



INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STUDIES INSTITUTE

SEMESTER PROGRAM:

ORPHANED AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN THAILAND

The OVC Semester is a **immersive academic and faith-based semester** in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Designed for students interested in social work, counseling, child welfare, or related fields, the program equips participants with both the **theoretical frameworks and practical skills** needed to engage with the complex realities faced by orphaned and vulnerable children in the Global South. Combining **intensive classroom study** with **direct community engagement**, students will **deepen their capacity for professional practice** in diverse cultural environments, while also exploring the role of personal values, faith, and justice in shaping responsible global engagement.

Academic Phase (Weeks 1–8)

The first half of the semester focuses on **building a strong academic and cultural foundation**. Thai language classes emphasize practical communication and enable students to engage meaningfully in both daily life and community settings. Studying Thailand's historical, political, and cultural context provides insight into how local values, religious traditions, and national policies shape approaches to child welfare. The course on orphaned and vulnerable children in the Global South explores the historical evolution of care for children at risk. The course encourages **critical reflection** on how care systems have developed over time, and highlights the importance of **culturally grounded, community-driven responses to the challenges facing children and families** today.

Field Placement (Weeks 9–16)

Following the academic phase, students do a field placement with a **local organization working directly with children, families, and communities**. These placements may include work in areas such as social work, ministry, education, community development, trauma-informed care, child protection, or related fields. Students contribute meaningfully to the ongoing work of their host organizations while **observing and learning from culturally appropriate models of care**.

Pedagogical Approach

The semester is rooted in experiential learning. Rather than treating Thailand as a backdrop, students are encouraged to see learning as relational, grounded in context, and informed by lived experience. Throughout the semester, students are guided to **reflect critically on their own positionality—their identities, values, faith commitments, and motivations**—and how these shape their understanding of justice, service, and global engagement. This reflective process is particularly important for students entering professions such as social work, counseling, or international development, where cultural sensitivity and self-awareness are essential.

SEMESTER COURSES	TOPIC	CREDIT
Thai Language: Students develop practical communication skills in spoken and written Thai while exploring cultural norms, social dynamics, and everyday life in Northern Thailand.	Foreign Language	4
Thai History and Culture: This course examines Thailand's history, religion, politics, and cultural foundations to provide essential context for understanding contemporary social issues.	History	4
Orphaned and Vulnerable Children in the Global South: Through case studies and comparative analysis, students explore the historical development of care systems for vulnerable children and critically engage with ethical, cultural, and community-based responses.	Sociology/ Social Work	4
Field Placement: Students complete a six week placement with a local organization, applying their classroom learning in a real-world setting while gaining experience in social work, ministry, education, community development, trauma-informed care, child protection, or related fields.	Sociology	4

Program Length: 16 week semester

Eligibility: Students currently enrolled in college or university in good academic standing

Deadlines: Spring Semester: October 15

**For more information, see <https://isdsi.org/ovcthailand/>
Interested? Email admissions@isdsi.org today to learn more!**

