



**RIJ**  
国際難民支援会

Building a  
Future for  
Refugees

# Cambodia



## Reasons for Displacement:

Cambodia experienced a series of traumatic events leading to massive displacement. In 1970, Lon Nol took over power in a coup against

Prince Sihanouk, and a civil war broke out between the new regime on the one hand and the communist Khmer Rouge and Sihanouk's supporters on the other. Furthermore, the involvement of North Vietnamese forces and the U.S. drew Cambodia into the Vietnam War. Thousands of people died in the conflict and two million people were internally displaced.

The civil war ended in 1975 with the takeover of the Khmer Rouge. With the aim to create a classless agrarian society, they evacuated the urban population to the countryside where they were forced to work as farmers. Potential political enemies were tortured and executed. A few thousand people escaped from Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge's ruling. However, it was only after Vietnamese troops overthrew them in 1979 that a massive wave

of people fleeing from the Khmer Rouge's atrocities and subsequent internal conflicts started. Throughout the following three years, over 600,000 people are believed to have fled Cambodia.

## Refugee Communities:

The majority sought refuge in Thailand, where Khmer Rouge victims and perpetrators lived side by side in makeshift camps under precarious health and safety conditions. RIJ was born in 1979 in response to the outflow of refugees to Thailand, advocating for better conditions in the refugee camps.

More than 200,000 camp residents were resettled in third countries, mainly in the U.S. and France, where most of them stay until today. In the U.S., where around 130,000 refugees were resettled, many faced difficult times, partly due to the economic recession at that time. The remaining refugees returned to Cambodia through the 90s, whereas some remained in Thailand.

## Assistance:

- RIJ funded numerous projects to assist Cambodian refugees in Thailand and returnees in the areas of education, health and agriculture
- Several organizations provided humanitarian aid in the border camps or inside Cambodia, for example UNICEF, the International Committee of the Red Cross, Oxfam and CARE



## Number of refugees:

63 residing in Country;  
13071 originating from Country  
[source: UNHCR]

## Number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):

0  
[source: UNHCR]

## History:

**1953** — Independence from France

**1970** — Lon Nol overthrows Prince Sihanouk; declaration of Khmer Republic

**1970-1975** — Cambodian Civil War

**1973** — Paris Peace Accords, Vietnamese troops withdraw and the US stops bomb attacks on Cambodia

**1975 - 1979** — The Khmer Rouge rule the country; around 2 million people die

**1978/79** — Vietnamese troops enter Cambodia and overthrow the Khmer Rouge

**1991** — Peace Agreement is signed in Paris; official end of Vietnamese occupation

**1993** — Re-establishment of the Kingdom of Cambodia

**2002** — Cambodia signs repatriation agreement to accept Cambodian deportees from the US

**2006** — Initiation of Khmer Rouge Tribunal

**2013** — General elections, victory of the ruling Cambodian People's Party

**2014** — Controversial refugee transfer agreement between Cambodia and Australia is signed