

Press Release

For Immediate Release: 23 November 2017

UK volunteer organisation removes all Orphanage Volunteering Projects

Volunteering abroad in orphanages is not in the best interests of children. Decades of research has shown that orphanages are not conducive to child development. This is the reason that Western countries no longer use this model to care for children, especially under the age of three. One study found that for every month that a child was in an orphanage, they lost one month of development (physical, emotional, social). While orphanages are outdated, people still continue to export them. The presence of volunteers in orphanages can increase the risk of abuse, and cause attachment issues and other developmental problems. **Orphanages are often not what you think** - 80% of children living in orphanages have one or more living parent.

“The orphanage industry – Did you Know?”

... that in some cases, volunteers and tourists are creating a "demand" for orphanages? This is resulting in the growth of what's known as the 'orphanage industry'." (*Reference: Better Volunteering Better Care*)

In the past decades, unscrupulous operators in developing countries have started orphanage volunteer projects in their countries. However, the children are not actual orphans, but taken from their parent(s) to live at the orphanage for the sole purpose of earning money from well-intentioned volunteers.

Working Abroad Projects is working with the “**Better Volunteering Better Care**” network and they have decided to remove all Orphanage Volunteering Projects from their online database.

The Working Abroad Projects volunteer database includes more than 2,000 volunteer projects with partner organisations from around the world and all projects with any reference to orphanage volunteering have been banned from their website.

Vicky McNeil, Founder of the organisation states “In early November, we decided to remove all unethical animal welfare volunteer projects from our website. Now, I am pleased that we have removed all orphanage volunteering projects and that we are working alongside the Better Volunteering Better Care Network which was co-founded by the Better Care Network and Save the Children UK. We will ensure that no orphanage volunteering programmes are listed on our website from now on, and we will also do our utmost to try and get other volunteer organisations to adopt the same stance. We will

continue to focus our community and child development volunteer programmes on educating young people in schools, re-integrating families back into the community and women's empowerment, in line with BVBC's guidelines. It feels very positive to have taken this stance with regards to ethical volunteering for wildlife and orphanages and I sincerely hope that other organisations will follow in our steps."

About Working Abroad Projects

Working Abroad Projects is a non-profit company that was first established in 1997 by Vicky McNeil and Andreas Kornevall. Its database of volunteer projects and own projects have since grown steadily, offering students, workers and families alike the opportunity to volunteer and work abroad.

You can find Working Abroad Projects' full policy on ethical volunteering [here](#). If you want to know more about the issues surrounding the orphanage industry abroad in relation to volunteering abroad, then you can visit the Better Volunteering Better Care website [here](#).

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