

Evaluation Report – Alternative Child Care

Background

The economic recovery from the Indian Ocean Tsunami that hit Thailand's West Andaman Coast on December 26th 2004 has been slow and arduous; increasingly, more and more families – both biological parents and extended family- are feeling increasing pressures to place children into institutional care. These institutional arrangements include, but are not limited to, group homes, orphanages, temporary residential care (foster care) and boarding schools. Recent reports in the tsunami affected provinces indicate that an increasing number of organisations are approaching families to take over the care of their children. At this time, it is unclear how organisations are being regulated and coordinated, hence, questions remain regarding legal provisions for children without parental care, family, community, and organisational roles in terms of alternative child care, and the responsible government authorities operating within the childcare sector.

Presently, there is little or no monitoring of alternative care arrangements for children within a non-primary, family setting and limited capacity within the government to monitor and support these arrangements. For example, it is not clear what kind of treatment children receive while living in extended family care or if their rights are fully realised given the fact that Thai culture deems family values and a cohesive family structure to be of utmost importance. Also, foster children are at high risk of being sent away due to economic reasons, and such decisions are usually made without the consideration of the child's best interest. Furthermore, families are being approached by boarding schools and foundations offering superior educational opportunities, which they believe to be more advanced than the available education in the local community. Thus, children with parents are without primary-care in hopes that they might receive a finer education.

Due to the uncertain status and well-being of children affected by the tsunami, UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security to develop a policy on alternative care arrangements that promotes family and community-based care. UNICEF is also planning to support the development of care systems in the tsunami-affected provinces, based on the Child Protection Act 2003, and UNICEF intends to strengthen government and community-based organisational involvement in monitoring and supporting this system.

Project Overview

UNICEF has commissioned a report, to be written by David Tolfree, an independent consultant, entitled 'The Situation Analysis of Alternative Child Care in the Six Tsunami-Affected Provinces in Southern Thailand.' This project is intended to determine where and why gaps of information and action exist within alternative child care. UNICEF has requested that ChildTRAC staff act as consultants and provide assistance to Mr. Tolfree as he examines all aspects of alternative childcare.

Mr. Tolfree's study plans to conduct a situation analysis of care arrangements for children living without primary caregivers and/or children whose parents or caregivers have died, been displaced, incapacitated or economically devastated as a result of the tsunami disaster. The report also intends to determine the care arrangements for children in conjunction with issues such as social exclusion, socio-economic difficulties, and HIV/AIDS.

Lastly, in determining the situation of children under alternative childcare, the role of the government, institutions, law authorities, and primary stakeholders must be researched in order to understand and assess the systems, policies, and structures in place, which currently dictate the location and status of the tsunami-affected children in alternative childcare.

Objectives

Project Objectives

The following tasks are to be accomplished in order to complete 'The Situation Analysis of Alternative Child Care in the Six Tsunami Affected Provinces in Southern Thailand.'

- Analyse the situation of children in extended family care situations (kinship) and children in out-of-home care, institutional arrangements including (but not limited to) orphanages and boarding schools, in order to identify best practices for caring for children without primary caregivers. The analysis is in respect to the principles and articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Review the procedures concerning the placement of children in out-of-home care, how these procedures are carried out both formally and informally, and their compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Assess the capacity of families, communities and government officials, service providers and local organizations/associations in their ability to promote the well-being of children in need of alternative care and their capacity to support and monitor community-based care.
- Identify good practice and subsequently, to make recommendations to improve the procedures and practice of out-of-home placement, as well as viable ways to promote community-based care for monitoring and reviewing the situation of children.

ChildTRAC's Role

The following tasks are to be carried out for the implementation of the Alternative Childcare Research Project:

- To collect background information concerning formal and informal alternative care arrangements (adoption, fostering, guardianship, community-based responses and their structure).
- To coordinate/ translate meetings for David Tolfree and provide the necessary support during field visits in hopes of understanding alternative childcare arrangements and best practices for caring for children without primary caregivers, in respect to the principles and articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- To gather data regarding the placement procedures of children in out-of-home care, how these procedures are carried out both formally and informally, and their compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- To contribute to alternative childcare research via data collection, relevant analysis and formal reports.

Additional tasks requested by David Tolfree:

- To track the process of a sample of children who arrived in institutional care facilities, and examine the process by which a child's care is managed (if at all), including evaluating the planning and implementation of their exit strategy.
- To use the Speak Out Kit (SOK) to determine if the child's account of their arrival at institutional care matches that of the institution or caregiver; and, to gain an overall insight into the child's care and well-being.



Purpose

The research project, set out by Child-TRAC, focuses on researching and investigating 'Alternative Child Care Arrangements Within Institutions.'

The overall goal is for ChildTRAC to assist in the data collection of information in regards to alternative care arrangements. The information collected will identify how a child is placed within the system, and how each particular child copes with his or her particular situation. Primarily, ChildTRAC's research efforts aim to facilitate David Tolfree in his research of alternative childcare in the six tsunami-affected provinces.

Geographical Scope

The information will be gathered throughout the six tsunami-affected provinces in Southern Thailand: Ranong, Phang Nga, Phuket, Satun, Trang, and Krabi. Additional information will also be provided from institutions located in other neighbouring provinces such as Surathani, Na Kon Si Thamarat, Songkla, Yaha and Na Ti Wat. Information will also be included from Laem Pang Province in the north of Thailand. All data gathered from Laem Pang was received via telephone due to the distance factor.

The extra surveys from provinces outside the six tsunami-affected provinces will set the grounds for comparison between established, long-term child care institutions and those which began after the tsunami.

ChildTRAC Schedule/ Timeline

Alternative Childcare

Appointment Schedule
Province: Phang Nga

1 - 14 March 2007

Place	Time
Alternative Childcare Mapping Preparation before David Tofree Coming	Full day

Province: Phang Nga

Wednesday 14 March 2007

Place	Time
David Tofree arrived to Bang Niang, Phang Nga	evening

Province: Phang Nga

Thursday 15 March 2007

Place	Time
Meeting in childTRAC office with David Tofree Perspective, objective, and expectation	9:00 - 13:00

Province: Phang Nga

Friday 16 March 2007

Place	Time
Siam Care (NGO)	9:00

Province: Phang Nga

Friday 16 March 2007

Place	Time
Tsunami Children Foundation (NGO)	10:30

Province: Phang Nga

Friday 16 March 2007

Place	Time
King Boarding School 35 (Boarding School)	15:45

Alternative Childcare

Appointment Schedule
Province: Phang Nga

Monday 19 March 2007

Place	Time
Duang Prateep Foundation (NGO - Residential)	10:00

Province: Phang Nga

Monday 19 March 2007

Place	Time
Tap Tawan - Morgan Village (No Interviewed made)	13:00

Province: Phang Nga

Tuesday 20 March 2007

Place	Time
One Stop Crisis Center (OSCC) - Takua Pa Hospital (Government Organization)	9:00

Province: Phang Nga

Tuesday 20 March 2007

Place	Time
Children World Academy (Yaowawit School - Private Boarding School)	14:00

Province: Phang Nga

Wednesday 21 March 2007

Place	Time
Social Development and Human Security (SDHS) - Phang Nga Duang Prateep Foundation (NGO / Residential)	10:30 10:30

Province: Phang Nga

Wednesday 21 March 2007

Place	Time
Home & Life (NGO / Residential)	14:00

Province: Suratthani

Thursday 22 March 2007

Place	Time
Suratthani Shelter (Government Shelter)	11:00

Province: Nakhon Si Thammarat

Friday 23 March 2007

Place	Time
Ban Srithammarat (Government Shelter)	10:00

Province: Phang Nga

Saturday 24 March 2007

Place	Time
4Kali (NGO)	10:00

Alternative Childcare

Appointment Schedule
Province: Phang Nga

Monday 26 March 2007

Place	Time
Holt Sahathai (NGO)	10:30

Province: Phang Nga

Tuesday 27 March 2007

Place	Time
Meeting in childTRAC office with Alex from UNICEF	8:00 - 13:00

Province: Krabi

Wednesday 28 March 2007

Place	Time
SripHong Phukaoluan Foundation (NGO)	14:00

Province: Krabi

Thursday 29 March 2007

Place	Time
Social Development and Human Security (SDHS) - Krabi	9:30

Province: Krabi

Thursday 29 March 2007

Place	Time
Muslim Boarding School	11:00

Province: Krabi

Thursday 29 March 2007

Place	Time
Krabi Government Emergency Shelter	14:00

Province: Phuket

Friday 30 March 2007

Place	Time
UNICEF	11:00

Province: Phuket

Friday 30 March 2007

Place	Time
Phuket Government Emergency Shelter	14:00

Appointment Schedule
Province: Phang Nga
Monday 2 April 2007

Place	Time
Last day for David Tolfree in Phang Nga (at 4PM) Last meeting for Additional Information Needs	9:00 - 14:00

Province: Phang Nga
Tuesday 3 April 2007

Place	Time
Writing up after David Tolfree Leaving before the Songkran holiday comes	Full day

Province: Phang Nga
Wednesday 4 April 2007

Place	Time
Planning for next interviewings and screening tool to children after Songkran schedule	Full day

Province: Phang Nga
Thursday 5 April 2007

Place	Time
Preparing letter, scheduling and making some appointment	Full day

Province: Phang Nga
Friday 6 April 2007

Place	Time
Wrapping up after David Tolfree Leaving (holiday start)	Full day

Province: Phang Nga
9 - 12 April 2007

Place	Time
Wrapping up after David Tolfree Leaving (Songkran holiday)	Full day

Province: Phang Nga
Friday 13 April 2007

Place	Time
Songkran holiday	Full day

Province: Phang Nga
Tuesday 17 April 2007

Place	Time
Provincial Education Office - Phang Nga	11:00

Province: Phang Nga
18 - 20 April 2007

Place	Time
Confirm all appointment made for following week	Full day

Alternative Childcare

Appointment Schedule
Province: Phang Nga

Monday 23 April 2007

Place	Time
Ban Sansisuk (Government Institution)	10:00

Province: Phang Nga

Monday 23 April 2007

Place	Time
Home & Life (Interview and screening tools to children)	14:00

Province: Phang Nga

Tuesday 24 April 2007

Place	Time
Writing up, adjusting screening tool question and practise	Full day

Province: Phuket

Wednesday 25 April 2007

Place	Time
Life Home Project (Interview and screening tools) -- Another team do the phone interviewing with welfares / rehabilitations / NGOs / King Schools (Boarding and not boarding) / Special schools	10:00 Full Day

Province: Phuket

Wednesday 25 April 2007

Place	Time
Stella Maris (Interview and screening tools -- Migrant NGO) -- Another team do the phone interviewing with welfares / rehabilitations / NGOs / King Schools (Boarding and not boarding) / Special schools	14:00 Full Day

Province: Phuket

Thursday 26 April 2007

Place	Time
World Vision Shelter (Interview and screening tools) -- Another team do the phone interviewing with welfares / rehabilitations / NGOs / King Schools (Boarding and not boarding) / Special schools	10:00 Full Day

Province: Phuket

Thursday 26 April 2007

Place	Time
Child Watch Phuket (Interview and screening tools -- Migrant NGO) -- Another team do the phone interviewing with welfares / rehabilitations / NGOs / King Schools (Boarding and not boarding) / Special schools	14:00 Full Day

Province: Phang Nga

27 - 30 April 2007

Place	Time
Finishing project, writing up, sending files with security system	Full day

Methodology

The overall goal for ChildTRAC's research was collecting information in regards to alternative childcare arrangements in the six tsunami-affected provinces. The research efforts facilitated David Tolfree in his research of alternative childcare in the six tsunami-affected provinces.

ChildTRAC collected baseline information on the legal system, governmental and private institutions, shelters, welfare homes and NGOs upon David Tolfree's arrival in Thailand.

Based on this information, a plan of action was created for his fieldwork in the South:

David Tolfree, with the assistance of ChildTRAC, interviewed caregivers and children within institutions, shelters, welfare homes and boarding schools. ChildTRAC also collected background information on these bodies involved in alternative childcare arrangements.

In order to get a better overall understanding of how a child is placed within the system, ChildTRAC utilized a screening tool questionnaire form that was used to interview institutional childcare employees.

In order to achieve the additional objectives, ChildTRAC used their own tool to identify how a child copes with his or her particular situation. This tool, called the "Speak Out Kit", or SOK, was used in conjunction with Screening Tool Questionnaire forms. With the visual aid of the SOK and supporting surveys, ChildTRAC was able to assess the alternative childcare arrangement at hand.

Speak Out Kit (SOK)

The SOK is a kit comprised of different foam cut-outs used to represent people, places, activities and emotions. The SOK replaces the formality of a traditional interview, allowing the child to 'speak out' about their personal situation, living environment and/or family circumstances. Through this interactive kit, the child is able to express his or her feelings about his or her current living situation and his or her relationship with the adult care-giver. This kit allows the interviewer to get a better idea of the well-being of the child.

The SOK has been tailored specifically for the alternative childcare report so that the cut-outs and questions are directed towards children within institutionalized care. For example, the cut-outs include representations of orphanage buildings and doll figures that represent employees of an orphanage that act as a child's caregivers.

How the SOK Works

The SOK contains a variety of coloured figures representing:

1. Places in the child's environment (child's own home, the institution, neighbour's home, school, temple, mosque, church, police station, etc).
2. People in their life and environment (father, mother, caregiver, sister, grandmother, aunt, step-brother, step-father, etc).
3. Emotions / personality traits (happy, sad, angry and neutral expressions).



Child TRAC researchers will ask each child to place on a magnetic board the figures representing the places and people in his or her community. Once the child finishes the layout of his or her environment, we will ask the child to place a face representing an emotion next to a place or person to express what he or she may experience when at a particular place or in a certain person's company.

The SOK will primarily be used in interviewing children between the ages of 6 – 12 years old. However, this can differ if deemed appropriate and will be left to the discretion of the field researcher. The SOK will *always* be carried out in a private environment. This is done to ensure that the answers given are that of the child's and are formed without any outside influence or peer pressure and without the child feeling embarrassed.

The SOK



The Screening Tool Questionnaire Forms

The Screening Tool Questionnaire is the form used to record all of the children's answers that were discovered during the Speak Out Kit (SOK) exercise. These forms are completed in both Thai and English based on the outcome of the SOK activity and the field researcher's interpretation of the child's mental, emotional, and physical status.

Supplementary Screening Tool Implemented:

-Exercise to Track the Care Pathway of Children in Institutional Care

Purpose

The object of this screening tool is to investigate and clarify the actual process by which children are placed within alternative childcare situations via interviews with institutional childcare staff. ChildTRAC will examine this process in regards to case management, consideration of a child's well-being, and ethical practices within childcare institutions.

Objectives

1. To track the process of a sample of children within institutional care facilities by assessing the questionnaires answered by the institutional caregivers.
2. To examine the process by which a child's care is managed (if at all) via evaluating the preparation and execution of the child's exit strategy.
3. Apply the interview responses from the institutional caregivers to the responses from the Speak Out Kit (SOK) and screening tool questionnaire form in order to determine if the child's account of his or her arrival at institutional care matches that of the institution or caregiver and to gain a better perspective as to a child's overall well-being.

Methodology

Sources of Information

- Institutions and caregivers (World Vision, Stella Maris, Baan Santisuk, Child Watch Phuket, Home & Life)
- Children in institutional care
- Official Records

Focus Group - Children

The criteria used to select children for this study is as follows: child must live in an alternative childcare institution as a result of being orphaned, neglected, abandoned, trafficked, affected by the tsunami, or suffer from a physical or mental disability. Children will be selected for the study by the head researcher.

Method of gathering information

Primary information will be gathered by the researcher in an interview conducted with an institutional staff member who has a close relationship with the children. The interviewer asks questions about a particular child ranging from how and why he or she entered into an alternative childcare environment to what is the proposed exit strategy for the child.



Further information can be collected, if necessary, via the examination of official records (verification will be conducted using official information when available and deemed relevant by researchers).

Challenges/ Difficulties

The most difficult obstacle encountered in this project was the issue of time. There were many components to this project including background research, perfecting the screening tool, scheduling field appointments, the actual fieldwork, and writing up reports, which were, at times, rushed due to the limited amount of time given to complete the project. This was especially true as ChildTRAC was working with UNICEF consultant, Mr. David Tolfree, who was in Thailand for a brief stay so as to complete all the fieldwork necessary for his research. Consequently, ChildTRAC also had to consider Mr. Tolfree's needs in all scheduling and preparation, including additional information needed by Mr. Tolfree during interviews. The additional information requested at any given institution was extensive and, at times, disabled the researchers from conducting all the components of the activities, thus they could not fill out all of the questions on the supplementary forms.

Furthermore, subsequent to the fieldwork, ChildTRAC was responsible for documenting all information concerning the project findings. However, the date for Mr. Tolfree's draft was due one work day following the fieldwork. This time pressure proved to be stressful, especially because Mr. Tolfree already departed the country and became more difficult to contact with questions and concerns.

One other issue, which stems from the lack of time given to complete the project, is that ChildTRAC was not able to plan appointments with all the desired organisations/ institutions. In the two weeks of scheduling and preparation time, not every organisation/ institution was available to arrange a meeting with us on such a short notice. Some of the organisations/ institutions visited were unscheduled and therefore the interviews were not always thorough and informative.

To contact and interview those institutions, welfare homes and detention centres outside the project scope, the six affected provinces, a portion of the interviews (outside the six provinces) conducted were done via telephone. In making these phone calls, the researchers were dependant on the people being interviewed that the information being given was accurate.

One other major issue apparent throughout this study was that the fieldwork occurred during the Thai summer holiday; children who ChildTRAC requested for an interview were often away for the holiday break with extended family members.

If more time was granted to this project, ChildTRAC would have spent more time researching the institutions visited so that the screening tool activities could have been adapted to HIV/AIDS cases. Throughout this project it became evident that HIV/AIDS cases have different placement and treatments within the alternative childcare system.

This project was formed to gather important information that has the potential to alleviate the situation of distressed children within alternative childcare in the tsunami affected provinces. Due to the time restrictions placed on the project, the data gathered was not as meticulous as possible. In order to improve the existing report, more activities and interviews should be conducted so as to ascertain appropriate alternative childcare statistics and a better general overview of the actual alternative childcare process.

