



ORPHANAGE VOLUNTEERING

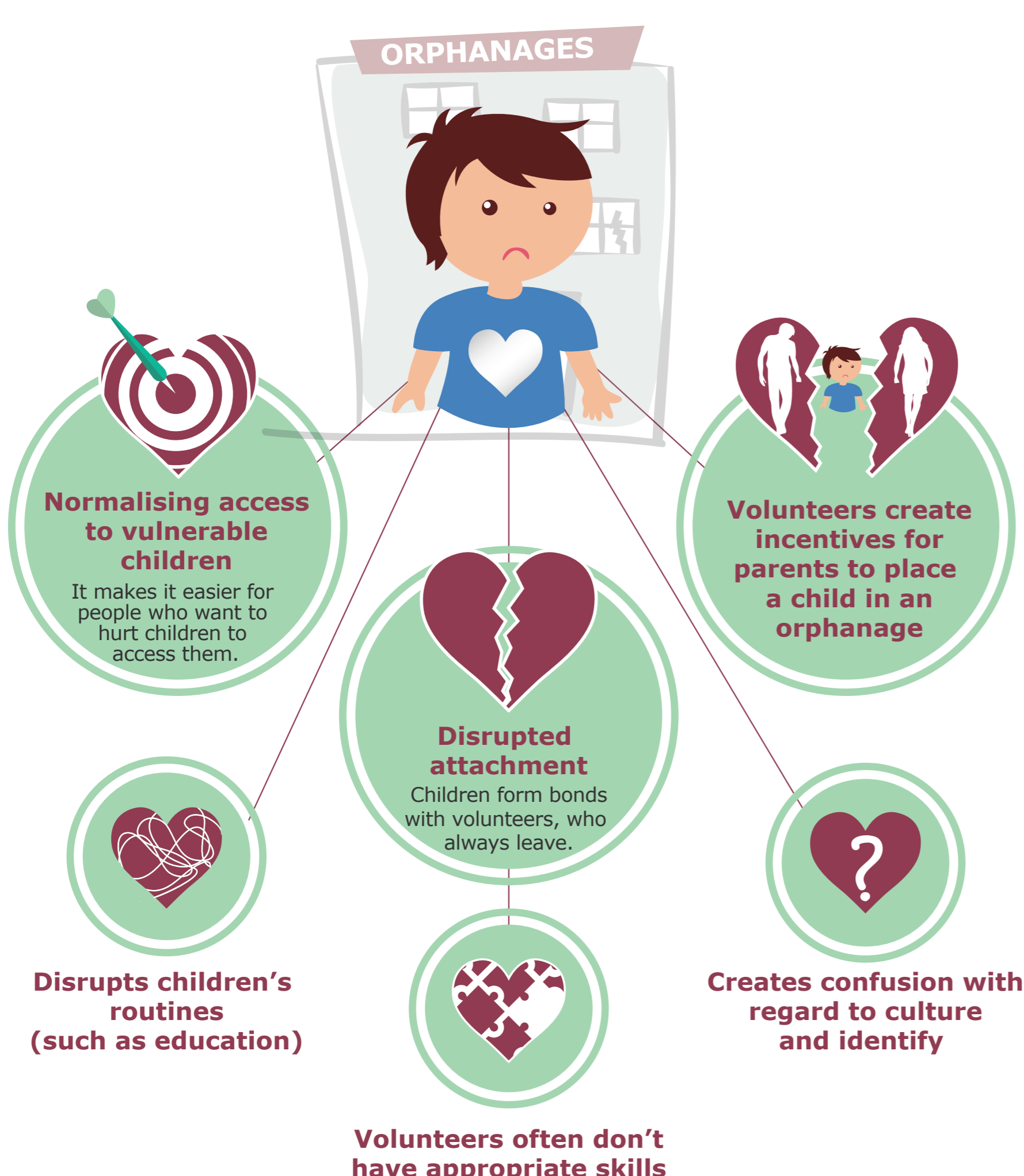
Why to say no



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:



Volunteer placements in orphanages can also contribute to the commodification of children. 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.

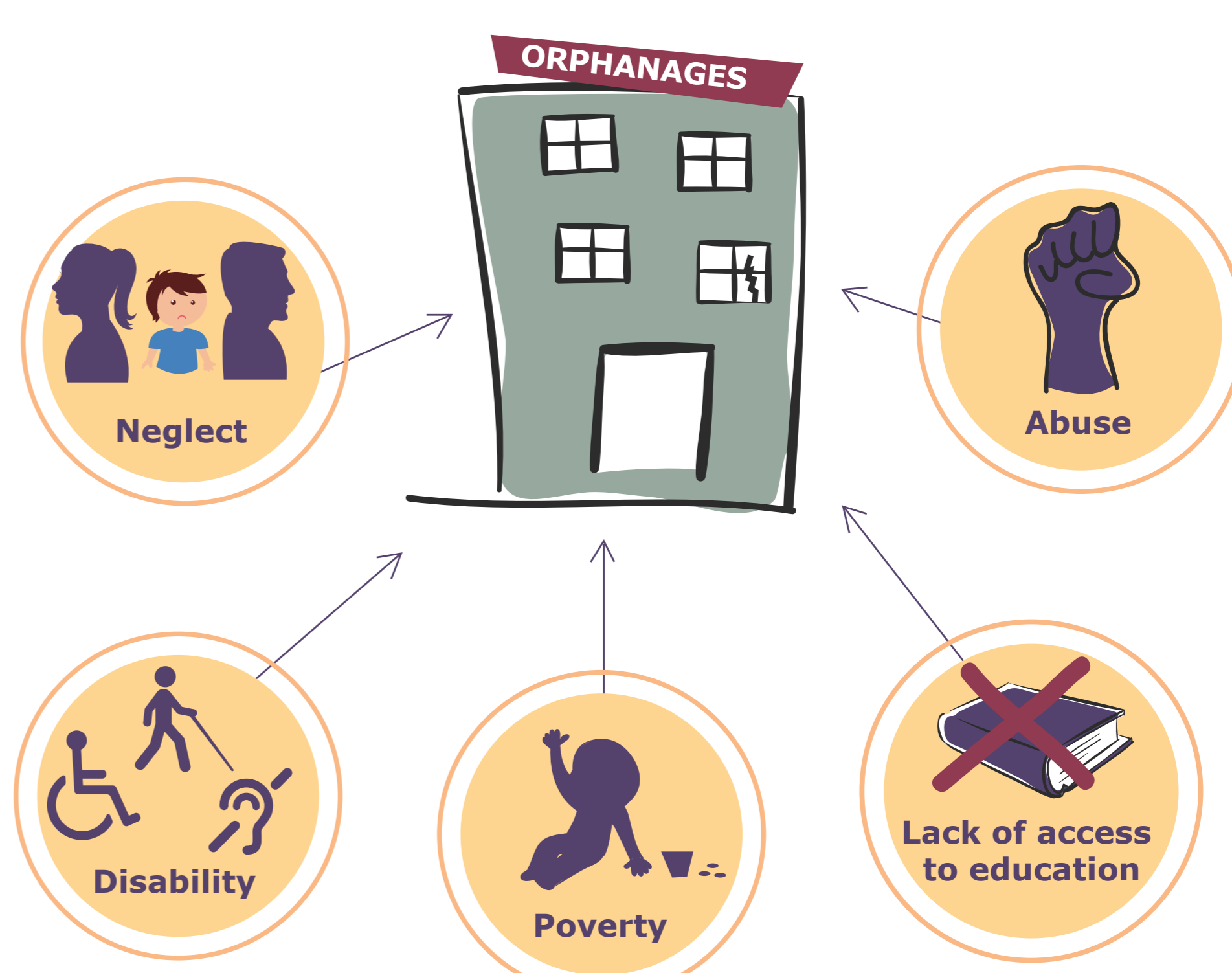
2 The orphanage myth



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 “orphanage” 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.



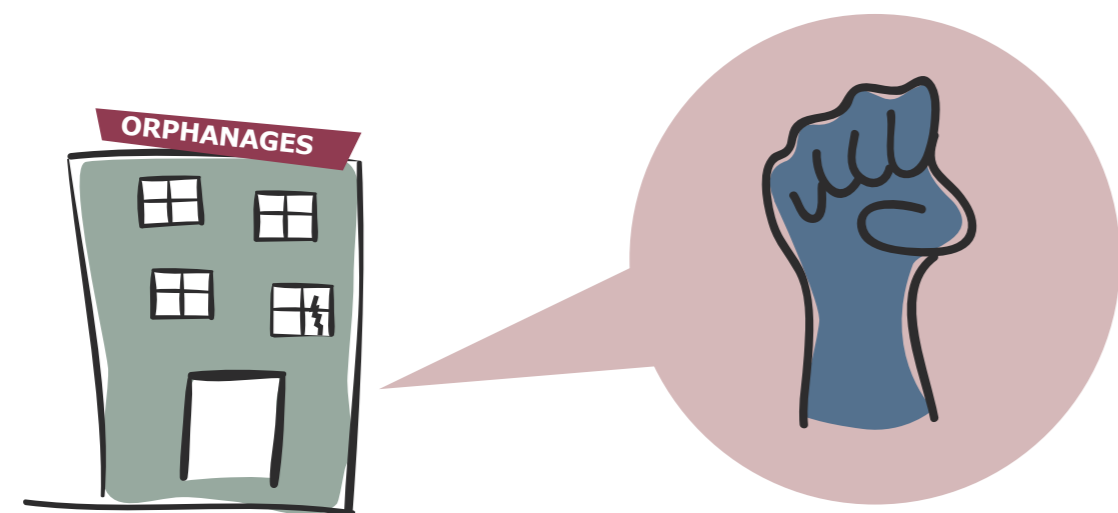
Whatever the reason, all children in an orphanage have faced difficult experiences.

Orphanages should only ever be a temporary solution

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



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.



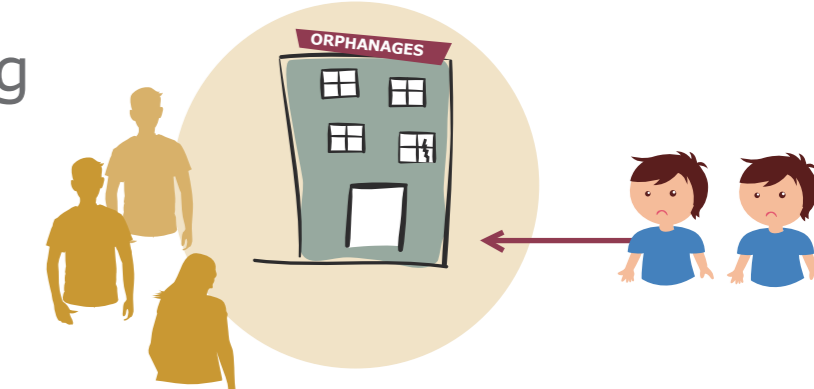
If a child needs to stay in an orphanage, this should be temporary, and as small-scale and family like as possible until a better alternative is found.



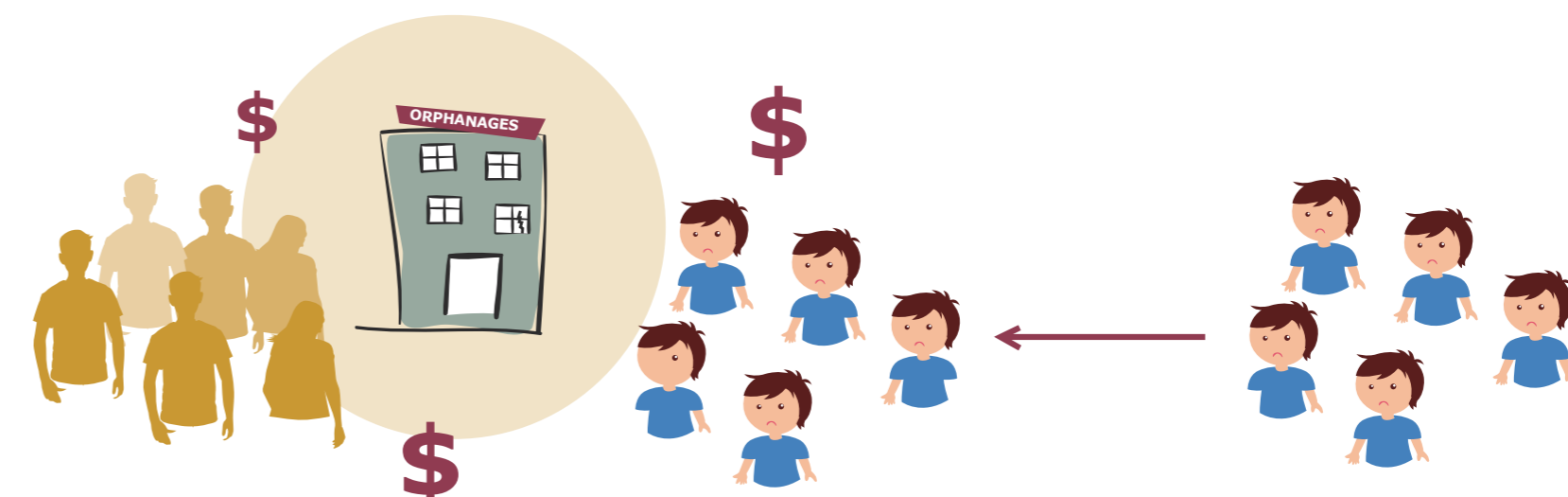
The Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, endorsed by the United Nations in 2009, state that governments should, wherever possible, promote family care, and prevent the separation of children from their parents.

Volunteering is contributing to the growth of orphanages

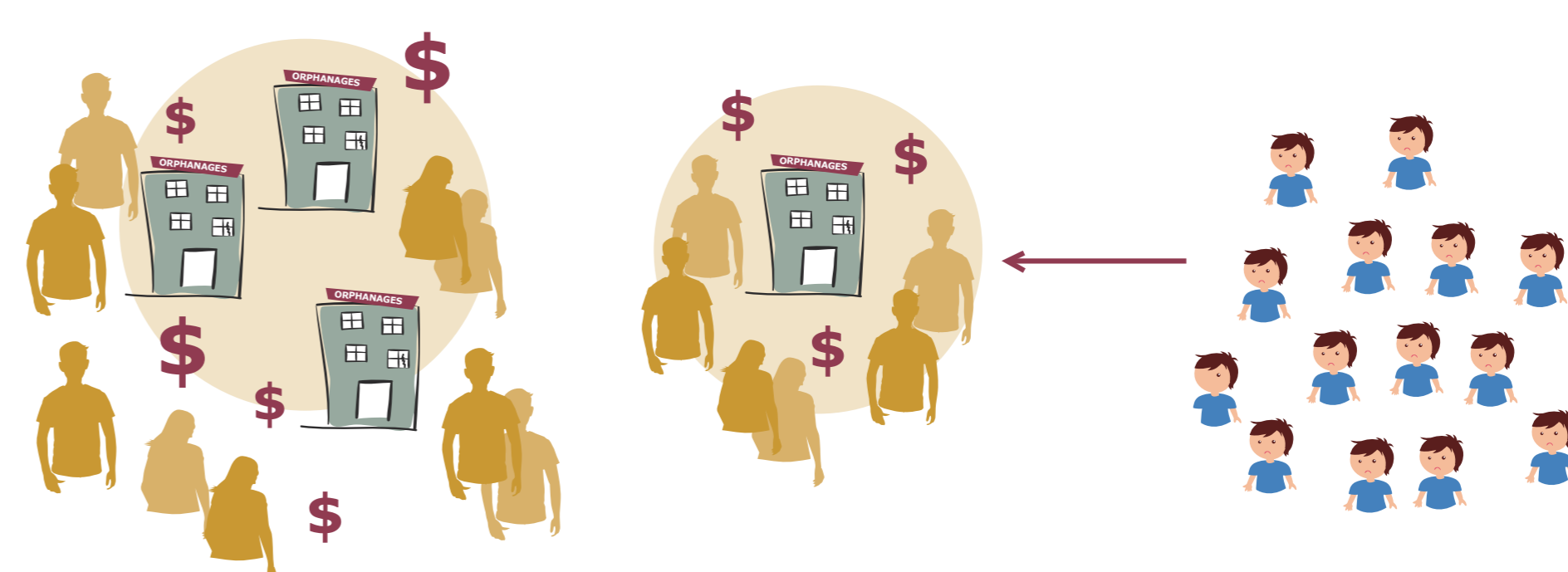
The practice of international volunteering in orphanages in the developing world is becoming so common it is creating a demand for “orphans” and “orphanages”.



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



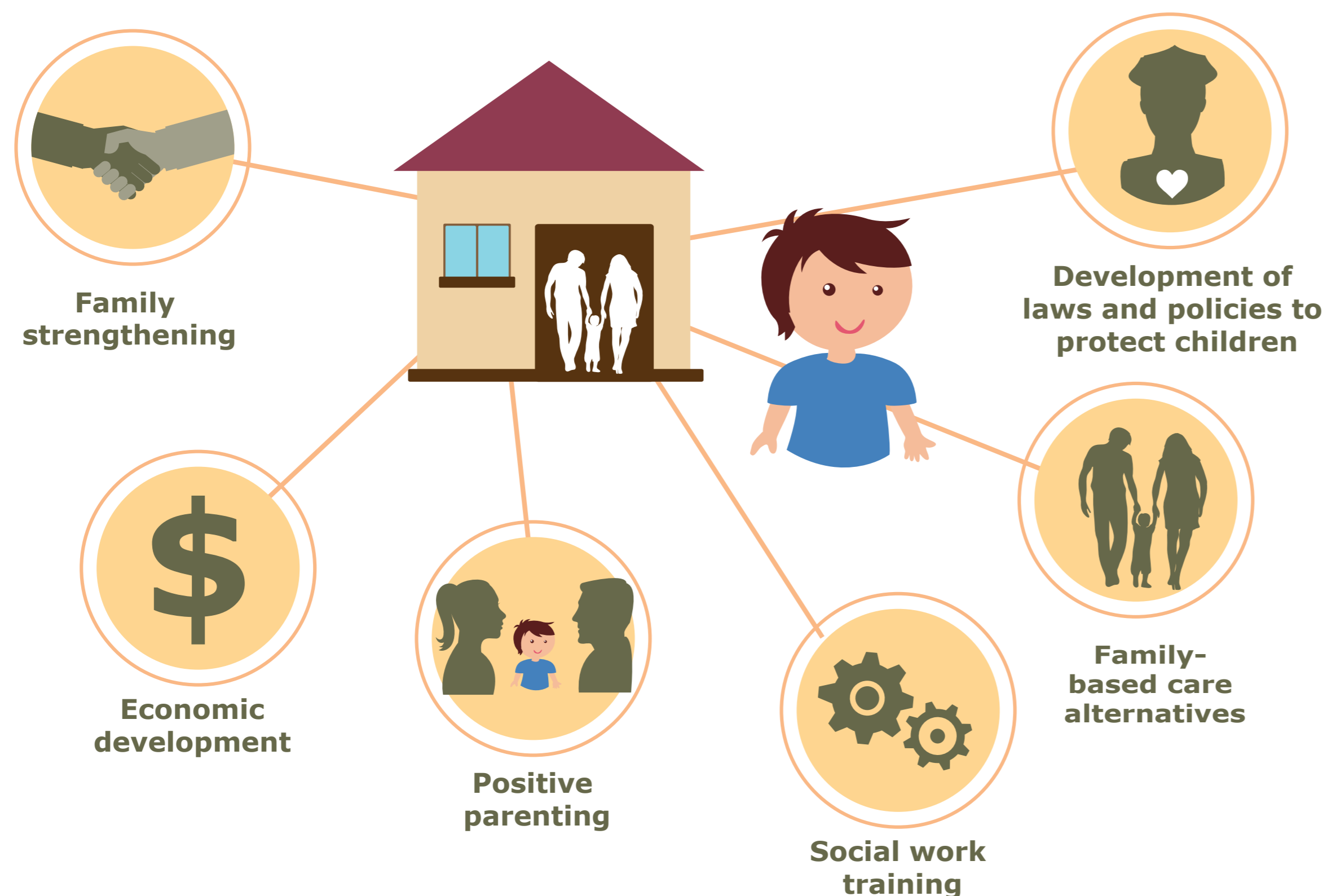
The more funding that goes into orphanages, the more appealing they become for struggling families, who become convinced that their children will have a better future in the centre than at home.



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

5 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