

Regional Peer-Learning Platform and Program of Learning and Action on Alternative Care Arrangements for Children in the Context of International Migration in the Asia Pacific

31 May 2021 | Workshop on Case Management

1. Background

On 31 May 2021 the International Detention Coalition (IDC) and Secretariat of the Asia Dialogue on Forced Migration (ADFM) convened a Virtual Workshop on Case Management, as part of the ongoing *Regional Peer-Learning Platform and Program of Learning and Action on Alternative Care Arrangements for Children in the Context of Migration in the Asia Pacific* (the Regional Platform). [Launched in Bangkok](#) in November 2019, the Regional Platform brings together individuals from policy and implementing agencies in the governments of Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia, and New Zealand as well as civil society and international organisations, in order to share positive practice and concrete examples of what is working.

Since the launch of the Regional Platform, subsequent meetings have been convened virtually due to travel restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. This Virtual Workshop on Case Management is the second in a series of online events, the first of which was the [Virtual Roundtable on Mainstreaming Child Protection in the Context of International Migration](#), held on 14 December 2020.

2. Summary of Proceedings

The Virtual Workshop on Case Management was attended by approximately 40 people from government ministries, civil society organisations, and international organisations in Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand and Thailand. The focus of the workshop was on the benefits of case management for children in the context of international migration and the different approaches that have been used to date in the region. Case management has been identified as a topic of significant interest by Regional Platform participants at past sessions. The Virtual Workshop was centred around a practical discussion over what makes case management approaches effective, what services are required, and the benefits of using case management approaches in a migration context. As the roundtable was conducted under the Chatham House Rule, what follows is a high-level summary of proceedings.

The Workshop began with a moderated discussion between two civil society panellists who are implementing case management programs in Malaysia. These programs benefit children and their families who have either experienced immigration detention, or who are at risk of immigration detention in Malaysia. The two programs cater to different groups of children and vary in terms of the intensity of the interventions provided.

The panellists agreed that their different approaches clearly demonstrated the ways in which case management can be tailored to meet the needs of refugee and migrant children in different contexts. Case management interventions can be more intensive where required; for example when unaccompanied and/or separated children are concerned. When children are with their families or where they are placed with a foster family, case management interventions can be scaled back to reflect the availability of community-based support. Participants also shared the cost savings benefits from their programs versus the use of immigration detention. They also reflected on the ways in which children in their programs have benefited from case management support, including examples of children who had been able to access life-saving medical treatment, safe housing, education, family reunification, and resettlement to a third country.

The panel discussion was followed by comments from others in the group about the importance of case management in responding to the needs of refugee and migrant children in other country contexts and from a range of government and non-government perspectives.

Participants then joined country breakout groups where they reflected upon the panel discussion and opportunities for further learning and development around case management practices in their respective countries. The small groups also discussed ways in which the Regional Platform could support them in this further learning.

3. Summary of Key Learnings and Conclusions

Key learnings and conclusions that emerged from the Workshop included:

- Most countries already use case management approaches to support different groups, including children. These same approaches can be adapted to apply to children in the context of migration, whether they are unaccompanied or separated children, or children with their families.
- There are opportunities to strengthen systems that apply domestically to also apply to non-citizen children, and educating front line staff about the changing needs of children as they cross borders
- Global research from IDC and others demonstrates that case management is one of the most effective tools that countries can use to strengthen migration governance and is cheaper than immigration detention. It can help migrants to cope better and improve their well-being, navigate immigration processes, and better address obstacles that impact on their ability to find long-term solutions for themselves. Case management does this by prioritising engagement and building of trust, over enforcement and penalties.
- There is no “one-size fits all” approach to case management. Rather, it is a person-centric, individualised approach towards migration governance. The different approaches discussed during the workshop will need to be tailored not only to reflect the national context, but also the needs of different groups of children and their families. However, sharing good practices, challenges, resources and learnings can assist participants better understand how case management can better support their work.
- Case management approaches can vary in intensity and resources required; they can involve a lighter-touch or can be more intensive, for example, where there are serious health issues or in the case of unaccompanied and separated children.
- There are many strengths within refugee and migrant communities that can be harnessed and strengthened to better support children and families. Communities are integral to any successful case management approach and should be consulted and involved in design and implementation.
- Case management can be more effective when done in partnership between governments and civil society, such as in Thailand between the Royal Thai Government, Host International Thailand and the Coalition on the Rights of Refugees and Stateless Persons, as well as in Malaysia between the Malaysian government and SUKA Society. At the same time, cooperation and collaboration between government ministries is critical.
- Although countries are at different stages in developing systems to support refugee and migrant children, the Virtual Workshop again demonstrated that there are many opportunities to learn from each other

4. Next Steps

Participants in the Regional Platform will progress two main elements over the course of 2021:

Further virtual roundtables to support ongoing peer learning: These will involve a mix of formal presentations, panel discussions by different countries, and small group discussions. In September participants will convene again around access to education for refugee and migrant children and then later in the year on government and civil society partnerships in implementing alternative care arrangements for children and their families.

Knowledge and resource sharing: IDC and the ADFM Secretariat will continue to facilitate information and resource sharing between participants. This could take the form of sharing access to resources, policy guides, or frameworks, or equally setting up bilateral conversations between interested parties to discuss different policy reforms and good practices in more detail.