



**Better
Volunteering,
Better
Care**

International Volunteering in
Residential Care Centres:
An Overview

Better Volunteering, Better Care

Lead Organisations: Better Care Network, Save the Children UK

Steering Group:

- Better Care Network Netherlands,
- ECPAT
- Faith to Action Initiative
- Friends International
- Hope and Homes for Children
- SOS Children's Villages
- UNICEF



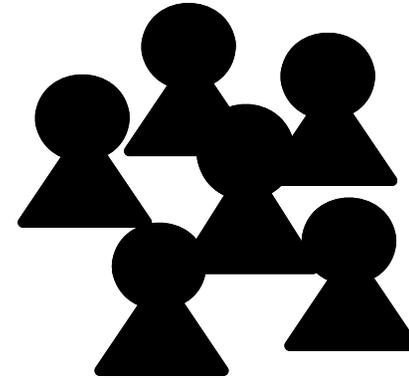
Project activities

- Mapping the trends
- Convening key actors
- Devising strategy and next steps

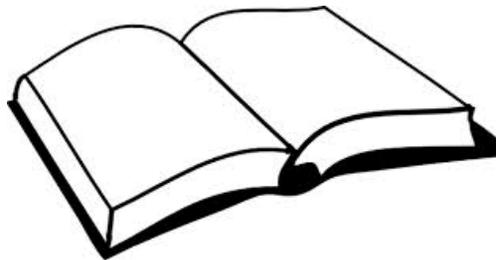
Mapping the trends



Surveyed nearly 150 volunteers
Accessed survey information for
a further 200+ volunteers



120 informant interviews



Google

Literature review and internet
analysis in English, Spanish,
and French

Focusing questions

- Who is promoting volunteering opportunities in residential care centres, and why
- What are the current trends in volunteerism, and who could be agents for change?
- What are some solutions, or alternative models being presented

Key areas



Why these areas?

- Popular tourist destinations
- Large numbers of the population living in poverty
- Disease or natural disasters resulting in high numbers of orphans, or families unable to care for children
- Lack of government regulation of child-care institutions
- Lack of government regulation of volunteers
- High (or previously high) level of inter-country adoption
- Lack of understanding of human rights and child rights
- Low levels of literacy and general education
- Lack of viable alternatives for vulnerable children

Popularity

- Aggregation site Go Abroad displays 1,180 orphanage volunteer opportunities
- 20 out of the top 23 organizations (87%) on Google promoting volunteering abroad opportunities are promoting opportunities to work in orphanages
- Orphanage placements regularly highlighted in marketing (i.e. promoted as “gold star” placements)
- Orphanage placements cited by travel companies as especially popular, positive reviews from volunteers
- Child-care images dominate the visuals of international volunteering

Marketing

- *“In Guatemala cruise the gorgeous Rio Dulce, brimming with lush, dramatic gorges. Visit the Casa Guatemala orphanage and spend time with these inspiring and hopeful children.”*

Blount Small Ship Adventures

“The most important thing you offer these poor children is love and attention that they so desperately crave. Resources for orphans are spread thin. Orphanage workers in Ghana do their best, but manpower is low and it is the face-to-face contact that this children desperately need.”

IRFE Volunteers Abroad, Ghana

Marketing



GoOverseas
Love Volunteer Cambodia

Marketing



GoAbroad
Volunteer in Ghana

Marketing



Globalcrossroad.com
Guatemala volunteering

Who is volunteering?



- Young people
- Families
- Professionals
- Retirees
- Faith groups
- Corporate groups
- All nationalities

Who is volunteering?



- Young people
- Faith groups



Why?

They think they are doing the right thing

They don't understand the bigger issues at stake because no-one has explained it to them

No-one told them it was a problem

They don't understand the problems around institutionalization.

They have no knowledge of development contexts

Everyone else is doing it

They think they are having an impact

They want to support vulnerable children



Trends in international volunteering



Polarisation of the issue

Real

Fake

Good

Bad

Responsible

Exploitative

Volunteers

Tourists

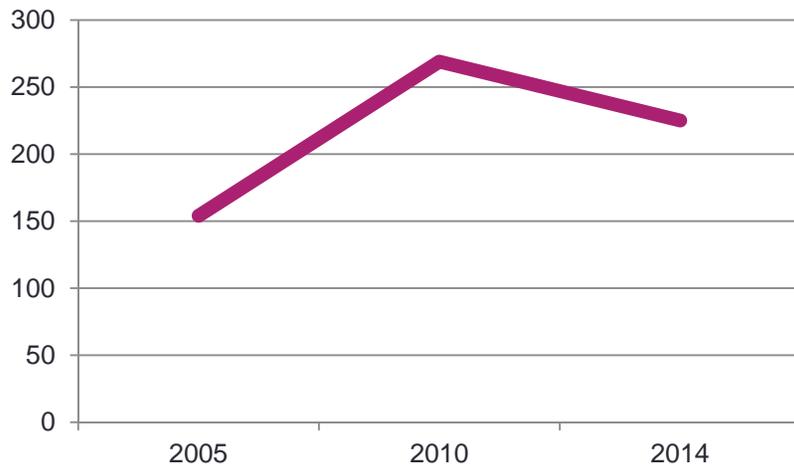


The orphanage “business”

- Cambodia
- Ghana
- Guatemala
- Indonesia
- Kenya
- Nepal
- Thailand

Country insights - Cambodia

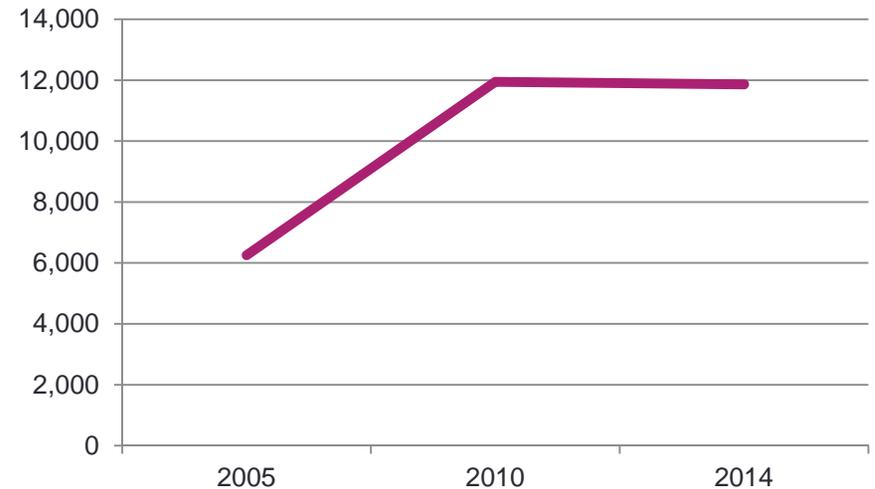
Number of orphanages



Numbers of tourists to Cambodia tripled between 2005 and 2014 from 1.4 million to 4.2 million. (Ministry of Tourism)

77% of the children living in residential centres had one or more living parents. (UNICEF, 2009)

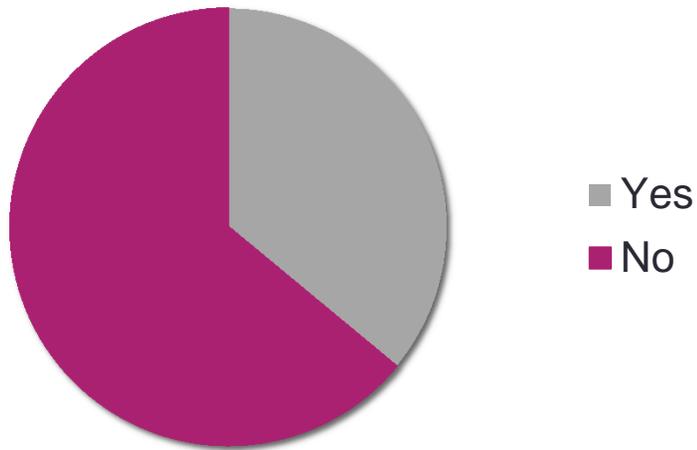
Number of children



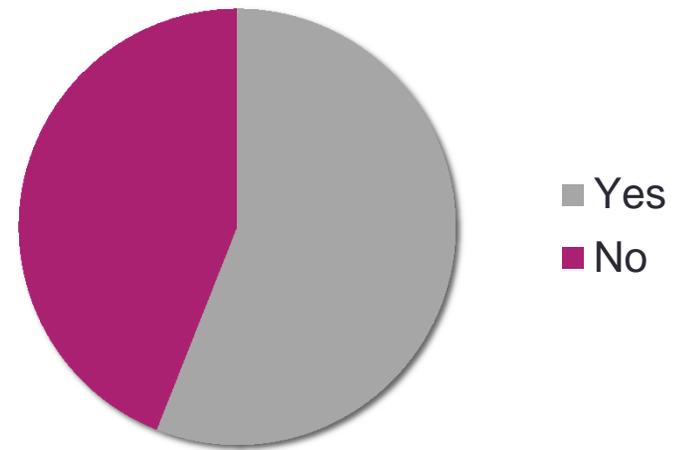
Country insights - Cambodia

Volunteer sending organisations offering orphanage placements in Cambodia:

Child protection policies



Police background check

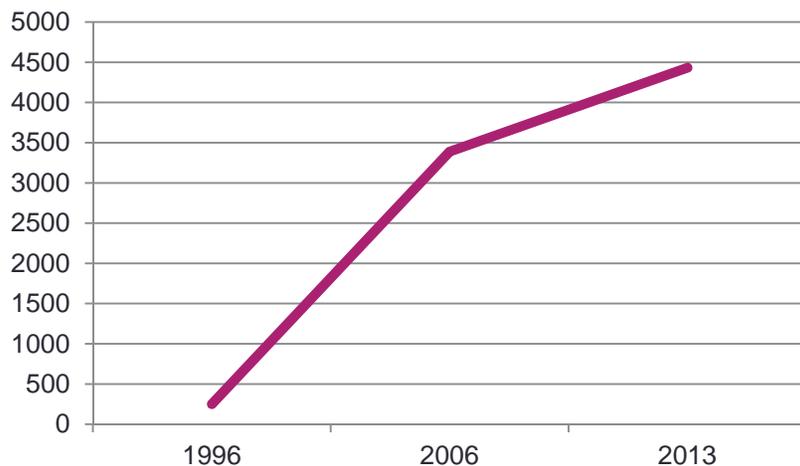


Country insights - Cambodia

- Nearly all residential care centres funded internationally (MoSVY, 2011)
 - Local and international travel industry involvement
 - Many “tourism” orphanages
 - Separation of children from families
 - Vulnerability to sexual abuse within orphanages (APPLE, 2014)
 - Ministry: “We do not have the power” (Phnom Penh Post, 2014)
 - High level of advocacy: Friends International, ConCert Cambodia, World Vision
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Country insights - Ghana

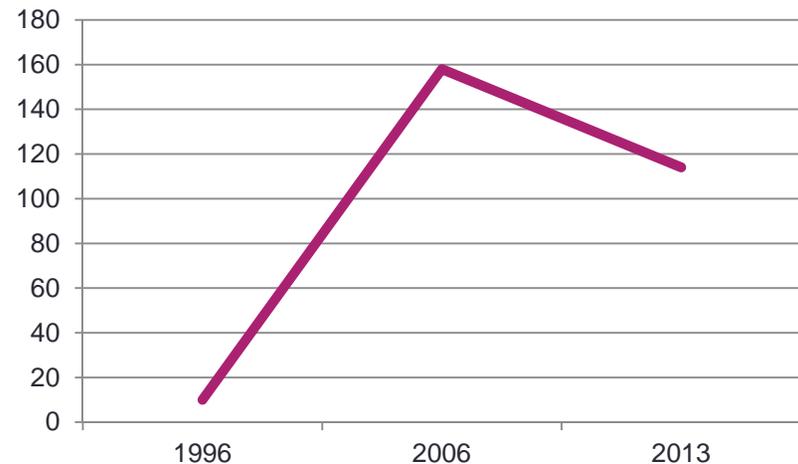
Number of children



80% of children living in children's homes have one or both parents still living.
(Department of Children)

Ghana is the most popular destination for one of the largest volunteer sending organisations, UK-based Projects Abroad; accounting for 40% of its revenues.
(Vrasti, W., undated)

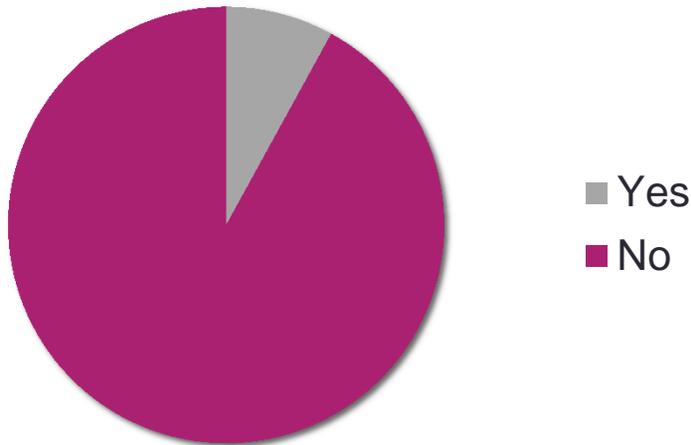
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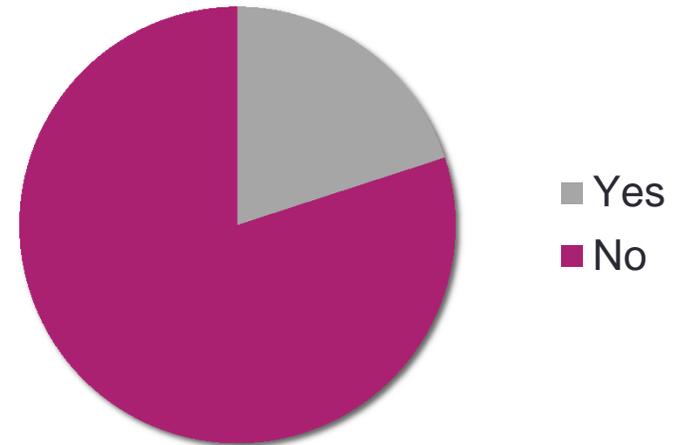
Country insights - Ghana

Volunteer sending organisations offering orphanage placements in Ghana:

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Country insights - Ghana

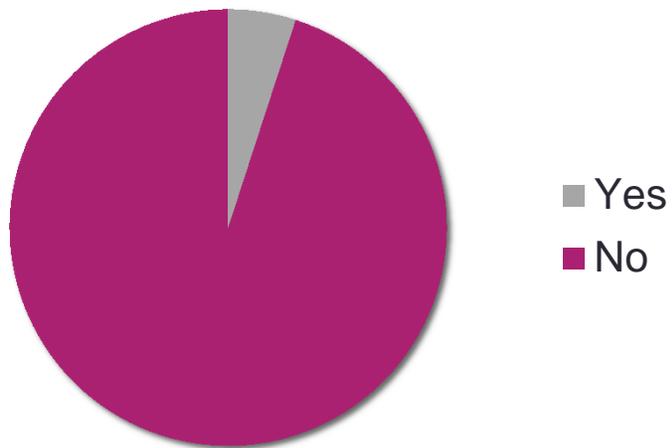
- More emphasis on organised trips than drop-in tourism
- “Ghana has been invaded by voluntourists” (Arku, J., 2013)
- Expectation of financial support
- Encouragement of a business model
- UNICEF Ghana’s *Social and Behaviour Change Communication Strategy for the Protection of Children in Ghana* targeting leading volunteer recruitment agencies

Country insights - Guatemala

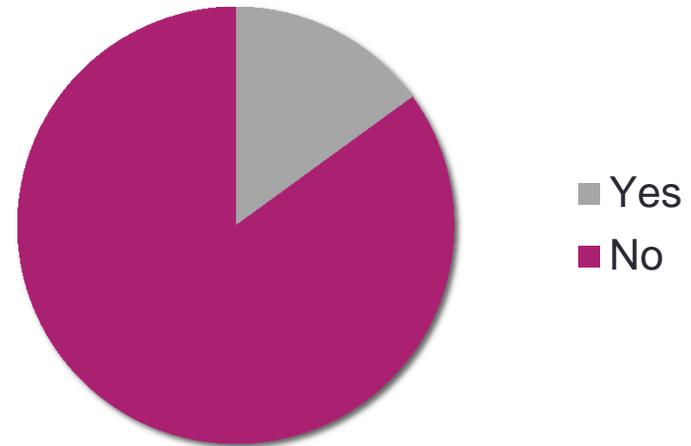
- Lack of reliable data
- 141 children's homes providing care to 5,566 children in Guatemala (UNICEF, 2013).
- 90% of private facilities are funded by international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), while the remainder are supported by religious congregations
- 6% of children in care had lost one or both of their parents (Perez, 2007 – 2008)
- Connection with inter-country adoption

Country insights - Guatemala

Child protection policies



Police background check



Country insights - Guatemala

- High number of school-organised volunteer trips, as well as faith missions
- Focus on reforming care and adoption rather than on volunteering-related issues
- RELAF study on macro institutions also considering impact of volunteering.

Positive change

- Engaged stakeholders from multiple audiences
- Country-specific initiatives emerging
- International guidelines initiatives
- Improved volunteer preparation
- Greater awareness in volunteer travel sector
- Greater local awareness in some countries

Challenges

- How to reach those who don't know to ask questions
- Coordination and cooperation between NGOs and other actors in the field
- Engagement with the community
- Transition support for travel agencies (and care centres)
- Positive volunteer alternatives that support children and families

Next steps for BVBC

Engagement strategy looking at three core areas:

- Structural change working with high schools and universities, faith communities, and the volunteer travel sector
- Working with young volunteers to create an media awareness campaign
- Working with local communities to create alternative volunteer experiences

Delivered through a supported and coordinated working group.



Keep in touch

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