40	Machine operator

In a meeting of eighteen Hmong teenagers, ten young men and eight young women, it was found that eight were working, part-time or full-time; four of them were also attending school. Seven were still in high school; of the others, seven were high school graduates. Half of the group were married. Part-time jobs held by Hmong students aged 14-16 include clerical work, interpreting, fast-food service, entertaining, service work, and delivering newspapers.

These data demonstrate that the Hmong in the Dallas area are doing very well economically compared to refugees in many other parts of the country. Men's wages appear to range between $4.00 and $7.00 per hour (two receive over $8.00). Most women earn from $3.35 to over $5.00; those women recently promoted to supervisory positions now earn around $6.50 per hour. One leader estimated men's wages to average $6-7, women's $4-5 per hour. Another said monthly earnings ranged between $1000 and $1500. Household incomes tend to be relatively high because a majority of Hmong households have more than one wage earner. And nearly all full-time jobs pay fringe benefits, including 80% coverage for health care.

Economic Outlook

The high level of employment in the Dallas-Ft. Worth Hmong community is one

of the most notable features of that community. But despite the generally rosy picture of employment presented above, the economic outlook is not equally good for all Hmong families in Dallas-Fort Worth.

Hmong employment and Hmong workers fall into two categories. Those who have very limited English language ability hold jobs with pay near the minimum wage where fluency in English is not a criterion for employment. These people are not able to upgrade their job skills or to learn English on the job, because of their limited ability to communicate, and few have any prospect of advancement. A Hmong woman interviewed offered the opinion that perhaps 20% of the Hmong in Dallas-Fort Worth have a possibility of promotion in their present employment.

After three years on the job, one man interviewed was unable to name the machine he operates. He said that his company employs several Hmong, and he speaks Hmong, not English, on the job. He uses mainly sign language, he said, to communicate with his foreman. He said he can never expect a promotion or a pay raise, other than cost of living increases. Because of the recent economic downturn some have been laid off, and Hmong in this category are generally fearful of being laid off and afraid that, because fewer employers will accept workers who cannot fill out applications and interview in English, they may be unable to obtain another job.

The second group of Hmong employees are those who have a reasonably good command of English, specific job skills, and in some cases one or more years of higher education. These individuals, mainly but not exclusively men, have good-paying jobs, possibilities of advancement, greater job security, and alternative employment possibilities. Because they communicate regularly in English, spoken and sometimes written, they are constantly improving their command of English,

and thus eliminating the obstacle that language poses for the first group.

One Hmong interviewed estimates about 40% of Hmong workers in the Dallas area are in the first group and approximately 60% are in the second. Those workers and their families who fall into the latter group may be said to have achieved successful resettlement in the U.S. or at least to be well on their way. Their future prospects are as good as any Southeast Asian refugees in the country; economically at least their situation is not much different from native-born Americans fortunate enough to be living at a time and place where well-paid jobs are plentiful. For the others, who have not acquired a good command of English and have not been able to upgrade job skills, their success depends very much on the economy. If jobs remain plentiful in the area, they will be able at least to survive. If they lose their present jobs and employment opportunities shrink, as was beginning to happen in early 1983, they have few resources to call upon. They are no longer eligible for help from refugee programs and there is essentially no public assistance available to them in the state of Texas once unemployment compensation is exhausted.

As already mentioned, even if they can hold on to present jobs, the possibilities for advancement are severely limited by their language handicap. The jobs they obtained almost as soon as they arrived enabled them to support their families, but those who missed out on English instruction and job training at the beginning missed the opportunity to prepare themselves for a time of greater competition for employment.

Views of Local Employment Services

Employees of voluntary agencies stated that workers who do not speak English can readily find jobs in the Dallas area. An employee of the Grand Prairie office of the Texas Employment Commission (TEC), however, reported that

"it is hard to get employers to accept workers who do not speak English." She said the best possibility for non-English speakers is to do assembly work in a large company where there may be others who speak the same language and know English better. She mentioned Mostek Corporation in the suburb of Carrollton, which has been willing to hire Indochinese provided there is at least one person on site who can serve as interpreter. Two Hmong, a husband and wife, are presently employed there. Other large companies known to have hired many Indochinese, including Hmong, are Tandy Corporation, Sweetheart Cup Company, General Magnetic, and American Manufacturing. Recently there have been cutbacks at a number of these companies, including Mostek, which has stopped hiring, and American Manufacturing, which laid off a large number of Lao employees in 1982, reportedly for refusing to accept transfer to lower-paying jobs.

As an employment counsellor rather than placement specialist, the TEC employee interviewed frequently refers refugees seeking work to ESL classes and job programs. She has seen clients whose employers thought them excellent workers but nevertheless laid them off because there were too many problems of communication.

TEC has served a considerable number of Hmong clients. The Grand Prairie office has been particularly helpful and is utilized by Hmong who live in other parts of the Dallas metroplex. One problem noted by the office is that, while they have made some successful placements of refugee clients, quite often refugee clients register and then disappear, or do not respond when job descriptions are sent to them. This problem may result from language problems, from lack of awareness of the need for persistance in the job search, or from the fact that the applicant may, after registering, get a job through a friend or relative

without notifying the agency. One Hmong told us that TEC usually refers Hmong applicants to low-paying jobs, often far from the person's residence. Thus the Hmong have generally taken jobs they find through friends, want ads, etc., rather than using the State employment service.

USCC in Dallas has two Lao caseworkers who are able to help Hmong if they speak Lao or bring their own interpreter. One caseworker there reported that he has three or four Hmong families on his case list and that two or three were currently using the services of USCC to look for jobs. He refers clients to ESL or job training or helps them find a job. He finds that most of the Hmong who come to him need ESL but are not eligible for training. He also finds that Hmong clients frequently do not follow through after an initial contact. This he attributes to transportation problems or the fact that to be served many Hmong clients would have to bring along a Hmong/Lao bilingual to interpret.

USCC in Fort Worth also has a contract to provide refugee services, a principal function being referrals. Their staff includes members of all the Southeast Asian refugee groups in the area except Hmong. A Lao caseworker there said he has communication problems in dealing with Hmong who seek his services; to deal with these cases, he has the names of three Lao-speaking Hmong he can call upon for help. He stated that the Hmong are hard workers and will accept any job. The principal problem for Hmong refugees, he said, is language.

The director of the International Rescue Committee office in Dallas had this to say about current (February 1983) employment opportunities:

> The economy in Texas is quite a bit worse this year than before. And besides the Indochinese, there are lots of American "refugees" from the north coming to Dallas in search of jobs....It now takes one to one and a half months to find a job for a newly-arrived refugee. Manufacturing jobs especially are down, but now service jobs - in hotels, restaurants, etc. - are being found, and things are looking up for the future.

A worker at Church World Service in Dallas concurred. "Assembly jobs," she reported, "are down, but hotel employment is up, and the field of diesel mecha-

nics, for example, looks good now." One currently promising field, she stated, is microcomputer repair.

B. Economic Self-sufficiency

This section is concerned with economic considerations other than those discussed above under the heading of employment: home ownership; Hmong views on self-employment in the area; and Hmong views on employment and self-sufficiency in general.

Home Ownership in Dallas-Fort Worth

Home-buying has proved to be an effective strategy for increasing economic self-sufficiency in the Hmong community in Dallas-Fort Worth. In addition to the economic benefits in purchasing rather than renting a house, many Hmong also see home-buying as a means of bringing the extended family together in one location to achieve a degree of stability and permanence after years of moving from one state to another.

Of the approximately forty-three families who have lived in the Dallas-Fort Worth area for a year or more (out of a total of up to sixty-five families in the area), sixteen have bought homes, or slightly more than 35%. Most range in price from $37,000 to $45,000, and the highest surveyed was $59,500. Virtually all of the sixteen families have purchased homes with either four bedrooms or three bedrooms with a garage that can be converted into another room.

Hmong families purchasing homes in the area have had to address several problems. The first was the selection of the house. Many said they did not know how to choose or buy a house. Few sought the help of realtors, initially. Instead they often simply drove around until they found a house in a suitable location that seemed to meet their needs. Then they contacted the realtor whose

sign appeared in front of the house.

Second, in order to obtain a mortgage loan, a satisfactory credit rating and proof of two years of employment are generally required. Credit can be a problem. Many Hmong have preferred to use cash in their financial transactions and have not established an adequate credit rating. To obtain loans for home buying, the Hmong in the Dallas-Fort Worth area have developed a strategy of using savings from the families' earned income to make large down payments, apparently with the result that credit requirements have been relaxed in some cases. Sometimes members of the extended family have been called upon to contribute to a pool of savings to make the down-payment. Families buying homes have included some with low-paying jobs as well as those with more education and good jobs. When savings were inadequate, sometimes two small families have joined up to buy a house together and share it.

A third problem is the lack of job security for Hmong in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, and therefore a concern about continuing payments in the future. Because of this concern, most have not only made large down payments, but have also taken second liens or made deals with owners to pay off the equity in as short a period as possible, usually two to five years. After that time they will have to pay only the monthly mortgage payment, and as they point out, this would not continually increase, as in the case of rent. While most Americans prefer to make a relatively low down payment in order to maintain an ample cash flow, Hmong families are stretching their ability to pay to the limit, often having difficulty even buying food by the end of the month, in order to ensure their ability to keep up payments in the future.

A fuller discussion of home-buying in Dallas is included in Part III of the Hmong Resettlement Study Final Report.

Hmong Views on Farming and Entrepreneurship

In many other areas of the country, where the Hmong have had little success in obtaining jobs, a strong interest has developed on the part of both the Hmong and various resettlement agencies in farming and other self-employment projects involving Hmong workers. It is striking that such initiatives are totally absent in the Dallas-Fort Worth community.

As elsewhere, a number of Hmong families in the area, especially those that own their own homes, have vegetable gardens in which they raise food for their own tables. Some families in Fort Worth have gardened larger tracts of land belonging to friends, without charge. But a l of this gardening is being done for family consumption only, not for sale.

Only a few of the Hmong men attending a household heads' meeting said that they would like to return to farming as a livelihood. At a meeting of women, some indicated that quite a few families were interested in farming, but that so far such a move had not been possible. All apparently feel that to get into farming it would be necessary to go somewhere other than Dallas.

Unlike other communities where Hmong live around the country, in Dallas there are no cooperatives, stores, or other outlets for Hmong needlework. There are also no Hmong-owned businesses in the area at present. One reason may be that the Hmong are too few and too spread out geographically to support a business such as a store or auto repair shop catering to their own people. Another reason given is lack of capital. It must be noted, however, that while they feel that insufficient capital is available for business ventures, a number of Hmong families have been able to put together enough money to make down-payments for the purchase of houses.

Some young men with technical training would like to start their own high-

tech business in which other Hmong could find employment. An older man who repairs cars for his friends said he would be interested in doing that as a business, if he had the means. A number of families are said to be saving money with the hope of some day investing it in a business. But one man said that the idea of starting a business has sometimes worked (for the Hmong) and sometimes not. Another mentioned that one problem in trying to start a Hmong business in Dallas is that at present there may not be enough skilled Hmong workers.

A more fundamental reason seems to explain the lack of Hmong business initiatives in Dallas-Fort Worth. One Hmong informant said the Hmong in the Dallas area are not starting their own businesses, or spending time gardening, or thinking about farming, for one principal reason--they have jobs. There is no need to take the risk of starting a business, he pointed out, if they already have good incomes from employment. The same reasoning probably accounts for the lack of interest in producing or selling needlework: better means are available for generating income.

This informant said that many of the Hmong are thinking about starting a business some day, after they are "really settled," but not now.

Hmong Ideas on Developing Self-sufficiency

Many of the Hmong in Dallas moved there from other areas where they were unable to find employment. On the basis of their experience in seeking jobs prior to coming to Dallas, individuals at the household heads' meeting offered their thoughts on how to help Hmong refugees reach economic self-sufficiency.

The central idea was that most jobs require persons with work skills. If refugee programs provide assistance in the form of welfare but do not help their clients develop needed skills, they are just wasting money. And often skills without experience in the workplace are not enough. One man said:

> Since I came to the U.S. and when I still didn't know English, I went to apply for a job and they told me that I don't speak English so I won't understand what they want me to do. And they told me to go get some skill first. So I went to welfare and I got training for two years. After I had graduated I went back to apply for a job and they told me that I only have skill, they won't take me but if I had experience they will take me, so I had no way to go. So I went back to welfare again but they said you're finished with our program - we can't help you anymore. So that's why I move around the U.S.

A strong plea was made by the Hmong household heads at this meeting for programs of on-the-job training or work experience, organized and funded jointly by the government and the employer. At the end of such a program the worker could use that experience in referral to another, permanent, job. One man supported this idea, saying, "First you must get experience no matter how much they pay." If the government could provide even partial support for a worker's family for the duration of the work-experience program, then at the end of the training the worker would either stay on without public assistance or go out and get another job or perhaps become self-employed. In places like Minnesota, he said, where jobs are scarce, it might be difficult to obtain a job even with such training and experience. In that case, an experienced worker could come to a place like Dallas and find a job.

One man said that there are just two ways to get steady employment in Texas. First, the person with good references and a good job record from elsewhere will probably find a job quite easily. Second, a person lacking those qualifications may hope to start in a very low-paying job only. But then, by doing exceptionally good work, showing motivation and willingness to learn, such a person may get promoted to a better position. Another added that there is a third way that Hmong have gotten jobs in Dallas. If a company has one Hmong employee who is doing well, he may be able to persuade the management to hire a

friend. This man said that that is how most professional jobs are obtained by the Hmong in Dallas.

In a meeting with household heads, English language ability was mentioned as an important factor in obtaining a job. While nearly all families have at least one person working, there have been recent lay-offs. Although the Hmong did not feel that English ability was a factor in the lay-off, they did feel that it will be a factor in finding a new job, given the present state of the economy. Employers who previously would hire anyone who was recommended by an employee now require that each applicant complete his or her own application in English. One prominent employer of refugees has recently instituted lie-detector screening of all job applicants, which of course is administered in English.

Besides difficulty with English and lack of job skills and experience, another factor frequently mentioned as a serious problem in finding jobs is discrimination against Asians or people of color generally. One Hmong man said, "People always say, 'Oh, no, we don't discriminate against anybody.' But in practice that's not true."

But another of the household heads suggested that what is perceived sometimes as discrimination is in fact a consequence of language problems. People who cannot communicate well with an interviewer may be judged not to have the appropriate skills, and not hired for that reason. Thus, he said, language problems and discrimination together may be the greatest obstacles to employment.

This man's suggestion for solving some employment problems for refugees was to get the Labor Department, and not just "the Welfare Department" involved in refugee resettlement programs (as is done for example in several countries of

Europe).

One of our Hmong informants suggested that "Hmong living in other states who are trained but don't have work could come to Dallas and find jobs. But if they don't have job skills they should not come. If more Hmong come in from other states, there should be a coordinator to help people find jobs. This person could also help local Hmong who, if they can't find work, sometimes leave Dallas to go to another state where they can get assistance." No suggestion was made as to where a Hmong employment coordinator might be located to serve Hmong who are spread out over the metroplex.

C. Welfare Dependence

Because of the gh rate of employment in the Hmong community of Dallas--Fort Worth and the difficulty of obtaining public welfare assistance in Texas, according to the Hmong not more than five percent of all families (viz. three families) receive any public assistance. There were no instances of welfare dependency among Hmong interviewed. A few families receive food stamps. Some older people receive SSI; others do not because their papers do not indicate their true age. Many workers have been employed long enough to qualify for unemployment compensation when they are laid off. But few have ever been out of work long enough to actually collect benefits.

Because the welfare payment level in Texas is low and Hmong families are large, probably most Hmong families would choose to move to other states rather than try to survive in Texas on public welfare if they were unable to support themselves. Several of the Hmong men interviewed said that if they lost their jobs they would move to another state alone, and send for their families only after they found employment. A former policeman said he would try to get government assistance to farm. Participants in a women's meeting, however,

tended to take the position that if they lost their jobs they would demand some form of assistance from the government for child support. One woman said that if she were laid off, the first place she would go would be the Welfare Office, and the next day she would start looking for another job. Another woman, a mother of seven, said that if she lost her job she would "take the seven children to the government" and then go look for another job.

Both men and women interviewed expressed the view that they were especially vulnerable to layoffs because of their lack of training. Several voiced the opinion that the government should have used the money spent on cash assistance for Southeast Asian refugees on subsidized training programs in large corporations instead, so that the refugees would be in a better position to obtain and keep jobs that pay enough to support their families.

Asked for opinions concerning the refugee program and the American welfare system, one informant said, "It's a neighborly program, but I believe the government could spend its money in a (more) beneficial way than they do now." He felt that a refugee should be getting job training or work experience during the time now spent on public assistance. Another suggested that during a work-experience program welfare should be used just as a supplement, to provide added family income. These people felt that a government-sponsored work-experience or on-the-job training program would 1) eliminate the welfare disincentive which prevents people from leaving welfare for lower-paying jobs, 2) help them find better jobs that require experience, 3) help them start their own businesses if jobs are not found.

A state employee who supervises state-funded refugee programs in the Dallas area indicated that he had found little reason to be concerned with the Hmong in particular as a refugee group. He noted that no one officially keeps track of

the Hmong as a separate group; at best they are included statistically with other Laotians. The Hmong, he said, like some other groups, seem to have taken care of themselves very well and to have stayed away from public assistance programs for a long time now. Certainly some are still around, he said, but no one hears about them. He noted the following as two important facts about resettlement in Texas that may set Texas apart from other states: 1) in the (Dallas) metroplex, resettlement agencies have been very consciencious about trying to keep refugees away form public welfare, especially cash assistance; and 2) welfare levels in Texas are so low that welfare is a very unattractive alternative, and this presumably discourages the indigent from coming to (or remaining in) the state of Texas.

D. Job Training

The most persistent complaint of Hmong interviewed in Dallas and Fort Worth concerned their feeling that refugees have not been offered English instruction and job training locally commensurate with their needs. Many feel that they lack job skills. Others have obtained them elsewhere, or by enrolling in evening classes after work at their own expense.

One Hmong informant estimated that 11-20% of the Hmong had received job training in the U.S., prior to moving to the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Of these, he estimated, 20% have gotten appropriate jobs. Another informant, however, estimated the percentage who had received some training as 60% to 70%, but also pointed out most were trained in other states.

In a group of sixteen household heads, seven of them (44%) indicated that they had received some kind of job training, including higher education, in the U.S. Five attended CETA-supported technical programs. One studied mechanical

engineering in a state college but moved to Texas before graduating. Two have received a degree of B.S. in electrical engineering - one from the University of Texas at Arlington and another from the University of Wisconsin.

In a meeting of eight Hmong women, all reported that they had received no job training in the U.S. One woman interviewed later said she had been trained as a key-punch operator in a local CETA program.

In informant interviews, one man reported that he had received no training during six years in this country, after completing high school in Laos. Then he was accepted for full-time CETA-funded training under "Adult Community Education" in Fort Worth through which he obtained a job in large engine repair. An older man received training in welding in Fort Worth after having to quit a job as laborer that required too much strength. He credits his present lighter job in solder assembly at Tandy Corporation to this training. A woman who had worked as a seamstress in Arlington, Virginia, enrolled in college classes which led to her present accounting job. Another woman studied business English and typing in college and then obtained a secretarial job requiring 60-70 wpm in typing.

In February, 1983, there were four Hmong adults enrolled in the federally-funded job training and placement program of the Indochinese Vocational Rehabilitation Program of the Fort Worth Independent School District. The program has served other Hmong, including one who did exceptionally well in a radio-TV course. The program is funded to serve refugees who have been in the U.S. less than 18 months and who are either unemployed or earning the minimum wage. Persons whose English is very weak are referred to the associated ESL program for instruction before they can enroll in job training.

The director reported that over the five-year life of this program there

has been a gradual shift of emphasis from vocational training to job placement. He explains this as follows:

> People are more concerned about immediate jobs than about training for the future. This is a universal phenomenon: when times are bad and people are upset, they drop out of evening classes and vocational training.

Like other job-training programs, the Fort Worth program has in the past trained people in areas such as welding in which there are presently no jobs. It is not surprising then that individuals may choose to work at available assembly jobs rather than to train for jobs which either do not exist or which, with their limited English, they may be unable to obtain. All Hmong refugees also will have exceeded their 18-month eligibility. An employee of the state refugee coordinator's office stated that the reason for reduced enrollments is that previously one person could be supported during training by relatives with entry-level jobs, but now such jobs are scarce and everyone has to work to make ends meet.

Yet there are still Hmong adults who lack job skills and who are in need of training. One of the Hmong interviewed for this study is a case in point.

Now over 40, head of a family of eight, he has been laid off from his assembly job at American Manufacturing for ten months. The company has announced that they may recall workers soon, but he isn't very hopeful. He has been looking for work without success. The problem is that jobs are much harder to get than before and he has no training, no skills, and very little knowledge of English. ESL or job training would certainly be helpful now; earlier he didn't feel he had time to go to classes after work. Since his family's financial situation is not good now (although his wife and a son in high school have jobs) he could not afford to pay for training. He is unaware of any free training available to refugees. For the first six and a half months after being

laid off he received unemployment compensation; now he receives nothing.

Asked what improvements in the refugee program he would suggest, this man said:

> There should be better language and job-training programs or better publicity about those that exist. It would be best to provide a period of language training first before people start working. Or maybe both at once. But the worker with no previous English can't communicate even with otner employees, can't learn English on the job, and can't learn more about the job than what a supervisor can demonstrate. When an employee doesn't know English, the supervisor may assign him to do something, and then if he doesn't understand or doesn't do it the supervisor will think he is lazy or stupid. Finally, there should be some assistance for untrained people like myself when they are laid off.

While the need for training still exists, few who need it are currently receiving training, whether because of loss of eligibility, lack of awareness that any program exists, transportation or child-care problems, or lack of confidence that training will increase employment opportunities. Whatever the reasons may be, enrollments are greatly reduced in the Fort Worth job training program and other area vocational programs. The state refugee coordinator's office reported that previously there was a waiting list of as many as 100 refugees for some vocational programs. Enrollment in CETA programs is down as well, according to the same source. At the same time, case loads for job placement workers are up in the past year, from 30 to 65 or 75 cases per worker.

E. Education

Background: Programs in Area Public Schools

The public schools in the Dallas area all have some kind of ESL instruction available for Southeast Asian students with limited English proficiency. None have bilingual education programs and none have Hmong-speaking staff. In high school, students are offered ESL class one hour a day for as long a period as they are judged to need it. Students taking ESL may concurrently take a regular

English class. In Dallas elementary schools there have been some Lao bilingual staff.

The ESL teacher at a suburban high school where several Hmong students attend said there are presently two Hmong students in her ESL class and there are four other Hmong students in the school who have been in the class.

She stated that the ESL program is poorly funded, uses inadequate text-books, and offers just one class for students of all language backgrounds and all levels of proficiency. In this situation, the teacher is forced to focus on the needs of the newest, least proficient students, offering little for others. This situation is no doubt a factor in the disdain for ESL expressed by Hmong students.

This teacher finds that Hmong students generally make very rapid progress in learning English. They receive in effect a total immersion language program - learning and using English in all their classes. Hmong students work hard, she said, and seem to get quite a bit of help with their studies after school. Some have enrolled in evening adult ESL classes while in school in an effort to improve their English skills.

Hmong Student Performance

A large part of the information to be presented here came out of a meeting between the study team and nineteen Dallas-Fort Worth area Hmong young people. Of the fourteen who were present for the beginning of the meeting, seven were in high school and seven were recent graduates. Other information was obtained from discussions with a number of Hmong parents about how their children were doing in school.

There is a very strong sense of the importance of education among the Hmong youth of the Dallas area. Half of the teenagers at the meeting were married,

but they had not dropped out of school because of marriage or family. Rather, young people seem to be putting out a tremendous effort to continue their educations. Nearly all students are graduating from high school on schedule. Some high school students have part-time jobs; some college students carry a full load of courses and work full-time to support themselves and pay their tuition, and some of these are married. One gets the impression that the young people are actively competing with each other for achievements in education.

A man who was a police officer in Laos, and lives in Fort Worth with his wife and eight of his nine children, now has two sons in college who also have full-time jobs. He has another son in seventh grade who recently received the outstanding citizen award in his class and has won several trophies for his achievement in wrestling and other sports. The man pointed out that the children had problems for the first six months after the family arrived in Fort Worth in 1976, but after that they got along fine. Because there were no Hmong children nearby, they played with American children in the neighborhood. His children learned English from their playmates and at school. They often speak English at home, while at the same time being instructed in Hmong values and traditions.

As elsewhere, young people who came to the U.S. as teenagers with little or no previous education have had the hardest time in school. One student said it would be better for these students to be placed in school initially according to their educational level rather than their age. Another young man who attended the teenagers' meeting said he had not been able to attend high school in the U.S. because they said he was too old; he took a job instead. One Hmong parent suggested that bilingual education programs are needed for young people in this category.

Parents report that Hmong students in the elementary grades are learning and in some cases doing very well. But teenagers said not enough attention is paid to the language problems of elementary students. At that level, they said, it is appropriate to use well-trained bilingual aides in the classroom.

Because in many families both parents work, some Hmong preschool children have been sent to day-care or pre-school programs where they learn English. Other pre-school children learn English from older siblings who bring it home from school.

Students' Concerns

None of the teenagers at the young people's meeting were taking ESL classes; some had never had an ESL class. One student said, "From my own experience, [Hmong] high school students are not interested in having an ESL class, and I believe 99% won't attend class." They see ESL as extra-curricular since it is not a graduation requirement, and they feel it is a waste of time. One student argued that graduation credit should be given for ESL. These students were opposed to the idea of using bilingual aides in high school. They said that aides invariably have no training in pedagogy and students waste time talking in their language to the aide and let the aide do things for them instead of concentrating on learning English. "The most important thing," one student said, "is to have a really good and helpful (American) English teacher." These students want to be prepared not only to graduate from high school, but to go on to higher education. For this, they feel they need maximum exposure to English and to classes where other students speak English.

A college student said that they would prefer more counsellors rather than Hmong or Lao teache· aides in the high schools. Students need more help in planning for their education than they need with their studies. But a younger

student in the young people's meeting said there is a need for tutoring for Hmong high school students.

The Hmong Student Association

One of the most significant features of the Dallas-Fort Worth Hmong community is the existence of a strong organization to which most of the young people belong, called the Hmong Student Association of Dallas and Fort Worth. Formed in 1978 by a Hmong student attending the University of Texas at Arlington, its original purpose was to bring together the widely scattered young people in the area for social activities and the development of a group identity, with the possibility that the organization might function as a mutual assistance association for the community. More recently its leaders have emphasized specifically educational goals. One of the college-student members said of the organization: "We try hard to help individuals become more dedicated ard their own goals - to help people become more self-motivated. We do this in part by providing good examples or models. What the organization wants is for everyone to graduate from college."

The organization has invited several national Hmong leaders to speak to the members about special educational concerns of the Hmong in the United States. College students in the organization have formed classes in English as a second language (ESL) for high school students with language problems. They have counseled teenagers making crucial decisions related to school, work, and family. Most important, the college students have served as models for the high school students, enabling the younger students to gain confidence in their own ability to achieve academically.

A general theme that has been emphasized by both the national leaders and the college students in the Association is the importance for teenagers to break

away from the traditional early marriage and postpone marriage until their formal education is complete. National leaders have pointed to the students' responsibility to their families and the larger Hmong community, and the need for well educated leaders. College students have reiterated the same theme, and have pointed out that the teenagers have only to look at others in the Hmong community, particularly women with children, to see how difficult it is to continue one's education after marriage and the arrival of children.

College students also provide help to high school seniors planning to enroll in college. This ranges from orientation programs and tours of college campuses to assistance with application forms for admission and financial aid. In addition they obtain forms from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to help high school students and their family members apply for permanent residence status.

Some activities of the Association are directed toward maintenance of traditional social and cultural ties. These have included organizing the community celebration of the Hmong New Year, parties and outings. The students have organized two soccer teams which play each other and sometimes go out of state (e.g., to Oklahoma) to play other Hmong teams.

An important feature of the Association is the regular meeting held every three months, during which members discuss their educational, personal, and financial problems. In these sessions members function as a mutual assistance group, offering encouragement and advice, as well as financial help in emergencies.

Possibly the most important of the Association's special activities is an annual graduation event honoring the year's high school (and college) graduates. Parents and other members of the Hmong community are invited to attend and to

join in honoring the graduates, who are each given certificates prepared by the Association in recognition of their achievement. A special academic achievement award is sometimes presented to an outstanding student. In the spring of 1983, awards were given to four secondary students who were in the top ten percent of their school classes. Two were eighth and ninth grade students from Dallas; the other two were both high school Juniors attending school in Fort Worth.

The Hmong Student Association does not claim all the credit for the good record of Hmong high school and college students in the area, but its leaders point to the fact that virtually all Hmong who have attended high school in the area have graduated, and it can be reasonably assumed that the support and assistance provided to high school students by the Association has been an important factor in their success.

A more detailed description of the Hmong Student Association of Dallas and Fort Worth is included in Part III of the Hmong Resettlement Study Final Report.

Student Aspirations and Plans

Nineteen young people at the group meeting agreed to say something about their plans for the future. One, a freshman, had no plans yet. One young man with no family is only thinking of earning enough to support himself. Several are working and either studying part-time or planning to return to school. Students still in high school plan to go on to college, if necessary after working first to save some money. One man is working while his wife finishes college; another has a wife finishing high school. Most are thinking of technical occupations, engineering or business. One young woman hopes to go to college and to find secretarial work. One married woman has a husband in college; she is working and studying for a General Equivalency Diploma (G.E.D.). One woman was in college, dropped out to have a child, and is now working and

hoping to return to college for a four-year degree in business. A freshman girl plans to be a nurse.

It is evident in their statements that these young people share a strong feeling about the importance of education.

Education vs. Marriage and Children

Although many of the teenagers are married, they expressed the belief that it is best to postpone marriage or at least child-bearing until one's education is completed. They seemed to see the goals for young men and women as very much the same. But they also seemed to be keenly aware of the traditional pressures for a Hmong girl to get married by the age of eighteen.

These opinions expressed at the young people's meeting clearly reveal the general view of this group:

> As far as I know a lot of Hmong [elsewhere] marry young. . . and don't ever get their diploma. They have family problems. After marry for a year or so the girl is pregnant then they have to work really hard and earn minimum wage because of no education.
>
> In Dallas, Texas, we don't believe in getting married early. We believe in education more - we have to compete with other people...we believe in getting good jobs.

Higher Education

In the Dallas-Fort Worth area there are about one hundred Hmong students at all levels. Almost twenty have gone on to college. According to a college student informant there were seventeen Hmong students in college in the Dallas area in 1982-83, six attending four-year schools and the remainder in two-year programs. Three more were expecting to enter college during the summer of 1983, and ten to twelve more in the fall, making a total of up to 33 Hmong college students, including six women. Two others are enrolled in graduate school. One of the leaders of the young people's organization said that at least 90% of

the students who graduate from high school (averaging about 5 to 6 per year) go on to college. This seems a remarkable record, and it is one of which the Hmong in the area are very proud.

Some young Hmong reported that when they graduated from high school they did not feel adequately prepared in math and English or that they had enough money for college, so they planned to go to work for two or three years while they saved money. They intended to take evening classes during this time to improve themselves in weak areas. Eventually they hoped to get into degree programs. Most young people who do not have families to support manage to work full-time and attend evening classes. In at least one case, a student with a full-time job has his tuition paid by his employer.

One Hmong man living in Grand Prairie has obtained a B.S. degree in electrical engineering from the University of Texas at Arlington, and is now enrolled in a graduate program. Another recently received the same degree and was offered a job as an avionics engineer with General Dynamics in Fort Worth. A third nearly completed an engineering program in Michigan before moving to Texas, and now has a high-tech job. Several others are in four-year engineering programs. One graduated from high school in Fort Worth and then completed an electronic technician program.

It is not clear whether the exceptional opportunities for education and jobs in the Dallas area are responsible for these achievements or whether they result from the fact that exceptional young people were attracted to the area by the opportunities that exist. But it is clear that the pursuit of higher education and high-tech jobs by Hmong young people in the Dallas area is moving some families quickly beyond mere self-sufficiency into the mainstream of American life.

F. Adult ESL

There has not been a great deal of attention given to providing ESL instruction for adult refugees in the Dallas area, although various educational agencies have offered courses and a number of churches provided instruction in 1976 and 1977. About two-thirds of the 15 families originally resettled here had some ESL after arrival, according to one Hmong interviewed. The volags have emphasized jobs rather than education for refugees. Service providers agree that it is possible to work in Texas without speaking English. Employers are used to dealing with Spanish-speaking workers who know little English. It is assumed that once one or more adults in a family are employed, the family will be self-sufficient. Then, if they wish, adults can enroll in ESL classes offered during non-working hours.

The Hmong feel that the available programs, however, are not well suited to their needs and relatively difficult to get to; and in many cases they are not even known by those who might benefit from them. Lack of child care and transportation, as well as fatigue from work, family pressures, and the perceived poor quality of instruction have all contributed to low enrollments.

The local attitude toward ESL on the part of service providers is well expressed in this remark by a volag employee:

> After the refugees have been here for awhile they pick up more English. Only a few insist on getting ESL before they work. There was one Hmong woman, healthy and strong and able to work, who wanted to be given three months of ESL before she went to work. But ESL is just an emotional crutch - it's necessary if a person thinks it is.

ESL Programs

Dallas. According to another VOLAG employee, ESL for refugees in Dallas is provided by three agencies: 1) the public schools, 2) the Dallas Community College District, 3) Operation LIFT (Literacy Instruction for Texans), which uses

volunteers. An unknown number of Hmong in Dallas have been served by the first two of these programs, but none by the third.

Originally the Dallas school district had a $400,000 grant from the Texas Education Agency to provide ESL for refugees. Under that program it had been possible for refugees to get ESL instruction at the job site if there were at least 10 refugees working at one site. But that grant was reportedly withdrawn. "Since then the school district has been able to do nothing for refugees," an American resettlement worker said. There are some evening classes that were already in place for Spanish-speaking students. The teachers are mostly Spanish-speaking, and Hmong students have found these classes poorly suited to their needs. Even the funded program had mostly Hispanic teachers, according to another informant, and refugee students didn't respond. Attendance and participation reportedly got to be a problem. A state supervisor of refugee projects said he was not impressed by the type of instruction being offered. One Hmong told us that Hmong students dropped out because of transportation problems.

The current state-funded refugee ESL program in Dallas is operated by the Dallas Community College District at El Centro College in downtown Dallas. As far as we were able to determine no Hmong are served by it. Their contract calls for them to provide English up to a "3rd-grade level" - which others in the community see as insufficient. They have no funds for child care or transportation, although these are recognized to be problem areas.

According to Hmong informants, most Hmong who study English pay their own tuition for community college classes, and the rest attend classes offered through their church.

USCC in Dallas says they refer their clients to ESL classes when

appropriate. Told that there are five or six Hmong families living on the east edge of Dallas, they said that there are day ESL classes available within walking distance of that area.

Fort Worth. A Hmong woman reported that before 1981 there was an ESL class that she and many other working mothers attended in Fort Worth, because there was a nursery at the school for the students' children. The class met from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. She said that the course was "hard, but everyone love it, everyone do it." But these women's participation in the program ended when budget cuts forced the closing of the child care program in 1981.

The program she referred to, which may be the best refugee ESL program in the area, is that operated by the Fort Worth Independent School District at the Adult Education Center. It has served a small number of Hmong; at present two are enrolled. (Both of these had had ESL elsewhere prior to coming to Fort Worth; neither is doing well in this program.)

This program holds classes at various locations designed to be convenient to the students, and classes are scheduled at convenient times. A new class to be held in Arlington, not too far from the Hmong in Grand Prairie, was announced in February, 1983, via a flier written in Hmong. But none enrolled. The reasons given were again transportation, child care problems and heavy family responsibilities. In addition, some Hmong feel that when they took ESL classes earlier they didn't get much out of it.

This program has a part-time Hmong employee on its staff, whose job is mainly to translate in class for Laotian students. The program places a special emphasis on training preliterate students, which would include most Hmong and some Cambodians. Whereas the Adult Basic Education classes also offered by the Fort Worth schools are part-time (4 hrs./week) refugee program classes are full-

time (12 hrs./week).

Other ESL classes have been available, through Community Education, for example, in the public schools, or offered by volunteers. But the quality has apparently been quite low. Hmong adults resent being placed in ESL classes taught by Spanish-speakers for Hispanic students. Hmong adults also reported their perception that teachers in both ESL and GED classes are there just to collect their pay, not to help their students to learn. An educated Hmong commented that this perception probably arises from problems of communication between students and teachers and from the fact that teachers were not qualified by their previous experience and training to provide appropriate instruction for uneducated, preliterate adults.

Hmong Experience with ESL

As for the Hmong refugees themselves, their command of English ranges from the near-native fluency of some college students to virtually none at all. As previously mentioned, many in the latter category are concerned that, with the downturn in the economy and the prospect of layoffs, their English will not suffice to get them another job.

The lack of English proficiency among this group appears to be due to work and family pressures that prevent them from attending ESL classes regularly, rather than lack of ability. The director of a voluntary agency in Dallas and an ESL teacher at South Grand Prairie High School both indicated in interviews that most Hmong seemed to be adept at language learning. Although opportunities exist for refugees with limited English to study ESL in Dallas and Fort Worth, few are enrolled. The stories of some of the Hmong who have learned little English may suggest the reasons.

One 28-year-old man knew no English when he arrived in Lawton, Oklahoma,

from Thailand in 1979. He received no instruction there or in Tulsa. Now he is enrolled in the Dallas Community College District classes, three nights a week. But he doesn't attend regularly and he doesn't get the homework done. He feels his work and his family make such demands on him that he can't devote himself to studying English at night. He would like to be able to study English full-time without interruption. He feels that that way he could learn. (Yet given a choice between working and living on welfare, he said, he would rather work, to build up experience.)

Another man, 45, resettled to Dallas in 1979 and working, said neither he nor his wife have ever had any education, ESL, or job training. He said he would like to study ESL if there were any class nearby (in an inner city area in Dallas) but there is none. His wife would need child-care in order to attend. He barely earns enough to feed his large family. He would like a better-paying job but he sees no way to get one with no English. He is very concerned that if he lost his job he would be unable to get another under present economic conditions. He said that he feels his only hope for the future is his sons, one of whom will soon graduate from high school. A friend of his, who worked for U.S. AID for several years in Laos, says he has received no help from the government. He has had to work hard, "act like a crazy man, pointing and asking questions" to learn English. He apparently once tried to study in the Dallas Public Schools ESL program but found the Americans "fighting over refugees rather than helping them" (a reference to the early State-funded program that is generally acknowledged to have been a failure).

A man whose papers give his age as 43, but who is actually 60 or so, a former major, lives in Ft. Worth and works for a refining company. When he first arrived, sponsored by USCC, he and his family received no help from their

sponsor after the first week. Soon after he arrived he signed up for an ESL class. He attended for a while, but felt that he wasn't learning much. It was hard for him to go to class after work. So he quit. He now thinks he is too old to learn and he doesn't plan to go back. He does know a little English and he says he learns a little on the job.

Women in the Hmong community are also concerned that if they do not improve their English they will not progress any farther in their jobs, and if they lose their jobs they may have difficulty finding new ones. In most families husband and wife are both working, one at night and one during the day. While both want to take ESL classes, women feel it is even more difficult for them than for men because of their additional burdens of child care and home duties.

During the discussion at the women's meeting in Grand Prairie one woman described her own situation. She pointed out that her husband works at night and she works during the day. Because they have only one car, neither has any transportation when the other is working (bus service is virtually nonexistent in her area). After she returns home from work she is tired, there is no one to take care of the children, and no transportation, so she cannot go to ESL classes in the evening. This is very disappointing, as she needs to learn English to progress in her job.

Another woman said she works at night while her husband works during the day. When she gets home in the morning she cares for the children and does housework until 11 a.m. Then the children's grandmother cares for the children while she sleeps. A third woman pointed out that both husband and wife must work in order for the family to survive on their low wages. Babysitting and day care are very expensive and they can't afford it.

Despite the insistence of one voluntary agency director in Dallas that ESL

is not necessary, because the Hmong can pick up English at work, both men and women interviewed indicated they could not learn English on the job. A man forty-two or more years of age who had no education in Laos said that there was no opportunity for him to learn English on the job because he just sits and does his work on the assembly line. Many of the other employees are also non-English-speakers, including three Hmong, and they don't know any more English than he does. A woman who lives in Duncanville, where there are no ESL classes, indicated that most of the women work in jobs in which there is no need to speak English, and therefore their English does not improve.

In summary, while a few Hmong have become fluent in English, those who have not are concerned that their lack of knowledge of English prevents them from making progress on their jobs. Some live in areas where there are no ESL classes. Most find it difficult to learn English on the job, particularly if they have had no education in Laos, and no ESL at all. Many work in situations where there is little need or opportunity to speak English. And despite their expressed need for help in learning English it is nevertheless the case that those with low English proficiency do not necessarily enroll or attend regularly when courses are offered. The reasons given vary, but include problems with transportation and child care, the burden of worries and family responsibilities, fatigue after a day of work, and discouragement as a result of previous bad experiences with ESL classes.

IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SITE: HIGHLIGHTS AND WHAT WAS LEARNED

A. The Uniqueness of the Dallas-Fort Worth Hmong Community

The Hmong community of Dallas-Fort Worth stands out among communities of Hmong refugees nationwide with respect to a number of positive attributes:

- a very high level of employment, with a preponderance of two-income families, providing relative economic prosperity;
- a concommitant low rate of dependence on public assistance or refugee-specific programs;
- a high level of home ownership;
- a high percentage of young people completing high school and continuing on to higher education.

The most serious problem reported in the community is the failure of some adults to make progress in learning English and the job skills needed for advancement and for protection against layoffs in bad economic times. But these problems are no more severe than in other Hmong refugee communities and less serious than in some.

One may look to factors both external and internal to the Hmong community for explanation of its unique characteristics.

External Factors

The economic and business climate in Dallas has been favorable to the economic integration of Southeast Asian refugees. Unemployment has remained below the national average. Employers are accustomed to hiring workers who speak little or no English. Assembly-line jobs in electronics and other industries have been available that require little use of English and that call for manual dexterity at which Southeast Asian workers excel. Most jobs provide health care benefits, particularly important to families with many children. The cost of

both rental housing and home purchase is within the means of unskilled workers where there is more than one wage-earner per family. These positive features of the Dallas-Fort Worth community have more than offset problems with transportation, childcare, job training, job search discrimination and difficulties of communication for most Hmong families.

The anti-welfare attitude of the state government and the citizenry of Texas, which might also be viewed as a high regard for self-reliance, seems not to have discouraged the Hmong now living in Dallas. It was not possible to determine, within the scope of this study, to what extent other Hmong refugees resettled in the area may have been persuaded or forced to leave by the low level of assistance generally provided by resettlement agencies and the difficulty of obtaining public assistance, such as has continued to support large numbers of unskilled and uneducated Hmong refugees in other states. At least one of the Hmong informants for this study felt that the absence of patronistic support from voluntary agencies, the State refugee office, and local governmental agencies was a positive factor in developing Hmong self-reliance and self-sufficiency. While the prevailing philosophy may have been one of 'sink or swim' the Hmong presently living in the area have generally proven to be quick learners and strong swimmers.

Internal Resources

The Hmong community in Dallas-Fort Worth seems to include an unusually high percentage of young persons who are well educated and possess valuable job skills, who are adapting well to the circumstances of living and working in America, who value education, and whose goals are focused on economic and cultural well-being in the American context. While the community includes a high proportion of young people, these goals seem to be shared by many of the

elders as well.

Within the scope of this study, it is impossible to determine whether persons sharing this outlook just happened to settle in this area, or instead the less adaptable were filtered out by the tough economic realities. It is also possible that the circumstances in the Dallas area fostered the development of this optimistic community attitude among those who happened to settle here. It does appear that the better-educated young men here were attracted to the area because of the possibility of professional jobs in industry. And it is also known that a number of the Hmong originally resettled here left, discouraged, to seek their fortunes elsewhere.

It also seems clear that values favoring education as the key to establishing a new life and adaptation to American modes of living and earning one's living have been spread widely in the community, apparently in large part through the influence of the college-educated young people. In the absence of a formal mutual assistance association led by the elders (although traditional mechanisms of consultation and decision-making within the community and individual lineage groups certainly persist) the younger leadership, particularly through the Young People's Organization, has obviously had a strong influence on the community. These young leaders display a particular zeal in encouraging the young people to continue and excel in their education. The relative prosperity of the community, combined with great dedication and hard work, have made it possible for many to pursue these goals despite relatively little public assistance.

The reason Dallas was selected by the Hmong families who have moved there is that there have been relatively good job opportunities for the Hmong in this area. Although the jobs may not all be high-paying, they pay better than the

average for jobs held by Hmong refugees around the country. Since the Hmong cannot expect public welfare support from the State of Texas, whoever moves to Dallas does so with the intention of finding employment.

The members of the Dallas community agree on the idea of discouraging an influx of Hmong to their community that would overtax the local job market. The Hmong leaders encourage heads of household to come to Dallas alone at first, leaving families behind. The head of household stays with relatives while searching for a job. Once a job has been secured, and perhaps an apartment, he can bring his family. The majority of Hmong families who moved to the Dallas-Fort Worth area recently have followed this procedure, and they continue to recommend it to any family planning to move to the area.

Hmong Attitudes Toward Future Migration

According to Hmong leaders and household heads interviewed for this study, there is little if any interest on the part of the Hmong in Dallas in moving to California, as so many others have from various parts of the country, or in returning to Laos (except under radically different political circumstances). One community leader pointed out that most Hmong move to get jobs, and since most of those in Dallas have jobs, they are not interested in moving elsewhere. Another Hmong said that although he wasn't entirely satisfied with his job, he would rather stay in Dallas and support himself than live somewhere else and be "bothered" by dependence on the government.

Several of those questioned stated that most Hmong who moved to California hoped to farm but were generally disappointed. Therefore Hmong in the Dallas area were not thinking of moving to farming areas.

Most of those interviewed indicated a return to Laos was not a realistic possibility. A former soldier explained that he would not go back unless it was the way it used to be, and that Laos has changed too much since he left.

Resettlement Policy and Welfare

Large numbers of Southeast Asian refugees, principally Vietnamese, have been resettled by voluntary agencies (USCC, IRC, and CWS) in the Dallas area, but services for these refugees, and particularly for the Hmong, have been much more limited than in many other parts of the country. Resettlement agencies, believing that it is possible to live and work in Texas (as many Hispanics do) without much education or English proficiency, have generally been satisfied merely to find housing and jobs for their refugee clients. Desiring not to raise questions of equity of services with respect to other minority communities, they have been reluctant to create or promote refugee-specific programs.

Moreover, social services, job development and ESL instruction, whether targeted for refugees or serving refugees through more widely focussed programs, seem not to have been very accessible to the Hmong, not to have been widely utilized by the Hmong, and of generally indifferent quality, or worse. A number of Hmong individuals report that they were ignored or ill-treated by members of larger refugee groups working in these programs. The general public and many agencies in the Dallas area seem unaware of the existence of the Hmong as a refugee population distinct from the Vietnamese. In some agencies it is assumed that because they do not see many Hmong the Hmong must have few needs, but this logic is hard to justify; it is equally possible that Hmong families with problems don't come to the agencies because they have little confidence that the agencies can help them.

B. Problems and Future Prospects

In general, Hmong resettlement in the Dallas area at present has all the earmarks of success. The availability of well-paying jobs, the willingness of

the Hmong, including women with small children and students, to take jobs, and the respect they have earned as employees for the quality of their work, together have contributed to relative economic well-being in comparison to refugees elsewhere. Their economic success has enabled some to buy homes and pursue higher education. A certain proportion of the Hmong in Dallas seem to be persons who, having studied English, developed job skills and pursued higher education in Laos or elsewhere in the U.S., have come to the Dallas area to take advantage of employment opportunities there. The Dallas Hmong community has probably the highest ratio of high school graduates and college students to the general population of any Hmong community in the U.S., and the orientation among the young people is strongly in the direction of success on American terms, i.e., through employment in American business, including electronics and communication. Thus at least a segment of the Dallas Hmong community appears to have already been successfully resettled, with excellent future prospects.

But there is another segment of the Dallas Hmong community which is perhaps only apparently or temporarily self-sufficient and which may yet suffer serious consequences from the emphasis on immediate employment and economic self-sufficiency for refugees in Texas in preference to education, training and social services. These are people who have been working but who have not learned English or developed job skills. Many of them are clearly worried about their future, with good reason. Even if not laid off, they see little possibility of advancement in their present jobs, without some means of improving their English or job skills, or both.

It has obviously been the case that one could obtain employment in Dallas without speaking English. But this may not always be true and there were indications that in 1983 it was no longer true. While an employed person might not

be fired because of lack of English, it was becoming apparent that persons who were laid off, for whatever reason, might have a very difficult time getting hired again without a greater command of English than many of the Hmong in Dallas have.

The fallacy in the resettlement philosophy of the Dallas voluntary agencies is in the assumption that refugees can learn English after they start working, either on the job or through evening classes.

Most Hmong with little knowledge of English and while working at entry-level jobs have not taken advantage of whatever opportunities there may be to study ESL in their free time. They offer a variety of reasons for this, even while identifying lack of English fluency as a major problem. They do hard work and are tired when they come home. They have heavy family responsibilities and worries about the future that prevent them from studying. They have had bad experiences in previous attempts to learn English and feel that the classes are poorly organized, the instructors are poorly prepared and uninterested in their work, or the courses are inappropriate, being designed for and/or taught by Spanish speakers. They have transportation or child-care problems that prevent them from attending classes. In many cases, they have no information about available classes and do not know where to obtain such information.

In particular it seems to be erroneous to believe that persons employed in jobs that do not require English proficiency will develop proficiency on the job. Some know so little English that they understand nothing of what is said to them. And where communication in English is not required for a job, very little communication in English goes on. In some cases it is too noisy to talk on the job. In cases where a Hmong bilingual has been used to interpret for non-English-speaking workers, the interpreter serves to further isolate the

monolingual from the English-speaking world.

As an ESL professional in Fort Worth pointed out, a person who knows the basics of the grammar of a language can pick up new vocabulary with relative ease. A person to whom the language is just a buzz is likely to pick up nothing. Some of the Hmong working in Dallas have never sat in an ESL class or had any other formal instruction.

Whether these adults can continue to survive economically depends on the continued availability of jobs that do not require English. If they lose their jobs and their limited command of English prevents them from getting another, the only course open to them is to move to another state where jobs are easier to obtain (if there is such a place) or where they can live on public assistance.

Persons over the age of 40 or 50 who lack education and English ability, as most of them do, generally hold no hope of learning to speak and read English or of obtaining employment. With no local possibility of self-employment such as farming and with few or no social programs or services available to them, they stay at home, sometimes caring for children while younger adults work. Some older people are content with the relative comfort and prosperity of their lives here; others long very much for their former self-sufficient rural life in Laos.

The future seems most promising for the young people. Despite having only a modicum of assistance through ESL classes in adapting to the English language and to American schools, the Hmong children and youth seem already to have made a successful adaptation. Their feeling of community and responsibility and the belief in the value of education, nurtured by the young people's organization, suggests that the Hmong youth of Dallas may be expected eventually to achieve the kind of success found among the offspring of earlier Asian immigrants to

America.

A Hmong college student expressed the opinion that Hmong families and communities should begin to look to their younger members for guidance in becoming self-reliant, rather than depending on the elders of the community for leadership. He believes the United States government, too, must begin to deal with younger leaders. In the view of this young man, at least, certain Hmong cultural traits, such as the insistence on living close together which inhibits social contacts with Americans, constitute obstacles in Hmong adaptation to life in the United States. He believes that the success of the Hmong in Dallas is due partly to the fact that there has been no mutual assistance association for Hmong families to depend upon for help, and that therefore they have had to develop more self-reliance than Hmong elsewhere.