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Introduction

National Plan of Action on Alternative Care for Children Phase 1 (2022 - 2026) has been prepared to provide the direction of alternative care operations in Thailand that reflects the spirit of practices on alternative care for children in 5 areas: 1) Family support and strengthening to prevent unnecessary separation, 2) Gatekeeping processes and mechanisms to prevent unnecessary separation of children from the family, 3) Ensuring quality of various childcare services 4) Deinstitutionalization to reduce dependence on institutions which should be a last resort in child care and 5) Providing enabling environment in accordance with relevant conventions and laws.

This national plan of action was developed through a qualitative research with participation of various stakeholders at the local level. The national plan of action was endorsed by **the National Child Protection Committee**, which assigns **Department of Children and Youth** as the lead agency to implement the **plan that properly aligns with the Department of Children and Youth's strategic plan and action plan for 2023-2027**. **This national plan of action will also be incorporated into the drafting of the 2nd National Child Protection Strategy 2023-2027, to ensure concrete mobilization of alternative care efforts by all relevant sectors.** Department of Children and Youth, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security would like to thank the researchers, Working Group on Alternative Care System Development under the National Child Protection Subcommittee on System Development, Government Agencies, private sectors, civil societies and those who shared opinions and provided recommendations for the development of this national plan of action, and UNICEF for providing technical as well as financial support. It's sincerely hope that all stakeholders will use the essence of this national plan of action as a guideline to implement alternative care for children in Thailand, so that children can continue to thrive in quality family care.

Department of Children and Youth,
Ministry of Social Development and Human Security
September 2022

Executive Summary

The National Action Plan of Alternative Care Phase 1 (2022-2026) has been developed to promote the implementation of alternative care in Thailand. It reflects the five key components of Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, which are 1) Family support and strengthening to prevent unnecessary separation, 2) Gatekeeping processes and mechanisms to prevent unnecessary separation of children from the family, 3) Ensuring quality of various childcare services 4) Deinstitutionalization to reduce dependence on institutions which should be a last resort in child care and 5) Providing enabling environment in accordance with relevant conventions and laws.

To draft the National Action Plan of Alternative Care Phase 1 (2022-2026), qualitative research was conducted by compiling secondary and primary data via interviews. A consultation was organised to receive feedback to shape the National Action Plan further. The research helps shed light on the strengths, opportunities, and challenges in implementing various aspects of alternative care according to the systematic analysis framework on child protection.

The National Action Plan of Alternative Care aims to offer a policy framework and charts the course for developing alternative care with the Department of Children and Youth as the changemaker. It can be adopted as a common guideline for all sectors involved in implementing alternative care. It can help develop a mechanism to oversee alternative care to ensure the child's best interest as well.

The outcomes of the application of this National Action Plan of Alternative Care may include (1) vulnerable children and families have access to adequate and diverse family-strengthening services, (2) a process is put in place to systematically filter and prevent unnecessary alternative care and apply to all forms of formal alternative care, (3) in every formal alternative care environment in Thailand; a standard is put in place to serve the best interest of the child, (4) an increase of family-based care options and a decrease in the reliance on institutional care, and (5) has agencies to comprehensively and systematically coordinate alternative care provision, both within state agencies and between state and private agencies. This is to engender a positive impact from the implementation of alternative care at the local level, which is closest to the most vulnerable children and families and at the national level, that is for Thailand's alternative care system to be on par with international standards and with an emphasis on the best interest of the child.

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1. Background

The 1999 United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children proposes that states take the lead in aiding the family and provide an enabling environment for child care to ensure that a child remains under parental or kinship care where appropriate. Therefore, the state must develop mechanisms and tools for competent officials to assess the situation of children and families; taking into account the child's best interest and allowing the children and their families to participate in such assessment meaningfully. It can also ensure that children are not separated from their families unnecessarily. Suppose "a family is unable to offer appropriate child care, abandon or relinquish the child despite having received sufficient support." In that case, "it is incumbent on the state to protect the child by ensuring that they receive appropriate alternative care." Family-based care, including kinship and foster care, is to be offered as a priority; institutional care, such as residential facilities which impede the child's development, can be chosen as the last option (United Nations, 2009).

Alternative care should, however, be provided on a provisional basis. Therefore, "It is the role of the State, through its competent authorities, to ensure the supervision of the safety, well-being and development of any child placed in alternative care and the regular review of the appropriateness of the care arrangement provided." Once the original causes of removal have been resolved or have disappeared, "the return of the child to the family should be done in the best interest of the child." (United Nations, 2009)

In light of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, five components of work should be done to protect the right of the child to grow up in a safe and nurturing family without being in alternative care unnecessarily.

- (1) Family support and strengthening to prevent unnecessary alternative care - the offering of support that effectively meets the needs of children and families identified through an assessment on a case-by-case basis, with the implementation hinging on the child's best interest.
- (2) Screening process and mechanism to prevent unnecessary family separation (Gatekeeping) - the evaluation of the need to separate a child and refer them to a different environment and of other available options enabling the child to remain under parental care where it is safe and nurturing. When necessary, this mechanism can temporarily place a child in an appropriate care environment on a case-by-case basis. Such supervision must be provided systematically with clear objectives, an assessment, planning, and regular review by competent agencies or mechanisms under the law. In other words, child care must be reviewed periodically to promote the child's reintegration into the original family without compromising the child's best interest.
- (3) Provision of quality and diverse child care services (Quality care), particularly alternative care in the family-based environment. This may include the development of standards of care, working tools and mechanisms to monitor and support all forms of child care to meet at least the minimum standards.

- (4) Decreasing reliance on institutional care, leaving it the last resort for alternative child care (Deinstitutionalisation) - If it is necessary to place a child in institutional care, it should be done for the shortest time possible. A care plan to serve the child's long-term care or permanency planning should be put in place. An effort should be made to return the child to the family or family-based environment. Also, children and families should be offered assistance in transitioning and reintegration.
- (5) Provision of enabling environment (Enabling environment) by allocating sufficient resources and ensuring the presence of qualified professionals and personnel who can care for children in typical situations and emergencies. The enabling environment also includes clear mechanisms for coordination, supervision, monitoring and evaluation through collaboration with all stakeholders.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) noted to Thailand in 2012 about the changing nature of families, which left many children in rural areas under the care of their grandparents. Therefore, it was recommended that Thailand conduct a legal reform considering parental responsibilities, develop measures to strengthen families, and promote or provide facilities to do so. It was also suggested that Thailand consider ratifying the relevant Hague Conventions, particularly Convention No. 34. In addition, there is a high incidence of human trafficking among children through child adoption and an incidence of child abandonment since their parents are migrants or have died from HIV/AIDS. Thailand should consider necessary measures to prevent unnecessary family separation and ensure that a child not placed under parental care is promptly placed in foster care.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child, therefore, recommend that the Thai government do the following;

- (1) Undertake a comprehensive study to assess the situation of children placed in institutions, including their living conditions, care plans and services provided;
- (2) Set clear standards for existing institutions and the foster care system, including rules for the involvement of children and their parents in decision-making processes and promote the development of strategy on temporary family;
- (3) Ensure that all alternative care institutions and programs are well monitored, including by independent complaint monitoring mechanisms and non-governmental organisations;
- (4) Put in place measures to return the child to their family
- (5) Take proactive family strengthening measures under the implementation of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, the General Assembly resolution 64/142 of 18 December 2009.

2. An analysis of the situation and trend of alternative care

With a total population of 66.17 million, Thailand is home to 12.8 million children under 18. (National Statistical Office, 2022) It has been regarded as a country with progress in social and economic development and an upper-middle income country since 2011 (World Bank, 2022) with a positive economic growth trajectory and access to welfare. The COVID-19 pandemic has, however, taken much toll on its economy. Even though recovery has started, but the labour market is still vulnerable and the service sector, particularly those related to tourism still see a slow recovery. (World Bank, 2022, p. 18) The pandemic has also increased poverty rate by 6.4% compared with 2020. In other words, there is

an increase of 200,000 poor people. It is projected that the poverty rate will increase to 7.4% without remedy measures from the government. (World Bank, 2021)

Due to economic and social change, Thailand has reached the pivot of families and households. Becoming an aged society, the family planning policy and the shift in attitude toward having children have contributed to the change in family behaviour. It has also given rise to more diverse forms of family. The “special households” with only a single family member exist with only older family members living together or with children. Demographically, the proportion of the child population has decreased while the social problems encountered by the child have become ever more complicated. Such a scenario reflects the Thai families’ vulnerabilities and the parental ability to raise their children in the family setting.

Poverty and family vulnerabilities are the key impetus that unnecessarily pushes many children into institutional care. (Lumos, 2015) Once entered into alternative (to their original family) care, it has often been found that the child shall remain under such care until they reach their legal age. (Department of Children and Youth & Unicef, 2022) It reflects a gap between the practices of institutional care providers and the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children. (CRC Coalition Thailand, 2018) It is necessary to consider the best interest of the child more effectively.

The Department of Children and Youth under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security has the policy to support vulnerable families and to offer services to children without parental care. Apart from offering allowances to 175,000 children in poverty with a budget of 175 million baht, it also provides 107 residential facilities for an average of 6,000 children per year with a total budget of around 250 million baht. In addition, Thailand is home to privately run residential facilities. According to the government’s statistics, there are 396 such residential facilities, both registered or unregistered, which care for around 6,200 children.

Apart from offering an allowance to low-income families and the provision of residential facilities, the Department of Children and Youth also provides child allowances to support 5,400 children under kinship care and another 339 under foster care at the rate of 2,000 baht per person per month. Training to develop the family’s capacity for child care has also been offered appropriately to the child’s age.

Thailand clearly relies on residential facilities as a primary service to children without parental care. (Department of Children and Youth, 2020) However, given the alternative care policy in Thailand, public agencies currently adhere to the guidelines to decrease their reliance on institutional care. They emphasise the measures to prevent unnecessary alternative care through family strengthening and to increase family-based alternative care options.

Given the prevalence of privately run children’s homes mostly without a license to operate (Alternative Care Thailand, 2022), and other types of residential facilities caring for non-kin children whose parents cannot care for such as dormitories, charitable student’s dormitories, religious institutions, group homes, or family-like residential facilities; the Department of Children and Youth realises the importance to collaborate with all types of residential facilities and to develop Thailand’s alternative care system in compliance with international standards and to serve the best interest of the child better.

3. Compliance with international laws, treaties, and obligations to which Thailand has pledged and the three-tier plans (National Strategy, Master Plan under the National Strategy, and other related plans)

3.1. Compliance with international laws, treaties, and obligations to which Thailand has pledged

3.1.1. Convention on the Rights of the Child

The convention emphasises ensuring a child can grow in a family-based environment. The States Parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when such separation is necessary for the child's best interests. (Articles 9-11) And States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of violence while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child. Social programs shall be established to provide support to the children and their families with an emphasis on offering child protection to the child deprived of their parental care. Such child shall be placed under foster care, kafalah of Islamic law, adoption or, if necessary, placement in suitable institutions for the care of children with due regard being paid to the desirability of continuity in a child's upbringing and the child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background. The child care shall be reviewed periodically, with welfare being given to the children and their families to ensure their affording a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. The parent(s) or others responsible for the child have the primary responsibility to secure, within their abilities and financial capacities, the conditions of living necessary for the child's development. (Articles 19-21, 25, 27) ("Convention on the rights of the child", 1989)

3.1.2. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities aims to promote the full and equal enjoyment by persons with disabilities of their human rights and fundamental freedoms and to promote respect for their inherent dignity, respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities. It recognises that children with disabilities shall have the full realisation of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities without discrimination of any kind on the basis of disability and recalls the implementation of obligations of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It also highlights the fact that the majority of persons with disabilities live in conditions of poverty, and in this regard recognising the critical need to address the negative impact of poverty on persons with disabilities. ("United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities", 2006)

Convinced that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State, and that persons with disabilities and their family members should receive the necessary protection and assistance to enable families to contribute towards the full and equal enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities, States Parties shall take all necessary measures to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children.

In all actions concerning children with disabilities, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. Respect for the right of all persons with disabilities to found a family and family institution. States Parties shall ensure the rights and responsibilities of persons with disabilities with regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship, adoption of children or similar institutions where these concepts exist in national legislation; in all cases, the best interests of the child shall be paramount. States Parties shall render appropriate assistance to persons with disabilities in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities. (“United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”, 2006)

States Parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child. Where the immediate family is unable to care for a child with disabilities, undertake every effort to provide alternative care within the wider family, and failing that, within the community in a family setting. (“United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”, 2006)

3.2. Compliance with domestic laws

3.2.1. Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E.2560 (2017)

It provides the rationale for providing welfare to protect and maintain the well-being of children and families. Section 27 provides that all persons are equal before the law and shall have rights and liberties and be protected equally under the law without discrimination. Section 48 provides for the rights of a mother during the period before and after giving birth that shall be protected and assisted as provided by law. Section 54 provides for the right to quality education for twelve years from pre-school to the completion of compulsory education free of charge. The state shall provide for young child care and development through cooperation with local administrative organisations and the private sector, which can support the educational expenses borne by those in poverty. Section 71 prescribes that the state should strengthen the family unit through support for housing and health. The state should assist children, youth, women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, disadvantaged persons and underprivileged persons in quality living. It shall protect such persons from violence or unfair treatment and provide treatment, rehabilitation and remedies to such injured persons. In allocating the budget, the state shall consider the different necessities and needs with respect to genders, ages and conditions of persons to ensure fairness. (Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E.2560”, 2017)

3.2.2. Child Protection Act B.E. 2546 (2003) and relevant Ministerial Regulations

Promulgated to ensure compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which stipulates the family’s role in providing child care, it is consisted of nine chapters and one transitional chapter, altogether 88 sections. It identifies different child protection mechanisms from competent officials and those authorised, the National Child Protection Committee, and the local child protection committee. It also states guidelines for treatment toward children, including assistance for children who receive care below the minimum standards, the protection of the welfare of children at risk, and foster care, emergency shelter, orphanage, Welfare Centre, Welfare Protection Centre, or Development and Rehabilitation Centre, the promotion of good behaviour among students, and the Child Protection Fund. (Child Protection Act B.E. 2546, 2003)

3.2.3. Child and Youth Development Promotion Act, B.E. 2550 (2007) and its amendment (no.2) B.E. 2560 (2017)

It provides principles for child promotion and development, taking into account the best interest of the child and youth, their right to basic education, public health services, their right to play, recreation time and involvement in age-appropriate recreational activities, and free participation in culture and arts. It also applies to children with disabilities, learning disabilities, and gifted children. It requires the state to take action to ensure the child is bonded with their family and has the right to birth registration, development, recognition and opportunities to participate without unfair discriminatory treatment due to differences.

In addition, it supports private or community organisations working on child and youth development to register and receive subsidies, assistance, or support from the state. The subsidies can be used to recruit volunteers, public relations, disseminate information, or study and research. The assistance can also be spent to help a child whose rights are violated (Section 41-43). The Act also mentions the power to revoke the registration or suspend subsidy, assistance or support previously provided to such private or community organisations. (Section 44) (“Child and Youth Development Promotion Act B.E. 2550”, 2007; (“Child and Youth Development Promotion Act B.E. 2560”, 2017)

3.2.4. The Promotion of Development and Protection of Family Institution Act B.E. 2562 (2019)

This Act has been revised based on the existing law, the Act on Protection of Domestic Violence Victims B.E. 2550, which emphasises rehabilitating the offenders and protecting the domestic violence victims to maintain good relationships within the family. The law has since been revised to emphasise the promotion, development, and protection of family institutions by integrating and cooperating with all sectors. Measures to protect the welfare of family members are still regarded as the state’s obligation. The state has to promote family strengthening and protect family members from violence or unfair treatment, as well as to offer rehabilitation and remedy to the victims of violence. (“The Promotion of Development and Protection of Family Institution Act B.E. 2562”, 2019)

3.2.5. The Prevention and Solution of the Adolescent Pregnancy Problem Act B.E. 2559 (2016)

It emphasises the development of mechanisms at the policy, strategy, and implementation levels through collaboration among concerned public and private agencies. The aim is to integrate their efforts for the prevention and solution of adolescent pregnancy with the Prime Minister as the Chairperson. The Act determines the system for assisting and protecting adolescents. Section 9 provides for the provision of an alternative family to adolescents who cannot afford to raise the child on their own. The *Ministerial Regulation on the provision of social welfare for the prevention and solution of adolescent pregnancy B.E. 2020*, in chapter 4 on the provision of an alternative family, determines the qualifications of a person eligible to register to care for a child borne by adolescents temporarily. (“The Prevention and Solution of the Adolescent Pregnancy Problem Act B.E. 2559”, 2016)

3.2.6. Social Welfare Promotion Act, (No.2) B.E 2550 (2007)

It identifies a social welfare coordination mechanism to ensure effectiveness and consistency in addressing various social problems which warrant a quick solution. This is mobilised through the National Commission on Social Welfare Promotion as the responsible organisation for determining social welfare standards and establishing the Social Welfare Promotion Fund to subsidise the provision of social welfare throughout the country. (“Social Welfare Promotion Act (No.2) B.E 2550”, 2007)

3.3. Compliance with the three-tier plans

3.3.1. The First-Tier Plan: The National Strategy

The 20-Year National Strategy (2018-2037), which is relevant to the guidelines for alternative care, can be described as follows;

(1) National Strategy on the development and enhancement of human resources

Goals

- Thai people are good, competent and have qualities compatible with the way of life in the 21st century.
- Thai society has an environment that favours and supports lifelong development.

Strategic issues

- Changing values and culture
- Enhancing potential throughout life
- Establishing an environment favourable to the development and enhancement of human resources

Achievements according to the National Strategy

Promote a caring environment in a family, develop human quality at all ages to develop quality human resources, with the skills and knowledge, being good persons and having discipline, being able to learn by themselves at all ages, emphasising on the creating of well-being for Thai families, the promotion of the roles and participation of public and private sectors, families and community in human resource development

(2) National Strategy on creating opportunities and social equality

Goals

- To engender fairness and minimise inequality in all aspects
- To decentralise economic and social development to create more opportunities and involvement of all sectors as the driving force for national development at all levels
- To enhance the capacity of the local community in the development, self-reliance, and self-management to ensure a quality society

Strategic issues

- To minimise inequality and to ensure fairness in all aspects
- To enhance social force
- To enhance the capacity of the local community in the development, self-reliance, and self-management

Achievements according to the National Strategy

All sectors have been mobilised and become involved in the promotion, support, and development to ensure the security and fundamental welfare of family in the context of society teemed with diversity in ethnicity, religion, and cultural way of life without discrimination.

3.3.2. The Second-Tier Plan: Master Plan under the National Strategy

Master Plans under National Strategy, which are related to the guidelines for alternative care, include the following;

Master Plan 10 on the evolution of value and culture

Goals: Thai people are virtuous, adhere to good values, love, and have pride in being Thai. Thai people adopt Sufficiency Economy Philosophy and apply it to their daily life. Thai society teems with joy and gets more recognition from the international community. To achieve the goals, social institutions must be integrated to encourage virtuous practice among the Thais and adherence to virtue and ethics. This can set the “way” to guide living and set the foundation on which Thai people can develop their humanity with the cooperation of robust social and cultural institutions, including family, community, education, mass media and civil society.

Master Plan 11 on life-long capacity building

Goals: Thai people of all ages attain a better quality of life and balanced development of their body, mind, and ethics. They become knowledgeable and equipped with skills for the 21st century. They love life-long education. This Master Plan aims to develop an environment conducive to developing and enhancing human potential. It helps create the well-being of Thai families as the smallest unit, which can be the driving force for social mobilisation. One small plan is to systematically develop the environment promoting human potential from the family to the community and societal level and adopting a system and mechanism to ensure efficient human resource development.

Master Plan 15 on social force

Goals: Every sector gets more involved in social development, including the private sector, civil society, and the local community. Support is given to encourage people to strengthen the community and to get them involved in the effort to tackle the problems that meet the demand and are based on knowledge and an in-depth understanding of the context.

Master Plan 17 on social equality and security

Goals: All Thai people afford better social protection and security through establishing social security, which applies to people from all walks of life, ages, genders, and groups, particularly the marginalised and vulnerable groups. In addition, an effort shall be made to bridge the gaps in inequality and disparity, which are set to escalate. It should help develop and promote human resources through the development of social security that is in line with basic living needs.

3.3.3. The Third Tier Plan: Other relevant plans

The National Action Plan for the Development of Children and Youth no. 2, 2017-2021 - Children and youth attain a better quality of life and development proportional to their ages. They become physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy, have wisdom, and become creative citizens who get involved and drive towards social development. They are responsible for themselves, care for the public interest, and are active in developing society. For human development, an emphasis is placed on

working with children and youth, and the environment affecting their development, including their families, community, and society. (Child and Youth Development Promotion Committee, 2018)

The Action Plan on Family, 2020-2022 - It aims to ensure families have well-being and are free of violence. They should be able to rely on themselves and engage in honest occupations based on the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy. They can provide for their children and live happily, and their children develop comprehensively and appropriately for their ages. They can mobilise for a quality society and minimise risk factors and the hostile environment, which can be detrimental and destructive to the family. Personnel working with families have received knowledge, skills, and proper attitude on how to enhance prevention and suggest the solution to problems faced by the families. All organisations have good coordination and efficient and effective implementation (Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development, 2020)

The Early Childhood Development Plan, 2021-2027 - It aims to ensure all children in Thailand, including children of migrant workers and children belonging to non-Thai families who live in Thailand, can attain quality, age and potential-appropriate, comprehensive development. They should have access to healthcare, education, and social welfare equally. As to the treatment of children, an emphasis should be placed on the participation and recognition of persons concerned with children to serve the child's best interest. (Early Childhood Development Policy Committee, 2021)

The National Strategy for Child Protection, 2017-2021 - Importance is placed on developing the system, measure, responsible mechanism, and coordinating point in each agency to help build the capacity at the national and regional levels. Curriculum development will be made to serve the personnel and multidisciplinary team which can work across the platforms and integrate their efforts among concerned agencies. Each agency shall also be encouraged to develop its human resource development plans regularly. (Department of Children and Youth, 2017)

In sum, the National Strategy's Second Tier and Third Tier Plans emphasise the importance of family and community to develop security in their living. The action plan on alternative care shall help Thailand to achieve the goals of securing the foundation to ensure all children can grow up to their full potential and in a safe and nurturing family environment.

4. The drafting process of the Action Plan

The drafting of the action plan on alternative care has been carried out as qualitative research. Secondary and primary data were collected. In-depth interviews and consultation sessions were conducted. The consultation sessions were at the beginning and towards the end to receive feedback on the draft. This research has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Thammasat University (Social Sciences).

4.1. Secondary data and literature review

The research team relies on secondary data from the report titled *Thai alternative care situational analysis report: information gap and recommendations from applying the Tracking Progress Tool*. The tools used to analyse the situation and identify gaps in data and issues at the macro and organisational levels. The analytical framework is on policy, implementation structure, structural

arrangement and workforce, budget, coordination among agencies, diversity, and cultural dimensions in implementing alternative care.

In addition, a review has been done on compliance with international laws, treaties and obligations to which Thailand has pledged along with the three-tier plans, including the National Strategy, the Master Plan under the National Strategy, and other plans as well as other concerned concepts and theories.

4.2. Data collection

The research team interviewed key informants from August – November 2021 online. The inclusion criteria for the key informants are based on their geographical locations and roles. The details are as follows;

Key informant selection

The research team has identified four areas in developing the alternative care system which need more information. These are family strengthening services, kinship and foster care, the management of welfare for children and families through fundraising and mobilising resources from non-governmental agencies, and the provision of alternative care considering the cultural dimensions. The researchers have then identified the locations where they are known for each key issue and collected data from various sectors within the specified locations to get an overview of alternative care service provision in the area. In addition, the research team has identified another group of key informants who may offer additional information on alternative care. The list of key informants has been reviewed and approved by the Alternative Care Working Group.

This research features five groups of key informants;

1. **Key informants from the area with family strengthening services** - Nakhon Si Thammarat. The key informants selected and interviewed include the Provincial Head of the Social Development and Human Security Office, the superintendent at the Nakhon Si Thammarat boys' shelter, a social worker at the Nakhon Si Thammarat boys' shelter, an executive and a social worker of the Sahathai Foundation in Nakhon Si Thammarat.
2. **Key informants from the area with services to support kinship and foster care as a gatekeeping mechanism** - Khon Kaen. The key informants selected and interviewed include the Provincial Head of the Social Development and Human Security Office, the superintendent and an officer working on foster care at Ban Khaen Thong Home for Children, and an officer of the Center for Creating Opportunities of Children and Youth, Khon Kaen Municipality.
3. **Key informants from the area with alternative care services and child and family welfare services fundraised and resourced by non-state agencies** - Chiang Mai. The persons interviewed include the Provincial Head of the Social Development and Human Security Office, the superintendent and social workers of Wiang Phing Home for Children.
4. **Specialists and officers working on alternative care**, including a specialist on social welfare and children, Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI), a specialist from the Equitable Education Fund (EEF), a representative from the Ministry of Education (Special Education Bureau), one representative from the Department of Provincial Administration,

a social worker from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Rajanagarindra Institute, Department of Mental Health, Director of Division of Family Institution, Faculty of Nursing, Khon Kaen University, and an officer from the Department of Children and Youth

5. Experts working on issues related to alternative care

4.3. The public consultation on the National Action Plan of Alternative Care

Following the collection of primary and secondary data, the research team applies frameworks and findings as the guidelines to conduct Focus Group Discussions during the national conference on *Children in safe and nurturing families*, conducted online on 19-20 November 2021, with more than 500 participants.

5. Findings from the study

The Department of Children and Youth (DCY) is a principal coordinating agency in charge of the development and enhancement of the capacity of children and youth, protecting and upholding their rights and promoting welfare for children and families. The department has developed the alternative care system via the Alternative Care System Development Working Group under the subcommittee for the Development of Child Protection System, reporting to the National Child Protection Committee. The department commissioned this situational analysis study and implemented of concerned activities, summarised the progress, and identified strengths, opportunities and challenges based on the systematic analysis framework on child protection as follows;

5.1. Legal frameworks and policies concerning family strengthening and the prevention of unnecessary separation of children

5.1.1. Strengths and opportunities

- The Child Protection Act B.E.2546 is a major law that places importance on the family as a social unit to raise a child on par with minimum standard pursuant to Section 23, alternative family-based care pursuant to Section 33, the best interest of the child, and Ministerial Regulations pursuant to Section 22. Also, a new version of the Child Protection Act is being drafted, placing more importance on local child protection mechanisms. Additionally, the draft addresses that persons close to the children to take part in prevention, care, and providing solutions to children's problems, the child protection measures shall be based on the best interest of the child, and the recruitment of alternative family to ensure children are cared for and developed in a family environment.

Other relevant laws include the Civil and Commercial Code, the Penal Code, the Civil Registration Act B.E. 2551, the Nationality Act B.E. 2508, the Child and Youth Development Promotion Act, B.E. 2550, the Prevention and Solution of the Adolescent Pregnancy Problem Act B.E. 2559, the Promotion of Development and Protection of Family Institution Act B.E. 2562, the Early Childhood Development Act B.E. 2562, etc.

- A review of the National Child Protection Strategy 2017-2021 is being done to develop the draft strategy version 2 and to determine shared visions among concerned agencies. The draft places importance on promoting family strengthening, the mobilisation of resources and the

promotion of social volunteers' involvement to protect children. In addition, there are other relevant national policies, including the Draft Early Childhood Development Plan, 2021-2027, the Strategic Action Plan for the Prevention and Solution of the Adolescent Pregnancy Problem, 2017-2026, and the Child Support Grant based on the integrated plan for life-long human development which is part of the social protection system.

- The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security has been implementing to strengthen families in post-Covid, with vulnerable families with children, older persons, persons with disabilities, bed-ridden patients, and single dads and moms as beneficiaries. A project aiming to enhance the quality of life of vulnerable groups at the household level was implemented with an integration of 12 Ministries and one agency to cover all aspects. It helps ensure their access to rights and welfare to develop their quality of life, rely sustainably on themselves and their families, and adjust to a new normal.

According to the Family Assembly's resolutions, five adjustments can be made to help the families, (1) their income, (2) living conditions or housing, (3) education, (4) health, and (5) access to public services. The plan has been approved and implemented through the National Family Assembly's resolution in 2020. This includes (1) the provision of learning space for families to enhance cooperation among organisations, networks, community and workplace and to recruit leaders who can help to educate families and promote creative media for families as well as to restrict unhealthy media, (2) the provision of family welfare in the wake of Covid-19 crisis including the review or revision of regulations or the determination of tax measures to reduce burden of workplaces which provide daycare services, the development of family counseling system, the development of learning process for family in crisis, the provision of welfare to help raise young children and to promote their education, (3) the policy management concerning family including the review of laws and regulations making them favorable to enhancing quality families, the review of curriculum making it more appropriate to the changing context including by offering Home School education, the development of online curriculum, which shall be further submitted for consideration of the cabinet and other concerned agencies.

The development of the policies above shall coincide with reviewing and drafting the National Child Protection Strategy Version 2. Apart from supporting the care of children in vulnerable families affected directly and indirectly by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Strategy helps chart the course and determine the goals of family strengthening. The National Alternative Care Action Plan will be developed in light of the aforementioned policies and laws to minimise redundancy and ensure responsible persons are assigned to the projects and activities. Nevertheless, even though the existing laws can be applied to many issues, there are problems with their interpretation and enforcement. From our interviews with the key informants, we have found the need to review legal issues further.

5.1.2.Challenges

- There has not been any revision of the Ministerial Regulations concerning foster care and kinship care to ensure more efficient provision of such care for children in the community. There is also no revision to support private organisations to be service providers under supervision but able to request expenses for operation cost, nor to increase the amount of child support grant to be proportional to the current cost of living.

- No effort has been made to determine definitions or to study the authorities and duties to supervise and monitor group homes, supervised independent living, preparation and support for children about to or have their care ended, respite care, and other forms of institutional care beyond the definitions under the Child Protection Act B.E. 2546 (such as boarding school or religious institution)
- Develop guidelines for the evaluation, decision-making, and good governance mechanisms for competent officials, supervisory agencies, and social service providers based clearly on the best interest of the child
- Clear intent has yet to be declared on whether to disallow more private or public institutional care establishments, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Coordination should be made with the Ministries which are authorised to give such permission and supervision of residential facilities under other laws or regulations.
- There has yet to be a study to review the exercise of the parental right to challenge the authority of child custody by public agencies and the system to offer legal assistance to the parents who want to exercise such right.
- The National Child Protection Strategy, 2017-2021's strategies were not adequately disseminated at the regional level. As a result, they were not integrated as part of the provincial action plans and the working plans of the Department of Children and Youth or other departments within the same Ministry.

5.2. Coordinating Structure and Mechanism

Under the existing administrative structure within the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, alternative care work has been decentralised to various Departments and Divisions, separating work related to children from those related to families. There is yet a single agency with direct responsibility and capacity to coordinate such effort to streamline the implementation, services, monitoring, and evaluation under one agency.

5.2.1. Strengths and Opportunities

- The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security adopts policies to integrate the implementation to provide social welfare. This ranges from the initiatives to enhance efficiency in collaboration or One Home -- the integrated projects to enhance the quality of life of vulnerable groups at the household level. Therefore, it is a chance for the Department of Children and Youth to communicate a common understanding about child protection and alternative care to achieve shared visions and designation of duties and responsibilities.
- The Child Protection Act B.E. 2546 prescribes mechanisms through the multidisciplinary task forces at the national and provincial levels. They are tasked to provisionally implement the action plans concerning alternative care while pending the study of the guidelines for reform of affiliated agencies to be more compatible with the mission under the Child Protection Act B.E. 2546. It is, therefore, necessary to develop mechanisms to keep monitoring the situation of children and families and compare it with the standards, to write reports and prepare the registration, to conduct screening and referral of responsibility, to provide a safe and rehabilitative environment to reintegrate children and family, and to control and eradicate any risk factors.

- Pursuant to the policies and the Act on the Determination of Plans and Procedures for Devolving Power to Local Administration Organizations B.E. 2552, the Department of Children and Youth and the Department of Provincial Administration have had consultations over the transfer of the development of children and youth under the social development strategy for quality of life and safety. It is a chance to include the welfare of children and families as part of alternative care work.

Action plans at the local level have to clearly adhere to the regulations concerning the implementation of local administration organisations. This can help to minimise problems, limitations, or a lack of clarity regarding the scope of duties according to the laws governing local administration organisations and to ensure the availability of budgets pursuant to Section 8 of the Child and Youth Development Promotion Act, B.E. 2550 and the National Strategy for Child Protection, 2017-2021. As a result, the Department of Children and Youth has to adapt its roles as an agency offering encouragement, support, and supervision and as a key agency on technical aspects. While pending the transition of work, it is possible to develop alternative care action plans and shared indicators together.

- Under the policy to translate early childhood development into practice and under the comprehensive framework of cooperation for early childhood among the four Ministries, the Early Childhood Development Plan, 2021-2027, was approved by the cabinet. It is an integrated public health services, education, welfare and rights protection plan. Incentives have been offered to encourage local administration to develop the quality of daycare facilities and to prepare an environment conducive to learning and development. A strategy has been set to mobilise for family development and family strengthening.

5.2.2. Challenges

- Given how the Department of Children and Youth has devolved its mandate to various bureaus under its charge, there is no centre for coordination, instruction, supervision, monitoring and evaluation and overall development. In addition, DCY has yet to determine the plan to reform its structure and redesign the administrative components commensurate to its mission to provide welfare to children and families, reflecting the alternative care work to strengthen the family and deinstitutionalise child care.
- The Department of Children and Youth is yet to develop its expertise and capacity to become an agency that can support, promote, supervise, and is ready to devolve its duties and services to local administration organisations and civil society and ensure they can manage the work by themselves.

5.3. Diverse and quality service under supervision and promotion

Quality assurance should be developed based on criteria in the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children. Alternative care should be provided in the shortest time possible by evaluating children and families who may encounter a range of problems and may need unique sets of services, a case management plan, the monitoring of child care, and reintegration planning.

The Department of Children and Youth primarily focuses on developing and providing services in residential facilities under its charge. Such work has been implemented through defined mechanisms, division of responsibilities, and Standard Operating Procedures. What needs to be further

developed is family-based care and welfare in the community. DCY can transform its role from offering residential care services to promoting and supporting children to be placed in family-based care. In addition, such alternative care services are not diverse enough and fail to cover group homes, independent living, child-headed households, respite care, preparing children and families transitioning from alternative care, and support for family and social reintegration.

In addition, the existing case management process to offer care and to protect the children's welfare is still not subject to supervision to ensure that it serves the purpose of the Child Protection Act B.E.2546.

5.3.1.Strengths and Opportunities

- There are 107 agencies under the department which can be divided into groups for expertise development purposes. They can provide services for particular groups and address the problem in the area. The orphanages can be upgraded to become a learning centre to demonstrate how to manage welfare for children and families commensurate to local context and problems, meeting the need of local children and families.
- Measures exist to support private residential facilities coupled with guidelines from research on alternative care in the provinces of Tak, Kanchanaburi and Chiang Mai. The information can help the private sector to notify their shelters and give information about the children to develop individual care plans ensuring all children fall under the charge of competent officials. It should start with creating a common understanding to shape the viewpoints on prioritising families. If the shelters are not registered, they may only be allowed an office and activity working with the community. Regarding religion-based residential facilities, coordination should be made with the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Interior to determine guidelines for giving permission, supervision, monitoring and revocation of permits in unison.
- For foster care, training is offered, and a manual is developed. The foster care standard is being drafted, and the coaching service system is being developed. Based on information from Phase Two, examples of good practices in communicating with the community have been discovered. Communities with strong implementation are being recruited. The qualification of the foster family, recruitment, and evaluation are being determined. Coordination with public health volunteers and the Tambon Health Promoting Hospital is created and maintained.
- Regarding the preparation of children in residential care, the Department of Children and Youth has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the development of children and youth in residential facilities of the Department of Children and Youth. This collaboration is under the project to prepare children and youth for happy and sustainable reintegration. Such collaboration is being made with the Thai Health Promotion Foundation and the Planned Parenthood Association of Thailand under the Patronage of HRH to ensure the children acquire life skills and get ready to return to society. There is a chance to replicate or further develop such a model by adding the work with family. This includes identifying guidelines and tools for identification, evaluation, and preparation of the families, planning to offer assistance to the children and families during the transition period and identifying indicators for successful reintegration to ensure a common standard.

5.3.2.Challenges

- The provision of alternative care still fails to place importance on tracking the background of the children, the maintenance of the relationships between the children and their biological families if it is not incompatible with the best interest of the child, the permanency planning, and the awareness of culture, language, traditional way of life to enable social reintegration.
- Shelters for Children and Families are responsible for the mechanisms and screening process to prevent unnecessary family separation and the placement of the child based on the necessity and suitability principles. The challenge remains with the capacity of the personnel and the coordination and mobilisation of resources from local agencies and in the local area. In addition, the competent officials, the Provincial Child Protection Committee, and the multidisciplinary task force still need to communicate more to engender an understanding of alternative care and gatekeeping measures.
- There are challenges as to the supervision and monitoring of residential facilities in terms of quality assurance, a lack of common evaluation standards for both public and private sectors, and the chance for outside agencies, which are independent mechanisms or non-state agencies, to inspect in compliance with the good governance in public administration.

5.4. Capacity to manage alternative care

In terms of childcare system reform through the transformation of relying heavily on residential facilities to prioritise family strengthening so children can remain in the community, it is necessary to conduct a survey and evaluate the qualification and quality of the personnel. The workforce must have the capacity commensurate with the needs and scale of the problems while complying with the prescriptions in the Child Protection Act B.E.2546. This applies to the competent officials, social workers and medical professionals, private organisations' child care personnel and volunteers. In addition, this may apply to persons surrounding the children, from their custodians (kinship family, foster family, and adoptive family), public health officers, educational personnel, and law enforcement officials. All of them need to have knowledge and understanding of alternative care and can coordinate and pull their resources together.

5.4.1.Strengths and Opportunities

- Standard Operating Procedures have been developed for competent officials and social workers working on child protection. The manual on standard evaluation has also been prepared. These cover the standards concerning (1) ethical implementation, (2) knowledge, (3) skills and implementation process, (4) coordination, and (5) supervision. Such evaluation tools are being tried in pilot projects.

5.4.2.Challenges

- There are too few competent officials and social workers. Compared to the provision of social services to children and families, it is considered disproportionately low. Empirical research on the social service workforce is necessary to ensure adequate capacity and qualification for child care work.
- A lack of training to ensure that the workforce has the knowledge and understanding about child development, problems affecting children without parental care, and various forms of alternative care services. Such knowledge should be taught at the university level or during the

training before work, during on-site-training and training for evaluation after they have started working. The certification and licensing system should be designed and offered to those qualified and who have received the training and education before they can start working. An effort should be made to develop and disseminate information for further study, and operational manuals and guidelines should be prepared. The curriculum should be reviewed and developed, particularly concerning the provision of services to special needs children since such work requires special knowledge and skills.

- It is still necessary to enhance workforce support services to prevent work overload and stress through self-care, proper rest, mentoring system, and adequate sponsors. This can help avoid burnout and high personnel turnover and preserve quality personnel in the care system.

5.5. Budget

To place importance on and pool resources to provide welfare to the children and families, it is necessary to rely on statistics about the children in the care system and children vulnerable to being left without parental care. The statistics can lead to calculating the cost per head of child care expense, the existing alternative care services, the number of social management units, the social service workforce and the financial resources available. In transitioning towards strengthening family and community, it is necessary to calculate childcare expenses and budget for administration within the timeframe to ensure proper allocation and disbursement of funding.

5.5.1.Strengths and Opportunities

- In collaboration with UNICEF, the Department of Children and Youth has evaluated the expenses incurred from implementing the Child Protection Act B.E. 2546. It helps to determine the cost per head and to project the budget plan to pave the way for transferring power and work to local administration organisations.
- The subsidy for child care in a family can be drawn from various funds established by different laws and mechanisms.

5.5.2.Challenges

- There has yet to be an effort made to communicate the concept to the sponsors and donors to transform from sympathy-based services to rights-based services.
- Disbursement from the Child Protection Fund is still problematic and fails to meet the demand of special needs children.
- The study on the subsidy of foster care services, including the remuneration and child care allowance, is still preliminary.
- The sources and categories of the disbursement for implementation expenses (food, supplies, medical services) must be clearly identified and set a common standard nationwide.

5.6. Supervision, monitoring and evaluation

Concerning the supervision, monitoring and evaluation, it is necessary to obtain information and statistics about the children and family. Tools and indicators must be developed for monitoring and evaluation. They must be accepted and recognised so they can be used in the development of action plans, budget plans and personal plans.

5.6.1.Strengths and Opportunities

- The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security has surveyed vulnerable families under the policy of the integrated project to enhance the quality of life of vulnerable groups at the household level. The ministry has started collecting data at the household level by itself. However, a suggestion has been made that it is not worth it for MSDHS to collect data by itself. The data collection may be inconsistent, affecting the integrity of the information. Therefore, it is recommended that secondary data from previous surveys by local organisations might be better.
- Regarding the development of statistical database, the Department of Children and Youth has embarked on an effort to develop a database through the Child Protection Information System (CPIS) application. This can serve as a portal to receive notifications and to offer comprehensive welfare. It can be made as part of the follow-up on the work by competent officials, the online volunteer registration, the online foster care registration, the child protection interpreter database and the private residential facility system. This can give rise to quality implementation and clear monitoring and evaluation. It can facilitate service persons or agencies to have convenient and prompt access to quality evaluation.
- The opportunity for coordination in collecting and integrating data of unregistered children. The Department of Children and Youth has been collaborating with the Department of Mental Health, Equitable Education Fund (EEF), Bangkok Metropolitan, and UNICEF to place children in emergency foster care and to support families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic
- Qualitative data has been acquired from research which can better aid the evaluation, review, supervision and follow-up on alternative care. Previous studies include the situation analysis of alternative care using Tracking Progress Tool, the research of the situation of children in private residential facilities in two pilot sites; in Tak's Mae Sot in collaboration with the Save the Children and Kanchanaburi's Sangkhlaburi with the One Sky Foundation, and the study on unregistered private residential facilities in Chiang Mai.
- The Department of Children and Youth has already developed an internal policy framework for child protection, the Child Safeguarding Policy for public residential facilities. Meanwhile, private organisations have also created similar policy frameworks. It can be used for self-evaluation by allied organisations. This can help prevent the use of violence by the personnel involved with delivering care. The use of such policy can be expanded to formal and informal educational facilities, businesses, the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection's shelters, and dormitories in some areas. It can be further replicated and expanded to various other agencies in charge of offering care and working with children. It will even enhance the conviction to adhering to the policy on a mandatory basis.

5.6.2.Challenges

- There has yet to be a study to monitor and evaluate the results to assess the merit, efficacy, and efficiency of each type of residential facility, how they have complied with the mission framework provided for by law, and how their work has impacted the quality of life of children under their current or previous care. If not worth it, it can be adjusted and reformed. Certain facilities can be run to meet the demands of children who warrant special protection commensurate to the context and situation in the local area, with an emphasis on family-based care in the community

- There is a lack of centralised mechanisms to supervise, mentor, monitor, follow up, report, and coordinate databases. There is also a lack of independent mechanisms to supervise and assess.
- No effort has been made to listen to the voice of the children and those who have undergone alternative care. They can help to give feedback and recommendations for the development of policies, actions, and projects.

5.7. Attitude, social norms, and culture

It is recognised that there are positive and negative attitudes, social norms, local values, culture and traditions towards providing alternative care, family separation, and family-based care.

5.7.1. Strengths and Opportunities

- The social value and culture of mutual help primarily contribute to the volunteer spirit, making it possible to mobilise funds and resources to support child care and to assist families in vulnerable situations and crises -- such as natural disasters, floods, fires, storms, or pandemics.
- The operation of social enterprises can be cited as a model to help raise awareness of the importance of the child's rights and business principles.

5.7.2. Challenges

- Some existing values, beliefs, and attitudes continue to put children in a more vulnerable situation. They deprive the children of the opportunities to receive family-based alternative care or accelerate their entry into institutional care. The examples include the belief that children's shelters are juvenile reformatory facilities and that parents are unwilling to supervise their children's behaviour by themselves. A belief echoed in the proverb 'Taking other people's children is like eating other people's spit' affects the decision of the potential foster parents. Sympathy for children has given rise to voluntourism in orphanages and donations to residential facilities, which may indirectly contribute to the children's continuation in the children's shelters.

6. Guiding principles

(1) Family is a fundamental societal unit and provides a natural environment to nurture growth, well-being and child protection.

(2) If the family cannot provide proper child care despite having received adequate support and if it is necessary to place the children under alternative care, the state shall ensure the right of the child to receive proper alternative care and give priority to the family-based care.

(3) Taking into account the best interest of the child before making a decision on or determining any form of childcare.

(4) Respect the child's right to freedom of opinion by developing a process to listen to and review their input appropriate to the child's age and maturity.

(5) Place the child at the centre for any endeavour to give them assistance.

7. The Plan's objectives

- (1) To provide a policy framework and direction for the development of alternative care, with the Department of Children and Youth being the change agent
- (2) To offer a guideline for all sectors to follow in their implementation of alternative care
- (3) To put in place a supervision mechanism to ensure alternative care is carried out for the best interest of the child

8. Goals and indicators for action plans in Phase 1

Goals	Shared indicators for action plans under Phase 1
1. Vulnerable children and families at risk of not being able to raise their children have access to adequate and diverse family-strengthening services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vulnerable children and families at risk of not being able to raise their children have access to welfare which responds well to the needs of each family.
2. A screening process is implemented to prevent unnecessary alternative care. Such gatekeeping shall be carried out systematically and comprehensively, covering all forms of formal alternative care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance the efficiency of the children and family assessment tools in considering the child's best interest by taking into account the necessity and suitability more precisely. Adjust the concept, increase the capacity of personnel working on the prevention, and give early intervention to at-risk families.
3. Every formal alternative care environment in Thailand is on par with the standards and serves the best interest of the child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A common standard for providing alternative care is put in place (both for family-based and residential care). The standard is to reflect the child's best interest, taking into account the necessity and suitability principles to ensure it can be applied to all public and private alternative care environments and with effective supervision.
4. More options for family-based alternative care and less reliance on institutional care (deinstitutionalisation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A process is put in place to engender understanding and communicate to all concerned parties and the public about the best interest of the child, building collective social engagement to encourage children to grow up in a family environment Policymakers and personnel of the Department of Children and Youth realise the importance and necessity of relying on institutional care less.
5. An agency is established to coordinate work on alternative care comprehensively and systematically both within public agencies and between public and private agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Children and Youth has the expertise and capacity to implement alternative care and to coordinate and mobilise for the development of the welfare system for children at risk or without parental care. The DCY coordinates with public and private agencies and sets a model for the provision of children and family welfare.

9. Mobilisation tactics

9.1. Tactic 1 Empowering family and community to ensure proper child care and protection

Family strengthening and support – supporting vulnerable families to have access to the right services

Tactic 1 Empowering family and community to ensure proper child care and protection				
Indicators	Goals (Phase 1)	Measures	Example programs	Responsible agencies
1. Comprehensive and updated welfare information is made available for relevant parties in coordinating resources to meet the needs of each family	A compilation of a list of child and family welfare services provided by the state, private sector, and local community is made available in every province.	<p>1.1 Alternative care coordinating agency collects information and produces a “welfare menu” or welfare package of each province to cover services available for vulnerable families, at-risk families, and children with special needs. The welfare packages are based on the existing welfare of each agency, including the Department of Women’s Affairs and Family Development, etc.</p> <p>1.2 Welfare information for children and families, particularly vulnerable families, is compiled and updated on an online database.</p>	- Through the Alternative Care Working Group under the Subcommittee for the Development of Child Protection System, National Child Protection Committee, the Provincial Child Protection Committees can be tasked to compile and develop information on child and family welfare, making it available at the provincial and national levels (by uploading on an online database) classified by the type of beneficiaries with special need or necessity	<p>Child and Youth Protection Division, Department of Children and Youth, Department of Women’s Affairs and Family Development, Department of Social Development and Welfare, Department for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Equitable Education Fund</p> <p>Strategy and Planning Division, Department of Children and Youth</p>
2. A process is put in place to raise awareness and communicate to all concerned parties and the public about the importance of having a child growing up in a family	1 Project on public awareness raising about the importance of family and the impact of institutionalisation towards children	1.3 Implement a project to raise public awareness about the importance of family and the impact of institutionalisation towards children, particularly those from 0- 5 years old	- Develop a communication tactic to raise awareness and attitude to promote family strengthening, including a project to develop public relations media materials (short video clips) to publicise the concept of having all children raised in a family	Child and Youth Protection Division, Protection System Development Subdivision

	<p>Awareness raising among stakeholders about the importance of family and preventing unnecessary alternative care</p>	<p>1.4 Add content on alternative care into the training and meetings of the Department of Children and Youth personnel and in training on law enforcement mechanisms under the Child Protection Act B.E. 2546 at least once a year</p> <p>1.5 Communicate and raise donor awareness to understand the importance of every child being raised in a safe and nurturing family environment</p>	<p>- Training officers of the Department of Children and Youth and concerned parties</p> <p>- Project “Making Merit to Earn Merit” to promote and support vulnerable children and families or alternative families instead of promoting voluntourism in residential care facilities (orphanages)</p>	<p>Child and Youth Protection Division, National Child Protection Committee Secretariat Subdivision</p> <p>Strategy and Planning Division, International Cooperation Subdivision</p>
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9.2. Tactic 2 Integration of mechanisms and resources to ensure children are raised in a safe and caring family

Tactic 2 Integration of mechanisms and resources to ensure children are raised in a safe and caring family				
Indicators	Goals (Phase 1)	Measures	Example programs	Responsible agencies
1. An agency under the Department of Children and Youth is tasked to coordinate within the public sector and between public and private sectors and to mobilise the development of an adequate welfare system for a child without parental care.	An agency under DCY is tasked to coordinate and drive forward alternative care work		- A plan to reform the administrative structure within the Department of Children and Youth	Child and Youth Protection Division, Protection System Development Subdivision
2. A child protection mechanism at the local level and a plan to integrate family-strengthening welfare provision, prevention of unnecessary alternative care, and the promotion of family-based alternative care	30% of local administration organisations have a local mechanism to work with the children at risk	<p>2.1 Coordination to raise awareness of high-level executives of local administration organisations</p> <p>2.2 A tactical plan is developed to advocate for the integration of alternative care into the action plan to determine the process of decentralising power to local administration organisations and into the Local Performance Assessment (LPA) on public services</p> <p>2.3 A plan is developed to enhance knowledge, understanding and capacity of local administrative organisations staff</p>	<p>- A project to integrate an alternative care action plan into the work of the Tambon Social Help Center (MSDHS)</p> <p>- Coordinate and organise meetings between high-ranked officers of the Department of Children and Youth and local administration organisations to advocate for the integration of issues concerning children and youth as part of the evaluation tool</p> <p>- A project to develop media and manual for staff of local administration organisations on how to work with children and families and organise training for them</p>	<p>Child and Youth Protection Division, Protection and Upholding Rights Subdivision</p> <p>Child and Youth Protection Division, National Child Protection Committee Secretariat Subdivision, Protection System Development Subdivision</p>

Tactic 2 Integration of mechanisms and resources to ensure children are raised in a safe and caring family				
Indicators	Goals (Phase 1)	Measures	Example programs	Responsible agencies
		<p>to work with children and youth. And collaborate with local administration organisations to identify pilot sites by considering the local resources available and implement projects in the pilot sites</p> <p>2.4 Each site develops a plan and guidelines for alternative care appropriate to the local resources and local context in each province/locality</p>	<p>- A project to develop pilot sites to support potential local administration organisations in promoting family strengthening and preventing unnecessary alternative care</p>	<p>Child and Youth Protection Division, Protection and Upholding Rights Subdivision</p>
3. Allocate resources to advocate for the transition from institutional care to family-based care	<p>Adjust the quota of alternative care provision at the local level (in relation to data on children's and family's needs)</p> <p>Revise the Budget</p> <p>Support family-based alternative care via subsidies and other forms of support</p>	<p>2.5 Adjust the quota of foster care proportional to the need and the number of vulnerable children and families in each area</p> <p>2.6 Revise the public budget allocation by reducing funding for residential facilities and increasing monthly subsidies for foster care and funding for vulnerable kinship families in need of support</p> <p>2.7 Develop a network of foster care recognised by public agencies to ensure their mutual support and to draw in support from outside</p> <p>2.8 Create an incentive program for foster parents, such as nonmonetary support and tax benefit</p>	<p>- A project to survey children in need of family-based care nationwide and determine the proper number of foster care proportional to the need in each province</p> <p>- A project to explore the scenarios related to the revision of public spending allocation</p> <p>- A project to empower the foster care network through regular network meetings, giving moral support through various activities such as offering an award for recognition or tax benefit</p>	<p>Child Adoption Centre, Foster Care Subdivision</p> <p>Child Adoption Centre, Foster Care Subdivision/Strategy and Planning Division, Budgetary and Action Plan Subdivision</p> <p>Child Adoption Centre, Foster Care Subdivision</p>

Tactic 2 Integration of mechanisms and resources to ensure children are raised in a safe and caring family				
Indicators	Goals (Phase 1)	Measures	Example programs	Responsible agencies
4. An increase in the number of foster care services as a family-based alternative care option	At least 350 more foster families	2.9 Develop the process to recruit foster families, publicise information, and start recruiting foster families from the community leaders to encourage more people at the local level	- A project to develop a communication tactic to efficiently harness the use of social media and other media to raise public awareness of the children who need foster care and to change the attitude to recognise that family is a better care environment than institutions	(Bangkok/ provincial) Foster Care Subdivision, Protection System Development Subdivision
	Foster care is available to cater to the care of special children	2.10 Require that each province has to see an increase of at least one more foster family every year		Foster Care Subdivision, Protection System Development Subdivision
		2.11 Offering training to prepare foster families to care for children with special needs		Foster Care Subdivision, Protection System Development Subdivision
		2.12 Consider offering additional support to foster care for special needs children		Foster Care Subdivision, Protection System Development Subdivision

9.3. Tactic 3 Determine standards, develop tools, and build capacity personnel working on alternative care with an emphasis on the best interest of the child

Capacity building and quality enhancement in family-based care with an emphasis on kinship care and foster care through the development of service systems such as the review of remuneration of child care and public relations to recruiting more foster care

Capacity building of personnel involved with the provision of social services - personnel development for social service providers by strengthening the case management system and having an effective support system to monitor and evaluate the results of services to children

Tactic 3 Determine standards, develop tools, and build capacity personnel working on alternative care with an emphasis on the best interest of the child				
Indicators	Goals (Phase 1)	Measures	Example programs	Responsible agencies
1. A common standard is established for the provision of alternative care services	A common standard is established for the provision of alternative care services	3.1 Establish a task force to determine a common standard for the provision of alternative care services 3.2 Study and develop standards for the provision of alternative care services in (1) group homes, (2) supervised independent living, and (3) respite care	- A project to study and draft alternative care service standards covering all forms of alternative care	Development Promotion and Welfare for Child, Youth and Family Division, Welfare for Children and Family Subdivision
2. An individual care plan is developed to promote the return of the child to family and community-based care with the participation of all sectors	An individual care plan is developed A plan is developed to support the child after the care ends.	3.3 A task force is established to develop standards and tools in planning a care plan emphasising the need to listen to the child, work with family members, review the necessity to remain in care, and coordinate with local agencies to encourage family and community reintegration, if possible 3.4 A system is put in place to support the child post the alternative care	- Study and develop reintegration, including the process and services to support children and youth who meet the criteria for being discharged from the care system	Development Promotion and Welfare for Child, Youth and Family Division, Welfare for Children and Family Subdivision

Tactic 3 Determine standards, develop tools, and build capacity personnel working on alternative care with an emphasis on the best interest of the child				
Indicators	Goals (Phase 1)	Measures	Example programs	Responsible agencies
3. A guideline to listen to the child and to have children and families participating in decision-making concerning childcare	A guideline on listening to the voice of the child and child and family participation is developed	<p>3.5 A task force, with the representation and participation of those in alternative care, is established to develop a guideline on listening to the child's voice.</p> <p>The guideline should pave the way for listening to the child yet to enter alternative care and those who have experienced care to review and improve the care plan and system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a guideline to evaluate and determine the best interest of the child - Develop a template to document the child's opinion and wishes during the process of determining care plan 	Development Promotion and Welfare for Child, Youth and Family Division, Welfare for Children and Family Subdivision
4. Policymakers and personnel in the Department of Children and Youth understand and realise the importance of family and the need for all children to grow up in the safe and caring family environment	70% of policymakers and personnel have participated in training on family strengthening, gatekeeping to prevent unnecessary alternative care, and other training concerning alternative care	<p>3.6 Organise training or add content on family strengthening, gatekeeping, or other concepts related to alternative care into the existing training organised by the Department of Children and Youth</p> <p>3.7 Organise an event to recognise and admire the exemplary implementation of agencies under the Department of Children and Youth which reflect the understanding and realisation of value to encourage the child to grow up in the safe and caring family environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop and organise training to promote welfare for children and families for middle and high-level management - Promote and develop innovations and models of agencies as changemakers toward the provision of family-based child welfare 	<p>National Child Protection Committee Secretariat Subdivision, Development Promotion and Welfare for Child, Youth and Family Division, Welfare for Children and Family Subdivision</p> <p>Development Promotion and Welfare for Child, Youth and Family Division, Welfare for Children and Family Subdivision</p>

Tactic 3 Determine standards, develop tools, and build capacity personnel working on alternative care with an emphasis on the best interest of the child				
Indicators	Goals (Phase 1)	Measures	Example programs	Responsible agencies
5. Personnel in private agencies are aware and realise the importance of family and the need for all children to grow up in the safe and caring family environment	<p>All kinds of residential facilities have been contacted and included in the government database</p> <p>Every province has at least one pilot residential facility to enhance the capacity of personnel to serve the best interest of the child through friendly counselling and evaluation systems</p>	<p>3.8 Contact the managers or providers of all kinds of residential facilities and supply them with basic information about child protection and the importance of family</p> <p>3.9 Identify at least one pilot residential facility in each province to enhance the capacity of personnel to serve the best interest of the child through friendly counselling and evaluation systems</p>	<p>- Develop a plan to survey and engage institutional care at the local and national levels</p> <p>- Develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the local administration organisations and private residential facilities with an aim to enhance the standard of services</p>	Development Promotion and Welfare for Child, Youth and Family Division, Welfare for Children and Family Subdivision
6. A plan to mitigate the impact of institutionalisation on children	A plan is developed to mitigate impact institutionalisation has towards children	3.10 Draft a plan for mental rehabilitation to ensure a child placed in residential facilities learn additional life skills and can live independently in society. The plan includes a life skill development plan, a plan to work with the family, and a family reintegration plan.	- Explore forms of rehabilitation and empowerment for the care experienced (institutional and foster care) utilising social capital in the local area	Development Promotion and Welfare for Child, Youth and Family Division, Welfare for Children and Family Subdivision

9.4. Tactic 4 Support the implementation, supervision, monitoring and evaluation of formal alternative care

Reduce reliance on institutional care (deinstitutionalisation), transition to family and community-based care, prioritise family of origin or kinship care/foster care, supervise private residential facilities, and transition from residential care to family and community-based care

Tactic 4 Support the implementation, supervision, monitoring and evaluation of formal alternative care				
Indicators	Goals (Phase 1)	Measures	Example programs	Responsible agencies
1. A concrete policy to reduce institutional care	A deinstitutionalisation policy	4.1 Develop and advocate for a policy to reduce reliance on institutional care and determine mechanisms for supervision and coordination to ensure efficient policy implementation	- Conduct a census survey of children at risk or being without parental care nationwide and documentation of children without care based on the big data of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security	Development Promotion and Welfare for Child, Youth and Family Division, Welfare for Children and Family Subdivision
	No new public and private orphanages	4.2 Measures are put in place to raise awareness, incentivise and accept the notification of all kinds of residential facilities (built into the development of the care database)	- Develop curriculum and training on the management strategy for the transition from residential care to family and community-based care	Development Promotion and Welfare for Child, Youth and Family Division, Welfare for Children and Family Subdivision
	20% of children in alternative care proceeds to social reintegration	4.3 Increase the social service workforce (child protection competent officials, certified social workers, trained para social workers) who can register children and are ready to develop the individual care plan to promote family and society reintegration	- Conduct a survey of the social service workforce and the training need for transition	Child and Youth Protection Division, National Child Protection Committee Secretariat Subdivision
	At least one government residential care facility has a pilot project to transition from residential care to family and community-based care	4.4 Implement pilot projects in public residential facilities to transition from providing residential care to family and community-based care	- Survey financial resources, facilities and supplies to consider decreasing or utilising for the new forms of services	Development Promotion and Welfare for Child, Youth and Family Division, Welfare for Children and Family Subdivision

Tactic 4 Support the implementation, supervision, monitoring and evaluation of formal alternative care				
Indicators	Goals (Phase 1)	Measures	Example programs	Responsible agencies
2. Supervision and monitoring of registered and unregistered private orphanages	Both registered and unregistered private orphanages are subject to supervision and monitoring by public agencies	4.5 Develop guidelines for the supervision and monitoring of private orphanages to promote family-based care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop guidelines for the notification and public relations on the registration of private residential facilities - Organise training and activity to enhance the capacity of private orphanages as with public residential facilities 	Development Promotion and Welfare for Child, Youth and Family Division, Welfare for Children and Family Subdivision

9.5. Tactic 5 Develop a database, enhance knowledge and research for policymaking

Develop a pilot project plan to develop a model of services for children and families - Develop the services in the pilot public residential facilities through developing service provision, improving standards of alternative care, and transitioning from residential care to strong family and community-based care

Tactic 5 Develop a database, enhance knowledge and research for policymaking				
Indicators	Goals (Phase 1)	Measures	Example programs	Responsible agencies
1. A database of alternative care is developed covering all forms of care provided by the state and private sectors to enhance the support and supervision of all care environments	A database of residential facilities provided by the state and private sectors and basic information on the children in those care	<p>5.1 Review and develop the definition of various forms of alternative care, particularly residential facilities in the Thai context, including boarding schools, any agency that offers residential care, religious institutions, dormitory, boarding houses, shelters, group homes</p> <p>5.2 Compile and develop a database of each category of residential care facility based on the definitions. Develop the policies, mechanisms, and structure for the verification of data, support, and supervision of residential facilities in each category</p> <p>5.3 Compile the database of foster care</p>	- Survey residential care facilities in each province or local area and use the acquired data for care reform. The survey can be conducted with the approval of the National Child Protection Committee and related subcommittees in coordination with the Provincial Child Protection Committee.	<p>Protection System Development Subdivision</p> <p>Welfare for Children and Family Subdivision, Shelter for Children and Families Coordination Subdivision</p> <p>Foster Care Subdivision</p>
2. Acquire local statistical information on vulnerable children and families at risk and unable to raise their children. Such information is used to determine the proportion of	A study is conducted to explore the need for alternative care in each area	5.4 Develop tools and documentation of children and families at risk and unable to raise their children through coordination with agencies with basic information about children and families at risk. Such information is used to determine the	- Experts are recruited to work with the National Statistical Office and UNICEF to survey the number of children in alternative care and to conduct the study within the MICS framework	Strategy and Planning Division

Tactic 5 Develop a database, enhance knowledge and research for policymaking				
Indicators	Goals (Phase 1)	Measures	Example programs	Responsible agencies
family-strengthening services and the appropriate number of each category of alternative care service in the area		proportion of family-strengthening services and the appropriate number of each category of alternative care service in the area		
3. A study on funding and guidelines for the transitioning of the welfare system for children and families in compliance with the alternative care policy	Acquire basic information to develop the alternative care system	5.5 Conduct a costing study for the development of an alternative care system based on the Childonomics framework to promote family-based care	- Social and economic experts are recruited to study the investment in children based on the Childonomics concept and propose it to the National Economic and Social Development Board	Child and Youth Protection Division, Protection System Development Subdivision, Welfare for Children and Family Subdivision

10. Implementation timeline

[illegible]

11. The evaluation of the outcome of action plans

The National Action Plan of Alternative Care shall be merged with the Draft Strategy for Child Protection (Version 2) and the action plans of agencies under the Department of Children and Youth. After a certain period of application and implementation, the evaluation can be conducted by using the evaluation process of the Strategy for Child Protection and the action plans of agencies to evaluate the outcome of this action plan. The Department of Children and Youth may further discuss and determine more specific indicators, including the overall indicators and thematic indicators. Overall, the evaluation should be conducted in the third year of implementation (mid-term evaluation) and the fifth year toward the end of the action plan.

Detailed evaluation of each tactic, quantitative index, and the duration of the implementation, shall be further determined by the Department of Children and Youth. The department has a national management mechanism -- the National Child Protection Committee with its Subcommittee on the Development of Child Protection System. Under it, there is also the Alternative Care Working Group. These mechanisms are to drive forward the supervision, monitoring and evaluation and to propose recommendations for revision of concerned laws or measures through the collaboration of the state and private sectors, civil society, local administration organisations, academic institutions, and networks of children and youth to ensure the achievement of the goals.

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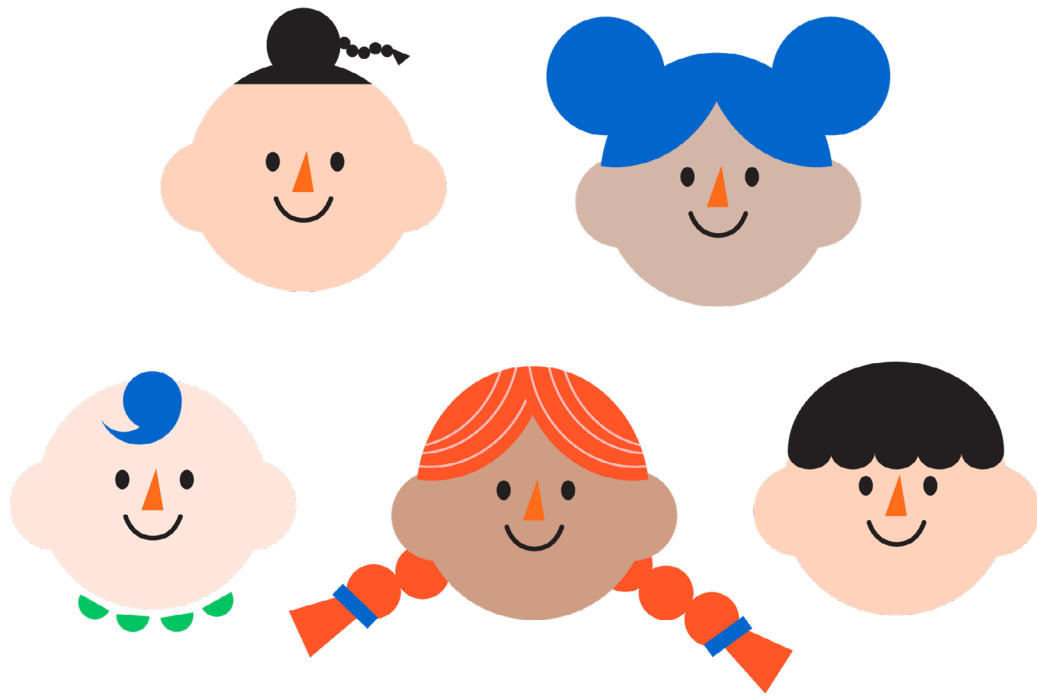
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13. Researchers

- 1) **Dr. Kanthamane Ladaphongphatthana**
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mahidol University
- 2) **Assistant Professor Dr. Tanya Rujisathiensap**
Faculty of Social Administration, Thammasat University
- 3) **Ms. Phusa Srivilas**
Social Work Professional, license no. 2164
Step Ahead Foundation



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