In 2008 IOM Thailand resettled some 17,450 refugees, most of whom came from nine camps on the Thai-Myanmar border. The ongoing operation, which includes medical screening, cultural orientation and travel arrangements to eleven resettlement countries, followed some 15,000 departures from Thai camps in 2007.

IOM’s history of refugee resettlement from Thailand began in 1975 in the aftermath of the Vietnam war. Over the next 15 years the organization helped nearly half a million Indochinese refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to start new lives abroad. In 1980 alone, at the peak of the exodus, IOM moved over 120,000 refugees.

Today the vast majority of refugees leaving Thailand originally come from Myanmar. As in the past, most leave Thailand for the United States. But other countries including Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom are now also accepting refugees for resettlement in growing numbers.

Over its 34-years of resettlement operations in Thailand, IOM has worked closely with the Royal Thai Government, the UN country team and the embassies of resettlement countries, recognizing that third country resettlement is only one of a number of durable solutions for refugees whose well-founded fear of persecution has forced them to flee their home countries.

IOM’s refugee resettlement programme in Thailand currently employs over 240 staff and operates in 11 locations, including all nine camps along the Thai-Myanmar border. Its activities include:

**Information Campaigns**

IOM’s cultural orientation team, working with the International Rescue Committee, the US Embassy’s Overseas Processing Entity and UNHCR, conducts information campaigns on resettlement in the camps. These campaigns are designed to help refugees who are still unsure of whether or not to resettle to make informed decisions. They also answer important questions about the resettlement process.
Medical Screening and Assistance

IOM conducts medical screening of refugees applying for resettlement. Screening is carried out by IOM doctors and the results are analyzed in IOM laboratories in Mae Sot, Wat Tham Krabok and Bangkok. Refugees are provided with treatment and counseling before they are cleared to travel.

Pre-departure treatment of refugees with communicable diseases such as tuberculosis is important not only for the refugees themselves, but also as an international public health issue.

It is designed to protect both the refugees and the people with whom they come into contact - during the resettlement process, when traveling and after they arrive in resettlement countries.

IOM also conducts last minute medical checks to ensure that refugees are fit to travel and, when necessary, provides medical escorts.

Cultural Orientation

IOM offers refugees accepted for resettlement 3-5 days of pre-departure cultural orientation aimed at addressing their needs and those of host communities.

It has developed special curricula for children, families, youth, singles and parents. It also offers 3-4 weeks of language training designed to provide newly-arrived refugees with basic, survival language skills.

IOM also produces cultural profiles of groups of refugees selected for resettlement. These are designed to help host communities to understand the needs of the refugees, in order to maximize their chances of successful integration.

Information in these profiles includes their educational, religious, and cultural background.

Pre-Departure Logistics & Exit Formalities

IOM arranges pre-departure logistics and exit formalities for refugees accepted for resettlement.

These include: providing transport for refugees to attend interviews by resettlement country officials and to undergo medical screening; arranging Thai exit permits; fingerprinting (on behalf of the Thai authorities); collecting and verifying travel documents and visas; booking domestic and international flights; and pre-departure, departure and arrival notifications.

IOM also arranges travel from the border camps to Bangkok’s Suvarnabhumi airport, providing food and overnight accommodation.

IOM’s Suvarnabhumi airport office offers departure assistance and other IOM airport offices around the world offer global transit assistance en route to final destinations. If travel escorts are required, IOM provides them.

It also provides appropriate warm clothing and footwear for refugees traveling from Thailand to cold climates.