



**Knowledge hub**  
-  
**Collection of best practices**

**Summary of the best practice**

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) \*

Leveraging mobile libraries to promote digital inclusion in remote and small schools in Thailand

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented \*

Thailand

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to \*

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) \*

UNICEF

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. \*

Mobile libraries, foundational reading, digital inclusion and learning, remote schools, migrant children and linguistic minorities

6. What makes it a best practice? \*

- It reaches the most marginalized children who live in remote areas, majority of them are migrant and ethnic minorities who have least access to digital learning. - It was transformed from a non-digital to a digital initiative resulting in lower implementation costs by building on and improving an existing programme. - The programme is in close collaboration with MoE at central level and local level

## Description of the best practice

### 7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? \*

UNICEF's 2015-16 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) examined support for education in the home, as well as the "Percentage of children under age 5 who have three or more children's books." The results in border provinces in Thailand were rather concerning: only 31% of children in Tak, and 29.6% of children in Mae Hong Son met the three-book criteria (compared to 60% of children in Bangkok). Poorest household, ethnic minorities and migrants are the majority living in border provinces and the estimates highlight their poor access to learning materials and tools to develop children's skills.

The mobile library initiative was initiated in 2016 to increase access to books and learning materials of disadvantaged children in border provinces. Four-wheel drive trucks able to traverse jungle trails were outfitted with large compartments lined with bookshelves--designed to display the books while keeping them from being tossed about. UNICEF's contribution is focused on supply of the mobile library van and reading and learning materials, and it also supports hiring of animators and drivers where needed, otherwise the local authorities deploy education resource persons. For example, in Mae Hong Son province where skilled drivers are needed to drive across unpaved roads in mountainous areas, UNICEF supports the driver and an "animator" trained and paid by UNICEF Thailand Country Office to conduct reading activities and digital learning activities with the children.

When education services were disrupted during the pandemic, the mobile libraries also remained parked during the 2020 national lockdown. With education increasingly going online, the digital divide in the remote provinces became more glaring. The most recent MICS in 2019 show that only 8% of households in Mae Hong Son and 14.8% in Yala have a computer at home, compared to 38.2% of households in Bangkok. In terms of internet access, 41.5% of household in Mae Hong Son and 36.8% in Yala have connectivity, compared to 73.5% in Bangkok.

During the pandemic, the mobile libraries were revisited to explore how they could support the digital inclusion of children attending remote schools. The trucks were additionally equipped with ICT devices including routers to provide on-line and digital learning to children.

The first mobile library truck was introduced in Mae Hong Son in 2016. The programme gradually expanded with additional trucks for greater coverage. As of 2022, there are a total 10 trucks operating in 5 border provinces in Thailand.

## 8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation? \*

The Mobile Libraries are four-wheel drive trucks with an enclosed cab containing shelves full of books and equipped with IT devices. The Mobile Libraries travel long distances on difficult roads to visit remote schools/classrooms, and mostly serve the poor, ethnic minorities and migrant children. The mobile library staff help students select books for reading at school and at home, and conduct interactive group reading activities, generally inside a classroom. Toward that end, mobile library staff utilize puppets, have children act out stories, ask older children to summarize the story, provide photocopied worksheets of story characters for the students to color, etc. When the ICT devices were equipped to the mobile library truck in 2021, the staff added on activities relevant to on-line and digital learning such as how to use a search engine and how to use e-learning platforms.

The mobile library activities are carried out year-round as per academic year (May – March). During implementation, the truck travels from one school to the next and in some remote areas, it will stay over-night at the school to allow parents and community members to use their services in the evening time. The local education authorities and schools are the key implementers who deliver mobile library service to children.

Furthermore, the Bureau of Teaching and Learning Technology provides support on the on-line and off-line content as well as training to the mobile library staff. Private sector provides funding through UNICEF to procure a truck and the first lot of reading materials. With thematic funding, UNICEF procured computer, tablets, projector, router and power banks to the mobile library truck. The gasoline and maintenance costs are supported by the government.

## 9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? \*

This practice has increased the access to learning materials for the most marginalized children in Thailand, many of whom do not speak Thai as their mother-tongue. Age-appropriate materials are available through physical books as well as electronically via tablets and computer. The first priority for kindergarten and early primary student is the development of basic Thai literacy and numeracy skills. With additional online and offline learning materials available, teachers have more tools to address the poor foundational skills of these children. The fact that the truck moves from school to school also increases the service coverage and makes children enthusiastic to use the tools/materials when the mobile trucks visit their schools. Prior to the pandemic in 2019 when there were 8 trucks, the mobile library programme provided service to more than 5,000 children annually. The programme was affected by Covid-19 and was halted in certain areas because of travel restrictions. However, the programme with 10 mobile library trucks are expected to reach 8,000 children in 2022.

Since the IT devices were added in late 2021 and schools in Thailand just re-opened in May 2022, no formal assessment has yet been carried out. However, through programme visits and feedback from local authorities, the response from target groups is very positive. The schools which are not included in the target group this year expressed interest to use mobile library service.

## 10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? \*

Based on its global “Reimagine Education” initiative, UNICEF is committed to the digital transformation of the Thai public education eco-system to ensure all children access high quality learning which meets them where they are. One of the key objectives of Reimagine Education is to improve digital inclusion of learners, especially the poor and at risk, with a focus on access to online and offline learning (including affordable data and appropriate devices) and digital literacy and life skills to use the internet safely for learning. Most of the remote schools served by the mobile library programme faced technology-related limitations. They have computers, but breakdowns are frequent and repairs time consuming. As internet connections are unreliable, some schools rely on satellite internet. The add-on digital element of mobile library truck makes it a digital hub for disadvantaged schools. The add-on also means it costs less since it is built on the existing programme and resources.

The collaboration with MoE at central level and local level is the key. The programme operation must be flexible and adaptive to each local area. Local implementers can set their own mobile library calendar to deliver services to children in their area. In some places mobile library might stay days or weeks at the same school while in other places the mobile library visits one school per day. The ownership of the truck is with local education authorities and that makes them feel responsible to use it in full capacity. UNICEF and Bureau of Teaching and Learning Technology act as supporters to bring quality learning content from trusted sources, provide capacity building and generate the mobile library network for knowledge sharing.

However, the transformation of the mobile library to a digital hub also faced challenges. Since the original mobile library target on reading, the mobile library focal point is usually the education supervisor on Thai language, who might not be familiar with IT devices, digital content and how to integrate it with learning.

## 11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a “best practice”.

What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented “best practice” or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? \*

The mobile library is used to digitally transform the service delivery of existing programme. The target group is the most marginalized children who live in remote areas. They are the last group who will have access to learning technology. Therefore, the programme addresses both access and learning quality while requiring less financial resources compared to initiating a completely new programme. In addition, the programme is not just about tools and materials; it is also about inspiring young students, creating a hunger for learning, and helping to bridge the educational equity gap. The children are very excited by mobile library visits (compared to when they have books installed in the classroom every day), and they eagerly devour the books and use the tablets to engage with materials and learn. These visits bring huge affective benefits.

## 12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. \*

<https://www.unicef.org/thailand/>