

# Put Children First: End Orphanage Care

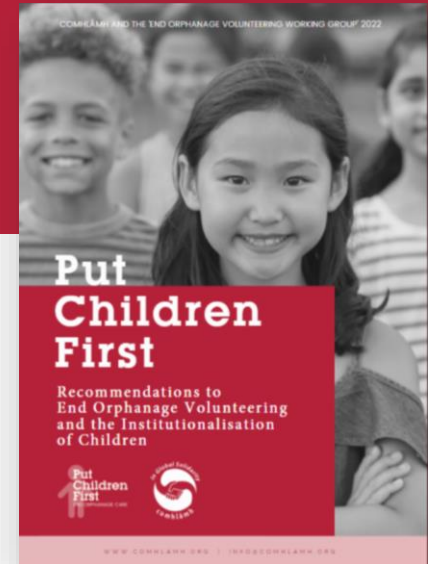
Comhlámh End Orphanage Volunteering  
Working Group



# Put Children First: End Orphanage Care

## Aim

- Explore the issue of orphanage care and orphanage volunteering.
- Provide a roadmap for change through advocacy and education, and awareness initiatives to reduce orphanage volunteering and the subsequent institutionalisation of children.



# Put Children First: End Orphanage Care

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(PowerPoint Presentation) - 1/7/21  
Created by Valerie Philipoll

Disconnect

Account

### Add a question

Question types

- Multiple Choice
- Word Cloud
- Open Ended
- Scales
- Ranking

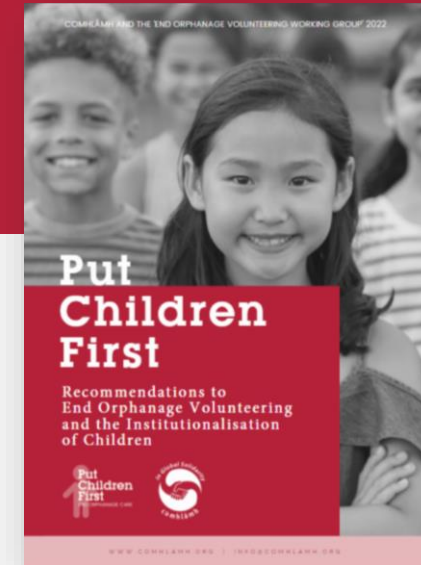
Quiz competition

- Select Answer
- Type Answer
- Leaderboard

Previously created

...word comes to mind when you think of orphanage volunteering

Help & Feedback



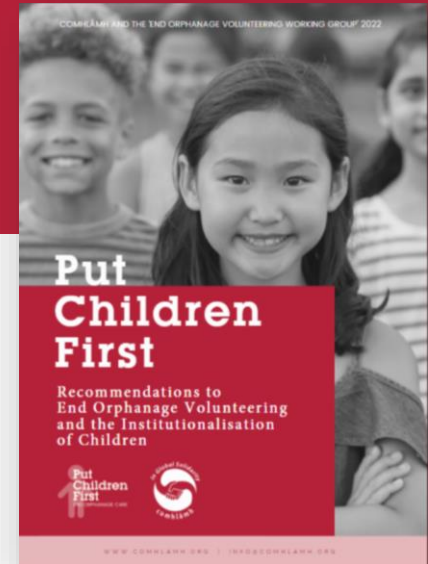
# Put Children First: End Orphanage Care

## ‘Institutional Care’

Broadly defined to encompass orphanages, large-scale institutions, and sometimes, small group homes and children’s villages.

Continues to be used as the main form of alternative care in many parts of the world.

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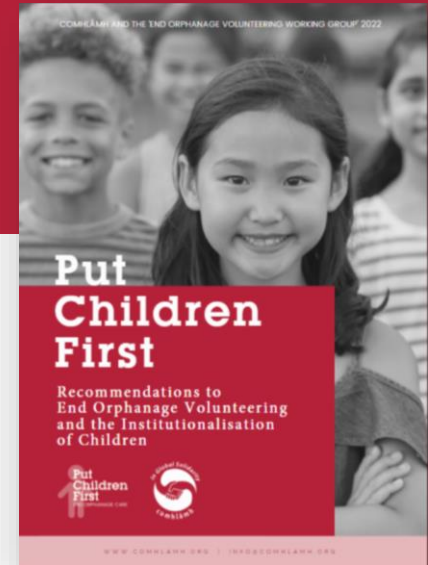


# Put Children First: End Orphanage Care

## ‘Orphanage Volunteering & Voluntourism’

Refers to visits or volunteering in orphanages as part of a holiday or tourist experience.

Represents the intersection of the desire of orphanage operators to gain access to international funding and the desire of tourists and volunteers to give back to less developed countries.



# Quiz - 1

Orphanages are the most cost-effective way to care for vulnerable children?

a. True or b. False

## Quiz – 2

What percentage of children living in orphanages in Nepal, have at least one living parent?

a. 10%  b. 30%  c. 50 %  d. 85%

## Quiz - 3

Of the more than 500 institutional care facilities in Haiti, what percentage are licenced to operate?

a. 5% b. 15% c. 45% d. 75%



# Quiz - 4

By what percentage did the number of orphanages in Cambodia increase between the years 2005-2010?

a. 15%   b. 30%   c. 75%   d. 100%

## Quiz - 5

By what percentage did Moldova reduce the number of children living in orphanages between 2007 and 2017?

a. 12%  b. 33%  c. 57%  d. 88%

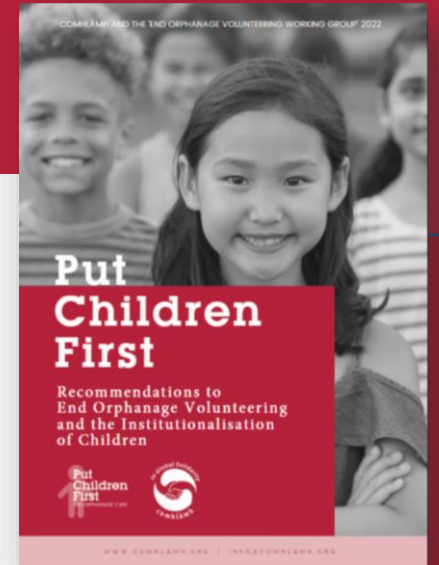
## Quiz - 6

Which country was the first to recognise orphanage trafficking where children are deprived of their family and exploited for profit as a form of modern slavery?

a. Ireland  b. Kenya  c. Australia  d. USA

# Put Children First: End Orphanage Care

- 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.
- Decades of research has shown that growing up in an institution has a negative effect on a child's health, development and long-term life outcomes.
- 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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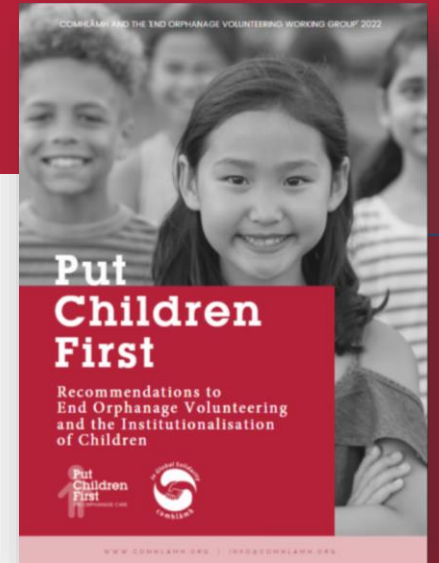
- Children who grow up in orphanages typically leave with lower levels of educational attainment than their peers, experience stigma and discrimination, and struggle to transition back into community life.
- The Lancet Group Commission research found that residency in an institution for children is strongly associated with:
  - Delays in physical growth, brain development, cognitive development, and attention.
  - Attachment disorders - Children need stable bonds with primary caregivers to develop and thrive.
  - Maltreatment and neglect.



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## Volunteering in Orphanages is harmful

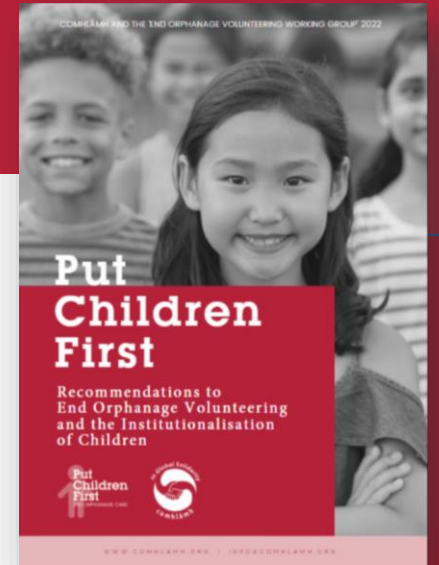
- Reproduces colonial ideas of the white saviour.
- Normalises access to vulnerable children.
- Leads to attachment issues - adults coming and going.
- Can create confusion with regard to culture and identity.
- Can create incentives for parents to place their children in orphanages.
- Volunteers often do not have the appropriate skills and training to work with vulnerable children.
- Financially props up and gives international legitimacy to a harmful system.



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## Institutional Care of Children is No Longer Seen as Best Practice

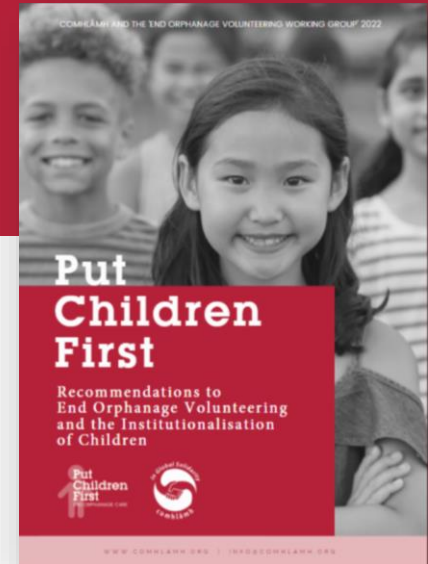
- UNCRC: Affirms every child's right, including a child with a disability, to live with their parents and to grow up in their community and culture.
- UNCRPD: Upholds the rights of children with a disability to live and fully participate within their own community.
- 2010 United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children.
- 2019 United Nations General Assembly Resolution on the Rights of the Child recognises the harm of institutions and called for them to be progressively eliminated.
- 2021 Committee on the Rights of the Child, Day of General Discussion on Children's Rights and Alternative Care.
- 2021 EU included commitment in Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) and global child rights strategy.
- 2022 UN Guidelines on Deinstitutionalisation, including in emergencies.



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## Historical Context (Ireland)

- Ireland has a traumatic history of orphanages and residential care institutions for children. From the 1940s, many children were placed in institutional care.
- The Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (2009) details pervasive and horrific levels of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and neglect within the institutions that were run primarily by Catholic religious orders but funded by the State.
- The Commission of Investigation into the Mother and Baby Homes: 1922 – 1998 (2021) found high levels of deprivation, physical and emotional abuse and rampant infant mortality rates.
- The testimony of survivors contained in both reports speaks of the long-term negative impacts of those who were brought up in these institutions.
- Further traumatised by the system of redress.



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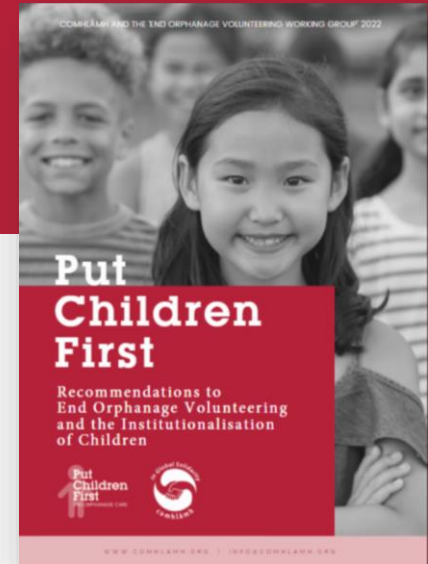




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## Present Context (Ireland)

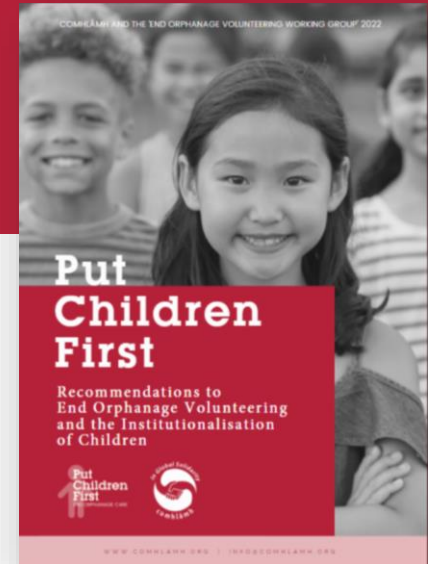
- Ireland's model of care for children is now committed to supporting families and to utilising family based alternative care, with separation from parents seen as a measure of last resort.
- 2023: General Foster Care (65%) Family/Kinship Foster Care (26%) Residential Care (6%), Special Care (0.3%), Other Placements (3%) (Central Statistics Office Ireland)



# Put Children First: End Orphanage Care

## Orphanage Volunteering (from Ireland)

- Despite Ireland's own history, volunteering in and support for overseas orphanages remains popular and many Irish people have either volunteered overseas or know someone who has.
- Comhlámh 'End Orphanage Volunteering Working Group' set up in 2016 due to concerns around the negative effects of institutional care on children and the particularly harmful impact of international volunteering in orphanages.
- From the beginning this process has been a slow, step by step journey of mindset change with different groups in Ireland.



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# Put Children First: End Orphanage Care

## Our Journey - Key Activities

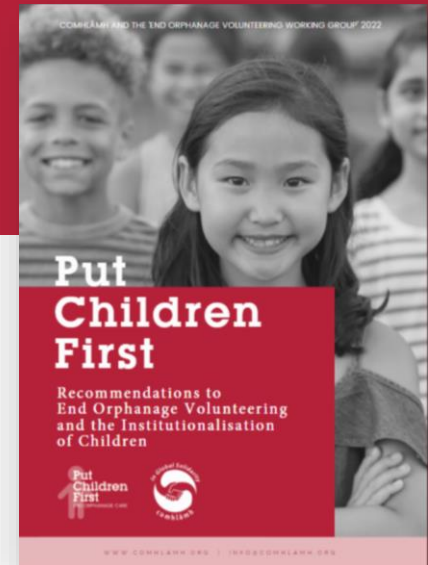
### Collating research for the Irish context:

- Little to no Irish literature on international volunteering in children's orphanages or residential institutions - a hindrance to progress.
- In 2018 the WG published "Children First: A Global Perspective on Volunteering in Orphanages and Transforming Care" report exploring the key issues of orphanage volunteering and making recommendations on next steps to Irish Government departments, VSO's, the education sector, sporting bodies and the general public to end volunteering in orphanages.

### Public launch:

The report was launched publicly with speakers including international experts on care reform, care expert/advocate from the global south with lived experience of growing up in an orphanage.

Attracted some, but limited, interest from national media, as well as engagement from Government Departments.

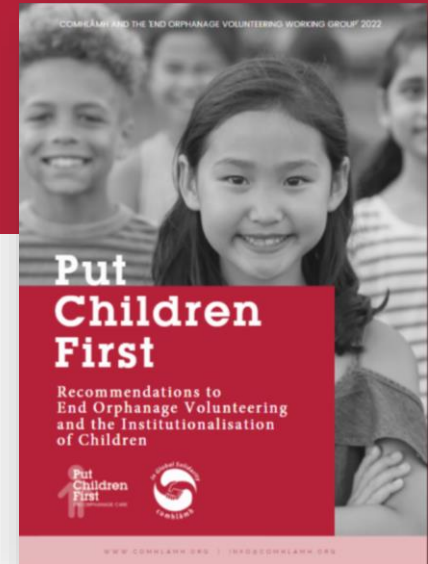


# Put Children First: End Orphanage Care

## Our Journey - Key Activities

### High-Level Conference:

- In 2021, WG member Tearfund Ireland hosted an online conference entitled [“Beyond Institutional Care: Rethinking how we care for orphaned and vulnerable children”](#).
- Speakers at the conference included international experts and advocates together with Care Experts from Cambodia and Kenya with lived experience of growing up in orphanages.
- A representative from the Australian Embassy in Dublin also took part to speak of the Australian experience of changing their practice in relation to overseas volunteering and support for orphanages.
- The recorded sessions from this conference continue to be used in Irish workshops exploring the issues of volunteering in orphanages.



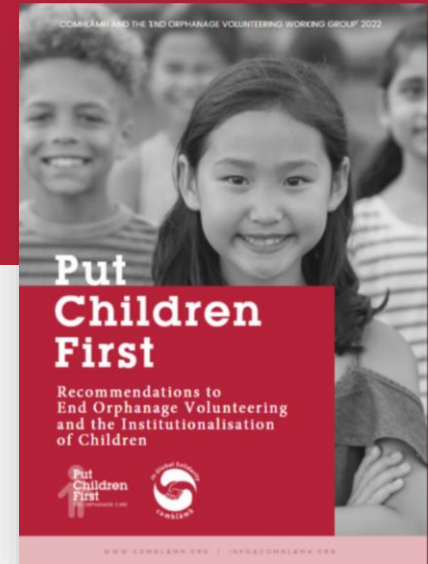
# Put Children First: End Orphanage Care

## Our Journey - Key Activities

### Development Education/Global Citizenship Education

#### approaches:

- Using a Development Education/Global Citizenship Education approach to explore the issues of volunteering in orphanages with groups due to the sensitive nature of the subject.
- This approach complemented advocacy initiatives, which, on their own, had the potential to give some individuals and organisations the impression that the work they had been doing in good faith was being condemned and undermined.
- In 2021 the WG launched “Just Care: Just Volunteering” a GCE resource which provides youth leaders, facilitators and others the tools to explore the harms of volunteering in orphanages with groups in a non-threatening way.
- Funded by Irish Aid thus adding legitimacy to the advocacy work of the WG.



# Put Children First: End Orphanage Care

## Our Journey - Key Activities

### Focused Advocacy:

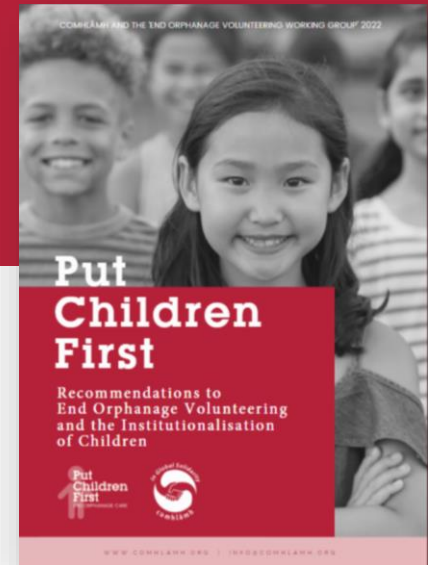
In 2021, “Put Children First: End Orphanage Volunteering” campaign launched with key asks of the Irish Government and the Education sector.

**Recommendation 1** - Irish Aid should introduce a dedicated funding stream for care reform strategies including family and community-based support programmes.

**Recommendation 2** - The Department of Foreign Affairs should introduce foreign travel advice warning of the harm caused by volunteering in orphanages (including the risk of incentivizing trafficking) and encouraging people not to visit or to volunteer.

**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 and Integration and Youth, should develop child-safe guidelines for trips overseas, including guidance not to visit or volunteer in orphanages.

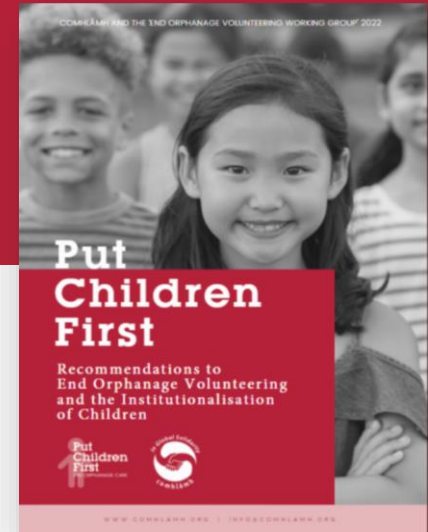


# Put Children First: End Orphanage Care

## Our Journey - Key Activities

### Focused awareness raising sessions with a broad range of stakeholders:

- Throughout 2022 and 2023 awareness and education sessions conducted with students, student bodies, youth organisations, NGOs, INGOs, teacher unions, volunteering bodies and volunteer sending agencies, using a blend of GCE and advocacy approaches.
- Where possible, the **voices of care leavers** have been utilised in awareness raising sessions.
- Being able to have conversations with care leavers has helped participants to better understand the lifelong impact of growing up in institutional care and the harm (often unintended) caused by volunteers and visitors.



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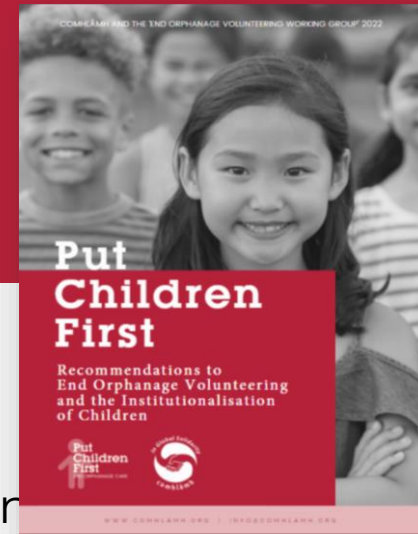


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## Our Journey - Key Activities

### Progress on Campaign Recommendations:

- The DFA has updated its [online travel advice](#) for backpacking, volunteering and adventure tourism, and gap year travel which include a link to Comhlámh's Code of Good Practice.
- Irish Aid's Civil Society Unit (CSU) has implemented funding criteria for INGOs to ensure that no programmes or activities that involve the sending of volunteers to orphanages will be supported (with the exception of skilled volunteers to support de-institutionalisation strategies and processes)
- If direct work with children is planned, volunteers must be trained to work with vulnerable and traumatised children e.g. social workers, psychologists.
- The WG welcomes this development and hopes that the CSU's approach will be mainstreamed across all areas of Irish Aid's work.



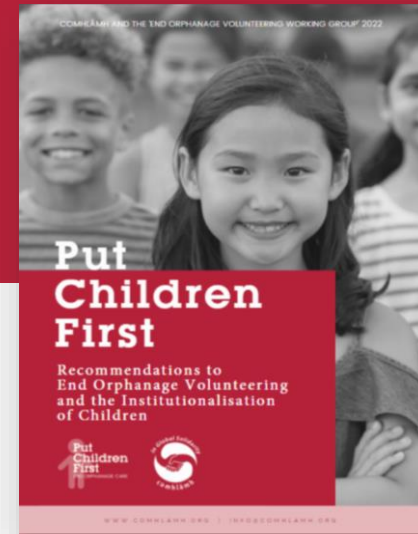
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# Put Children First: End Orphanage Care

## Next Steps

1. **Continue to build our network**, with like-minded agencies, organisations, academics etc.
2. **Work with various stakeholders in the Education sector** to change the practice of sending school trips to orphanages and support for orphanages, including with the Department of Education to issue guidance on child-safe school trips.
3. **Continue to raise awareness among tourism students** so they can influence the market by promoting responsible ways of travel in their future careers.
4. **Continue to engage and advocate with businesses** that are facilitating voluntourism overseas.
5. **Continue to work constructively with DFA** to strengthen travel advice and on wider matters relating to values-led international volunteering.
6. **Explore routes to support legislative changes to the Charities Act**, with the aim of creating an environment where the priorities for national and international child-safe volunteering are aligned.

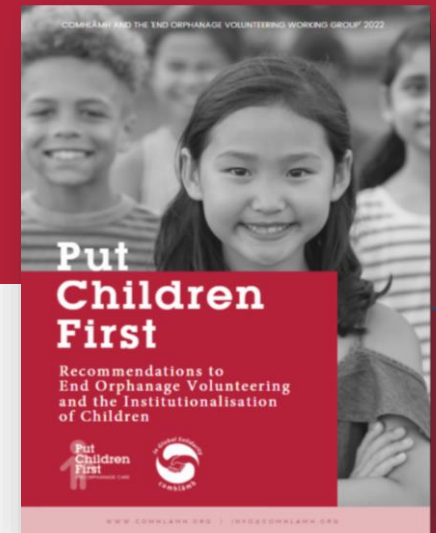


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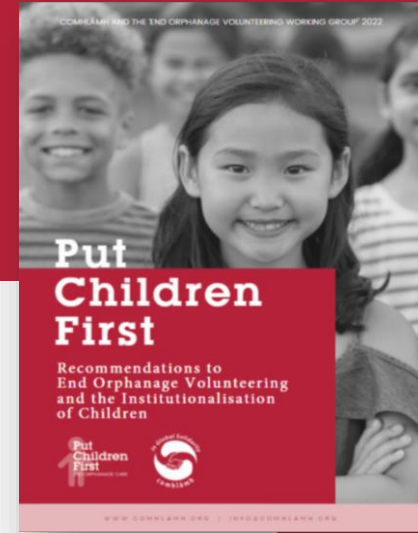
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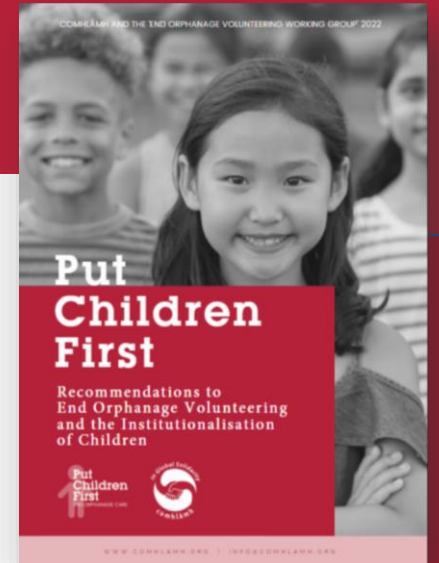
**One Last Thing!!**  
**Become an Ally – Sign our Pledge**



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# Put Children First: End Orphanage Care



For more information, contact:

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**Thank you!**

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