Care for Children



PRE-PILOT PROJECT VISIT REPORT

Vietnam, June 2016

Care for Children's pre-pilot research visit to Hanoi and Thai Nguyen to understand the child welfare framework for orphan care in Vietnam.

CONTENTS

Background	Page 3
Method	Page 4
Pre-pilot project research team	Page 5
Meetings overview	Page 6
Findings	Page 15
Learning and Implications	Page 19
Contact	Page 22

BACKGROUND

Care for Children partners with governments in Asia to help create a positive alternative to institutional care through local family-based care for disadvantaged children.

National Family Placement Conference, Hanoi 2014

In February 2014 Care for Children co-hosted a Family Placement Conference in Hanoi, Vietnam, with the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA). Following this conference, MoLISA invited Care for Children to launch a pilot foster care project in Hanoi City and Thai Nguyen Province.

Government Partner

The pre-pilot project research team worked in direct partnership with the Department of Child Care and Protection (DCCP) within the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA), Care for Children's proposed government partner for the pilot project, to plan the logistical requirements of the visit, and data collection and review.

Pre-pilot project visit

In June 2016 the Care for Children Team visited Hanoi, Vietnam on invitation of MoLISA. The purpose of the pre-pilot project research visit to Vietnam was to understand the current situation of orphan care in the country at large, and in the two proposed pilot project sites specifically, Hanoi and Thai Nguyen, and to understand the existing child welfare framework upon which a foster care pilot project will be developed.

METHOD

Meetings

Care for Children's visit meant that relationships were built and we were able to explain our Core Business Model (CBM) and Theory of Change (ToC) and project goals in meetings with:

- The Vice Minister of MoLISA
- Director General of Department of Child care & Protection (DepCCP)
- Deputy Director of DepCCP
- Head of Child care within MoLISA
- Officer of International affairs
- Head of Child care within Department of Labour Invalids and Social Affairs (DoLISA), Thai Nguyen province
- Head of Child care within DoLISA, Hanoi
- Director and Deputy of Social Protection Centre (orphanage) in Thai Nguyen
- Director and Deputy of Social Protection Centre in Hanoi
- Team Workers in Social Protection Centres

Within these meeting discussions were held about existing practices, project planning, and strengths and weaknesses moving forward.

Project site visits

Care for Children visited the proposed pilot sites in Hanoi and Thai Nguyen to meet with staff and children.

Literature review

Existing policies, procedures and documents relating to child care, in particular alternative care, were reviewed and discussed with MoLISA.

Baseline survey

A baseline survey was carried out within the two proposed pilot sites to establish conditions and suitability.

Questions

Pre-visit, we compiled a list of questions within a Terms of Reference agreement, and sent them ahead of our arrival to MoLISA. The questions were listed under the following subheadings:

- 1. National and Local government authorities (e.g. authority, structure and lines of communication, NGOs)
- 2. Child Welfare System (e.g. policies and practices, budgets)
- 3. Relevant statistical information (e.g. children, staff, orphanages)
- 4. General knowledge and attitudes in society (e.g. staff, cultural beliefs, existing foster parents)
- 5. Related historical information (e.g. past efforts, success and failures, past relationships

PRE-PILOT PROJECT VISIT TEAM

THOMAS ABBOTT

Group Projects Manager

Team leader

thomas@careforchildren.com



EMMA ZHANG <u>Training Manager, China</u> *Training expert* emma@careforchildren.com



RUTH YANG

Training Officer, China Research and data collection expert ruth@careforchildren.com



KELLY GREEN

Operations and Safeguarding Officer, UK Research and safeguarding expert kelly@careforchildren.com

MEETINGS OVERVIEW

Care for Children has been invited to Vietnam by the Ministry of Labour – Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA).

The Department of Child Care and Protection (DepCCP) works within MoLISA, and would be Care for Children's official project partner. In every province of Vietnam, there is a Department of Labour – Invalids and Social Affairs (DoLISA), which also has a Division of Child Care and Protection (DivCCP).

Care for Children has been invited to start the pilot project in two locations – Hanoi City and Thai Nguyen City (which represents Thai Nguyen province), which meant meeting both sets of DoLISAs and DivCCPs, as well as MoLISA and DepCCP during this visit. We also visited two 'Social Protection Centres' (orphanages), and two families caring for disadvantaged children (but not as a formal foster care placement, as this does not yet exist in Vietnam).

Following is a summary of each key meeting that took place during the pre-pilot project visit.

Formal welcome to Vietnam

Key figure	Ms Dao Hong Lan
Position	Vice Minister of Labour – Invalids and Social Affairs
Purpose	 Receive official welcome by governing authority in Vietnam responsible for child welfare Share Care for Children's CBM and ToC



Care for Children's most high profile meeting during the research visit was with the Vice Minister, Ms Dao Hong Lan, on the first day. Other senior figures from MoLISA and DepCCP were present, including the General Director of DepCCP. This was a formal welcome to Vietnam by the government, and an important opportunity to introduce Care for Children's CBM and ToC, as requested in the Terms of Reference prior to the visit.

The Vice Minister confirmed that Care for Children's CBM and ToC supported the government's own direction forward for child welfare in Vietnam, and therefore approving the presentation in all meetings during the research visit. It was a very positive meeting, and helped set a positive and constructive tone for the rest of the research visit.

The meeting was reported on in the government's own news channels, and can be found at the following website address: www.molisa.gov.vn/vi/Pages/ChiTiet.aspx?IDNews=24758

Formal introductions to start the pre-pilot project visit

Key figure	Mr Dong Hoa Nam
Position	Director General of the Department of Child Care and Protection (DepCCP)
Purpose	 Present current position of DepCCP Share Care for Children's CBM and ToC For both parties to run through the purpose and plans of the pre-pilot project visit Q&A



The Director-General, Mr Dong Hoa Nam, and the Deputy Director, Ms. Vu Kim Hoa, (who is also a medical doctor) were both present.

The meeting was an opportunity to make introductions, and discuss the purpose and plans of the research visit in more detail.

Mr Nam presented the Vietnamese government's position on alternative care, and further outlined their need for support in developing foster care.

Mr Abbott delivered a detailed presentation that included background information about Care for Children, including the CBM and how it fits into the ToC.

Formal introductions with the Department of Labour – Invalids and Social Affairs (DoLISA), and Division of Child Care and Protection (DivCCP), Thai Nguyen province

Key figure	Mr Duong Duy Hung (DoLISA) Ms Trinh Thi Nguyet (DivCCP)
Position	Director General of DoLISA
Purpose	 Receive official welcome by governing authority in Thai Nguyen province responsible for child welfare Share Care for Children's CBM and ToC Q&A



Care for Children's first DoLISA and DivCCP meeting was in Thai Nguyen province, two hours north of Hanoi. Care for Children was accompanied by DepCCP staff and a professional translator.

The department and division had been fully informed of the Thai Nguyen SPC as a potential pilot project site, so it was a good opportunity to share the CBM and ToC.

DoLISA staff provided various statistics about child care in the province, and they were very happy to answer questions. After the meeting they hosted lunch.

Introductions to Director and staff at Thai Nguyen's Social Protection Centre

Key figure	Ms Nguyen Thuy Huong
Position	Director of Thai Nguyen Social Protection Centre
Purpose	Site visit to proposed pilot project site



Care for Children's first SPC meeting was in of Thai Nguyen city. Care for Children was accompanied by DepCCP staff and a professional translator.

The SPC Director welcomed the Care for Children delegation, and introduced her staff and the work of the SPC. Mr Abbott delivered a presentation to the SPC staff about Care for Children, and how we have worked with SPCs in China and Thailand, encouraging them, and looking forward to the future of working together in the pilot project.

The DepCCP had arranged gifts (cartons of milk) for Care for Children to present to the SPC. Pictured is the Director of Thai Nguyen SPC who has worked there for over 20 years.

After meeting with the staff, we had the opportunity to meet some of 32 children that live there. It was very clear to us that the children's care would be significantly be improved in a family environment.

Meeting with the Department of Labour – Invalids and Social Affairs and Division of Child Care and Protection, Hanoi city

Key figure	Mr Dang Van Bat (DoLISA) Ms Do Thi Hai Duong (DivCCP)
Position	Mr Duong Duy Hung (DoLISA) Ms Trinh Thi Nguyet (DivCCP)
Purpose	 Receive official welcome by governing authority in Hanoi city responsible for child welfare Share Care for Children's CBM and ToC Q&A



Care for Children's second DoLISA and DivCCP meeting was in Hanoi city. Care for Children was accompanied by DepCCP staff, including the Deputy Director, and a professional translator.

The department and division had been fully informed of Hanoi city as a potential pilot project site, so it was a good opportunity to share the CBM and ToC.

DoLISA staff provided various statistics about child care in the city, and they were very happy to answer questions. After the meeting they hosted lunch.

Visiting Birla Social Protection Centre, Hanoi city

Key figure	Mr Chu Dinh Diep
Position	Director of Birla Social Protection Centre, Hanoi city
Purpose	Site visit to proposed pilot project site





Care for Children's second SPC meeting was in Hanoi with one of 11 SPCs in the city. Care for Children was accompanied by DepCCP staff and a professional translator.

This SPC specialised in caring for children over 12. This SPC was managed very well. For example, each day their meal's budget is written up on a board in the kitchen to teach them budgeting skills, and there are organised life-skills classes on site, such as hairdressing. The Director was very proud of the training they provided. The Care for Children team was warmly welcomed by the children. Nonetheless, we were left with several concerns. For example, only one single 'mother' is responsible for approximately 30 children (above is one of four houses the children lived in), and boys and girls live in the same house, separated only by a floor.

The accommodation, while very basic, was clean and appeared orderly (children had lockers opposite their beds). But as we often say at Care for Children, no matter how well managed an institution is, you can't replace the need children have for a family to care for them. The 'mother' of the house we visited agreed – saying that although she is close to the children, she recognises they need to be in a family.

It is unlikely that this particular SPC will be chosen for the pilot project stage, and Care for Children has encouraged the Hanoi DepCCP/Hanoi DoLISA to choose one of the other 11 SPCs in Hanoi, preferably one with younger children.

Meeting with families caring for disadvantaged children, Hanoi city



DepCCP orranged for two family visits in Hanoi city. The first (pictured) was an example of informal kinship foster care. The children's parents had died, and then their two uncles who were caring for them had also died. They are now living with their Grandparents. Here you can see staff from DepCCP, Hanoi DivCCP, and also a community leader accompanying Care for Children in the meeting. It is 'informal kinship care' because the legal guardianship is with the Grandparents (not the government), but the family can apply for an allowance from the government to help with the extra costs. Informal kinship foster care is common in Vietnam, and seems to be well organised. But there are no instances of formal foster care yet – where the legal guardianship is with the government, and foster parents are recruited to care for children with whom they have no biological relationship.

The second visit was to an adoptive family, where a boy had been abandoned at a monastery, and the head monk recommended the family we visited to the local government to adopt him. It was a privilege to be taken into the homes of local families in Hanoi, and listen to their stories. They were very relaxed visits, and the families were happy to host us. It helped us visualise what foster care will look like. After the visits, the Director-General of DepCCP hosted us for lunch.

Final meeting with the Department of Child Care and Protection

Key figure	Ms Vu Thi Kim Hoa
Position	Deputy Director, DCCP
Purpose	 To summarise pre-pilot project visit To fill any knowledge gaps To plan next steps





Our last meeting with DepCCP was an opportunity go over the questions in the Terms of Reference that we still needed answered.

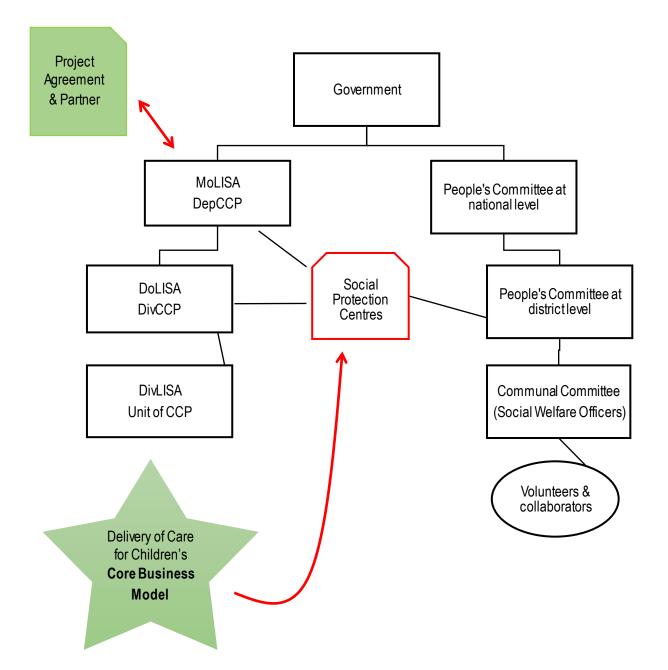
One of the most pressing questions was to learn how MoLISA, and the government in general, is structured from the top (Ministry) to the bottom (communities), and understand how the government would manage foster care in that system. The Deputy Director, Ms. Vu Kim Hoa, led this meeting, and was able to answer all of our questions. She confirmed DepCCP are looking exclusively at Care for Children to help them develop family-based care for orphaned and vulnerable children in Vietnam.

At the end of the meeting Ms. Vu Kim Hoa recorded a short message on film for Care for Children to use, sharing how Vietnam was looking forward to working with Care for Children.

After the meeting Care for Children staff and DepCCP staff posed next to a statue of Ho Chi Minh that was on the ground floor of DepCCP's building.

FINDINGS

1. <u>National and Local government authorities (e.g. authority, structure and lines of communication,</u> <u>NGOs)</u>



- Care for Children will work under MoLISA in direct partnership with DepCCP, and train staff at the Social Protection Centres.
- There is a People's Committee at each level who co-manage with the Government, they have the responsibility to monitor Child Care and Protection.
- Different governing bodies manage the Social Protection Centres: MoLISA, DoLISA and also some by district-level people's committees.

- Positions within the ministry are relatively stable and key personal have been within their posts for some time.
- Care for Children may also work closely with the International Cooperation Department (ICD).
- 2. <u>Child Welfare System (e.g. policies and practices, budgets)</u>
 - There are 63 people's committees at National level, 600 people's committees at District level and more than 10,000 communal committees in Vietnam.
 - Official population of Hanoi is 7.2 million (however, real figure may by up to 10 million)
 - 1.8 million children
 - 13,000 living with disabilities
 - 11 SPCs in Hanoi
- 3. Child Welfare Law
 - Vietnam is part of the Hague Convention and UNCRC
 - A new law on Child Protection was approved in April 2016 and it needs to be in place by July 2017, within the law there are 3 main types of child care:
 - 1. (First and most important) alternative care (foster care)
 - 2. Adoption both internationally and domestic
 - 3. Social Protection Centre (institute) as a last resort
- 4. Social Protections Centres
 - 393 SPCs run by the state of Vietnam
 - 22,000 children living in SPCs in Hanoi
 - Children leave SPCs at the age of 18
 - The Director of the Social Protection Centres have legal guardianship of the children within its care.
 - Children typically come into care due to:
 - Abandonment
 - \circ $\,$ One parent has died and the other is missing
 - Parents are in prison
 - o Children have some kind of disability
 - Children leave SPCs at the age of 18
- Birla SPC, Hanoi
 - 130 children in the SPC
 - 48 under 12 and the rest are up to 18
 - They are all healthy children and go to school
 - The staff have tried to create a family environment at the SPC with 'mothers' that monitor a 'house' and the 30+ children are treated as 'siblings'.
 - There are 4 'families', with 2 mothers per family, and each family has 33 both boys and girls, all ages 2-18.
 - The children go into the community for their education
 - They receive support from outside sources (donations, etc)
 - Some of the children are adopted, both internationally and domestically.
 - According to the leadership, since opening, 500 children have returned to communities, with 100% getting jobs and a many getting married
 - All babies that were placed in the SPC have now grown up, and babies now go to special SPCs
 - 13 children came in and out in 2015
 - Capacity is 130 children
 - Most children still have contact with their birth family. The SPC acts as a bridge to contact the family, and it is a rule to maintain contact.

- Families can visit every 2 months but can also visit more if requested. Children visit family twice Tet (New Year) and during the summer holiday.
- Care for Children discussed with MoLISA that the Birla Orphanage was well ran but due to the age of the children and they still have families it would not be a good choice for a pilot site. A pilot site needs to make an impact to the community, it needs to be a success story younger children are easier to place so ideally a pilot site needs a number of babies/toddlers.
- Thai Nguyen SPC
 - 311 children in SPCs in Thai Nguyen province
 - Breakdown figures for Thai Nguyen proposed pre-pilot site: -
 - 32 children in total (16 male / 16 female)
 - 24 orphans (including 10 with disabilities, 4 HRV) orphaned by parents dying, HRV, disease or accident. In some cases, one parent died but the other disappeared.
 - 1 homeless child that ran away
 - 3 children of a prisoner (including one with disability)
 - 4 abandon babies (including one with HRV)
 - 20 of these children do not go to school (for medical reasons), 1 is in kindergarten, 2 are in primary school (ages 6-10), 7 are in secondary school (ages 11-17), 2 in higher education
 - The babies in the SPC at Thai Nguyen have many different primary care givers. Within a 2 day shift the children can be looked after by 6 different care givers. All 20 care givers look after the different age groups.
- 5. Existing systems supporting kinship care
 - When a child is placed outside the SPCs it is very likely that it will be with family members (kinship care).
 - The People's Committees are the ones who decide what care is needed and who the legal guardians will be for a looked-after children.
 - When a child is recognised as needing care, it is dealt with at the Communal Committee level. Where possible, extended family will come forward. The Communal Committee makes the decision. The Communal Committee level applies to the SPC if kinship care cannot be found.
 - Policy states that the ratio of adult to child is as follows:
 - Under 1yrs 1:1,
 - 1-4yrs 3:1 (although this is not always possible)
 - Social welfare allowance received per child is 350'000 mini and 675'000 max dong nationally for kinship care.
 - The support offered apart from allowance is by tuition fees for secondary school, health insurance, partial financial support for universities, holiday gifts and scholarship opportunities if the child is outstanding academically.
 - No child training is required to work with the children in the Social Protection Centre's.
 - For the existing kinship care support system, for families to receive allowance the Chair of the District within the People's Committee approves the monthly allowance. The money is delivered to the Communion Committee, and families receive the money from there.
 - Social Workers at provincial level do not visit the families unless required to do so by the Communal Committee. Social workers at provincial level are government workers that receive a wage.
 - There is a volunteer worker at community level that visits kinship foster families. They receive 150'000 dong monthly for travel expenses. There are 3,450 voluntary workers in Thai Nguyen.
 - A volunteer worker doesn't need qualifications or training, their job is not just for the children, it's like a community worker.
 - The volunteers report to a Social Affairs Officer at the Communion Committee in a debriefing either monthly or quarterly. If a case is urgent then it is dealt with straight away.

- When a child can return to his/her community the SPC assesses families for kinship care. If they qualify then the District Committee is sent a list of children to go back into the community. It's the Communion Committee that then chooses which next of kin the child lives with.
- Volunteer workers are local people, and each one is responsible for one village. They collect data and information of children and families. Volunteers report to the Social Welfare Officer in the Communal Committee monthly. If there is a child in difficulty, the Communal Committee will submit their details to the People's Committee at District level and to their DoLISA.
- In Thai Nguyen province there are 142 kinship care families with 358 children who receive an allowance per child
- 6. Other relevant statistical information (e.g. children, staff, orphanages)
 - More than 100 privately run orphanages
 - 170,000 disadvantaged children in Hanoi (e.g. including disabilities of some kind)
 - 1.2 million children with disabilities nationwide
 - Only 10 individuals, children or elderly people, are required to set up a centre
 - The babies in the Thai Nguyen SPC have many different primary care givers. Within a two day shift the children can be looked after by six different care givers. All 20 care givers look after the different age groups.
- 7. General knowledge and attitudes in society (e.g. staff, cultural beliefs, existing foster parents)
 - Many children in SPCs have a disability of some kind
 - If a woman has a baby out of wedlock she may put the baby into an SPC
 - There is international and domestic adoption within Vietnam, although domestic adoption is not common.
- 8. <u>Related historical information (e.g. past efforts, success and failures, past relationships)</u>
 - One of the key societal, economic and political pressures that impact families in Vietnam is poverty and lack of knowledge due to poverty. Vietnamese people need more knowledge of the law, and to gain skills of early detection of problems.
 - People at district and commune levels are the ones that help make sure the children are protected.
 - Existing training resource mentioned as following:
 - o plan to launch a national project for preventing sex abuse;
 - have translated training materials (2 textbooks) on service for HIV positive children by UNICEF

LEARNING AND IMPLICATIONS

"Care for Children's support is very timely with our new law due to be enacted in July 2017.

"The new child care law in Vietnam means it can now be an international cooperation. We are excited that in the future MoLISA and Care for Children will work together regarding alternative care. We have made improvements, but not enough, and we are very eager to listen to your experience."

Ms Dao Hong Lan

Vice Minister of Ministry of Labour, Invalid and Social affairs

Relevance of Care for Children's expertise to the Vietnamese situation

During this visit we learned that the new child law was being drafted in 2014, during the same time as Care for Children's National Foster Care Conference in February, co-organised with the MoLISA. Prior to the conference, foster care as a form of alternative care had not been included in the draft. As a direct result of the conference, foster care was included, and the draft was approved in April 2016, and will be enacted in July 2017.

The team felt it was significant to learn that Care for Children had already made a change to the legislative framework that will enable foster care to develop. MoLISA confirmed that they are looking *exclusively* to Care for Children to assist them in implementing foster care within their child welfare system.

The visit was a very positive start for key stakeholders to build on sustainable relationships moving forward. It was evident that now is a good time to assist this change in Vietnam's child welfare system.

Understanding the existing informal kinship foster care system

The pre-pilot project research team was particularly interested in the existing informal kinship care system. This system is set-up to prevent children from entering institutional care where family members are able to care for them, with some financial support from the government. Although it does not involve moving children out of an SPC, and the legal guardianship remains with the family, some of the government's structure and support mechanisms that have been put in place to manage informal kinship care are likely to be utilised in the development of a formal foster care system. The team was encouraged by many aspects of the informal kinship care system.

Next steps

The new law sets roles and responsibilities of Social Workers (a new position in Vietnam's social welfare system), and now there is a need to develop this role at the Communal Committee level. Once the law is enacted there will be four officers responsible for Child Protection:

- 1) Communal Social Affairs Worker (in charge of Child Care Protection at Communal Committee level)
- 2) Staff at SPCs
- 3) Collaborator (volunteer at community level)
- 4) Social Worker (new)

Prior to the official project launch, Care for Children will negotiate with MoLISA key roles and responsibilities, and a training strategy, based on Care for Children's COB & ToC.

Vietnam currently stores all information in paper form. However they are currently running a pilot project for electronic storing and if this is successful it will be rolled out nationally. Care for Children

could take advantage of this development, and use an electronic data management system for foster care to assist roll out.

MoLISA expressed that they would like to develop the following aspects through their cooperation with Care for Children:

- Make related policy and law to improve foster care,
- Clarify the process and procedure of foste care
- Help abandoned child go into foster care families directly
- Move children out of SPCs and into local foster families
- Develop training materials
- Monitor the operation of the foster care project

MoLISA has asked Care for Children to train Child Protections staff (including Social Workers) at every level to understand foster care, as well as train SPC caregivers to become family placement workers. This is in libe with Care for Children CBM and ToC.

Challenges expressed by MoLISA

- Most children in the SPCs are from poor families, so returning them to the community could mean they will have poorer conditions compared to the SPC
- Other countries are willing to take care of the children (international adoption)
- Poverty means families can not want provide adequate care for their children, so choose to put them in an SPC to ensure their wellbeing
- It will be important to raise awareness of this new work to recruit families willing to care for children

Project start

Care for Children proposes a 'soft' start to the project in February 2017 to allow for the project team to settle into the country, make initial staff recruitments, and conduct final negotiations in Hanoi with MoLISA. The official launch date is planned for July 2017 in line with the implementation of Vietnam's new Child Law.

Care for Children aims to develop the child welfare system that already exists in Vietnam. This means that there are no new personnel or buildings that the government is required to employ, purchase, or eventually take over management of. Care for Children recognises that its role is to stand alongside and support the government through a transition period, providing a level of seed-funding to help offset initial rises in costs at grassroots level, and providing all training and technical advice without cost. We do not want to replace or duplicate services that are the responsibility of local authorities. Instead we want to build their capacity, utilizing existing government staff and resources, so that they can deliver these services as effectively and sustainably as possible.

Care for Children uses a phased approach (four stages), which ensures sustainability, local ownership and impact:

- 1. Pilot project
- 2. National roll-out
- 3. Preparation for independence
- 4. Exit / Advisory and consultation to Government

Care for Children will prioritise a strategic relationship with MoLISA, and as part of the initial stages an agreement will be negotiated for the pilot project sites. The pilot project (stage 1) will be necessarily small and slow in growth as sensitive cultural issues are explored and understood, and training materials are written and tested. Once the pilot project is complete and a 'National Foster Care Project' is agreed (stage 2), the project will expand rapidly throughout the country. It is through this phased approach that we are able to make such an impact and transform a nation's child welfare system.

Key outcomes for the pilot project (3-5 years) will include:

- Strong relationships established with key government stakeholders
- Family placement programmes initiated by two SPCs
- Core training materials and training programme, tailor-made for Vietnam
- An established project office with a world-class Vietnamese training team
- Best practice/working model to start rolling-out across country (project stage 2)

CONTACT

UK Headquarters

3 The Close, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1 4DH, United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)1603 627814

Registered Charity No. 1072199 (England & Wales)

SE Asia Office

223/30 Moo 1, Nong Ho Road T. Chang Phuaek A. Muang Chiang Mai 50300 Thailand

Tel: +66 (0)53 010727

www.careforchildren.com