



For over 15 years, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Government of Australia have worked in partnership in order to deliver pre-departure Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) training for Australia-bound refugees and humanitarian entrants. The program is funded by the Department of Home Affairs and has been delivered by IOM since 2003.

IOM Thailand is host to the AUSCO Global Office which oversees permanent AUSCO implementing and coordinating missions in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Iraq, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Kenya. AUSCO has been further delivered in Sudan and Uganda, and through mobile facilitation in several countries, including Ghana, Guinea, Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Chad, Cameroon, Malawi, Tanzania, South Africa, Zambia, Myanmar, Iran, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, Costa Rica, Trinidad and Tobago, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Curacao.

The program’s objectives are several-fold and include empowering refugees and humanitarian entrants with information on life in Australia, whilst also encouraging language training on arrival, and equipping participants with the basic skills and necessary tools needed to deal with initial challenges experienced during their settlement journey and to reach self-sufficiency.

Through a 5-day course, AUSCO provides the opportunity for participants to be provided with practical advice and accurate information on the departure and settlement processes, and an opportunity to ask questions about travel to Australia and life in their new home country — including pathways and access to further education and employment, learning English and understanding Australian law. Since the program’s commencement, more than 113,000 beneficiaries have been supported globally.

AUSCO

Australian Cultural Orientation Program



Locations of AUSCO’s Activities in Thailand

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*Creative Activities in Mae Sot, Thailand
Photo: AUSCO Global Office*

Key Facts

3318

Total number of persons trained globally through AUSCO prior to resettlement in Australia in 2020

110

Number of participants in Thailand that benefitted from AUSCO in 2020

5 Days

Duration of the pre-departure AUSCO cultural orientation program

Stakeholders in Thailand

The local stakeholders to the AUSCO Program in Thailand are the Australian Embassy in Bangkok and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The majority of AUSCO sessions in Thailand are held in temporary shelter areas along the Thai-Myanmar border and IOM sub-office in Mae Sot where the AUSCO trainer team is based.

AUSCO sessions are also occasionally held in Bangkok for urban caseloads. A total of 110 refugees and humanitarian entrants in Thailand benefitted from the AUSCO program in 2020.

Link to Onshore Settlement Services

AUSCO links closely with the orientation element of the onshore settlement program, together providing a continuum for humanitarian entrants to facilitate their settlement journey.

To ensure best practices, AUSCO and the Australian based humanitarian settlement program hold workshops bringing together service providers to exchange ideas in an effort to make the transition from offshore to onshore orientation as seamless as possible.

This would be in addition to Train-the-Trainer workshops that are held regularly in various locations.

The AUSCO Curriculum

The AUSCO Program is provided to refugee and humanitarian visa holders over the age of five who are preparing to settle in Australia. The program provides practical orientation to Australian lifestyle and culture as well as managing client expectations.

Each AUSCO course is tailored to meet the needs of a diverse range of participants and is designed to achieve four primary objectives:

- Prepare visa holders for travel;
- Enhance settlement prospects;
- Create realistic expectations about life in Australia;
- Provide information about Australian laws, values and lifestyle.



*Trainers involve participants in interactive activities.
Photo: AUSCO Global Office*

This is achieved over the course of five days with 15-25 contact hours. AUSCO trainers use a variety of teaching methods throughout the course including brainstorming, simulations, case studies, discussions, problem solving and role plays. Course content is supplemented by Standard and Easy Read AUSCO Student Folders available in a number of languages, and an 'Activity Book' to reflect upon and record the participants settlement journey, plus the AUSCO DVD "An Australian Settlement Journey".



A group of children discussing and determining legal activities in Australia.

*Front page: AUSCO class in South East Asia, as facilitated by Thailand based trainers.
Photos: AUSCO Global Office*



Australian Government
Department of Home Affairs