

# Exploring the “Orphan Myth” in Thailand

An Analysis of Unregistered, Private Children’s Homes in Sangkhlaburi District

## Key Findings

- 605 children were accounted for within 17 privately-operated children’s homes in Sangkhlaburi District, Thailand.
- None of the 17 institutions is legally registered.
- 90% of children residing in unregistered, private children’s homes (UPCHs) reported having at least one living parent.
- 95% of children living in UPCHs were previously living with family.
- 65% of children stated they had contact with parents or family within the last 12 months, either having traveled home, had their parent visit the UPCH, or their parent worked at the UPCH.
- 1 of 17 UPCHs was aware of national law, *Thailand’s Child Protection Act, 2003 (CPA)*, and global guidelines, *United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)*, for child protection and alternative care.
- 4 of 17 UPCHs had a child protection policy in place.
- 9 of 17 UPCHs utilized volunteers, of which 2 UPCHs reported conducting background checks on volunteers to ensure they have appropriate skills for the volunteering role they are undertaking and have no previous criminal offenses against children.
- 4 of 17 UPCHs used children’s real names and photos, such as in communication with donors, on social media, and/or on a website, which is a breach of Thailand’s Child Protection Act, 2003.
- 6 of 17 UPCHs were able to show signed agreements from parents or guardians giving permission for the child to live at a UPCH.
- The primary reason children were placed in UPCHs in Sangkhlaburi was due to lack of access to education at 63%. (parents too poor)

\* from the study of children’s situation in the children’s institutions (2014) by interviewing 605 children and founders or officers from 17 children’s homes in Sangkhlaburi during October - December 2014



Alternative Care  
Thailand







# Recommendations for Government

**1) Establish a participatory approach where children and families are involved at every stage in the alternative care process for the children's best interest.**

**2) Fulfill a duty of care to all children in alternative care** including:

- Requiring all UPCHs to register with the government.
- Ensuring regular monitoring of standards of care in all private children's homes (PCHs).
- Overseeing all arrivals and departures of children in all PCHs.
- Overseeing case management of all children in all PCHs to ensure that they remain in the PCH for the shortest time possible.

**3) Update Thailand's CPA and other relevant legislation to fully incorporate the core principles of the Guidelines** including:

- Implementing the "necessity principle" by having the government provide specialist training for competent officials so that they can conduct independent and impartial gatekeeping for all PCHs in Thailand.
- Implementing the "suitability principle" by having the government provide specialist training for competent officials so that they can assess all children's needs on an individual basis and ensure all children are placed in care settings suitable to their specific needs.
- Ensure that trained competent officials are sufficient in number to provide child protection services throughout Thailand.
- Take action to prevent removal of children from families by unlicensed private individuals, claiming to provide child protection services.

**4) Review the requirements for registration of a PCH in Thailand and thus improve standards of care and child protection** including:

- Introducing minimum standards for training for all PCH staff.
- Requiring background checks for all PCH staff and volunteers.
- Ensuring strong child safeguarding policies are in place and followed.

**5) Create and utilize holistic family support services at the local level and make this help available to all families in Thailand** including:

- Financial aid and poverty alleviation programs.
- Counselling and emotional support.
- Education grants for children from low-income families (school uniforms, travel, and lunch costs).
- Encourage collaboration among existing services at hospitals, social services, police, and NGOs to provide holistic support to families in crisis.

This document is also available in Thai language. If you would like to discuss any of the points in this summary handout, or if you would like to receive the full report by email, please contact us at [oneskythailand@gmail.com](mailto:oneskythailand@gmail.com), or visit [www.alternativecarethailand.com](http://www.alternativecarethailand.com)

