

Terms of Reference for an external evaluation of Childhood's work to strengthen care reform in Thailand

Background and rationale

Child sexual abuse and exploitation is a global problem affecting the lives of millions of children. Even though no child is immune against potential abuse and violence, there are some groups of children that are at higher risk. Children growing up outside of family care – in residential institutions or other forms of alternative care – are among the most exposed. Isolation from family and community, weak oversight, and the higher concentration of vulnerable children in these settings all increase the risk of sexual abuse, exploitation and other forms of violence. Systematic abuse against children in alternative care has been found in a large number of countries through reports from individual children and their families, through scandals reported in the media, in research and in comprehensive national inquiries.

In Thailand, approximately one in four children lives apart from their biological parents. The vast majority live with their extended family but at least 135,000 children live in some form of residential care. Previous research has concluded that, just as in most other similar countries, around 90 percent of children in care have at least one living parent.

The Thai care system is characterized by fragmentation, limited resources and poor oversight. More than half of the approximately 700 private children's homes operate unregistered and unregulated, and many rely on foreign volunteers – a model linked internationally to voluntourism and, in its most exploitative forms, to orphanage trafficking. At the same time, an estimated three million children live in kinship care; 37 percent of these households are in the poorest income quintile, yet only a small fraction receive any financial support from the state. The child protection and welfare system does not provide systematic, and equal access to support for families in crisis. As a result, major reasons for children being placed in residential care remains material conditions: poverty and access to education, combined with neglect and other forms of violence. The role of residential care remains the predominant model for children who cannot stay with their biological, or extended, family.

Childhood has been active in Thailand for more than 20 years, and one priority has been to support a shift away from residential care towards family-based options and prevention. Over the past 10–15 years, care reform has been one of Childhood's main priorities in Thailand through substantial investments, research, advocacy and partnerships. A key strategy has been to invest in a set of complementary partnerships

designed to shift the country's child protection and care system away from residential care and towards family strengthening, kinship support, foster care and gatekeeping. Our investments have been made at several levels:

- Direct support to partner organisations developing models for family-based care, crisis interventions and prevention services
- Coalition-level support to build a field of advocates, practitioners and experts on alternative care
- Research to shed light on various dimensions of the Thai care system
- Advocacy using our network and partnerships to push for systemic change

The period under review has coincided with significant policy movement in Thailand, including the National Action Plan for Alternative Care 2022–2026, the development of provincial strategies for the management of private children's homes, a district-level child protection committee model, and a national gatekeeping ladder under development. These changes have not happened in isolation and have to a large degree happened because of intensive work by Thai civil society organizations. This work has been done together with Thai government agencies, international partners and faith-based organizations.

The purpose of this assignment is to analyse and document the systemic changes, challenges, and lessons learned from this body of work, during the period 2013–2026.

Specific Objectives of the Study and Questions

The overarching research question is to what extent, and through what mechanisms, has Childhood's portfolio contributed to the development of a care reform field in Thailand and where does the greatest potential for continued progress lie — for Childhood and for the field as a whole.

The study should focus on the following research questions:

- What changes have taken place in Thailand's child care and protection system over the period under review – on different levels and in areas such as policy, government practice, financing, civil society capacity, public attitudes and norms?
- What led to these changes, and what was Childhood's part in them? Consider civil society action, government engagement, international pressure, and broader political shifts, alongside Childhood's own investments and ACT's work, and explain how these factors interacted.

- Have the Childhood-funded projects contributed to strengthening family-based care and reducing reliance on residential care for children in Thailand? If so, in what way?
- How has ACT worked as a coalition – building shared knowledge, a common agenda, and stronger ties among its members? Has this changed how partner organisations themselves think and work (for example their knowledge, language, or approach to institutional and family-based care)? What does ACT's model offer, and what are its limits, for others who want to build similar coalitions?
- What are the challenges encountered in the work with care reform (within the coalition, with external stakeholders such as government authorities, other civil society organisations, beneficiaries, families)? What are the key barriers to faster progress?
- Where are the gaps in Childhood's portfolio in Thai care reform – in terms of actors, geographic areas, or types of intervention.
- Based on the evaluation findings, what recommendations should guide Childhood's continued investment in ACT and Thai care reform going forward?

The results from the study will be used to inform future grant-making and communication from World Childhood Foundation as well as inform Thai civil society in the continued work to reform Thailand's alternative care system. It is also intended to help inform future strategies for reforms of Thailand's alternative care system. We also aim to present the findings to other international foundations and partners with the purpose of increasing the number of stakeholders supporting care reform and family-based care in Thailand and beyond. The ambition is that the study will provide a valuable contribution to global learnings about how civil society coalitions, direct service partners and donors can work together to support the transition from institutional to family-based care.

Scope and methodology

The study should document and analyse the experiences from the ACT coalition and the projects mentioned in appendix 1.

Suitable approach and methodology are to be proposed as part of the presented tender. We anticipate a combination of desk-research (project proposals, reports, monitoring data, research outputs and policy documents) complemented by information gathered through interviews, focus groups and case studies. The methodology should include a clear approach to contribution and attribution analysis, recognising that changes in Thai care reform are shaped by multiple actors and broader societal shifts.

Some in-country fieldwork in Thailand is expected. Interviews and case studies may be carried out by local team members.

Required Expertise and Qualifications

Desired profile of the study team or individual:

- a relevant academic degree and/or practical experience that includes qualitative interviews and quantitative analysis
- a good understanding of global child protection and child safeguarding in general, and understanding of alternative care, deinstitutionalisation, family strengthening, kinship care, foster care and gatekeeping
- knowledge of, and ideally direct experience in, the Thai context
- Thai-language capacity within the team
- a good ability to express yourself in writing to clearly and structurally document the results of the assignment

Expected Deliverables and Duration of the Work

The assignment is expected to start after the summer of 2026, with a maximum duration of six months from contract signature. The final report should be submitted no later than the end of February 2027.

The report should be written in English.

An inception report with a detailed methodology and implementation plan should be submitted within two weeks after the agreement is signed.

Throughout the assignment, the team is expected to hold regular progress review meetings with Childhood staff, to allow for ongoing input and reflection on emerging findings. The team is also expected to submit a draft report for Childhood's review and feedback prior to finalisation.

The final report should not exceed 30 pages, including an executive summary. It should include:

- A overarching analysis of the findings in relation to the research questions, illustrated by questions and case studies from the ACT coalition and project partners
- A brief context analysis of how care reform plays out across different provinces and at the national level in Thailand
- A clear contribution and attribution analysis
- A list of recommendations and lessons learned

Budget

The budget should cover all costs associated with the assignment, including team member salaries, per diem, travel, translation, and data processing. Costs for printing or dissemination of the final report fall outside the scope of this budget.

Proposals may be submitted in USD or SEK. The maximum available budget for this assignment is 35,000 USD.

Exclusivity and rights

World Childhood Foundation shall retain ownership of the report and related material and shall be free to determine how the material is presented and communicated after completion of the assignment. Any changes to the design of the assignment or report must be approved by Childhood. During the assignment, any findings and conclusions shall not be shared with stakeholders outside of Childhood.

The proposal should include the following:

The study will be made in close collaboration with Childhood with clear milestones for reporting, feedback and final approval – to be developed in partnership with the consultant.

Proposals must be received no later than 31 July 2026. Proposals will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

The application must contain:

A brief description of the applicant and why you are interested in this project.

Overall approach and project plan for the assignment including:

Proposed methodology and analytical approach for the assignment.

Estimated total time for the mission, with key phases and milestones.

Cost proposal with specified fee and possible expenses for the assignment, excluding VAT.

2 work samples of similar assignments carried out with the associated description of the assignment.

2 references with contact information.

Applications and questions about the assignment can be sent by e-mail to:

Maria Dorrian, Senior Program Manager

World Childhood Foundation

E-mail: maria.dorrian@childhood.org

Additional References or Resources

United Nations General Assembly (2010). *Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children*. Resolution A/RES/64/142. United Nations, New York

National Action Plan for Alternative Care in Thailand, 2022–2026 (Ministry of Social Development and Human Security).

APPENDIX 1: Childhood-funded work in Thailand

Alternative Care Thailand (ACT) — a coalition of ~18 NGOs under CRCCT. Advocates for a national reform of Thailand's childcare system, transitioning from institutional care to family-based alternatives.

One Sky Foundation — organisation functioning in Sangkhlaburi and Chiang Mai and works with migrant, ethnic minority and stateless children. Develops and pilots models for kinship support, foster care and district-level child protection, using evidence to influence national policy.

Step Ahead Foundation — organisation based in Bangkok and operating in Thailand. Works to build the capacity of vulnerable families through programmes integrating financial inclusion, community economic development, mentoring and training to improve outcomes for at-risk children, with a strong focus on keeping families together and preventing placement in residential care.

Christian Care Foundation for Children with Disabilities (CCD) — organisation based in Bangkok focusing on improving care for children with disabilities and preventing their placement in institutional care, through day-care centres, community-based rehabilitation, and family support programs.

Baan Dek Foundation — organisation working to improve the wellbeing of vulnerable children and their families living in urban slums and construction site camps in Chiang Mai, supporting access to healthcare, education and child protection services, and creating systemic change in the Thai construction sector through advocacy.

Parenting for Lifelong Health (PLH) — a parenting program delivered by the organisation Peace Culture Foundation in Thailand with the aim to reduce violence against children in low- and middle-income countries. In Thailand, the programme has been piloted and scaled through the public health system, focused on positive parenting and reducing physical and emotional violence.

Childline Thailand — a organisation based in Bangkok operating a helpline providing professional counselling, emergency services, case management and legal assistance to children under 18 across Thailand.

Friends International Thailand (Peuan Peuan) — a organisation providing support for children and families in Bangkok and Pattaya, addressing youth unemployment, unsafe migration, child abuse and lack of access to services through mobile social support and comprehensive reintegration services.

The HUG Project — a organisation based in Chiang Mai working against child sexual exploitation and trafficking, pursuing safety, protection and justice for children through partnerships with government policymakers, law enforcement, the justice system, and NGO partners.