

HOME

a Cambodian Story

Original Story “Home a Cambodia Story”

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Foreword

In the past residential care homes for children were accepted and widely admired in South East Asia and around the world. Most people trusted that they offered the best option for the children living in them. However, this situation is changing. Years of research and experience have raised serious concerns that large numbers of children are being disconnected from their families and birth communities, hindering them from developing life skills. Institutions, unlike families, have little chance to meet the needs and to enhance the self-identity of each child in the midst of many other children. Children lack the individual love and affection found in families and risk impaired development of their brains.

Research shows that a child raised in an institution is likely to become an adult who has more problems than a child of a normal family.

Today the call to end the institutional care of children is growing in volume, “because a child needs a family, rather than a residential institution”.

Unbelievably, Sangkhlaburi - a small border town in Thailand has 17 child caring institutions with more than 600 children living in them (December 2014 survey). In our experience, for most of these children living in an institution is unnecessary and is mostly due to a family's poverty or for a better chance at education, both problems that can be solved in other ways.

Throughout South East Asia we need to develop social services to help those families finding appropriate solutions instead of giving up their children. We need to strengthen families and to place higher value on keeping families together instead of investing in institutions.

This story comes from Cambodian; however, it reflects the real situations in many countries throughout SE Asia. We see in this story that the children take no part in expressing any opinion or making any decision for their own lives. This book speaks for children, expressing their opinions and feelings that we might take for granted or never listen to.

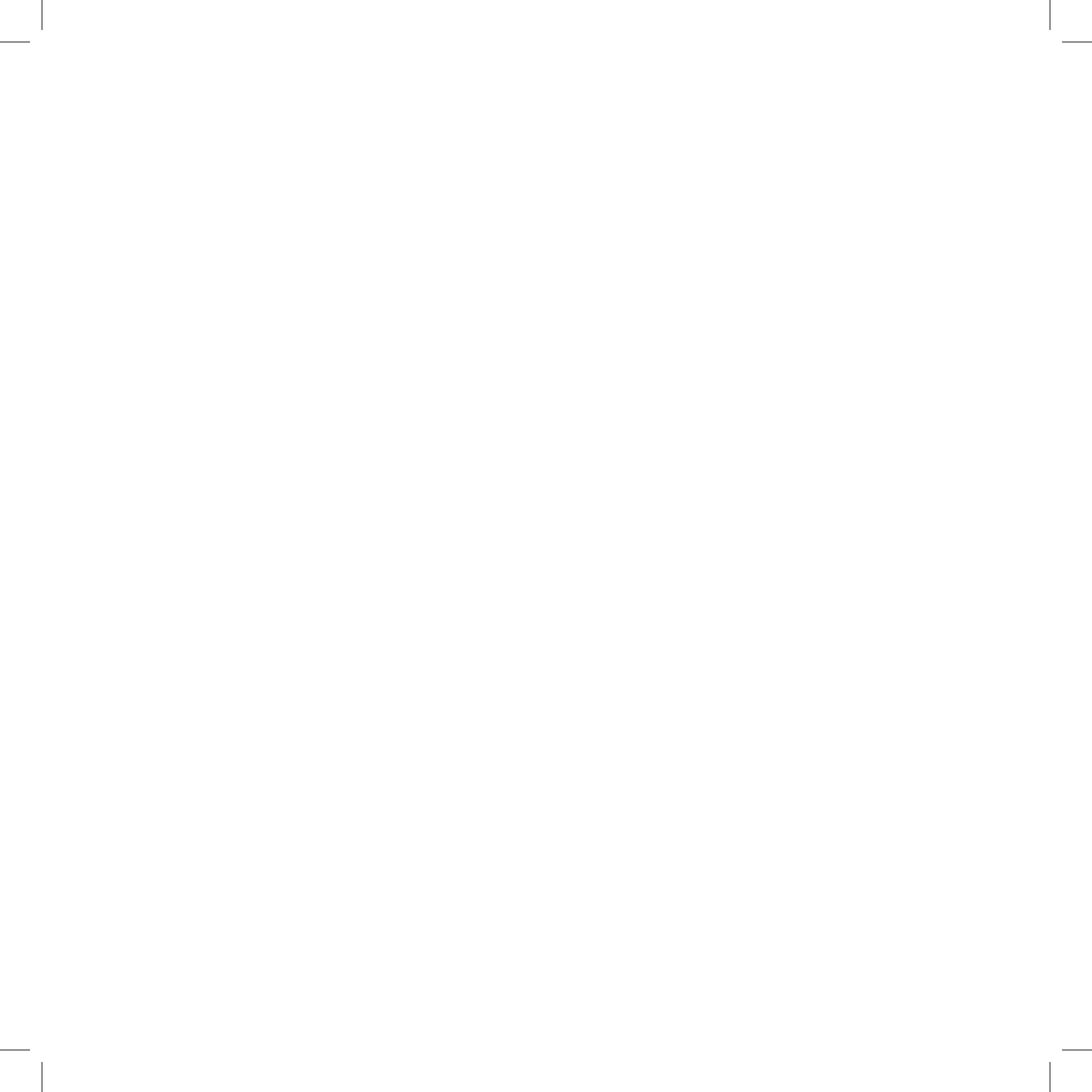
Wiwat Thanapanya

Co-Founder & Director One Sky Foundation

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HOME

A heartfelt story of the journey from
an orphanage back to a loving family



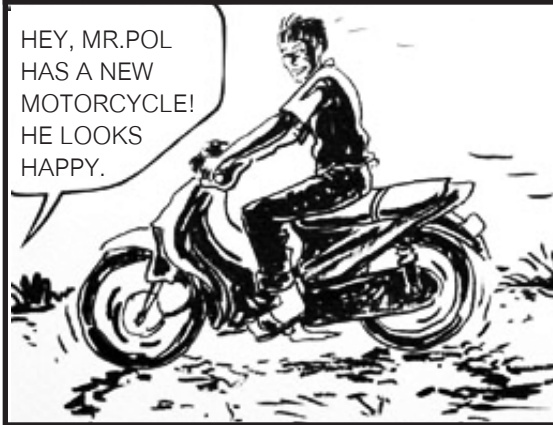
ONE MORNING JUST OUTSIDE
THE CITY AT SUNRISE...

PO, WAKE UP

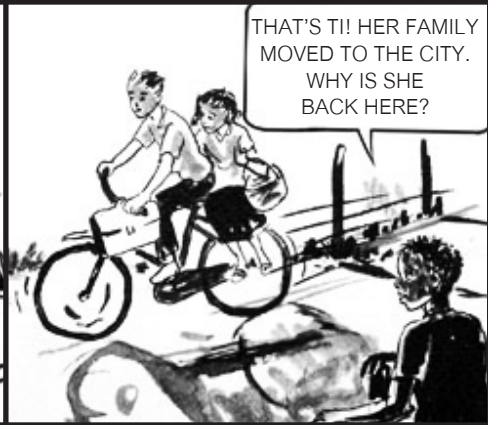




LOOK, IT'S MRS. HENG.
YESTERDAY HER OX GOT
INTO HER NEIGHBOR'S
RICE FIELD. WHAT A MESS!



HEY, MR.POL
HAS A NEW
MOTORCYCLE!
HE LOOKS
HAPPY.



THAT'S TI! HER FAMILY
MOVED TO THE CITY.
WHY IS SHE
BACK HERE?



MOM! WE'LL HAVE MEAT
WITH OUR RICE TODAY!



LATER THAT DAY...

10

HERE'S A
FAT ONE
FOR YOU.

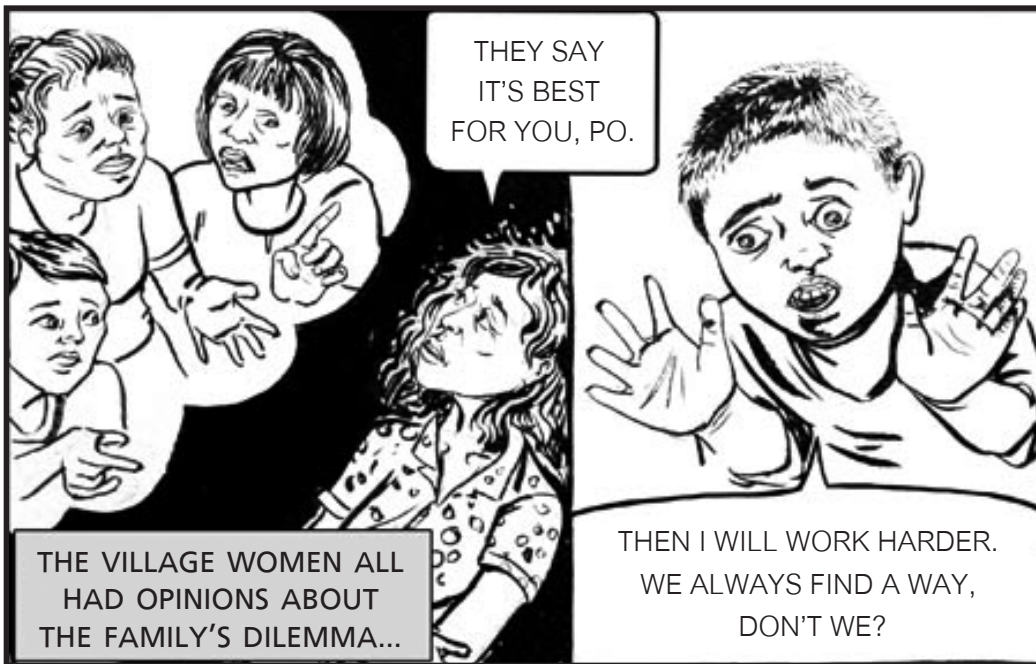


WE'RE
ALMOST OUT
OF RICE...

HEY! THESE
FROGS CAN
DANCE!







THEY SAY
IT'S BEST
FOR YOU, PO.

THE VILLAGE WOMEN ALL
HAD OPINIONS ABOUT
THE FAMILY'S DILEMMA...

THEN I WILL WORK HARDER.
WE ALWAYS FIND A WAY,
DON'T WE?

YOU CAN GO
TO SCHOOL.

BUT THIS IS
MY HOME.



IT JUST DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT.

IT'S A GOOD OPPORTUNITY!

BUT HE'S MY SON.

ARE YOU READY TO GO YET, PO?

CAN I TAKE THE COMB?

AND IT WAS DECIDED...



HOW CAN A MOTHER TAKE
HER OWN SON TO AN OPHANAGE?



The global picture of children in institutions

With so many children's homes in the developing world that are not registered with or monitored by governments, it is very hard to know exactly how many such institutions there are worldwide. In 2017 UNICEF estimated the number of affected children to be more than 2,700,000 while also stating that the true number is likely to be much higher. Other reports have quoted 8,000,000 children.

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Perhaps more importantly, experts working on the ground in individual countries recognise this as a huge issue and describe firsthand the negative impact for children caused by the breakup of families.

The orphan myth

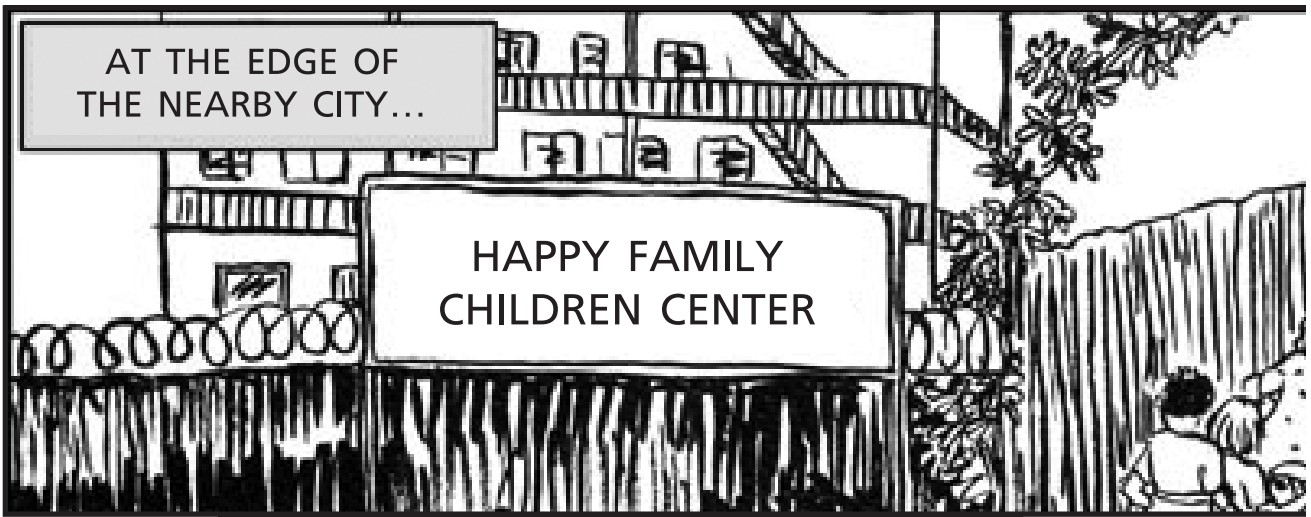
It is easy to trust that institutions or orphanages are there to support orphans, but interviews with children in orphanages all around the world consistently reveal that over 80% of these children have at least one living parent.

Poverty and its consequences are often the reason why children are separated from their families and many families could stay together given just a little support



AT THE EDGE OF
THE NEARBY CITY...

HAPPY FAMILY
CHILDREN CENTER



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HI PO!
I'M MARK.





I WANT YOU TO MEET...



JET!

AND
PICH!

THEY'RE YOUR
ROOMMATES.

I WANT TO BE
A FAMOUS SINGER!



I WANT TO BE
A LAWYER.

WOW, THIS IS
A MATTRESS!

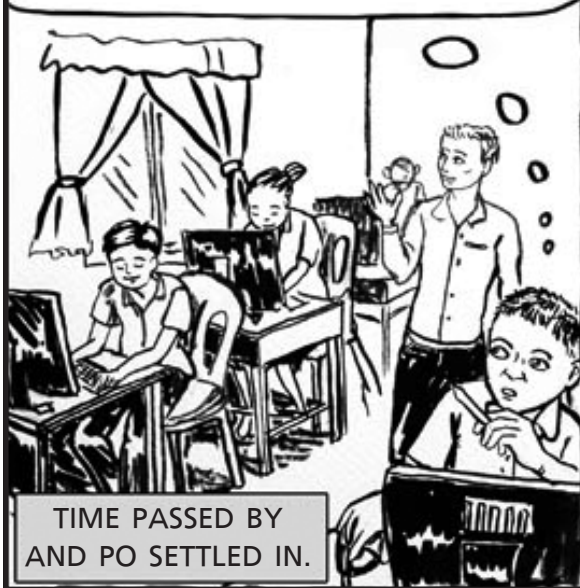


YOU TOOK LUNCH
MONEY BUT DIDN'T
GO TO SCHOOL!

MING IS OKAY, BUT STAY
ON HER GOOD SIDE!



THEY HAVE LOTS OF THINGS HERE
THAT I CAN'T GET AT HOME.



TIME PASSED BY
AND PO SETTLED IN.



WHY ARE THEY ALL STUCK
INSIDE THESE WALLS?



Residential institutions for children have many names around the world, including orphanage, children's home and baby home.

Regardless of the name, size or location, institutional care is defined by certain characteristics:

- Unrelated children live in the care of paid adults.
- Children are separated from their family and often their community. In many cases, they do not have the opportunity to bond with a caregiver.
- Institutions run according to workplace routines, instead of responding to individual children's needs.

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Although some institutions are well-resourced with dedicated staff they cannot replace a family. Eighty years of research has shown the negative impact of institutionalisation on children's health, development and life chances, as well as a high risk of abuse.

www.wearelumos.org



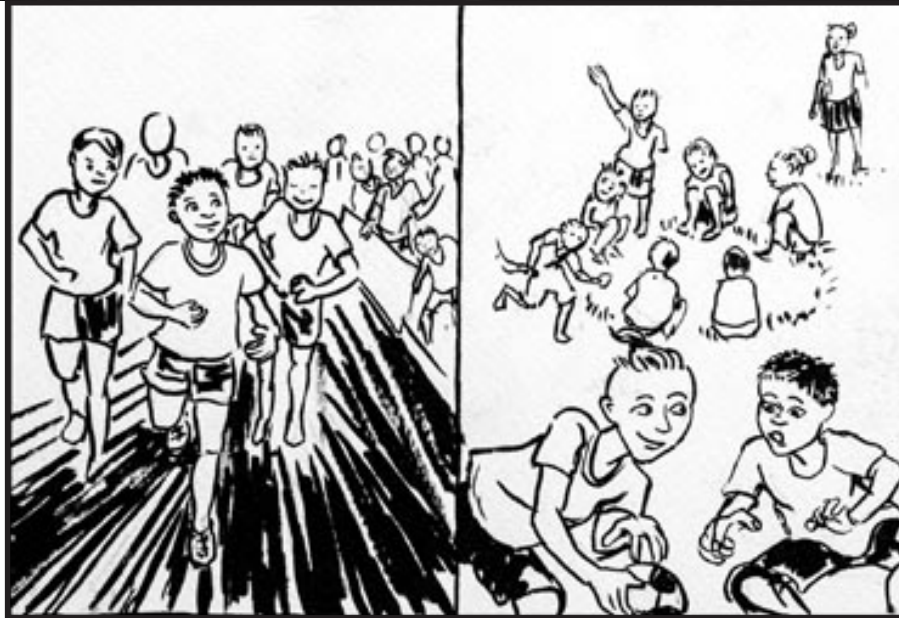




SOMETIMES VOLUNTEER
GROUPS WOULD COME.



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THE VOLUNTEERS ARE HERE! THE VOLUNTEERS ARE HERE!



I'M TIRED.



WE LOVE YOU!!

WE WILL COME BACK!

DO THEY LOVE ME?

WILL THEY COME BACK?







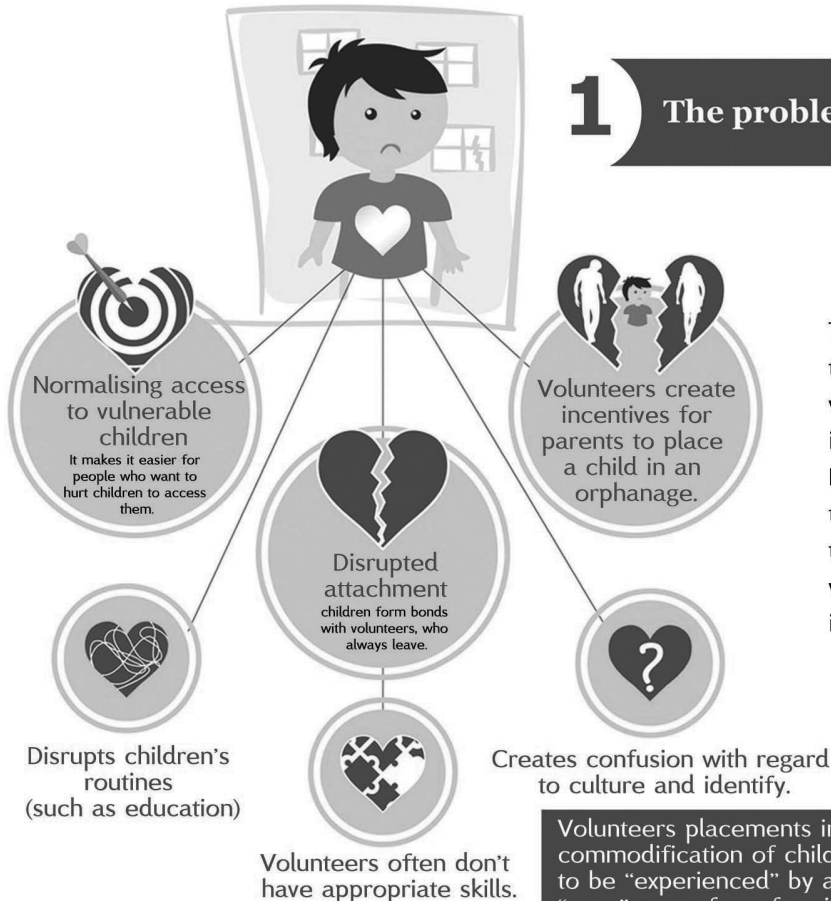
ORPHANAGE VOLUNTEERING

Why to say no



Volunteering in orphanages has become a hugely popular way to **“give back”** when travelling abroad. However, many children’s organisations are campaigning against this practice. **Why?**

1 The problem with volunteering



The majority of people who want to volunteer in an orphanage have very good intentions and the best interests of the children at heart. However, they may not realise that many residential care centres that allow volunteers direct contact with children put children at risk in the following ways:

Volunteers placements in orphanages can also contribute to the commodification of children where they are seen as something to be “experienced” by a visitor, and can be encouraged to act “poor” or perform for visitors to solicit donations.





THIS IS WHERE WE HANG
OUR CLOTHES TO DRY.



GIRLS STARTING
ON THE LEFT.



THIS IS WHERE WE LINE UP TO LISTEN TO MR.
MARK'S MORNING ANNOUNCEMENTS.

AT SCHOOL WE LINE UP LIKE THIS.





THIS IS HOW WE LINE UP TO EAT.
THE YOUNGEST KIDS GO FRIST.



YOU LINE UP FOR MEDICINE HERE
WHEN YOU'RE SICK.



WHERE DO I LINE UP
TO GO HOME?



ORPHANAGE VOLUNTEERING

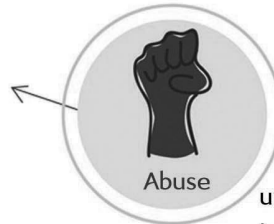
Why to say no



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2

The orphanage myth



Many volunteers don't understand the real situation of children in orphanages.

Studies have shown that approximately 80% of children in orphanages worldwide have one or more living parent. The term “orphanages” is misleading, conjuring up images of children with no family to care for them.

There are many reasons why a child may be living in an orphanage

whatever the reason, all children in an orphanage have faced difficult experiences.



THERE'S SO MUCH LOVE HERE! I
FEEL ALIVE. ITS BEAUTIFUL.



WHEN WILL
YOU GO?



WILL YOU LEAVE
TOMORROW?

THEY'VE SAID GOODBYE
TOO MANY TIMES
ALREADY.



DO THEY ALWAYS
ASK THAT?





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I HAD THAT BAD DREAM AGAIN.

THE ONE WHERE WE LEAVE?

HOW BAD?

AT LEAST I HAD MY CLOTHES ON.



ORPHANAGE VOLUNTEERING

Why to say no



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Volunteering is contributing to the growth of orphanages

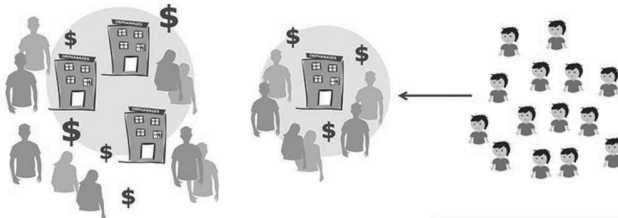
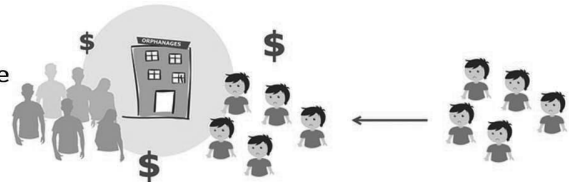
3

The practice of international volunteering in orphanages in the developing world is becoming so common it is creating a demand for "orphans" and "orphanages"



An increase in the number of orphanages in a country indicates an increase in the separation of children and families. Volunteering in such settings supports this trend.

The more funding that goes into orphanages, the more appealing they become for struggling families, who become convinced that their children will have a better future in the centre than at home.



Child protection experts have expressed concern about the practice of international volunteering in orphanages in over 20 countries.

SO, YOU READ IN THE BIBLE TO CARE FOR WIDOWS AND ORPHANS?

RIGHT, AND I KNEW THAT WAS MY CALLING.



ONE DAY ANNA ASKED MARK HOW HE BECAME AN ORPHANAGE DIRECTOR.

MY MOM IS A WIDOW.
IF YOU HELP HER,
I CAN GO HOME.



HUH.

OUCH.





TI THINKS HER AUNT IS COMING
TO TAKE HER HOME TODAY,
WHAT SHOULD I DO?



SIGH, SOMETIMES I THINK IT
WOULD BE BETTER IF THEY
DIDN'T SEE THEIR FAMILIES
AT ALL.



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HOW MANY OF THEM HAVE FAMILIES?



MOST HAVE ONE
PARENT OR TWO,
AND RELATIVES.

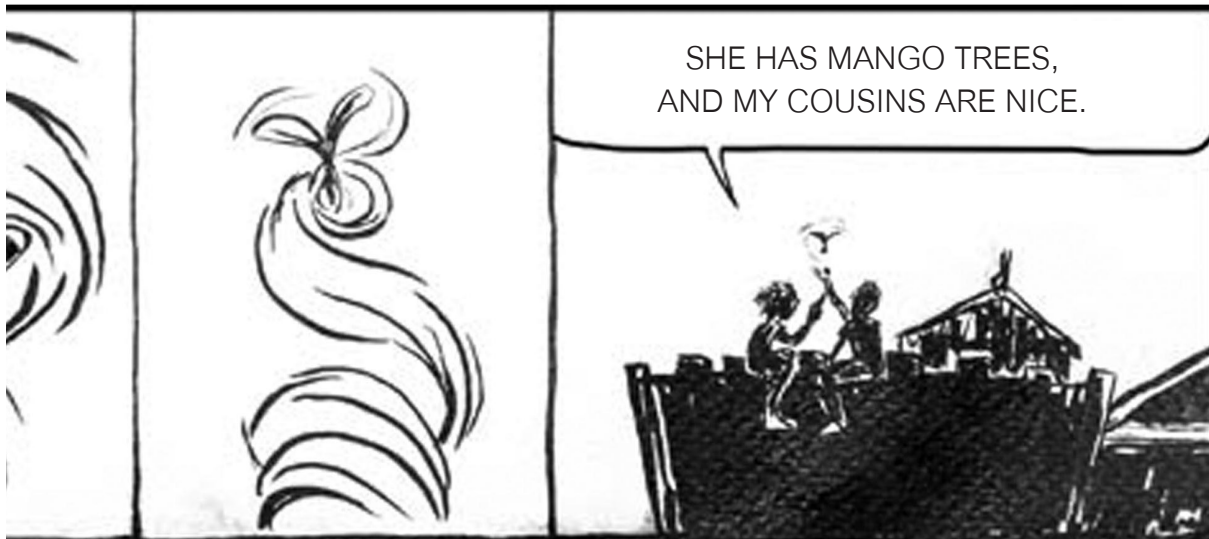




SOMEDAY MY AUNT MAY TAKE ME WITH HER.

IT'S NOT MUCH.

YEAH.



AFTER TRYING SIX
OTHER PLACES...



THIS ONE
LOOKS
LIKE
A REALLY
NICE
PLACE.

THIS IS ROS HE'S
NEEDS, AND HE'S

GOT SPECIAL
A GREAT KID!



I'D LIKE TO HELP,
BUT WE'RE JUST
SO FULL RIGHT NOW.

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STRANGE WE NEVER
HAVE ROOM FOR THE
SPECIAL KIDS. EVEN
WHEN WE HAVE
EMPTY BEDS.



FEW ORPHANAGES
TAKE KIDS WITH
DISABILITIES.



VOLUNTEER FOR THE DAY...

HE'S CUTE!

BIG SMILE!



FACEBOOK SHOT! HEY, HE KICKED THE DOG!



NAK IS A LITTLE TERROR TODAY. WHAT'S UP?

LAST YEAR HE WAS THE CUTE ONE WITH ALL THE ATTENTION.

DIDN'T I TELL THOSE VOLUNTEERS NOT TO PUT PICTURES OF THE KIDS ON FACEBOOK?



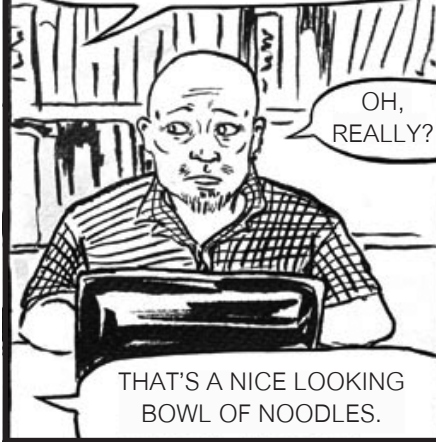
ME, TOO. ITS SO HARD TO STOP THEM.

THEY WANT LIVES THAT COUNT, AND THEY KEEP SCORE ON FACEBOOK.



PRETTY SAD.

HEY, 90 'LIKES' FOR THE PHOTO YOU POSTED THIS MORNING!



OH, REALLY?

THAT'S A NICE LOOKING BOWL OF NOODLES.

CHILDREN ARE NOT TOURIST ATTRACTIONS



THINK before visiting an orphanage.

www.thinkchildsafe.org



Supported by
unicef    

Situation depicted in this image is creatively designed
and all involved children and adults are actors



ORPHANAGE VOLUNTEERING

Why to say no



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Orphanages should only ever be a temporary solution

4

60 years of research shows that growing up in an orphanage can have a negative impact on:



Children's



Development



Life chances

The risk of children suffering from violence, or physical or sexual abuse is much higher in orphanages than in any other type of care setting.



If a child needs to stay in an orphanage, this should be temporary, and as small-scale and family like as possible until a better alternative is found.



The Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, endorsed by the United Nations in 2009, state that governments should, wherever possible, promote family care, and prevent the separation of children from their parents.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF MING...



SHE FEEDS THE YOUNGEST KIDS AT THE CENTER, SHOPS FOR LUNCH, THEN HELPS WITH OFFICE WORK AS NEEDED FOR THE REST OF THE DAY.



MING RISES EARLY TO MAKE BREAKFAST FOR HER CHILDREN AND SEND THEM TO SCHOOL. 5AM



IN THE EVENING SHE RETURNS HOME TO HER CHILDREN AND THEY EAT DINNER TOGETHER.



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I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT MING WAS
SKIMMING FROM THE FOOD MONEY.



I WISH I WERE MORE
SURPRISED.



I'M TAKING 2 DAYS OFF TO
CLEAR MY MIND.

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DO OUR STAFF START OUT CORRUPT
OR DO WE CORRUPT THEM?



ANNA, I HAVE TO ASK SAMBOT
TO LEAVE THE CENTER.



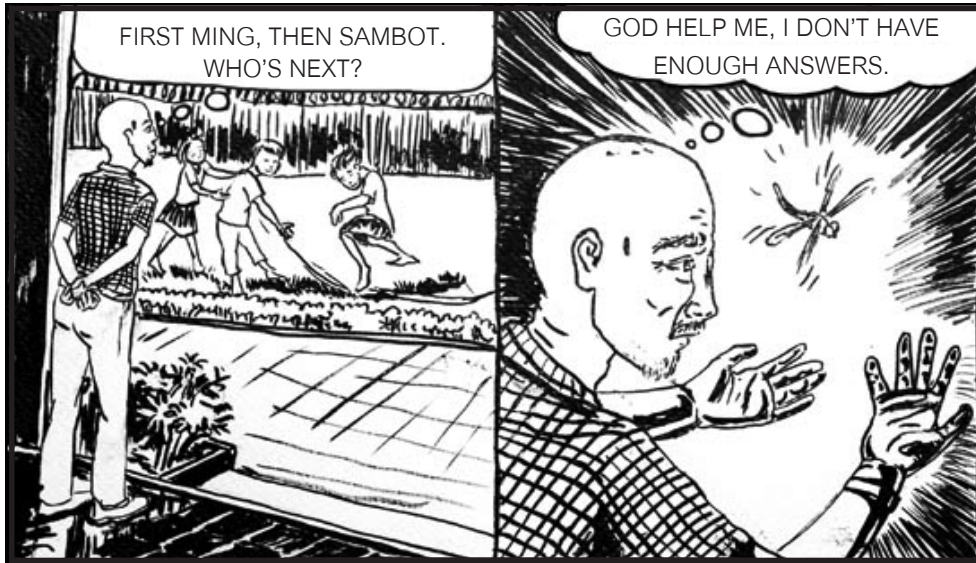
I REMEMBER WHEN HE WAS A GOOD KID.
SOME OF THEM JUST GO BAD.



YEAH, HE'S A BAD INFLUENCE.

REALLY!? HOW OFTEN DO
GOOD KIDS GO BAD?





I JUST REMEMBERED THAT I'M INVITED TO A TRAINING EVENT TOMORROW.
ITS ABOUT KEEPING ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN FAMILIES.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?

INTERESTING!

NOT LONG AFTER THAT...



IT DOES SOUND INTERESTING. SO WHY DO
I HAVE SUCH A SINKING FEELING?



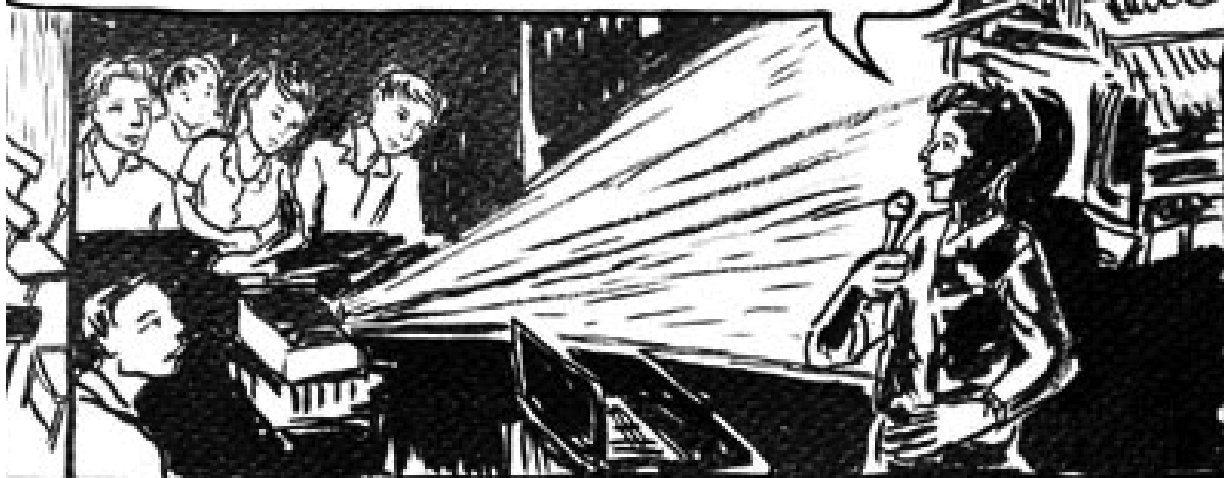
AND SO THE NEXT DAY...

ORPHANAGE DIRECTOR TRAINING



DECADES OF RESEARCH ALL OVER THE WORLD, THE CONVENTION ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS, EXPERTS, LEADING ORGANIZATIONS, AND EVEN GOVERNMENT POLICY ARE ALL CALLING FOR A TRANSITION AWAY FROM ORPHANAGES TO FAMILY-BASED CARE.

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN ORPHANAGES.

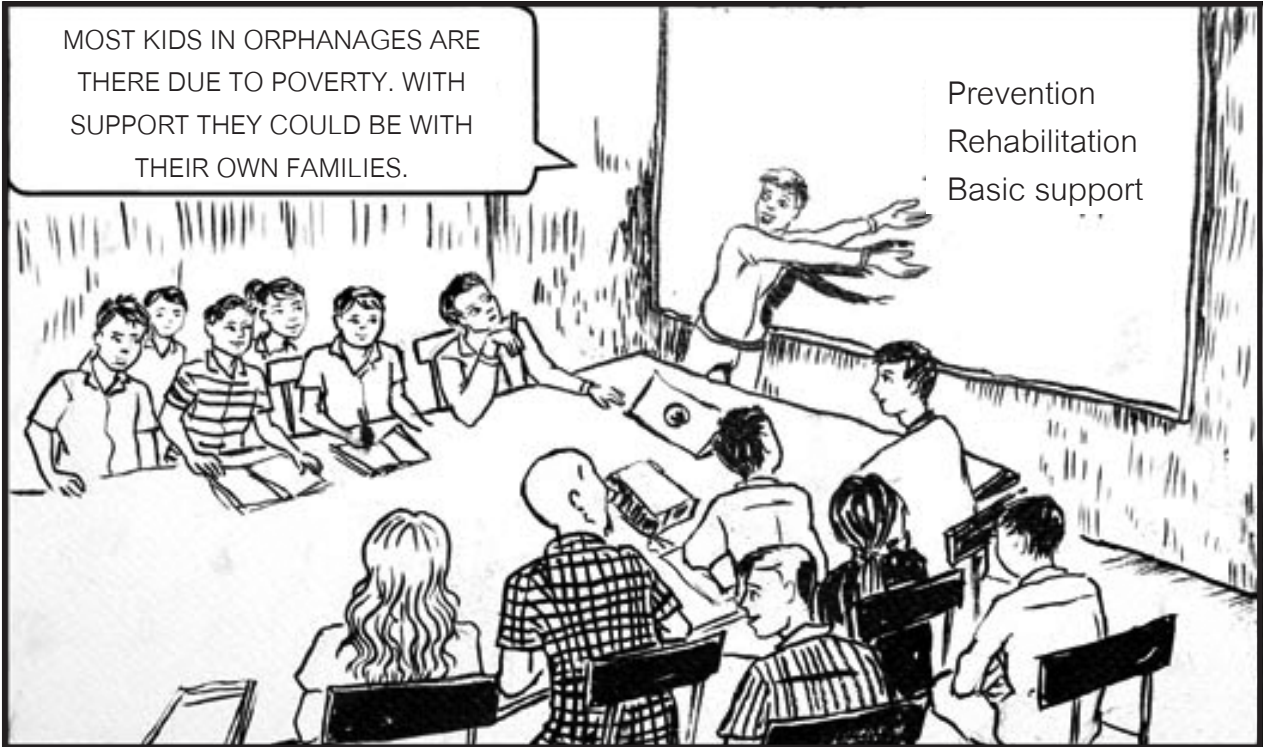


BUT WHO SAYS THEY'RE RIGHT?



MOST KIDS IN ORPHANAGES ARE THERE DUE TO POVERTY. WITH SUPPORT THEY COULD BE WITH THEIR OWN FAMILIES.

Prevention
Rehabilitation
Basic support



WHAT IF OUR ORPHANAGE IS BETTER THAN
BEING IN A POOR FAMILY?





68



WE WANT ORPHANAGES TO VOLUNTARILY TRANSFORM INTO COMMUNITY-BASED,



FAMILY SUPPORT CENTERS. THE MONEY USED TO RAISE ONE CHILD IN RESIDENTIAL CARE COULD SUPPORT UP TO FIVE CHILDREN IN FAMILY-BASED CARE. PUTTING A CHILD IN AN ORPHANAGE SHOULD BE A LAST RESORT.

BUT GOD TOLD ME TO START AN ORPHANAGE.

WHY ME?

WHY NOT ME?



KIDS HUGGING STRANGERS IS A SYMPTOM OF ATTACHMENT ISSUES. NOT SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE.



WE DON'T RECOMMEND SHORT-TERM ORPHANAGE VISITS.

70



OUR DONORS LOVE THE ORPHANAGE,
AND THEY'RE REALLY ATTACHED TO
THE CHILDREN.



OUR SUPPORTING CHURCH
SENDS A GROUP EVERY YEAR.

THEY ALWAYS SAY IT'S A
LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE.



WOULD THEY LET GO OF ALL
THAT IF YOU TELL THEM ITS
BEST FOR THE CHILDREN?

HONESTLY, THEY
MIGHT LET ME GO
INSTEAD.

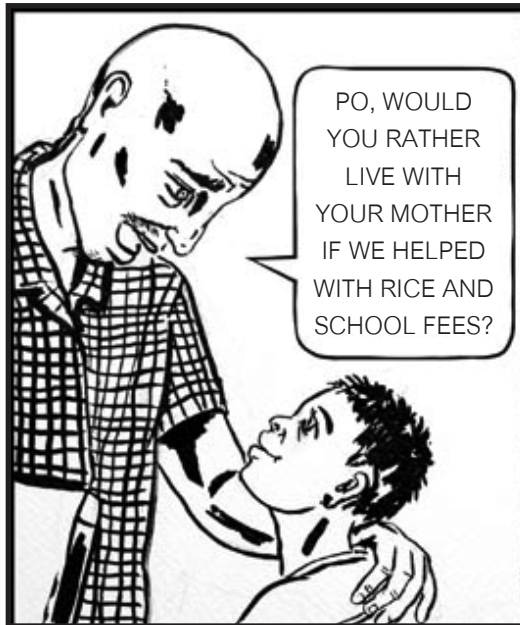


THEY
MIGHT.



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PO, WOULD YOU RATHER LIVE WITH YOUR MOTHER IF WE HELPED WITH RICE AND SCHOOL FEES?

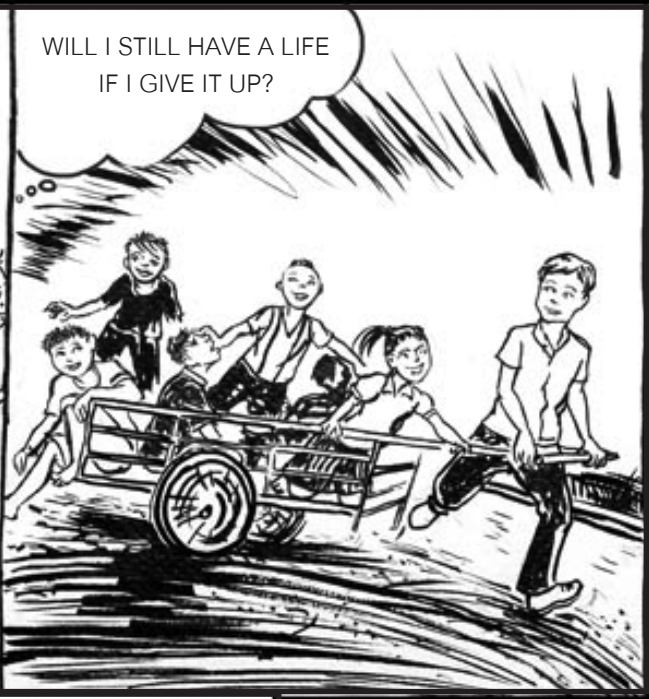


YES! CAN YOU DO THAT?



I THINK I HURT MR. MARK'S FEELINGS.

BUT HE WANTED TO KNOW, RIGHT?







76



WE WANT TO TRANSFORM INTO A VILLAGE CENTRE THAT SUPPORTS AND RESTORES FAMILIES FOR THE SAKE OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN.



WHAT ABOUT THE KIDS?



SOME WILL STAY HERE, AND MOST CAN BE REINTEGRATED WITH THEIR PARENTS OR RELATIVES.

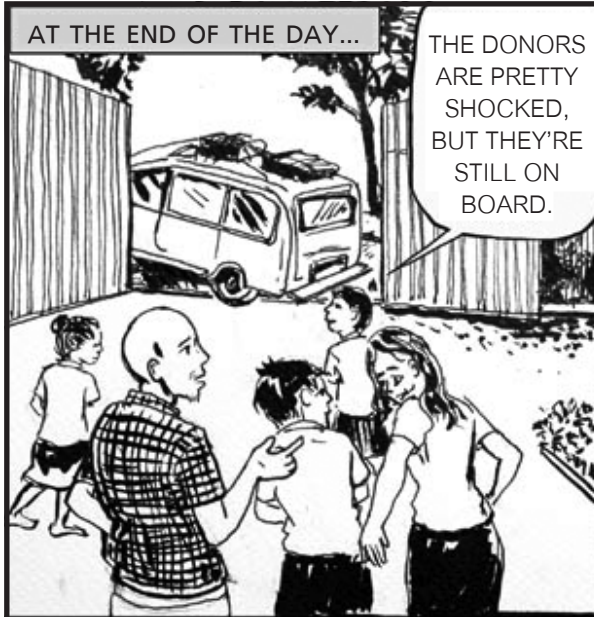
WHAT'S HAPPENING?

THEY ALL STARTED TALKING FAST.



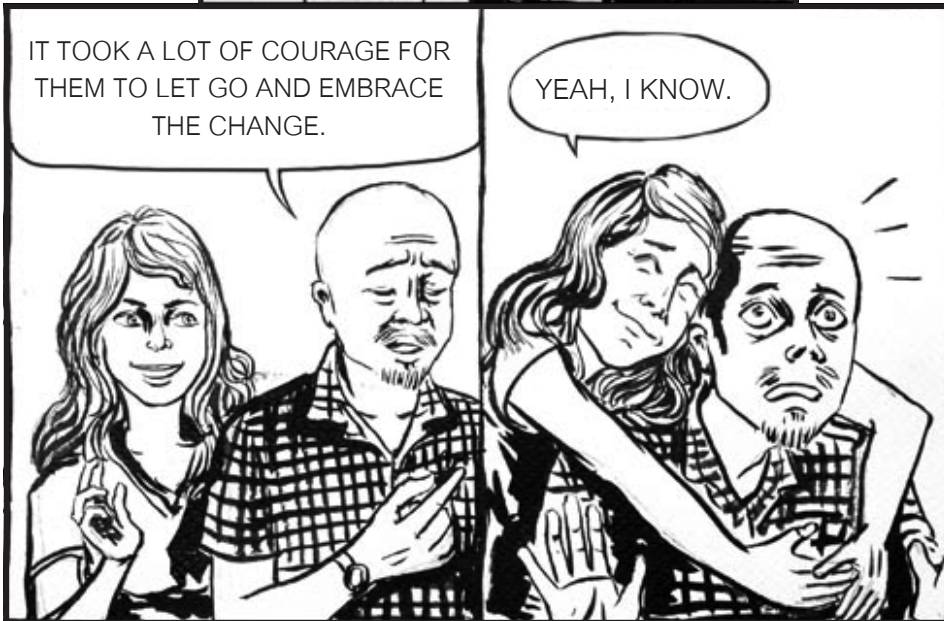
AT THE END OF THE DAY...

THE DONORS
ARE PRETTY
SHOCKED,
BUT THEY'RE
STILL ON
BOARD.



IT TOOK A LOT OF COURAGE FOR
THEM TO LET GO AND EMBRACE
THE CHANGE.

YEAH, I KNOW.





SEASONS PASSED...



80



IT'S BEEN
SIX MONTHS
AND WE'RE
FINALLY
SEINDING
CHILDREN
HOME!



THE RIGHT THING TO DO IS HARDLY EVER THE QUICK OR THE EASY THING.







WILL JET EVER FIT IN TO
HIS OLD HOME IN
THE VILLAGE AGAIN?



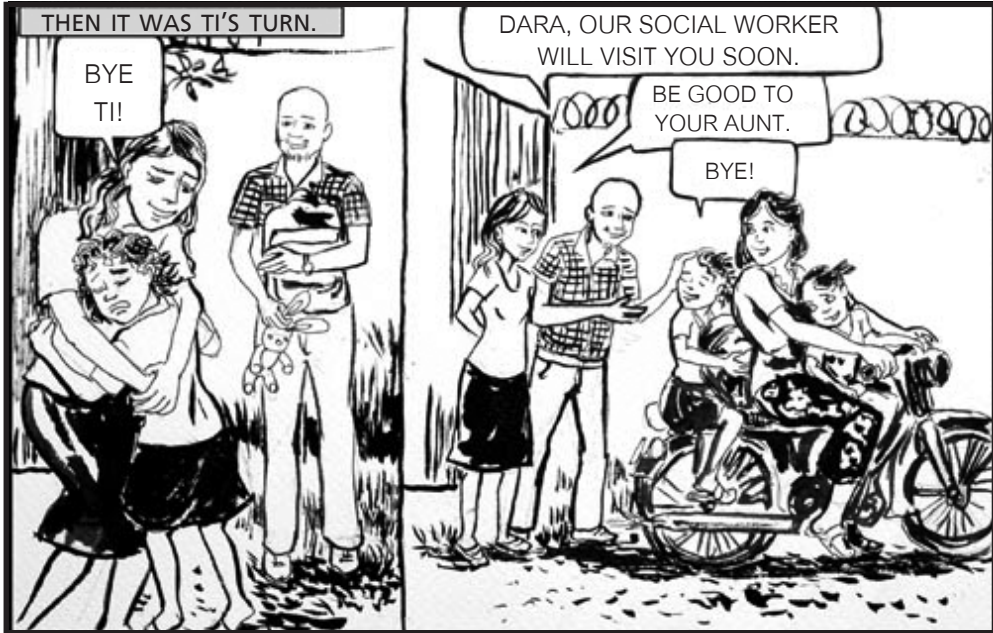
BACK AT THE CENTRE...

84

FOR SOME
OF THEM
IS TOO
LATE TO
GO BACK.



AT LEAST IT WON'T BE
BORING AROUND HERE.





TI WAS SO EXCITED AND
RELIEVED, BUT THEN...

86





WE'RE LIKE A BIG FAMILY HERE, TI.



THIS IS...



TI!

AFTER BEING FIRED, MING HAD FOUND A NEW JOB.

MING!



MEANWHILE...

THIS PLACE FEELS EMPTY NOW, BUT JUST WAIT UNTIL NEXT WEEK.



TWO P's IN THAT.

I WONDER HOW THE KIDS ARE DOING WHO WENT HOME.

THEY'RE KEEPING DARA BUSY.





I'M DARA, THE NEW
SOCIAL WORKER.



ONE DAY THE SOCIAL
WORKER FROM THE FAMILY
SUPPORT CENTER CAME.

HOW ARE YOU DOING, PO? I
KNOW IT'S A BIG ADJUSTMENT.



I LOVE MY FAMILY,
BUT I'M GETTING
USED TO THEM
AGAIN.



THE FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER WILL PROVIDE SOME RICE AND SCHOOL SUPPLIES, AND HELP WITH...



... TUTORING



... ENGLISH CLASSES

THEY REALLY WANT TO MAKE US STRONGER. MAYBE WE CAN DO THIS.



... HOME VISITS



... AND JOB TRAINING.

PO, I HAVE
BAD NEWS,
TI'S AUNT
TOOK HER TO
ANOTHER
ORPHANAGE.

HUH!?

BEFORE MR.DARA LEFT...

IF ADULTS ARE CONFUSED.
HOW ARE KIDS SUPPOSED TO
FIGURE THINGS OUT?

PO, LET'S PICK MANGOS.







Poor, Street Children and Orphans Training C

ORPHANAGE

TOURISTS WELCOME



ផ្ទះលេខ០១ ក្រុមទី១៥ ផ្លូវ៣៧១ ភូមិគ្នោតព្រំ៥ សង្កាត់បឹងទំពុន ខណ្ឌមានជ័យ រាជធានី

THERE WERE DANCING
LESSONS EVERYDAY
PLUS PERFORMANCES.

KNEES UP AND BACK
STRAIGHT, TI



AND SMILE!

SO PEOPLE WILL
LIKE YOU.

OR FEEL SORRY
FOR YOU.

AND
DONATE.



DANCING IS
HARD WORK.



BUT I LIKE IT.

100



IT HELPS ME
FORGET.







103



MING WENT TO CHECK ON TI THAT NIGHT.

BE CAREFUL WITH THE BOYS HERE, TI.

OKAY.

G'NIGHT, MING.

104

WHAT'S A SWEET GIRL LIKE YOU DOING IN THIS PLACE?

ONE MORNING...

COME ON, VUTHY! I'LL RACE YOU
TO THE FENCE!

TI!



POW!!

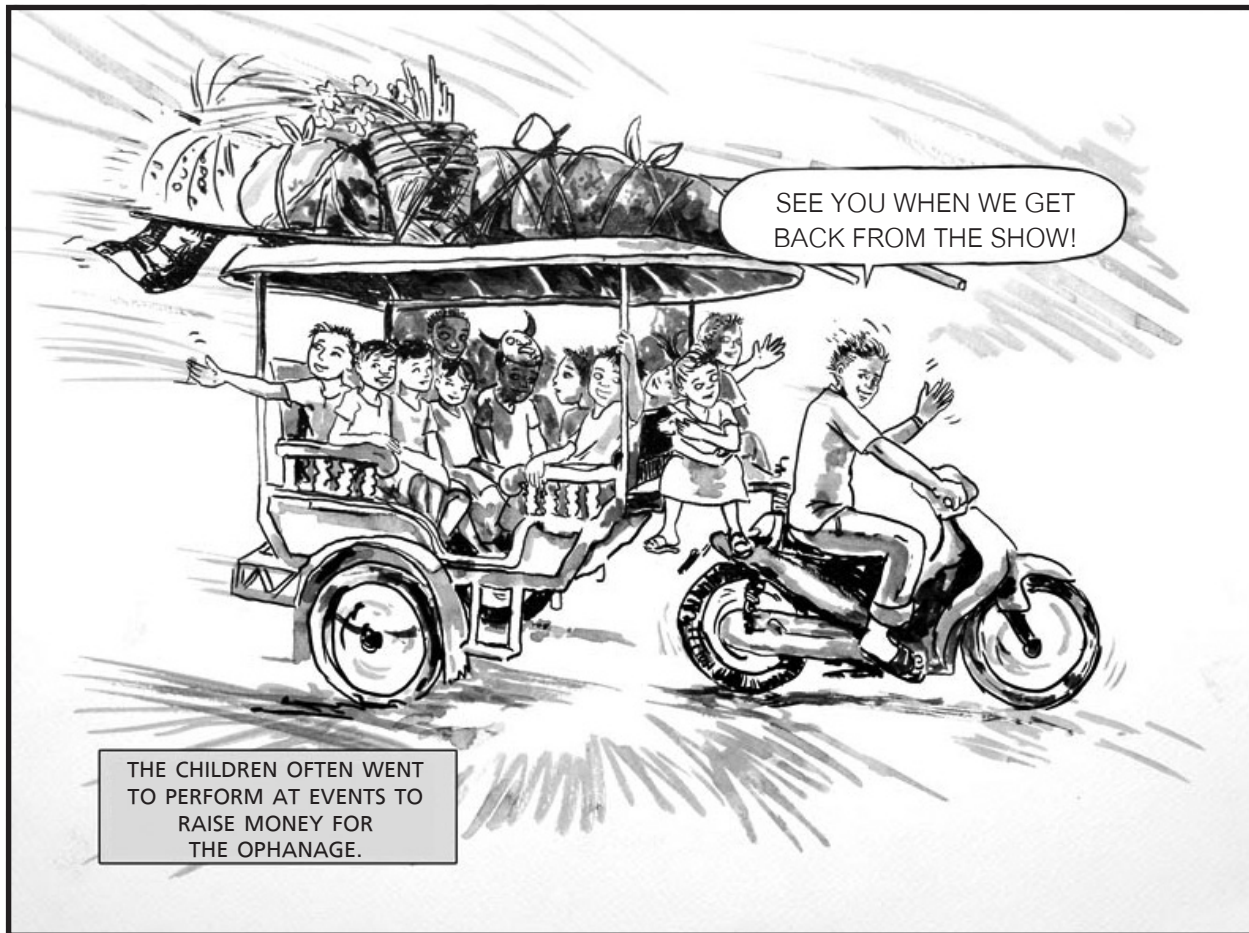
MEANWHILE, INSIDE...





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THE CHILDREN OFTEN WENT TO PERFORM AT EVENTS TO RAISE MONEY FOR THE OPHANAGE.



108



AND THEN...

TI, I WANT TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING.

I DON'T SEE IT.



MING, WON'T BOTHER US HERE.

I'M SCARED.





“Many Residential Care Institutes (RCI’s) do not have the best interests of children at heart, and deliberately keep children in poor conditions in order to continue the receipt of financial support from tourists who are eager to help children in difficult situations. In these RCIs, physical, sexual and emotional violence against children is commonplace. Children in RCIs are almost four times more likely to experience sexual abuse than children in family-based care and are therefore at higher risk of growing up to become perpetrators of abuse and violence. Children who grow up in institutions are at higher risk of engaging in self-harm, violence against others, criminal activity, prostitution, and substance abuse”

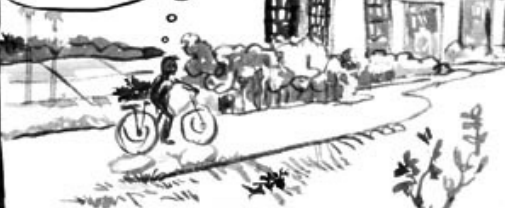
111

www.rethinkorphanages.org

I FEEL WORRIED ABOUT TI. I SHOULD GO SEE HER.



IT'S SO FAR AWAY.



LATER AT PO'S HOUSE



HUH!?



IT'S EMPTY.

THE POLICE CAME THIS MORNING AND TOOK THE CHILDREN AWAY.



WHY?

AT TI'S OPHANAGE

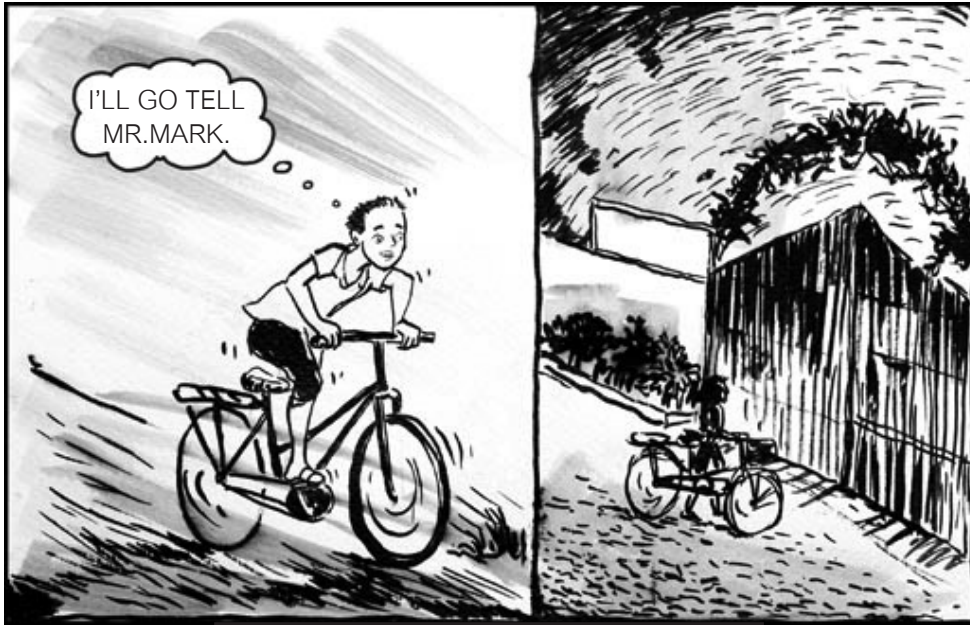
DON'T KNOW I HEARD DIFFARENT STORIES.



WHERE ARE THEY?

NOBODY IS SAYING, AND THE STAFF ALL RAN AWAY.





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PO GOT A RIDE HOME...

WHAT WILL HAPPEN
TO TI?



DON'T WORRY, PO. WE'LL FIND
A FAMILY WHO WILL LOVE HER AND
GIVE HER A HOME.



BYE!



THANK YOU!



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TWO WEEKS LATER DARA MET WITH MR. MARK...

I FOUND TWO NICE FAMILIES WHO COULD RAISE TI.



ONE IS A BIT COMPLICATEED...



BUT SHE WILL BE LOVED THERE.

OH!?



YOU UNDERSTAND WE ONLY PROVIDE RICE,
SCHOOL SUPPLIES, AND A LITTLE MONEY
FOR FOOD?



MR. MARK MET A POTENTIAL
FOSTER MOTHER FOR TI.

AND YOU WILL RAISE HER AS
YOUR OWN DAUGHTER, AND
WE'LL SEND MR. DARA TO
CHECK ON HER
REGULARLY?



YES.

THEN LET'S HAVE
A TALK WITH TI.



THIS WILL BE YOUR HOME, TI.
YOU'LL BE PART OF OUR FAMILY.
YOU CAN JOIN THE PROGRAMS
AT THE CENTER, AND MR. DARA
WILL VISIT EACH MONTH.



THE DAY OF DECISION
ARRIVED FOR TI...

IS THIS WHAT
YOU WANT?



YES.



I HOPED IT WOULD
BE YOU, MING.





ORPHANAGE VOLUNTEERING

Why to say no

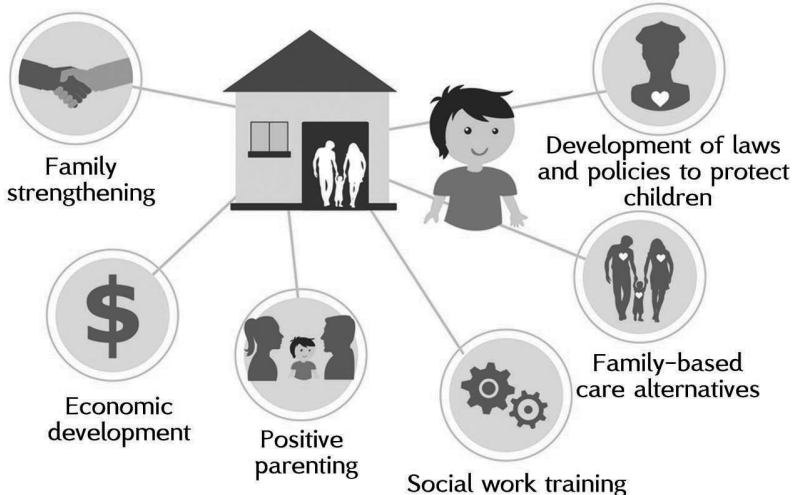


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To help children, support their families and communities



There are millions of vulnerable children in the world at risk of disease, exploitation, abuse, neglect, and death. To support these children, please consider learning about, working with, or donating to programs supporting children in families and at-risk communities.



For resources on best practice for international volunteering with organisations working with children, visit:

- comhlamh.org
- globalsl.org
- learningservice.info
- orphanages.no
- thinkchildsafe.org

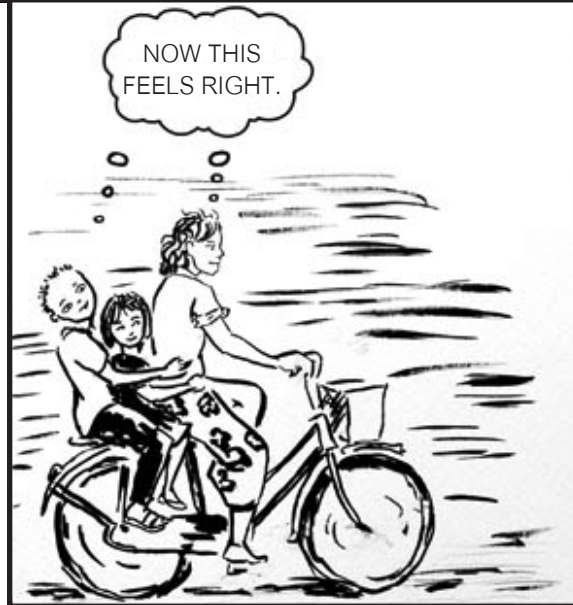
Support families, not orphanages

i For more information visit: bettervolunteeringbettercare.org

✉ Get in touch: volunteering@bettercarenetwork.org



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AND SO THE FAMILY SUPPORT CENTRE
HELD A COMMUNITY CELEBRATION.



IT'S
ALL READY!



WHY DIDN'T WE DO
THIS BEFORE?

WE DRIFTED APART FROM
THE COMMUNITY, BUT NOW WE'RE
ALL IN THIS TOGETHER!





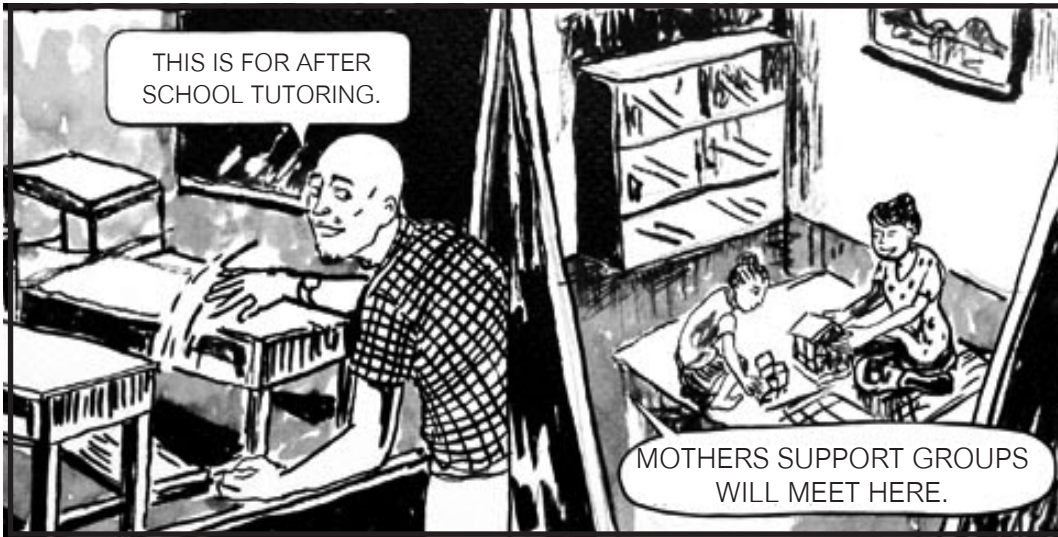
LOOK, THERE'S PO WITH HIS FAMILY.



COME TAKE A TOUR WITH US.



THE MAIN DORMITORY WILL BE A COMMUNITY TRAINING CENTRE.



THIS IS FOR AFTER
SCHOOL TUTORING.

MOTHERS SUPPORT GROUPS
WILL MEET HERE.



WILL THERE BE A SUPPORT
GROUP FOR MING , TOO?

YES, FOR FOSTER
MOTHERS, TOO.



Kim's story

In December 2004 a giant tsunami wave swept across the Andaman Coastline in Southern Thailand leaving 1200 children orphaned. I was part of a coalition called, We Love Thailand, which set up child-safe zones in the displaced person camps hoping to protect children from potential traffickers and provide a secure place for children to play while their immediate and extended family members tried to find each other and to make sense of the disaster.

One morning, I arrived at a safe zone to find a young mother with tears streaming down her face, hopelessness in her eyes, and the burning sting of defeat that grew with each tear falling onto the toddler she clutched close. The weary widow listened to a foreign woman explain, "It takes courage to make the right decision to give your child away." The Christian missionary children's home director spoke confidently; assuring the weeping widow her precious daughter would never know hunger again.

Carrying paperwork and photos of a beautiful cement home, the director came prepared for this young mother to sign her child over. Every three months she could visit her daughter, and the daughter would have the opportunity to complete high school and possibly attend university. I realized what was happening, and spoke to the young mother asking her, “Do you really want to give your child away?” The young mother felt she had no choice because she was unemployed and had no money to care for her daughter. I explained that our organization believed no mother should have to make that choice and we would find support for her family.

Kim actually arrived in Thailand many years ago to take up a volunteer position in a Christian children's home. Kim has since dedicated her life to working with families and preventing children from entering children's homes unnecessarily. Her organization, Step Ahead, now supports many families in Phang Nga, Bangkok and North Eastern Thailand.

LOOK, TI, ISN'T THAT MR. DARA ASKING
YOUR COUSIN TO DANCE?



HEY GO TASTE
THE CURRY!

UH.


AND THEN IT WAS TIME
TO JOIN THE PARTY.

MING HELPED
MAKE THIS.



SEE YOU LATER,
MR. MARK.





SEE HOW MR. MARK AND
MISS ANNA ARE LOOKING AT
EACH OTHER?

FINALLY!

A LITTLE WHILE LATER...

DARA AND THE COMMUNITY LEADER DID A GREAT JOB WITH THE PARTY, ALL THE PLANING , FOOD, GAMES, AND MUSIC...



AND MING CAN DANCE!



WHO KNEW?





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.. IS SO MUCH BETTER, WE JUST
COME ALONGSIDE FOR A TIME.

AND THEN.. DISAPPEAR?

ITS THEIR STORY.

YOU'RE JUST SO...



AND THEN IT WAS TIME
TO GO HOME.





How Orphanages are Changing for Good

by Andy Gray, Author of the original story

“Home, a Cambodian story”

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The change has started. We are seeing orphanages in Cambodia transitioning into community and family support centers. They have not lost their vision to care for the most vulnerable children, but they are seeking better ways to accomplish it.

Tom Matuschka, Director of Asian Hope, took over one of Cambodia’s earliest and well-known orphanages in 2008. He began to see a pattern of problems as children matured, so he set out to learn more.

“What I found shook my beliefs to their core. The problems our kids were enduring were not uncommon, even in local, non-religious Cambodian orphanages. They were and are the normal result of raising children in residential care rather than in a functioning family. In all honesty, we came to the conclusion that God designed people to grow up and develop in a family—not an orphanage or a children’s home or

even a group home. We as relational beings have a need for belonging and security that these non-family-based institutional solutions can't satisfy.”

Family-based care means working together so that vulnerable children and orphans are raised within loving families in their own communities. It recognizes the need to move beyond “orphan care” under the control of outsiders, to empowering families and communities to care for their own vulnerable children.

Honestly, it's complicated and difficult. But it's not as complicated and costly as removing children from their families and communities, then returning them to society years later.

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Truth is, family-based care is working in Cambodia - even among the very poor. But it's also true we have a long way to go here.

We must acknowledge a painful truth. Poverty is the root cause behind most children being put in orphanages in Cambodia and worldwide. Nearly half of the children placed in Cambodian orphanages are sent by their own parents. On major holidays, the orphanages empty out as most children and staff go home to their parents and relatives.

Orphanages offer food, education, and other physical benefits that poor families need for their children. But putting a child in an orphanage is an inefficient and costly way meet these needs.

Roughly speaking, the cost of raising a child in an orphanage is five to ten times the cost of supporting the same child within a family, and that's not counting the psychological and social costs.

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Spien (which means, "The Bridge") is a community-based organization working throughout Cambodia that supports nearly two thousand orphans living with relatives or in long-term foster care. In general, all it takes for Spien to keep a child living in a healthy family situation is a regular visit from a volunteer, a fresh set of clothing and school supplies each year, and about ten dollars worth of rice each month for the child and care provider.

"They have already lost their parents," says Phan Chork, a Spien volunteer in Takeo Province. "In an orphanage, they will lose their uncles, aunts, grandmother and more. Even though they are poor and don't have very much, they don't want to be separated from their own family."

“We must stop reacting to poverty by separating children from their families and communities,” says Mick Pease, who has trained orphanage directors and foster care providers around the world. “If they were your children,” he often asks, “would you be happy to see them living in an institution or a group home rather than in a family?”

But poverty is not the only issue. Many children face abuse and neglect at home, and some are exploited and even sold by their own parents. Step-parents in this culture are more likely to abuse children from previous relationships. Added to all of this, Cambodia has a legacy of violence, family-separations, and post-traumatic stress dating to the Khmer Rouge years.

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Family-based care does not mean turning a blind eye to these problems. Nor should anyone naively think that orphanages are free from them either.

When a child cannot live with his or her own parents, experts and Cambodian government policies agree that the following options should be attempted in this order: 1) kinship care (placement with close relatives), 2) foster care leading to domestic adoption, and 3) residential care until a better alternative can be found.

Orphanages should be the last resort and a temporary one, because living with a family is better for a child's development.

"A family is what every child wants, even after abuse and neglect," says Mick Pease. "They want to belong to someone, not to an organization. They want to feel normal, not stigmatized. They want to have siblings and relatives and a community. They want things at home to be safe and right. Poverty is not what matters to a child most; it is being part of a family."

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Unfortunately, there are still too few organizations and resources dedicated to family-based care in Cambodia.

By contrast, recent mapping has indicated that more than 600 registered and unregistered orphanages have proliferated throughout the country. What was meant to be a "last resort" has often been the default solution instead.

We can do better than that.

Family-based care starts with prevention: taking steps to keep the most vulnerable children with their own parents and relatives so they will not be sent away to orphanages in the first place.

Organizations like Indochina Starfish Foundation, Cambodian Children's Trust, and Transform Cambodia are running community-based programs that meet crucial needs: supplemental education, food support, and family interventions. They may not use the words "family-based care," but they are keeping families together and preventing children from being sent to orphanages.

Orphanages can start by doing their utmost to prevent children from being separated from their parents due to problems that can be solved with other interventions. Why not make this a top priority and spend accordingly?

For the cost of raising two or three children in residential care, a trained social worker can be hired full time to work with local community leaders to preserve and strengthen families. For the cost of raising ten children, a team of workers can be employed to impact hundreds of children and their family members.

Are we thinking too small?

There is no line in the sand that stops orphanages from developing high quality family support services, including kinship and foster care programs. The orphanages of today could become the family support centers of tomorrow. We are already seeing orphanages around the world taking these steps.

Not every orphanage will have the capacity or vision to make such big changes, but every orphanage should practice prevention, and every orphanage can seek partnerships with family-based care organizations that provide kinship care, foster care, and domestic adoption services.

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When orphanages and family-based care organizations work together, everyone wins. Are you ready to take the next steps and support the family-based care revolution?

Donors - If you are a donor, please do not suddenly stop supporting an orphanage. But do use your influence to ask questions and press for needed changes. Learn from the resources on the back page, and consider committing new funding to projects that support community and family-based care.

Volunteers - Be wise. Experts have said for years short-term visits to orphanages are not good for the children. They need to form long-term attachments with consistent adults, but they are faced with high staff turnover and a constant flow of visitors in and out of their lives. This can damage a child's development. If you volunteer, commit long term. If you organize group trips to orphanages, consider stopping them. See the resources on the back page for more about ethical volunteering and group trips.

Christians - Many people caring for orphans are Christians, including many pioneering leaders in family-based care, so it seems right to address Christians directly. The Bible says every person is made in the image of God and worthy of love and justice, and caring for widows and orphans and other marginalized people is central to biblical faith. This is good news! Keep in mind that in the Bible orphans were cared for in families: by relatives or foster/adoptive parents. Widows were supported so they could raise their own children. Surely Christians can agree that strengthening, restoring, and providing families for children in their own communities is a biblical calling.

Orphanage Leaders - This book is also for you, and we hope you receive it as a positive and encouraging challenge. Orphanages all over the world are re-evaluating and changing. There is no reason to draw a line between residential care and preserving and restoring children in families. Erase the line. If you want to learn more and explore making changes, look on the back page for organizations with people who can help and even walk through a transition with you. Exciting opportunities are ahead!

Readers - Thanks for joining us, now go out and share the story with others. Help drive this growing and needed conversation in positive directions. There is much more to say, and much to learn and do! See the back page for ideas, connections, and resources for the next steps from here.

Related Websites

crocoalitionthailand.wordpress.com

orphanages.no

plan-international.org/thailand

stepaheadmed.org

thailand.savethechildren.net

www.bettercarenetwork.org

www.childiinethailand.org

www.familyforeverychild.org

www.friends-international.org

www.oneskyfoundation.org

www.rethinkorphanages.org

www.sahathai.org

www.unicef.org/thailand

www.wearlumos.org

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Vision

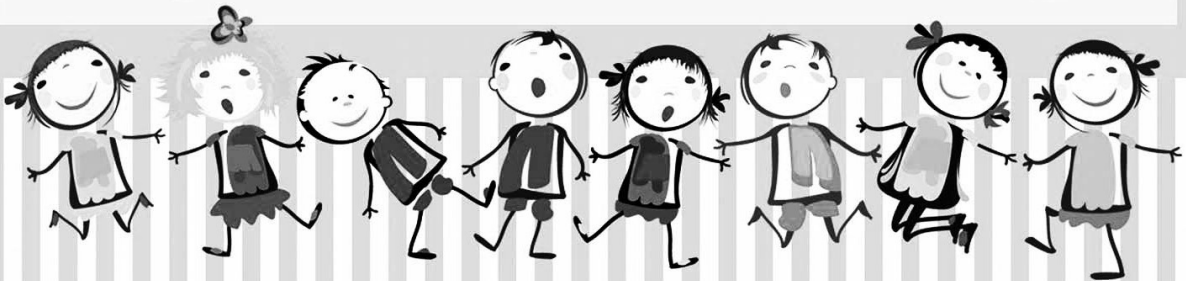


“CRC COALITION THAILAND”

Established in 2012 through the coalescence of civil society organizations working on Child Rights.

The Coalition aims to encourage and support collaboration within the network as well as with other civil society and public/government sector organizations to insure implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its Optional Protocols, and in accordance with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand.

"Every child can access and claim their rights"



MISSION



To campaign, advocate, monitor, and provide recommendations to the public and civil society sectors to enable them to operate, in all matters involving children, in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, its Optional Protocols, and the recommendation of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.



To insure communication and knowledge exchange, as well as facilitating capacity building and collaboration among members of the CRC Coalition Thailand.



To coordinate, monitor, and systematically collect information in regards with the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, its Optional Protocols, and the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.



To insure collaboration between government agencies and civil society organizations in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its Optional Protocols, and the recommendations of the United Nations Commission on the Rights of the Child.



To campaign, advocate and provide recommendations to government agencies and civil society organizations involved in implementation of Child Rights, to enable them to operate in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its Optional Protocols, and the recommendations of the United Nations Commission on the Rights of the Child.

It's time to step up for Child Rights, don't become another good person doing the wrong thing because you didn't do your research

In our experience, investing in unregulated children's homes in developing countries weakens the community and fuels the separation of children from their families. Many children's homes have become slick at marketing themselves as child protection centers or preventing trafficking, protectors of children's rights. In reality they are denying children their rights as stated in the convention on the rights of the child. Our experience has shown us that in the vast majority of cases, poverty was the root cause of the separation of children from their families.

By investing in families we can build and strengthen communities instead of eroding their independence and confidence to care for their own children. Of course this takes time and determination, but with some children's homes already running for decades, imagine what they could have achieved by now if their investment had been in families and the community.

The UN Alternative Care Guidelines were agreed in 2009 to strengthen article 20 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Guidelines tell us:

1 4. Removal of a child from the care of the family should be seen as a measure of last resort and should, whenever possible, be temporary and for the shortest possible duration. Removal decisions should be regularly reviewed and the child's return to parental care, once the original causes of removal have been resolved or have disappeared, should be in the best interests of the child, in keeping with the assessment foreseen in paragraph 49 below.

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1 5. Financial and material poverty, or conditions directly and uniquely imputable to such poverty, should never be the only justification for the removal of a child from parental care, for receiving a child into alternative care, or for preventing his/her reintegration, but should be seen as a signal for the need to provide appropriate support to the family.

Please think carefully before supporting Orphanages, children need families and you can help to make this possible.

Andy Lillicrap

Co-founder & Advisor One Sky Foundation