



EVALUATION REPORT

June 2022 // HOST International Foundation Thailand

THAILAND ALTERNATIVE TO DETENTION PROGRAM



HOST
INTERNATIONAL

INTRODUCTION

HOST International (HOST) has successfully piloted an effective, community-based alternative to Immigration Detention (ATD) in Thailand by working in partnership with Government, civil society and community. Between 2019 and 2021 HOST's community based Case Management program has challenged immigration norms, influenced thinking in ATD, and **supported 211 children and 110 adults** to transition out of detention and into Thai society.

This evaluation was conducted during 2021 and 2022. It highlights the successes of HOST's community-based Case Management program and the lessons learned for using this approach for ATD. It also provides recommendations for specific interventions in relation to the urban refugee context in Thailand.

HOST International is an international NGO committed to making life better for people on the move by strengthening community based models of protection through local integration. For over four years, HOST has been active in Thailand and has built a strong relationship with the Royal Thai Government (RTG) as well as different international and national organisations. Throughout this process, HOST has advocated on the rights of refugees with a focus on ending the immigration detention of refugee and asylum seeker children.

Despite being a relatively small organisation with limited resources, HOST has managed to self-fund the Case Management program in Thailand since 2019, believing that the project would provide a viable alternative to detention and act as a demonstration of good practice to others in the region.



Community
Based
Alternatives
WORK

For many children and their families, the transition out of detention is hard. There are many challenges including tackling legal matters, meeting basic daily needs, finding and paying for healthcare, managing finances, securing adequate accommodation and accessing education. This is often challenging due to not being in their home country and having to adapt to a new culture and language. These difficulties are exacerbated as Thailand does not yet implement the National Screening Mechanism that would protect the basic rights of refugees and asylum seekers. HOST supports people to live independently in Thai society by helping them understand Thai culture, to make and build relationships with the local community and to comply with immigration requirements. This reduces the risk of future arrest and detention and ensuring adequate support networks are available.

HOST's community-based Case Management program has made a significant difference in people's lives. In Thailand, HOST has empowered refugees and asylum seekers to sustainably live alongside the Thai community whilst they await a durable solution to their immigration status. HOST aims to ensure that children and their families maintain their human dignity while living in Thailand and that they are well prepared to safely and voluntarily depart for third countries or return to their home country if able. There is an additional focus on ensuring cooperative relationships with the local Thai community where common needs are addressed and conflict is avoided. Referrals to service providers are made where needed along with a range of activities to support livelihood skills development such as agriculture, waste management, and soap making. In the first year of programming HOST supported 27 families, and by the end of 2021 support had been given to 43 families.

For this evaluation 122 people gave input through surveys, interviews and focus group discussions. Feedback was included from children and adults who have been part of the Case Management program. To provide a direct comparison, people who have not been part of this program were also invited to share their experiences. Their input provided a different perspective of what many people go through on a day-to-day basis. The views of DCY, the Immigration Bureau, HOST and the International Detention Coalition, as well as eight civil society organisations, were also included.



THAI ATD TIMELINE



1

In **September 2016**, at the Leaders' Summit on Refugees and Migrants at the United Nations in New York, Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha made a pledge to end child detention. This resulted in a significant step forward for the rights of children on the move in Thailand.

During **2018**, the Coalition for Rights of Refugee and Stateless Persons (CRSP) searched for a suitable local organisation to lead the implementation of a child-focused and community-based Case Management program, for children and their families who were released from immigration detention. This resulted in HOST working in partnership with the Thai Department of Children and Youth under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (DCY) to support children and their families released on bail.



2



3

On **21st January 2019**, seven government ministries signed the 'Memorandum of Understanding on the Determination of Measures and Approaches, Alternative to Detention of Children in Immigration Detention Centres' (ATD-MOU). This was the first step towards ending immigration detention of children and thus was a historic moment for Thailand. The event was attended by dignitaries from 14 countries with a significant media presence.

On **23rd January 2019**, in collaboration with DCY, 11 mothers and their children were released from immigration detention centres and government shelters to live with limited restrictions and still subject to immigration monitoring. Their release and the support from HOST's community-based Case Management program has been a significant and progressive step towards improved child rights and refugee protection in Thailand, where few other regular legal protections exist.



4



5

On **9th June 2022**, DCY signed an MOU with HOST. This was to establish a formal partnership and collaboration to implement the ATD-MOU. It includes coordination on activities to strengthen the capacity of Government child protection officers and the child protection system to effectively protect children and their families in the context of migration.

LESSONS LEARNED

As the world sees an increase in migration, and at a time when there is a call to eradicate child immigration detention, community-based Case Management ATD provides a coherent and effective approach towards achieving this goal. Global studies have shown this approach to be extremely effective in supporting governments to realise their migration governance goals, while also upholding the rights and well-being of refugees and migrants(1). Through HOST's Thailand Program, community-based Case Management works effectively for people in urban areas and has excellent potential to be scaled-up to include other areas of the country. This could also be replicated in other locations within the region. In Thailand, this approach is cost effective, supports compliance with immigration requirements and leads to improved well-being by providing tailored support and skills development. It requires strong partnerships, the ongoing involvement of local communities and longer-term investments to support Thailand's strengthened migration governance outcomes. Importantly, it has achieved these outcomes within a context that does not recognise the legal framework of the 1951 Refugee Convention.

1. Community-based Case Management supports compliance with immigration requirements, is cost-effective and efficient.

Community-based Case Management is an effective and efficient tool in the context of Thailand's migration governance system as it allows refugees to live independently within Thai society, providing support only where this is needed.

A community-based ATD approach that is supported by Case Management increases the likelihood of people being able to comply with immigration processes, without the need for restrictions or deprivation of liberty. In the three years of this project no clients(2) absconded or violated immigration rules. With the support of the Case Management Program they were able to report regularly to immigration authorities. There was also a significant financial saving in immigration detention costs. The costs for running the community-based Case Management in Thailand was around USD 1.80 per person, per day. Immigration detention facilities in Thailand are estimated to be 5 to 10 times this due to the higher number of resources and staff required.

1. International Detention Coalition, Promising Practices in Alternatives to Detention for Children and their Families: Ideas for Strengthening Protection for Children and their Families at Risk of Immigration Detention in Thailand, 2022

2 Clients refers to those who are supported by the HOST Case Management program.



\$1.80 USD per day

Cost of community based case management



2. Community-based Case Management supports well-being by providing tailored support

Community-based Case Management provides a universal and comprehensive approach in a community setting that addresses both immigration and personal needs. It has proved to be relevant to refugees, as it ensures a client centred approach to individual needs and maintains wellbeing. Psychological and emotional well-being was recorded as the most common need in Case Management meetings during the first year of the program. This led to referrals for relevant support in addition to direct case management support.

HOST has developed a comprehensive outcome framework to monitor and evaluate the impact of community-based Case Management on the transition out of detention and the lives of the clients. This framework demonstrates that the HOST approach significantly helps people to increase their formal and informal support networks. Each person was able to engage in social gatherings and increase their understanding of life within the host community.

In addition, Case Management helps provide access and support for education and training. However there is also a substantial limitation to how independently clients can live due to not having legal status or the right to work

3. Community-based Case Management requires strong partnerships and the involvement of host communities

A partnership model is key to the success of community-based Case Management in Thailand. With DCY and the CRSP network, and support from HOST, a strong network of partners has been established with efficient processes to refer clients to the appropriate services.

Through these partnerships HOST is able to implement community-based protection and livelihood strategies



that prepare refugees for a durable solution and avoid immigration detention. This partnership model aims to mobilise community resources by identifying resources and support systems that are available in the areas where refugee families live. This includes Thai communities, government agencies and civil society organisations, schools, and religious institutions. Partners reported that they are happy with the level of communication and support they receive from HOST. However, two commented that recent HOST and government staff turnover has affected coordination and relationship building.

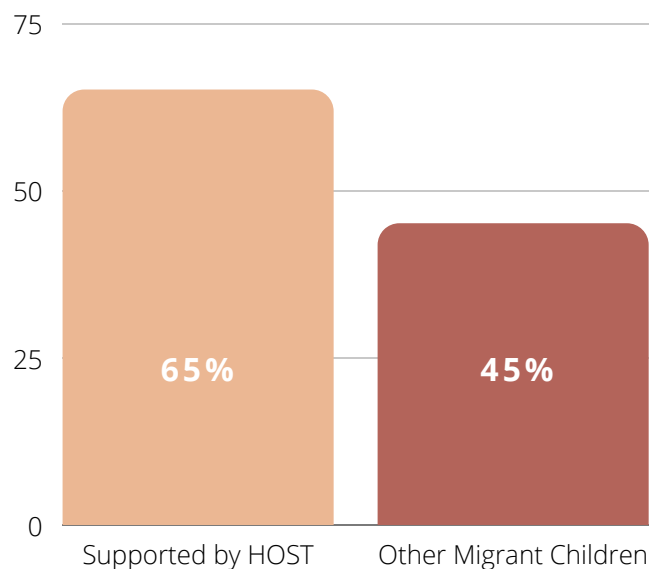
The effectiveness of a community-based Case Management program lies in its ability to create strong relationships. The partnership model practised in Thailand is vital to achieving effective outcomes for clients. Partnerships with the government, service providers, the host community and clients have led to good communication, effective sharing of resources, and co-designing solutions to problems together. The local CRSP network has been critical in facilitating these partnerships.

HOST has liaised with local schools to ensure there is a welcoming environment for the children and that administrative barriers do not get in the way. The clients have highlighted they feel well supported with this. As a result 65% of children in the HOST program, compared to 45%(3) of the national child migrant population, attend school.

Case Management is best placed at the municipal and local levels - with coordination and support from the local community and local organisations, and technical support and monitoring from central government. Fundamentally, by expanding the use of community and gender responsive ATDs, the risks that many children and adult refugees face on their migration journeys will be significantly reduced - not only for the individual, but for society as a whole.

3. IOM, Thailand Migration Report, 2019, <https://www.iom.int/news/united-nations-launches-thailand-migration-report-2019> which reports 164,000 children in school compared to 200,000 children not in school (a 45:55 ratio).

Migrant Children in School



4. HOST's approach is effective

HOST has been able to meet the needs of children and their families by providing a range of services, including needs-based assessments and individual support with support from service providers. There are key mechanisms to support unaccompanied children, such as referral to DCY and family-based care. A large part of the program's effectiveness has been in its ability to support people to be independent and resilient.

The program has created a comprehensive set of tools to conduct initial assessments with clients and plan a response to their needs, based on their emotional, social and physical capacities. Managing this process are Case Managers who are highly skilled professionals and have provided training and support to several partner organisations in Bangkok.

Another key element for delivering effective Community-based Case Management is the concept of co-design. Clients work together with partner organisations, the community and the DCY to find solutions. HOST's Urban Agriculture and Livelihood project⁽⁴⁾ is an example of effective co-design. The initial idea came from women who were already involved in HOST's community-based Case Management program. The clients and local members of the Thai community have benefitted by learning new skills together, such as growing fruits and vegetables, increasing their access to better nutrition.

Supporting women to live independently has been at the heart of community-based Case Management and has been a significant part of an effective gender response. Through meetings and activities HOST aims to provide women with decision-making skills to support themselves and their children. In addition, family planning workshops were held for women in advance of their husbands being released from detention. Relatively few cases of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) were reported by case managers as part of this evaluation which is likely a result of the provision of support to manage common stressors associated with detention and community living in Bangkok.

Children and their families who have not been part of HOST's community-based Case Management program have encountered many more challenges, particularly around issues of mental wellbeing, accessing resources, and living in constant fear of being arrested. By comparison, the HOST approach has been extremely effective in mitigating these common stressors for children and families.

"THROUGH BUILDING NETWORKS WITH WIDER
HOST COMMUNITIES, HOST HAS ENCOURAGED
COMMUNITY INCLUSION AND ENHANCED SOCIAL
COHESION"

4. Initially a Gardening Project was developed in 2019 which later evolved into the Agriculture and Livelihoods Project.

COMMUNITY BASED SUPPORT IS EFFECTIVE

Transitioning out of detention or a temporary shelter is a significant upheaval for children and their families, both physically and emotionally. Children who experienced being separated from their parents, either in detention or the shelter, have been psychologically affected.

With a focus on children, HOST has used the principles of 'non-discrimination', the 'best interest of the child', 'the right to survival and development, and 'the views of the child' to develop the community-based Case Management program. In addition, participating in daily life free from being in detention has given children and their families many opportunities to access their rights.

During interviews it was apparent that women in particular, experience difficulties transitioning from the detention centre to living in a community. In the initial stages, this is mainly due to ongoing psychosocial effects of detention; the majority of mothers felt insecure, lacked confidence, and relied on others while caring for their children alone.

Alongside Case Management support, HOST has also established a women's group to ensure women are empowered to continue to actively engage in public life and are supported to engage with their partners after a long period of separation.

By living within a community, many children and their families have also benefited from the support



and protection of local schools, churches, mosques and other organisations.

By connecting families to the community they are able to access ongoing information, support and build cooperative relationships with local people. This reduces the risk of conflict with the local community while supporting mental wellbeing and immigration compliance.

In practical terms, information provided to families about their legal rights, resources and activities available is difficult to communicate, due to the language and cultural barriers in place. HOST has been innovative in using pictures and workshops to communicate information. While integration into the community has been challenging for children and their families, the support from HOST has significantly helped the transition.

CONCLUSION

In general, refugees have no legal status in Thailand and often stay in the country temporarily while waiting for durable solutions. However, they require long-term support to live in Thailand as the opportunity for resettlement to a third country is limited and returning to their country of origin is often not possible.

As a result, living within local communities has been a mixed experience for some clients. Interviews raised issues of fears of local police, whereas others emphasised the kindness of Thai people in supporting them with their daily needs. Understanding people's culture and how to build relationships with them is key to achieving social cohesion. Through building networks with the wider community, HOST has encouraged community inclusion and enhanced social cohesion.

For example, case managers regularly liaise with local schools and support children's access to education, which has had a very positive impact on the numbers of children accessing schooling. Alongside this, HOST has focused on building unity amongst the different cultures. Regular community meetings are held to communicate with refugees and host communities to help build understanding. Different local partners often provide local facilities, such as church meeting rooms for these meetings and for key community events.

Children and their families feel confident to cope with daily life as they are able to interact with different people in the community as well as engage with organisations to be able to get support in accessing basic needs.

Community-based Case Management has proven to be a coherent and relevant approach in strengthening ATD in Thailand. It has had a significant impact on the well-being and resilience of children and their families, has supported them to comply with their immigration obligations, and led to cost savings on government immigration detention spending. It has been conducted efficiently, at a low cost, with few staff and with a relatively short-term intervention for each family. It has also contributed to more children being able to access the education system and for continued releases of families from detention.

Having professional Case Managers, access to relevant training materials and comprehensive programming tools ensures the effectiveness of Case Management. Positive long-term outcomes for individuals and the RTG are already evident in Thailand, but in order for community-based Case Management to be sustainable, it needs to become a reliable pathway that is available to refugees and migrants entering Thailand, and it must be complimented by some sort of temporary protection status. By focusing on the best interests of the child, strengthening child protection mechanisms and continuing to collaborate with the Royal Thai Government and civil society organisations at all levels, it is likely to improve the quality of life for children on the move and their families.

For more information on HOST International, please visit - <https://www.hostint.org>



RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve the quality of life for children and their families on the move, it is recommended that organisations practising community-based case management should:

1. Support the local community to develop the protection capacity they provide to people on the move.
2. Develop mechanisms to contribute to the ongoing professional development of internal and external stakeholders in responding to the stages of child development and the impact of displacement on children.
3. Provide technical support to promote refugee-led initiatives within the community.
4. Devise scenarios, based on situations that case managers have previously dealt with, as a training tool for capacity building/technical support for the government and local partners.
5. Review existing Case Management tools related to promoting gender equality and gender responsiveness to identify any gaps and how these can be addressed.
6. Strengthen child protection mechanisms by establishing a child protection committee of key community and Government representatives.
7. Facilitate workshops for children and families to understand more about their rights, the role of the child protection committee, and how they can safely access support.
8. Build-in more ways for children to give feedback in a child-friendly way, about their experience of support from community-based Case Management and implement their ideas and recommendations whenever possible.
9. Increase the capacity of the community to reduce the potential of sexual and gender-based violence through awareness raising campaigns, workshops and providing a safe space for children and adults to report any related incidents.
10. Establish an Emergency Preparedness Plan with partners to be able to mitigate against potential shocks and stresses which may arise if emergency situations occur.



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About the Evaluators

Roz Keating and Louise Bloom have worked closely with people who are on the move, granted asylum status, given the right to remain, and those who have been detained. Roz has focused on strengthening child rights, child and youth participation and developing community protection mechanisms. She has been involved in establishing Case Management approaches across a range of countries to ensure protection, education, health, and well-being initiatives are prioritised, with suitable accommodation and legal support being accessible.

Previously, Louise was based at the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford and has conducted extensive research within refugee communities worldwide, with a focus on livelihoods and refugee-led innovation. Together they have over 30 years of experience in the international development and humanitarian sectors, working across a number of continents and organisations such as Save the Children, Oxfam, VSO and UNHCR. They are passionate about supporting children and adults to have more access to their rights

Final editing was undertaken by representatives from HOST International and International Detention Coalition.