



The SOK Guidelines

'The Speak-Out KIT" – SOK Guidelines

Preface

ChildTRAC is an organisation dedicated to assisting vulnerable or abused children by establishing their welfare and happiness via one-on-one interviews. In order for ChildTRAC to determine a child's emotional, mental, and physical health whilst being both considerate and inquisitive, ChildTRAC has created a screening tool that is both sensitive and therapeutic; the tool targets children mainly between the ages of 6-12 years old.

The 'Speak Out KIT' (SOK) is the name of the ChildTRAC tool. The literal name, SOK, reveals the purpose of the tool, which enables children to 'speak out' about their living environment, wellbeing and personal situation, without requiring the child to explicitly state the situation at hand.

The SOK guidelines introduce the 'Speak Out Kit' process, explaining each step that is used by a field researcher while in the field. The guideline commences with an overview of the SOK equipment, specifically what is in the kit storage box and the significance of each individual piece.

For every project there is a distinct SOK box; hence, the SOK for *Alternative Child Care* has different contents than the SOK for the '*Tsunami orphans where are they now*' Project. A field researcher must ensure that he or she has the correct SOK before going on an interview.

Before using the SOK, please read these guidelines carefully. For more information contact chantalle.l@childtrac.org or saskia.r@childtrac.org. For questions in Thai contact wiracha.s@childtrac.org.

1. Purpose

The SOK is a kit composed of different foam cut outs used to represent people, places, activities and emotions. Using the foam cutouts, a child is invited to create his or her environment and how he or she feels about the situation. Essentially, the SOK replaces the formality of a traditional interview with a form of art therapy that enables a child to comfortably 'speak out' and tell his or her own story!

In applying the SOK, children are empowered to 'speak out' about their personal situation, living environment and/or family circumstances, without completing an official interview, which may require verbal confirmation of detailed, and perhaps uncomfortable, facts. ChildTRAC has developed this interactive kit so that the child is able to express his or her feelings about his or her current state of affairs and his or her relationship with the adult caregiver in order to get a better idea of the mental, physical and emotional well-being of the child.

The SOK contains a variety of coloured figures representing the following:

1. **Places in the community** (the child's own home, a neighbour's home, their school, temple, mosque, church, police Station etc).
2. **People** in the child's community (Father, Mother, Sister, Grandmother, Aunt, Stepbrother, Stepfather etc).
3. **Emotions** to identify personality traits of the child and the people in the child's community (happy, sad, angry and neutral expressions).

The foam cutout equipment in the SOK is deliberately vibrant so to entice a child to "play" with these tools. There are magnets on the foam cutouts (dolls, houses, buildings and emotions). The magnet component of the cutout figures is significant because this allows a

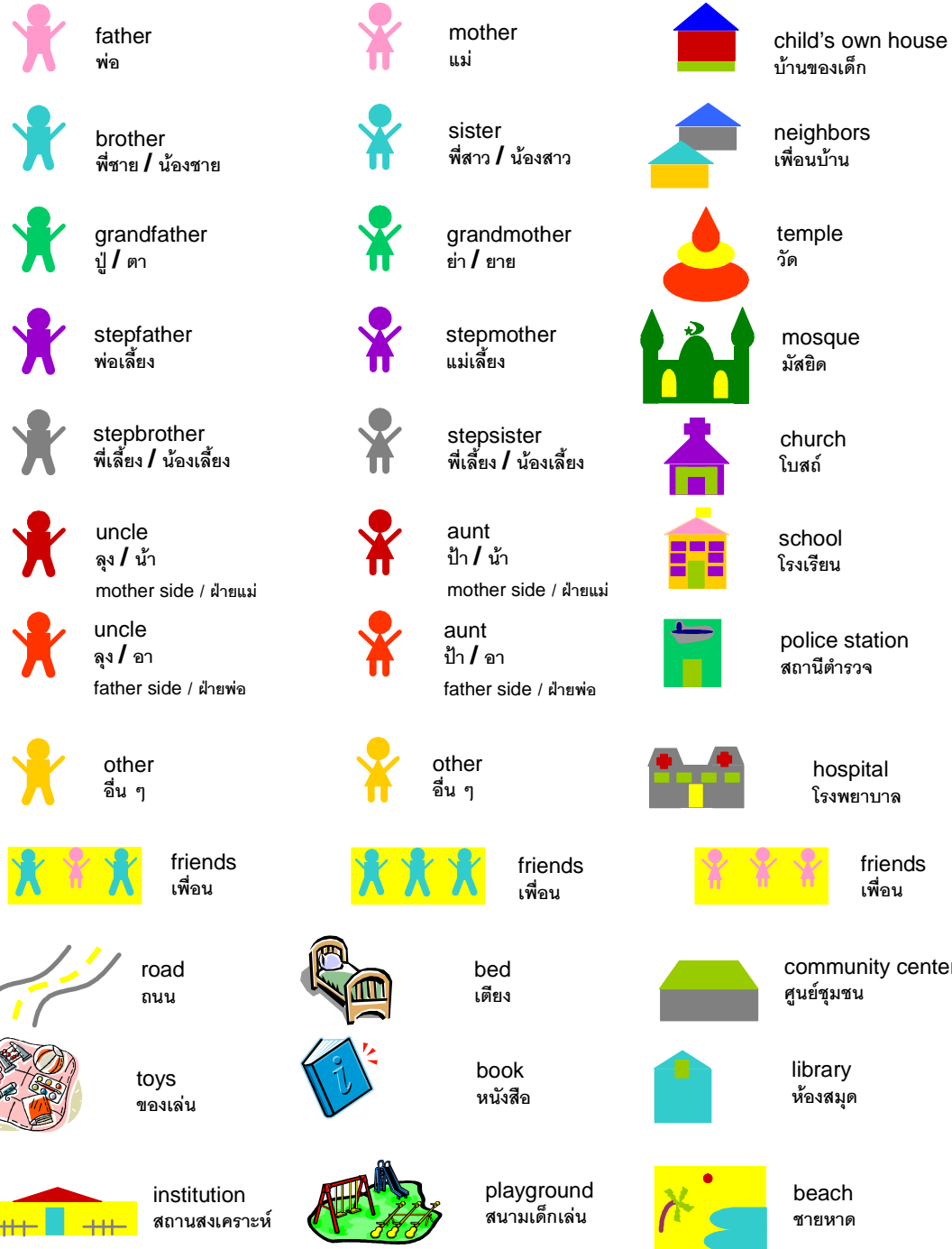
child to attach the emotion magnets on top of people in the child's community, places in the child's community, and on also on top of the figure representing themselves.

The SOK will primarily be used when interviewing children between the ages of 6 - 12 years old; however, this can differ if deemed appropriate by the field researcher. The SOK must always be carried out in private area to ensure that all information is kept confidential. The child and researcher cannot be observed by any outside person, especially by the caregiver of that particular child, because that would invalidate any information supplied by the child. The child should feel comfortable to speak out without fear of embarrassment, judgement, reprimand or external influencers.

2. Equipment

The SOK contains a magnet board, the storage kit (with all the foam cutouts), the SOK guidelines, and a camera with which to take photos of the child and session.

2.1. The contents of the BOX



2.2. Camera

Make sure that a picture is taken of every SOK activity. Put the ChildTRAC picture number on the correct form; double check to ensure that the picture number matches with the appropriate form for each child.

Example: ChildTRAC number: 01000023/ name child: Ellen Dunleavy/ pic.538 & 539.



3. The 3 P's to Remember

P1. Privacy

In order to play with the SOK, both the researcher and the child must be in a private area. When playing with the SOK, the child will be asked very personal information; therefore, it is critical that the researcher act responsibly with the information a child provides. This means that a researcher must ensure that the information **does not fall into the wrong hands and/or that the researcher and child will not be overheard by a third party.**

If the researcher cannot secure a private area, the researcher should make a note of the situation he or she encounters and why it was not possible to have time alone with the child. It should be noted that privacy does not mean that a researcher and child are secluded behind locked doors or that the child will be brought to a different location. Rather, during an interview, a researcher must ensure that an outside person is either able to see the researcher and child from a considerable distance or that the outside party is able to enter a room, which is still considered at a safe distance from the outside party.

P2. Precision

Make certain that everything the child says is written down. Also, explain emotions that come up. Do not draw a smiley face on the screening form; the child's explanation is necessary! **Make sure that everything is written out.**

In order to be accurate, a researcher should also check and double check names and ChildTRAC ID numbers to ensure that the names and ID numbers correlate.

After playing with the SOK and filling out the forms, it is essential that the researcher **confirm his or her own writing.** Make sure that the child's same name is used on all forms and explanations. Thus, if the notes are organized, accurate and consistent, an outside researcher should have the ability to read and understand what the primary researcher recorded without further explanation.

P3. *Push*

Never ever push a child! If a child does not want to do the SOK, respect the child's wish. The same is true when a child does not want to answer questions; **never ever push** a child to give an answer. Furthermore, **never ever provide answers for the child.** If a child cannot answer a question, this is not a problem. It is acceptable to fill in the child's questionnaire by stating that the child did not or could not answer the question. Never assume an answer to any question asked of the child or put the words in the child's mouth.

Also, use caution when asking a child for examples. In utilising specific examples, a researcher could direct the child in a certain direction, which means that the answers given by the child are not authentic.

4. How the SOK Works

Regardless of the information required for the project at hand, a researcher must always begin by explaining the purpose of the SOK to the child. In describing the purpose of the SOK, the researcher must first introduce him or herself to the child. Then, the researcher should request that the child play the SOK 'game' with the researcher so that the researcher can learn about where the child lives and how the child is feeling. If the child agrees to play with the SOK, the researcher must clearly label all the foam cutouts for the child so that the child understands what the dolls, figures, buildings, and emotions symbolize.

The second step is to explain to the child that he or she is also represented in the magnet board via one of the dolls. Furthermore, it must be explained to the child that he or she should use the magnets to create his or her home and people within their home and community. Subsequently, the researcher must illustrate how an emotion can be placed on top of every magnet within the child's living situation so that the researcher can understand how the child feels about every person and place within the child's life. It is extremely

important to tell the child that there are no good or bad answers, and that it is most imperative for the child to be truthful about explaining what he or she thinks and feels.

4.1. Step by step procedure when using the SOK:

4.1. A. Living environment (caregivers and siblings) and placement

1) ChildTRAC researchers start the game by placing the 'red house' (the child's house) or the community center on the magnet board and ask the child; *'Is this your house; do you know the address of your house/ community center?'*

2) Subsequently, the researcher will inquire, *'who is living with you in your house?'* Then, researcher or child places the appropriate dolls that represent the caregivers on the magnet board (*'who is your caregiver?'*)

3) After establishing the caregivers, the researcher will ask, *'Are there brothers and sisters (the siblings) living in your house?'* Again, the researcher or the child places the figures on the board.

4) Once the child finishes the layout of his or her 'home situation,' the researcher will ask the child to place an emotion on the house and the dolls, by asking; *'How do you feel about each person and how do you feel living in your house?'* This will allow the child to express what he or she experiences at a particular place and in the company of the caregiver and/or other family members.

4.1. B. School information and the child's well-being

After determining the child's home situation, the researcher should place the school on the magnet board and continue the SOK by asking questions about the child's school. The researcher should ask questions such as: *'What is the name of your school, what kind of school is your school?'* (Kindergarten etc). *Where is your school and do you know the address of the school?'*

From now on, the researcher starts asking questions about the child's wellbeing.

First the researcher asks: *'Do you like to go to school? Are you a good student?'*

Preceding these questions, the researcher should place the friends doll next to the school, and ask the child, *'Do you have friends? Do you like them?'*

Later, the child should be asked to use the emotion magnets to describe how he or she feels about his or her friends. The researcher should ask, *'What games do you play with your friends?'*

4.1. C. Indicators for well-being

At this point, in order to get a more detailed portrait of the child's living situation, a researcher should ask the child to decorate the magnet board with any other magnets he or she would like to add to his or her living environment.

Next, in order to determine if the child has any spiritual beliefs, a researcher should ask the child, *'do you go to temple, church or mosque?'* If the answer is yes, the researcher or child should place the appropriate place of worship on the magnet board. After the place of worship is determined, the researcher should ask the child: *'do you like to go?'* (Let the child place an emotions on the institute) and ask *'is it important for you?'*

After a child's living situation is revealed on the board, the researcher will begin a series of questions to determine how the child feels about him or herself. The researcher should ask the child, *'How would you describe your feelings now?'*

'What is best thing that happened to you in the last year? What is worst thing that happened to you in the last year?' If the child does not provide the researcher with a direct answer, the researcher should show the child a hospital magnet and asks the child, *'have you ever been in the hospital? Have you ever been sick? If yes what did you have and did you receive any help? Do you like to go to the hospital?'* (Let the child put an emotion on the hospital).

Conclusion

In concluding the SOK session with the child, thank him or her for all of his or her hard work and honesty. Afterwards, reward the child with a pencil, button and small ChildTRAC doll. Also be sure to express thanks to the caregiver, teacher or other outside person(s) present.