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Resettlement of Displaced Persons on the Thai–Myanmar Border

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Resettlement of Displaced Persons on the Thai–Myanmar Border

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The opinions expressed within this report are those of the Asian Research Center for Migration research team alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Development Programme or the European Union.

We are hopeful that this report on resettlement of displaced persons from the temporary shelters on the Thai–Myanmar border will provide useful insights into the process and prospects of the current resettlement programme in Thailand and encourage stakeholders to renew their commitment to finding sustainable solutions for the situation.

Bangkok, August 2013

Benjamin Harkins
Supang Chantavanich

Contents

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CA	State of California
CAL	Center for Applied Linguistics
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CCSDPT	Committee for Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand
DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IN	State of Indiana
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KNU	Karen National Union
KWO	Karen Women's Organization
MDHS	Minnesota State Department of Human Services
MN	State of Minnesota
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand
MOI	Ministry of Interior of Thailand
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSC	National Security Council of Thailand
NY	State of New York
OPE	Overseas Processing Entity
PAB	Provincial Admissions Board
POC	Person of Concern
R&P	Reception and Placement Programme Agency (Also VOLAG)
RTA	Royal Thai Army
RTG	Royal Thai Government
SF	San Francisco
TANF	Temporary Cash Assistance for Needy Families
TB	Tuberculosis
TBBC	Thailand Burma Border Consortium
UN	United Nations

UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USCIS	U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service
USRAP	U.S. Refugee Admissions Programme
VOLAG	Voluntary Agency (Also R&P Agency)

Executive Summary

Background, Objectives and Methodology

The resettlement operation for the camps on the Thai–Myanmar Border is the world's largest resettlement programme, with 12 receiving countries accepting displaced persons for relocation and integration. However, despite the large-scale financial and human resource engagements in the operation, there has been limited research conducted on how successful the resettlement programme has been as a durable solution both from the perspective of displaced persons and for the other stakeholders involved.

The central research problem of this study was therefore to determine what resettlement operations have achieved so far in Thailand and how the programme can be strengthened to become a more effective durable solution to the displaced person situation on the Thai–Myanmar border based on an evaluation of the impacts of resettlement as well as of the motivations and constraints for displaced persons to participate in the programme.

The study addressed these research questions in a broad range of research locations and incorporated the perspectives of a diverse group of stakeholders for the displacement situation. This included an evaluation of the integration experience for displaced persons at two locations within the U.S., an analysis of the programme's impacts on displaced persons within Thailand, and an assessment of the impact of the resettlement programme on displacement flows and shelter population totals. The rationale for this broad ranging approach was to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the programme's impacts than has existed previously with the overall objective of developing recommendations for the normative future role of the programme in Thailand.

The research for the study utilised a mixed methodology approach including an extensive desk review of relevant documents, a large-scale survey of 444 displaced persons across three temporary shelter locations, key informant interviews, focus group interviews and researcher participation in the target group's social activities. The qualitative data from key informant interviews, focus groups and participation in activities were analysed and compared with quantitative and secondary research data in order to triangulate the research results.

Findings

Motivations for choosing resettlement proved to be highly individual for displaced persons. The research showed that in the end, 'not everyone wants to go', and that the internal algorithm that combines all of the different factors involved for each individual and leads to a decision to apply or not is difficult to standardise. However, when displaced persons talked candidly about their motivations, they tended to centre on family reunification, educational and employment opportunities, greater levels of respect for their human rights and an overall hope for a better future as the primary pull factors for choosing resettlement. Conversely, the lack of freedom of movement, livelihoods and educational opportunities were key push factors from life within the shelters as were the lack of prospects for the other two durable solutions of local integration in Thailand or a safe return to Myanmar. Finally, while none of the displaced persons complained openly about the poverty they experienced within the shelters, based upon the proxies and euphemisms for impoverishment discussed, it was evident that the conditions of prolonged destitution are a major push factor for choosing resettlement.

For purposes of discussion, it was found that the constraints to participation in the resettlement programme could be subdivided into categories of 'soft' constraints, which displaced persons interact with and are influenced by in decision-making, and 'hard' constraints, which are policy restrictions over which they have no significant control.

As for hard constraints, the consensus among key informants interviewed was that the most significant bottleneck to the resettlement programme as a whole is the stalled PAB registration process and the large resulting population within the shelters that are simply ineligible for resettlement whether they are interested in applying or not.

For soft constraints, the three major areas of concern for those who had decided not to apply for resettlement could be summarised as family obligations/separation, fears about integration in resettlement countries and reluctance to give up on returning to Myanmar/leaving their people behind.

Positive impacts of the resettlement programme were found to include the opportunity for thousands of displaced families to start a new life removed from the cause of their displacement; the protection role played by resettlement in the shelters in allowing survivors of gender-based violence, those in need of specialised medical care, and other vulnerable displaced persons to be taken out of the shelters; the creation of a 'safety valve' on the situation with the idea that there is hope for an alternative to life within the shelters which has helped to prevent some of the social problems associated with long-term encampment; and the connections established internationally with the Diaspora that help to support those remaining in the shelters both directly through remittances and through awareness raising with the international community.

A negative impact assessed was the question of 'brain drain' within the community-based model of shelter services and administration. While this

appeared to be a catastrophic impact initially, particularly for the health and educational sectors within the shelters, it now looks as if the situation has stabilised somewhat. Although there continue to be losses of educated and experienced NGO staff and camp administration members to resettlement, new staff and leadership have emerged as a result and service provision has been able to continue despite some gaps in consistency and quality.

There were some concerns found but no conclusive evidence as yet about whether resettlement itself has become a significant pull factor to the shelters. Thus far, credible evidence that the new displacement flows into the shelters do not consist of legitimate asylum seekers does not appear to exist. Meanwhile, very tangible evidence of the deteriorating human rights and security conditions that would induce additional displacement flows from Myanmar certainly does exist. However, it was found that there is also a need for continued vigilance against fraud in order to maintain the integrity of the resettlement solution in Thailand.

In terms of quantitative progress in reducing the size of the shelter populations, the research results appeared to indicate that the net impact of resettlement so far has mostly been to prevent the situation within the shelters from getting worse. It is clear that so far, resettlement has been ineffective at de-populating the camps in the aggregate. However, this was not found to be an entirely negative impact as without the benefit of resettlement operations within the shelters it is possible that the population totals could be appreciably higher than they are today. If that scenario had not been avoided, there would also be a considerable associated increase in the amount of donor funding necessary to prevent a deterioration of living conditions.

The two case studies of Myanmar refugee communities in the U.S. found that in both St. Paul, MN and San Francisco, CA, the resettled refugees were adapting successfully to life in their new country.

For increasing the level of participation in the resettlement programme among the Karen, a key issue found was the assurance that they would be resettled within an existent Karen community within the U.S. Due to the special service needs of Karen refugees resulting from their exceptionally protracted stay in the refugee camps in Thailand, there were found to be clear benefits both for the Karen and for the American communities that they integrate into to have established populations and ethnically specialised organisations ready to welcome new arrivals.

In addition to the benefits of resettlement in an existing Karen community, it was found that there are lessons to be learned from the successes of St. Paul, MN in establishing strong intra-community linkages: between the newly arrived refugees and established members within the local community to encourage adaptation and provide access to resources, between the VOLAGs and CBOs in order to bridge the gap between the short-term and long-term social service needs of refugees and between different refugee populations themselves to support a refugee to refugee learning process.

In particular, the refugee-to-refugee model of learning that has been encouraged between the Karen community and the resettled Hmong, Somali and Vietnamese

communities in St. Paul has had obvious benefits for increasing the rapidity of the integration process and surmounting internal capacity constraints for the Karen.

All of these linkages are further strengthened by refugees receiving sufficient English language skills training before arrival. Particularly for older Karen, much of the ongoing isolation that many experience is the unfortunate result of a lack of confidence in their ability to speak English within the larger community.

It was clear from the research in San Francisco that refugees from Myanmar resettled in the SF Bay Area have added challenges and pressures, as well as less support from their own communities, than those resettled in a location such as St. Paul. The everyday expenses faced in the City of San Francisco makes survival there challenging even for native born American citizens, and this is further compounded for the newly arrived refugees by the fact that the labour market has already been saturated with low-skilled workers as a result of previous refugee resettlement and labour migration.

However, there are significant opportunities for the resettled refugees coupled with these risks. As they attempt to integrate into the very affluent San Francisco community, the circumstances push refugees to engage with the local community rather than depend on other resettled refugees. This means that they are forced to learn English and adapt culturally much more quickly than in a location such as St. Paul. It also means that they are exposed to educational and career opportunities, particularly to the benefit of the younger generation of Myanmar refugees, which might not be available to them in smaller cities within the U.S. While the research seemed to indicate that the context of San Francisco is a more difficult environment for integration to take place, it was also clear that many of the refugees who are sent there are able to make it work, perhaps providing a degree of validation to the U.S. resettlement approach of rapid refugee integration.

Overall, it was found that resettlement in both locations does continue to provide a viable alternative to indefinite encampment for thousands of refugee families from Myanmar.

Conclusion

Resettlement operations within the shelters in Thailand have now been ongoing continuously for more than 5 years with over 64,000 departures completed as of the end of 2010. However, despite the large investment of financial and human resources in this effort, the displacement situation appears not to have diminished significantly in scale as of yet. While no stakeholders involved with the situation in Thailand are currently calling for an end to resettlement activities, there has been little agreement on what role resettlement actually serves in long-term solutions for the situation. For the most part, the programme has been implemented thus far in a reflexive manner rather than as a truly responsive and solutions-oriented strategy, based primarily upon the parameters established by the policies of

resettlement nations and the RTG rather than the needs of the displaced persons within the shelters.

Looking towards the future, it appears highly unlikely that resettlement can resolve the displaced person situation in the border shelters as a lone durable solution and almost certainly not if the status quo registration policies and procedures of the RTG are maintained. All stakeholders involved with trying to address the situation are currently stuck with the impractical approach of attempting to resolve a protracted state of conflict and human rights abuses within Myanmar without effective means for engaging with the situation in country.

Within the limitations of this strategy framework, a greater level of cooperation among resettlement countries, international organisations and the RTG to support a higher quantity of departures for resettlement through addressing the policy constraints and personal capacity restrictions to participation appears a desirable option and might allow for resettlement to begin to have a more significant impact on reducing the scale of displacement within Thailand. However, realistically this would still be unlikely to resolve the situation as a whole if not conducted in combination with more actualised forms of local integration within Thailand and within the context of reduced displacement flows into the shelters.

The overall conclusion reached about resettlement is that it continues to play a meaningful palliative, protective and durable solution role within the shelters in Thailand. While it is necessary for resettlement to remain a carefully targeted programme, the stakeholders involved should consider expanding resettlement to allow participation of legitimate asylum seekers within the shelters who are currently restricted from applying because of the lack of a timely status determination process. Allowing higher levels of participation in resettlement through addressing this policy constraint, as well as some of the more personal constraints that prevent some families within the shelters from moving on with their lives, would be a positive development in terms of providing durable solutions to the situation. In conjunction with greater opportunities for local integration and livelihood options for those who cannot or do not wish to participate in resettlement, the programme should be expanded to make the option of an alternative to indefinite encampment within the shelters in Thailand available to a larger group of eligible displaced persons.

Recommendations

1. It has become clear that the stalled registration process within the shelters has reached the point where it is becoming a significant obstacle to continuing resettlement operations in the shelters. While it is necessary for resettlement to remain a carefully targeted programme, expanding resettlement to allow participation of legitimate asylum seekers within the shelters who are

currently restricted from applying because of the lack of a timely status determination process should be addressed by the stakeholders involved.

2. The potential for family separation posed by differences in registration status within families when applying for resettlement do not serve the best interests of any stakeholder within the displacement situation in Thailand. Allowing immediate family members of registered displaced persons within the shelters to receive priority in status determination screening to prevent family splitting through resettlement should be enacted as soon as possible.
3. If the shelters in Thailand are going to maintain a community-based model of service provision that relies heavily upon the capabilities of the displaced persons themselves to function, increased freedom of movement between shelters is necessary to avoid the detrimental impact of the resettlement programme on the quality of service provided. Opening the labour market of the shelters to allow displaced persons to migrate to fill labour needs and allowing sufficient freedom of movement for them to pursue educational and vocational training opportunities outside of the shelters would help to repair some of the deterioration in capability caused by resettlement.
4. Although resettlement plays an important role within the shelters in Thailand, many displaced persons have justifiable reasons for choosing not to apply to the programme. Increasing the options for self-reliance and integration within the local community in Thailand is a necessary part of any truly sustainable long-term strategy for resolving the displacement situation.
5. It would be beneficial to explore the possibility of providing programmes that would facilitate some former refugees returning to the camps to work as NGO staff members. This would help to repair some of the deterioration in capability caused by resettlement.
6. While the widespread reluctance to apply for resettlement due to differences in registration status within families is an issue that is best dealt with at the policy level, fears about integration in resettlement countries because of capacity constraints appear more feasible to attempt to ameliorate programmatically. Further programmes encouraging dialogue and capacity building on these concerns, perhaps incorporating the skills and experiences of those who have already been through the resettlement process, could provide uncertain displaced persons with the confidence they need to make a decision.
7. The indications are that the Karen benefit significantly from being placed for resettlement into already existing and well-established Karen communities within the U.S. The type of community development and mutual aid that exists and continues to mature, in the St. Paul Karen community for example, is simply not possible in every resettlement location. VOLAGs in the larger and already established Karen communities should be encouraged to increase their level of specialisation for working with the Karen to facilitate additional arrivals.
8. The refugee-to-refugee model of learning that has been encouraged between the Karen community and the resettled Hmong, Somali and Vietnamese communities in St. Paul has had enormous benefits for increasing the rapidity

of the integration process and surmounting internal capacity constraints for the Karen. Additional opportunities to implement this model of learning should be sought out and nurtured through support for capacity-building programmes between CBOs.

9. The amounts allocated for cash assistance to support refugees during their initial resettlement period are too low for high-cost cities such as those in the San Francisco Bay Area where taxes and living expenses are among the highest in the U.S. The initial amounts given for resettlement assistance need to have a higher end within their scale to compensate as well as sufficient support services to help refugees to establish longer term financial stability.
10. There was near-complete consensus on the part of government agencies, social service providers, the Karen leadership and individual refugees interviewed that additional English language skills training before arrival in the U.S. is needed to facilitate a speedier integration process. Increasing the amount of English language skills training should be a priority intervention area for increased programming within the shelters.

Chapter 1
Research Approach

Benjamin Harkins

Abstract A brief overview of the protracted refugee situation on the Thai–Myanmar border is given, together with a summary of the resettlement programme's operations—both in terms of numbers of departures and receiving countries. The approach to the study is then laid out, including the main objectives of determining what has been achieved and how the programme can be strengthened. The research methodology is presented, comprising a mixture of quantitative and qualitative techniques such as survey, key informant interview, focus group discussion and review of secondary sources of data. The limitations of the approach are indicated, notably the financial and time constraints which limit the study to resettled persons destined for the U.S. only.

Keywords Refugee · Resettlement · Durable solutions · Myanmar · Thailand

1.1 Introduction

Sustained conflict within Myanmar has forced large-scale displacement of a broad mix of ethnic groups across the border into Thailand. Beginning with the initial displacement flows in 1984, registered and unregistered displaced persons in the nine temporary shelters along the Thai–Myanmar border now form the largest protracted refugee situation in East Asia (Adelman 2008). The registered population in the temporary shelters as of December 2010, as recognised by UNHCR, is 98,644. However, there were 141,076 total residents in the shelters receiving food rations as of that date, thousands of whom are yet to receive an official status determination even after years of residing in the shelters (TBBC 2011: 6–7).

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Beginning in 2005, those displaced persons in the temporary shelters who were registered during the 2004–2005 MOI/UNHCR registration process, or subsequently by the Provincial Admissions Boards (PABs), have been eligible to apply for third country resettlement. During 2010, 11,107 displaced persons from the shelters departed for resettlement, bringing the total number of departures to 64,513 since 2006 (TBBC 2011: 8). Approximately 76 % of this total was destined for resettlement in the USA, with the remainder accepted by Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Japan.

While the programme has been widely heralded for finally offering an alternative to indefinite internment in temporary shelters for the displaced ethnic groups, it has not as of yet been successful in providing a solution for the situation. The population of displaced persons living in the shelters has not decreased significantly even after 5 years and over 64,000 departures for resettlement. As a result, concerns have begun to emerge for some stakeholders that the programme is becoming a pull factor for *resettlement seekers* to the shelters rather than legitimate asylum seekers. At the same time, among those displaced persons within the shelters who are eligible to apply for resettlement, the rates of application to the programme have been lower than anticipated. Perhaps an even more intractable concern, there is a large and growing proportion of displaced persons in the shelters who are ineligible to apply for resettlement due to the lack of a functional status determination process to assess their claims to asylum.

As a contribution to a greater understanding of the resettlement programme's current role and how it can be strengthened to become a more effective and responsive durable solution, a course of qualitative and quantitative research was conducted in Thailand and the United States to study the motivations and constraints for displaced persons to participate in the programme as well as the programme's impacts and implications for programme participants, the remaining shelter populations and new displacement flows into the shelters. The research was commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme as part of a larger research project based at the Asian Research Center for Migration in Bangkok, Thailand, entitled *Sustainable Solutions to the Displaced Person Situation on the Thai–Myanmar Border.*

1.2 Statement of Problem

The resettlement effort in the border camps is the world's largest resettlement programme (Sciortino/Punpuing 2009), with multiple United Nations agencies, international organisations and NGOs coordinating operations; 12 receiving countries accepting displaced persons and countless organisations providing integration services after resettlement overseas.

However, despite the large-scale financial and human resource engagements in the operation, there has been limited research conducted on how successful the

resettlement programme has been as a durable solution both from the perspective of displaced persons and for the other stakeholders involved. Even on the fundamental questions of whether the resettlement programme has been effective in depopulating the camps in the aggregate or has become a pull factor in its own right, the answers are not entirely clear. Likewise, the programme's effectiveness in assisting displaced persons with integration in their new homes and the impact that resettled displaced persons are having on the situation within Thailand are largely yet to be determined.

The central research problem of this study was to determine what resettlement operations have achieved so far in Thailand and how the programme can be strengthened to become a more effective durable solution to the displaced person situation on the Thai–Myanmar border based on an evaluation of the impacts of resettlement as well as of the motivations and constraints for displaced persons to participate in the programme.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To determine the motivations and constraints for displaced persons to participate in the resettlement programme.
2. To assess the impact of resettlement on the resettled displaced persons themselves, the remaining shelter population and shelter administration and services.
3. To assess what the gender-related impacts of resettlement have been.
4. To evaluate the impact that resettled displaced persons in the U.S. are having on the shelters in Thailand.
5. To evaluate the impact of the resettlement programme in reducing the number of displaced persons in the shelters and on the influx of new asylum seekers into the shelters.
6. To provide recommendations of how the resettlement programme can be improved to become a more effective durable solution for displaced persons in the border shelters.
7. To reach a conclusion on what the future role of resettlement should be as part of a sustainable and solutions-oriented approach to the situation.

1.4 Research Questions

1. Is resettlement a desirable durable solution or simply the only option available from the perspective of displaced persons in the shelters?
2. What are the major constraining or motivating factors determining whether displaced persons participate in the resettlement programme?
3. What impact has the resettlement programme had on the remaining population in the shelters?

4. What impact has resettlement had on the influx of new asylum seekers into the shelters and the total number of displaced persons living in the shelters?
5. What are the impacts that resettled displaced persons are having on the situation back in Thailand?
6. What are the gender-based impacts of the resettlement programme?
7. How can the resettlement programme be improved to become more effective in result and more responsive to the needs of displaced persons?
8. What role should resettlement play in the future as part of a sustainable and solutions-oriented approach to the displacement situation?

1.5 Study Framework

Figure 1.1 shows the major factors that were studied as influences on the implementation and outcomes of the resettlement programme within the research.

The factors influencing the programme's implementation, the resettlement process and the impacts and implications resulting from the resettlement programme were the focus of this study in order to determine what role resettlement should play in future policy and strategy approaches towards the displaced person situation in Thailand.

The study addressed these subjects in a broad range of research locations and from the perspectives of diverse stakeholders for the displacement situation. This included an evaluation of the integration experience for displaced persons at two

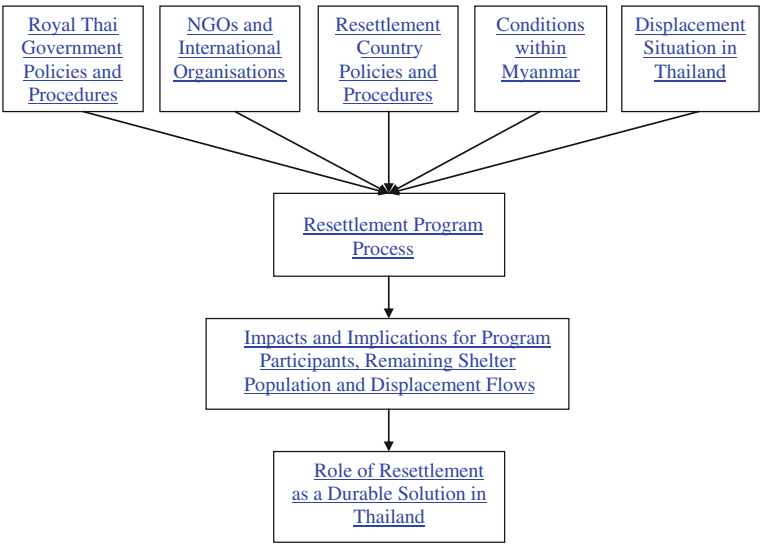

Fig. 1.1 Diagram of study framework. *Source* The authors

locations within the U.S., an analysis of the programme's impacts for displaced persons within Thailand including socio-cultural, camp management and gender dimensions, and an assessment of the impact of the resettlement programme on displacement flows into the shelters. The rationale for this broad ranging approach was to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the programme's impacts than had existed previously with the overall objective of developing recommendations for the normative future role of the programme in Thailand.

1.6 Research Methodology

The research methods used to complete the study's objectives included the following:

- *Desk review of resettlement policy-related documents:* review and analysis of documents on national, multilateral and organisational policies for resettlement of displaced persons along the Thai–Myanmar border.
- *Desk review of documents related to resettlement programme implementation and impacts:* review and analysis of documents related to the resettlement process and the impacts of resettlement for displaced persons and the displacement situation in Thailand.
- *Key informant interview:* field visits/phone interviews with key individuals at local, national and international levels including representatives from the Thai Government, U.S. Government, Thai Military, international organisations, embassies, NGOs, community-based organisations (CBOs), civil society organisations and representatives of displaced persons.
- *Interviews with displaced persons:* interviews with displaced persons both participating and not participating in resettlement within the shelters as well as with programme participants post-resettlement within the U.S.
- *Focus group discussions:* meetings with targeted stakeholder groups within the shelters and in the U.S.
- *Researcher administered survey:* structured interviews with residents in three of the temporary shelters in Thailand.
- *Participation in activities:* joining the resettled Karen community in religious and cultural activities in the U.S.

The field research in Thailand was conducted during visits to Tham Hin Temporary Shelter in June of 2010, Ban Mai Nai Soi Temporary Shelter in August of 2010 and Mae La Temporary Shelter in August of 2010. Interviews with key informants in Bangkok were held between February and December 2010. In addition to the research in Thailand, two overseas field trips to conduct case studies on the communities of resettled displaced persons in St. Paul, USA and in San Francisco, USA, were completed in August and September of 2010 respectively.

1.6.1 Survey Data Collection

The six studies conducted under the larger research project were on livelihood, social welfare and security, environment, Thai Government policy, roles of donors, the UN and NGOs and resettlement. The researchers for these studies formed into two teams to facilitate data collection. The resettlement study joined team B to assist with conducting the survey within the shelters. In order to determine the sample size collected, each team applied the Taro Yamane formula.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + e^2 N}$$

where
N = Study population (145,786),
e = Margin of error (5 %),
n = Sample size.
Substitution for this formula:

$$n = \frac{145,786}{1 + 145,786\,(0.05)^2}$$

n = 400 Displaced Persons

Therefore, a sample of 400 respondents from the three temporary shelters was established as a target for each of the two survey teams. The survey for team B actually resulted in a final valid sample of 444 respondents from the three temporary shelters. The quantitative data from the survey was analysed using the SPSS software programme.

The survey respondents were randomly selected to answer the questionnaire and stratified to reflect the gender balance and registration status of residents within the shelters. Detailed demographic results are included within Appendix II of this report. Each questionnaire interview lasted approximately 30–40 min in duration.

The survey within the temporary shelters was conducted in accordance with the Chulalongkorn University Ethical Guidelines for Research on Vulnerable Groups in order to protect research subjects. Due to the effect of the precarious living conditions for displaced persons in the shelters on the accuracy of survey responses, the results that were chosen for inclusion within this report were first screened to determine if the results appeared to be a reasonable reflection of the conditions encountered within the shelters and documented in other research studies. Additionally, the qualitative data from key informant interviews and focus groups was analysed and compared with the quantitative data to triangulate the research results.

1.7 Limitations of the Research

Due to the financial and time constraints of this research project, and because of its central role as a receiving country in the programme, the U.S. was selected as the focus country for the research on the resettlement programme in Thailand. While displaced persons resettled in other countries likely have significantly varying resettlement experiences depending upon the policies and programmes of those nations, it was decided that based upon the resources available, a more in-depth study of the resettlement programme as 76 % of its participants experience it would be the most productive course of research.

It should also be noted that the research for this report was carried out before the political reform process in Myanmar had begun to gather momentum after the election held in November 2010. As a result, some contextual elements of the displacement situation have changed substantially since the analysis was written, with the improved prospects for a safe return to Myanmar the most salient of these. Nevertheless, the future for many in the camps remains extremely uncertain, and this report offers important lessons learned and recommendations for providing effective and sustainable durable solutions for the displaced persons from Myanmar that remain in the Thai refugee camps.

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Chapter 2
Desk Review of the Resettlement Programme

Benjamin Harkins

Abstract A wide range of literature is examined in detail, dealing with both policy and practical elements of the resettlement process. The key actors in the programme are catalogued and considered, including Thai Government agencies, inter-governmental organisations and non-state actors. Key source materials for policies on eligibility and the application process are reviewed. Preparation and support provided to resettling displaced persons is assessed, covering both pre-departure stages and after arrival in the U.S. The impact of resettlement on participants is evaluated, considering aspects such as education, employment, health care and other cultural and socio-economic criteria. The impact on those left behind in the camps is also analysed, revealing that there have been both positive and negative consequences.

Keywords Resettlement · Refugees · Durable solutions · Refugee integration · Thailand · Myanmar

2.1 Resettlement Theory

Resettlement as a durable solution serves multiple functions as it must address the differing agendas of the diverse stakeholders engaged with a refugee situation simultaneously if it is to maintain the necessary support to continue. Likewise, the decision to begin a large-scale resettlement programme is generally motivated by more than a single factor for any given refugee situation. As a shared solution, it requires the support and engagement of not only refugees, asylum countries and resettlement countries but also the operational capabilities of multiple international

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organisations, NGOs and CBOs to be effective. This chapter of the review will address international conceptions about the meaning and functions of resettlement as well as those related to refugee integration in resettlement countries.

2.1.1 Definition and Function of Resettlement

According to UNHCR's definition of the term, *resettlement involves the selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them—as refugees—with permanent residence status. The status provided should ensure protection against refoulement and provide a resettled refugee and his/her family or dependents with access to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. It should also carry with it the opportunity to eventually become a naturalized citizen of the resettlement country* (2004: I/2).

Resettlement has three equally important functions in the context of refugee situations. It can be used to meet the protection requirements or special needs of individual refugees, including those whose basic freedoms, safety or health are at risk within the country of first asylum. Second, it can serve as a major durable solution for large groups of refugees, with or without the other two durable solutions of voluntary repatriation and local integration. Lastly, it can serve as an expression of international solidarity and burden sharing towards host countries by developed nations (UNHCR 2004).

Resettlement is also used in situations where refugees may not be in immediate physical danger, but where there are compelling reasons for removing them from the country of first asylum. This includes survivors of violence, disabled people, persons suffering from post-traumatic stress and those in need of specialised treatments which are unavailable in the asylum country. While it is generally the solution of last resort in the spectrum of durable solutions, when voluntary repatriation or local integration are not feasible, there are situations where resettlement proves to be the optimal choice for specific individuals or groups of refugees. It usually becomes prioritised because of situations where there are no other options for protecting the legal rights or physical security of refugees. Examples of this include circumstances where refugees are threatened by the possibility of refoulement or being endangered by the spillover of violent conflict into their country of refuge. Resettlement is also often the only option for reuniting refugee families that sometimes become separated by borders while fleeing from their home country (UNHCR 2004).

However, it is important to note that historically, resettlement has not always been conducted strictly for altruistic policy goals. During the Cold War, resettlement was primarily used as a humanitarian complement to foreign policy objectives, targeted to further the anti-communist goals of Western countries in the conflict by resettling politically important refugees such as the Vietnamese *boat people* and dissidents defecting from behind the Iron Curtain (Hammerstad 2005).

Keeley describes the goal of resettlement during this period *not as helping to restore stability to the international system but to destabilise governments, cause states to fail, and create domestic support for a policy of opposing and weakening communist governments in a constant struggle* (Keeley 2001: 308).

It should also be noted that, with the exception of the large Indochinese resettlement programme during the period following the Vietnam War, resettlement has primarily been used as a much smaller scale piece of durable solution strategies for refugee situations (Hammerstad 2005). This may be partially attributable to the fact that large-scale resettlement programmes, as was implemented during the Indochinese refugee situation, have been less than an uncritical success in achieving their objectives. According to a comprehensive retrospective account written by an authority on refugee issues in Asia, *There is general agreement in most Western capitals that what began as an essential durable solution for the Indochinese became part of the problem, both by perpetuating an outflow of people in search of permanent exile and by hampering the search for other durable solutions, namely local settlement or voluntary repatriation* (Robinson 1998: 274). A senior immigration official who was heavily involved with the Indochinese programme referred to large-scale resettlement as the *narcotic of cures; it is expensive, addictive and, in the long run, destructive* (Robinson 1998: 274).

Despite these historical shortcomings, it is also true that during the last 50 years, millions of refugees and their families have been resettled in developed countries, giving them the opportunity to start a new life removed from the causes of their displacement. In addition to this primary goal, resettlement has a number of ancillary benefits which are important for justifying its continued role in addressing refugee situations. Through the outward display of support by the international community, resettlement has in some cases maintained the openness to providing asylum in host countries. For resettlement nations, the acceptance of refugees for resettlement can sensitise the general public to the struggles and conditions faced by refugees throughout the world. Finally, refugees themselves often make meaningful contributions as citizens within their resettlement countries (UNHCR 2004).

Individual nation states are under no international obligation to resettle refugees and only a small number of countries have regular and well-established programmes with budgets, procedures and quotas for doing so. Perhaps reflecting the voluntary nature of refugee resettlement, there is only a single article listed as a strategic priority in the 2010–2011 UNHCR Global Appeal that is directly related to resettlement programmes. This simply states that *Resettlement is actively used as a protection tool, a durable solution and a means to effect greater responsibility sharing* (UNHCR 2010: 20). The relatively basic indicators used as metrics for strategic application of resettlement by UNHCR may also be a correlate of its charitable classification by the international community. These are primarily the number of resettlement places offered by third countries and the percentage of individuals identified for urgent and emergency resettlement that are actually resettled (UNHCR 2010).

In recent years, however, there has been new interest in providing resettlement to refugees by countries that had never previously participated. While these offers of resettlement are generally viewed as generous contributions to the durable solution options for refugees by states, they should not be considered simply altruistic in nature as many refugees go on to become successful and productive citizens of their new countries (UNHCR 2004).

2.1.2 Refugee Integration

From the perspective of receiving nations, the most critical part of the resettlement process for maintaining community social cohesion and supporting the long-term sustainability of resettlement as a durable solution is refugee integration. According to Kunz, *However much the newly arrived refugees are under the influence of memories of home and transit, they rarely remain fully captives of their past. Unless they are irrevocably broken by trials, they will soon begin to explore their surroundings, assess the attitudes of their hosts, and endeavour to find a niche for themselves in which they can feel consistent both with their background and with their gradually changing expectations. In doing so, the nature of the country of resettlement and its population will be of vital importance* (Kunz 1981: 46).

UNHCR presents integration as resulting from an interrelated three-part process for refugees in resettlement countries: Legal, where refugees are granted legal status within their new country equal to that of ordinary citizens; economic, where refugees progress towards financial independence from welfare and assistance programmes and become economically self-supporting through their own livelihood activities; and social and cultural, where refugees adjust to the cultural environment of the resettlement country and the society within that country affords the refugees a place in order to maintain community social cohesion (Threadgold/Court 2005).

However, the results of a research study that attempted to build a conceptual framework for normative understandings of refugee integration presents an opposing point of view of the "social cohesion" debate that has become so prominent within the European Union. The study found that *the resulting framework reinforces a notion that processes supporting the maintenance of ethnic identity (especially 'social bonds') in no way logically limit wider integration into society (through the establishment of 'social bridges' and other means). This opposes not only a common rhetorical misconception in the current integration debate in the UK, but also theoretical analyses that see increased emphasis on 'social cohesion' as necessarily a prescription for a more assimilationist policy* (Ager/Strang 2008).

Much of the literature on integration stresses the importance of the end goal of attaining citizenship as a symbol of integration, with the citizenship educational process a means by which to attain linguistic, cultural and behavioural knowledge,

and proficiency. While some of the literature suggests that citizenship status itself is a metric for integration, six of the more commonly utilised basic indicator domains for refugee integration include housing, health and social support systems, welfare of refugee children, safety and community participation, employment and vocational training, and education. The crosscutting interventions that are frequently used to address these domains include programmes that mitigate the poverty and material deprivations that disproportionally affect refugees as one of the most vulnerable groups within society, providing refugees with high quality translation assistance prior to language acquisition coupled with free and indefinitely supplied language training courses, preparing the receiving community for the resettlement of the refugees through education and programmes that inform the community about the refugees and encourage interaction and cohesion, and fighting stereotypes and preconceptions through providing accurate and unbiased information about refugees (Threadgold/Court 2005).

2.2 Resettlement Policies in the Border Shelters

As with the other two durable solutions to refugee situations, resettlement programmes are the result of a complex process, involving the policies and procedures of multiple governments, international organisations, NGOs and CBOs.

2.2.1 UNHCR Resettlement Policies

2.2.1.1 Eligibility for Resettlement

Those who have been officially registered by the PABs and who are residing in one of the nine temporary shelters are eligible to apply for resettlement. Persons who are still waiting to be screened for registration by the PABs are not able to apply until their status has been determined.

The decision to apply for resettlement is strictly a voluntary process and no parties are permitted to attempt to convince displaced persons to apply for resettlement if it is against their wishes. To maintain this principle, only requests made in writing to UNHCR are considered valid.

All of the registered displaced persons in the shelters have an equal opportunity to submit their applications regardless of age, gender, education, religion, or ethnicity (UNHCR 2006).

2.2.1.2 Cost of Resettlement

There are no fees charged for the application process by UNHCR, the RTG, or other agencies involved (UNHCR 2006).

2.2.1.3 How to Apply

No forms are necessary to apply for resettlement. Those wishing to apply write their official registration number as well as the names of all of their family members who wish to apply on a piece of paper and submit it directly to a member of the UNHCR staff or place it in one of the UNHCR mailboxes. The application can be made in the displaced person's native language and does not need to be translated into English before submission. Displaced persons who have family members already living in third countries can write the names of their relatives and their country of residence on their application.

Due to the high level of interest in the resettlement programme, applications often take several months to process, during which time applicants are requested to continue with their normal activities. After a decision has been made, applicants are informed about the timing of their departure and other necessary information.

Any applicant attempting to commit fraud during the application process is permanently disqualified from future resettlement consideration by UNHCR. Examples of fraud include supplying false information about background, misrepresentation of identity, falsely claiming individuals as family members and soliciting money from other displaced persons for resettlement-related services. It should be noted that making false statements during the application process is also considered a criminal offense under Thai law (UNHCR 2006).

2.2.1.4 Submission of Case to Resettlement Country

During the application review process, displaced persons and their families are interviewed to prepare their case for submission. Every effort is made not to separate families through resettlement although all displaced persons over the age of 18 years are eligible to apply on their own. The goal of the interview is to obtain accurate information about the displaced person's case for resettlement so that the resettlement country can make a determination about their qualification status. The factors taken into consideration during the screening process include:

A. *Individual displacement situation*: resettlement countries each have their own criteria however, questions are generally asked about why the individual fled to Thailand, what their living situation in the shelter has been, if they are capable of integrating into a new society and whether or not they have committed any serious crimes in the past.
B. *Family links in third countries:* It is not necessary to have relatives living abroad for displaced persons to be considered for resettlement, nor does having relatives abroad necessarily entitle displaced persons to resettlement. The information is used to reunite immediate family members if possible.
C. *Health requirements and access to treatment:* The health status of applicants and their dependents is assessed to determine if adequate treatment facilities are available in resettlement countries and to determine if the applicant meets the health requirements of the resettlement country.

D. *Skills and education:* Language skills, job experience and education are not considered by some resettlement countries while others do take them into consideration in making a determination.

Except in special circumstances, displaced persons are not allowed to choose their preferred resettlement country. For displaced children without parents, UNHCR staff will make a *best interest determination* to decide if resettlement is the best possible option for the child's future (UNHCR 2006).

2.2.1.5 Consideration of Case by Resettlement Country

After a displaced person's case has been submitted to a resettlement country, UNHCR has no role in deciding whether an application is accepted or not. In most cases, a government representative from the country will conduct an additional interview before a determination is made. The process for appeal if a resettlement country rejects an application depends upon the individual country. UNHCR may also review the case and consider resubmitting the application to another country if resettlement still seems to be the best option. Applications for resettlement are never submitted to more than one country at a time (UNHCR 2006).

2.2.1.6 Medical Examination

Some countries require a medical examination before final approval of the resettlement application. In that case, the applicant and family members need to be examined and treated if necessary, which can take several months to complete. Displaced persons can be rejected for resettlement based upon the results of the medical examination. Re-applying to another resettlement country is possible if UNHCR determines that resettlement is still the best option for the applicant (UNHCR 2006).

2.2.1.7 Cultural Orientation

Once a displaced person is accepted for resettlement, they will undergo cultural orientation training. Depending upon the country, the training is conducted either before departure in Thailand or upon arrival in the resettlement country. The goal of the training is to assist displaced persons with a smooth integration process into their new homes (UNHCR 2006).

2.2.1.8 Travel Arrangements

After displaced persons have been accepted for resettlement, IOM handles the travel arrangements from Thailand to the resettlement country. As part of this

process, IOM informs the displaced persons of what to expect during their journey and upon arrival in their resettlement country. Exit permits are issued to displaced persons by the Ministry of Interior to allow them to depart from Thailand (UNHCR 2006).

2.2.1.9 Reception and Integration in Resettlement Country

The immediate goal upon arrival for displaced persons is to work towards integration in their new homes as quickly as possible with the assistance of special programmes designed for this purpose. The level and duration of financial support depends upon the resettlement country and varies significantly. Displaced persons are expected to work and financially support themselves if they are physically able to. Additionally, displaced children must attend school and study the language of their resettlement country. Educational and vocational training opportunities for adults may also be available depending upon where they are resettled. Initial assistance with finding housing and accessing medical care is also provided.

Resettlement is conceived of as a permanent solution for displaced persons, with the possibility of citizenship and all of the accompanying rights and responsibilities available to them. Displaced persons who are resettled are free to practice their religious and cultural traditions in their new countries (UNHCR 2006).

2.2.2 United States Resettlement Policies

Historically, the U.S. has maintained a policy of admitting refugees of special humanitarian concern for resettlement, which reflects the country's origins as a nation of migrants and of its history as a place of refuge for victims of political, religious and social intolerance in their countries of origin. Following the admission of over 250,000 displaced Europeans during World War Two, the first refugee admissions legislation was passed in 1948 by the U.S. Congress. Since that time, waves of refugees from Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, Korea, China, Cuba, Indochina and Myanmar have been resettled, mostly through services provided by ethnic and religious CBOs in public/private partnerships with the U.S. Government (Refugee Council USA 2007).

As a result of the experience of resettling hundreds of thousands of Indochinese refugees in the post-Vietnam War period, the U.S. Congress passed the Refugee Act of 1980, which incorporated the concepts of the UN Convention and Protocol on the Status of Refugees and standardised resettlement procedures for all refugees admitted to the U.S. Today, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Programme (USRAP) is administered by the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration within the State Department in cooperation with the Office of Refugee Resettlement within the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Homeland

Security. The U.S. President, Congress and relevant Departments make an annual determination of the nationalities that are to be made programme priorities for the coming fiscal year as well as establishing a ceiling for admission of refugees from each part of the world. The average total number admitted annually since 1980 has been approximately 98,000 refugees (Refugee Council USA 2007).

However, in the wake of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001, the passing of the USA Patriot Act of 2001 and the Real ID Act of 2005 have significantly impacted the number of refugees admitted for resettlement. Due to broad interpretation of clauses in the legislation barring those who have provided material support to groups engaging in terrorist activity from resettlement, the USRAP has only in the last few years returned to its previous levels of refugee admissions (Refugee Council USA 2007: 4). The proposed ceiling for 2010 admissions was to provide resettlement services to 80,000 refugees in total (U.S. Department of State, Homeland Security, and Health and Human Services 2009: 5).

The *material support bar*, as it is commonly referred to, severely curtailed resettlement of refugees from Myanmar during the early stages of the programme. Over 20 % of Karen applicants were determined to be *inadmissible* because of past affiliation with armed insurgent groups within Myanmar (Refugee Council USA, 2007: 16). After heavy pressure from a coalition of religious, human rights, civil liberties, refugee and immigration organisations within the U.S., the State Department began issuing waivers protecting supporters of individual insurgent groups from the application of the bar, including the Karen National Union, the Chin National Front and other Burmese groups (Daskal 2007). Although progress has been slow, many of the legislative barriers to resettlement of the Burmese have now been ameliorated.

USRAP proposed admission of 17,000 refugees from East Asia in FY 2010, 16,500 of which were expected to be nationals from Myanmar (Fig. 2.1) (U.S. Department of State et al. 2009: 31). In the U.S. refugee admissions policy, refugees under consideration for resettlement are designated into three priority categories: Priority 1, individual cases referred to the programme by virtue of their circumstances and apparent need for resettlement; Priority 2, groups of cases designated as having access to the programme by virtue of their circumstances and apparent need for resettlement; and Priority 3, individual cases from eligible

Approved pipeline from FY 2009	*2,700*
Priority 1 Individual Referrals	*600*
Priority 2 Groups	*13,600*
Priority 3 Family Reunification	*100*
Total Proposed Ceiling	*17,000*

Fig. 2.1 USRAP proposed admissions from East Asia in FY 2010. *Source* U.S. Department of State et al. (2009)

nationalities granted access for purposes of reunification with anchor family members already in the U.S. (U.S. Department of State et al. 2009).

The displaced persons registered in the nine temporary shelters in Thailand fall under the Priority 2 designation, and those identified by UNHCR as being in need of resettlement are eligible to apply. Those displaced persons in the shelters with 'anchor' family members already residing in the U.S. are categorised as Priority 3 cases and are also eligible. In addition, individual displaced persons can be resettled under the Priority 1 category if they are referred by UNHCR, designated non-governmental organisations or the U.S. Embassy (U.S. Department of State et al. 2009: 10, 13). However, none of these designations guarantees admission for resettlement in the U.S. and they do not correspond with any precedence in processing of applications. Final decisions about whether applicants are admitted are made by the Department of Homeland Security/U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services officers (DHS/USCIS) based upon criteria set out in the Immigration and Naturalisation Act and after completing a non-adversarial face-to-face interview. The goal of the interview is to gather information about the legitimacy of the applicant's claim to refugee status as well as determining if there are any grounds for ineligibility. A background check using the applicant's name and biometric data is also completed before a determination is made (U.S. Department of State et al. 2009).

The U.S. Government has used its leadership position in global refugee resettlement as leverage with countries of first asylum to promote its humanitarian and foreign policy interests. In some cases this has meant maintaining openness to providing asylum to refugees by host countries, and in others it has been used to influence the availability of local integration as a durable solution to the situations. The impact of resettlement efforts in Africa, the Middle East and East Asia have helped to support UNHCR in its efforts to increase humanitarian concessions by host governments to refugee groups (U.S. Department of State et al. 2009: 3).

In the case of displaced persons from Myanmar, the U.S. Government has used resettlement both as a humanitarian response to the displacement situation in Thailand as well as a strategic intervention to support its long-term foreign policy goal of a transition to democracy within Myanmar. (U.S. Department of State et al. 2009).

The Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration typically contract with an outside organisation to act as the Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) on location in countries of asylum. The OPE assists in the processing of refugees for admission to the United States. In the case of the displaced persons in the temporary shelters in Thailand, the NGO International Rescue Committee manages the OPE for prescreening of applicant eligibility, to make an initial determination of qualification for one of the three processing priorities, and to generate cases to be assessed by DHS/USCIS officers. Once an applicant is approved, the OPE makes arrangements

for medical screening and cultural orientation. Once sponsorship by an organisation in the U.S. has been secured, the OPE then makes a referral to IOM for transportation services. The State Department pays for the transportation services provided by the IOM programme in the form of a loan that must be paid back by the refugee over time, beginning 6 months after arrival (U.S. Department of State et al. 2009).

Refugee resettlement policies in the U.S. are designed to encourage economic self-sufficiency as rapidly as possible in order for refugees to become active participants and positive contributors in their new communities. As a result, sustainable employment is the fundamental outcome domain used by the U.S. Government as an indicator for refugee integration services in the U.S. In order to facilitate self-sufficiency and integration, refugees are allowed to work immediately upon their arrival in the U.S. After residing in the U.S. for 1 year, they become eligible for a *green card*, which provides permanent resident status. After 5 years of residence, refugees may apply for full citizenship status within the U.S. (U.S. Department of State et al. 2009).

For initial assistance to newly arrived refugees, The Department of Health and Human Services funds the *Reception and Placement Programme* in order to provide cash and medical assistance, training programmes, employment and other social services channelled through a variety of different public and private sector agencies. Sponsored Reception and Placement Programme agencies are responsible for the following services: pre-arrival planning; reception in the U.S.; provision of basic needs such as housing, furniture, clothing and food for at least 30 days; orientation to the community; referrals for health, education and other necessary services; and creating a resettlement plan for the first 90–180 days (U.S. Department of State et al. 2009).

2.3 Key Stakeholder Organisations Within the Resettlement Programme

The organisations listed in this chapter are the key actors for the resettlement programme in the temporary shelters. While these organisations are specifically involved in resettlement to the U.S., with the exception of the OPE, R&P and U.S. Government agencies, the organisations discussed in this section play a similar role in resettlement to other receiving countries as well.

The *Ministry of Interior (MOI)* is the RTG agency responsible for registering displaced persons in the temporary shelters. Only registered persons are eligible to apply for resettlement through UNHCR. After being screened by the PABs, displaced persons are issued a *UNHCR/MOI Household Registration Form* which has the names of all household family members and their photographs. This form is the identification used to validate each displaced person's right to apply for resettlement. (IRC n.d.) MOI is also the agency responsible for issuing exit visas to departing displaced persons through the Immigration Bureau.

The *Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MOFA)* role in the resettlement programme is as liaison and coordinating agency with resettlement countries and international organisations. Beginning in 1975, the MOFA began working with the international community involved with the resettlement of Indochinese displaced persons and gained a reputation as being generally supportive of the interests of displaced persons. (Lang 2002).

The *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)* is the refugee agency for the United Nations. The organisation was established in 1950 by a statute passed by the UN General Assembly and its mandate is determined by the UN Convention and Protocol on the Status of Refugees (Keely 2005). The mandate includes making refugee status determinations, providing protection and humanitarian aid services, and facilitating durable solutions to refugee situations. In the case of the temporary shelters in Thailand, UNHCR's role in the resettlement programme has mainly been to assist with registration of displaced persons, to make referrals for resettlement and to help with coordination of the resettlement programme between stakeholders.

The *Overseas Processing Entity (OPE)* is the agency contracted by the U.S. Government to assist with the application and preparation process for refugee resettlement. The OPE for the temporary shelters in Thailand is contracted to the NGO International Rescue Committee and is based in Bangkok. After the OPE receives a referral for resettlement to the U.S., they are responsible for conducting the initial interview to prepare the case for adjudication by DHS/USCIS officers. After initial approval for resettlement, OPE conducts a cultural orientation training, locates a sponsoring Reception and Placement Programme agency in the U.S. and makes arrangements with IOM for medical examinations and travel arrangements (IRC 2010).

The *U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)* is the official representative of the U.S. Government within the resettlement application process in Thailand and elsewhere. The final interview to determine priority status and eligibility for resettlement is conducted through a face-to-face meeting between a DHS officer and the applicant. Security screening procedures include background checks based upon nominal and biometric information.

The *International Organization for Migration (IOM)* has a 35-year history of providing resettlement services to displaced persons in Thailand, beginning with the resettlement of nearly 500,000 Indochinese displaced persons following the Vietnam War. The IOM's role in the current resettlement programme in Thailand began in 2004, when 15,000 Lao Hmong displaced persons in Saraburi province were offered resettlement by the U.S. Government. Following a subsequent offer by the U.S. Government, the programme was extended to include the displaced persons in the nine temporary shelters on the Thai–Myanmar border. In total, 80,000 displaced persons have been resettled from Thailand through the IOM programme as of June 2010 (IOM 2010). In relation to U.S. resettlement operations in Thailand, IOM is the organisation to which accepted applicants are referred for final preparations and travel to the United States. IOM's programmes in this regard include information campaigns related to the resettlement

programme, conducting medical examinations, treatment and counselling, and arranging the departure of displaced persons from Thailand and their travel to the U.S. (IOM 2010).

The *Reception and Placement Programme Agencies (R&P Agencies)* are the 10 external agencies within the U.S. who contract with the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration to provide assistance services to resettled refugees. Sometimes referred to as *Voluntary Agencies*, these currently consist of nine private non-profit organisations and one governmental organisation. R&P agencies assist newly arrived refugees with housing, furnishings, clothing, food, medical treatment, employment and social service referrals based upon standards established by the NGO community and the U.S. Government. Underneath the umbrella of the 10 R&P agencies is a nationwide network of 350 locally based agencies that provide services to refugees in their home resettlement communities (U.S. Department of State et al. 2009). Many of these organisations supplement the contract funding of the R&P Programme with additional financing and in-kind donations from private sources in order to provide further services.

2.4 Resettlement Programme Implementation

Between January 1, 2005 and December 31, 2009, UNHCR submitted approximately 100,000 Burmese displaced persons for resettlement consideration (TBBC 2010: 9). However, despite this large-scale effort, Thailand continues to play host to over 140,000 displaced persons residing in temporary shelters along its border, some of whom have been living as displaced persons for over 20 years.

The U.S. resettlement programme completed the shelter-to-shelter circuit of its resettlement operations in 2010, which raises a number of questions for programme stakeholders on how to continue to work towards durable solutions to the situation. What is to be done for refugees who have been excluded due to delays in the registration process is yet to be decided, as is the issue of how to provide better living conditions for those refugees who have decided not to apply for resettlement (Garcia/Lynch 2009).

In order to provide an understanding of some of the operational concerns involved with providing the resettlement programme, this section of the review will examine the resettlement process starting from eligibility screening through to third country integration of displaced persons.

2.4.1 UNHCR Resettlement Process

Regardless of context, the UNHCR process for resettlement has six basic stages that each individual resettlement case must pass through:

1. Identification of refugees in need of resettlement consideration.
2. Assessment of individual resettlement need.
3. Preparation of a resettlement submission.
4. UNHCR submission decision.
5. Resettlement country decision.
6. Departure arrangements and monitoring (UNHCR 2004).

The UNHCR process is designed to complement the individual application processes of resettlement nations which vary in their level of overseas engagement with refugees. In the case of the U.S. resettlement programme, much of the administrative work involved with the application process is carried out by the OPE for the South-East Asian region as described in detail below.

2.4.2 USRAP Resettlement Process

In order to facilitate timely processing of applications, the NGO International Rescue Committee has been contracted by the US Government to operate the Overseas Processing Entity for Thailand and the rest of South-East Asia. OPE resettlement operations have been conducted on a shelter-by-shelter basis: Tham Hin in 2006; Mae La in the first half of 2007; Umpiem Mai and Nu Po during the second half of 2007; Ban Don Yang in 2008; and Ban Mai Nai Soi and Ban Mae Surin in 2009 (TBBC 2009). Resettlement opened to the remaining two shelters at Mae Ra Ma Luang and Mae La Oon in 2010 and departures have begun. Thus, the U.S. resettlement programme completed its circuit in 2010, offering resettlement to all nine of the shelters within Thailand (TBBC 2011).

The procedural steps in the USRAP resettlement process and the organisations responsible for them are as follows:

2.4.2.1 UNHCR

Those displaced persons who are registered and have a completed UNHCR/MOI household registration form and identity card can apply for resettlement with UNHCR by expressing their interest in writing. In each temporary shelter, the opening of resettlement operations has usually been initiated with a large-scale verification exercise, after which displaced persons who still want to apply can go directly to the UNHCR office with their requests. Every displaced person over 18-years old who is not disabled must apply in person for resettlement (IRC n.d.).

2.4.2.2 Overseas Processing Entity

After the UNHCR verification is complete, the displaced person's name and biodata are sent to OPE to arrange an initial interview. The OPE interview is for the purpose of gathering additional information about the displaced person family's history and asylum background story. The interview is conducted in English with an interpreter provided if necessary. The OPE does not make a decision regarding approval of the displaced person's application but is simply tasked with gathering of pertinent information for the interview with DHS. Displaced persons are requested to bring the following to the interview: their household registration form, all family members wishing to resettle, all family documents such as birth and marriage certificates and contact information for any relatives or close friends already living in the U.S. (IRC n.d.).

2.4.2.3 U.S. Department of Homeland Security

The second interview scheduled with each displaced person applying for resettlement in the U.S. is with an officer from DHS to determine whether they meet U.S. criteria for refugee status and whether they are eligible to enter the U.S. The interview is again conducted in English with an interpreter provided if the displaced person so requests. A background check is also generally conducted at this stage based upon the name and biodata of the displaced person (IRC n.d.).

Shortly after the interview, the applicant will receive a decision letter from DHS stating that they are either eligible or ineligible for resettlement in the U.S. Those displaced persons who are declared ineligible have a 90-day period in which to appeal to the DHS adjudication of their case. A written statement showing that a significant error occurred and/or new information is available that necessitates a review of the case must be delivered either directly to DHS or to OPE for forwarding (IRC n.d.).

2.4.2.4 Overseas Processing Entity/International Organisation for Migration

After an applicant is determined to be eligible, IOM provides a medical examination to screen for diseases that would prevent their immediate entry into the U.S. Treatment is also provided and a note is made in their file if additional treatment will be necessary after departure. The screening results are valid for 1 year if none of the screened-for-conditions are found or 6 months for those diagnosed with certain types of conditions such as Class A or B tuberculosis, untreated STDs, multibacillary Hansen's disease, substance abuse and mental disorders with harmful behaviour (Oh et al. 2006).

The OPE then matches the displaced person with a sponsoring R&P agency within the U.S. and provides information to them about the family to facilitate a

suitable placement based on their individual situation. This decision takes into consideration such factors as age, education, occupation, ethnicity, religion, country of origin and medical conditions that need treatment. Additionally, an attempt is made to resettle displaced persons in close proximity to immediate family members if already in the U.S. Requests can be made for resettlement near other relatives and friends as well but are weighed against other important factors in making the final decision. Displaced persons are notified of their resettlement location before departure (Center for Applied Linguistics 2004).

Before departure, the OPE conducts a brief cultural orientation training to help displaced persons prepare for life in the US. Every family also receives a copy of *Welcome to the United State*s, which is a guide to resettlement developed by resettlement organisation staff, refugees and the U.S. Government (U.S. Department of State et al. 2009).

2.4.2.5 International Organisation for Migration

IOM is responsible for facilitating travel to the U.S. Displaced persons are provided with transportation and accompanied by IOM staff to the airport in Bangkok and are also met in connecting flight locations by IOM staff during their travel itinerary to the U.S. A bag of essential documents for the trip is given to each displaced person by IOM before departure including an I-94 Arrival/Departure Form and customs declaration form, medical forms and X-rays and other resettlement documents (Center for Applied Linguistics 2004).

Displaced persons are given an interest-free loan to pay for the cost of their transportation to the U.S. After 4–6 months in the U.S., they are required to begin paying off the debt in monthly instalments and are given 3 years to pay off the total amount. The repaid funds are used to finance travel services for future refugee resettlement (Center for Applied Linguistics 2004).

2.4.2.6 Reception and Placement Agencies

R&P agencies are contracted to assist and advise refugees for the first 3 months after arrival. This includes actually paying for all of the basic living expenses for the refugees including such things as food, rent and electricity. During this 3-month period, agency staff along with relatives, friends and volunteers, help refugees with: obtaining long-term housing; acquiring appropriate clothing and furnishings; applying for a social security card; searching for employment; enrolling children in public school; learning how to use the public transportation system; setting up an appointment for a medical examination and/or treatment; enrolling in English language classes; learning about U.S. laws and customs; earning about their community. Services for refugees need to be set up during this first 3-month period after resettlement. After that time, assistance may or may not be available depending upon the individual R&P agency and the resources of the

local community. The government-sponsored provision of R&P services ends after this period however (Center for Applied Linguistics 2004).

2.4.3 Addressing Fraud Within the Resettlement Programme

According to an article published in 2009 by the Irrawaddy, a network of brokers has emerged to assist individuals from Myanmar who wish to enter the refugee camps and resettle in a third country whether or not they have legitimate claims to asylum. The article states that *it has been alleged that the camp authorities are working in cahoots with the brokers and have become immersed in the corruption and fraud that has sprung up around the resettlement process. Residents claim that brokers pay the camp commanders for their clients' entrance to the camp, allowing people with no valid refugee claim to enter.* The article goes on to quote a displaced person in the shelter, stating *I see many fake refugees coming into the camp. They pay the brokers and the camp authorities. Then they get resettled first* (Ellgee 2009).

UNHCR maintains a very strict zero tolerance policy on cases of fraud related to resettlement. New policies and procedures were introduced for investigation of alleged abuses in 2008, including tough new penalties for those found responsible. During 2009, UNHCR began investigations of alleged fraud cases and suspended new applications for resettlement in Mae La Temporary Shelter which was the location of 75 % of the cases. About half of the cases investigated were based upon fraud related to displaced person registration status that took place before application was made for resettlement (TBBC 2010).

In response, UNHCR and OPE began a public information campaign to support fraud prevention efforts in all of the temporary shelters. In March 2010, UNHCR resumed accepting applications for resettlement in Mae La temporary shelter after additional safeguards were put in place to verify identity during the resettlement application process (TBBC 2010). Since the resumption, there has been a significant decline in new allegations of fraud (TBBC 2011).

2.5 Resettlement Programme Impacts

They speak no English and a halting translator can bridge only part of the communication chasm. They've been catapulted from an 18th-century existence into the 21st century almost overnight after arriving in Albany over the summer from a refugee camp on the Myanmar–Thailand border. 'It's good here' , says Steah Htoo. She serves as the sole English translator among the Karenni families on Grand Street, where she also lives. She is Karen and Burmese ethnically, but she says the three groups get along fine in Albany and Rensselaer. Here, each person is given $900 by the federal government to last them for their first three

months (the sum was increased from $425 a year ago). That is supposed to cover rent, food, clothing and household supplies. After 90 days, they can qualify for public assistance, food stamps and Medicaid. If they get a job, they have to begin reimbursing the U.S. government for their airfare from Thailand. Large Karenni families might owe up to $10,000 in airfare. Many pay back their debt at a rate of about $100 a month for more than 10 years. Some live below or just at the poverty level (Grondahl 2010).

As the above newspaper article from a local paper in Albany, NY shows, simply being processed for resettlement and sent to the U.S. is only the first step in a very long resettlement process for displaced families, and likely the easier part of the transition for most. Successful adjustment to life in an immensely dissimilar environment to their birthplace within Myanmar is an equally critical measure of the programme′s impact for displaced persons. Additionally, the holes left behind through departure of long-term community members and leaders must also be considered in evaluation of resettlement's impacts. This section of the review will examine the literature related to the impact of the resettlement programme in two key areas: impacts on the remaining shelter population and impacts on the resettled displaced persons themselves.

2.5.1 Impacts on Resettled Displaced Persons

There was a limited amount of literature found examining the impact of the resettlement programme on displaced persons from Myanmar after resettlement within the U.S., possibly due to the relative newness of the programme within the temporary shelters in Thailand. The two main articles identified included an observation piece written by Jack Dunford, Executive Director of TBBC and a report published by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), which was written by a team of experts on Myanmar and refugee resettlement professionals within the U.S.

2.5.1.1 Employment

Dunford observed that the Karen are considered hard workers in the community and easy to please in terms of accepting job offers. However, there have been difficulties for some Karen in adjusting to the workplace culture of the US. It was noted that some Karen did not understand the importance of punctuality and of informing their employers about necessary absences which can lead to termination. If this happens early on during resettlement, it creates a major problem for the refugee due to the emphasis on rapid financial independence in the U.S. resettlement programme. Dunford states that R&P organisations were generally too busy to assist with finding a second job placement for the refugee if they lost their first position. It was also noted that Karen refugees inevitably ended up starting at

minimum wage unskilled positions which were a significant waste of the talents of the teachers, health workers and community leaders in the group. The relevance of the previous vocational training received by refugees was not determinable although the programmes offered in the shelters were not designed for the context of resettlement countries (2008).

The CAL report provides support for many of these observations. The perception of Burmese refugees by employers was that they are highly motivated and have a strong work ethic. In a Midwestern site, the researchers found that men often were working in manufacturing and assembly jobs and women were working in housekeeping and sewing positions. Entry-level unskilled positions were the norm. Husbands among the refugee population appeared to have little objection to having their wives work outside the home. However, most were not experienced with this type of employment and were uncomfortable with the idea of leaving their younger children in day care facilities. They tended to prefer working different shift hours from their husbands in order to take care of their children at home (Barron et al. 2007).

The refugees struggled somewhat with the job application process and were not accustomed to the idea of 'selling themselves' in an interview. Even making eye contact goes against their cultural instincts, in which looking down is a sign of respect. They generally needed thorough guidance throughout the application and job orientation process (Barron et al. 2007).

2.5.1.2 Housing

The housing situation was found to be satisfactory to most refugees, although they were described by Dunford as sparsely furnished and some Karen had difficulty adjusting to a Western style house and would have benefitted from further orientation support in that area. Most R&P agencies tried to group the resettled refugees close together in specific housing complexes for purposes of mutual aid. It was also noted that transportation from their homes to work or other appointments was a problem in some cases depending upon the public transportation options in the community (2008).

The CAL researchers also found that the refugees from Myanmar had varying degrees of experience with Western style housing. Those who had lived for some amount of time in urban areas in Thailand and Malaysia were more familiar with modern amenities, while those who had only stayed in rural areas and in the temporary shelters needed more orientation. Disposing of toilet paper in the wastebasket instead of the toilet is an example of the basic things that had to be taught. Others included such things as how to use modern cleaning supplies, keys and locks, landline telephones, sheets and blankets, microwaves and washing machines, etc. The refugees were found to be quick learners after basic instruction however (Barron et al. 2007).

One common complaint heard from the refugees was that the housing was actually too spacious. When placed in a multiple bedroom apartment, many

families often crowded into a single one of the bedrooms rather than sleep in different rooms (Barron et al. 2007).

As with the Dunford study, it was found to be positive for the refugees to have multiple household placements in the same housing complex due to the strong sense of community among refugees from Myanmar. This practice enhanced refugee morale and helped to promote community development among the resettled refugees (Barron et al. 2007).

2.5.1.3 Health

A very limited overview of the health care available to refugees is provided by Dunford which states that significant barriers to accessing health services exist for many including language and dealing with service provider red tape. Several refugees reported not receiving the health care they felt that they needed as a result. Another health concern was that immunisation histories were not documented in the refugee health records provided (2008).

The CAL researchers state that health care service providers reported no major health issues among the refugees. While outbreaks of scabies and lice occurred; HIV, TB, parasites, malnutrition and lead levels in children were not found to be causes for concern. Additionally, most refugee children had received the necessary vaccinations before arrival. The refugees were typically familiar with the concept of visiting clinics and hospitals for health treatments. However, due to the basic level of care available to the refugees for many years, it was found that self-medicating was a fairly common practice and that they had to be encouraged to go to appointments and follow the proper course for prescribed medications (Barron et al. 2007).

Some cultural orientation was necessary for the refugees related to tobacco and alcohol use. Refugees had to be taught about where it was okay to smoke although many prefer to chew betel nuts anyway which are available at Asian stores in many resettlement locations. Resettlement organisations also reported that the Karen men often do like to drink beer and sometimes do so to excess. Education provided on responsible alcohol consumption was not very successful partly due to the fact that many of the refugees did not consider beer a form of alcohol (Barron et al. 2007).

Reproductive health issues were found to be difficult to address among the refugee women as the subject is considered taboo by many and not something they want to discuss even with their doctor. Although it was reported that there was some interest in learning about different birth control options among Karen women, Chin women were found to generally prefer to control their fertility cycles naturally and also tended to want to avoid going through gynaecological examinations (Barron et al. 2007).

2.5.1.4 Education

According to Dunford, education services seemed to be functioning well for younger Karen who were enrolled in public schools. It was found that the staff in the schools was frequently provided with orientation courses on teaching refugees and assisting with the assimilation process. However, access to higher education was described as difficult for many due to the overriding need to support their families financially (2008).

The CAL researchers found that refugees from urban areas had previously enjoyed more access to education than those in the temporary shelters. However, some refugees with the necessary language abilities were found to be working towards their general equivalency diplomas (GED). Many refugee parents were excited about having their children in school and wanted to actively participate in their child's education. It was found that for resettled Chin adults, there was limited pursuit of further educational opportunities but that their children were enthusiastic learners who generally got good grades and often decided to go on to college (Barron et al. 2007).

2.5.1.5 Welfare

Welfare assistance for the refugees was described briefly by Dunford as difficult to access and inadequate for many. Food stamps were the most common form of assistance received by refugees after the initial cash assistance programme ended. Overall, it was observed that many refugees were not able to earn sufficient income to support themselves and had to apply for some form of welfare assistance (2008).

2.5.1.6 Language Skills

The deficit in English language skills was noted as the most critical need to be filled for resettled Karen by Dunford. While there are classes taught in the temporary shelters, it was found that many were virtually helpless to communicate once they reached the States. The article argues that a vicious cycle exists where the Karen refugees are forced to find work immediately in order to survive, which effectively limits the time that they can spend learning English and means that they can only get low paying jobs which then force them to work even more to earn a living rather than spending time on improving language skills. English language classes are not included in the essential services provided by R&P organisations, and it was found that many of the classes available to refugees were taught by volunteers and varied significantly in quality (2008).

The CAL researchers reported that the Karen refugees were all literate in Karen but only a few had knowledge of Burmese, English or Thai. Despite this, the Karen refugees were described as eager to learn English (Barron et al. 2007).

2.5.1.7 Community-Based and Religious Organisations

While church groups involved with refugees and the refugees themselves voiced many complaints about their R&P organisations, Dunford's assessment is that they do a fairly good job with the limited funding that they have available through the government. Most agencies were unable to provide more than basic services unless they raised additional funding on their own. As one R&P agency described it, *This is a bare-bones programme* (Dunford 2008: 3).

To make up for this gap in services, other members of the community outside of the formal resettlement programme play an important role in facilitating effective integration, particularly religious institutions. It was noted that many of the Karen who are resettled are Christian and that their participation and sponsorship by local churches have proven to be mutually beneficial with the churches providing support to families and the Karen reinvigorating the church parishes (Dunford 2008).

The article also notes that a national non-profit organisation called the Karen American Community Foundation has been formed to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate social services to the Karen community. While the scope and effectiveness of the Foundation's services was not investigated, it was observed that the resettled Karen do bring with them a history of community support for and participation in CBOs (Dunford 2008).

2.5.1.8 Community Reception

The general impression gathered by Dunford was that the Karen are well liked in their communities within the U.S. as well as by the R&P agencies due to their strong work ethic, responsibility and reluctance to complain. However, this does create problems at times with the Karen relying too heavily upon each other for help rather than attempting to access services and assimilate into their local communities (2008).

It was also mentioned by the CAL researchers that while service providers appreciate the cultural values of modesty and politeness found among the refugees from Myanmar, it is also sometimes the cause of confusion and misunderstanding. As one worker put it, *The refugees often give you the answer they think you want to hear* (Barron et al. 2007: 64). This has made it difficult at times for providers to assess needs and ascertain preferences among the resettled refugees.

2.5.1.9 Legal Concerns

It was observed by Dunford that many cases of family separation have occurred as a result of resettlement, caused by such reasons as missed cut-off dates, registration status problems, lost paperwork and others. There were also other immigration-related problems of refugees being denied green cards because of past association with armed insurgency groups. These types of immigration and international law

issues were found to significantly test the resources and capabilities of resettlement organisations which are often small community-based social service providers (2008).

The CAL study found that understanding of U.S. domestic laws was also limited and difficult for many of the refugees. They usually arrived with insufficient orientation on American laws and sometimes unknowingly committed legal violations through such activities as fishing without a license, drinking and driving, and domestic abuse. It was also found that the refugees were unaccustomed to freedom of movement without fear of being detained by police and that confidence in law officers had to be actively encouraged (Barron et al. 2007).

2.5.1.10 Communication

Despite the physical separation, Dunford found that the lines of communication between resettled refugees and their friends and family back in the temporary shelters are very strong. Many refugees were regularly calling back to the shelters to relay news about the realities of life in the U.S. When asked what they have been telling their families and friends about life in their new home, the response was very mixed. Some refugees were saying *come*, others were saying *don't come* and still others changed their recommendation regularly depending upon their recent successes and failures with integration (2008).

The CAL research discovered that the amount of communication has sometimes led to unreasonably large long-distance phone bills for new arrivals who want to contact people in other parts of the U.S. or back in Asia. Thus, it was important that refugees be shown how to use the Internet to send emails as an alternative form of communication as well as places where they can access free public Internet services such as libraries (Barron et al. 2007).

2.5.1.11 Remittances and Personal Finances

Dunford's article states that an unknown but certainly existent quantity of remittances have started to flow from the U.S. to the temporary shelters. The author was surprised by how easily and cheaply money could be sent through Western Union as transfers take only minutes and normal exchange rates and reasonable service fees are applied. The prevalence and quantity of these remittances back to the shelters was not examined during the study however, (Dunford 2008) CAL's research on remittances did reveal problems with refugees sending more money than they could actually afford to relatives and friends still overseas (Barron et al. 2007).

Most of the refugees had no experience with the concept of paying bills and had to be taught about such things as how to keep the cost of heating bills down. However, some agency staff found that the refugees were very conscious of their spending habits and would turn down such luxuries as eating out in favour of saving for big ticket items such as cars, homes and businesses. Within a few years, refugees

often had computers, cell phones and the other modern accoutrements of American life. Most refugees were also anxious to pay back their travel loans in order to establish a good credit history for future home ownership (Barron et al. 2007).

2.5.1.12 Secondary Migration

According to Dunford, a substantial amount of secondary migration has been occurring. Causes mentioned are for reunion with relatives and friends, to avoid expensive housing in some areas or for better employment opportunities elsewhere. The R&P organisations try to discourage early relocation because it means that the refugee loses their right to any ongoing resettlement support. Dunford also suggests that the R&P organisations have a vested interest as service providers in keeping the refugees within their service catchment areas (2008).

2.5.2 Impacts on Remaining Shelter Populations

While the positive impact of the opening of a major durable solution for the displaced person situation on the border is intuitively apparent, it has also been well documented that there have been negative impacts on shelter administration and humanitarian services due to the loss of a disproportionate amount of the most skilled and best educated among the shelter population. The results of a survey commissioned by CCSDPT in 2007 showed that in three of the most critical service sectors of the shelter (health, education and shelter administration), as many as 75 % of the skilled staff have been lost through resettlement attrition. According to the survey, this depletion of staff has begun to pose a serious challenge for the community-based service structure in the shelters (Banki/Lang 2007).

Much of the current planning by NGOs and UNHCR for the border shelters has been focused on mitigating the impact of these losses (TBBC 2009). The main strategic approach proposed in the CCSDPT/UNHCR Five-Year Strategic Plan is to create a more sustainable service model through encouraging greater self-reliance for displaced persons as well as service integration with existing RTG programmes (2009).

2.5.2.1 Overall Depletion of Skilled Workers

Due to the community-based model of service provision within the shelters, the depletion of skilled staff caused by resettlement is a major concern for the sustainability of basic service and administrative functions. Research carried out by CCSDPT has shown that the best educated, NGO staff members, and more generally, those with experience, authority and leadership qualities have been applying and departing for resettlement in significantly higher proportions than

among the total population. There were three primary reasons found for this disproportionality: the educated within the shelters show a higher preference for resettlement, the UNHCR's policy of first in, first out for the resettlement programme which in some shelters has meant that the best educated and the leadership are departing first, and that some resettlement countries do select candidates based upon criteria for integration potential, including education and work experience (Banki/Lang 2007).

Replacement of the loss of the most skilled and educated staff members is made more difficult by the fact that the shelters do not function as an open labour market. There is no opportunity for displaced persons to shift between shelters to fill open positions and in certain shelters, nearly every displaced person with a post-10th grade education is already employed (Banki/Lang 2007).

The CCSDPT's research found that of the approximately 7,000 employment positions in the shelters, 911 require a post-10th grade education in order to maintain current levels of service quality. However, a 38 % decrease in those with a post-10th education was projected within 6 months of the research report along with only a 10 % decrease in the total shelter population. Even if there is eventually a marked decrease in the total shelter population, the CCSDPT points out that the decrease in staff necessary to provide services will not be exactly proportionate with this lower population figure. In the meantime, it has been reported by NGOs that even those trained as replacement staff are beginning to depart for resettlement, showing the growing need for new strategies to address the losses (Banki/Lang 2007).

The Karen Women's Organisation (KWO) has said that although they initially supported resettlement because of the need for quality education for children in the camps, it has now become a "love/hate issue" for the organisation. While they agree that resettlement has provided increased opportunities for a portion of the community, they have pointed out that it has also left the remaining community "without resources and support" because of the departure of the most educated and skilled from the camps and that community structures are deteriorating as a result (Karen Women's Organisation 2008).

2.5.2.2 Education

Resettlement has had a major impact on the availability of high quality teaching staff in the shelters, already a salient concern even before the start of resettlement. However, of even higher priority for maintaining the quality level of education in the shelters is the loss of supervisors, principals, subject coordinators and teacher trainers who over the years have received a considerable amount of specialised training in curriculum development, classroom management and school supervision. The loss of the educational leadership staff, particularly in light of the additional loss of the most experienced teachers in the shelters, makes it difficult to maintain effective educational programmes within the shelters and continuity of learning for students (Banki/Lang 2007).

Two key issues have exacerbated the impact of the losses within the educational sector: the first is that because teachers receive lower salaries than many other NGO staff in the shelters, teaching staff are not only lost directly to resettlement but also through job hopping of teachers to newly vacant positions in other sectors with higher pay rates; the second issue is that because a capacity building approach has been utilised for educational services in the shelters, with an eye towards a future repatriation of the educational staff, the educational programmes are very dependent on the skills of the displaced persons themselves and particularly vulnerable to losses of key staff (Banki/Lang 2007).

The decrease in quality of instruction caused by the loss of skilled staff from the educational sector will likely have a trickledown effect to many other key operational areas within the shelters as fewer well-educated staff will be available to fill positions in all sectors in the future. The loss of English teachers and teacher trainers certainly will have impacts on the availability of English language courses within the shelters, already a concern because of the prohibition on native English speakers teaching in the shelters. This may also raise operational costs for NGOs in the shelters as it will likely become necessary for many organisations to have a greater reliance on non-shelter-based interpreters for their programmes in the future. Additionally, the loss of educational management staff will not only have the immediate effects of diminished supervision for teachers and of discipline within the schools but also longer term effects on programmes and funding due to a lack of reporting and proposal writing capacity to secure future financial support (Banki/Lang 2007).

2.5.2.3 Health

The impact on the health sector within the shelters has also been distinctly negative, with some health programmes losing 50 % of their staff in 2007. Particularly difficult to replace will be the experienced managers and specialists working in health services. In addition to the human resource loss itself, the timing of the resettlement programme has made identifying and adequately training replacements a critical challenge (Banki/Lang 2007).

Loss of interpreters with the technical proficiency to work in the health sector is also a major obstacle to providing effective health services that will take time to replace. An assessment of the number of technical English speakers in the shelters revealed that there were 250 at the time of the study in 2007, and that 75 % of these were employed in the health sector (Banki/Lang 2007).

Perhaps the most immediate impact will be a reduced number of qualified medical staff working in the shelters. This could potentially cause a number of secondary negative impacts on health services within the shelters, some of which have already started to be realised, including a rise in misdiagnosed conditions, loss of confidence in medical services causing an increase in self-treatment or neglect of health problems, an increase in hospital referrals and a decline in offerings of preventative health programmes. The potential for notable declines in

displaced person health status caused by increases in cases of malnutrition, communicable disease outbreaks and other treatable illnesses is certainly a concern as well. Training, and therefore service capacity, will also likely be impacted by the loss of experienced medical personnel (Banki/Lang 2007).

One positive health impact of the resettlement programme is that because most resettlement countries require a mandatory medical check-up as part of the application process, many treatable illnesses have been diagnosed, including 478 cases of tuberculosis which were detected and treated between 2004 and 2008 (Sciortino/Punpuing 2009).

2.5.2.4 Administration

As with the health and education sectors in the shelters, the model used for shelter administration is highly dependent upon utilising the skills and capabilities of the displaced persons themselves in operations and management and therefore is vulnerable to decline from a loss of staff to resettlement. So far, it was found that the impacts have been managed effectively due to a smooth transition plan for staff into vacancies created by resettlement as well as a relatively smaller number of key staff having departed than in other sectors. Both camp committees and CBOs have been outspoken about the challenges created by the impact of resettlement and have been very involved in efforts to address these problems (Banki/Lang 2007).

A concern for the future is that with an overall reduction in the number of educated and experienced staff in the labour pool of the shelters, CBOs may end up being hurt by the competition with NGOs for qualified staff members. As CBOs do not generally pay a stipend, they may well end up losing staffing resources to NGOs who often require a full-time commitment, with the end result a possible deterioration of organisational effectiveness. CBOs may also be impacted financially as their staff members have in the past been an important part of proposal writing efforts to secure funding for small projects in the shelters, a capacity that might be diminished by losses to resettlement (Banki/Lang 2007).

A positive impact for shelter administration that was found by the CCSDPT research was that in some cases the resettlement of entrenched leadership staff within the shelters allowed for new and effective leaders to emerge (Banki/Lang 2007).

2.5.2.5 Vulnerable Groups

A derivative effect of the impacts on the shelter service structure is that specific groups within the shelters are disproportionally negatively affected, particularly vulnerable populations such as the elderly and separated children. Just as the most capable shelter residents such as NGO staff and the more educated are more likely to apply for resettlement, the vulnerable populations within the shelters are generally less likely to apply (Banki/Lang 2007). This may in the future create conditions of deteriorating service provision within the shelters for an increasingly

aid-dependent consumer population. As the Karen Women's Organisation has stated, *it is the people who can speak out and have capacity who are leaving. Those left are illiterate, simple, hidden people. They will have no voice* (2008).

2.5.3 Emotional Situation in the Shelters

The emotional impact of the resettlement programme appears to be mixed within the shelters. While the opening of a durable solution to what has become a very protracted displacement situation has certainly brought with it a degree of hope, giving up on the dream of returning home in the future is very difficult for many in the shelters and the challenges and uncertainty of a future in a resettlement country have also been a cause for anxiety. Interviews conducted during the CCSDPT research in the shelters revealed contrasting emotions with those waiting to resettle often filled with hope and expectations, whereas those who had been rejected were bitter and depressed and the undecided population were typically filled with confusion about whether to apply or not (Banki/Lang 2007). The Karen Women's Organisation has documented the negative impacts that these stresses have had on families in the camps. Conflicts within families as a result of disagreements about whether to apply for resettlement or stay in the camps have become a common domestic issue (2008).

2.5.3.1 Expenses and Income

It has been assumed that if resettlement eventually leads to a decrease in the shelter population, then the cost for running the shelters will be reduced as the quantity of food rations, shelter staff and other services will be lower. However, the CCSDPT's research points out that in the short- and medium-term periods, costs are likely to actually increase as NGOs have to intensify their activities in an effort to compensate for the loss of experienced staff (Banki/Lang 2007).

Although the research of CCSDPT was not able to identify a large number of specifically positive impacts of resettlement on the remaining shelter population, they did document that remittances have begun to flow from resettlement countries to the shelter residents and to CBOs in the shelters. A separate livelihood study conducted in four of the border shelters found that remittances from third countries were the third most frequently mentioned source of income, received by one out of four families. The percentage of households surveyed with family members abroad was approximately 75 %, meaning that one of every three families in the shelters with family members in resettlement countries are receiving remittances (Cardno Agrisystems 2009).

Analysis of household incomes in the shelters found that those with relatives in third countries, were twice as likely to fall into the top income group of those earning over 2,200 baht per month, whereas those without were twice as likely to

fall into the bottom income group of those earning less than 100 baht per month (Cardno Agrisystems 2009).

2.5.3.2 Future Options for Displaced Persons

One of the most significant impacts of resettlement on the shelter population has been its effect on plans for the future. A survey conducted as part of a livelihood study in the shelters yielded the following results regarding preferences for future options in two of the temporary shelters (Fig. 2.2):

The researchers suggest that one of the reasons for the large difference in preference for staying in the shelter between the two research sites may be due to better livelihood options in Ban Mai Nai Soi Shelter. They also propose that the timing of the survey may partially explain the lower interest in resettlement at Ban Mai Nai Soi due to the survey being conducted soon after the first round of departures, reducing the number of those who had already decided upon the resettlement option. The survey demographics showed that in both shelters, there was no significant difference in interest in resettlement between sub-groups of those who had arrived in the shelter before or after 2005. It was found, however, that households with a secondary or higher education were twice as likely to indicate a preference for resettlement. However, no significant relationship was found between level of education and a preference for staying in the shelter or local integration in Thailand (Cardno Agrisystems 2009).

A qualitative study on the perceptions of resettlement and the factors that influence the resettlement decision among young educated Karen in the temporary shelters in Thailand found that while the key factors in their decisions were unique to the individual, many of those interviewed faced a common dilemma and reached similar conclusions. In order to make their decisions, the young Karen were forced to weigh push factors such as lack of basic human rights, lack of sufficient livelihood and educational opportunities, and lack of positive prospects for the future; and pull factors such as family security, increased personal freedoms, citizenship status, greater educational and livelihood opportunities, and the luxuries of a modern lifestyle; against their preconceptions about the challenges and difficulties of life in a third country and the perceived threat to *Karen-ness* posed by leaving the larger community behind (Berg 2009).

While it was found that young educated Karen do in fact make both choices, with some choosing to remain behind to assist their communities and some

	Ban Mai Nai Soi	Tham Hin
Resettlement in third countries	35%	45%
Integration in Thailand	5%	14%
Stay in the shelter	60%	41%

Fig. 2.2 Preference for future options in the shelters. *Source* Cardno Agrisystems (2009)

choosing to go for resettlement, the vehemence with which many expressed their views about wanting to stay and help the community during the interviews did not in fact match the large quantity of those who did in fact choose to apply. It was determined that overall, the majority of the young Karen interviewed had decided to apply for resettlement unless they had family obligations that precluded that choice. The study concluded that the push factors, and particularly the feeling of being perpetually deprived of their basic human rights, had frequently become the most compelling factor motivating the choice to apply for resettlement and that this push factor was generally more strongly felt than the pull factors offered by life in third countries (Berg 2009).

2.5.3.3 Shelter Population Totals

UNHCR and MOI re-registered the entire shelter population during a registration effort during 2004–2005. At that time, the official population of registered displaced persons in the temporary shelters was documented as 137,859 on October 2005 by MOI/UNHCR (TBBC 2006: 2), and 142,917 by TBBC's internal figures on December 2005 (TBBC 2006: 3).

As of June 30, 2010, the UNHCR/MOI figure was 98,644 (TBBC 2011: 7) and TBBC's internal figure was 141,076, which includes unregistered residents in the shelters (TBBC 2011: 7) (Fig. 2.3).

Therefore, depending upon which set of figures are used, after approximately 5 years of resettlement and over 64,000 departures there was either approximately a 28 % decrease in the aggregate temporary shelter population by official figures or a 1 % decrease if the unregistered population is included. However, it must be taken into account that to ignore the existence of the sizable unregistered population in the shelters because of the stalled registration process raises serious

Location	Australia	Canada	Denmark	Finland	Netherlands	Ireland	Norway	NZ	Sweden	UK	USA	Other	Total
Former urban	5	5	8	5	3		10			1	3		40
Site 1	21			8			5				1,960	3	2,002
Site 2	222										483		705
Mae La Oon	146	140									1,841		2,127
Mae Ra Ma Luang	153	189					31		63		1,627		2,603
Mae la	100	1			47		1		4	3	1,495	27	1,678
Umpiem Mai	16	1							6		963		986
Nu Po	105	3					3				664		775
Ban Don Yang	51			75					3		165	23	317
Tham Hin	38			35					4		337		414
2010	**857**	**339**	**8**	**123**	**50**	**0**	**50**	**5**	**80**	**4**	**9,538**	**53**	**11,107**
2009	2,323	828	11	202	9	0	280	79	118	5	12,826	4	16,685
2008	1,562	637	1	283	144	97	70	24	141	29	14,280	1	17,172
2007	1,516	1,574	5	350	62	0	414	148	178	111	10,181	0	14,636
2006	734	756	5	208	115	0	324	176	348	81	2,164	2	4,913
Grand Total	**6,992**	**4,119**	**30**	**1,166**	**380**	**97**	**1138**	**432**	**865**	**230**	**48,989**	**60**	**64,513**

Fig. 2.3 Departures of displaced persons for resettlement. *Source* TBBC (2011) (From data provided by the International Organization for Migration)

ethical concerns about the future provision of asylum. It seems clear that the ideal scenario for the resettlement programme, in which the shelters are gradually closed down as they are depopulated, is not going to occur in the near future.

The total number of displaced persons departing for resettlement in 2010 was approximately 11,107 (TBBC 2011: 8), far short of the original total projected for the year of 15,000 (TBBC 2010: 9). A similar total number of departures is expected in 2011 and 2012, after which most of those displaced persons who are both eligible for and interested in resettlement will have departed (TBBC 2011: 8). In order for the shelters to shut down as a result of resettlement alone, the influx of new refugees, a high birth rate within the shelters, delays in registration of new residents and significant levels of disinterest in resettlement will all have to be overcome (Sciortino/Punpuing 2009).

2.6 Desk Review Conclusion

Reviewing the literature published on the resettlement programme in Thailand is informative in terms of the policies and procedures for the programme but somewhat more limited in revealing the impacts and implications that have resulted. While understanding the programme's policies and operations is an important element in determining how the programme can be improved, the lack of sufficient research on its impacts and implications leaves a gap in the literature which may be partly based upon the international perception of the role of resettlement in Thailand.

Many within the international community view resettlement as essentially a charitable contribution to durable solutions for refugee situations, and as such, there may be a disinclination to be overly rigorous in evaluating its impacts. If resettlement does not make the situation worse, through creation of a significant pull factor in its own right for example, it may be assumed to have played a beneficial role at least for the families that are resettled.

However, as resettlement has been the only available durable solution to the displacement situation within Thailand for over 5 years, it appears that there is reason to make greater efforts to understand the effect that resettlement is having on Thailand. If resettlement continues to be the only long-term solution available to displaced persons in Thailand, it is critical to understand what has been accomplished so far and how the programme can be strengthened for improved results in the future.

Based upon the gaps identified in the research published on the resettlement programme in Thailand, the focus of the field research in asylum and resettlement countries for this study was on understanding the motivations and constraints for displaced persons to participate in the programme, as well as the impacts and implications of resettlement for programme participants, the remaining shelter populations and new displacement flows into the shelters.

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Chapter 3
Asylum Country Results and Analysis

Benjamin Harkins, Nawita Direkwut and Aungkana Kamonpetch

Abstract The motivations and constraints for participating in resettlement are analysed, assessing differences based upon demographics, as well as both policy and personal respects. Key push and pull factors that influence the decision-making process for individual refugees are examined. The impact of resettlement is evaluated, both for participants and those left behind in the camps. The policies and procedures of the actors involved in the resettlement programme are assessed, together with the preparatory programmes available to assist refugees with the challenges they face in third countries.

Keywords Refugees · Resettlement · Durable solutions · Karen · Thailand · Myanmar

3.1 Assessment of Motivations and Constraints for Participation in the Resettlement Programme

Survey questions to establish the level of participation in the application process by eligible displaced persons determined that approximately 36 % of respondents had applied for resettlement, 48 % had never applied and the remainder gave no response to the query (Fig. 3.1). Approximately 57 % of those surveyed were registered by MOI/UNHCR as displaced persons within the shelters which places

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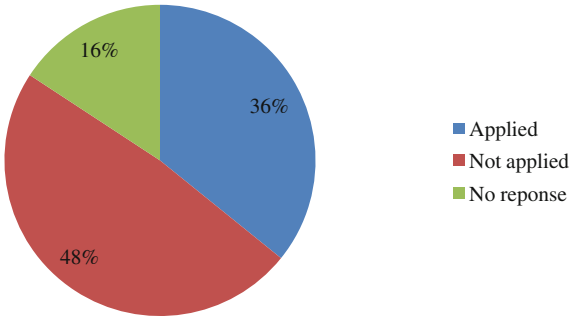

Fig. 3.1 Resettlement application status. *Source* Survey results

the rate of application among eligible residents at 63 %. This result matches precisely with UNHCR's own figures for application rates within the shelters in Thailand, lending support to the representativeness of the survey group for resettlement-related questions, and raising the critical issue of why overall application rates appear to be lower than expected.

3.1.1 Demographic Analysis of Applicants

Demographic comparison between sub-groups of those respondents who said they had applied versus those who said they had not revealed significant deviations within several variables from the overall response. While the variables of gender, age, marital status, income level and family size did not have large deviations from the overall decision rate of 36 % when values were high enough to be interpreted as significant, other variables did appear to have stronger relationships with the decision to apply or not.

3.1.1.1 Shelter, Ethnicity and Place of Birth

Displaced persons living in Ban Mai Nai Soi Shelter stated much more frequently that they had applied for resettlement than those in Mae La or Tham Hin Shelters. As Ban Mai Nai Soi is overwhelmingly a Karenni Shelter site, there were related high frequencies of application within the variables of ethnicity and birthplace suggesting that displaced Karenni from Kayah State were more likely to apply for resettlement than the total sample (Fig. 3.2). While there is likely more than a single reason for this result, it is reasonable to assume that the much greater number of past departures for resettlement from Mae La and Tham Hin Shelters

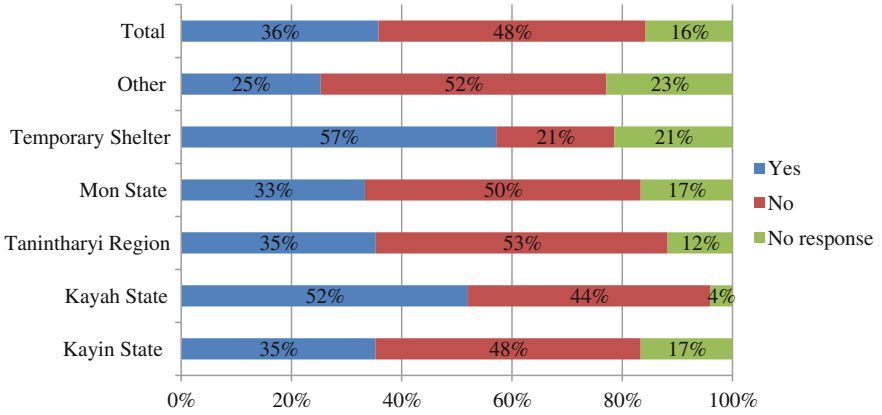

Fig. 3.2 Resettlement application status by place of birth. *Source* Survey results

are largely responsible for the variation by shelter, ethnicity and birthplace. These variables will likely become less meaningful after the U.S. resettlement programme completes departures of approved applicants from Ban Mai Nai Soi, which was targeted later in the camp-by-camp progression of the programme.

Another noteworthy result within the demographic analysis of resettlement applicants was that the highest rate of application for any grouping was that of displaced persons born within the temporary shelters themselves. As a discreet sub-group within the shelters, this may be partially a result of both a near-blanket positive registration status as well as a lesser degree of personal connection with the idea of a future return to Myanmar and in many cases, a lack of national citizenship status within Myanmar.

3.1.1.2 Education

The impact of the resettlement programme on brain drain of the best educated within the shelters has been well documented by previous research studies and it was still notable that those who had been educated within the shelters or had completed post-10th grade courses stated more frequently that they had applied for resettlement (Fig. 3.3). However, it also appears that the differences in education levels between resettlement applicants and the remainder of the population are beginning to subside likely as a result of a large portion of the best educated within the shelters having departed for resettlement during the early waves of the programme.

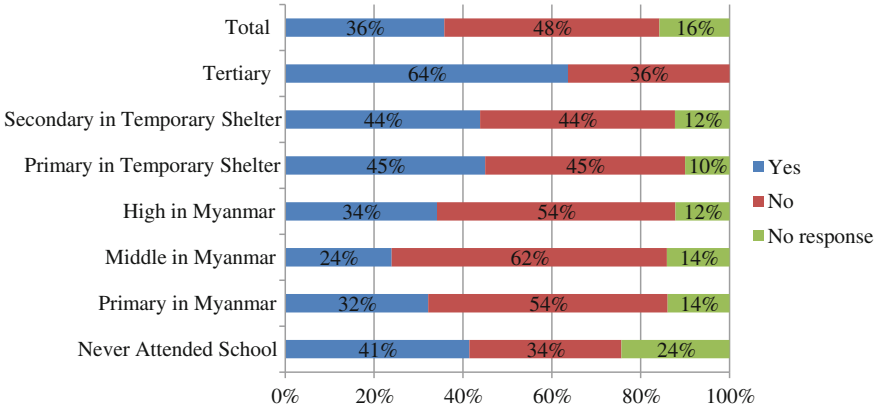

Fig. 3.3 Resettlement application status by educational level. *Source* Survey results

3.1.1.3 Length of Stay

Length of stay in the temporary shelters proved to have a very dramatic impact on levels of application for resettlement (Fig. 3.4). A very distinct bifurcation of application rates appeared in the data between those who had lived in the shelters for 1–5 years and those who had lived in the shelters for longer periods. While the application rates did appear to follow a fairly linear temporal progression, steadily increasing over time, the distinct split occurring at the 5-year time frame is clearly due to the stalled registration process within the shelters. Very few status determinations have been made by the Provincial Admissions Board since the 2005 MOI/UNHCR registration process and this has had an obvious impact on applications for resettlement with only approximately 8 % of those who had arrived in the shelters during the last 5 years of applying.

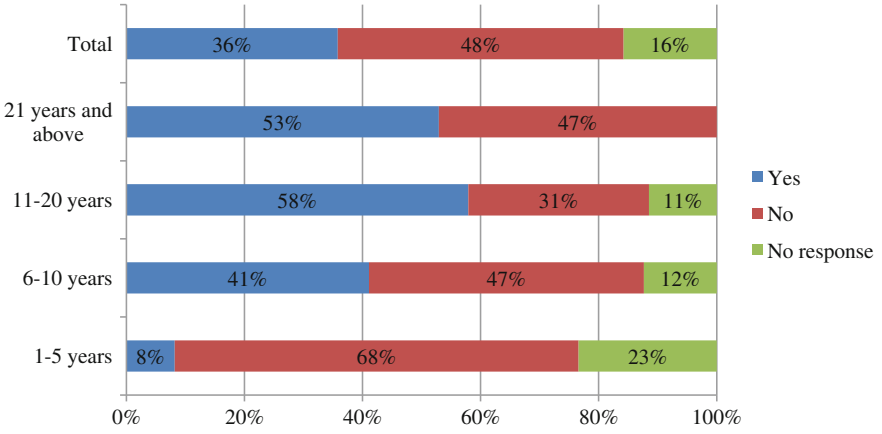

Fig. 3.4 Resettlement application status by duration of stay in the temporary shelter. *Source* Survey results

3.1.2 Motivations for Participation in the Resettlement Programme

The motivations for participation in the resettlement programme were found to be by no means uniform, and in most cases, difficult to define even for individual applicants in a single all-inclusive *reason.* For most of those who had chosen to apply, the answers given for what motivated their choice were a complex blend of push and pull factors which often required additional probing in order to deconstruct the foundations they were built upon. In many cases, identifying the recurring patterns within responses of what displaced persons felt was desirable about life in resettlement countries, based upon the limited amount of accurate information they had available, was more revealing about the workings of what a key informant at the OPE referred to as the *rumour machine* between resettled displaced persons and those still in the shelters than their own empirical assessments of what resettlement had to offer. Nearly 68 % of survey respondents stated that their friends and family who had already been resettled told them that it was a good decision with only 6 % stating that they had been told it was a poor decision (Fig. 3.5). This type of very subjective reporting certainly has a real impact on resettlement decisions for many, as displaced persons have a tendency to trust what they are told by friends and family over the official information provided by organisations involved with the resettlement programme. Nevertheless, there was a shared conceptualisation for many resettlement applicants about the pull factors that made them choose resettlement as well as a fairly well-established collective story about the push factors that made other options untenable, and these base commonalities were the target of the research.

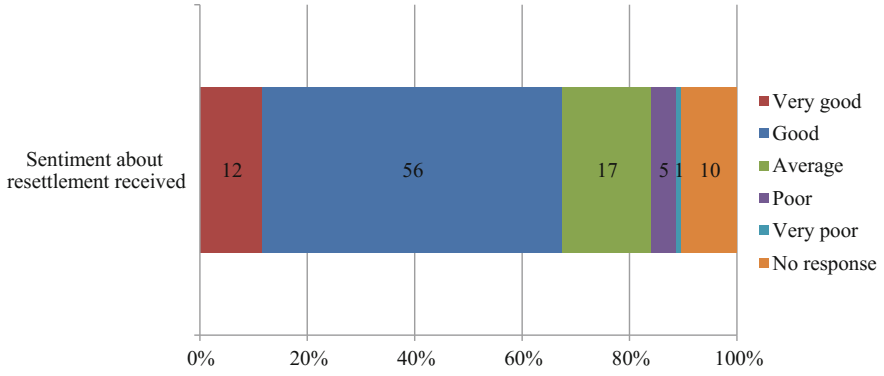

Fig. 3.5 Sentiment about resettlement decisions received from participants. *Source* Survey results

3.1.2.1 Key Pull Factors

Respondents in the survey who had applied for resettlement stated most frequently that reunion with friends and family members, educational opportunities and hope for a better future were the primary reasons for their decisions to apply. This was supported by the findings of the focus group sessions which focused around family reunification, educational and employment opportunities, and greater freedoms/respect for their human rights as key motivations for choosing resettlement. Emphasis varied somewhat with the demographics of the respondents however, eight out of ten participants in focus groups within Ban Mai Nai Soi stated that they already had relatives within the U.S. who had been resettled and reunification appeared to be a key cross-cutting motivational factor for the majority of respondents in all shelters.

Particularly for female respondents in focus groups, education for their children was a frequently stated pull factor for resettlement countries. While this was a shared concern of male respondents as well, it was often less emphasised in favour of the opportunity to work and provide a better future for their families within resettlement countries. This mix of pragmatic realism about their own opportunities within resettlement countries but strong optimism for the future of their families and their children was a defining characteristic of the viewpoint of many displaced persons towards resettlement within the shelters.

Within focus group discussions, it was revealed that many had received unromanticised stories about livelihood pursuits within the U.S. Friends and family members had often told them that the nature of the jobs they had found were difficult general labour type positions and that they had to work hard in order to avoid poverty. As one group member stated, *The USA is the same as anywhere, you have to work to survive*. However, none of the participants in the focus groups stated this as a reason not to apply. Despite the constraints to livelihood opportunities in the shelter environment, most seemed unaffected by the symptoms of *dependency syndrome* and appeared quite eager to find even very basic employment.

The opportunity to earn a living was unquestionably a fundamental pull factor of resettlement countries for many displaced persons, just as the limitations on working within the shelters was a strong push factor and seen as a violation of their basic human rights by many of those interviewed.

3.1.2.2 Key Push Factors

Within both focus group and survey results, the reasons stated as push factors for choosing resettlement appeared to be based on a greater amount of empirical information and had a higher level of uniformity than stated pull factors. Approximately 62 % of respondents stated that they remained in the camp out of security concerns. Likewise, essentially all focus group and survey respondents stated that they felt that it was unsafe to return to Myanmar currently, and a significant portion of that group expressed the opinion that they did not feel that it would ever be safe for them to return.

Within the overall survey results, only 12 % stated that their preference for the future was to return to Myanmar, however, it appears likely that this result was based more upon a keen understanding of the existing human rights abuses within Myanmar rather than a desire-based decision (Fig. 3.6). When probed about their preference for the future in focus groups if a safe return was truly possible, a majority stated their interest in returning to Myanmar. This leads to the conclusion that for many who have applied for resettlement, the choice is motivated primarily by making the only reasonable decision given the dearth of options available. This point of view was explicitly stated during multiple focus group sessions in Ban Mai Nai Soi, Tham Hin, and Mae La Shelters as well as by approximately 64 % of survey respondents (Fig. 3.7).

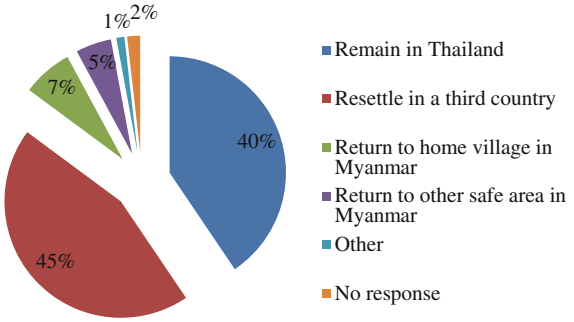

Fig. 3.6 Preference for the future. *Source* Survey results

An interesting and illustrative example of the thought process within the shelters for those who do choose resettlement was demonstrated by a group of three displaced persons within a focus group in Mae La. The group reached the consensus conclusion that although they had no real preference for future plans, what they did want was *anything except to return to Myanmar*, and as a result, all members of the group planned to apply for resettlement once they became eligible.

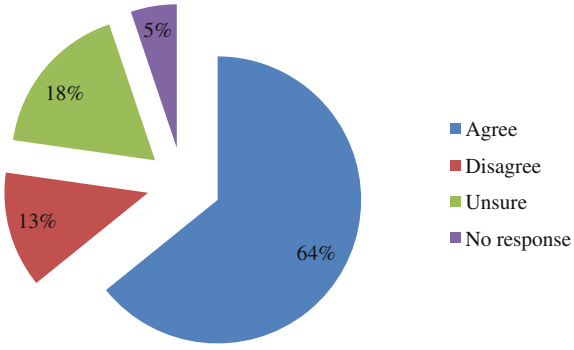

Fig. 3.7 Resettlement is the best option available. *Source* Survey results

The other major push factors for resettlement appeared to be living conditions within the shelters and the future prospects for local integration within Thailand. While displaced persons were generally gracious to their host country in their assessments of these during both focus groups and individual surveys, the absence of serious interest in local integration or willingness for candid discussions about topics such as the lack of freedom of movement, livelihoods, educational opportunities, high quality health care or productive activities in general made it clear that long-term encampment had certainly lowered the horizon line of what was thought possible for many in the shelters. The concept of going to Thai schools, using Thai medical facilities, working legally within the Thai economy and perhaps even being granted Thai citizenship seemed beyond the imagination of most. In that sense, while living conditions in the shelters are a clear push factor towards the choice of resettlement, local integration can also be thought of as a significant push factor due to the current absence of policy accommodations for its realisation.

3.1.3 Constraints to Participation in the Resettlement Programme

Assessing the constraints to participation in the resettlement programme is a far less qualitative research question in nature then motivations to apply. While the primary research conducted in the camp focused on determining the more personal, socio-cultural and procedural reasons that encouraged or discouraged displaced persons to apply, it was a priori understood that a great number in the shelters are in fact excluded from the programme before any of these considerations are taken into account. According to the most recent credible accounting of the unregistered population totals in the shelters, there are currently approximately 56,000 unregistered displaced persons in the shelters with 7,500 entering during just the first 6 months of 2010 (TBBC 2010a: 2). Based upon these figures, over 38 % of the shelter population is ineligible for resettlement based upon registration status. This has occurred primarily because of the stalled PAB registration process, which has completed very few status determinations for displaced person since the 2005 registration initiative took place.

During a key informant interview, a UNHCR representative acknowledged that the stalled registration process is a major cause for the large unregistered population in the shelters but that no large-scale registration effort is currently being planned. It was explained that UNHCR is now waiting to see how the PAB prescreening pilot programme results turn out in hopes that it will help with breaking up the gridlock in the registration process, a position that at the moment seems very optimistic given the early problems with inconsistent results from the programme.

Starting with this preliminary understanding that the lack of registration status constitutes a major pre-existing exclusion to full participation in the resettlement

programme, the constraints addressed within the research were based on the factors within the decision-making and programme process for the remaining 62 % of eligible displaced persons in the shelters.

3.1.3.1 Ethnic Identity and Resettlement Decisions

In analysing the results on constraints to participation in the resettlement programme, it was useful to compare and contrast the focus group findings with those of the survey as ultimately the decision for individuals and families to participate in the programme is a personal choice but is also strongly influenced by the socio-cultural context of the temporary shelters. As has been noted by other research studies, registered displaced persons in the shelters in Thailand are often somewhat surreptitious about their resettlement decisions as well as their progress within the resettlement process. It has been suggested that the avoidance of discussing these issues publicly may be partly because *there are strong disagreements among the refugees between those who favour resettlement and those who are concerned with its negative implications for the Karen culture and community* (Berg 2009: 65–66). Therefore, dialogue between displaced persons within the focus groups was useful for establishing the more publicly held ideas about the choice of resettlement and these were frequently found to be quite different than what was expressed during individual surveys.

While the pressure to remain engaged with the struggles of their individual ethnic groups was very apparent during focus groups and seemed to be acutely felt on the individual level, many within focus groups did not feel that resettlement was a betrayal of their ethnic identity. Through passing on cultural traditions to children, sending remittances to friends and family members, providing emotional and informational support from overseas and even by coming back to work in the shelters as NGO staff, nearly all of the participants in focus groups stated their interest in maintaining ties to their heritage and communities. However, as the survey results revealed, supporting the collective welfare was generally secondary to personal and family interests in influencing the decision about whether to apply for resettlement.

3.1.3.2 Awareness and Adequate Information About Resettlement

One of the first questions addressed in attempting to define the constraints to participation in the resettlement programme was to determine the level of awareness among shelter residents of the resettlement option. Approximately 81 % of respondents in the survey stated that they were aware of the programme (Fig. 3.8). It is likely that the real figure is actually higher in terms of basic awareness of the existence of resettlement operations in the camp but that some respondents interpreted the question as implying more in-depth knowledge about the resettlement process. The most common source of initial information about the

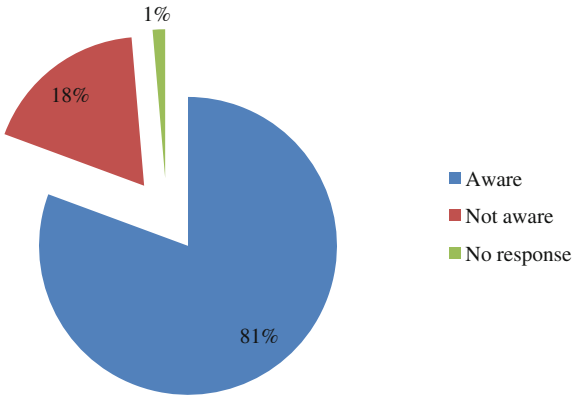

Fig. 3.8 Awareness of the resettlement programme. *Source* Survey results

programme stated by both focus groups and survey respondents was friends and relatives however, approximately 47 % of survey respondents stated that they had received additional information about the resettlement programme at least once per month while living in the shelters. The implication of these results is that the dissemination of information about the existence of the resettlement programme in the shelters has not been a significant constraint to participation.

Closely related to the concern of simple awareness of resettlement activities is the question of whether shelter residents feel that they are provided with adequate information to make an informed decision about participation in the programme. In this regard, only 20 % of survey respondents stated that they had received adequate information to make their choice. Within focus group sessions, it was clear that displaced persons tended to have a fairly idiosyncratic conception of life within resettlement countries, formed through a combination of rumours circulating within the shelters, both positive and negative reports from friends and family who had already resettled and their exposure to Western media images. While there are informational campaigns conducted within the shelters about resettlement, most focus group participants tended to give more credibility to information about life in third countries received from friends, family and other community members rather than the information about resettlement received from NGOs and UNHCR.

The *rumour machine* between resettled displaced persons and those in the shelters that was described earlier in this chapter seems to be more of a motivating factor than a constraint. This may be due to the natural tendency of resettled displaced persons to want to feel good about their decision after the fact as well as to encourage others still in the shelters to join them in their choice. However, this also means that the information provided is often very biased and is not always beneficial for making an informed decision.

It was suggested by one NGO key informant that having the cultural orientation prior to departure conducted by an organisation and individuals with experience of

practical living conditions in their destination country is a good deterrent for preventing the spread of some of this misinformation. However, the cultural orientation is conducted after displaced persons have already chosen to apply, have already been approved for resettlement and is timed for just prior to departure, meaning that it has a very limited impact on the actual decision-making process for displaced persons about whether to apply.

3.1.3.3 Accessibility, Duration and Impartiality of the Resettlement Application Process

The accessibility, duration and impartiality of the resettlement application process were operational concerns with the programme that were addressed within the research as possible constraints to participation. These were thought to be potential issues due to the low levels of education and limitations in language abilities for some displaced persons, the diversity of minority ethnic and religious groups applying and the red tape involved in processing applications and coordinating services between multiple NGOs, international organisations and state representatives before departures can take place.

Within the survey results, fewer than 10 % stated that they found the application process difficult and this was supported by focus group discussions within which not a single member suggested that it was a difficult process to apply for resettlement.

Only one focus group member explicitly raised concerns about the fairness of the process, stating that he felt that there are *different classes of resettlement applications based upon language ability, education and skills.* While it is true that some resettlement countries screen applicants for integration potential, the vast majority of focus group respondents stated that they felt the judgments made on applications were fair. Particularly related to the U.S. resettlement application process, key informants working both within the U.S. resettlement programme as well as those unaffiliated with it stated that the U.S. adjudication process does not screen applicants based on capabilities. One NGO executive interviewed simply stated, *The U.S. will take anyone*.

However, a key informant from the RTG who wished to remain anonymous did express his concern that there is a lack of transparency and equity within the selection process for some resettlement countries that has resulted in the removal of many of the most highly qualified service staff and leaders within the shelters. He stated that this has raised anxieties for the Thai Government about resettlement becoming an obstacle to the continued provision of effective services within the shelters as well as the RTG's ability to manage the situation safely.

The responses about how long the resettlement application process was taking for displaced persons varied widely. While some had just applied and had waited for less than a month, the majority of those who said that they had applied stated that they had already waited for 6 months or longer. Processing time varied even more among focus group participants, with times as short as 1–2 months for some

to as long as several years for others. Many in the focus groups seemed to anticipate that it would be an approximately 1-year process based on what they had witnessed for other applicants. In focus groups held in Ban Mai Nai Soi Shelter, the majority of participants who had applied for resettlement were already approaching this time horizon.

Among those who said that they had been waiting for over a year, a frequently stated reason was that they had faced significant delays because of differing registration statuses within their families. For example, one woman stated that she had been approved for resettlement since 2006 but because her husband was away during the 2005 registration process, he had not been registered as a member of her household and could not apply. The completeness and accuracy of household registration documents and the quality of information that displaced persons were able to provide during interviews were found to be key variables for the duration of the application process. Health status was also a factor in delays for some, notably including pregnancies.

The basic conclusion that can be drawn from this data is that if an applying family has all of the documentation necessary, it is correctly filled out without any major discrepancies and they are able to answer the application questions plausibly, the process generally takes less than 1 year. If not, the resettlement application process can become bogged down in the details of resolving these issues and is often significantly prolonged.

3.1.3.4 Coordination Between Organisations Involved

As with any programme involving such a broad mix of actors with varying missions, policies and objectives, there is a certain amount of discontinuity and disagreement about how to conduct resettlement in Thailand. However, it appears that the high levels of operational expertise in carrying out resettlement activities among organisations such as UNHCR, IRC and IOM keep departures happening even when diplomatic relations and policy approaches are not always entirely harmonious.

A major coordination constraint that had existed within the U.S. resettlement programme initially was the so-called *material support bar*. Based upon key informant interviews with OPE management, as well as published literature, it appears that the material support bar is no longer a significant concern preventing participation in resettlement in Thailand. Waivers have been granted to most of the key armed groups within Myanmar that some displaced persons had prior affiliation with.

Several key informants representing international organisations involved with the resettlement operations did state their desire for a greater amount of dialogue with representatives of the RTG to address their concerns. A representative of UNHCR interviewed made it clear that developing some type of legal framework for displaced persons in Thailand remains a major objective which they would like to see accomplished either through acceding to the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees or through national legislation. Through either of these mechanisms,

UNHCR hopes to make policy responses to refugee situations in Thailand more predictable in the future. However, although there is ongoing dialogue between UNHCR and multiple RTG institutions, little progress has been made in implementing a more solutions-oriented approach to the current situation or in developing a legal framework for policy towards displaced persons in Thailand.

3.1.3.5 Ability to Choose Resettlement Country

Based on UNHCR resettlement policies, displaced persons in the shelters in Thailand are not allowed to choose which resettlement country they apply to. This was considered within the research as another possible constraint to participation due to the lack of control over their future resettlement destination for displaced persons.

Within focus groups, while most participants agreed that they had no control over which country their application was sent to, a few responded that they had targeted specific countries based on applying for resettlement when their desired destination country was currently in the shelter processing applications. While the individuals using this strategy felt that it had been successful, it is unclear if their actions actually influenced which country their application was sent to in any way.

Within the survey results, the most frequently selected country for resettlement was the U.S. at 44 % of responses (Fig. 3.9).

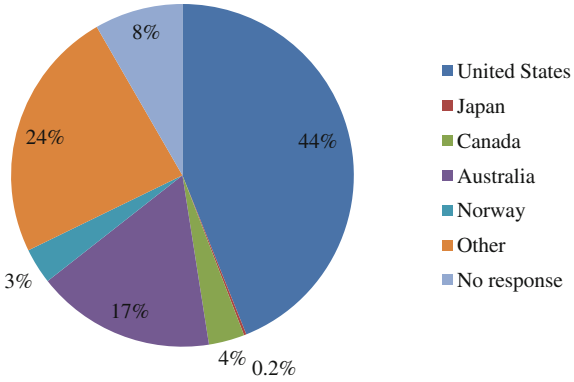

Fig. 3.9 Preferred country for resettlement. *Source* Survey results

In making the choice of a third country for resettlement, the factor stated to be most influential was a desire to go to the nation where friends and family members were already living at 32 % of the total, followed by educational opportunities at 19 % (Fig. 3.10). However, overall it did not appear that the lack of country choice was a major constraining factor to participation in the resettlement programme as long as displaced persons were allowed to rejoin their family members who had already departed for resettlement.

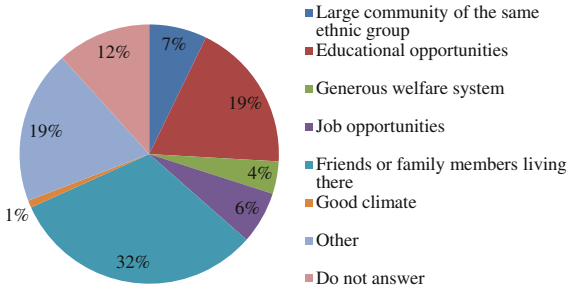

Fig. 3.10 Reason for resettlement country preference. *Source* Survey results

3.1.3.6 Differences of Registration Status Within Families

A heavily emphasised constraint to participation in resettlement that both key informants and displaced persons stated is the issue of different registration statuses within families. The research results revealed it to be a concern based upon a series of interrelated causal factors. As described by a key informant from IOM, as well as by several displaced persons within focus groups, the lack of livelihood opportunities in the shelters often leads to a coping strategy of families splitting members between the shelters for protection and other members who leave to work illegally as migrant workers in Thailand in order to support them. This has meant that some family members are not in the shelters during the registration efforts that have taken place, and the lack of registration status of these members consequently impedes the resettlement application process if the family decides to apply. As a result, many families are forced to postpone applying for resettlement, postpone departing for resettlement or even accept temporary splitting of family members between Thailand and resettlement countries as a result.

The halting pace of registration since 2005 has meant that new arrivals or those who were outside of the camp at the time of registration, even if a part of households that are otherwise fully registered, are mostly unable to gain registration status. A representative of UNHCR described the registration process in the shelters as essentially stuck and confirmed that this has led to a large quantity of cases of differing registration statuses between family members and subsequent problems with resettlement delays and family separations. Another key informant from the OPE also confirmed that the lack of registration status is a major constraint on participation in the programme, and that differing statuses within families is a key element of the problem. The informant suggested that an expansion of the U.S. Government's Priority 2 classification in Thailand might display the Government's willingness to accept all of the unregistered residents in the camps if the PAB resumes actively conducting status determinations. So far, however, although the issue seems to be well known among the organisations working on resettlement in the shelters, very little progress has been made in addressing this constraint.

3.1.4 Conclusion on Motivations and Constraints to Participation

Motivations for choosing resettlement proved to be highly individual for displaced persons. The research showed that in the end, not everyone wants to go, and that the internal algorithm that combines all of the different factors involved for each individual and leads to a decision to apply or not is difficult to standardise. However, when displaced persons talked candidly about their motivations, they tended to centre around family reunification, educational and employment opportunities, human rights and an overall hope for a better future as the primary pull factors for choosing resettlement. Conversely, the lack of freedom of movement, livelihoods and educational opportunities were key push factors from life within the shelters as were the lack of prospects for the other two durable solutions of local integration in Thailand or a safe return to Myanmar. Finally, while none of the displaced persons complained openly about the poverty they experienced within the shelters, based upon the proxies and euphemisms for impoverishment discussed, it was evident that the conditions of prolonged destitution are a major push factor for choosing resettlement.

For purposes of discussion, it was found that the constraints to participation in the resettlement programme could be subdivided into categories of *soft constraints*, which displaced persons interact with and are influenced by in decision-making, and *hard constraints*, which are policy restrictions over which they have no significant control.

As for hard constraints, the consensus among key informants interviewed was that the most significant bottleneck to the resettlement programme as a whole is the stalled PAB registration process and the large resulting population within the shelters who are simply ineligible for resettlement whether they are interested in applying or not. A representative from the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok's Refugee and Migration Affairs Office stated that a large part of the reason that U.S. resettlement operations have recently been unable to meet the annual ceilings allocated for refugee admissions from the shelters is because there are simply not enough registered displaced persons in the shelters who are eligible to apply. A key informant from the OPE stated that they are already beginning to target resettlement operations to *residual resettlement cases* as a result.

A secondary procedural obstruction within the resettlement programme that was mentioned by several key informants was the issuing of exit permits by the RTG, without which displaced persons cannot depart from Thailand. According to an informant from IOM, displaced persons from Myanmar are the only group who requires this type of exit permit from Thailand. Displaced persons from other nations are simply forced to pay a fine for *overstay* and allowed to leave. While it appears that the delays faced in issuing of permits have been reduced, they remain an additional procedural step within the resettlement process. One high-level key informant involved with the resettlement operations in Thailand stated that she felt that it was actually easier to clear the bureaucratic hurdles

necessary with the government of Myanmar for family reunification purposes than with the RTG.

While the hard constraints are well established and appear somewhat intractable until alternative policies related to status determination and exit permits are developed and implemented by the RTG, the soft constraints appear more feasible to ameliorate programmatically. A focus group within Tham Hin Shelter did a good job of summarising the three major areas of concern for those who decide not to apply as family obligations/separation, fears about integration in resettlement countries (Language, employment, culture, general fears of the unknown), and reluctance to give up on returning to Myanmar/leaving their people behind. While these are significant obstacles to participation, some of which cannot and should not be removed, others can be addressed through programming that builds capacities and addresses the fears and concerns of displaced persons.

3.2 Impacts and Implications of Resettlement

Whether the impacts and implications of the resettlement programme support the objective of developing a truly coherent, sustainable and solutions-oriented approach is a question that is worthy of deliberation, with the answer likely to be highly dependent on which of the programme's stakeholders is asked to respond. While there was general agreement among key informants interviewed that resettlement operations should continue in Thailand, no one interviewed was willing to state that they felt that resettlement as a lone durable solution can resolve the displacement situation. The following section will analyse the findings of the research on impacts and implications of resettlement for resettled displaced persons, the remaining camp population and displacement flows into the shelters, including the cross-cutting concerns of gender and socio-cultural-related impacts.

3.2.1 Origins and Objectives of the Programme

In order to monitor the resettlement programme's impact thus far, it was necessary to first determine how and why the programme was initiated. Based upon key informant interviews, the generally accepted origins of large-scale resettlement in the border shelters is that resettlement started with the U.S. offering to accept a targeted group of Persons of Concern (POCs) in Bangkok, largely consisting of former students and political dissidents who had fled Myanmar during the 1988 crackdown by the military government. After the RTG agreed to this operation, and it had been carried out successfully, the offer was subsequently broadened from the POCs in Bangkok to resettlement of all of the registered displaced persons in the border shelters. A key informant from the OPE described the actual beginning of resettlement activities within the shelters as originating in Thamhin camp simply

due to the challenging logistics of establishing resettlement operations in all nine of the remote shelter locations simultaneously. As a result, the programme was expanded to include all displaced persons on a shelter-by-shelter basis after the OPE for South-East Asia was scaled up sufficiently to process the required caseload.

Despite these origins however, it is an important distinction to make that the overall resettlement programme is not a unilateral U.S. Government operation, and therefore U.S. policy objectives have not been the only considerations in establishing the programme's characteristics. A key example of this is the concern among stakeholders from the inception that the programme should be carefully targeted so as to avoid the creation of a pull factor to the shelters as occurred during the Indochinese resettlement programme. In particular, this was a prime concern for RTG representatives given the historical context of displacement flows into Thailand being exacerbated and prolonged as a result of resettlement activities. This has also been coupled with a desire to avoid the loss of sovereign control over the situation such as occurred during the Indochinese resettlement programme to a significant degree.

A corollary to these differing policy agendas and organisational objectives for the resettlement programme is that there are varying opinions about what purpose the resettlement programme in Thailand serves and if it has been successful in that regard. For example, a representative of the OPE described its primary importance for the displacement situation in Thailand as to act as a safety valve for the displaced persons in the shelters. In her view, the significance of resettlement is that it provides an option for displaced persons when repatriation and local integration are not possible, helping to alleviate the hopelessness and frustration that can occur in protracted refugee situations.

On the other hand, a representative of UNHCR who was interviewed gave a more individualised perspective of the positive impact of resettlement saying that from UNHCR's point of view, resettlement has been effective in terms of providing a long-term durable solution to participating displaced persons. She also stated that resettlement has been decreasing the total registered population within the camps and that UNHCR's primary focus for the programme is not on resettlement's impact on the aggregate population totals but the positive impact that it has had for individual refugee families.

While key informants from the RTG stressed the fact that the Thai Government has limited operational control over the resettlement programme itself, the policy objectives that led to the RTG's support of the programme were cited as being threefold: On a humanitarian basis as a durable solution for the displaced persons within the shelters, on a diplomatic basis in order to support harmonious and cooperative relationships with resettlement countries and the international organisations involved, and on a national security basis as resettlement supports the long-term security interests of Thailand in resolving the displacement situation.

A representative from the Refugee and Migration Affairs Office at the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok presented the key policy motivation of the U.S. Government for resettlement as being that it offers an immediately available solution for reducing the number of displaced persons in the shelters. Through this means,

resettlement allows the opportunity to provide humanitarian assistance to those who are in need without coming into conflict with the RTG's own policy objectives for the situation, such as their reluctance to allow the establishment of significant forms of local integration and their concern with the avoidance of creating a pull factor for additional flows of displaced persons.

While it is perhaps a bit of an *ex post facto* programme objective for some of the key organisations involved to focus on resettlement as a safety valve or an individual solution rather than its impact on depopulating the shelters, it would also be narrow-minded to suggest that resettlement has been completely ineffective based upon this impact alone. The results in this regard so far however, while unfair to interpret as discrediting the programme as a whole, also do not justify changing of the expectations for resettlement to have a measurable impact on reducing the scale of the displaced population within Thailand.

3.2.2 Impacts on Programme Participants

3.2.2.1 Preparation for Life in Resettlement Countries

While there is a short cultural orientation programme for displaced persons conducted by OPE before departure to the U.S., this is carried out after they have already been accepted for resettlement, is very limited in duration and scope, and does not appear to have much impact either on decisions to depart or on preparedness in general for that matter. It was the view of a UNHCR representative interviewed that preparation for resettlement predominantly depends on the individual and their attitude towards cultural adjustment and key informants in general were sceptical of how much can really be accomplished during the brief cultural orientation training.

Many of those waiting for resettlement had substantial concerns about their readiness for life after moving to a third country, with inability to communicate the most common survey response at 32 % (Fig. 3.11). A key informant from OPE stated that she felt that the key variable in determining preparation for resettlement before departure for displaced persons was whether they had lived in an urban or rural environment after seeking asylum rather than a resettlement programme outcome. She described the differences in experience between displaced persons in the border shelters in Thailand versus those in urban areas of Malaysia as being like night and day. While displaced persons who have been forced to adjust to life in a large city like Kuala Lumpur are generally decently prepared for resettlement in an American city, those staying in the isolated rural areas where the shelters are located in Thailand generally have a much harder integration process ahead. The need to speak English, use modern housing facilities, find employment, etc., are a practical form of orientation that many displaced persons in Malaysia are forced out of necessity to undergo and which displaced persons living in the border shelters have no chance to experience.

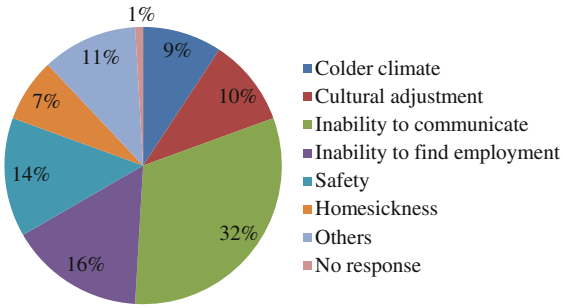

Fig. 3.11 Major concern about life after resettlement. *Source* Survey results

Within the survey results, approximately 37 % of respondents were confident about their ability to communicate in their resettlement country (Fig. 3.12). According to an IOM representative, it was discussed with the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration at the U.S. State Department whether they were interested in funding long-term language training as was conducted for the Indochinese refugees who were sent to the Philippines or other locations for several months before arrival in the U.S. in the past. A decision was made not to repeat this programming again however. According to a representative of OPE, the programmes that existed during the Indochinese refugee situation were found to be largely ineffective at teaching language skills, and as a result, were not a cost-effective use of resources by the U.S. State Department. Instead, on a much smaller scale, the OPE for South-East Asia has received funding for a pilot programme of expanded ESL training within the shelters themselves. It should also be noted that several other countries participating in the resettlement programme have longer term language training courses that they provide in-country after arrival.

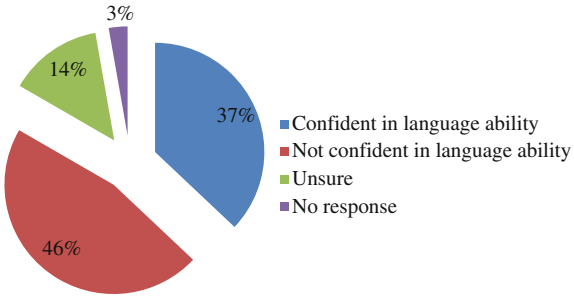

Fig. 3.12 Confidence in language ability for resettlement country. *Source* Survey results

Interrelated with the concern for preparation in language skills is that of readiness for employment in resettlement countries. Particularly for the U.S. resettlement programme, the emphasis on rapid refugee integration through immediate

immersion in the labour market rather than support through welfare assistance means that displaced persons must be prepared to work almost immediately upon arrival.

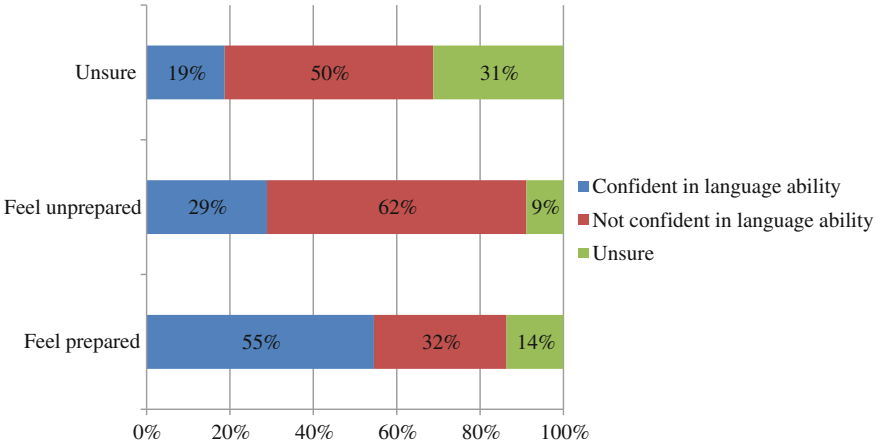

Fig. 3.13 Feel adequately prepared vocationally for resettlement by confidence in language ability. *Source* Survey results

Currently, no vocational training is offered in the shelters that is specifically targeted for livelihood activities within resettlement countries, and therefore employment readiness should not be used as indicator for evaluating the resettlement programme's impact. However, as an assessment of the present level of employability among those who have applied for resettlement for development of future interventions, it was found that approximately 41 % of survey respondents felt adequately prepared for employment in their resettlement country. This result displayed a high level of correlation with the responses of displaced persons who also felt confident in their ability to communicate in the language of their resettlement country (Fig. 3.13). While vocational training targeted for resettlement goes beyond the reasonable scope of what the resettlement programme can accomplish, confidence in ability to communicate is a concern upon which the resettlement programme could have a more significant impact if language training was expanded.

Most respondents, both in surveys and focus groups, were realistic about the type of manual labour employment positions that would be available to them upon arrival in resettlement countries. Based upon the findings of multiple studies conducted within the U.S., this willingness of displaced persons from Myanmar to do any job offered upon arrival within the U.S. without complaint has made them very popular with employers and has led to relatively high rates of employment for new arrivals in spite of low levels of English-speaking ability (Barron et al. 2007; Dunford 2008).

3.2.2.2 Resettlement Location and Displaced Communities

The level of impact of resettlement on the socio-cultural foundations of displaced communities is heavily affected by the process of determining displaced person's final destination cities for resettlement. There is a secondary assessment process within the U.S. resettlement programme, occurring after approval for resettlement, which determines the actual community in which the displaced person will be resettled. According to a key informant from the OPE for South-East Asia, a weekly meeting of R&P agencies within the U.S. is held during which approved resettlement cases from OPEs around the world are distributed based on a formula that takes into account organisational capacities and the needs of special cases. The national organisations then determine which local affiliates or partnering organisations the refugees should be sent to based upon their individual needs and the available services in each community.

However, there are differences in organisational capacities for carrying out these determinations effectively. Particularly when the national organisation is only connected to the local R&P organisation through a cooperative partnership rather than as a local affiliate, the decisions made about location are sometimes more about filling quotas rather than genuinely as a best interest determination for the displaced person.

Partly as a result of the method by which the placement process takes place, secondary migration for the purpose of joining friends and family members is a very common occurrence within U.S. resettlement. In general, displaced persons are encouraged to stay in their initial placements for at least 6 months in order to receive assistance from their sponsoring R&P organisations. However, given that ethnic identity beyond the level of nationality is not documented and therefore not considered within the resettlement application process, as well as the high probability of disruption to communal continuity for village groups that may have lived together since before they fled Myanmar, the U.S. resettlement programme does indirectly encourage secondary migration flows. This leaves some resettled displaced persons in the unfortunate position of having to choose between friends and family and official resettlement support services upon arrival in the U.S.

On the other hand, a key informant from the OPE with several decades of experience in refugee integration within the U.S. stated that in some cases, being resettled within a large community of their own ethnicity may actually slow down the integration process. From her experience, being forced to immediately interact with the local community typically has the impact of speeding up the integration process. With this in mind, the informant's opinion was that in general, the best choice for facilitating integration is to provide refugees with the high levels of local engagement that are most readily available in the resettlement context of smaller cities within the U.S.

3.2.2.3 Gender Roles

A key informant interviewed from the OPE stated that the need for displaced persons to find work as quickly as possible after arrival in the U.S. appears to often mean that women find work more quickly than men in various forms of domestic employment. The implication of this phenomenon is that the women are out working while the men are at home cooking, cleaning and taking care of the children. While this has been a difficult cultural adjustment for many resettled refugee groups, it has been noted by organisations working with displaced persons from Myanmar that they have not had too much trouble coping with these changes in gender roles. This is perhaps partially a result of a general acceptance of women working outside the home within their native communities and a pragmatic view about the need to adapt to changing conditions after spending so long in the unstable environment of the shelters.

3.2.3 Impacts on Remaining Shelter Residents

3.2.3.1 Population Totals

The impact of resettlement operations on the aggregate shelter population totals has thus far not been particularly impressive. The current figures seem to indicate that the large quantity of departures are diminishing the registered population significantly but this has nearly been made up for by additional flows of unregistered asylum seekers into the shelters since the last registration was conducted, resulting in only a small net reduction of residents.

In assessing the impact on population totals, it should be noted that the registered shelter population figures are not simply a quantitative accounting of who is resident in the camps but a highly politicised figure that reflects a number of different and competing policy and programme agendas. While the RTG has from the beginning been concerned with containment of the scale of the displacement situation and still regularly makes clear that they would like to see a repatriation of displaced persons take place in the near future, NGOs are facing concerns about restrictions on donor funding for services provided to unregistered residents in the shelters and UNHCR is caught in the position of trying to encourage observation of the principles of international agreements related to the status of refugees in a context where those agreements have not been signed and policy towards displaced persons is generally formulated in an ad hoc and often unpredictable manner. This had led to the current situation of registration in the camps which is essentially a stalemate based upon the ineffectuality of the PAB screening process and no clear alternative means for additional status determinations to be made.

However, the limited quantitative impact of resettlement does not appear to be due to the ineffectiveness of resettlement operations within the shelters which had facilitated the departure of 64,513 displaced persons as of the end of 2010 (TBBC

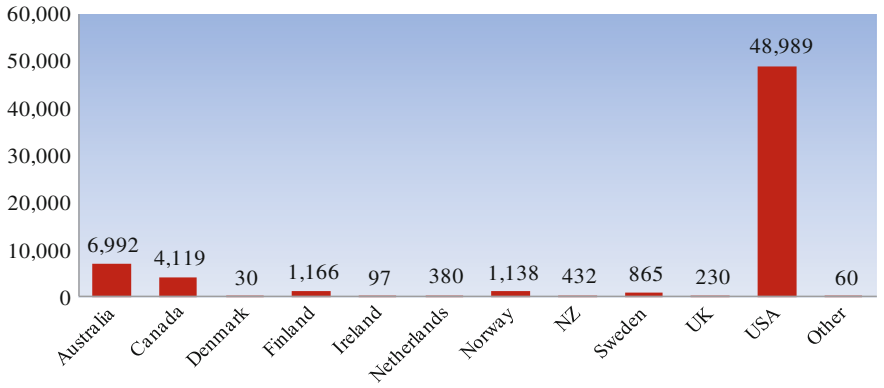

Fig. 3.14 Departures of Myanmar displaced persons from Thailand by receiving country (2006–2010). *Source* International Organisation for Migration (2011)

2011: 8). A representative of the Refugee and Migration Affairs Office at the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok gave the assessment that the resettlement programme has assisted in reducing the total number of displaced persons in the shelters and that if it continues to be carried out efficiently along with other measures, the number of displaced persons might be reduced to the point where the shelters could eventually be closed down as occurred with past resettlement programmes in Thailand.

While this appears to be a somewhat optimistic view of the present state of resettlement operations in Thailand, it does reveal that the quantitative impact of the programme is a primary objective of U.S. resettlement operations (Fig. 3.14). The bottom-line organisational metric for the OPE is the number of displaced persons departed for resettlement. This target is established contractually with the U.S. State Department, and the organisation has been successful in its efforts to date. Over 10,000 departures from the border shelters to the U.S. have taken place every year since 2007 (TBBC 2010a, 2011). According to a key informant from the OPE, the targeted figure for 2011 is for an additional 9,500–10,000 departures from the shelters in Thailand.

Since it is clear that the departures are continuing to take place, a qualitative assessment was conducted as a fresh approach for addressing the question of the impact of resettlement on the camp populations. Although the tally itself is presumed to be fairly accurate, it was considered that the UNHCR's figures stem from a methodology that is at the mercy of diplomatic negotiations between UNHCR and the RTG, and further only includes displaced persons who fall under the definitions of both the RTG and UNHCR's policy directives and mandates. As Loescher and Milner have stated, by limiting recognition of new arrivals of refugees into the camps, host governments have a mechanism for reducing the scale of their *burden* and also the number of refugees covered by UNHCR's mandate for protection (Loescher/Milner 2007).

Results from discussions with focus group members about their perceptions of a decline in the shelter population were widely mixed. All of the focus groups conducted in Tham Hin Shelter, where the resettlement programme has been active the longest, revealed the opinion that the shelter populations had not decreased significantly. One focus group member gave the estimate that the camp population figure was about 9,000 before resettlement began and that it stands at around 8,000 currently. On the other hand, many of the focus group participants in Mae La Shelter felt that the population had been reduced but were divided about the level of attribution of this impact to the resettlement programme. Several felt that the decrease in the population was equally or even more a result of those who had chosen to return to Myanmar because they could not get registration status or food rations even after years of waiting. Others felt that residents leaving to go work outside the shelters in Thailand were a more significant cause of the population decrease. Another group reached the consensus that the camp had gotten smaller as a result of resettlement but that it was not a large decrease because there were a lot of new arrivals to offset the departures. Still others did not see any decrease whatsoever and a final group suggested that the camp population was in fact increasing gradually but continuously regardless of resettlement.

These results appear to indicate that the perceived impact of resettlement on each shelter population is highly contextually specific and open to individual interpretation. Factors within each shelter such as duration of resettlement operations, ratio of registered residents, accessibility of livelihood and educational opportunities, proximity to conflict areas within Myanmar and other causes of flows of displaced persons in and out of the shelters all interact with resettlement activities in determining population changes. However, speaking more generally about the situation, most key informants interviewed were of the opinion that had the resettlement option not been opened up within the shelters, a large number of the total who have departed might be appended on to the current population levels. This suggests that while the current impact of resettlement on the population totals may not be the ideal scenario, it is likely that the situation within the shelters might be even more congested had the operations not taken place.

3.2.3.2 Future Availability of Resettlement

The plan going forward for the U.S. resettlement programme appears to be more of the same as long as there are still eligible displaced persons in the shelters to apply. A key informant at the OPE for South-East Asia stated that their operational plan for the upcoming year is to establish a more permanent OPE presence in field offices located near the camps in order to handle resettlement of *residual cases* rather than accepting applications on a shelter-by-shelter basis as was done in the past. DHS adjudication will still be conducted in the form of circuit rides when enough cases have been accumulated for review.

The most significant take away from this statement of future strategy for resettlement operations in Thailand is that there are no current plans to discontinue

the programme even after the full circuit of shelters has been completed. This was confirmed by a key informant from the U.S. Embassy's Refugee and Migration Affairs Office who stated that not only are resettlement activities expected to continue but that projected ceilings of refugee admissions from the shelters will actually be slightly higher over the next several years. Assuming that eligible displaced persons are still available to apply, it appears that resettlement will continue to be offered for the foreseeable future.

3.2.3.3 Advocacy

An impact that appears to be taking place within the U.S., as indicated by the swift change in policy to address the obstruction to resettlement operations created by the *Material Support Bar* is that resettlement has begun to play a significant role in creating strong advocates for U.S. foreign policy towards the displacement situation in Thailand. As one key informant stated, simply bringing displaced persons into the U.S. and having them interact with the local community sensitises the U.S. public to the conditions that they have faced on their journey to resettlement and helps to support policy change towards the displacement situation and their country of origin.

3.2.3.4 Gender Related

A positive gender-related impact within the shelters has been that victims of gender-based violence (GBV) are expedited for resettlement as protection cases according to information provided by a key informant at the OPE for South-East Asia. Given the difficulties faced in defining the scale and nature of GBV within the shelters and the ongoing struggle to provide effective means for prosecuting offenders and services to survivors, this must be considered a positive development.

The traditional response to GBV within Myanmar is generally enacted between families rather than publicly in order to avoid the social stigma surrounding the issue. The shame for victims and their families associated with incidents of rape is so strong that a Karenni women's organisation has documented several occurrences of adolescent displaced persons choosing to commit suicide rather than reveal that they had been raped by Thai authorities (Ward 2002). While resettlement certainly does not address the core of this issue, it does at least provide an alternative option for survivors of GBV who do not wish to remain within the shelter environment.

Some indications were found that an increase in divorces is a negative gender-related impact of resettlement that may be worthy of further investigation. Several focus group members mentioned that a higher incidence of divorce and of men taking second wives has begun to occur due to family separations caused by resettlement and that this was not a significant social problem within Karen culture previously. However, it was not possible to confirm these anecdotal accounts statistically within

the research and a key informant from UNHCR stated that they had not identified any negative gender-related impacts of resettlement within the shelters.

3.2.3.5 Shelter Services and Administration

A major cause of concern for NGOs from the beginning of resettlement operations has been the issue of *brain drain* within the shelters. While the significant quantitative loss of staff that took place particularly during the early phase of resettlement operations is not in question, the actual impacts of the staffing turnover have been more indefinite. In response to the thorough research that has already taken place addressing the NGO concerns on this issue, this research sought to address the question primarily from the consumer side in order to give a broader perspective of the tangible impacts of resettlement on services and administration within the shelters.

Both focus groups and survey respondents were asked about their perceptions of the changes in services and administration that have taken place since resettlement began. Approximately 62 % of survey respondents stated that they felt that resettlement had an overall positive impact on the shelters and that the most frequently chosen reason was actually improved shelter services at approximately 29 % of the total (Fig. 3.15). Of the approximately 6 % of respondents who stated that they felt resettlement had an overall negative effect on the shelters, the largest proportion stated that this was because of a loss of solidarity and less than 1 % of the total stated that the negative impact was a result of a reduction in the quality of shelter services or of a less effective camp administration.

The focus groups conducted on this issue were useful in unpacking these results but also revealed that there was little real uniformity in perceptions of the impact of resettlement on shelter services and administration. Within Tham Hin focus groups, none of the participants had noted a deterioration of service quality within the shelters and one respondent actually felt that educational services had improved. Focus groups conducted in Mae La Shelter were more varied in response. The majority of participants stated that they had not noticed any change in services however, many felt that there had been a decline in quality of health

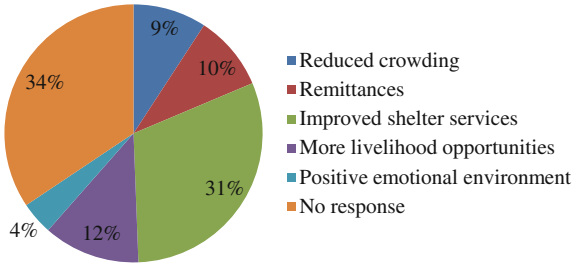

Fig. 3.15 Most positive impact of resettlement on the shelters. *Source* Survey results

services and several others stated that educational services were actually improving to varying degrees.

In relation to health service quality, there were several reports of paracetamol tablets being the only treatment offered for illnesses because of a lack of training. As for the perceived improvements in educational services, smaller class sizes were the only tangible impact mentioned. Additionally, one focus group participant stated that there were many new training opportunities for NGO positions available to him as a result of openings created by resettlement.

On the whole, the results seem to indicate that at this point, most NGOs have managed to adjust their programmes to compensate for the loss of educated and experienced staff members to resettlement despite some gaps in service quality and consistency. Likewise, new leaders appear to have emerged to fill vacancies on shelter administrative committees. These results were generally consistent with the views of the key informant from UNHCR who stated that the impact of brain drain in the shelters does not appear to have been catastrophic and that services and administration continue to function with new leadership and service staff filling in for losses.

3.2.3.6 Remittances

The impact of remittances sent from resettled displaced persons to friends and family members remaining in the shelters proved a difficult question to answer with any real level of certainty for the simple reason that it is a topic that most displaced persons do not like to discuss openly. A recent livelihood study conducted in the shelters found that remittances were the third most frequently stated form of income, received by a quarter of households within the shelters (Cardno Agrisystems 2009: 34). However, while these findings reveal that remittances have undeniably begun to take place, the impact on quality of life within the shelters is more difficult to quantify. Key informants interviewed from UNHCR and TBBC both stated that they were aware of remittances occurring but were unwilling to try to estimate their scale or impact.

The most frequent responses received during focus group sessions were that participants were either receiving remittances irregularly for specific purposes, such as debts, medical expenses or birthdays or were receiving none at all. None of the focus group members in any of the shelters were willing to openly state that they were receiving regular monthly remittances from overseas.

As to the impact of remittances on life within the shelters, responses tended to be heavily dependent on whether the focus group member stated that they were receiving remittances themselves or not. Those who said they were receiving irregular remittances frequently stated that they did not see a significant impact. However, several group members who participated in a discussion in Mae La Shelter who were not receiving remittances stated the opinion that conditions in the shelter had improved as a result of remittances but only for those directly receiving the funds. The group members went on to state that they felt remittances

had *begun to create class differences within the shelter population.* This observation was shared by another focus group within Mae La Shelter who were not receiving remittances but agreed that some families in the shelter had a better life due to the additional money they had received from remittances.

While it is difficult to draw solid conclusions from these results without the support of more candidly provided data, it does appear that remittances are becoming an increasingly important source of income within the shelters as more displaced persons are resettled and integration within resettlement countries continues to progress.

3.2.4 Impact on Displacement Flows

The impact of resettlement operations on the flows of displaced persons into the shelters is another highly politicised concern which has played a key role in shaping how resettlement has been implemented within the shelters. Even the initial RTG approval for resettlement to take place within the shelters was not a foregone conclusion and was held up for a period due to a reluctance to issue exit permits without which the displaced persons would not have been allowed to leave Thailand. This was primarily due to concerns on the part of the RTG over creation of a pull factor for flows of *resettlement seekers* into the shelters as occurred during the Indochinese refugee situation (Adelman 2008). While the reality of these concerns is difficult to quantify definitively within the current programme, research with key informants, focus groups and survey respondents was conducted in order to contribute towards a tentative assessment of the issue.

While all of the key informants interviewed during the research were in agreement about the need for a carefully targeted resettlement programme in order to avoid creation of a pull factor, the majority were also of the opinion that resettlement has not been a significant pull factor for new flows into the shelters so far and were instead of the belief that the new displacement flows were the result of the ongoing conflict and human rights abuses occurring within Myanmar. A key informant from OPE stated that she was unaware of any major concerns with resettlement seekers within the programme currently and stated that the continuing flows of displaced persons into the shelter are *plain and simply the result of deteriorating human rights conditions within Myanmar*. This view was supported by a UNHCR representative interviewed who stated that UNHCR has seen no evidence that resettlement is pulling large amounts of displaced persons into the shelters.

However, a different view on the issue was offered by a key informant from TBBC who stated that, based upon their database of displaced persons in the shelters, there has recently been a broader mix of ethnicities within the new arrivals to the shelters, including an increasing number from newer areas of displacement. The informant felt that this should be investigated further as it might be representative of an increased resettlement pull factor within the shelters.

It was stated by an RTG official who wished to remain anonymous that some parties within the Thai Government has also begun to reconsider its views on the motivation of asylum seekers based upon the mounting numbers of displaced persons from Myanmar arriving in the shelters. It is becoming a more widely accepted perspective within the RTG that the increases incross-border flows in recent years are not always founded on the basis of persecution or escaping conflict but instead are the result of a preference for life in the shelters because of the availability of nearby livelihood opportunities as well as the chance to apply for third country resettlement.

In order to assess this question during field research in the shelters, focus group respondents were asked when they first became aware of the resettlement programme and from what source. Within Tham Hin Shelter, respondents in all four of the focus groups stated that they had initially learned about the resettlement programme from friends and family after arrival in the shelter. Focus groups within Mae La and Ban Mai Nai Soi Shelters were more mixed in responses as to when they had first learned about resettlement with about one out of five participants stating that they had learned about the programme before coming to the shelters. Sources for information about resettlement were also significantly more diverse within Mae La and Ban Mai Nai Soi Shelters, with respondents stating that they had heard about resettlement from such sources as a BBC radio programme, a telephone call from a family member resettled in Australia, a friend while in Chiang Mai and directly from a UNHCR representative. However, not a single respondent stated that they had learned of the resettlement programme while still living within Myanmar.

While these results should not be taken entirely at face value, and there is a need for further research on this important question, they do appear to indicate that flight from Myanmar is generally occurring prior to knowledge of the possibility of resettlement. In addition, as stated earlier, when asked directly during surveys what their primary reason for remaining in the shelters was, security and family related concerns were overwhelmingly the reasons given.

3.2.4.1 Fraud Within the Resettlement Programme

The incidence of fraud within the resettlement application process is another proxy that can be analysed to assess the degree to which resettlement has begun to create a pull factor to the shelters. There have been increased concerns with fraud in resettlement applications since 2009, when resettlement operations in Mae La Shelter were temporarily suspended as a result of reported increases in the level of improprieties taking place.

A senior officer from the Ministry of Interior stated that they have received reports about fraud occurring both within family reunification cases as well as through the selling of household registration documents to parties interested in resettlement through corruption of RTG authorities. Another RTG official stated that there have recently been orders to establish more restrictive procedures within the PAB status determination process as a result of the highly publicised fraud cases.

These types of events have reinforced awareness of the need for appropriate safeguards to be put into place within the application process in order to avoid an increase in the prevalence of fraud within the programme. Despite the increased attention, however, a key informant from UNHCR stated that they have always maintained a zero tolerance policy on fraud related to the resettlement programme. According to their calculations, only 0.05 % of those who have applied have been found to be fraudulent cases. A similarly small rate was given by a key informant from OPE who offered the estimate of 2–3 % fraudulent applications. She qualified this figure by stating that most of the cases are prevented through informational campaigns and effective safeguard mechanisms within the application process.

As a proxy measurement for resettlement seekers within the shelters, the level of fraud found would seem to indicate that applicants to the programme have so far been almost entirely legitimate asylum seekers. However, there is clearly a need for continued vigilance in order to maintain the integrity of the resettlement solution in Thailand.

3.2.5 Conclusion on Impacts and Implications of Resettlement

Assessing the situation realistically, it remains highly unlikely that resettlement can resolve the displaced person situation in the border shelters as a lone durable solution and certainly not if the status quo registration policies and procedures of the RTG are maintained. All stakeholders involved with trying to address the situation are currently stuck with the impractical approach of attempting to resolve human rights abuses within Myanmar without effective means for engaging with the situation in-country. This has resulted in having to address displacement reactively for the most part, and without the assistance of any realised form of local integration beyond small NGO pilot programmes.

However, it does appear that resettlement has had a number of positive impacts that help to justify continuation of the programme. The opportunity for thousands of displaced families to start a new life, removed from their cause of flight as well as the heavily restricted shelter environment, is unquestionably a positive result of the programme. Likewise, the protection role played by resettlement in the shelters, allowing survivors of gender-based violence, those in need of specialised medical care, and other vulnerable displaced persons to be taken out of the shelters is a critically important triaging function of resettlement. Additionally, resettlement has created a safety valve on the situation with the idea that there is hope for an alternative to the torpor and despondency of life within the shelters, helping to prevent some of the social problems that have resulted from long-term encampment. Finally, resettlement has created connections internationally that help to support those remaining in the shelters both directly through remittances and through awareness raising, ensuring that conditions within Myanmar as well as within the shelters themselves cannot be ignored by the international community.

There were some concerns found but no conclusive evidence as of yet about whether resettlement itself has become a significant pull factor to the shelters. Given the historical precedent of this occurring on a very broad scale during the Indochinese resettlement programme, it is understandably a prime concern with the current programme, particularly for the RTG. However, to brand an asylum seeker as a *resettlement seeker* is a very serious assertion which should require the burden of evidence. Thus far, credible evidence that the new displacement flows into the shelters do not consist of legitimate asylum seekers does not appear to exist. Meanwhile, very tangible evidence of the deteriorating human rights and security conditions that would induce additional displacement flows from Myanmar does exist. The necessity of further evidence before reaching a conclusion on this issue does not, however, discount the need for continued vigilance against fraud in order to maintain the integrity of the resettlement solution in Thailand.

While ultimately, the major stakeholders involved will likely want to see resettlement make quantitative progress in reducing the size of the shelter populations, or to make progress in leveraging the RTG into allowing a more significant degree of local integration within Thailand, the research results seem to indicate that the net impact of resettlement so far has mostly been to prevent the situation within the shelters from getting worse. This is not insignificant, however, as without the benefit of resettlement operations within the shelters, it is quite possible that the population totals could be appreciably higher than they are today, and that the associated increase in donor funding necessary to prevent a deterioration of living conditions would be considerable.

While the very protracted nature of the situation certainly frustrates the stakeholders involved, the majority of whom would like to see more rapid progress towards long-term durable solutions, resettlement does appear capable of playing at least an important palliative role within the situation if not a wholly curative one.

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Chapter 4
Resettlement Country Results and Analysis

Benjamin Harkins, Nawita Direkwut and Aungkana Kamonpetch

Abstract The actual experience of resettlement for displaced persons is documented with case studies from the U.S., the primary destination country for the majority of the displaced persons from Myanmar who wish to resettle. Experiences in two cities are examined, St. Paul and San Francisco, and data collected from both resettled refugees and those who provide assistance to them are analysed. The key role played by NGOs and other private sector agencies is highlighted, together with the importance of an already established refugee community from Myanmar to support the integration process. Practical concerns for new arrivals and the coping mechanisms they apply are explored, drawing out lessons learned for improving the provision of support programmes.

Keywords Refugees · Resettlement · Durable solutions · Refugee integration · Thailand · Myanmar · Karen · St. Paul · San Francisco

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4.1 Case Study: St. Paul, Minnesota, USA

St. Paul, Minnesota is currently home to the largest Karen refugee population in the United States (Binkley/Binkley 2010). While estimates vary due to a lack of accurate data about secondary migration of refugees within the U.S., the Karen leadership in St. Paul and the non-profit organisations providing social services to the community place the current population total at between 4,000 and 5,000 Karen. The majority of these are congregated in just a few residential neighbourhoods of the St. Paul metropolitan area including the Arlington Avenue and Westminster areas as well as in nearby Roseville.

The Karen first began arriving in significant numbers in St. Paul through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Programme in 2003 (Bright 2008). Following successive waves of resettlement from Thailand, a large and well-organised Karen community has become firmly established in the Twin Cities. Whereas the initial arrivals consisted mainly of a small number of former students and other political activists who fled Myanmar following the government crackdown on the pro-democracy movement, after the scope of the resettlement programme was broadened in 2005, Karen from all nine of the refugee camps in Thailand began arriving steadily in the St. Paul area (Fig. 4.1).

Although the resettlement effort from the camps on the Thai–Myanmar border is the world's largest resettlement programme (Sciortino/Punpuing 2009), there has been limited research conducted on how successful the programme has been from the perspective of refugee integration in receiving countries. This is a particularly important concern for Karen refugees, as even among other groups of resettled refugees in the U.S., there is an awareness that the Karen are in need of special assistance with integration due to their protracted stay in the refugee camps in Thailand (Gilbert et al. 2010). In some cases, the Karen have lived in the refugee camps for over 20 years, constituting a whole generation born and raised in asylum.

In spite of the difficulty of integrating refugees from protracted situations, there are certain communities in the United States that are particularly well suited to meet this challenge. The Twin Cities area possesses a long and successful history

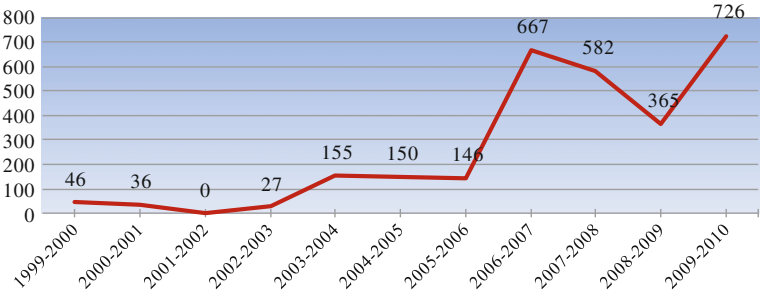

Fig. 4.1 Refugee arrivals in Minnesota from country of origin Myanmar through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Programme. *Source* Minnesota Department of Human Services (2010)

of supporting resettlement of refugees and is home to some of the largest groups of refugees in the United States or the world, including significant Hmong, Somali, Vietnamese and former USSR refugee communities. In total, more than 90,000 refugees have been resettled in Minnesota since 1979 (AANews 2010).

While the figures are less well-defined, it is also known that thousands more continue to arrive in the area through secondary migration from other resettlement locations. According to a report prepared for the Office of Refugee Resettlement, the amount of secondary migration of refugees to Minnesota is the highest in the United States (Gilbert et al. 2010). In 2007, the most recent year for which official statistics are available, Minnesota had a net in-migration of 1,373 refugees (Office of Refugee Resettlement 2008). As a result, the Minnesota Department of Human Services now estimates that 20 % of its refugee services caseload is due to secondary migration.

Pulled by a multiplicity of needs and attractions including a well-established Karen community, a generous public welfare system, the availability of unskilled employment opportunities, an accommodating and supportive educational system, access to affordable housing, a robust support network of religious and community-based organisations (CBOs) and a diverse and tolerant local community already heavily experienced with resettlement of refugees, the Karen community in St. Paul seems likely to expand considerably in the future. In this regard, the integration experience of the Karen in St. Paul provides an important case study for generating lessons learned about providing services to refugee populations from extensively protracted refugee situations. Such groups are a significant emerging concern for refugee service providers as it is estimated that nearly two-thirds of the world's refugees are now living in situations of protracted displacement (Loescher/Milner 2011).

The primary objectives of this segment of the project were to conduct an ethnographic research study of the Karen community in St. Paul in order to assess the integration process locally and determine what the impacts and implications of resettlement have been internationally on the refugee situation within Thailand. In addition, the research sought to determine the critical motivations and constraints for refugee participation in the resettlement programme in order to assist with evaluating the causality of these impacts. These objectives were addressed through utilisation of a mixture of qualitative research methods that relied heavily on the principles and techniques of participatory research with the St. Paul Karen community. The results have been analysed to form a case study of the backend stage of the resettlement programme for refugees residing in the nine shelters along the Thai–Myanmar border that will support a greater understanding of both its current function and how it can be strengthened to play a more beneficial role within the larger framework of durable solutions for the situation.

4.1.1 Case Study Research Methods

The field research was conducted in the St. Paul Metropolitan Area during the month of August 2010, primarily utilising participatory research techniques. The research site of St. Paul was chosen due to its significance as the largest resettled community of Karen Refugees in the U.S. and its reputation as a major destination for secondary migration of refugees. The following principles were used to guide the research:

- *Respect.* Listening, learning from and respecting local intellectual capabilities;
- *Inclusiveness*. Enhanced sensitivity to inclusion of the views of marginalised and vulnerable groups within the study target population and
- *Flexibility*. Allowing the community itself to largely dictate the course of the research through applying the sampling technique of *snowballing*.

The research subjects included leadership representatives of the non-profit community, the Karen CBO community, the elders of the Karen community, representatives of the Karen National Union, the Karen and American religious communities, government officials overseeing refugee services, American volunteers providing assistance to refugees and randomly selected refugee households. The subjects were asked both coded and open-ended questions to assess their opinions about the Karen community in St. Paul and the refugee situation in Thailand. A non-positivist approach to data collection was applied to a total of 10 in-depth key informant interviews, 15 semi-structured interviews with Karen refugee households, two focus group sessions (a group of six Karen community leaders to collect the Karen perspective on resettlement and a group of five engaged local community members to ascertain community support for Karen integration), participation in community activities at two Karen church services, a Karen baby's first birthday party and an extensive review of secondary data sources. The data were analysed using the observer impression interpretive technique and the research results from all sources were methodically triangulated to reach the study's conclusions.

The discussions with 15 refugee households were designed to be opportunistic and driven by the individual stories and histories of the families. In order to provide cross-sectional data on Karen refugees in St. Paul, a mixture of new arrivals from Thailand, those who had lived in St. Paul for several years and those who had arrived via secondary migration from other regions of the United States, were interviewed. Families representing each of these three groups were chosen randomly for interview based upon query of a local service provider's database. The researcher was accompanied by an interpreter from the local Karen community who administered the questions in the Karen language.

The research was conducted in accordance with the Chulalongkorn University Ethical Guidelines for Research on Vulnerable Groups. Research subjects were informed of the researcher's affiliations as well as the objectives of the research project and were asked to give consent for their participation.

4.1.2 Motivations and Constraints for Participation in the Resettlement Programme

4.1.2.1 Motivations for Participation

The research results indicate that there are a number of key motivating factors that influence Karen refugees to apply for resettlement. These were frequently a combination of push factors away from life in the camps and pull factors towards life in the U.S.

A frequent response for the rationale of choosing resettlement was a conviction that it would never be safe to return to Myanmar or at least not in the foreseeable future. This becomes a push factor when coupled with the feeling among the refugees that they would not be allowed to stay in Thailand indefinitely and their frustrations with the restrictions on their ability to attain self-sufficiency in the camps. As one man put it, *We have no rights in Myanmar and our village has been destroyed by the military. We have no right to work in Thailand and don't want to live our whole lives without being able to take care of ourselves.*

The inability to freely engage in livelihood activities, limitations on educational opportunities and a general lack of human rights were the major push factors within the camps described in motivating the choice to resettle. One man summarised the problems with life in Umpiem Mai camp as *No security and poor quality education for children*, and that these reasons were enough motivation to leave. Another man describing his time in the camps during a focus group simply stated: *Life in the camps is like being in jail*.

The pull factors motivating the choice to resettle in the USA were noticeably focused on three interrelated desires: better educational opportunities for children, better job opportunities and an overall better future for their families. Additionally, family reunification was a key driver in the decisions for many to apply. The chance for regularised citizenship status, a greater amount of human rights, positive recommendations from friends and relatives in the U.S. and an overall better future for their families were also repeatedly stated as reasons for choosing resettlement.

4.1.2.2 Constraints to Participation

The most frequently stated constraint for not applying/reluctance to apply for resettlement among those who were eligible was a fear of a lack of sufficient English language skills. It was clear that these fears can carry over for many years after arrival in the U.S. as many of the middle-aged and older Karen in households interviewed were still uncomfortable with speaking English even just for basic pleasantries. As a result of these enduring fears, there was definitely a feeling in many of the households that the older Karen did not go out much if not working.

Additional constraining factors mentioned included concerns about their ability to find work in the U.S., low educational levels, the high cost of living, negative reports from friends and family in the U.S. about the difficulty of life there, depictions of life in the U.S. as dangerous and difficult from various media channels and a reluctance to leave the Karen community behind. A key informant from the Karen Organisation of Minnesota agreed that concerns about the separation from their people are critical for many: *Leaving the community is like breaking a promise.*

No recurring resettlement process or policy-related constraints were identified during the research for those who were already registered as refugees and eligible to apply for resettlement. The delays in the refugee registration process appear to be far more of a policy obstacle to the efficiency of the resettlement programme's operations than the duration of the resettlement application process itself. Particularly, families with a split household registration status within the camps, making some family members eligible to apply while others are not, was mentioned as providing an extraordinarily difficult dilemma for many.

While some of the constraints identified go well beyond the scope of the resettlement programme and may be impossible to address in the short term, an increase in the amount of training in English language skills for adults as well as young people was repeatedly mentioned as an important intervention area for expansion of NGO programming in the camps. As one key informant stated, *Preparation for life in the U.S. is insufficient because the young people are the only ones being trained in English.*

4.1.3 Post-Resettlement Impacts for Refugees in the USA

4.1.3.1 Impact on Refugee Integration

According to research conducted by the Brookings Institute, *For newly arriving refugees who are not being reunited with family members, local non-profit organisations and a host of individuals on the ground are the most important integrating features of life in the United States* (Singer/Wilson 2006: 19).

The impact of having both a community and community-based organisations made up of those who have already been through the resettlement process themselves and who are deeply vested in the well-being of the Karen refugees is striking and seems to account for much of the pull factor that the area has for secondary migrants. One key informant from the Karen Community of Minnesota stated that the type of mutual aid available in St. Paul is the reason that *50 families per month are coming to St. Paul through secondary migration.*

Although most Karen refugees arriving in St. Paul have chosen to pursue resettlement partly as an escape from the so-called *dependency syndrome* whereby refugees become trapped in the role of passive recipients of aid, it is important to acknowledge that at least initially, many find themselves becoming even more

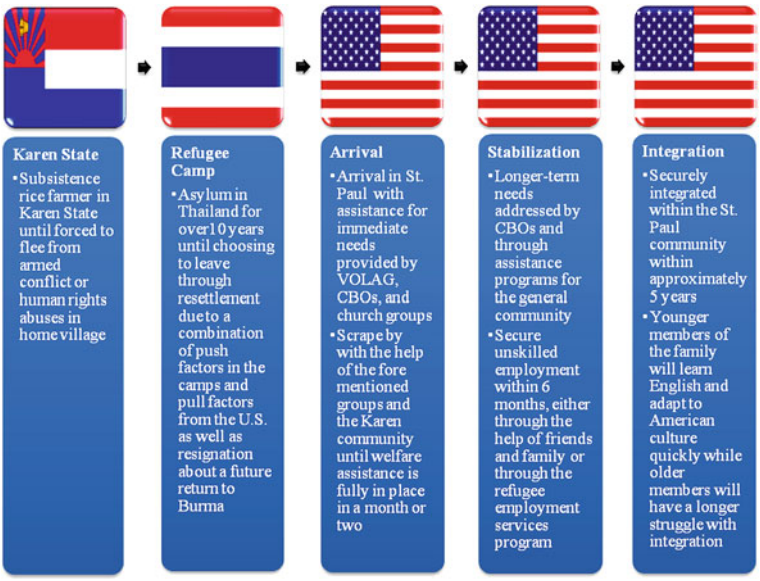

Fig. 4.2 Karen refugee resettlement process. *Source* The author

dependent on welfare and social services due to language barriers and other socio-cultural impediments to self-sufficiency.

Multiple factors appear to determine how rapidly individual Karen refugees engage with the local community and attain functional independence. While educational level, language abilities and vocational skills are certainly key, the age of refugees appears to be the critical variable determining how quickly the process occurs. After only a few years, many young Karen are virtually indistinguishable from U.S. born citizens, embracing the local culture and community as their own. Conversely, older Karen appear to struggle with acceptance of American culture, speaking English and the psychological transition to embracing the U.S. as their home.

In order to provide an understanding of what the typical resettlement process undergone by refugee arrivals in St. Paul looks like, the following timeline documents the refugee resettlement experience from displacement to integration (Fig. 4.2).

The duration and complexity of the process of successful integration for Karen refugees should not be minimised. It is a long-term and typically uneven process that involves the support of multiple formal and informal actors and forms of assistance. A focus group among the Karen leadership in St. Paul stated that resettled Karen refugees often experience a wave pattern of emotional states during the process, with most eventually finding a more stable level of satisfaction with their decision after securing long-term employment and receiving an earned income (Fig. 4.3).

Generally speaking, social services within St. Paul were found to be exceptionally responsive to the needs of refugees during this process. For example, a key

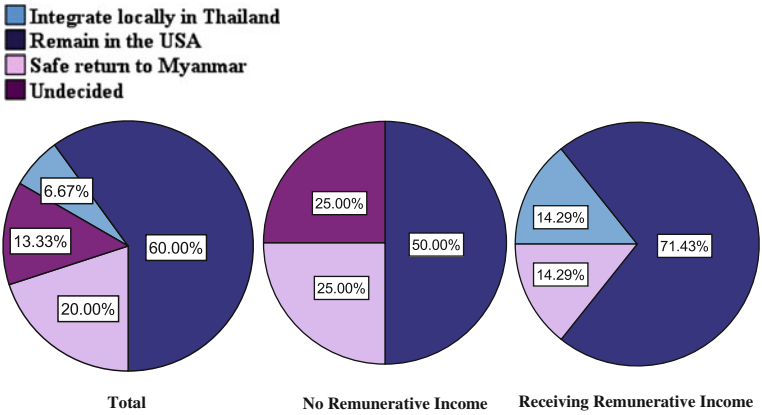

Fig. 4.3 Preference for the future of resettled refugees disaggregated by remunerative income. *Source* Household interviews

motivation for many refugees to choose resettlement is the desire for a better quality education. However, upon arrival in the U.S. they often find that they are over the age limit to attend local public schools. According to a focus group with several local teachers, Minnesota is unusual in the U.S. in that it allows students to attend public schools who are over the age of 21 at the discretion of individual school districts. In addition, while there have been recent budget cuts at the Federal level, the refugee assistance services funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services and provided by local CBOs utilise a significantly more comprehensive system of indicators for refugee integration outcomes. While these do address the Federal metric of sustainable employment, they also provide funding for programmes that attend to additional refugee needs such as adjusted immigration status, stable housing, engagement with community services and independent functioning.

The importance of the role of informal and voluntary assistance in their integration was also clearly critical for the majority of refugees interviewed. Almost all stated that the First Baptist Church of St. Paul had helped them with food, furnishings and household items upon arrival. Americans from the local community were also said to have helped with household items and clothing. Many refugees also cited the assistance they had received from within the Karen community itself as being an important source of support for interpretive services and food items. For those that had come through secondary migration, the availability of interpretive services was frequently stated as a prime motivation for relocating.

4.1.3.2 Impact on Preference for the Future

When asked about preferences for their future, the majority of refugees stated that they preferred to remain in the U.S., followed by those who wanted a safe return to their home village in Myanmar. A small percentage of respondents stated that they

were still undecided and a single refugee expressed a desire to return to Thailand to integrate locally outside of the camp. Even though none of the households interviewed had been in the U.S. for the typical 5-year period that it takes for a refugee family to fully integrate, the data indicated that over 71 % preferred to stay in the U.S. after they had begun to receive remunerative income.

4.1.3.3 Impact on Livelihood and Welfare

Despite the well-documented lack of livelihood opportunities available in the camps, only about 13 % of refugees interviewed stated that they did not work in the camps compared with 67 % after arrival in the U.S. However, those who were able to find jobs were reportedly doing quite well according to a key informant from an organisation providing refugee employment services who stated that the Karen appear to be well liked by employers due to their strong work ethic. The primary businesses in St. Paul which have been hiring recently arrived Karen refugees are meat packing plants and large-scale commercial laundries and bakeries.

Most refugees stated that it had taken between 1 and 6 months to find work in the U.S. and almost all of those employed said that they *liked their jobs*. Many even professed that they "loved their jobs" despite the repetitive manual labour required by most of the positions refugees were employed in. However, much of this was later qualified by responses stating that they were not so pleased with working graveyard shifts, commuting long distances, cold working conditions and the arduous physical demands of the jobs.

When asked what type of welfare assistance they were receiving, food stamps were by far the most common response and were nearly universal among the refugees. Most families were receiving between $300 and $600 worth of food stamps per month. A large proportion were also receiving rental assistance although this was problematic for some refugee households who said that it did not fully cover their actual rental expenses and that they did not have enough income to make up the difference. The majority of the families interviewed had also been enrolled in Medicare for their health care needs although the programme was challenging for many.

4.1.3.4 Impact on Gender Roles

The research results appeared to indicate that even after only a few years in the U.S., gender roles among the Karen community have begun to change. Many of the Karen women in households interviewed worked outside the home and as a result were gaining greater control over household decision-making. Young Karen women in particular seemed to be adapting very quickly to a more American model of femininity, with increased levels of personal independence and pursuit of educational and employment opportunities.

In many of the refugee households visited, the women in the family had been initially more successful at finding work and as a result, the men in the family were at home taking care of children. Overall, the Karen seemed to be adjusting fairly easily to these major changes in gender roles. As one focus group member jokingly stated *In Burma, the man is king. In the U.S., it's the woman.*

However, despite the evidence of these changes within individual households, it should also be noted that only one of the Karen community leaders interviewed was female despite significant efforts to identify such informants. While it is likely that there are additional women in positions of leadership within the community than were identified through this research, on the whole, female representation in leadership positions appeared to be relatively minute.

4.1.3.5 Impact on Social Problems

Some of the negative impacts of resettlement on the Karen community mentioned included an increase in the prevalence of drug and alcohol abuse and some high profile racial conflicts with the African American community in St. Paul. According to a key informant from First Baptist Church interviewed, a lot of the conflict stems from a perceived competition for services, housing and jobs between the communities. In addition, when incidents have occurred, the Karen do not always want to report it because they are used to being afraid of the police from their time in Thailand. Religious leaders from the two communities have been working cooperatively to address the tensions and violence and these efforts do appear to be having a positive impact on the situation as there have been no major incidents recently.

As to the issue of substance abuse, a religious leader from the First Baptist Church stated that he felt that alcohol and drug use are becoming more problematic among the Karen. This perspective was also shared by the Social Services Director at the Karen Organization of Minnesota who stated that he considered the increase in drug use among the Karen to be an emerging social problem for the community. However, no statistical data or literature was located on the prevalence of drug and alcohol abuse for the Karen and additional research is needed to determine how widespread the problem has become.

4.1.4 Impacts of Resettlement on the Displacement Situation in Thailand

None of the key informants interviewed in St. Paul were of the belief that resettlement on its own could resolve the displacement situation in Thailand. While several of those interviewed stated the opinion that resettlement had been effective in providing better living conditions for individual refugee families, the general consensus was that the source of the problem lies within Myanmar and that it

would not go away until conditions changed inside the country. As a key informant from the Karen Community of Minnesota stated, *it has been 10,000 out and then 10,000 right back in as a result of the armed conflict and human rights abuses within Myanmar*.

It was also found that none of those interviewed felt that resettlement had become a significant pull factor for additional refugee flows into the camps relative to the push factors of armed conflict and human rights abuses within Myanmar. However, several key informants were confident that fraudulent claims to asylum and eventual resettlement were taking place: *For $3,000 USD, people are smuggled into the camps including transportation, a house in the camp and registration documents.* The Karen in St. Paul appear to be aware of such people resettled within their community but seem inclined to leave well enough alone.

4.1.4.1 Impact on Human Resource Capacity

Both from seeing the leadership capabilities within the Karen community in St. Paul and from hearing their comments during interviews, it was clear that resettlement is causing a significant degree of *brain drain* from the camp environment. While it does seem likely unavoidable that resettlement will continue to result in the loss of some of the best and most experienced staff within the camps, from a broader perspective, this is not an entirely negative impact. As a resettled Karen CBO director stated, *the resettled refugee community needs leaders too*.

One seemingly promising option for addressing some of the critical losses of staff within the camps that came up repeatedly within discussions was the possibility of providing programmes that would facilitate some former refugees returning to the camps to work in NGO staff positions. As there seems to be significant interest in this prospect within the resettled Karen community and their commitment, language abilities and educational levels would likely have a significant impact on improving service quality within the camps, it appears to be a worthwhile option for NGOs to explore in their efforts to repair some of the deterioration in capability caused by resettlement.

4.1.4.2 Impact on Community Linkages

The research confirmed that the links between resettled refugees and those back in the refugee camps are strong. Most refugee families reported that they regularly had contact with friends and family members still in the camps and that they planned to continue these associations. Several families stated their interest in sharing their resettlement experiences with those in the camps; however, it was somewhat difficult to determine exactly what the messages being sent back were actually recommending. For the most part, refugee families interviewed seemed to be encouraging others from the camps to apply while at the same time providing a more realistic view to those in the camps about what life is actually like in the U.S.

A focus group of the Karen leadership in St. Paul stated that the resettled Karen community have primarily been trying to educate those in the camps about life in the U.S. so that they can make informed decisions and prepare themselves accordingly.

Four out of five refugees interviewed stated that they were still in regular contact with family, friends or the camp committee back in their previous refugee camps through phone calls. When asked what they were telling their contacts about life in the U.S. during these phone calls, the most common response stated was that they were informing them about the good employment and educational opportunities available. A smaller portion of responses did have less positive news for those in the camps however. One man stated that he was telling his friends and relatives that they should be serious about preparing for employment and in learning English before leaving the camps and that *Life is not heaven here*. Another man, who was disabled from losing his leg to a landmine, stated that he was telling people that it was difficult to get a job or use transportation in the U.S. and that the welfare assistance he was receiving was insufficient for his needs.

While many refugee families stated their desire to send remittances back to friends and family members in the camps, most were simply not in a solid enough economic footing to do so. While amounts with a specified purpose such as paying off debts or covering medical expenses were being sent, there did not appear to be a large scale of regular remittance flows from the U.S. to the camps among the families who had only been in the U.S. for a few years or less. A focus group of Karen leadership stated that remittances being sent back to the camps and Myanmar are still limited in quantity because of the difficult economic conditions for newly arrived refugees. However, the remittance flows are certainly existent for some families and seem likely to increase over time.

4.1.5 Case Study Conclusion

The Karen community in St. Paul, based upon both the indicators of the Federal and State outcome areas for integration and the qualitative assessment of this research study, appears to be adapting successfully to life in the United States. While using the resettled Karen refugee community in St. Paul as a case study provides what may be a somewhat rose-coloured view of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Programme's potential for resolving the displacement situation within Thailand, it does grant a number of valuable lessons learned about the practical realities of integration of refugees from extensively protracted refugee situations in the United States. Moreover, ethnographic research among the community opened a window into the Karen perspective on the refugee resettlement programme and its impacts on the displacement situation in Thailand, a viewpoint often somewhat absent for the international community.

The Karen have endured conflict and human rights abuses within their homeland in Myanmar for generations and anyone who has witnessed the quiet but

unyielding resolve of the Karen people would have to agree that it seems unlikely that the integration experience will push them beyond the limits of their cultural fortitude. However, more can be done through policy and programming to support the inherent cultural resilience that makes the Karen such a comfortable fit with the ethnic diversity of the United States.

While the research revealed that the inertia and frustration that characterises life in the refugee camps coupled with the freedoms and opportunities that are available within the U.S. remain the most compelling motivations for refugees to apply for resettlement, another key issue in encouraging a broader acceptance of resettlement among the Karen is an assurance that they will be resettled within an existent Karen community within the U.S. Due to the special service needs of Karen refugees resulting from their exceptionally protracted stay in the refugee camps in Thailand, there are clear benefits both for the Karen and for the American communities that they integrate into to have established populations and ethnically specialised organisations ready to welcome new arrivals. These community features appear to account for a large portion of the current pull factor for secondary migration of the Karen to St. Paul. The type of community development and mutual aid that exists and continues to mature in the St. Paul Karen community is simply not possible in every resettlement location. Therefore, while it is necessary to avoid overwhelming individual resettlement communities, VOLAGs in the larger and already established Karen communities should be encouraged to increase their level of specialisation in order to facilitate additional arrivals.

In addition to the benefits of resettlement in an existing Karen community, there are lessons to be learned from the successes of St. Paul in establishing strong intra-community linkages: between the newly arrived refugees and established members within the local community to encourage adaptation and provide access to resources, between the VOLAGs and CBOs in order to bridge the gap between the short-term and long-term social service needs of refugees and between different refugee populations themselves to support a refugee to refugee learning process.

The refugee-to-refugee model of learning that has been encouraged between the Karen community and the resettled Hmong, Somali and Vietnamese communities in St. Paul has had obvious benefits for increasing the rapidity of the integration process and surmounting internal capacity constraints for the Karen. Interestingly, the newly formed Karen Organization of Minnesota actually has a Hmong–American as its new Executive Director which is overtly symbolic of the broader environment of mutual support between former refugee groups and the contemporary group of resettled Karen that exists in St. Paul. Additional opportunities to implement this model of learning should be sought out and nurtured through support for capacity building programmes between CBOs.

All of these linkages are further strengthened by refugees receiving sufficient English language skills training before arrival. While the mutual assistance provided within the Karen community is an essential element of the support network for many refugees and should be supported, the long-term welfare of refugees still depends upon high levels of engagement with the local community. Particularly for older Karen, much of the ongoing isolation that many experience is the

unfortunate result of a lack of confidence in their ability to speak English within the larger community.

The impacts and implications of the resettlement programme for the displacement situation in Thailand appear both clear in some respects and deceptively simple in others. While the reduction in educated and experienced staff members from the NGO service providers and the camp administration is easily discernible, as are the strong connections between the diaspora and those remaining behind within the refugee camps, the impact of the resettlement programme on camp population totals is more nuanced and difficult to determine. While it is certain that resettlement has so far been ineffective at de-populating the camps in the aggregate, most of the evidence available seems to suggest that the new refugee flows into the camps are primarily due to the ongoing conflict and human rights abuses within Myanmar rather than created by the pull factor of resettlement itself. As a result, it appears likely that a large number of those who have departed through resettlement might very well be appended on to the current population totals had the programme not taken place. Just as importantly, it is only from a somewhat myopic policy standpoint that one can ignore the well-being provided to refugee families through resettlement because it has yet to reduce the refugee situation in Thailand quantitatively.

While the future for Karen refugees in Thailand appears as murky and indefinite as ever, and resettlement has yet to prove its effectiveness in resolving the situation in the absence of other durable solutions, it does continue to provide a viable alternative to indefinite encampment for thousands of Karen in supportive communities like St. Paul. The value of a *home* after years and even decades of *temporary shelter* is based on a function perhaps difficult to calculate but certainly not without worth for Karen refugees.

4.2 Case Study: San Francisco, California, USA

Refugees resettled in San Francisco, California face a number of significant obstacles to their integration into American society. While the resettlement communities in some cities such as St. Paul, MN, Utica, NY and Fort Wayne, IN are quite large and densely populated with resettled refugees from Myanmar, the community in San Francisco, CA is much smaller and diffuse in character. Between January 2004 and August 2010, only 467 refugees from Myanmar have been resettled in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Myanmar refugees in San Francisco face the same challenges that all refugees must undergo upon arrival in the U.S. but without the mutual aid provided by resettlement within larger communities of their own nationality or ethnicity. In order to gain a greater understanding of the challenges faced by more isolated refugees after resettlement, as a counterbalance to the research conducted in St. Paul, MN, this case study focused on assessing the livelihood opportunities,

community integration and living conditions for the resettled refugees from Myanmar in San Francisco.

4.2.1 Case Study Research Methods

The field research for this case study was conducted in August 2010 through arrangements made with the IRC San Francisco office and other key informants in the San Francisco Bay Area. The relatively small population of resettled refugees from Myanmar in the area when compared to other larger scale resettlement locations meant that the refugees were well aware of where the other community members were living and were able to provide contacts to facilitate the research. The field research activities in San Francisco included:

- Observation of daily activities such as social relations within families (family ties, older generation/younger generation gaps), daily work routine (male/female career norms) and community activities (community cohesion, religious commitments);
- Key informant interviews of NGO staff and refugee leadership;
- Shadowing of R&P agency staff during home visits to refugees;
- Visits to employment locations for resettled refugees; and
- Group discussions with four refugee households.

Comparison of the research results with the St. Paul case study was made in order to provide a broader perspective on the integration experience of refugees from Myanmar within the U.S.

4.2.2 Impact on Livelihood Opportunities

Resettled refugees from Myanmar are employed in a fairly broad spectrum of low-skilled and entry-level occupations within the San Francisco area. These included production work at glass, tableware and textile factories; service jobs as drivers, attendants and cleaning personnel at hotels and sports venues; and as assistants at nursing homes and hospitals. Some who possessed prior medical training from work with NGOs in the temporary shelters were able to complete training programmes and become certified nursing assistants to secure higher paying jobs. Another frequent occupation of resettled displaced persons was in restaurant staff positions, particularly at fast food establishments.

One disadvantage faced by refugees from Myanmar within the labour market in the San Francisco Bay Area is that they are still a small and relatively unestablished ethnic group in the area when compared to some of the other ethnic minority groups living there. Communities of other economic migrants and refugees who had arrived earlier in the Bay Area generally spoke better English and already had

large and well-established networks to help them find employment. Immigrants from ethnic minority groups to the Bay Area who had been successful in starting their own businesses have a tendency to hire members of their own ethnicity rather than offering jobs to newly resettled refugees from different ethnic groups. In some cases, certain sectors of the labour market had become nearly entirely dominated by a particular ethnic group and this restricted those from other ethnic groups from finding employment in those sectors. This type of workplace segregation is significant enough that some refugees from Myanmar have chosen to relocate to other areas of the U.S. where they are able to find employment through their own social networks.

In summary, the competition within the appropriate sector of the labour market in the San Francisco Bay Area is quite high for refugees from Myanmar due to an excess supply of unskilled workers caused by an influx of both refugees and economic migrants to the Bay Area. The labour market appears to have reached its saturation point for unskilled workers at the moment and as a result, the refugees are faced with very limited employment opportunities in a very high-cost living environment.

4.2.3 Impact on Living Conditions and Community Integration

The integration experience for this group of refugees from Myanmar has been made more difficult by the timing of their resettlement to the San Francisco Bay Area. A combination of high unemployment, budget cuts to social service providers and increased debate about immigration to the U.S. has meant that they find themselves in a challenging social and economic environment upon arrival. However, the cultural values of a strong work ethic and a reluctance to complain have allowed refugees from Myanmar to gain the trust and respect of many in the community and helped them to establish a place for themselves in the city. The group has also been working internally to establish the communication networks within their small community necessary to make sure that new arrivals to the Bay Area are not isolated during their initial integration period.

It is also not strictly the case that other ethnic minority groups in the Bay Area only provide competition for the resettled refugees within the labour market. A small group of refugees from Myanmar have established connections with a group of Hmong refugees who had previously been resettled in San Francisco and have used these connections to gain a foothold in the former's market in downtown San Francisco. This was partly facilitated by the Hmong group's higher level of fluency in English, which helped the refugees to network within the market community. As a result of this mutual aid from other former refugees, the group from Myanmar has been able to become relatively more affluent compared to other new arrivals of resettled refugees in the Bay Area.

A social problem within the resettled community that has begun to emerge is that a large number of the younger children within the community have a difficult time speaking their native language. Many have already had a lot of exposure to the Thai language and now the English language but in some cases did not have a chance to adequately learn their own native languages. As a result, the older generation of resettled refugees face a communication barrier not only with the society around them but in some cases even with their own family members. This language barrier has begun to evolve into a major generational gap between older and younger refugees from Myanmar within the U.S.

In reference to their living conditions, there were many complaints voiced by refugees about the high cost of living in the San Francisco Bay Area in comparison to other cities in the U.S. The sales tax rate of almost 10 %, combined with the already high costs of housing, transportation and food, proved to be a major burden for many during the initial stages of integration after resettlement. Moreover, the amount of resettlement cash assistance provided to refugees upon arrival is determined at the state level and is not sufficient to cover the high cost of living in an expensive city such as San Francisco.

Those who have remained in San Francisco have developed coping strategies for surviving under the high cost of living in the city, however, a significant number of those who were sent to San Francisco have already moved to Minnesota where there is a much larger Karen refugee community. The main determining factor influencing decisions to stay in the San Francisco Bay Area or move to other locations appeared to be whether or not the resettled refugees were able to find sufficient work quickly enough to support themselves within the costly living environment (Fig. 4.4).

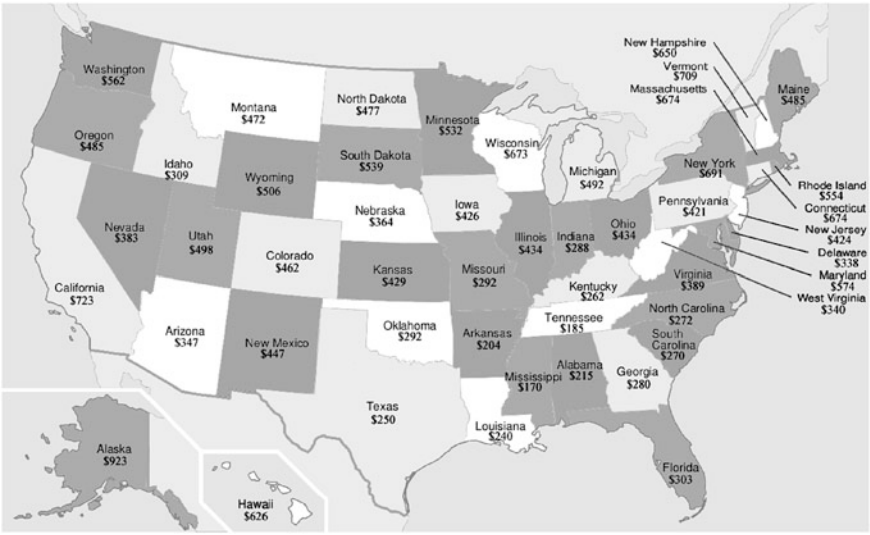

Fig. 4.4 Map of cash assistance provided to refugees upon arrival in the U.S. *Source* International Rescue Committee (2010)

4.2.4 Case Study Conclusion

It was clear from the research in San Francisco that refugees from Myanmar resettled in the Bay Area have added challenges and pressures, as well as less support from their own communities, than those resettled in a location such as St. Paul. The everyday expenses faced in the City of San Francisco makes survival there challenging even for native born American citizens, and this is further compounded for the newly arrived refugees by the fact that the labour market has already been saturated with low-skilled workers as a result of previous refugee resettlement and labour migration.

However, there are significant opportunities for the resettled refugees coupled with these risks. As they attempt to integrate into the very affluent San Francisco community, the circumstances push them to engage with the local community rather than depend on other resettled displaced persons and means that they are forced to learn English and adapt culturally much more quickly. It also means that they are exposed to educational and career opportunities, particularly for the benefit of the younger generation of resettled refugees, which might not be available to them in smaller cities within the U.S.

Given the option of any resettlement location within the U.S., it is probably not ideal for resettled refugees from Myanmar to be forced to adjust to an expensive and sophisticated city like San Francisco, while at the same time trying to learn English and adjust to Western culture in general. They would likely have less steep of a learning curve in a smaller and less costly city. However, while the research does seem to indicate that the context of San Francisco is a more difficult environment for integration to take place, it is clear that many of the refugees from Myanmar who are sent there are able to make it work, perhaps providing a degree of validation to the U.S. resettlement approach of rapid refugee integration.

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Chapter 5
Conclusion and Recommendations

Benjamin Harkins

Abstract The conclusion reached in the study is that resettlement does play a meaningful role for the refugee situation in Thailand, although it should be a part of an integrated approach with other durable solutions, and should not be seen as a panacea. Recommendations are put forward to improve the resettlement programme, including restarting the refugee status determination process to allow increased participation, enhancing the preparation of displaced people before departure, and strengthening services in receiving countries so that refugees can integrate more rapidly.

Keywords Refugees · Resettlement · Refugee integration · Durable solutions · Thailand · Myanmar

5.1 Conclusion

Resettlement operations within the shelters in Thailand have now been ongoing continuously for more than 5 years with over 64,000 departures completed as of the end of 2010. However, despite the large investment of financial and human resources in this effort, the displacement situation appears not to have diminished significantly in scale as of yet. While no stakeholders involved with the situation in Thailand are currently calling for an end to resettlement activities, there has been little agreement on what role resettlement actually serves in long-term solutions for the situation. For the most part, the programme has been implemented thus far in a reflexive manner rather than as a truly responsive and solutions-oriented

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strategy, based primarily upon the parameters established by the policies of resettlement nations and the RTG rather than the needs of the displaced persons within the shelters.

As a contribution towards a baseline assessment of resettlement's impacts and implications as well as the motivations and constraints for participation in the programme, this research study was designed to complement recent efforts of the international community to develop a more sustainable and solutions-oriented approach for addressing the displacement situation through evidence-based policy. Because it is the lone durable solution currently available in Thailand, an assessment of what has been accomplished through resettlement activities so far is an important aspect in formulating a comprehensive, coherent and results focused strategy for resolving the situation.

The impacts and implications of resettlement operations to date do include some notably positive effects on the displacement situation in Thailand. Resettlement has allowed thousands of displaced families to start a new life in resettlement countries, facilitated the removal of some of the most vulnerable displaced persons from the shelter environment in a protection capacity, created a *safety valve* on the situation which has helped to prevent some of the social problems that had begun to occur as a result of long-term encampment and has created connections internationally that help to support those remaining in the shelters both through direct financial support and through political advocacy in resettlement countries.

On the more ambiguous side of its impacts is of course resettlement's lack of effect on reducing the scale of displacement in Thailand. While there is currently not a sufficient amount of credible evidence available to indicate that resettlement itself has become a significant pull factor for new displacement flows into the shelters, it is apparent that resettlement operations have thus far not outpaced the flow of asylum seekers into the shelters or the high birth rate among the shelter population. The net result of these competing factors affecting the shelter population totals appears to be a small reduction of about 1 % in actual residents present since resettlement began if the unregistered population is included. However, this could perhaps be seen as a deceptively good outcome, as it appears likely that a large number of those who have departed through resettlement might very well be appended on to the current population totals had the programme not taken place.

A final impact assessed is the question of *brain drain* within the community-based model of shelter services and administration. While this appeared to be a catastrophic impact initially, particularly for the health and educational sectors within the shelters, it now looks as if the situation has stabilised somewhat. While there continue to be losses of educated and experienced NGO staff and camp administration members to resettlement, new staff and leadership have emerged as a result and service provision appears to be continuing despite some gaps in consistency of service quality. It does appear to be unavoidable that resettlement will continue to result in the loss of some of the best and most experienced staff

within the shelters but from a broader perspective, this is not an entirely negative impact. As a resettled Karen NGO director interviewed in St. Paul, USA stated, *the resettled refugee community needs leaders too*.

The motivations to apply for resettlement proved to be highly individual for displaced persons and the internal algorithm that combines all of the different factors involved for each individual and leads to a decision to apply or not is difficult to standardise. However, when displaced persons were willing to talk frankly about their motivations, they tended to centre around family reunification, educational and employment opportunities, human rights, and an overall hope for a better future as the primary pull factors for choosing resettlement. Conversely, the lack of freedom of movement, livelihood and educational opportunities were key push factors from life within the shelters as were the lack of prospects for the other two durable solutions of local integration in Thailand and safe return to Myanmar. Finally, while none of the displaced persons complained openly about the poverty they experienced within the shelters, based upon the proxies and euphemisms for impoverishment discussed, it was evident that the conditions of prolonged destitution are another major push factor for choosing resettlement.

Constraints to participation in the resettlement programme were subdivided into categories of *soft* constraints, which displaced persons interact with and are influenced by in their decision-making, and *hard* constraints, which are policy restrictions over which they have no significant control. For hard constraints, it was found that the most significant bottleneck for the resettlement programme as a whole is the stalled PAB registration process and the resulting large population within the shelters that is ineligible for resettlement because of a lack of displaced person status. A secondary hard constraint that slows down the process within the resettlement programme is the need to issue exit permits by the MOI, without which displaced persons from Myanmar cannot depart from Thailand. In practice however, this is generally a much less significant obstacle.

While the hard constraints are well established and appear somewhat intractable until alternative policies are developed and implemented by the RTG, the soft constraints appear more feasible to ameliorate programmatically. The three major areas of concern for those who decided not to apply for resettlement were family obligations/separation, fears about integration in resettlement countries (language, employment, culture adaptation, general fears of the unknown), and reluctance to give up on returning to Myanmar or to leave their people behind. While these are significant obstacles to participation, it is clear that some of them could be addressed through programming that builds capacities and addresses the fears and concerns of displaced persons.

Looking towards the future, it appears highly unlikely that resettlement can resolve the displaced person situation in the border shelters as a lone durable solution and almost certainly not if the status quo registration policies and procedures of the RTG are maintained. All stakeholders involved with trying to address the situation are currently stuck with the impractical approach of attempting to resolve a protracted state of conflict and human rights abuses within Myanmar without effective means for engaging with the situation in-country.

Within the limitations of this strategy framework, a greater level of cooperation between resettlement countries, international organisations and the RTG to support a higher quantity of departures for resettlement through addressing the policy constraints and personal capacity restrictions to participation appears a desirable option and might allow for resettlement to begin to have a more significant impact on reducing the scale of displacement within Thailand. However, realistically this would still be unlikely to resolve the situation as a whole if not conducted in combination with more actualised forms of local integration within Thailand and within the context of reduced displacement flows into the shelters.

The overall conclusion reached about resettlement is that it continues to play a meaningful palliative, protective and durable solution role within the shelters in Thailand. While it is necessary for resettlement to remain a carefully targeted programme, the stakeholders involved should consider expanding resettlement to allow participation of legitimate asylum seekers within the shelters who are currently restricted from applying because of the lack of a timely status determination process. Allowing higher levels of participation in resettlement through addressing this policy constraint, as well as some of the more personal constraints that prevent some families within the shelters from moving on with their lives, would be a positive development in terms of providing durable solutions to the situation. In conjunction with greater opportunities for local integration and livelihood options for those who cannot or do not wish to participate in resettlement, the programme should be expanded to make the option of an alternative to indefinite encampment within the shelters in Thailand available to a larger group of eligible displaced persons.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 The Royal Thai Government

1. It has become clear that the stalled registration process within the shelters has reached the point where it is becoming a significant obstacle to continuing resettlement operations in the shelters. If the resettlement programme is going to continue to function beyond residual resettlement of displaced persons in Thailand, it is urgently necessary to consider another major MOI/UNHCR re-registration effort and to reinvigorate the PAB screening mechanism for regular ongoing status determinations.
2. The potential for family separation posed by differences in registration status within families when applying for resettlement does not serve the best interests of any stakeholder within the displacement situation in Thailand. Allowing immediate family members of registered displaced persons within the shelters to receive priority in status determination screening to prevent family splitting through resettlement should be enacted as soon as possible.

3. It is apparent that the better educated and those with leadership capabilities in the shelters are opting for resettlement disproportionately. While the impact on shelter services and administration has not been crippling, there are gaps in quality that have emerged as a result. If the shelters in Thailand are going to maintain a community-based model of service provision that relies heavily upon the capabilities of the displaced persons themselves to function, increased freedom of movement between shelters is necessary to avoid the detrimental impact of the resettlement programme on the quality of service provided. Opening the labour market of the shelters to allow displaced persons to migrate to fill labour needs and allowing sufficient freedom of movement for them to pursue educational and vocational training opportunities outside of the shelters would help to repair some of the deterioration in capability caused by resettlement.
4. Although resettlement plays an important role within the shelters in Thailand, many displaced persons have justifiable reasons for choosing not to apply to the programme. Increasing the options for self-reliance and integration with the local community in Thailand is a necessary part of any truly sustainable long-term strategy for resolving the displacement situation. The absence of the availability of other durable solutions in Thailand makes resettlement a less effective programme.

5.2.2 NGOs in Thailand

1. It would be beneficial to explore the possibility of providing programmes that would facilitate some former refugees returning to the camps to work in NGO staff positions as there seems to be significant interest within the resettled Karen community and their commitment, language abilities and educational levels would likely have a significant impact on improving service quality within the camps and would help to repair some of the deterioration in capability caused by resettlement.
2. While the widespread reluctance to apply for resettlement due to differences in registration status within families is an issue that is best dealt with at the policy level, fears about integration in resettlement countries because of capacity constraints (e.g. language skills, vocational skills, cultural understanding and adaptation, etc.) appear more feasible to attempt to ameliorate programmatically. Further programmes encouraging dialogue and capacity building on these concerns, perhaps incorporating the skills and experiences of those who have already been through the resettlement process, could provide uncertain displaced persons with the confidence they need to make a decision.

5.2.3 The U.S. Refugee Admissions Programme

1. The indications are that the Karen benefit significantly from being placed for resettlement into already existing and well-established Karen communities within the U.S. The type of community development and mutual aid that exists and continues to mature, in the St. Paul Karen community for example, is simply not possible in every resettlement location. VOLAGs in the larger and already established Karen communities should be encouraged to increase their level of specialisation for working with the Karen to facilitate additional arrivals.
2. The refugee-to-refugee model of learning that has been encouraged between the Karen community and the resettled Hmong, Somali and Vietnamese communities in St. Paul has had enormous benefits for increasing the rapidity of the integration process and surmounting internal capacity constraints for the Karen. Additional opportunities to implement this model of learning should be sought out and nurtured through support for capacity-building programmes between CBOs.
3. There was near-complete consensus on the part of government agencies, CBO social service providers, the Karen leadership and individual refugees interviewed that additional English language skills training before arrival in the U.S. is needed to facilitate a speedier integration process. While the mutual assistance provided within insular Karen communities at low-income housing projects is certainly an essential element of the support network for many newly arrived refugees, the longer term welfare of refugees depends upon high levels of engagement with the local community. In order to facilitate this and avoid the near-homebound condition of many older Karen refugees, additional English language skills training should be a priority intervention area for increased programming within the shelters.
4. The amounts allocated for cash assistance to support displaced persons during their initial resettlement period are too low for high-cost cities such as those in the San Francisco Bay Area where taxes and living expenses are among the highest in the U.S. During the initial integration phase after arrival, many displaced persons are forced to move out of these areas to cities and towns where the cost of living is lower. If resettlement to expensive urban areas in the U.S. is going to continue, the initial amounts given for resettlement assistance need to have a higher end within their scale to compensate as well as sufficient support services to help displaced persons to establish longer term financial stability.

5.2.4 All Stakeholders in the Resettlement Programme

1. While it is necessary for resettlement to remain a carefully targeted programme, expanding resettlement to allow participation of legitimate asylum seekers within the shelters who are currently restricted from applying because

of the lack of a timely status determination process should be addressed by the stakeholders involved. In conjunction with greater opportunities for local integration and livelihood options for those who cannot or do not wish to participate in resettlement, the programme should be expanded to make the option of an alternative to indefinite encampment within the shelters in Thailand available to a larger group of eligible displaced persons.

Appendix A
Key Informants Interviewed

Anonymous, Ministry of Interior Official.
Anonymous, National Security Council Official.
Anonymous, Royal Thai Government Official.
Anonymous, Royal Thai Army Official.
Anonymous, Overseas Processing Entity Officer.
Anjalina Sen, Deputy Regional Refugee Coordinator, U.S. Embassy Bangkok.
Becky Price, First Baptist Church Refugee Resettlement and Mission Board Member.
Cecilia Oberg, ESL Teacher, First Baptist Church Refugee Resettlement and Mission Board Member.
David Johnson, Reverend, First Baptist Church of St. Paul.
Gus P. Avenido, Refugee State Coordinator, Minnesota Department of Human Services.
Hans Beckers, Regional Programme Coordinator for Resettlement and Voluntary Return, IOM.
Hsar Hin Htoo, Karen Community of Minnesota Advisor.
Jack Dunford, Executive Director, TBBC.
Kyoko Yonezu, Senior Regional Programme Officer, UNHCR Regional Office Thailand.
Lay Moo, Karen Community of Minnesota Advisor.
Leslie Peterson, Deputy Director, IRC San Francisco Office.
Marner Saw, Karen Community of Minnesota Secretary, Social Services Coordinator at the Karen Organization of Minnesota.
Nay Htoo, Karen Community of Minnesota Vice-Chairman, Support Manager, Outreach Specialist, and Employment Counsellor at Vietnamese Social Services of Minnesota.
Paw Wah Toe, Karen Organization of Minnesota Board member, First Baptist Church Refugee Resettlement and Mission Board Member.
Raymond Tint, Karen Community of Minnesota Advisor, Karen Organization of Minnesota Board Member.
Robert Bazan, Founding Member of the Karen Community of Minnesota, U.S. Representative of the Karen National Union.

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Sally Thompson, Deputy Executive Director, TBBC.
Saw Hla Tun Oo, Karen Community of Minnesota Chairman, Volunteer Coordinator at Vietnamese Social Services of Minnesota.
Saw Winner, Deacon, First Karen Baptist Church of St. Paul.
Somsak Thanaborikon, Field Coordinator for Mae Hong Son Office, IRC.
Susan Donovan, Director for Overseas Processing Entity South-East Asia, IRC.
Terry Matthews, Teacher, First Baptist Church Refugee Resettlement and Mission Board Member.
Wilfred Daniel Tunbaw, Social Services Director, Karen Organization of Minnesota.

Appendix B
Survey Demographics

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Name of the shelter		
Tham Hin	113	25.5
Ban Mai Nai Soi	113	25.5
Mae La	218	49.0
Total	444	100
Registration status		
Registered	252	56.8
Non-registered	148	33.3
Other	44	9.9
Total	444	100
Gender		
Male	198	44.6
Female	246	55.4
Total	444	100
Age		
18–24-years old	126	28.4
25–59-years old	303	68.2
60-years old and above	15	3.4
Total	444	100
Marital status		
Single	122	27.5
Married	304	68.5
Widowed	11	2.5
Divorced/separated	7	1.6
Total	444	100
Highest level of education achieved		
Never attended school	111	25.0
Primary level in Myanmar (standard 1–4)	115	25.9
Secondary level (standard 5–8)	71	16.0
Secondary level (standard 9–10)	41	9.2
Primary level in camp (standard 1–6)	20	4.5
Secondary level (standard 7–10)	57	12.8

(continued)

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(continued)

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Post-10 class	11	2.5
College/University	5	1.1
Non-formal education only	5	1.1
Vocational training only	2	0.5
Others	6	1.4
Total	444	100
Ethnicity		
Karen (Pwo)	84	18.9
Karen (S'gaw)	214	48.2
Karenni	99	22.3
Kachin	1	0.2
Mon	6	1.4
Burmese	18	4.1
Arakan	2	0.5
Shan	1	0.2
Rohingya	3	0.7
Others	16	3.6
Total	444	100
Religion		
Animist	40	9.0
Buddhist	137	30.9
Christian	250	56.3
Muslim	14	3.2
Other	3	0.7
Total	444	100
Monthly income		
No income	369	83.1
1–1000 Baht	43	9.7
1001–2000 Baht	17	3.8
2001–3000 Baht	10	2.3
3001–4000 Baht	1	0.2
4001–5000 Baht	4	0.9
Total	444	100
Length of stay in shelter		
1–5 years	171	38.5
6–10 years	73	16.4
11–20 years	183	41.2
21 years and above	17	3.8
Total	444	100
Number of family members in household		
1–4 persons	171	38.5
5–8 persons	228	51.4
9–12 persons	40	9.0
13 persons and above	5	1.1
Total	444	100

Chulalongkorn University

Chulalongkorn University, Thailand's first institution of higher education, officially came into being in March 1917. The groundwork and preparation, however, took place more than a century ago. The worldwide economic, social and political changes in the late nineteenth century contributed to Siam's decision to adapt herself in order to avoid conflict with the Western powers ('Siam' became 'Thailand' in the year 1939). Thus, the royal policy of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) was to strengthen and improve government so that the country could successfully resist the tide of colonialism. One of the major parts of the policy, which would later prove to be highly effective, was to improve the Siamese educational system so as to produce capable personnel to work in both the public and private sectors. As a result, a University was founded in 1871 at the Royal Pages' Barracks within the Grand Palace compound.

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The development of Chulalongkorn University continued. From 1934 to 1958, the university emphasised the improvement of undergraduate education, and more faculties were established. In 1961, the University set up the Graduate School to be responsible for graduate-level education. From 1962 until the present, the University has focused on graduate education and has set up research centres and institutes. The University, known informally as 'Chula', has grown dramatically since its founding.

At present, Chulalongkorn University is composed of 19 faculties, 23 colleges and 17 research institutes. Currently, there are over 38,000 students, including 24,951 undergraduates, 13,391 postgraduates (10,881 in Master's Degree and 2,150 in Doctoral Degree programmes) and 2,800 faculty members. Its 87 international programmes have established an excellent reputation for all-round academic rigour.

According to many Asian university rankings, Chulalongkorn University is Thailand's highest-ranked institution, with the highest scores in many subjects including Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and Management, Natural Sciences, Engineering and Technology, Life Sciences and Medicine.

Chulalongkorn University's Strategy 2012–2016 has been undertaken to guide the university's development. The initiative focuses on the objective of raising the university to a level of excellence that will qualify it as a world class national university and as the *Pillar of the Kingdom*.

The Institute of Asian Studies

The Institute of Asian Studies (IAS) is an interdisciplinary research, teaching and service organisation. IAS was established in 1967 as a unit within the Faculty of Political Science at Chulalongkorn University. After a considerable expansion of activities at IAS in 1979, an upgrade in the Institute's status was determined to be necessary. Consequently, on 10 May 1985, IAS was officially recognised as a separate institute at Chulalongkorn University, granting IAS a status equivalent to that of a faculty at the university.

Today, the strategic vision for IAS is to continue to serve the Thai community and the Asian region as a source of knowledge and expertise for a broad range of subject areas in the region, including economic, social, political and security concerns. This has been accomplished through the diligence and cooperation of a team of highly qualified researchers who possess specialised knowledge about each country and sub-region within Asia.

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Asian Research Center for Migration

The Asian Research Center for Migration, based at the Institute of Asian Studies of Chulalongkorn University, is an internationally recognised centre of excellence in social science research. Located on the historic campus of Chulalongkorn University in the heart of Bangkok, ARCM is an important contributor to the research output of Thailand's oldest and most respected institution of higher learning, conducting critical policy-relevant research on international migration into, out of and within the South-East Asian Region.

History

ARCM was initially founded in 1987 as the Indochinese Refugee Information Center. The Center was established with the mission of conducting research on the flows of refugees from Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and other South-East Asian countries seeking asylum in Thailand. After the Indochinese refugee crisis had abated in Thailand and the refugee camps were closed under the Comprehensive Plan of Action, the Center began to conduct research on new refugee situations that had begun to emerge in South-East Asia.

In recognition of this newly broadened research focus, the Center was reconstituted as the Asian Research Center for Migration in 1995. Since that time, the thematic areas of ARCM's research have expanded significantly and now include projects on all forms of international migration in South-East Asia with a particular emphasis on Thailand as a sending, receiving and transit country.

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Research Activities

Through published research, statistical data, consultation and policy recommendations related to cross-border migration in the South-East Asia region, the objective of ARCM's research activity is to support evidenced-based decision-making by governments, international agencies and private sector organisations on migration-related issues. These activities are conducted by a multidisciplinary team of committed researchers, including both Thai and international experts, with backgrounds in a diverse range of academic fields relevant to migration such as sociology, anthropology, political science, economics and law.

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Among his major publications are:

Chantavanich, S.; Laodumrongchai, S.; Jitpong, W.; Harkins, B.; Yothinneeranath, P.; Tunon, M.; Olsen, A., 2013: *Employment Practices and Working Conditions in Thailand's Fishing Sector* (Bangkok: ILO); at: http://www.ilo.org/asia/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_220596/lang–en/index.htm.

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Harkins, B., 2012: "Beyond "Temporary Shelter": A Case Study of Karen Refugee Resettlement in St. Paul, Minnesota", in: *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 10, 2; at: http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15562948.2012.674326.

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After she graduated in Sociology from the University of Grenoble, France, Supang Chantavanich focused her teaching and research areas on South-East Asian society and culture, sociological theories, qualitative research, migration and development, the overseas Chinese, education and health care of migrant people and labour migration and forced migration including refugee and human trafficking. Recently, she led a research team at ARCM which conducted a study of migrant fishermen from Myanmar and Cambodia in Thailand with the International Labour Organisation. Another regional study on "Politics, Governance, Experience and Response to Flooding from the Locals' and Migrants' Perspective in ASEAN" is currently being conducted with researchers from eight ASEAN countries. The study addresses human security and conflicts among people affected by floods in the region.

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trafficking, the Thai recruitment industry, human security in migration management, employment and working conditions in the fishing sector, refugee resettlement, environmental refugees, good labour practices in the Thai seafood industry, the reproductive health of the refugee population, durable solutions for the protracted refugee situation of displaced persons from Myanmar, etc.

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About this Book

The resettlement operation for the camps on the Thai–Myanmar Border is the world's largest resettlement programme, with 12 receiving countries accepting displaced persons for relocation and integration. However, despite the large-scale financial and human resource engagements in the operation, there has been limited research conducted on how successful the resettlement programme has been as a durable solution both from the perspective of displaced persons and of the other stakeholders involved.

As a contribution to a greater understanding of the resettlement programme's current role and how it can be strengthened to become a more effective and responsive durable solution, a programme of qualitative and quantitative research was conducted in Thailand and the United States. The research was commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as part of a larger research project entitled *Sustainable Solutions to the Displaced Person Situation on the Thai–Myanmar Border.*

The overall conclusion reached about resettlement is that it continues to play a meaningful role as a palliative, protective and durable solution within the shelters in Thailand. While it is necessary for resettlement to remain a carefully targeted programme, the stakeholders involved should consider expanding resettlement to allow the participation of legitimate asylum seekers within the shelters; these are currently restricted from applying because of the absence of a timely status determination process. Allowing higher levels of participation in resettlement through addressing this policy constraint as well as some of the more personal constraints that prevent some families within the shelters from moving on with their lives would be a positive development in terms of providing durable solutions to the situation. In conjunction with greater opportunities for local integration and livelihood options for those who cannot or do not wish to participate in resettlement, the programme should be expanded to make the option of an alternative to indefinite encampment within the shelters in Thailand available to a larger cohort of eligible displaced persons.

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The book provides practical and realistic recommendations for policy options to provide durable solutions for refugees on the Thai-Myanmar border. Practitioners and policymakers from government institutions, international organisations and NGOs will benefit from the findings and recommendations proposed. The volume will also be useful for those who study forced migration and its denouement in the age of globalisation.