

# OneSky: blended learning for home-based childcare providers in Vietnam

- ▶ Around 1.2 million migrant factory workers' children live in Vietnam's industrial zones.
- ▶ OneSky piloted a blended learning approach for training home-based care providers.
- ▶ Vietnam's government has invited OneSky to scale-up this training to 19 provinces.

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**A growing body of research shows that blended learning produces better overall educational outcomes than online or classroom learning alone (Means et al., 2009, 2013). OneSky's innovative blended learning approach leverages the power of digital technology to improve the effectiveness of in-person training, create an online learning community, and provide continuing professional development for home-based care providers serving the children of factory workers in the industrial zones of Vietnam.**

Over the last decade, millions of Vietnamese have migrated from rural to urban areas as climate change decreases agricultural productivity (General Statistics Office (GSO) and United Nations Population Fund, 2015). Many of these migrant workers, 80% of whom are women, find employment in factories in industrial zones (Unicef, 2017). Unfortunately, Vietnam has no public childcare system for children under the age of 3 years. For children aged 3 to 6 living in industrial zones, public preschools are often out of reach due to lack of residency status, as are private preschools due to cost.

A home-based care (HBC) industry has emerged in response to high demand for and limited supply of childcare in industrial zones. The vast majority of HBC providers are women who receive no formal training. There is little, if any, government oversight of their HBC centres. Under the regulations, as many as 49 young children in one group may be looked after by untrained caregivers for over 12 hours a day in these home settings (Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) et al., 2016). An estimated 1.2 million children of low-wage factory workers live in these industrial zones, and they are not receiving the stimulation and learning opportunities they need in their formative early years (GSO and Unicef, 2015).

## Innovation through blended learning

In 2018, OneSky launched HBC provider training in the Hoa Khanh Industrial Zone in Da Nang, a growing city in central Vietnam. The HBC providers undergo an 11-month programme focused on responsive caregiving and fostering a safe, nurturing learning environment that supports the developmental needs of young children from birth to the age of 6.

The OneSky curriculum is inspired by the Reggio Emilia principles of child-centred learning, informed by the global evidence base on early childhood development, and adapted to serve the specific needs of children and caregivers in Vietnam. It centres on establishing responsive relationships between caregivers and children, promoting age-appropriate communication, and stimulating healthy cognitive, physical, language and social-emotional development.

The HBC training programme consists of 20 in-person classroom sessions delivered every two weeks, individual in-person and virtual group home visits by trainers to coach HBC providers twice a month, and an online learning platform suited to mobile access called *1GiaDinhLon* (1GDL) – meaning ‘1BigFamily’ in Vietnamese. HBC providers are invited to participate by their provincial Department of Education and Training and receive a certificate, signed by the Department and OneSky, on completing the training.

The training is delivered through an innovative blended learning approach, which combines online education with the in-person elements: the classroom sessions with peers and home-based individual support from trainers. The online platform increases participants’ engagement during and after training, and supports their motivation for lifelong learning.

*Teacher and child at OneSky Early Learning Centre*



## Building 1BigFamily of caregivers online

HBC providers are introduced to 1GDL, the online learning portal, after the second classroom session. As trainers are able to do home visits only twice a month, 1GDL allows them to expand their teaching reach and give each HBC provider the ongoing support and individualised guidance that she needs.

1GDL is integrated with the classroom curriculum so the topics HBC providers learn in person can continue to be reinforced through discussions, follow-up practice instruction, related resources, photos, videos, and specialist support. Through a peer exchange forum, 1GDL connects HBC providers to learn from each other's experiences. This online community of practice is the first of its kind for HBC providers in Vietnam.

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1GDL has multiple skill-building features and resources to support continuing education long after the classroom sessions have been completed. Resources in the online library include various play activities, research articles, and guides for homemade toys. Longer distance-learning e-courses will also be accessible soon for specialised skills development.

Use of the 1GDL portal has increased over time: at the time of writing it has 492 HBC users, 214 content posts by trainers, over 9200 photos and videos uploaded by HBC users, and over 12,200 total comments. It has become even more relevant during the Covid-19 pandemic: while their childcare centres have been closed, HBC providers have logged into 1GDL to stay connected to each other and continue their learning.

With the 1GDL online platform, OneSky is transforming the way HBC providers are trained and supported in Vietnam. The OneSky blended learning approach is:

- enhancing the impact of in-person training on student engagement, knowledge retention, and skills proficiency through digital learning and teaching aids
- providing on-demand content accessible on mobile phones, including interactive, visual resources that enable caregivers of all educational levels to understand and apply concepts immediately
- cultivating collaboration through peer support, online community, and the exchange of best practices and resources
- driving greater scale by reducing the cost of training and continuing education that requires personnel, travel, and meeting expenses
- improving monitoring and evaluation by empowering trainers, equipped with tablets and online engagement data, to better assess skills gaps and improve programme quality.

## Scaling up for systems change

OneSky is measuring progress through HBC provider surveys at the midpoint and endpoint of training. By digitising data collection using the KoBoToolbox app – which functions offline – and analysing the data through impact

dashboards on Tableau, our data analytics and visualisation software, frontline trainers equipped with tablets are able to contribute to rapid feedback loops for programme improvement. Concurrently, Professor Aisha Yousafzai at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health is conducting a pioneering impact evaluation on the HBC training, along with Vietnam's Research and Training Center for Community Development. It will be the first study on home-based childcare in industrial zones in Asia and the largest outside the Global North.

Since 2018, we at OneSky have trained 320 HBC providers in the industrial zones of Da Nang to improve the quality of care for 10,424 children. We recently expanded our training to a neighbouring province, Quang Nam, where we are now training 147 HBC providers to reach an additional 3675 children of factory workers.

The innovation's success so far has led Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training to formally invite OneSky to scale-up the HBC provider training to 19 provinces. Our systems change strategy now involves creating regional training clusters for northern, central, and southern Vietnam, driving stronger government partnerships to advance quality childcare across the industrial zones. We aim over time to tie comprehensive training to licensing – upskilling the HBC provider workforce to ensure that an entire generation of factory workers' children gains the early developmental foundation they need to thrive in primary school and beyond.

➔ Find this article online at [earlychildhoodmatters.online/2020-20](https://earlychildhoodmatters.online/2020-20)

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