

This Life In Families

Supporting Children & Families in Conflict with the Law

Scalability & Replicability Study 2021



This Life
ILE | Siem Reap | Cambodia



September 2021

About

This Life is an Australian registered NGO, based in Siem Reap Cambodia. This Life is a Community Development focused organisation that seeks to listen to and support individuals and communities as they identify and determine solutions to their problems and aspirations.

Using dialogue as knowledge and existing evidence, This Life seeks to empower and enable Cambodian communities to challenge and navigate their own pathways towards prosperity.

Impact Learning and Effectiveness, (ILE) is a distinct team based within This Life, that provide independent research and policy analysis on behalf of projects that work directly with individuals and communities. ILE provides monitoring and evaluation services, as well as capacity and partnership development opportunities to community groups, local stakeholders and fellow NGOs

About the Program

The aim of TLIF is to identify, support and preserve vulnerable families from the risk and hazards of separation, and to take practical and proactive steps to help families remain safe and together.

Family separation often occurs in Cambodia when families experience poverty shocks or other unplanned family crises and do not have sufficient support to cope. As a result of a range of these factors, many children in Cambodia have been unnecessarily separated from their families and communities. Separation creates instability and disconnection within the family structure, which if left unacknowledged, can become irreparable

The use of institutional care in Cambodia became increasingly common during the 2000s as a result of a range of factors such as poverty, low access to education, limited employment opportunities and an insufficient provision of child and social protection services. Parents coming into conflict with the law and being placed in closed facilities also influenced increasing family separation. Today, we see similar patterns with exacerbating factors such as domestic violence and economic migration contributing to family separation.

Duration:

Three-year program running from July 2018 to June 2021 & Jan 2019 to Dec 2021

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Abbreviations

TLIF	This Life In Families
TLIC	This Life In Communities
TLBB	This Life Beyond Bars
TLWB	This Life Without Bars
SW	Social Worker
CCWC	Commune Committee for Women and Children
WCC	Women and Children Committee (District level)
POSVY	Provincial Office of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth Rehabilitation
OSVY	Office of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth Rehabilitation
LICADHO	Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights
ADHOC	Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association

2. Executive Summary

This report presents the findings from a research study that sought to determine the prospect and potential to expand This Life's This Life In Families (TLIF) program activities, into other provinces in Cambodia.

The aim of TLIF is to identify, support and preserve vulnerable families from the risk and hazards of separation, and to take practical and proactive steps to help families remain safe and together.

The key results of this research were generated from both; primary and secondary data sources. The study collected its primary data via interviews with all of TLIFs program Social Workers and the Program Coordinator. The research study also collected secondary data through desktop reviews of the projects monitoring and evaluation reports, program manual, staff operational reports, client case notes and observation notes made by individual social workers.

The research exercise sought to analyze these critical factors as means to determine the program's success in key areas, such as; program and process design, technical evaluation, issues and risk assessment, modularity and regulatory, environmental and social assessment, and stakeholder acceptance. In doing this, the research exercise also sought to understand the prospect of project replication, in areas beyond Siem Reap.

The critical factors found and recommendations are summarised as follows.

Key strengths of the program

The delivery of the current program is in its second phase, having been extended from its pilot phase, which started in 2016. The research study found that throughout this second phase, the current program can be understood as functional, valued and working effectively, due to the following terms and conditions:

- There is significant evidence that relates to service improvement via the optimization of process monitoring, evaluation and program redesign.
- Technology has been willfully sought, modified and used within the current program, which has resulted in more effective and efficient use of data. This has enabled and provided distinct flexibilities within the program, to operate faster and to either extend its reach to larger numbers of target clients and/or spend more time engineering support within families.
- The current staff are competent with a range of appropriate skills in both case and project management to deliver activities in orthodox conditions and beyond. This was demonstrated in the maintenance and provision of services during the initial threat and prolonged threat associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Here, the pandemic created the opportunity for staff to perform in a vigilant and considered manner, which in itself, provided performance improving insights into the delivery of the program in both urban and rural areas.
- According to the program plan, the study found a significant impact on project recipients, especially amongst those whose role as primary family breadwinner became compromised when in conflict with the law. Case studies of this work have been published within international texts and clearly present the wider determinants of poverty and unplanned family shocks.¹ In these circumstances, the holistic nature of TLIF has been observed as delivering valued support to family members, that have helped maintain contact and interaction.
- The holistic support associated with TLIF does not exist anywhere else outside of Siem Reap, within Cambodia. As such, the research had identified and found a clear demand in other areas where explicitly prisons and other remand centres are to be found.

¹ Andrew M. Jefferson & Samantha Jeffries (Eds), (2022). *Gender, Criminalization, Imprisonment and Human Rights in Southeast Asia*: Published March 29th 2022. ISBN 9781801172875.

- The provision and notion of a duty of care are weak and lacking within local authority administrations, which for the most part can be regarded as the closest representation of an orthodox system of welfare. Within the current decentralised network of local government, there is a distinct lack of skilled personnel, budget, and human resources capable of responding to the demand, impact and fallout, associated with a range of underdeveloped social policies.
- TLIF staff have received statements of satisfaction and praise from both local authorities and direct beneficiaries. This is indicative of the opportunities and authentic advantages that this program delivers to people and their families in times of need.
- Because of widespread demand, it is the conclusion of this study that TLIF is more than capable of replicating its activities in other local areas, given the explicit availability of donor funding. However, in a competitive and policy development environment, it remains unclear how sustainable this project can be, if future resourcing is to be tied to mainstream government funding. New and dynamic funding opportunities would need to be explored that include the use of pooled budgets and prospectively, the introduction of new legislation that allows for local tax revenue-raising capabilities.
- Whilst there are significant technical factors associated with case management systems, which can in themselves, lend to the scaling of this type of program, engaging in such activities outside of Cambodia would perhaps require further and deeper consideration. This would include a detailed understanding of the target country's history, demographics, law, culture, customs and working environment. This could be undertaken in a further report, once distinct ideas and preferred locations had been asserted.

Weakness within the program

Given its progression into a second phase, the research study found areas that could be deemed weaknesses. Whilst the program was seen to be functional and efficient, key areas for future improvement have been identified.

The TLIF program demonstrates some design weaknesses at a granular level, and the program documentation would benefit from a review, should the opportunity to expand its reach be considered.

- Accessing available resources appears to be time-consuming and bureaucratic. The requirement for a social worker to purchase critical materials to support program clients has revealed administrative systems that have resulted in time consuming and delays. At the time of writing, a central procurement officer has been appointed within the team, to ensure that finance and access points to finance are streamlined for the benefit of the service user and not the service provider.
- The current skills and knowledge of all social workers are fair to perform their tasks through working experience. While all TLIF social workers have received on job training in social work and case management practices none of them are found to be formally certified as the social worker. While the country has established Guidelines on Basic Competencies for Social Workforce², the program should invest its ongoing staff capacity development in the guidelines and other social welfare standards.
- Program management processes could benefit from improved skills in digital record keeping. Documentation and document management are both areas that could benefit from further investment and engagement. From the methods employed to date, it could be argued that program staff need to collect wider elements of information and record this within an electronic environment, enabling new opportunities for data sharing and research linked interrogation.
- A further step for improvement hinges on enhancing the monitoring processes that underpin the program such as visitation and small business activities. By pursuing and aligning the routinely

² The Guidelines on Basic Competencies for Social Workforce in Cambodia _ Khmer. (2019). Retrieved 12 August 2021, from https://www.fcf-react.org/download/the-guidelines-on-basic-competencies-for-social-workforce-in-cambodia_-_khmer/

collected data to the stated program outcomes; and developing SMART³ indicators, the program outcomes can be more clearly understood. The outcome of the improvement on the activity monitoring can ensure the improvement of the relationship of the project beneficiaries and the family inside prison and also in income generation support.

- The current income generation activity in the program module is relatively weak in both its delivery, implementation and control. A brief market analysis, small business financial management training, and standardised monitoring should be developed and incorporated into the program, to support and optimise this distinct avenue of opportunity for families. We sense that more can be done to improve this aspect of the program which could result in more economic success amongst beneficiaries.
- The program could benefit from the reintroduction of robust and supportive counselling services. As the program mainly engages with the families whose members are in conflict with the law, access to an advice and counselling service appears intrinsic given the trauma and impact that this shift in circumstance evokes. This type of service could also help support families by providing advice and counselling to family members on distinct legal issues and help clearly explain how the law operates. Given the extent of corruption within the legal system, the service could also help prevent the family from falling foul of money extortion.
- In the current model, social workers have been known to present themselves as a counsellor when their skills and knowledge base is insufficient. There are limits to what a social work qualification enables an individual to do, however, at present, there is a risk that the profession may overestimate its own capabilities.

Buoyancy & Control Within the Program

The scalability and replicability research study developed and used an analytical framework from which to understand those deeper elements that are associated with the program and its activities. A Likert scale was also adopted and used to measure views and perceptions of these deeper elements. This provided an opportunity to assess the levels of buoyancy and control that was associated with the program.

Buoyancy refers to the positive influence and likely impact that an element has on the program's activities and outcomes - with high buoyancy suggesting favourable outcomes. A motivated workforce for example can be seen as a highly buoyant element of the program.

Control refers to the amount of control and influence an individual project member has over the factors in question. Higher levels of power and autonomy within the program's workforce tend to have an influential impact by enabling more control over the circumstances and situation. The combined assessment and **result of the Likert scales reduced perceptions to a numerical percentage form would suggest that the buoyancy of the project rests at 74% while the level of control over its associated factors is 64%.**

Therefore, on the balance of probability and given the current program is now in its second phase, focusing on key technical factors such as staff skills, program management, and the impact of the program, the analysis of the report would suggest that the program is appropriately positioned to scale up its activities, subject to the following three caveats:

1. Scaling up the program within another country would require more preparation, notably in areas such as the working environment, existing welfare provision, social, political and economic insights as well as a deep understanding of what levels of provision already exist within the public and voluntary sector.
2. Benefitting from a further service review, and with modifications in key areas, the current program is fit to meet widespread demand in other provinces in Cambodia. This is largely due to the lack of skills, budget, and human resources that exist within the jurisdiction of local authorities and the urban/rural geographic spread that they attend to.

³ This S.M.A.R.T. approach refers to the development of indicators that are: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound.

3. Control over the programs buoyancy can be improved via staff training, designing and adopting more rapid efficient financial systems and developing an appreciation of heightened workplace autonomy, that would need to be instilled amongst staff. Collectively, these elements, alongside the expanded use of digital/electronic records will help improve program delivery and enhance the quality of services inherent to it.

Factors that would mitigate against this include:

1. This Life Senior Management makes the final decision.
2. The availability of operational funds for the program extension.
3. The continued spread and escalation of COVID-19 via new and vaccine outperforming variants

3. Project Background

In Cambodia, an estimated 49,000 children are living in residential care institutions.⁴ Research between 2005 and 2010 indicates a 75% increase in the number of institutional care facilities throughout the country albeit that the number of orphaned children is consistently decreasing.⁵ The research also illustrated that approximately 80% of children residing in institutions are deemed to have at least one living parent.⁶ There are known factors that lead to children being unnecessarily separated from their families and communities, such as poverty, lack of access to educational opportunities in rural areas, domestic violence, migration, and conflict with the law.⁷

Among the known factors, families with a parent or caregiver in conflict with the law are particularly vulnerable to family separation due to a fundamental lack of services to address the social needs arising from imprisonment in Cambodia. The empirical research has further documented an almost complete lack of consideration for the care of children at the initial point of a parent being arrested and detained.

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When a parent is imprisoned, family dynamics change immediately. There is a well-documented scarcity of services for children and families left behind when a parent is incarcerated,⁹ and the operational nature of the juvenile justice system often prevents children in conflict with the law from fully accessing or exploiting their rights. Typically, a family that has a member in conflict with the law, is isolated, compounded by shame, stigma, and possible discrimination within the community or family structure. Women and children who come into conflict with the law are among the most vulnerable, marginalised, and self-isolated in their communities.

4. Project Description,

This Life In Families (TLIF) program, has been implemented in Sautr Nikum, Svay Leu and Siem Reap districts since 2016 through GHR Foundation funding. The program has then been expanded to all the districts in Siem Reap province with the funding support from the Firetree Philanthropy in 2018. The program is implemented alongside other This Life programs and projects, such as the This Life In Schools (TLIS), This Life Without Bars (TLWB), and This Life Without Violence (TLWV).

The program's overall goal is for children to be protected and supported to return to and remain within their family and community environment.

To meet the program's aim, a two-pronged (short and long term) approach is adopted to tackle the issue of child family separation. *The Family Preservation* dimension provides a range of practical, short-term, early interventions, which help to *support and preserve vulnerable families at risk of separation*.

⁴ National estimation of children in residential care institutions in Cambodia: a modelling study. (Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health and the Ministry of Planning's National Institute of Statistics, 2016)

⁵ With the Best Intentions - A Study of Attitudes Towards Residential Care in Cambodia. (Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation and UNICEF, 2011).

⁶ With the Best Intentions - A Study of Attitudes Towards Residential Care in Cambodia. (Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation and UNICEF, 2011).

⁷ UNICEF in Cambodia country programme 2019-2023. Available from: [CountryProgramme_OVERVIEW_25x25_2019_Final.pdf .pdf \(unicef.org\)](#).

⁸ Andrew M. Jefferson & Samantha Jeffries (Eds), (2022). *Gender, Criminalization, Imprisonment and Human Rights in Southeast Asia*: specifically Chapter 4. Published March 29th 2022. ISBN 9781801172875.

⁹ Mothers Behind Bars: The Impact of Detention on Women & their Children (LICADHO, May 2015)

The Family Support dimension is provided when a juvenile or parent comes into conflict with the law. The Family Support component works in parallel to provide a longer-term service, involving the provision of services and support for *families of those already imprisoned and needing additional support*.

5. Project Aim

To support and preserve vulnerable families at risk of separation to safely remain together.

6. Stakeholders

The TLIF program provides support to families that meet the following criteria:

- Mother or father is a prisoner, with a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 3 years remaining of their sentence.

Based on an assessment of effort, the following organisational stakeholders are also important elements to this project:

- POSVY
- OSVY
- CCWC
- WCC
- Village Chief
- Prison Guard
- Legal Aid organisation
- ADHOC
- LICADHO
- Angkor Hospital for Children, and
- Other local NGOs

7. Research Study Objectives

TLIF seeks to claim proof of concept over its business model and illustrate that it not only delivers impactful social change for the project's direct and indirect beneficiaries but also delivers an evidence-based model for change that can be scaled and expanded to a wider audience, exposed to similar pressures, within other communities or regions in Cambodia.

However, it remains unclear if the project is indeed that portable. What works in one area may not be the same for another. A one size fits all approach to development practice has often been the nub of many mistakes, and the urban-rural divide is often stark in low-income economies.¹⁰ In this sense, the research has taken into consideration those key issues and components associated with the project and sought to understand how buoyant they may indeed be if commuted to and applied to a second or alternative environment.

Due to the unique characteristics of the Siem Reap district, a like-for-like comparison is not possible. Nevertheless, comparisons of the subsets of data generated at commune and district levels in the Siem Reap Province will provide invaluable insight into the project's implementation across similar socio-economic settings.

8. Scope of Work

The Scalability and Replicability Study will assess a variety of factors, using existing data, that was collected via regular ongoing monitoring, including the risks and issues register, program reports, the baseline, the mid-term evaluation, end-line surveys and the end line project evaluation

¹⁰ Lessmann, C., & Markwardt, G. (2010). Does one size fit all? Decentralisation, corruption, and the monitoring of bureaucrats. *World Development*, 38(4), 631-646.

9. Deliverables

Within this research study, we aim to:

- Identify a list of critical factors and accompanying questions, with which to assess the basis of expansion and replication of the TLIF model.
- Provide a final report, highlighting conceptual strengths and weaknesses.

10. Study Methodology

Scalability refers to the capacity to change or expand in size or scale, in response to a distinct purpose. In development terms, scaling up often refers to "taking successful projects, programs, or policies and expanding, adapting, and sustaining them in different ways over time, in exchange for wider development impact." While replicability is "the quality or capability to copy or reproduce one thing and expect the same outcome."

While scaling up is a common goal, there is no universally accepted methodology to follow. Therefore, the research study on TLIF will focus on and use both primary, secondary, quantitative and qualitative data.

Primary data will also be collected from staff engaged in the project. Naturally, this may contribute a subjective view into the consideration. As such, views of other independent people may be sought, to provide alternative views and perspectives that could be critical to any future decision-making process.

Secondary data will be identified via the records and literature that exists and which describes the project's evolution. This includes the project's design records, monitoring and observation reports, baseline reports (if any), project evaluation reports both mid-term and end-term project evaluations. Secondary data will also be collected from M&E Officer monthly reports, which provide an opportunity for the M&E Officer to make critical judgements and options for change, about each This LifeProject.

The data drawn from both primary and secondary sources will be analysed and compared. This analysis will seek to identify patterns of opportunity that could suggest a basis for service expansion. Equally, patterns of uncertainty may also be discovered, which suggest critical alternative actions. In this sense, and on the balance of evidence and probability, key suggestions relating to service expansion will be presented, via the production of a 10–15-page final report.

11. Analysis of Critical Factors

In conducting this study, a range of factors were taken into a pool of consideration. Collectively, these process mapping factors represent important elements in the delivery of the TLIF program and highlight important dimensions to any decision that involve expansion. They include:

Time

Empirical research, based on staff interviews and desk reviews of relevant literature indicates that the implementation of the program has remained on time, according to the activities set within the program's designed time frame. However, some family recipients under the Family Preservation project have not been followed its timeframe (3 - 6 month case closures) due to some external factors including:

- The information requested from the prison authority was late due to prison administration and the choice of contacts within the establishment.
- While in the field, sometimes, the target family member did not know their family member had been arrested until contacted by the program staff and were unaware of the date of the arrest, or where their family member had been held.
- Family members suppressed information due to personal shame. It was only after multiple contact and conversations, families engaged in the process of the program.

- The Covid-19 pandemic slowed down activities as the staff needed to take very high precautions to protect themselves and the project recipients.

Cost

When thinking about cost, we have considered those elements that were expended within different stages of the program and considered what has been gained and what may have been lost. It should be noted that the expenditures associated with this the program are available and have been externally audited as part of the organisational annual global audit.

The current scale of the project is seen to be eclipsed by the burden of the problems associated with young people and adults in conflict with the law. Whilst appropriate levels of funding are associated with the operational activities; it is felt that further investment and expansion beyond Siem Reap may also represent a valid second step in any development of this initiative.

The investment has not only brought solutions, relief and support to a distinct cohort of individuals and their families, but it has also helped illuminate a common problem in Cambodian society that to date is still largely unacknowledged and neglected. As such society is probably paying a higher cost for its exclusion from mainstream welfare support.

The research is firm in its belief that the costs associated with the delivery of this program have been worthwhile in terms of the long-term impacts that the program delivers.

Effort

The research found exemplary commitment from staff who adopted high levels of responsibility to perform their tasks and serve eligible clients. The evidence found in the project evaluation reports shows a high level of gratitude and satisfaction from project recipients alongside the relevant government authorities who work with the project in partnership.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has generated more restrictions on personal contacts, new opportunities were established to help support social workers undertake their duties with project clients. This period of disruption helped staff teams to innovate in ways that otherwise would have denied clients and their families of valued services.

Impact

The program's primary impact was evidenced by family members maintaining contact, while a family breadwinner remained in conflict with the law and was subsequently charged and sent to jail.

Historical research had clearly illustrated the devastation that a jail sentence has on a family in Cambodia, with the family dynamic being broken, families invariably split up. The impact of such family separation, on children often ended with the involvement of residential care institutions.

It is clear from the range of case studies and interviews with direct and indirect family members, that this project provided a lifeline of practical services and solutions, that helped maintain hope in the reunification of the family. Through holistic program interventions, family members have been able to visit the loved one in jail regularly, children continued their education and the family was able to generate an alternative income from which to support the rest of the family.

Procurement

Purchasing items to support families qualified by the program become tedious and time-consuming. At times, inconsistent requests for financial paperwork to program staff cause confusion and delay and brought the whole process of procurement into focus. Conflicting demands for accountability and transparency from the finance team become so sensitive, that social workers believed their honesty and personal honour was in question.

Suggestions from social workers, relating to the purchase of material goods, led to the finance department creating a distinct procurement service so that goods and consumables could be purchased rapidly, be subject to scrutiny without the burden of unnecessary bureaucracy. This development created clear advantages for the purposes of procurement, not only for this project but across all other This Life programs. This enabled program staff to dedicate more time concentrating and supporting the needs of the clients, families and other case-related issues.

Skills & Knowledge

The case notes review of the project found that social workers have a range of appropriate skills and knowledge. This includes means testing as a method from which to articulate program eligibility. A means test is undertaken to articulate which families are in most need and also which families are at most risk. Beyond this, social workers are skilled in collecting relevant information that helps form an appreciation of the substance and fabric of a family's circumstance, once a member is detained in prison. Note and information are collected throughout the program involvement with a family and this data is kept securely on an electronic platform.

There is also evidence of the social workers' limited skills in assessing and allocating financial support, for income generation purposes. The rudimentary skill includes small business start-ups, product development and market analysis. Legal and local authority specific knowledge is also made available to families who require or could benefit from it.

Administration

Administrative tasks underpinning the program were found to be handled by the program team. These jobs are minimal and found to be easy to manage, except for finance-related requests, as mentioned earlier. As such, there are questions to be considered relating to the role of minor administrative tasks and the obvious absence of administrative staff. Staff seem to be confused when distinguishing administrative tasks from service-specific tasks and there were a lot of contradictory answers between them.

The review would suggest that a routine task audit be undertaken across a distinct period and that critical tasks are distinguished from clerical tasks. There is a sense within the reviewed documentation that an administrative role could help remove benign activities from those people who are better placed to work with families and solve social problems. The use of interns and volunteers, if carefully managed, would help bridge this divide with minimal cost to the program. This would certainly help reduce time if the administrative function was aligned with finance and procurement

Value for Money

The study found that whenever one family member came into conflict with the law, the situation and circumstances would quickly escalate into arrest and either pre-trial detention or prison. This would automatically place a family at risk of breakdown. The impact of a family losing its daily income would invariably mean that a child's education would become at risk. Further chaotic coping strategies would be adopted, and in dire circumstances, families would break up and children would be vulnerable to residential care institutions.

In the three years of program implementation, it was found that the program helped family members remain together, establish alternative family income through an income generation program, and keep children in school. As is often the case, the emotional and mental health support that the TLIF program provides helps with the wide-ranging emotional struggle and hurdles often faced by families and friends of prisoners living with alternative sides of a wall.

In terms of value for money, the study found the program to be value for money. In the time of this report writing, a total of 413 families has been enrolled on TLIF: 215 enrolled on the Family Preservation Project, and 194 families enrolled on the Family Supports Project. Approximately, if an average of 5 members per family, totalling 2,045 family members who the program has supported, directly and indirectly, since its outset. Without such support, lives would have been disrupted; further criminal activity may have been adopted as means by which to cope. As has been mentioned by public health professionals elsewhere, society pays a high price for ignoring preventative-based activities.

It may be time to reassess those key areas of the program's service that have been supported, and using granular research, articulate and analyse the levels of investment that each area has consumed. It may follow that a more robust approach to business start-up is established to reap richer rewards in terms of income generation.

Demand

The desktop review on the project mid-term evaluations for 2019 and 2020 clearly shows that local communities need this type of support for those families in these distinct circumstances. Since the start of the program, 133 families have been identified as ineligible, from a total number of 547 families referred.

The program has used its resources to work with those members of the community who have demonstrated the most need. However, in tandem, significant numbers of local people, with lower levels of need have not been deemed eligible. **The project may do well to follow up on all applicants as part of a longitudinal study, to articulate the cost-of-service provision, and the price that society has subsequently paid for those that were not eligible to participate.**

In the face of existing demand, responsible local authorities have demonstrated praise and satisfaction with the activities provided. In the absence of sufficient budgets, this may also be understood as institutional gratitude. Albeit sceptical at first, local authority staff have declared value in the approach and range of support services delivered by the program.

Similar circumstances likely exist in the vast majority of provincial areas that span Cambodia. However, any decision to scale up and expand the project to other geographical areas should perhaps undertake further impact exercises. It would be valuable to calculate, if only synthetically, how the demand on the service shifted, should its eligibility criteria be amended by modest increments. It may follow that modest changes in eligibility criteria is sufficient to multiply existing local demand. It would be remiss to think that those who are marginally above the eligibility criteria, face any less significant risk to family breakdown, than those marginally under it. This would be an exercise worth undertaking, before any further expansion, to articulate pragmatic choices and value for money.

It can be argued that expanding the program, based on demand, only really makes sense when long term funding or government mainstreaming of costs is a serious consideration. Establishing similar conditions and maintaining operational advantages that have been crafted in Siem Reap may well take time to foster in other areas. New partnerships may or may not evolve and follow suit and the working culture of a remote and satellite service may be difficult to replicate and maintain. Building larger enterprises that have uncertain financial futures is also a point for more prioritised discussion.

Technical Factors

The research found that the technical factors of the existing model are appropriate for scaling to another province as indicated in the operational plan. However, scaling to another country would require more planning. Service costs, language, culture and wider management challenges would vary depending on the target location.

The desktop reviews and interviews indicated that the present Case Management system employed by the program is appropriate and critical for program scaling up. In the practical theory of Social Work¹¹, Case Management involves assessing an individual/family's needs and helping them find solutions to their problems. It also can be defined as "a collaborative process that coordinates, support, advocate, strength-based, problem-solving goal-orientated, monitoring, and is solution-focused to meet a client's health or human services need¹². In dealing with participants, the program uses the case management system to organise and structure the support from the primary support toward self-sufficiency. It is a step-by-step process that all social workers must follow from start to finish with full participation from the family clients.

¹¹ NASW standard for Social Work Case Management, Available: <https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=acrzomEfhlo%3d&portalid=0>, accessed:2 Sept, 2021

¹² Four Key Components for Successful Case Management, Available: <https://www.socialsolutions.com/blog/successful-nonprofit-case-management>, Accessed 2 Sept, 2021

Benefits

From the desk review, staff interviews and project evaluations, the project indicates that project recipients are supported by a wide range of benefits. However less is known, or less is communicated about the interventions that are planned and work and the interventions that work but are less valued. Producing more case study examples, that illustrate the range of interventions that are produced, would support the knowledge and evidence base of this type of intervention. Both social workers and the project's case management system would do well to articulate this area of their work more (their achievements) and perhaps accommodate more record space for this dimension of the project on the case management system.

The theory that underpins this project is clear and understood – breadwinning family members who find themselves incarcerated place their immediate and innocent family at risk. Similar perspectives can be made separately about children who end up in prison, and mothers too. However, it is with the interventions that the project delivers, that prevention can be seen to work its magic and occur. It is with this dimension that opportunities and options may exist for performance improvement. It may follow that alternative and supplementary services can be developed that solely focus on those interventions and which in time, could complement the parent service more robustly.

An example of this can be seen in terms of income generation related activities, which or some, may create real and valuable solutions. However, for other families, it may not, for a range of credible reasons. This may be down to family confidence, product value, price, market conditions etc. It may also be linked to an overestimation of knowledge and skills on behalf of the social worker. Better perhaps to focus on those interventions that work and potentially view the development of support services to help consolidate planned outcomes.

Beyond this, the relationships that the project builds with families is clear. The wider benefits associated with health, education, visitation and emergency cash are also practical. Further research into the use, value and long-term nature of these benefits would be useful, as would the production of more case study examples.

Complexity

Covid-19 pandemic created more difficulties for the program team to deliver its activities properly. The visitation program was postponed, but the related costs were redistributed towards a fund that was used to buy credit for mobile phones, so as loved ones could keep in contact with those in prison instead. The restriction also created unplanned opportunities from which to make program savings, which were used later in wider preventative activities.

Core to the TLIF program is its case management system, which was developed in 2012. Throughout the years, this case management system was gradually improved. Of late, an electronic system, OSCaR, was initiated in 2018. However, because of the complexity of the TLIF cases, OSCaR cannot accommodate all the needs and data collection points of the program, which has led to a cease of use. The current Case Management system can be tailored to address various social issues experienced by the program and possibly throughout the wider context of Cambodian society. It may have other forms of utility in other developing countries.

The Case Management system has been used right through the implementation of the program, up to 2021. Given the lack of electronic platforms, this feature possibly positions TLIF at the forefront of best practices for social workers in Cambodia. It provides donors with confidence in This Life's ability to provide the support that creates impact at a grassroots level.

It was also found that This Life is the only non-government organisation working with families in conflict with the law in Cambodia. This Life has long-lasting, mature and effective relationships with local authorities and staff within the General Department of Prisons. This Life received support for program activities from the Deputy Provincial Governor, Prison Director and DoSVY at the Provincial level. The nature of this goodwill would offer This Life a clear advantage in expanding its operations into other provinces.

Risks

The COVID-19 pandemic represents the largest unplanned risk that This Life and its projects have had to deal with. With frequent and sporadic restrictions, the program has faced a clear period of operational challenge. TLIF has managed this program well in response to the risk associated with the pandemic. The pandemic generated high levels of caution and pressure amongst all levels of staff and stakeholders. On every occasion, actions that were taken were adopted for the safety of clients and their families in mind.

However, as has been discussed, the future impact of the pandemic will largely depend on people and their attitudes to change¹³. Future mutations and variants of the virus will also pose long term threats and the program will routinely risk-manage its activities based on public data and known infection rates. Given the nature of COVID-19, this would be a critical area for consideration should a second location or other nation be identified as a focal point for expansion.

Modularity

For the purposes of successful expansion, the program may choose to review key elements of its current model, these include:

- A brief service supply audit, small business financial management training.
- Standardised monitoring should be added to the existing program element in the small business or income generation element.
- While managing a small business, mid- and long-term financial investment, management support is seen as essential for business success and sustainability.
- Add a supportive counselling service into the program element.

As the program mainly engages with the families whose members are conflicted with the law, the counselling service is inevitable. The service can provide counselling to the family members on emotional and mental health issues, as well as in a guidance format, where legal issues and advice can be provided. The service could also help prevent financial mismanagement as many families turn to local loan lenders in times of emergency. In the current model, SW sometimes works as a counsellor outside of their skill and knowledge.

At the time of writing, a counselling room has been developed with This Life HQ for facilitating counselling and further funding bids have been linked to legal advice services.

- Refocus and assign the social worker role to client-facing activities and liberate their time from administrative and financial procurement-related activities.
- This could help create a more centralised and less time-consuming workforce.
- This Life could establish or delegate procurement activities to one individual, this could create and free up time and energy for client-focused development work.

Access

The study found that all social workers have successfully supported the project recipients according to the project objectives. Decisions have been made amongst recipients with full consent, consultation, collaboration, and mutual respect.

However, as the program has grown, there is little evidence to suggest that those local authorities have any interest in fully or partly owning and funding the process. This limitation is due to many interwoven factors such as available financial and human resources, knowledge, skill, and the level of bureaucracy that is both absent and present within the current decentralised model of public sector-led service provision.

As mentioned earlier, establishing larger social-focused services and enterprises, without clear options for sustainability, can be challenging in the long term. It would appear that new forms of revenue generation at the local level, and/or disinvestment policies within wider public areas are needed to incentivise and create a culture of change and innovation in welfare service provision. This would be a

13 Nature | Vol 584 | 6 August 2020, Available: [d41586-020-02278-5.pdf](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-020-02278-5.pdf) (nature.com)

key area for discussion underpinning the majority of activities that seek to amend and reform welfare service provision in the future. Given This Life's unique position in this type of social service, it may follow that exploratory discussion are pursued before any further plans for expansion are considered.

In any new iteration of this program, a service mapping or a rapid assessment activity should be implemented to identify those 'networks of support and community-based care options that could offer relief to clients. The service mapping exercise could help the program outsource distinct activities and services instead of the program designing in house solutions.

Quality

The program was found to be guided by a specific program manual called "TLIF Program Manual" which was designed to guide and inform program development and management, via evolving stages, through to the point of operational implementation. The manual itself is detailed and has been finalised by 2021 which became a crucial guidance to implementing the program.

The Case Management System forms represent a sound system and offer suitable tools for the social workers to follow and fill in. However, the recording skills displayed by some staff require attention and information on the pre-forms need to be standardised, to capture specific and relevant information for each case.

The quality of the staff performance is found to be suitable for scaling up the program. However, new arrangements and training in the use of the case management system may need to be developed. Advanced training in case management is an area that this program could benefit from and perhaps represents a critical area in any proposition of the program. The case management system may benefit from individual scrutiny and assessment by a database expert, who could potentially enlighten the project to other products and services that are available in the marketplace.

It was noted that there was minimal training given to staff in the use of this particular program manual. The quality of the program documentation may need to be reviewed and improved. Poor quality and inconsistency in documentation recorded by the social workers has been found, such as the Case Management forms, case study, minutes of the meeting, and process observation.

Marketing

This Life was the only identified organisation dedicating time and support to vulnerable families who have a family member in conflict with the law. The program has already expanded from a pilot scheme in 2016, to a larger and more robust program from 2018 to 2021.

Given the lack of engagement by the government to this distinct cohort of families, there is a distinct possibility that the market conditions for expanding the program into other provincial areas of Cambodia will remain for some time. The marketing of the project is an area that This Life has expertise in and it can mobilise this should be exploited across various channels and via distinct campaigns, should a decision to expand be made. It may also be possible for This Life to market and target the nature of the project to other Asian nations as a precursor to future exploratory and development-based discussions.

Technology

In the current project management design, the client cases are mainly recorded on a paper-based system. The case management system is comprised of filed folders and kept in the cabinet. The current data protection systems are underdeveloped, which leaves operational records exposed and at risk to unplanned disasters, such as fire or theft-related damage. In the absence of a total electronic solution, backup copies of paper records could be pursued via scanned digital copies that were filed and stored within a secure repository in the cloud. This would minimise the risk of losing sensitive and vital documents. The first step in this direction is to acknowledge the risk and recognise the value of backed up data. To avoid duplication, staff could record and save to cloud and then print to file in the current custom and practice.

Complementation

The program was found to attribute well with the range of other This Life programs and government services. TLIF operates interchangeably with other This Life programs, such as TLIC, TLWB, TLWV and TLBB which also operates in a similar environment. Furthermore, TLIF contributes, at least modestly, to the Government's strategic and SDG Frameworks, which aim to help reduce levels of poverty amongst vulnerable families.

Commitment

Evidence is drawn from analysing staff interviews clearly emphasised that the levels of commitment demanded from relevant local authorities is deemed critical to the success of implementing the program. This is a key dimension that should be taken into account should the service seek replication in other areas. At present, TLIF benefits from deep-seated partnership working and levels of trust amongst key personnel that have been nurtured over a long period of joint working. This level of collaboration exists amongst representatives of TLIF and local authorities such as police, prison officers, and the CCWC from all levels of government, from the commune to the provincial level. This level of collaboration would also need to be established and whilst this may not necessarily require the same levels of time to be invested, the same level of commitment to a common purpose would be.

Stakeholders

The level of involvement with stakeholders depends on the sub-programs that TLIF coordinate. The research found some conflicting information on the question of which local authority the program collaborates with, about the Family Preservation or Family Support program. That aside, the levels of engagement that did exist tended to vary, depending on the needs of the individual/family. However, the program engaged most with the CCWC, prison officers, DoSVY, and village chiefs accordingly. Most social workers found it more difficult working with the local police, due to the sensitive information that existed between both parties. The CCWC was found to be the most engaged stakeholder with social workers. From time to time, when asked for help and assistance in meeting new families, levels of cooperation were unprecedented, especially in situations requiring family reconciliation and reunification.

Partnerships

The term partnership refers to many things in development; association, cooperation, collaboration, participation, joint decision-making etc.²⁴ The experience captured from the implementation of TLIF suggests that the nature of collaboration that is needed is different amongst key stakeholders. A detailed stakeholder analysis would provide further insight into the needs of the program and the levels of cooperation that stakeholders can provide. While the program needs distinct levels of support and coordination from the CCWC, the CCWC needs the program to handle and support the vulnerable families in their area. The latter element demands more effort and involvement on TLIFs' behalf; however, the former is intrinsic for starting the process on a trustworthy footing. Typically, CCWC lacks skills, workforce, budget, and the knowledge that is needed to deliver the entire service itself.

Partnership working is often taken for granted and less attention is given to its maintenance. Time set aside to understand the pressures that exist amongst partners can help strengthen the relationship, but more importantly, create opportunities for new services and innovations to materialise. In practice, the current relationship with the community base is going well. This relationship should be maintained and used as a good practice in the scaling-up program to other areas.

Culture

The social workers, possess practical skills and knowledge, and they know and understand the positive impact that they can have on vulnerable families. This shared knowledge is cohesive and helps build a

²⁴ Fiona, B & Ann, M. Dolan, "The meaning of Partnership in Development", Policy and Practice, Issue 13 A4.pdf (developmenteducationreview.com)

positive culture amongst the team. Furthermore, they have developed solid communication skills with local authorities and wider stakeholders, which enables them to be productive in solving uncommon problems. This level of understanding is helping to create the success story that underpins the program both internally and amongst external stakeholders locally and in other areas. Integrating or inducting new members into the Siem Reap team may be a productive step forward in building a new team capable of replicating the service in a new area.

Organisational Change

From a reflective point of view, key areas of change that could help improve the TLIF project include:

- Take time to improve and optimise the case management system
- Improve the recording system to collect critical data about the reintegration and post-release support activities provided by the program.
- Take a systematic approach to understand how therapeutic counselling can offer practical and clinical support to clients.
- Consideration and attention should be given to quality assurance and standardisation of service provision, to ensure that similar levels of quality support and investment are delivered in the more common caseloads that the project staff manage and engage with. Complex cases should be afforded wider flexibilities.
- To standardise and to eliminate the inconsistency of the services provided to different families, on-going program manual training should be training to which each SW complies.
- Flatter hierarchies and smaller spans of control amongst managers and staff may also offer advantages.
- The introduction of social work assistants and the formation of joint teams with local stakeholders may offer an opportunity (theoretically) to deliver more service provision at lower costs, to more vulnerable families. This could offer new flexibilities when considering opportunities to expand the service

Finance & Funding

The TLIF project, using its holistic case management approach is achieving its goals. It provides a straightforward, measurable approach that can be scaled and replicated across Cambodia and, pending further research other developing countries. The holistic approach in the case management such as family supports, family preservation activities, training police on Juvenile Justice Law, Child Friendly Procedures, income generation activities, basic counselling, education support for children, basic needs/emergency support, prison visitation, referral service, and post-release support and follow up. The program cost per project implementation found that when calculate the program costs at scale, the per-family cost is \$2,686 for the present This Life's model. By using a comparative benchmark, this service costs \$514 less, per case, than that of a similar provider of the \$3,000 average cost of reintegrating one child from institutional care in Cambodia (Family Care First initiative).¹⁵ UNICEF research shows it costs 1/10th of the cost of institutional care, to keep children in their community. From the above discussion on modularity, the approximate cost per family may be cheaper due to some program elements being omitted for cost improvement.

12. Buoyancy & Control

¹⁵Alternative Care Community Practices for children(2018). Unicef.Org, 2022, https://www.unicef.org/cambodia/media/666/file/Alternative_Care_Community_Practices-EN.pdf%20.pdf. Accessed 27 May 2022, (p.88).

Following the assessment of the factors mentioned earlier, the following Likert scales represent both levels of buoyancy and control. Buoyancy refers to the likely impact of the element, with high buoyancy alluding to favourable outcomes.

Control refers to the amount of control and influence that the program has over the factor in question. Higher levels of power, generated through experience and confidence in the activities being undertaken, refer to the likely impact of the element, with increased control alluding to more favourable outcomes.

The combination of the analysis of factors is presented in the following assessment map. The combined assessment and **result of the Likert scales reduced perceptions to a numerical percentage form that would suggest that the buoyancy of the project rests at 74% while the level of control over its associated factors is 64%.**

Buoyancy Assessment			Control Assessment		
1	None	Impact	1	None	Impact
2	Marginal		2	Marginal	
3	Average		3	Average	
4	Good		4	Good	
5	Strong		5	Strong	

Factors	Assessment	Factors	Assessment
Time	4	Time	4
Cost	4	Cost	3
Effort	4	Effort	4
Impact	4	Impact	4
Critical Elements	4	Critical Elements	3
Waste	1	Waste	1
Skills & Knowledge	4	Skills & Knowledge	3
Administration	3	Administration	3
Value of Money	4	Value of Money	3
Demand	4	Demand	3
Technical Factors	4	Technical Factors	3
Benefits	4	Benefits	4
Complexity	3	Complexity	3
Risks	5	Risks	3
Modularity	4	Modularity	3
Access	4	Access	3
Quality	4	Quality	3
Marketing	4	Marketing	4
Technology	3	Technology	3
Complementation	4	Complementation	3
Commitment	4	Commitment	4
Stakeholders	3	Stakeholders	3
Partnerships	3	Partnerships	3
Culture	4	Culture	4
Organisational Change	3	Organisational Change	3
Finance & Funding	4	Finance & Funding	3

The buoyancy scores in the table above indicate the relationship between the factors in the current designed program, and to a larger extent, expectations of what could be replicated and improved upon in a second expanded setting.

In contrast to buoyancy, control refers to the amount of influence and control operational staff have over those elements that characterize the program. Again, the higher the scoring, the more control the program has and could improve upon, in consideration of expansion.

13. Suggestions

A program monitoring system exists and this has recently been updated. From the variety of Excel spreadsheets that was traditionally being used by individuals, (to record and track a range of process-related activities, covering different components of the project), a single data file now exists that organises activity data more comprehensively. This facilitates a more detailed interrogation of data and will be useful in considering any option to expand the service.

The next step to improve the monitoring of this program could be to connect the data that is routinely collected to program outcomes and develop simple indicators that relate directly to the program outcomes using the SMART¹⁶ approach.

- The current spreadsheet forms for use with the family visitation program should be modified by adding observations while the SW accompanies the family to see their loved one in prison.
- The quality of the project documentation and time-consuming financial processes need to be reviewed and improved accordingly. First, while all client case notes are recorded mainly on the hard copies, data loss is at risk from unplanned emergencies, such as fire or equipment loss. The alternative is all case notes should be recorded in the electronic platform on the cloud drive and printed out to file in a folder with the appropriate arrangement. Some records indicate the agenda of meetings but the notes and detail of the meetings, or the decisions made at them are absent. **A strategy and implementation plan should evolve in due course.** Second, the program team confirmed to spend considerable time to access funding due to procurement processes which have taken their valuable time for supporting their clients. **A clerical staff dedicated to the program should be considered to support such paperwork processes.**
- The reflective practice on the client's case can assist in personal and professional growth and create a meaningful record of change that accrues in time. This approach to record-keeping was found to be at a minimum. The discrepancies may also be due to supervisory skills and/or the restrictions that accompanied COVID-19.

As this activity is more central to the case management system, the approach to information gathering and recording should be reviewed and improved. It forms part of the commitment to improve the quality-of-service provision for clients through case reviews. All pertinent information recorded serves as an evidence base and links accountability for the case being managed to the social worker responsible. It may follow that whilst social work trained social workers understand and appreciate social theory, their abilities to translate and record social work practice is considered difficult and therefore avoided. This is a training opportunity that should be embraced and mastered, as the case management records are important records of an individual's circumstances and development.

- Should the project expand and scale up its activities, it is suggested that costs relating to maintaining school attendance be standardised at the higher end of the price range. In this approach, SW will be assured that the same materials and costs are available equitably. Procurement strategies and tasks associated with them should also be considered as a means of reducing precious SW time.
- Health allowance - this support was budget for a proportion of the cases up on needs basis of the clients. There are existing health centres available in their commune that the project recipient can

¹⁶ This S.M.A.R.T. approach refers to the development of indicators that are: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound.

acquire services free of charge when they need them if they hold IDPoor. The program support should be offered to recipients can't afford and with serious health problems; otherwise, connect them to the existing fee and health specialised services of the government and organisations.

- School support materials - There should be limited in supplying school materials such as school bags and pencils to the same child every year. The school bag is necessary for the first year. The recipient family can contribute small items such as pencils to their child's education rather than expecting support from the program.

14. Conclusion

Through cross assessment and analysis, this report has outlined the factors that underlie the project and the processes that exist within it. Alongside the implementation and engagement of the program with members of the public, the processes that drive the program are, on the whole, considered to be good.

The research used methodologies that included desktop reviews and staff interviews to collect data, compare, and analyse accordingly to enrich the findings. As indicated in the program element factors discussion, there are many internal and external factors to consider. Each point was discussed, and the alternatives were provided, some in the discussion section but mainly in the suggestion section.

As the program was found to be extended from 2016 to the current 2019 to 2021 the current program provides substantial evidence that it is capable of being replicable in other settings. However, for the current program to expand and sustainably scale its activities, new forms of conversations need to be undertaken about mainstreaming resources from existing budgets. This will invariably require disinvestment in other areas, or new resource raising measures at the local level.

The decision to expand the program will rest with This Life Executive Office, pending funding. The suggestions listed above attempt to extract the key points of learning from the programs implementation and guide practical reflective decision making in key areas. These include financial and administrative functioning within the program. The integrity of the data that is routinely collected. The governance procedures that underpin data and the varying styles in which information is collected by SWs. These are the key areas for future development and change in a larger and expanded project.

Appendices

Appendice 1: This Life In Family Case Management Systems

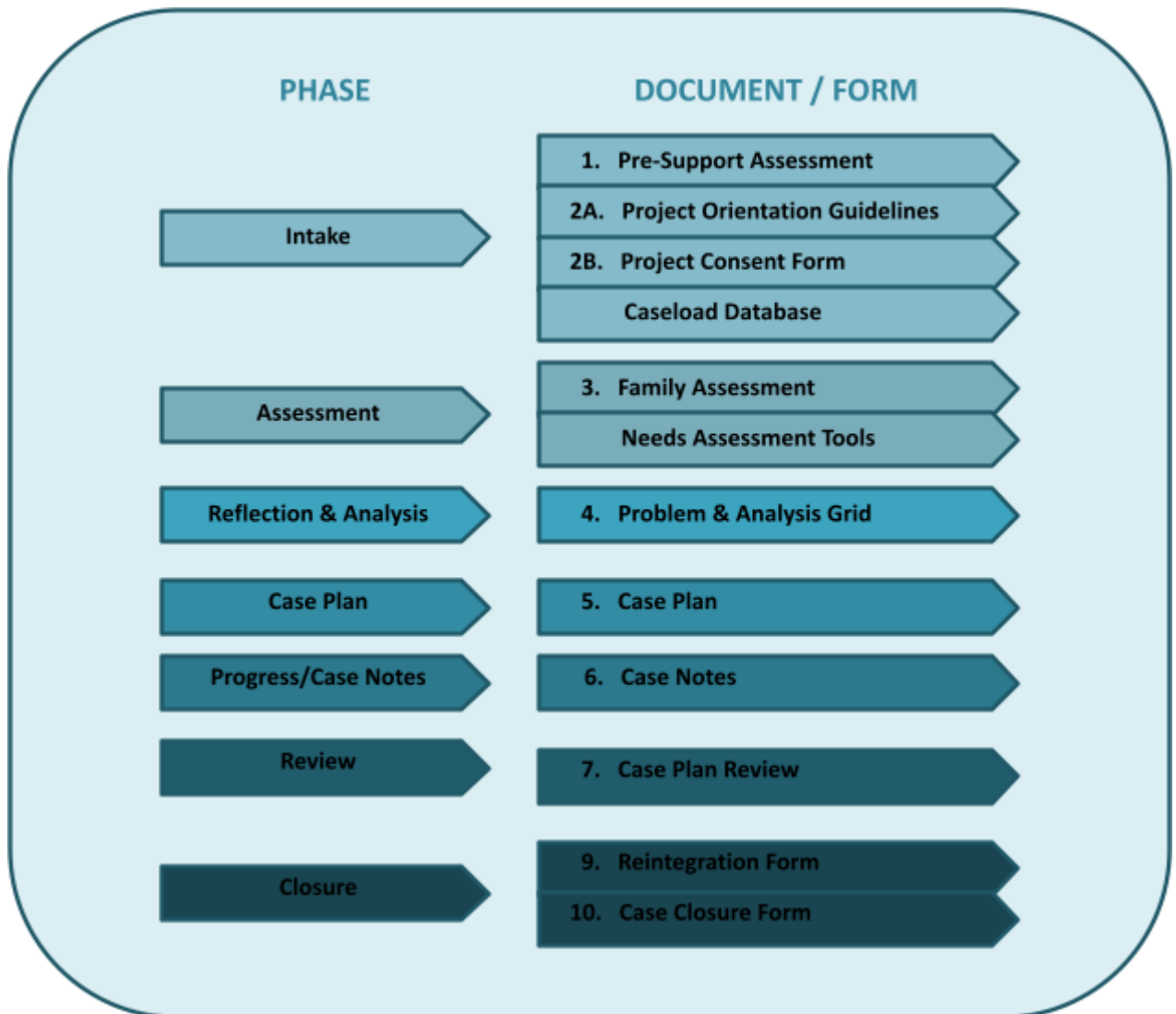


Figure 1: Courtesy THIS LIFE Case Management System

Appendice 2 - Family Preservation Module

The following schematic illustrates the client pathway when engaging with the TLIF program

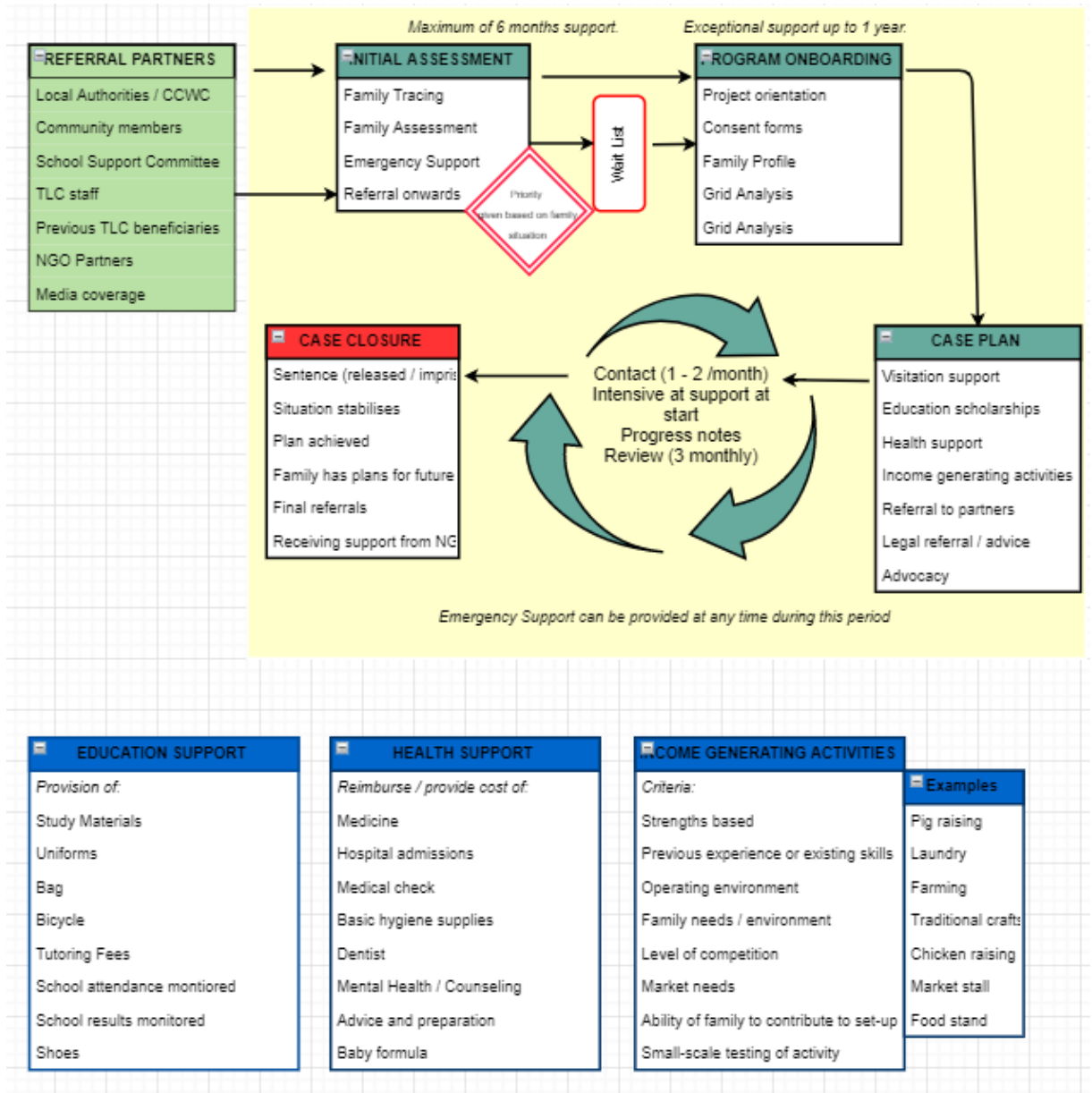


Figure 2: Copied from THIS LIFE CAMBODIA MODEL FC Apr 18

Appendices 3 - Family Support Module

The following schematic illustrates the client pathway when engaging with the TLIF program

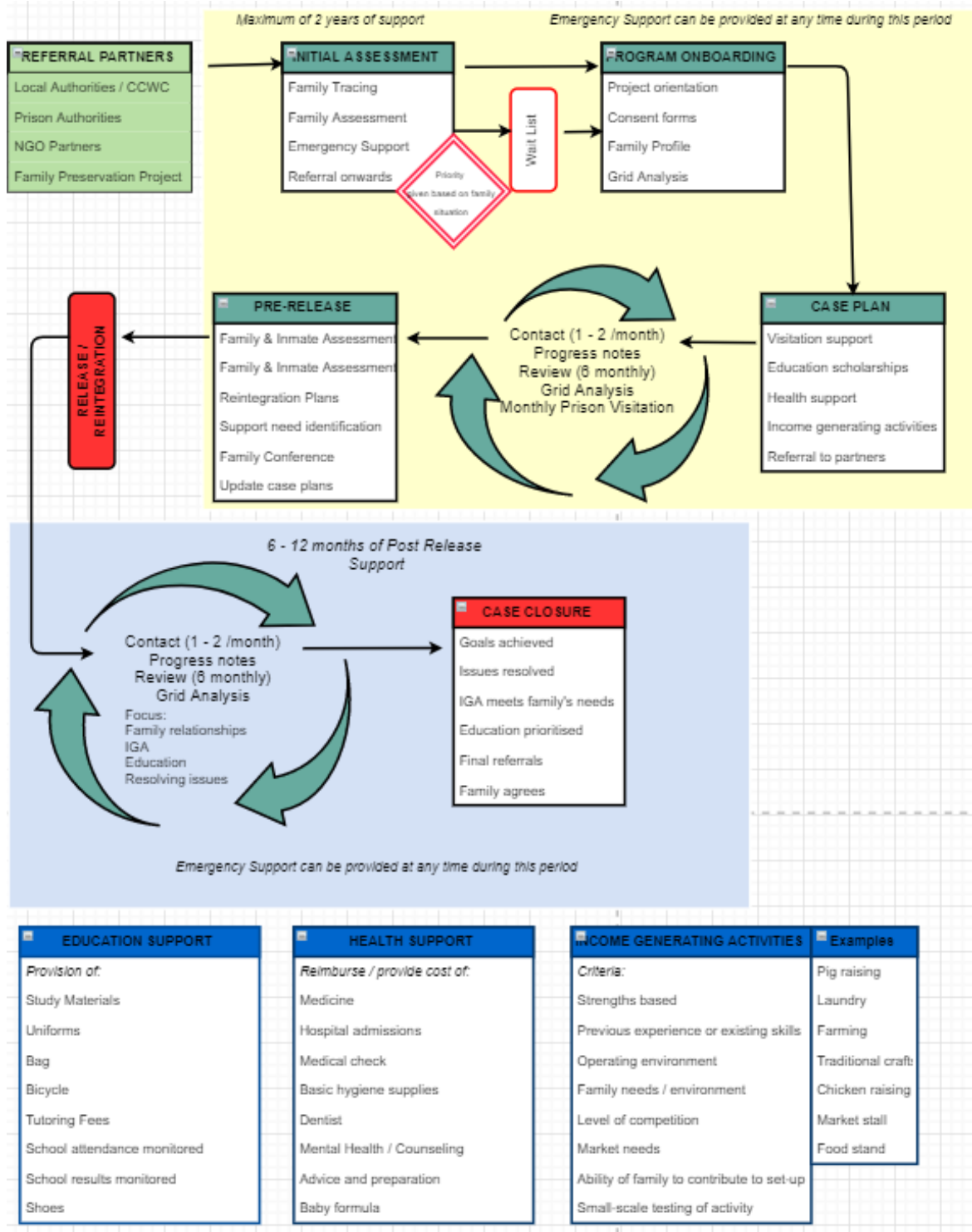


Figure 3: Copied from THIS LIFE CAMBODIA MODEL FC Apr 18