



Current Activities and Initiatives



Better Volunteering Better Care is an initiative led by Better Care Network and Save the Children UK

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Better Care Network

Better Care Network Netherlands

ECPAT

Faith to Action Initiative

Friends International

Hope and Homes for Children

Save the Children UK

SOS Children's Villages

UNICEF

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Introduction

Through informant interviews, literature reviews, internet searches, and surveys, organisations were identified that are engaged in promoting positive change in the area of volunteering. Their activities fall broadly into three areas:

- 1) Advocating against volunteering in residential care centres
- 2) Promoting ethical volunteering
- 3) Advocating for the inclusion of child rights and child protection principles within businesses and non-profit organisations.

The focus of this project is primarily on 1) and 2), but instances of 3) have been included as these efforts have been found to be relevant. Within the activities, some key methods used to generate engagement have been identified. The following is not a comprehensive overview of the methodology and actors in this arena, but rather a number of examples demonstrating different approaches.

Production of best practice guidelines

Perhaps the most common way of both engaging with organisations, and organisations demonstrating best practice, is through the development of guidelines. Examples of such include:

- Kate Simpson, *The Ethical Volunteering Guide (2006)* (www.ethicalvolunteering.org/guide.html)
- FSG Social Impact Advisors, Pfizer Inc, and The Brookings Institution produced *Volunteering for Impact: Best practice in international corporate volunteering in 2007* (www.fsg.org/tabid/191/ArticleId/81/Default.aspx?srpush=true)
- Faith to Action Initiative *Journeys of Faith: A Resource Guide for Orphan Care Ministries Helping Children in Africa & Beyond (2011)* (faithtoaction.org/resources/journeys-of-faith/)
- The International Ecotourism Society *Voluntourism Guidelines for Commercial Tour Operators (2012)*. (www.ecotourism.org/voluntourism-guidelines)
- Comhlámh Volunteer Charter (2012) (www.comhlamh.org/volunteer-charter-2/)

- Better Care Network Netherlands: *Guidelines on the deployment of volunteers working with children abroad* (<http://www.bettercarenetwork.nl>)
- SOS Children’s Villages: *Corporate Volunteering, Strategic Approach and Skills (not yet published)*
- Eric Hartman: *Fair Trade Learning: A Rubric Guiding Careful and Conscientious Partnership (not yet published, presented 2014 at Melibee Global Education Consulting Webinar)*

Within these examples, those that specifically address the issue of volunteering in residential care centres are the Faith to Action Initiative *Journeys of Faith* publication (2011) and the guidelines by Better Care Network, Netherlands, due for publication later this year. It is worth noting that many individual travel and volunteer sending organizations, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), also have their own policies and guidelines, based on some of the models given above or developed through independent efforts.

Such guidelines are perceived to be very useful by sending organizations and volunteers. However, a key challenge of this approach is in how to make organizations and individuals aware of such resources, and how to help them to understand why they are relevant and important.

Code of conduct initiatives and “sign up” schemes

Some initiatives encourage organisations to sign up to a code of conduct and to network with similar organizations as a way to keep in touch with activities and develop advocates and industry leadership on certain issues. Examples of such efforts include:

- The Code (short for “The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism”). The Code is an industry-driven responsible tourism initiative. When a tourism company joins The Code they commit to taking six essential steps to help protect

children. Established 1996. (www.thecode.org/)

- Comhlámh’s Code of Good Practice for Volunteer Sending Agencies (2012) (<http://www.comhlamh.org/code-of-good-practice-2/>)
- Tourism Concern’s International Volunteering Standards Group (GIVS) (www.tourismconcern.org.uk/givs.html)
- Keeping Children Safe membership network (www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk)
- The Child Safe Tourism initiative, which encourages individuals to take a pledge to be a child safe traveller. (www.childsafetourism.org)

Encouraging membership and establishing criteria incentivises best practice, and encourages organisations to address key issues. However, interview informants commented on the danger of organizations seeing the activity of signing up to the initiative as being a solution in itself. Codes of conduct are most effective when they are seen as the first part of an on-going process. In addition, Comhlámh expressed the concern that codes can encourage volunteers and other stakeholders to be less critical of organizations, as they feel due diligence has already been performed by another body.

Certification initiatives

Certification initiatives, such as the Fair Trade label and The Soil Association, have proved to be successful in the food and garment industries. The Fair Trade Volunteering initiative, founded in 2010, seeks to take a similar approach with volunteering organizations. (www.fairtradevolunteering.com)

Development education / volunteer training

Informants commented that effective development education, and training about volunteering internationally, could play a key role in helping volunteers to make more informed choices.

Examples of such initiatives include:

- **Students Hubs / Impact International.** The Impact International works through universities, enabling students groups to access information, training and resources to help choose appropriate international volunteering opportunities, and to properly research and assess potential placements. (www.impactinternational.org.uk)
- **Comhlámh.** Comhlámh provides pre-decision making, pre-departure, and post- return courses for volunteers. (www.comhlamh.org/courses)
- **Omprakash: EdGE.** As part of their immersive international internships, Omprakash: EdGE provides an online pre-departure classroom to explore the moral, ethical, historical, environmental and economic complexities of international aid and volunteering. (www.omprakash.org/edge)
- **World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts.** The WAGGGS world centres in India, Mexico, Switzerland, and London offer workshops and training on global topics, such as leadership, advocacy and community action for WAGGGS members. (www.wagggs.org/en/world/centres)
- **The Ethical Volunteer.** This group offers a series of videos, and an e-learning tool which aims to highlight some of the ethical considerations to be taken into account before, during and after an overseas volunteering placement. (www.theethicalvolunteer.com/)

Some volunteer agencies are now offering more rigorous pre-departure and on-the- ground training for volunteers. Examples include the MyCCS platform from Cross Cultural Solutions (www.crossculturalsolutions.org/login) and the Unleesh application from Think Impact (www.unleesh.com).

While many organizations offer information for volunteers on their websites, one informant commented: “a jumbled mass of resources is a pretty weak way of educating volunteers”. However, while many saw the need for a more sophisticated approach to educating volunteers, encouraging volunteers to spend time on such courses and funding or monetizing these opportunities were seen as barriers to scaling such efforts.

Movement building

There are a range of initiatives seeking to create whole-scale change in terms of how various communities think about international volunteering efforts, and international aid in general and how volunteering plays a part in that. Some examples include:

- **Australian Christian Churches International Relief – Kinnected Initiative.** Featuring in-country programming, as well as online connection platforms, Kinnected creates a strategic and sustainable way for the ACC movement to engage in the care of vulnerable children throughout developing nations. (www.accim.org.au/keep-informed/kinnected)
- **Faith to Action Initiative.** The Faith To Action Initiative mobilizes and educates churches, faith-based organizations and individuals to engage in care that upholds the vital importance of family in a child's life. (faithtoaction.org/)
- **Learning Service.** The Learning Service initiative is promoting a movement of learning, designed to better prepare young people who are about to travel abroad for the first time. The site features videos and resources for volunteers, and the Learning Service book is due for release later this year. (learningservice.info/)
- **Everyday Ambassador (EA).** The mission of EA is to create a cultural shift in the world of travel and volunteerism/service, so that good intentions are always translated into respectful social change efforts. EA provides an online platform featuring everyday ambassadors around the globe and for providing resources to become an everyday ambassador. (everydayambassador.org/)

Movement building is aimed at inciting paradigm shifts. While this approach can be hugely transformative, it is dependent on the organization's ability to reach large numbers of people.

Provision of resources and information

While many of the organizations listed above provide resources as part of their initiatives, some groups specifically provide and collate resources on issues related to orphanage volunteering and/or ethical volunteering. Examples of such groups include:

- **ConCert Cambodia.** ConCert works as a drop-in centres for visitors to Siem Reap, in Cambodia, who are interested in volunteering. ConCert provides resources and information on responsible volunteering, and connects visitors with NGOs in the area interested in working with volunteers. (www.concertcambodia.org)
- **Orphanages.no.** The goal of the Orphanages.no group is to provide a resource for tourists, visitors, and those seeking to volunteer in Cambodia, so that they are better able to make informed and responsible decisions about whether to support orphanages, and to understand the consequences of their decisions. (www.orphanages.no)
- **Comhlámh.** Among their other offerings, Comhlámh provide resources and leaflets for volunteers, relevant research, and other resources to promote responsible volunteering. (www.comhlamh.org/resources)
- **Global Service-Learning Pedagogy and Partnership.** The globalsl.org website hosts a research wiki, a tools and curricula wiki, web resources and a blog platform that allows on-going sharing, building, questioning, and collaboration in the fields of community development, global citizenship, human rights, fair trade, conscious consumption, sustainability, education, transformation and reflection. (www.globalsl.org)

Campaigning and awareness

A number of organizations have been active in raising awareness on the issues surrounding volunteering in residential care centres. Some examples include:

- **Friends International.** The ChildSafe initiative and the campaign Children Are Not Tourist Attractions brought a great deal of attention to the issue of orphanage volunteering. Although mainly focused on visitors in Cambodia, this campaign has generated coverage in a variety of international media. (www.thinkchildsafe.org/thinkbeforevisiting/)
- **Responsibletravel.com.** In 2013, responsibletravel.com removed orphanage volunteer trips from their site, and spent time working with their travel partners to encourage them to rethink some of their volunteering offerings. (www.responsibletravel.com/copy/press-release-orphanage-volunteering)
- **Tourism Concern.** Tourism Concern has an active campaign running, encouraging supporters to sign a petition to end orphanage tourism. (www.tourismconcern.org.uk/orphanages.html)
- **Next Generation Nepal (NGN).** NGN has recently been active in producing publications to raise awareness about some of the problems surrounding orphanage volunteering, and gives details about how the situation is developing in Nepal. (www.nextgenerationnepal.org/The_Challenge)
- **Freedom Matters.** Freedom Matters is currently running a fundraising campaign in order to help them raise awareness and advocate against the “orphanage business” in Nepal. (www.freedommatters.org.uk/projects/fighting-trafficking/The-Orphan-Business.html)
- **People and Places.** Responsible volunteering agency People and Places have been raising awareness and advocating against orphanage volunteering on their website and across social media. (www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/)
- **International Centre for Responsible Tourism.** The International Centre for Responsible Tourism has featured articles advocating against orphanage volunteering in their publication Progress in Responsible Tourism. (www.icrtourism.org/)
- **World Travel Market (WTM) World Responsible Tourism Day.** This annual event features panels on Child Protection within tourism, and has twice welcomed speakers to talk about issues surrounding orphanage volunteering. (www.wtmresponsibletourism.com/)
- **Whole Child International.** Whole Child International presented on the issue of orphanage volunteering at the Joint Council Symposium on International Children’s Services 2013. (www.wholechild.org/)
- **ConCert Cambodia.** ConCert have been advocating against orphanage volunteering for some time, both within Cambodia, and also through speaking at conferences (including WTM World Responsible Travel Day) (www.concertcambodia.org)
- **Learning Service.** Learning Service produced a short video to raise awareness of the problems surrounding orphanage volunteering which was released in 2013. (learning-service.info/)

Final thoughts

There are a number of positive actions being made and a range of resources available supporting advocacy against volunteering and more ethical volunteering practices with regards to child protection. Despite this, many individuals and organizations commented that they were not aware of such resources, had not seen the campaigns, and did not know where to go to find advice and information. It seems essential to consider how to incentivise engagement in, and more effectively market, initiatives so as to ensure that they reach a greater percentage of prospective volunteers and stakeholder organizations.