

HOMECOMING

BECAUSE CHILDREN THRIVE IN FAMILIES



Examining the UK
Church's support
for orphanages
and family care
for children
globally



A HOME FOR GOOD REPORT
NOVEMBER 2024

Foreword

The UK Church has long been a beacon of hope and compassion, dedicated to caring for the most vulnerable at home and abroad. However, the report before us challenges us to critically assess if our good intentions truly benefit the children we aim to uplift. The findings are both sobering and inspiring, showcasing our immense generosity and dedication while also revealing some unintended consequences of our actions.

For too long, we've viewed residential institutions as the best solution for children in need of care, despite growing evidence of their harmful effect on child development and wellbeing. This report invites us to be part of a global movement in care reform, urging a shift towards family care models that uphold the dignity and stability every child deserves.

The critical question it poses is not whether we will respond — we already do with our time and around £500 million annually — but how we might respond differently in light of what we now know. The stakes could not be higher, but I believe that together, the UK Church can help create a world where every child is nurtured in a loving family.

I hope that as Christians across the land read this report, they feel inspired to question, to seek understanding and act with courage in response, driven by passion and a vision for kingdom justice. The path to meaningful change is challenging, but the futures of millions of children depend on our commitment.

Martin Dickson, Chair of Homecoming

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Introduction

The Homecoming Project is an initiative originally established by UK charity Home for Good in 2019, who work to inspire Christians and churches to play their part in caring for vulnerable children in the UK. With a strong reach into the UK Church, Home for Good began to recognise a discrepancy between the type of care supported for domestic vulnerable children and the forms of care supported by UK Christians for children overseas. As such, the Homecoming Project was established to provide a vehicle for speaking to the UK Church around best practice for caring for children globally.

Due to the growth of the project and increasing recognition of the scale of the task of raising awareness across the UK Church as a whole, in 2023 a Leadership Council was established to oversee the Homecoming Project collectively. The Council is made up of organisations who desire to see the UK church engaged with the international care reform movement. The member organisations of this Council are Home for Good/Safe Families, Viva Network, Hope and Homes for Children, SFAC, All Nations Christian College, Thirtyone:eight, Tearfund Ireland, World Without Orphans, Just Love, Faith to Action, Church Mission Society, Tehila and Safe International.

In 2024, the Homecoming Leadership Council launched a research project to uncover the current nature and extent of the UK Church's support for orphanages and residential institutions overseas. This report showcases the findings of this crucial research and the opportunities that lie ahead for supporting the UK Church to redirect its support towards family care for children. In October 2024, the Council commissioned Natalie Mills, an independent consultant, to author this report.



The Homecoming Leadership Council would like to express our sincere thanks to Claire Wright, and to The Martin James Foundation, for supporting the project and making this report possible.

Martin James Foundation is a global network of organisations working towards a vision of a world where children grow up and thrive in safe, loving families.

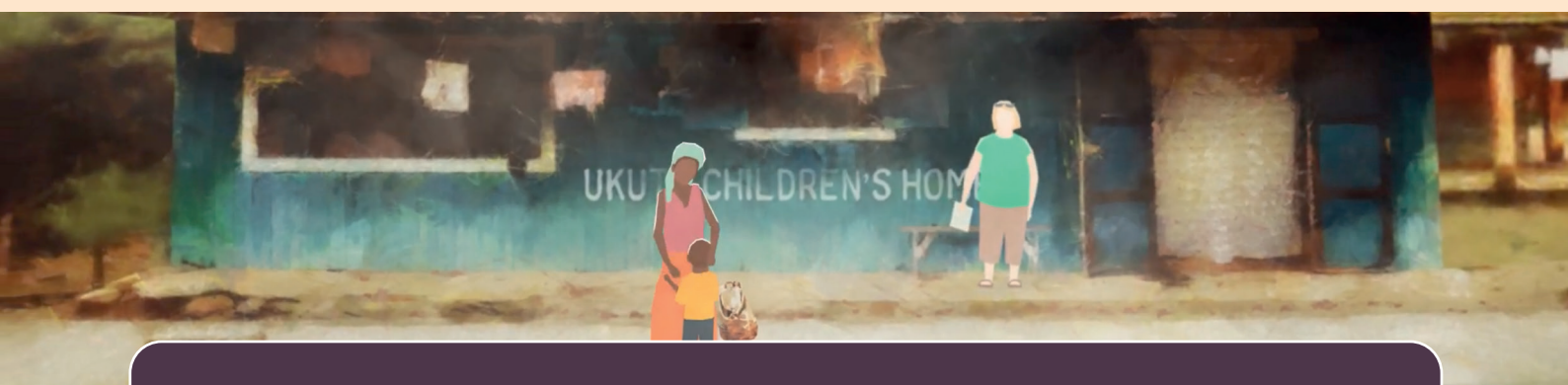


Martin James
FOUNDATION

Overview

Historically, orphanages have been a long-standing form of caring for children globally but a growing body of academic studies demonstrate the adverse impact of long-term institutional care on children's development, life expectancy and outcomes.

Analysis of 75 studies covering 3,800 children in 19 different countries found that children raised in orphanages had an IQ 20 points lower than their peers who had grown up in foster care.¹ These children also experienced developmental delay in their physical bodies, with one study suggesting that children are delayed by one month of physical growth for every three months spent in an orphanage. One of the challenges, particularly for younger children, is the lack of a constant caregiver in the early, formative years of life which enables children to learn how to form healthy, positive attachments; skills which remain necessary for flourishing and thriving throughout their life.



TABITA'S STORY

Tabita* was just four when she went to live in an orphanage. Born in the Tamang community – one of the most marginalised indigenous groups in Nepal – Tabita was sent away because her family couldn't afford education.

"I didn't want to send her away, but life was very difficult for us," recalls Megha, Tabita's mum. An orphanage seemed like the only chance for Tabita – the eldest of four girls – to get an education. "We cried the whole night until dawn broke and it was time for her to go," says Megha. "It felt like an explosion in my heart."*

Tabita still remembers those first fearful nights away from home. *"My parents left me at the orphanage, saying they'd be back in a while. They didn't return. I cried hard, all night."*

Across Nepal, 85% of children in orphanages have living parents. But many children are sent to orphanages under the promise of receiving an education. Tabita lived in the orphanage for six long years. When she was sick, no one took care of her. She often went to sleep hungry. And instead of receiving the education her mum had dreamed of, Tabita received regular physical abuse.

In addition, Tabita's orphanage was also a popular destination for well-intentioned, but misinformed tourists to volunteer in. When the tourists said goodbye, Tabita experienced the pang of abandonment all over again.

** Names changed to protect identities.*

1. IQ of Children Growing Up in Children's Homes. A Meta-Analysis on IQ Delays in Orphanages. Marinus H. van IJzendoorn, Maartje P. C. M. Luijk, Femmie Juffer. Leiden University, MERRILL-PALMER, cited in 'The Negative Impact of Institutionalization on Children 0-3 years' by UNICEF.



Furthermore, whilst orphanages were originally designed to care for children without any parents to care for them, current research suggests that nowadays, between 40 and 90% of children in institutions worldwide have at least one living parent.² It is often poverty that drives children into orphanages, through which children become vulnerable to exploitation and harm. Tabita's story demonstrates that poverty, and the false promise of a better education, caused her to be separated from her loving family for many years, with impact on her safety, wellbeing, cultural identity and future.

With between 2.7 and 8 million children living in orphanages worldwide, there is a growing emphasis on ensuring that wherever possible, children are enabled to grow up in family care through being supported to remain living with their birth families or where this is not possible, provided with alternative care through fostering or adoption. This emphasis is driven by a scientifically-underpinned conviction that children belong in families, not institutions, and **no matter how well-run an orphanage is, it is still detrimental to a child's well-being and development to grow up without the commitment and love of a family for life.** Sometimes institutions are necessary as short-term solutions, however, due to the damaging psychological, emotional, physical and social effects of institutionalisation, orphanages and residential care should only be used as a very last resort and temporary solution.

Christians have a long-standing involvement in the care of children, both at home and overseas, with many of those at the forefront of establishing orphanages and residential settings motivated by their faith to take action. However, as the body of research surrounding the benefits of family care for children over institutional care has evolved and grown, education within the UK Church itself has lagged behind. This research project was catalysed to identify the extent to which support from within the UK Church for children overseas has not kept pace with best practice, in order to enable a sea-change in the way that Christians in the UK seek to care for children globally.

2. Lumos. 2017. Children in Institutions: The Global Picture. Available at: https://lumos.contentfiles.net/media/documents/document/2017/03/Global_Numbers.pdf [Accessed 30 October 2024].

Summary of Findings

Our research has uncovered that the Church across the UK is disproportionately supporting orphanages and institutionally-based care for children around the World, compared to the overall British population.

WE HAVE FOUND THAT:

Regular churchgoers are
3 x more likely
to have donated to an orphanage than British adults overall.

1 in 5
regular churchgoers have visited or volunteered at an orphanage, compared to 1 in 20 British adults.

The UK Church is donating around
£500 million
every year to overseas orphanages.



These findings reveal two realities about the Church in the UK:

1

The UK Church is highly motivated to take proactive action to support vulnerable children around the World.

2

At present, a significant amount of this goodwill and good intention is being directed towards supporting orphanages and institutional settings for children, which do not and cannot provide the highest quality care.

However, our research has also found emerging indications of appetite for change among the Church in the UK and a growing sense of responsibility about the way in which Christians are supporting vulnerable children overseas.

WE HAVE FOUND THAT:

1 in 3

regular churchgoers have donated to family or community-based projects overseas, compared to 1 in 4 who have sent items to orphanages.

27%

of regular churchgoers have not donated to orphanages and stated that they would not in the future.

Nearly
40%

of these Christians stated that the reason for this is that they would prefer to give to family or community-based projects instead.

As such, the moment is ripe to build momentum around this growing awareness and sense of responsibility within the Church.

There is huge potential for a sea-change in the way that vulnerable children around the world are cared for and supported to thrive if this good will and significant support from the UK Church were to be redirected towards family care. The Homecoming Leadership Council is primed to build on these findings and emerging signs of openness within the UK Church to catalyse change.



The Research

METHODOLOGY

Among those looking to improve the quality of care for children globally, it is well-recognised anecdotally that Christians and churches in the UK are heavily invested and committed to supporting vulnerable children overseas. However, the true extent and nature of this support, including the types of care that individuals and churches are supporting has been relatively unknown and under-evidenced. The aim of our research was to provide robust data to meet this gap and to shape the sector's approach to engaging with the UK Church.

The overall research question that this project sought to answer is:

“What is the extent and nature of the UK Church’s support for vulnerable children overseas?”

Our research methods involved commissioning two surveys through two research agencies. We chose to utilise surveys to conduct our research because of the large-scale participation it would provide that would enable us to draw conclusions around the national patterns and practices of churchgoers in the UK and to draw direct comparisons between this cohort and British adults overall. This would thereby draw out the specific contribution of the UK Church’s support.

SAVANTA SURVEY

We commissioned Savanta, a leading data and market research company, to run a survey on behalf of the Homecoming Project. This was a comparative survey, comparing regular churchgoing British adults to non-churchgoing British adults. The aim of this was to ascertain whether Christians demonstrate any greater support for vulnerable children overseas than non-churchgoing British adults and to understand the activities through which regular churchgoers express this support.

Savanta interviewed 4,552 British adults online across the UK (excluding Northern Ireland) during August 2024. Data was weighted to be demographically representative of all UK adults aged 18 and over. The survey respondents were evenly distributed in terms of gender, age and social grade. Regular churchgoers³ made up 16% of the sample (n=722 respondents).

The main question asked of participants was:

“In which of these ways, if any, do you try to help vulnerable children overseas?”

The list of options included: sponsoring a child, donating or sending items to orphanages, visiting or volunteering overseas in orphanages, donating or sending items to charities which run family/community-based projects, visiting or volunteering overseas with charities which run family/community-based projects, and donating to one-off major appeals (TV appeals, major emergencies).

3. Defined as those who reported to attend a church service (not including occasions such as weddings or funerals) weekly or more often.

FINDINGS FROM THE SAVANTA SURVEY

Donating or Sending Items

When asked whether they were actively involved in donating or sending items to orphanages, regular churchgoers were over three times more likely than British adults overall to report being actively involved (25% vs. 8% - see Table 1 below).

TABLE 1:

In which of these ways, if any, do you try to help vulnerable children overseas?

Donating or sending items to orphanages.

	British Adults	Regular Churchgoers
I am actively involved in this kind of project.	8%	25%
I am not actively involved in this kind of project, but I consider it to be important.	33%	36%
I am not actively involved in this kind of project and only consider it to be important in certain circumstances.	26%	25%
I don't consider this kind of project to be important.	23%	9%
Don't know	11%	4%

Younger British adults were more likely to report active involvement in sending items to orphanages than older adults (14% of 18-34 year olds vs. 3% of respondents aged 55+). Whilst a higher proportion of male respondents reporting active involvement in donating items to orphanages than female respondents (9% vs. 7%), interestingly, one in four British adult men consider this activity unimportant compared to one in five British adult women (27% vs 19%).

While regular churchgoers were broadly as likely as British adults overall to express no involvement with orphanages in this way, British adults were more than twice as likely to actively express that sending or donating items was unimportant (23% vs. 9% - see Table 1).

However, when asked about sending or donating items to family or community-based projects, regular churchgoers were **2.5 times more likely** to report active involvement in such activities, compared to British adults overall (See Table 2).



TABLE 2:

*In which of these ways, if any, do you try to help vulnerable children overseas?
Donating or sending items to charities which run family/community-based projects.*

	British Adults	Regular Churchgoers
I am actively involved in this kind of project.	13%	32%
I am not actively involved in this kind of project, but I consider it to be important.	32%	34%
I am not actively involved in this kind of project and only consider it to be important in certain circumstances.	24%	23%
I don't consider this kind of project to be important.	20%	6%
Don't know	10%	5%

Regular churchgoers are marginally more likely to donate or send items to **family or community-based projects** than orphanages.

Among British adults generally, a higher proportion of respondents said that they were actively involved in sending items to family/community-based projects, compared to sending to orphanages (13% vs 8%). This pattern was echoed among regular churchgoers too (32% vs 25%) and reflects a **higher active engagement with donating items to family and community based projects globally than orphanages.**

Younger British adults were twice as likely as older individuals to report being actively involved in sending items to family/community based projects.⁴ While one in five British adults considered sending items to such projects not to be important, this figure was over three times higher than regular churchgoers who said the same.



4. 21% of 18-34 year olds vs. 12% of 35-54 year olds vs. 10% of 55+ respondents.

Volunteering and Visiting

When asked about visiting or volunteering in orphanages, the survey found that regular churchgoers were over four times as likely as British adults overall to report actively engaging with orphanages in this way:

TABLE 3:

In which of these ways, if any, do you try to help vulnerable children overseas?

Visiting or volunteering overseas in orphanages:

	British Adults	Regular Churchgoers
I am actively involved in this kind of project.	5%	21%
I am not actively involved in this kind of project, but I consider it to be important.	29%	36%
I am not actively involved in this kind of project and only consider it to be important in certain circumstances.	24%	23%
I don't consider this kind of project to be important.	31%	13%
Don't know	12%	7%

A higher proportion of regular churchgoers than British adults overall reported that while they were not actively involved in visiting or volunteering at orphanages, they felt that such activities were important (36% vs 29% - see *Table 3 above*). Male British adults were almost twice as likely than females to say that they had visited or volunteered at an orphanage (7% vs. 4%), although female respondents who had not visited or volunteered were more likely than their male counterparts to express that such projects were important (32% vs 25%).

Younger adults were significantly more likely to report active involvement with visiting or volunteering in orphanages than older individuals⁵, with adults aged 55 and over three times as likely as those aged 18-34 to express that such projects were not important (46% vs. 15%).

1 in 5

regular churchgoers
has volunteered in an
orphanage, compared to 1
in 20 of British
adults overall.

⁵. 11% of 18-34 year olds vs. 6% of 35-54 year olds vs. 1% of respondents aged 55+

The Research (continued)

When asked about their involvement in visiting or volunteering at family or community-based projects overseas, British adults were slightly more likely to report active involvement (6% vs. 5%) in these projects than orphanages.

TABLE 4:

In which of these ways, if any, do you try to help vulnerable children overseas?

Visiting or volunteering overseas with charities which run family/community-based projects:

	British Adults	Regular Churchgoers
I am actively involved in this kind of project.	6%	24%
I am not actively involved in this kind of project, but I consider it to be important.	30%	36%
I am not actively involved in this kind of project and only consider it to be important in certain circumstances.	24%	23%
I don't consider this kind of project to be important.	27%	10%
Don't know	12%	6%

A slightly higher proportion of both male (8% vs. 7%) and female respondents (5% vs. 4%) reported being actively involved with visiting or volunteering in family or community-based projects than orphanages.

Significantly, regular churchgoers were **four times as likely to report visiting or volunteering** overseas with charities which run family/community-based projects, compared to British adults overall. Around **one in four regular churchgoers** reported being actively engaged with family and community-based projects in this way.

Regular churchgoers are
4 times more likely
to volunteer in an overseas family or community-based project than British adults overall.



Child Sponsorship

The survey also highlighted significantly higher levels of engagement with child sponsorship among regular churchgoers:

TABLE 5:
In which of these ways, if any, do you try to help vulnerable children overseas?
Child sponsorship:

	British Adults	Regular Churchgoers
I am actively involved in this kind of project.	7%	27%
I am not actively involved in this kind of project, but I consider it to be important.	28%	39%
I am not actively involved in this kind of project and only consider it to be important in certain circumstances.	26%	19%
I don't consider this kind of project to be important.	27%	9%
Don't know	13%	7%



More than one quarter of British adults (n=28%) reported that they were not actively involved in sponsoring children overseas, but consider it to be important. An additional quarter of British adults expressed feeling that child sponsorship projects were not important (n=27%). Interestingly, male respondents were almost twice as likely as female respondents to report being actively involved in child sponsorship projects (9% vs 5%) and there was a consistent increase in the proportion of adults who did not consider child sponsorship to be important, as the age of respondents increased.⁶

In contrast, regular churchgoers were almost **four times as likely to be involved in child sponsorship projects** than non-churchgoers. While one quarter of British adults said that they did not consider child sponsorship projects to be important, this figure was three times the proportion of regular churchgoers who said the same.

6. 15% of 18-34 year olds did not consider child sponsorship to be important, compared to 25% of 35-54 year olds and 38% of respondents age 55+.



One-off Appeals

We also asked respondents about their involvement in donating to one-off appeals, including those advertised via TV which showcase global crises or major emergencies. As with all the other forms of supporting children overseas mentioned before, regular churchgoers showed higher levels of active participation in such activities:

TABLE 6:
In which of these ways, if any, do you try to help vulnerable children overseas?
Donating to one-off appeals (TV appeals, major emergencies).

	British Adults	Regular Churchgoers
I am actively involved in this kind of project.	15%	27%
I am not actively involved in this kind of project, but I consider it to be important.	29%	35%
I am not actively involved in this kind of project and only consider it to be important in certain circumstances.	24%	25%
I don't consider this kind of project to be important.	22%	8%
Don't know	11%	6%

Table 6 demonstrates that regular churchgoers are **nearly twice as likely to donate to one-off fundraising appeals** in order to support vulnerable children overseas than British adults overall.





SAVANTA SURVEY: **OVERALL FINDINGS**

Overall, the results from the Savanta survey of over 4,500 British adults demonstrate that when it comes to active involvement, British adults are most involved in donating to one-off appeals (n=15%) or donating or sending items to charities which run family/community-based projects (n=13%). They are least likely to report visiting or volunteering in orphanages (n=5%). British adults are slightly more likely to report being involved in supporting family or community-based projects through donating or volunteering, than orphanages.

Across all the activities presented to respondents, younger British adults (18-34) are consistently more likely to be actively engaged than their older counterparts, with significantly higher engagement among the younger population for engaging with orphanages through either donating or volunteering/visiting.⁷

Across every activity listed, **British Christians reported greater active involvement** than British adults overall, demonstrating particular concern and willingness to support the needs of vulnerable children globally than the overall British population. Whilst this includes higher levels of engagement with orphanages, British churchgoers displayed slightly higher levels of active involvement with family and community-based projects.

These results point to an encouraging reality that there is a cohort of UK Christians who demonstrate a preference for supporting family and community-based projects over orphanages. However, it also demonstrates the distance to go, with significant, continued support for orphanages that far outweighs the support among British adults overall.

The continued support for orphanages could indicate either that awareness of the harm caused by orphanages remains only in pockets of the UK Church, or that despite awareness of the benefits of family care, opportunities to support such projects are not reaching the eyes and pockets of churchgoers sufficiently to redirect their support.

⁷ Donating to orphanages - actively involved: respondents aged 18-34 = 14%, 35-54 = 9%, 55+ = 3%.
Visiting/volunteering in orphanages - actively involved: respondents aged 18-34 = 11%, 35-54 = 6%, 55+ = 1%

RESONATE PANEL SURVEY

The second survey was conducted by Christian Research, an independent market research agency and members of the Market Research Society (MRS). Resonate is the largest Christian online panel in the UK, with about 5,000 members whose perspectives are sought on issues and trends within the Christian community, as well as broader current affairs. The panel is multi-denominational and seeks the views of practising Christians across the country. This project utilised the monthly survey mechanism which seeks the views of around 1,000 of their members. The aim of commissioning this survey was to investigate the extent, motivations and engagement of practising Christians across the UK with orphanages and other forms of institutional-based care.

In consultation with Christian Research, we commissioned 10 questions which were a combination of multiple choice questions and open text questions for respondents to provide comments and text responses. 1,079 respondents participated in the survey.

Demographically there was representation from practising Christians across the UK, with the highest proportion of respondents (39% combined) located in the South East (not including London) and South West. Respondents affiliated with 12 different church denominations with the highest proportion identifying as part of the Anglican church (47%), followed by the Baptist church (13%).

There was a representative split of male and female participants, but respondents were significantly weighted towards older adults, with 20% of participants aged 55-64, 36% aged 64-74 and 31% aged 75 and over. This meant that only 12% of participants were aged 18-54 which represents a significant skew towards the older population. Please see Appendix 1 for the full demographic breakdown of the Resonate Panel participants.

The ten questions put to respondents focused on financial support and volunteering within residential care facilities for children. Examples of residential care facilities provided to respondents included children's homes, children's villages or centres and orphanages. Please note that for ease, this report will henceforth use the term 'orphanages' to encompass all of these residential care facilities. We also asked respondents about any connection they had with international adoption and fostering. The intention of these questions was to uncover the extent of support which practising Christians are providing to orphanages, their motivations for engaging, or not, in these activities and to gather specific data on the geographic locations that donations, volunteering and support are being directed to.

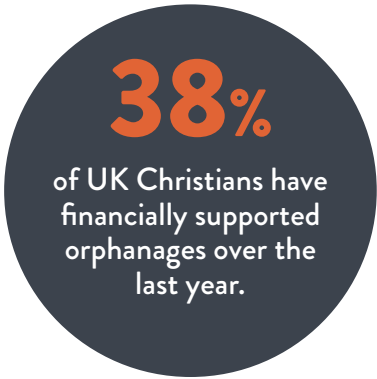
FINDINGS FROM THE RESONATE PANEL

Participants were asked whether they had **donated any money to orphanages in the last 12 months**, with **38%** responding that they had. Of these, 25% had given directly while 13% had donated through their local church. 47% of respondents said that they had not donated in the last year, but 43% of this cohort expressed that they probably would in the future. **One-quarter** of respondents (*n*=27%) expressed that they **had not donated in the past year, and would not in the future**.

TABLE 7:

In the past 12 months, have you donated money to any overseas residential care facilities for children (including children’s homes, children’s villages or centres, and orphanages)? Select one.

Yes, I do so directly	25%
Yes, I give through my local church	13%
No, but I probably will in the future	20%
No, and I would not do so in the future	27%
Don’t know	15%



Female givers are more likely to have given directly to orphanages over the past year, whereas male givers are more likely to have given through their local church. Within England, respondents in the North East were the least likely to say that they had donated over the past year, with respondents in the South West most likely to have donated.

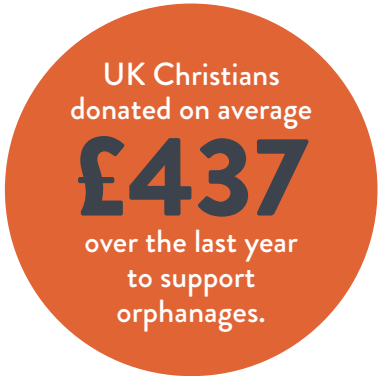
Outside of England, 35% of respondents from Wales reported donating to orphanages in the last 12 months, compared to just 18% of respondents in Northern Ireland. However, Scottish participants who had not donated demonstrated the most openness to giving in future (45%), whereas Northern Irish respondents were significantly more likely not to have donated, and not to consider donating in future (46%). It should, however, be noted that the number of respondents from each of these nations was statistically fairly low and so this should be held in mind.

When the 27% of respondents who answered that they had not donated and would not in the future were asked for their reasons behind this, **39%** of respondents said that **they would prefer to give to projects that support local families or communities**.

TABLE 8:

You said that you have not donated money to any overseas residential care facilities for children in the last 12 months and would not do so in the future. What is your main reason for this? Select all that apply.

I prefer to give to projects that support local families / communities.	39%
Other (please state)	38%
I can't afford to donate.	11%
I don't think residential care facilities are the best way to care for vulnerable children.	10%
Prefer not to say	6%



10% of this cohort expressed that they did not feel that residential care facilities were the best way to care for vulnerable children as a reason for choosing not to donate.

Of the significant proportion of respondents who answered 'Other', there were a range of reasons provided, with the most common including that there were other causes that respondents wanted to prioritise instead, a lack of trust in supporting charities overseas where they cannot be certain of the accountability and governance and a number of participants already supporting other charities and therefore being unable to give to any further causes.

Of respondents who said that they had donated to an orphanage in the last 12 months, we asked them to indicate approximately how much they had donated. We chose to ask this question in order to calculate an estimate for how much money is being directed from the UK Church to overseas orphanages.

76% of this cohort had donated between **£1 - £500 over the past year**, with 1% of respondents saying they had donated more than £5,000. By taking the median donation for each giving bracket, we have calculated that the overall average donation by each individual who gave in the last year was approximately **£437**. Across the whole cohort who indicated that they have donated, we can estimate that around **£176,000** was donated to orphanages over the past year.



TABLE 9:

Approximately how much have you given in the past 12 months? Select one.

£1 - £150	46%
£151 - £500	30%
£501 - £1,000	10%
£1,001 - £5,000	6%
£5,000 +	1%
Prefer not to say	7%



Using these figures and the approximate 3 million regular churchgoers in the UK, we can estimate that if 38% (n = 1.14million) of this whole population have donated on average £437, then the UK Church has donated nearly **£500 million⁸** to orphanages over the past year.

We then asked participants to select the countries that the facilities they had donated to were located. 78 countries were selected in total by participants, with the top 10 countries (not including the UK) being:

Uganda	15.7%	Malawi	5.1%	Ukraine	3.7%
India	13.3%	Israel	4.8%	Ethiopia	2.9%
Kenya	12.8%	Pakistan	4%	Zambia	2.9%
Philippines	5.6%				



African nations comprise half of the top ten countries where donations are sent. The top 5 African nations received nearly 40% (n=39.4%) of all donations to orphanages.

⁸. Exact estimate = £498,180,000

The Research (continued)

The survey then turned its focus towards volunteering by asking respondents whether they have ever volunteered in an orphanage. 6% of respondents said that they had, with **81% saying that they had not and would not in the future.**

TABLE 10:

Have you ever volunteered in any overseas residential care facilities for children (including children's homes, children's villages or centres, and orphanages)? Select one.

Yes, and I would be eager to do it again.	3%
Yes, but I wouldn't do it again.	3%
No, but I would like to in the future.	5%
No, and it's not something I would be likely to do in the future.	81%
Other (please state)	8%

32 text responses mentioned age and physical mobility being a barrier to volunteering in an orphanage in the future and 5 text responses mentioned either preferring to resource local staff, or needing an assurance of the quality of care provided by a facility in order to agree to volunteering there. Please note that the responses to this question are likely to be limited by the skewed older demographic of respondents.

For those who responded that they had volunteered in an orphanage, we asked them to tell us which country the facility was located in. 42 different countries were selected by respondents which whilst being a fairly high number, comprises half the number of countries receiving financial donations to orphanages, suggesting that financial giving and volunteering are not always joined up.

Kenya	15.2%	Uganda	7.6%	Israel	4.5%
Romania	13.6%	Armenia	4.5%	South Africa	4.5%
India	10.6%	China	4.5%	Tanzania	4.5%

These 9 countries comprise nearly 70% of all countries volunteered in by respondents. African countries make up 4 out of the top 9 nations indicated, comprising 30% of locations visited for volunteering purposes. 4 of the top 9 countries are based in Asia (including the Middle East), comprising 24% of locations visited for volunteering purposes.

Four countries (Kenya, India, Uganda and Israel) **are represented in both the top donation-receiving nations as well as the top countries for volunteering.**

The 4 countries which receive the most support from the UK Church for their orphanages, both financially and through receiving volunteers are:

Kenya

India

Uganda

Israel

Finally, we asked participants about any connection they had to adoption or fostering of children from overseas whether personally or through someone they know. **26%** of respondents said that they had either adopted or fostered a child from overseas, or knew someone who had.

TABLE 11:
Have you ever personally adopted or fostered a child from overseas, or do you know someone who has?

Yes	26%
No	73%
Prefer not to answer	2%

Interestingly, as the age of respondents increased, so did the likelihood of them having fostered or adopted a child from overseas, or knowing someone who had (See Table 12). This pattern should be held lightly given the disproportionate number of older participants.

TABLE 12:
*Have you ever personally adopted or fostered a child from overseas, or do you know someone who has?
Breakdown by age.*

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Yes	*9	*	15%	19%	23%	26%	29%
No	*	*	85%	81%	76%	73%	69%
Prefer not to answer	*	*	0%	0%	1%	1%	3%

Finally, we asked respondents to provide us with the names of charities they are aware of which help children overseas. The top 10 most commonly listed, in ranked order, were as follows:

1. Compassion

2. World Vision

3. Save the Children

4. Tearfund
5. UNICEF

6. Christian Aid

7. Oxfam
8. Embrace the Middle East

9. Barnabas Aid

10. Mary's Meals

There were 190 organisations listed overall, with a notable mixture of both global-reaching, multinational charities and organisations or institutions based in specific, one-off locations. This demonstrates that individuals from the UK Church are donating and volunteering to a wide span of organisations, both small and large and both global and local in focus.

9. Please note that the number of respondents in these age brackets was not statistically significant enough to be included

DENOMINATION ANALYSIS

While the results so far have demonstrated the extent and nature of engagement with overseas orphanages across the UK Church as a whole, there are some interesting insights when analysing the engagement of specific denominations, with some significantly more engaged in supporting vulnerable children through orphanages than others.

Please note: The following analysis should be taken with caution, given the small cohort of respondents for some of the denominations. A further study with a larger sample size that provides representational denominational breakdown to the UK as a whole would provide more robust evidence from which stronger conclusions around specific denominational activity could be drawn.

In terms of financial giving, our data suggests that Pentecostals and participants from Independent churches were most likely to have donated to an overseas orphanage over the past year. Methodists and those affiliated with 'Other' denominations were more likely to have donated through their church, which suggests these churches may be more likely to have some kind of direct partnership with orphanages.

TABLE 13:

In the past 12 months, have you donated money to any overseas residential care facilities for children (including children's homes, children's villages or centres, and orphanages)? Select one. Breakdown by Church denomination.

	Anglican	Baptist	Catholic	Independent	Methodist
Yes, I do so directly	26%	27%	20%	36%	24%
Yes, I give through my local church	11%	12%	8%	11%	14%
No, but I probably will in the future	21%	24%	25%	14%	17%
No, and I would not do so in the future.	30%	23%	23%	17%	30%
Don't know	13%	14%	25%	21%	15%

(table continued on page 23)

	Pentecostal	Presbyterian	New Church (eg Newfrontiers)	Other denomination	Don't identify with any denomination
Yes, I do so directly	30%	25%	20%	21%	32%
Yes, I give through my local church	12%	9%	13%	15%	4%
No, but I probably will in the future	27%	27%	23%	13%	14%
No, and I would not do so in the future.	21%	23%	30%	33%	36%
Don't know	9%	16%	13%	18%	14%

Of those that did give during the past 12 months, we then analysed the amounts given based on their denominational affiliation to look for patterns of giving among particular sections of the UK Church:

TABLE 14:

Approximately how much have you given in the past 12 months? Select one. Breakdown by Church denomination.

	Anglican	Baptist	Catholic	Independent	Methodist
£1 - £150	48%	38%	64%	30%	48%
£151 - £500	34%	30%	18%	41%	28%
£501 - £1000	9%	17%	9%	13%	4%
£1001 - £5000	4%	6%	9%	11%	12%
£5000+	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Prefer not to say	6%	9%	0%	4%	8%

(table continued on page 24)

The Research (continued)

	Pentecostal	Presbyterian	New Church (eg Newfrontiers)	Other denomination	Don't identify with any denomination
£1 - £150	29%	40%	40%	43%	30%
£151 - £500	29%	40%	30%	21%	40%
£501 - £1000	21%	7%	20%	14%	0%
£1001 - £5000	0%	7%	0%	7%	10%
£5000+	7%	7%	0%	0%	0%
Prefer not to say	14%	0%	10%	14%	20%

TABLE 15:

Overall average donation by denomination:

	Anglican	Baptist	Catholic	Independent	Methodist
Average £	£384	£433.50	£444	£583.25	£517

	Pentecostal	Presbyterian	New Church (eg Newfrontiers)	Other denomination	Don't identify with any denomination
Average £	£623.50	£772.50	£277.50	£415.50	£452.50

Calculating the average amount donated by participants within each denomination highlights some interesting patterns. The data suggests that members of the Presbyterian and Pentecostal church are likely to have donated more on average over the past year than other denominations, with members of the New Church donating the least on average.

When it comes to volunteering, there are some interesting variations between denominations around experience and attitudes to volunteering in orphanages too.



TABLE 14:

Have you ever volunteered in any overseas residential care facilities for children (including children's homes, children's villages or centres, and orphanages)? Select one. Breakdown by denomination.

	Anglican	Baptist	Catholic	Independent	Methodist
Yes, and I'm eager	2%	6%	8%	4%	0%
Yes, but I wouldn't repeat	3%	8%	3%	3%	0%
No, but I would like to	6%	0%	0%	4%	5%
No, and I wouldn't	82%	77%	80%	78%	88%
Other (please state)	7%	8%	10%	11%	8%

	Pentecostal	Presbyterian	New Church (eg Newfrontiers)	Other denomination	Don't identify with any denomination
Yes, and I'm eager	6%	5%	3%	5%	4%
Yes, but I wouldn't repeat	3%	2%	7%	0%	0%
No, but I would like to	15%	7%	0%	8%	11%
No, and I wouldn't	73%	73%	87%	82%	75%
Other (please state)	3%	14%	3%	5%	11%

The research indicates that Catholics were most likely to say that they had experience of volunteering in orphanages and express enthusiasm for volunteering again, with Pentecostals and Baptists following closely behind. However, Baptists and members of the New Church denomination were most likely to express having had experience of volunteering, but not wanting to repeat this experience.

From our data, we can tentatively identify that members of the Pentecostal church appear to be far more likely than other denominations to express that while they had not volunteered previously in orphanages, that they would be interested in doing so, with Methodists and members of the New Church most likely to express that they would not be interested in volunteering in the future. As mentioned previously, overall responses to this question may be significantly impacted by the older demographic of survey respondents and therefore findings and conclusions should be drawn tentatively.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS OF THE SAVANTA SURVEY AND RESONATE PANEL

Financial Giving

The findings from the Savanta survey highlight that regular churchgoers were over **three times more likely** than British adults overall to report donating or sending items to orphanages overseas (25% vs. 8%). While donating through one-off appeals was the most popular way of supporting vulnerable children overseas among British adults overall, regular churchgoers were nearly **twice as likely** to report active engagement with donating to appeals (27% vs. 15%).

Furthermore, **38%** of the practising Christians surveyed through the Resonate panel reported that they had donated money to an overseas residential institution for children in the last 12 months. **76%** of these respondents had donated between £1 - £500, with 16% of this cohort having donated between £500 and £5000 during the last year. By taking the average donation within each giving bracket, we can estimate that the average donation was **£437** per respondent which indicates that this cohort of donors has given around **£176,000** to overseas orphanages over the past year. By scaling these numbers up to the number of regular churchgoers across the UK as a whole, this would suggest that around **£500 million is being sent to overseas orphanages every year by the UK Church.**

Despite these significant figures, our research indicates that there are pockets within the UK Church who are expressing preference for supporting children overseas through family and community-based projects rather than orphanages. The Savanta survey revealed that **32%** of regular churchgoers reported donating or sending items to family or community-based projects, compared to 25% who reported engaging with orphanages in the same way. Moreover, **27%** of regular churchgoers through the Resonate panel stated that they had not donated to orphanages in the past year, and would not in the future. Of this cohort, **39%** stated that they would prefer to give to more family or community based projects as the reason for their decision. A further 10% stated that they did not think that residential care facilities were the best way to care for vulnerable children.

Volunteering

1 in 5 regular churchgoers reported active involvement in visiting or volunteering in orphanages, which is four times higher than British adults overall. A fractionally higher proportion (24% vs. 21%) of regular churchgoers said that they were actively involved in visiting or volunteering at family or community-based projects that support children overseas compared to orphanages.

The Resonate panel indicates much lower participation with volunteering, with only 6% of respondents reporting that they had visited or volunteered at an orphanage. Half of these respondents said that they would volunteer again. This is likely to be heavily influenced by the over-representation of older adults among this panel, with age and mobility frequently cited as their reason for not volunteering. Only **5%** of respondents said that they had not volunteered before but would be interested in doing so in the future.

The top 5 countries where participants had volunteered in an orphanage were **Kenya, Romania, India, Uganda and Armenia**, with 15% of respondents having volunteered in an orphanage in Kenya. The top 5 countries where participants had donated money in the past 12 months were **Uganda, India, Kenya, Philippines and Malawi**. 3 of the same countries appear in both lists; Uganda, Kenya and India, suggesting that these are the countries that regular churchgoers in the UK are most likely to be engaging with, either financially or through volunteering.

Child Sponsorship, Fostering and Adoption

We asked participants about other ways in which they were involved in supporting vulnerable children overseas. The results from the Savanta Survey highlight that regular churchgoers were almost **four times** as likely to be involved in child sponsorship projects than British adults, with 1 in 4 regular churchgoers reporting being actively involved. The high level of engagement with child sponsorship further reaffirms a high degree of interest and engagement with supporting vulnerable children overseas, particularly among regular churchgoers in the UK.

Furthermore, **26%** of respondents through the Resonate Panel said that they had either adopted or fostered a child from overseas, or knew someone who had, representing 1 in 4 UK Church participants.

Summary

These findings paint a picture of the extent and nature of support flowing from the UK Church towards orphanages overseas. While often well-meaning, the significant flow of financial giving and volunteering can perpetuate a reality for children that does not hold their interests at the centre. Moti's story (on the back cover) is a stark reminder of the childhoods impacted by growing up in an orphanage and how reunification, kinship care or other family models can create a sea-change in the life of a child. Stories like Moti's provide a compelling mandate and an urgency to engage with the UK Church to ensure the support they are motivated to provide is directed towards models of care that provide children around the world with the stability, love and care they need to flourish.

Recommendations and Opportunities

Held altogether, these research findings demonstrate that the UK Church is deeply concerned and invested in supporting vulnerable children overseas. But, these findings also highlight the opportunity to ensure this support is redirected towards projects and initiatives which truly hold children's needs at the heart.

As such, this report sets out the following recommendations to take these findings forward and catalyse change for vulnerable children globally through the UK Church:

- 1** The Church should be supported to understand:
 - the needs of vulnerable children globally
 - the adverse impact of institutional care
 - the opportunity, within family care, to enable vulnerable children globally to thrive

FOR CHURCHES WHO CURRENTLY SUPPORT ORPHANAGES:

- 2** Review the overseas initiatives supported by your church and church members to gain an understanding of where you are supporting institutional care and family care.
- 3** Recognise and use your influence as a church to begin dialogue with organisations you are in partnership with, to explore their current use of institutional-based care and encourage them to transition towards family and community-based models of care.
- 4** Redirect your support only after exploring opportunities to partner towards family care models and with advanced notice. Immediate withdrawal of funds could result in enhanced vulnerability and harm to children globally.



- 5 Reconsider the practice of sending volunteers on short-term missions trips to orphanages and residential overseas. While well-intentioned, such practices can reinforce trauma, loss and broken attachments for children living in these settings.

FOR INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS SUPPORTING ORPHANAGES OVERSEAS:

- 6 Reach out to the orphanages you provide support to (either financially or through volunteering) to catalyse conversation about the use of the funding they receive and whether they have a strategy to transition towards family models of care. This may include supporting kinship care options or working with government or local agencies to develop fostering or adoption services in their country.
- 7 Research for yourself on the impact of orphanages on vulnerable children and the positive opportunity presented through family care to enable children to thrive over the long term. Utilise the Homecoming Learning Journey¹⁰ and suite of interactive and inspiring resources on the Homecoming website.¹¹

FOR THE UK GOVERNMENT:

- 8 The new Labour Government has an ambitious aim to “create a world free from poverty on a liveable planet” and to rebuild Britain’s influence in the space of international development and tackling global poverty. With poverty a key driver at the heart of institutional care, the UK Government should play a leading role in developing relationships with the top global nations where orphanages are being supported by the UK and partner with them to enable them to develop and transition towards family care models.

Finally, while this research has provided a snapshot of the UK Church’s involvement and investment in supporting vulnerable children overseas, further research is needed to ensure a more representative sample of the UK Church as a whole. In particular, further insights into the views, motivations and convictions of younger generations within the Church would be of significant benefit. This research could be undertaken through networks and organisations with existing reach into younger Christians including David’s Tent, the HTB network and Wildfires.

This research sets out a horizon of opportunity for organisations with long-standing expertise in supporting family care worldwide to work together in building momentum and awareness across the UK Church towards supporting family models of care; harnessing the significant good intention and tangible support of the Church and redirecting it towards initiatives, organisations and models of care that are truly best for children.

10. Visit homecomingproject.org/sign-up

11. Visit homecomingproject.org/resources

Appendix 1: Demographic of Resonate Panel Respondents

GENDER:

Male	51%
Female	48%
Prefer not to say	1%

AGE GROUP:

18 - 24	0.2%	55 - 64	20%
25 - 34	0.8%	64 - 74	36%
35 - 44	3%	75+	31%
45 - 54	8%		

LOCATION:

UK Nation	Region (if applicable)	% of respondents
England	South East	25%
	South West	14%
	East of England	10%
	North West	9%
	London	8%
	West Midlands	8%
	East Midlands	6%
	Yorkshire and the Humber	6%
	North East	4%
Wales		5%
Scotland		4%
Northern Ireland		1%

CHURCH DENOMINATION BREAKDOWN:

Denomination	% of respondents	# of respondents
Anglican	47%	442
Baptist	13%	119
Independent	10%	98
Methodist	7%	66
Presbyterian	5%	44
Catholic	4%	40
Other	4%	39
Pentecostal (e. Assemblies of God, RCCG)	4%	33
New Church (eg. Newfrontiers, Vineyard, Pioneer)	3%	30
I don't belong or identify with a denomination	3%	28
Prefer not to say	1%	11
Orthodox	0.1%	1

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MOTI'S STORY

These are the words of Moti*, a young man from Chitwan District, Nepal, who spent most of his childhood confined inside an orphanage. Moti's dad died young, leaving his mum, Kumari*, scrambling to raise her six children alone. Unable to pay for Moti's school fees, a local priest advised her to send him to an orphanage. Believing it was her only chance to get an education for her youngest child, Kumari agreed. Moti was only four. *"They took me at such a young age,"* Moti says. *"I stayed there for 12 years. When people asked me where I was from, I couldn't remember. I didn't even know I had a family."*

"I felt bad living there," says Moti. *"The orphanage was meant to educate, but that's not what it did. I suffered."* Moti grew up alongside 300 other children in an overcrowded, understaffed orphanage. He received little care, love, or freedom. Even sleeping was controlled and Moti lived under the constant threat of violence. *"I slept in a dorm with 30 other children,"* he says. *"Three rows of ten, like sardines. We were forced to sleep completely straight. The slightest movement and we were beaten. We had to wake up at 4am for prayers and chores every day,"* Moti continues. *"The orphanage was Christian, so Hindu children were forced to convert. I always wanted to drive a car, but I wasn't allowed. We never got to go outside. We felt like the world was only as big as the orphanage."*

In 2018, organisations in Nepal worked with the Nepali government to investigate Moti's orphanage and started reuniting each child inside with their families. Including Moti.

"When I left the orphanage for the first time and saw the world, I felt very strange," Moti remembers. *"I couldn't make sense of where I was or the world around me. So, I kept silent."*

Moti was supported to reconnect with his family and received counselling, financial support and anything he needed for his education. Moti is now in his final year of school. He's bonding with his family, settling in to home life, and looking forward to the future. *"I still haven't used the word 'mum' out loud yet,"* he says. *"Because I spent so much time in the orphanage, I can't quite seem to call her 'mum' and mean it from the heart. I love her though."*

Now, Moti's dream is to finish school, learn to drive, and move abroad. *"To me, family means to live together, to love each other, to share our sorrows,"* he says. *"Because we got beaten a lot in the orphanage, I had a lot of fear. Thanks to the love I've received from everyone here at home, my fear has gradually gone away. Here, with my own bed, I am free. I can move and sleep on my own free will. And nobody can say anything about it."*

* Names changed to protect identities.

Tabita and Moti's stories are published with permission from Hope and Homes for Children

HOMEcoming

homecomingproject.org

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