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The UNHCR Regional Office in Bangkok houses the world's largest resettlement program for refugees. Since January 2005, more than 30,000 refugees have departed Thailand for countries like the USA, Australia and Canada where they have begun new chapters in their lives. Resettlement is the only long-term solution for many refugees as they cannot return to their country of origin and nor can they integrate locally due to the national policy. Thailand is not a party to the *1951 Refugee Convention* and those outside camps are regarded as illegal migrants.

Nevertheless, Thailand hosts a huge number of refugees. There are two overarching categories of refugees in Thailand. The vast majority are from Burma and they live in closed camps along the Thai-Burmese border. These camps have been in operation since the 1980s and it is clearly a protracted refugee situation. The second major group of refugees are those based in Bangkok and other urban centers. They are nationally diverse, originating from over thirty countries such as Iraq, Sri Lanka, China and Somalia.

As a resettlement intern for the urban caseload, my primary task was to interview candidates for resettlement. In the process, I confirmed refugee claims and gathered additional information required to complete Resettlement Registration Forms (RRFs). I also regularly provided counseling to individual refugees, explaining the procedures and prospects for resettlement given the nature of their case and resettlement policies. Moreover, I had the opportunity to observe a number of Best Interest Determination (BID) panels. These panels bring together a multi-disciplinary group of colleagues to discuss and eventually decide what the most appropriate care arrangements are for individual cases of separated and unaccompanied children, taking into account a wide variety of factors including the views of children.

The internship provided me with firsthand exposure to the UN and its functioning. In addition, just as I had hoped, I was thrust into the field of refugee law and policy, dealing with issues ranging from refugee status determination and the applicability of Article 1F

in the *1951 Convention* to questions of child custody. In the course of my meetings with refugees, I developed interview and counseling skills while at the same time learning about the ongoing challenges refugees face in Thailand, such as the constant risk of arrest and rising food prices. Not only did I learn a great deal from refugees themselves but also UNHCR staff, who hold a wealth of knowledge and experience as humanitarian workers and were extremely generous in sharing their time with me.

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