

Put Children First End Orphanage Care

Comhlámh End Orphanage
Volunteering Working Group



Put Children First: End Orphanage Care

Some Stats

- An estimated **5.4 million** children live in institutions worldwide.
- Around **80% of children** living in orphanages have at least one living parent.
- Worldwide, children with disabilities are up to **17 times more likely** to live in institutions than other children.

Institutional systems put children at increased risk of abuse, violence and exploitation

Young adults raised in orphanages are:

- 10 times more likely to fall into sex work,
- 40 times more likely to have a criminal record and
- 500 times more likely to take their own lives than their peers.



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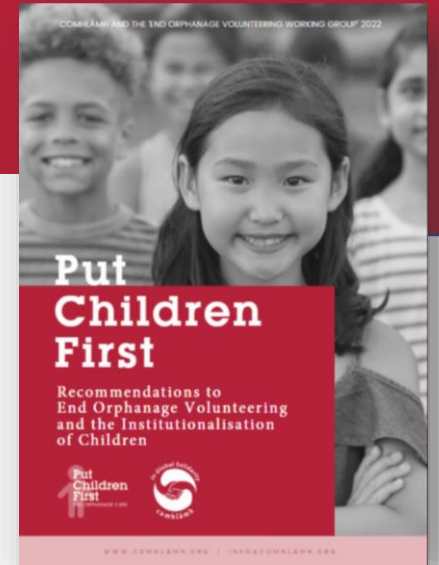
Results of Research

Decades of research has shown that growing up in an orphanage has a negative effect on a child's health, development and long-term life outcomes.

Children who grow up in orphanages typically leave with lower levels of educational attainment than their peers, experience stigma and discrimination, and struggle to transition back into community life.

The Lancet Group Commission found that residency in an institution for children is strongly associated with:

- Delays in physical growth, brain development, cognitive development, and attention
- Attachment disorders
- Maltreatment and neglect



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Institutional Care of Children is No Longer Seen as Best Practice

2019 UN General Assembly Resolution recognised the dangers of orphanage volunteering; and harms of institutions, called for them to be progressively eliminated. Adopted by 193 countries, including Ireland.

2021 EU Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) promotes transition from institutional to community-based care for children as an area of cooperation and intervention

2009 UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, UNCRC and UNCRPD

National Initiatives (Rwanda, Kenya, Moldova, Bulgaria, Romania)

Organisational and community initiatives

However...

Orphanage tourism, volunteering and overseas donations are helping to financially sustain the orphanage industry worldwide



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Volunteering in Orphanages is also harmful

- Reproduces colonial ideas of the white saviour
- Normalises access to vulnerable children
- Creates fake attachments
- Can create confusion with regard to culture and identity
- Disrupts children's routine (e.g. education)
- Can create incentives for parents to place their children in orphanages
- Volunteers often lack the skills and training to work with vulnerable children
- Financially props up and gives international legitimacy to a harmful system

Comhlámh's Code of Good Practice for Volunteer Sending Agencies commits all members to values-led international volunteering, including to stop sending orphanage volunteers and to support care reform



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Supporting the Global Movement to Transform the Way We Care

4 key policy recommendations to end orphanage volunteering and support the move away from institutional care towards family care and community-based services.

- Governments, INGO's, NGO's and care leavers are **working to reform** care systems, prevent family separation and support reunification; and to provide alternative care including foster/kinship care when needed
- But technical and financial support required – new ways to work

Recommendation 1

Irish Aid should introduce a dedicated funding stream for care reform strategies, including family and community-based support programmes.



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Orphanage volunteering and tourism is harmful

Recommendation 2

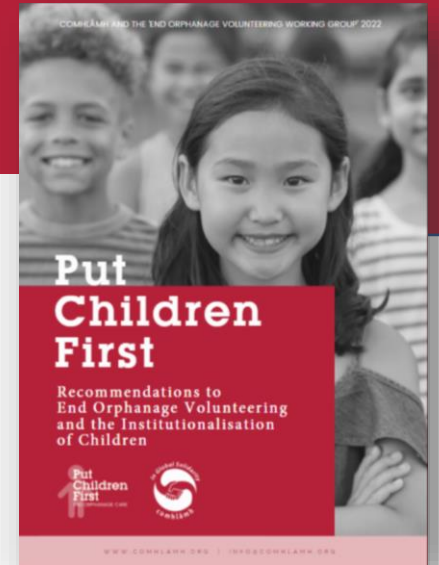
The Department of Foreign Affairs should introduce foreign travel advice warning of the harm caused by orphanage volunteering

Recommendation 3

Irish Aid should recognise the harm of orphanage volunteering and introduce funding criteria that no programmes or activities that involve the sending of volunteers to orphanages will be supported.

Recommendation 4

The Departments of Education, and Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, should develop child-safe guidelines for trips overseas, including guidance not to visit or volunteer in orphanages.



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Our Endorsers

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Care Reform is...

Possible

Happening

Cost-efficient

Progressive

Committed to

Needed

Just

International Volunteering should...

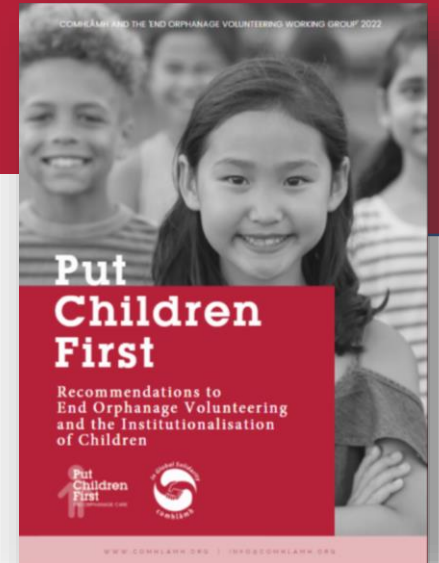
Be values-based

Support sustainable, community-led responses

Support child-centred development

Safeguard the most vulnerable

Promote solidarity and mutual respect



For organisations:

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE ENDORSEMENT CAMPAIGN VISIT:

<https://comhlamh.org/volunteering-and-orphanage-care/endorse-put-children-first-end-orphanage-care-campaign/>

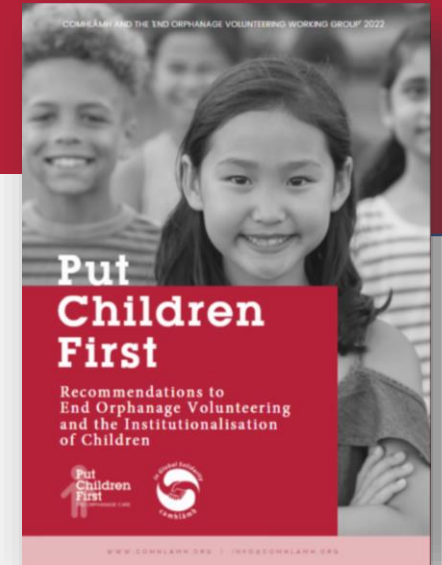
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Stephen Ucembe

“Children do not need to just survive, they need to thrive through one-on-one care and love, and have a sense of belonging and identity that only a family and community can provide.

THE LAUNCH OF 'PUT CHILDREN FIRST:END ORPHANAGE CARE' CAMPAIGN



For individuals:

Our Pledge:

- You will neither promote nor engage in volunteering and/or visits to institutions for children.
- You will further educate yourself and people around you about the harm caused by orphanage volunteering and institutions and you will only support volunteering opportunities that put the best interests and wellbeing of children and families first.

To sign the Pledge:

<https://my.uplift.ie/petitions/sign-put-children-first-end-orphanage-care-pledge>



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For more information, contact: vphilpott@miseancara.ie

Thank you!

