

FOOTSTEPS

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CARING FOR ORPHANS



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'God sets the lonely in families' (Psalm 68:6). This moving verse echoes throughout this edition of *Footsteps*. All through the Bible we see God's special concern for the orphan, the widow and the foreigner – those who may well be alone and vulnerable. He longs for them to know the love and protection of a family. This message is as relevant as ever in today's society.

Research shows that the best place to raise children is in a caring and nurturing family environment. This edition features many inspiring individuals, organisations and churches who are working to provide loving families for orphaned and vulnerable children. In Zimbabwe, ZOE is helping churches support orphans in their communities (page 6). In Uganda, CRANE is providing careful support to reunite children with their families (page 17). M'lup Russey is transforming orphan care in Cambodia, as well as helping orphans make a good transition when they leave institutions (pages 10–11). In China, Care for Children is inspiring families to offer foster homes to children in need, including many with disabilities (page 24).

We hope this issue of *Footsteps* will encourage those running conventional orphanages to consider ways to improve and strengthen the care they offer, and perhaps even to transition into family and community strengthening programmes (pages 14–15).

You will notice that *Footsteps* has a whole new look for its 101st edition! We have introduced some new regular features, including a children's zone (page 19) and community page (page 23). We would love to feature your insights and the 'knotty problems' that are challenging you, so please do get in touch.



Zoe

Zoe Burden – Editor

📷 Cover shows a foster child in Chiang Mai province, Thailand.
Photo: Care for Children



by Markus Köker

FAMILY FIRST: HOW BEST TO TACKLE THE ORPHAN CHALLENGE



📷 A loving, stable family is the ideal place for raising children. Photo: Marcus Perkins/Tearfund

The Bible often talks of God's compassion for 'the fatherless' and his desire to set the lonely in families (Psalm 68:6). Good families are places where children are protected, nurtured and provided for. In loving families, children learn important life skills and feel a sense of belonging. Growing up and living without a family greatly increases our vulnerability.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states:

'The child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.'

WHO IS AN ORPHAN?

Unicef defines an orphan as a child who has lost one or both parents through death. According to Unicef, there are an estimated 140 million such orphans worldwide. But these statistics underestimate the problem and do not include 'social orphans'. These are children and young adults who have lost any meaningful connection to their family. Social orphans include vulnerable children who may be living on the street, growing up in an orphanage or experiencing separation from their families due to trafficking, conflict or other issues.

In fact, millions of children known as orphans still have one surviving parent, grandparent or other family member. According to Save the Children, at least 80 per cent of children living in orphanages still have at least one parent alive.

RESIDENTIAL CARE AND POVERTY

Residential care institutions (including orphanages and children's homes) have often been seen as the answer to the orphan challenge, and many have been set up with the best of intentions. However, some orphanages are run as businesses, where the children are seen as a way of bringing in income. This has sometimes led to children being trafficked into institutions.

In developing countries, all too often poverty is the reason that children end up in orphanages. Parents or family members may believe that an orphanage will give their children food, shelter and education, which they would otherwise struggle to provide. These so-called 'pull factors' increase the number of children placed into residential care unnecessarily. For example, although the number of vulnerable children in Cambodia has decreased, the number of orphanages increased by 75 per cent between 2005 and 2010. But no orphanage can provide the care and nurture of a loving, supportive family.

UNDERSTANDING THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS

Research has clearly shown that long-term institutional care is not in the best interests of children. It can negatively impact their lives in many different ways:

- **Serious delays in psychological and social development:** Children lack the individual care and attention they need. They are less likely to develop the intellectual, physical, social and emotional

skills appropriate for their age. They have less chance to learn the life skills they will need to live independently in the future.

- **Attachment problems:** Children grow up with frequent changes in staff, volunteers and visitors. This means they do not develop the strong, lasting relationships they need.
- **Dependency mindset:** In institutions, someone else is always responsible for meeting children's basic needs and making decisions on their behalf. Children are not usually given opportunities to take responsibility for themselves based on a relationship of trust. This makes it harder for them to live independently as adults.
- **Trafficking and abuse:** Many institutions do not have child protection policies and may not carry out background checks for visitors and staff. This puts children at risk of trafficking and physical and sexual abuse.
- **Separation from society:** Children in residential care usually grow up separated from their family and community. They often struggle to rejoin the community when they leave.

Young people are very vulnerable when they leave residential care, and many institutions do not have strategies for supporting them through this process. A long-term study from Russia showed that one in five orphans leaving an institution turned to crime, one in seven fell into prostitution and one in ten committed suicide (Judith Harwin, *Children of the Russian state 1917–1995*).

WORDS USED IN THIS EDITION

Alternative care is when someone other than the biological parents cares for a child, eg kinship care, foster care, adoption or residential care.

Residential care means looking after children outside of a family setting, eg in orphanages or group homes.

Transitioning is when a residential care centre changes from offering residential care to helping children be cared for in families and the community.

A BETTER WAY

The good news is that around the world people are beginning to realise there are better ways of caring for orphans and vulnerable children. There is a range of options:

- **Family strengthening:** We can strengthen and support families, so that they do not place children in orphanages to begin with. This can include providing parenting classes, day care and income-generating activities. It is important to help parents realise that family is for life and that they can usually provide a better upbringing for their child than an orphanage can.
- **Reuniting children with their birth families:** If it is possible and safe, the best option is to reunite children who are in residential care with their families. This involves trying to address the problems that led to their separation from the family, wherever possible.
- **Kinship care:** If reuniting children with their birth families is not possible, kinship care is an option. Many orphans will have other family members who would be willing to care for them – aunts, uncles, grandparents, an older sibling or another member of the extended family. It is often possible to trace relatives and support them to care for the child.
- **Foster care:** Foster care is when a family cares for a child who is not biologically related to them. Fostering can be a temporary measure while

efforts are made to reunite children with their family. It can also be a longer-term option. In some countries it can be a way of providing a permanent family for a child.

- **Adoption:** When it is not possible to reunite children with their family or relatives, adoption may be an option. This is when parents agree legally and permanently to care for a child who is not biologically their own. Adoption is easiest for the child when it happens within the child's own country. International adoption is usually a more disruptive option, so the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child considers local adoption or foster care to be preferable.

- There is sometimes a place for **residential care** (for example, this may be needed for a child in crisis while other options are being investigated). But in most cases this should be seen as a last resort and not as a long-term solution. If residential care is necessary for a time, it should be as 'family-like' as possible, in small group homes within the community rather than in large orphanages.

Those in charge of a child's care should work through this range of alternative care options to see what is best for the child.

NATIONAL POLICIES ARE CHANGING

A growing number of countries are now putting these ideas about alternative care into practice and making them their official policy. For example, in 2012 Cambodia announced a new policy aimed at keeping children out of institutions and preferring family-based care. As well as being better for children, these principles make good financial sense. In Uganda, for example, a study showed it costs up to 14 times more to run an orphanage than to care for children within the community (Unicef).

WHAT CAN WE DO?

The church can play a powerful role in changing the way we care for orphans and vulnerable children. The World Without Orphans movement has united Christians, churches and organisations

around the world to work together towards family-based care. Beginning in the Ukraine, it has initiated national movements in more than 26 countries. As a result of its work, the number of children being fostered or adopted locally has increased.

There is a number of things individuals, churches and organisations can do to improve orphan care. **Individuals** can consider becoming foster or adoptive parents, and encourage others to do the same. **Churches** can develop programmes to strengthen families and support orphans within their churches and communities. **Directors of residential care centres** can explore ways of transitioning to provide family and community strengthening services. We can all advocate to our governments for policies that prioritise family-based care. By uniting with others who have the same vision, we can work towards a world where every child has the chance to grow up within a loving family.

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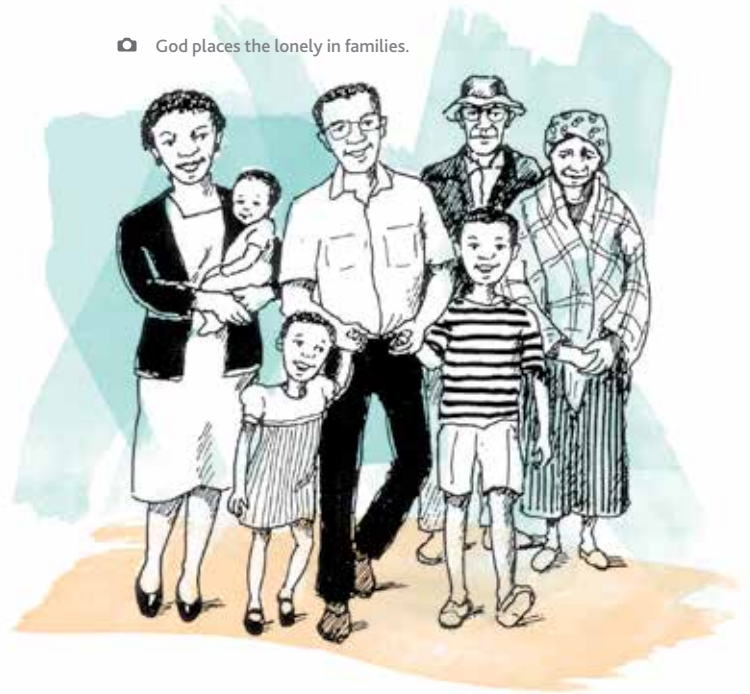
*World Without Orphans
Website: www.worldwithoutorphans.org
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📷 In developing countries, poverty is often the reason families place children in orphanages.



by Krish Kandiah



BIBLE STUDY

DOES GOD HATE CHRISTMAS?

How would you feel if I told you that God hates Christmas? Or that he is annoyed by Advent, Lent and Easter? What if I told you that prayer meetings bore him and communion frustrates him?

Really?

Well, that is what God seems to say in one of the Bible passages that scares me most:

'Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations – I cannot bear your worthless assemblies. Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals I hate with all my being. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I hide my eyes from you; even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening. Your hands are full of blood!' (Isaiah 1:13–15)

Is God really asking his people to close down their worship services? Is he really saying that prayer is pointless?

It is not that God is against offerings: he commanded them. It is not that God has no interest in prayer: he started the conversation. It is not that God does not enjoy festivals: he invented them.

But none of these things is at the heart of worship. God does not make it complicated. In fact, in the following two verses (Isaiah 1:16-17), he clearly summarises genuine worship in six short headlines:

1. Stop doing wrong.
2. Learn to do right.
3. Seek justice.
4. Defend the oppressed.
5. Take up the cause of the fatherless.
6. Plead the case of the widow.

This is the kind of worship that God wants from his people. God would rather we shut down our services than carry on with them while neglecting these six headlines.

Most churches are quite good at teaching headline number one, 'Stop doing wrong.' Some churches are not bad at teaching headline number two either, 'Learn to do right.' But often numbers three to six are not given much attention.

I would particularly love the church to rediscover this kind of worship by addressing headline number 5, 'Take up the cause of the fatherless.' We live in a broken world, where there are millions of orphans. Some of these children are in our own communities. But Christians and churches are beginning to discover the depth of true worship that comes when we obey God's call to defend their cause. In my work for the charity Home for Good, I hear many stories of Christians

who offer a home to a vulnerable child – and find that they are the ones who are being blessed and transformed.

Around the world, more and more countries are recognising that the best place for vulnerable children to flourish is not in institutions such as orphanages or children's villages, but in families. We know that God 'sets the lonely in families' (Psalm 68:6) and that 'Religion that our God and Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress' (James 1:27). Family worship takes on a whole new meaning as we open up our homes to vulnerable people in response to God's love and grace in our lives.

Of course God does not hate Christmas. Let us not forget that, in the Christmas story, God displays his Father heart for our world. He entrusts his son to the care of Mary and Joseph so that he can make a way to adopt us into his family. Let us give God the worship that our gospel demands. Let us discover what it means to take up the cause of the fatherless.

Dr Krish Kandiah is the chair of Tearfund's theological panel. He is an adoptive father and foster parent. Krish founded Home for Good, a charity seeking to find foster and adoptive homes for all the children who need one in the UK.

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by Denford Munemo and Qobolwakhe Khumalo

HELPING ORPHAN FAMILIES THRIVE IN ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe is home to an estimated 720,000 orphans, partly as a result of deaths from AIDS-related illnesses. Traditionally, the extended family would care for orphans. However, the difficult economic and social conditions in the country have left relatives struggling to cope. ZOE (Zimbabwe Orphans through Extended Hands) believes local churches have a vital role to play.

MOBILISING CHURCHES

Mobilising churches is at the heart of ZOE's work. Often churches have a desire to care for orphans, but do not know how to help. This is where ZOE steps in.

The strength of the ministry is in churches working together. When a church leader approaches ZOE for help with caring for orphans, ZOE first asks the pastor to gather all the church leaders in the area. ZOE staff then envision the leaders together about the biblical message to care for orphans. The leaders go back to their churches

and share the vision. They ask those in their congregations who have a heart for orphans to become volunteers.

ZOE then trains church volunteers to visit and support orphan families (families who are caring for orphans). Each volunteer is responsible for visiting four or five orphan families regularly (fewer if any of the families are child-headed households, as these need more support).

FAMILY STRENGTHENING

Church volunteers are trained in parenting skills, budgeting, child protection, psychosocial support, child development, and sexual and reproductive health. They pass on this training and knowledge to the families they support.

Churches and community members are also encouraged to speak up for orphans through advocacy. They protect orphan families' inheritance rights and help orphans get birth certificates, which they need for accessing other services.

Building supportive relationships is central to the volunteers' role. As part of their training, they are encouraged to use their God-given resources to support orphan families (see opposite page).

SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

ZOE also helps orphans and caregivers find ways to make a living. They provide them with small livestock (eg goats, chickens or rabbits) and train family members in animal management. They also train orphan families to grow crops and offer vocational training to orphans in a trade of their choice, setting them up for a more secure future.

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Denford Munemo is National Director of ZOE, and Qobolwakhe Khumalo is ZOE's Programmes Manager.

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📷 ZOE provides orphan families with livelihood opportunities, and church volunteers offer support. Photo: Eleanor Bentall/Tearfund



BRINGING DEAD LIVES TO LIFE

Pastor Bob Chimboo from south-east Zimbabwe shares his experience of working with ZOE.

With ZOE's help, between 2003 and 2016 we envisioned 135 churches in Masvingo to care for orphans. A lot of lives that seemed dead have been 'raised to life'. Churches have found many different ways to meet the needs of orphans and widows. These include paying school fees and teaching skills in hairdressing, motor mechanics and sewing. Some

of these orphans now have jobs and can provide for their families. We are training orphan families in gardening, fish farming, candle making, goat breeding and peanut butter making. We have also been advocating against child marriage and all forms of child abuse.

The ZOE model has helped us as pastors from different churches to be united for the cause of orphans. We meet once every month to discuss the issues volunteers from our churches come across during their visits. We are now a relevant church in our communities.

USING YOUR GOD-GIVEN RESOURCES

ZOE staff use these inspiring ideas as part of their training for church volunteers. Could you make a copy of this handout and use it in your church?

God created us with a heart, eyes, ears, mouth, hands and feet. Church volunteers can use these God-given resources to build supportive relationships with orphan families.

EARS

To listen to the children and understand their pain... To listen to the old grandfather who now has six children in his care and knows he has four more on the way when his next son dies... To listen when no relative has asked: 'How are you?' or 'How are the children?' But now this volunteer comes to visit, and asks: 'How many children are you caring for? How are they? How are you?' This volunteer says they want to help in any way they can, and gives the old man a chance to talk for the first time in months. Then the volunteer asks if he can come back – and does come back!

HANDS

For practical help, such as mending thatch, preparing the ground for planting, teaching sewing or carpentry etc.

FEET

For taking messages, bringing supplies, escorting children to the clinic etc – as well as for playing sport and games!

EYES

To see the soft brown hair and swollen hands and feet that speak of *kwashiorkor* (malnutrition due to a lack of protein and other nutrients)... To look into the child's eyes and see 'abuse'... To observe the home – the hole in the thatch, the absence of pots and pans etc...

MOUTH

To give messages of hope from the Bible and wise advice. To let families know what help and services are available in the community. To speak out and be a voice for the voiceless through advocacy.

HEART

A heart filled with love because of the cross of Jesus. A heart like God the Father's, to love and care for orphans.

God has given us these abilities to care for others and to reveal Jesus' love. They are totally free! Church members can use these resources to begin to build a strong orphan care ministry.

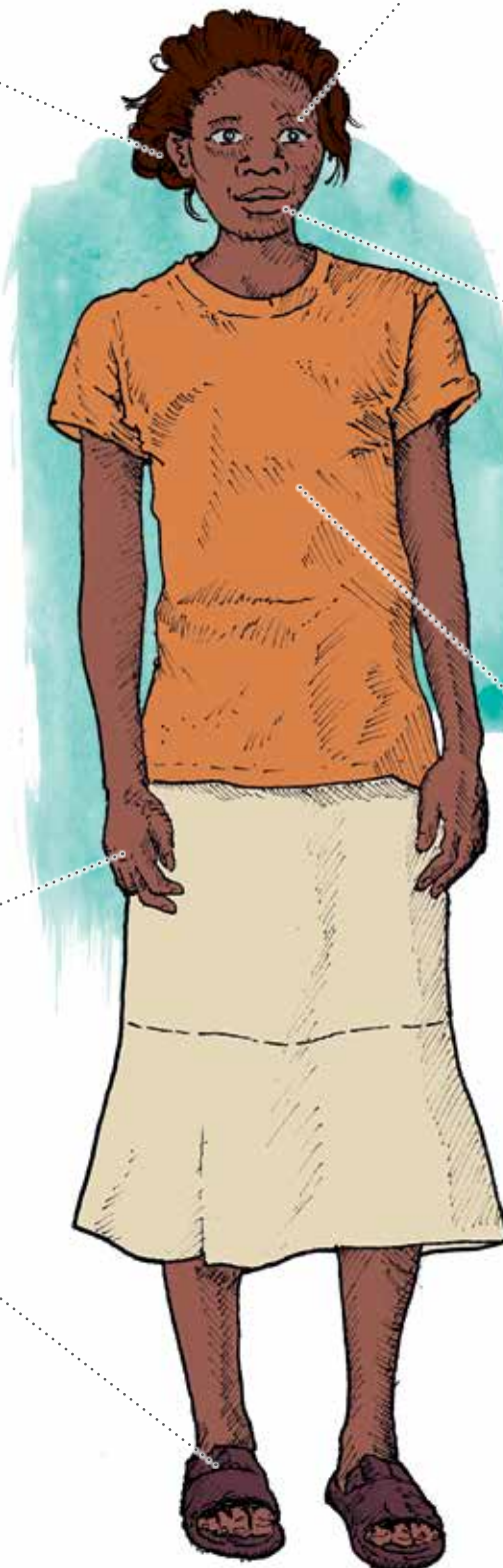


Illustration: Lloyd Kinsley/Tearfund

INTERVIEW

MY CHILDHOOD IN A CHILDREN'S HOME

Peter Kamau Muthui's mother died when he was six weeks old, and his father died a year later. He and his five older siblings grew up in residential care in Kenya. Here, he shares the impact this had on his life, and how it led him to start the organisation Child in Family Focus – Kenya.

What was it like for you growing up in a children's home?

My upbringing in a children's home had its share of highs and lows. I enjoyed occasional trips to see the world outside the home and particularly looked forward to going to school and church. I fondly remember my very first birthday celebration, aged seven. My nursery school teacher, Mercy, baked me a big cake and brought it to school. The next recognition of my birthday was when I turned 20.

I was one of 30 children under the care of two house mothers, who worked in shifts. This meant it was hard to get the attention, love, care and guidance I needed for a healthy and happy childhood. We never lacked material things. The biggest lack was love and attachment.

I got used to routines and noticed the harsh consequences of not keeping to them. Help with homework was a challenge. It was hard to get just three minutes of the house mother's time for a difficult arithmetic question.

Seeing children, including my friends, getting fostered and adopted left me wondering when my turn would come. Every time visitors came to the home, I was on my best behaviour. I wanted to increase my chances of being loved and taken away to be part of a family.

At first, four of my siblings were in different institutions to me and my youngest sister. We were eventually moved to the same children's home. I longed to see my elder siblings, but this was only possible at special events and sometimes at meals.

I still feel the effect of this limited interaction with my elder siblings. There is not a tight bond between us. My eldest brother's suicide in 2007 was a big blow to the family. It shows that many young people leaving care do indeed end up depressed and suicidal.

Despite the challenges of my upbringing, I have the children's home to thank for who I am today. I strongly believe that God allowed me to go through the experience for a reason. It prepared me to become an advocate for change.


GOD NEVER WASTES PAIN, BUT GROWS BEAUTY AND PURPOSE FROM IT

Did you feel well prepared for the outside world when you left the children's home?

No, I was ill-prepared for life outside the home. Like many who had gone before me, I was left to manage alone.

I had spent years following a structured routine where I had little or no choice, and so I struggled with independent life. Forming relationships, cooking and budgeting were challenging for me.



 Peter Kamau Muthui is the founder of Child in Family Focus – Kenya.

The lack of positive interaction with adults at the children's home meant I lacked personal confidence and key social skills. This included the skills necessary for starting a family.

Despite this, I think I had a rather 'soft landing'. Soon after completing my college studies, I was asked to work at the children's home. At first I was a teacher's assistant. I then became a social work assistant while I studied for my bachelor's degree. I later served as Social Programmes Manager for nine years.

What insights did you gain from working as Social Programmes Manager in the home?

Firstly, I learnt that being orphaned was not the main reason children were admitted into care. The majority of the children in the home had one or both parents alive, as well as many able relatives. Poverty was the main reason for putting children into care. People wrongly thought residential care had more to offer children than relatives.

Secondly, I learnt that even high-quality institutional care cannot replace families! Families provide children with love and a sense of belonging. They

teach social skills, and help children connect with the wider community. Children 'age out' of care, but there is no ageing out of families.

Most children leaving care struggled to be accepted back into the community. There was a high chance they would end up involved in criminal activities, sexual exploitation, drug abuse and early marriages.

I learnt that family-based care options had great benefits for children. We started an adoption agency and an outreach programme that supported children within their own families. This helped to strengthen families and prevent separation. These programmes continue to have a positive impact on the lives of children in Kenya.

What has helped you cope with, and heal from, the effects of growing up in residential care?

SALVATION AND GOD'S WORD – I continue to pursue an even deeper relationship with God. His word is full of great promises that I apply to my life daily. I have found salvation, healing, joy, purpose and hope in him.

MY CHURCH FAMILY – I am part of the praise and worship ministry at church. I also belong to a fellowship group that meets weekly and includes a few people who were at the children's home with me. This fellowship group has become my family.

SUPPORT GROUPS – I am a part of the Kenya Society of Care Leavers, and still interact with my siblings and friends who I grew up with in care. This helps me cope with the effects of my upbringing.

It is important to choose to forgive and forget the past, and focus on the work God is doing in and through us.

GOD'S PLAN FOR CARING FOR CHILDREN IS THE FAMILY

Could you tell us about the work of Child in Family Focus – Kenya?

In 2011, I felt God was calling me to join him in pursuing a new vision. I set up Child in Family Focus – Kenya to champion family-based care for orphaned and vulnerable children in Kenya. We do this through advocacy, assisting with deinstitutionalisation (phasing out orphanages), and monitoring governance in child care and protection matters.

Our mission is to uphold every child's right to family-based care. Our vision is a Kenya where family-based care for orphaned and vulnerable children is the norm rather than a privilege. In 2016 the organisation played a key role in the creation of the Alternative Care Alliance

– Kenya. The alliance brings together individuals, NGOs and the government to work towards implementing the Guidelines for the Alternative Family Care of Children in Kenya.

What message would you like to give to *Footsteps* readers?

That God places the lonely in families. (Psalm 68:6). God's plan for caring for children is the family. It is a much better plan than caring for them in children's homes – no matter how beautiful and well run a children's home may be.

For those who are supporting children's homes, now is the time for a change of mindset. Challenge those managing orphanages to transform them into community support centres. These centres can strengthen families so they can care for their own children and orphaned relatives. If kinship care is unavailable or unsuitable, we should support other forms of alternative care, such as foster care and adoption.

Finally – God never wastes pain, but grows beauty and purpose from it.

Peter Kamau Muthui is a founding partner and director of Child in Family Focus – Kenya.

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Peter is part of Tearfund's Inspired Individuals programme, which supports new leaders who are bringing transformation to their communities.

Website: www.tearfund.org/inspired



📍 Peter (highlighted by arrow) with some of the others in the children's home.

Contact details for the Kenya Society of Care Leavers:

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by Sarah Chhin

GETTING READY TO FACE THE WORLD

The M'lup Russey Organisation is transforming the way vulnerable children and young people are cared for in Cambodia. We are passionate about promoting alternatives to institutional care for children, and do a lot of work in this area. But we also recognise that it takes time for an orphanage to transition, and that children need support while they are still in institutions.

AFRAID OF THE WORLD OUTSIDE

In 2007, M'lup Russey staff held workshops with more than 500 young adults living in orphanages. All spoke of their fears about leaving the orphanage. They were afraid of ending up discriminated against, victimised, jobless and homeless. Some were even afraid they would starve. They feared they no longer had the skills to be part of an outside community.

Sadly, there are good reasons for these fears. Without careful preparation, young adults leaving orphanages in Cambodia struggle to fit back into community and family life. They are extremely vulnerable to exploitation, abuse and trafficking. Orphanages do not remove their vulnerability, but only delay its effects. In

many cases, their vulnerability is increased because of their stay in the orphanage.

M'lup Russey supports children while they are in residential care – but our work does not stop there. We do all we can to help young people successfully rejoin their community when they leave.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

First, M'lup Russey builds relationships with the directors of residential care centres. We invite them to training events so they can improve the way they care for children. We also help them to understand and apply the government's alternative care policy, which sees family-based care as a better model. Over the years, we have trained orphanage directors in child rights, child protection, child participation, anger management, proper reintegration processes, centre management, understanding the needs of children and youth, leadership skills and more.

After building relationships with the directors, M'lup Russey can begin working with the children and young people in their care. We offer them the chance to take part in peer support groups and life skills training.

These help young people learn the skills they will need to be safe, independent and socially included when they leave the centres.

YOUTH CLUBS

M'lup Russey supports young people to set up youth clubs in their centres. The clubs' activities build the young people's self-confidence, freedom and ability to live safely in a community in the future. The youth club members elect their own leaders and decide on their own structure and schedules. The clubs give them a voice in the centre. They help the young people express themselves freely and prepare them for independence.

All this trains them in how to be leaders, facilitators and responsible team players. It improves their communication and work skills, and helps them relate well to others. Thanks to M'lup Russey, hundreds of young people have been members of orphanage youth clubs since 2008!

LIFE SKILLS TRAINING

M'lup Russey also offers life skills training and vocational training scholarships to young people living in centres. These workshops are taught by professionals and experts. They cover more in-depth topics, such as

- 'knowing myself'
- communication skills
- living safely in the community
- anger management
- reproductive health
- drug awareness
- money management
- life planning
- goal setting.

📷 Life skills training helps young people learn how to live independently when they leave residential care. Photo: M'lup Russey Organisation



FURTHER SUPPORT

These support services give M'lup Russey the opportunity to build strong, trusting relationships with children and young people in residential care centres. They can then offer them other services, such as counselling and legal advice, as well as support when they eventually leave residential care.

CARE LEAVERS' NETWORK

M'lup Russey runs a Care Leavers' Network for young people who have left residential care. Care leavers can join a small group of other young people in the same situation. In the regular small group meetings, they can share their stories and their experiences of community life.

There are also big group meetings, where the smaller groups join together. This provides the care leavers with a large network of people they can form good relationships with. Through this network, care leavers help each other become independent and responsible for themselves.

The care leavers are in a unique position to help others who are soon to leave orphanages. They visit orphanages and share their experiences of life in the community. This helps young adult orphans step into the future with more confidence. M'lup Russey also provides vocational training to care leavers,



Young people taking part in life skills training on anger management. Photo: M'lup Russey Organisation

enabling them to lead successful independent lives. Finally, for Christian care leavers, M'lup Russey runs a Bible study and prayer group.

Sarah Chhin is Strategic Technical Adviser for M'lup Russey.

M'lup Russey also provides emergency foster care and family reunification services, and helps residential care centres to transition. They welcome enquiries from anyone interested in learning more or wishing to do similar work.

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IDEAS FOR USING THIS ARTICLE

- In a group, discuss what you think works well about M'lup Russey's approach.
- Discuss ways your church, group or organisation could help support children and young people after they leave residential care. For example, are there care leavers' networks in your area that you could help young people connect with?



CASE STUDY: PITHOU'S STORY

Pithou grew up in an orphanage in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Here, he shares his thoughts about learning life skills in the orphanage:

'Learning life skills showed me a new way to live. In the past, I did not care about my future because I had enough rice to eat and a place to live. I thought I was not good at studying, and even my mother said I had a lobster brain! [Editor: a name for someone who is not very clever.]

But now I have had a chance to express my feelings and make friends with other people living in orphanages. I saw two of these new friends reading and studying hard. So I started to look hard at myself. I made a decision to commit to studying harder for my own future and the future of my country. I now know that we all have great value for our community, society and country.

People think that orphanages give children everything they need, but they do not. Children in orphanages do not have hope and they do not have the love of their parents. The life skills training has been very important for me. It has opened wide my heart and my mind. It has taught me to be brave and share my thoughts, which I was never able to do before as I felt weak and afraid. I am not a frog inside a well any more.'

MAKING FAMILIES STRONGER

Family strengthening is about keeping children in their families and preventing them from being placed in residential care. Different families will have different needs, and many will need a combination of approaches.

When an orphanage is phased out, it can use its buildings and resources to provide services for the community. Your church or community group can get involved and play an important role in supporting families. Here are some ideas...



COUNSELLING

Counselling can help families and parents experiencing difficulties such as marriage breakdown or substance abuse. Check whether someone in your church or community is qualified and willing to provide this service. If not, find a counsellor from elsewhere who could visit regularly to offer appointments.

PARENTING SUPPORT

Provide training for parents and caregivers in topics such as parenting skills, budgeting, good nutrition, child development and child protection. This will help strengthen families and increase their confidence in caring for children.



FREE OR LOW-COST DAY CARE

Offer child care services during the day. This will allow parents or caregivers to go out to work and support their families. Provide the children with meals, stimulating activities and play time during the day. Offer respite care for children with disabilities to help refresh and re-energise their parents.



EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

Poor families often struggle with the costs of school fees, books and uniforms. They may think a child will have a better chance of an education in residential care. Supporting families with these costs can make a real difference. Try negotiating with schools so they reduce or remove fees for vulnerable children. Use your community centre to provide extra tuition or learning opportunities for children who are struggling with school.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMMES

Train volunteers to visit vulnerable families in their homes and offer appropriate support. This can include practical help with food preparation and household tasks, as well as emotional and spiritual support.



INCOME-GENERATING ACTIVITIES

Poverty is often the main reason families place children in orphanages. Helping families find ways of earning enough income can make a huge difference. Consider offering vocational training, such as tailoring, carpentry, metalwork, baking, hairdressing or computer skills. The training should be relevant to local needs and opportunities. Offer people help with starting small businesses, and start saving and loan schemes.



ADVOCACY AND ACCESS TO SERVICES

Support orphans and their caregivers to access the benefits they are entitled to, such as government grants and services. Sometimes this may be as simple as letting them know what is available. Orphaned children may also need support with securing inheritance rights, accessing school or getting identity documents. Nominate representatives from your community group to speak up for vulnerable children's needs at school board meetings and local councils.



WOMEN'S, MEN'S AND CHILDREN'S CLUBS

Women's clubs allow women to come together and talk about their experiences and challenges. Children's clubs help children to support one another and have their voices heard. Set up and facilitate these clubs – and consider setting up a men's group, too, focusing on what makes a good father.



ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Through your community centre, help families access health care, including HIV testing and counselling. Train volunteers to deliver home-based care for sick relatives so that children can attend school. Provide support for those with disabilities, eg access to physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy.

by Rebecca Nhep

THE ORPHANAGE THAT TURNED INSIDE OUT

The message is spreading that long-term residential care is not in the best interests of orphans and vulnerable children. As a result, many orphanages around the world are transforming into centres providing family and community strengthening services. This process is often called 'transitioning'. Rebecca Nhep, Director of ACC International Relief, outlines how this change can take place.

CHANGING THE WAY WE CARE

If you have been supporting or running an orphanage or children's home, the thought of transitioning to a family and community-based programme can be very daunting. It raises lots of questions such as, 'What's involved in a transition?', 'How can I make sure the children are safe and well cared for in a family?', 'What about their education or their faith?', 'What will my donors think?', 'What happens to our building if children no longer live here?' and 'What will be left of my ministry when we are no longer an orphanage?'

Sometimes these questions and concerns feel like obstacles that stop us from changing. However, with good planning, the right support and well developed processes, you can make sure the transition is effective and safe for children. What's more, you will actually see your programme or ministry grow in its reach and success.

ACC International Relief's Kinnected programme supports local and international organisations to transition their residential care programmes. Over the last six years, we have worked with more than 60 residential care centres across 11 different countries.

The story of Pastor Myint Nwe shows some of the key steps involved in transitioning. This is just one example of how the process can work.

REALISING THE NEED TO CHANGE

Pastor Myint Nwe is the director of Caring and Loving Children (CLC), a community-based organisation in Myanmar. He used to be responsible for five residential care centres across the country. Many of the children in the centres had living relatives, but had been referred because of extreme poverty, the death of one or both parents, or another crisis situation.

Over time, Pastor Myint saw that residential care is not ideal for children. He realised that, whenever possible, children belong in families. However, he lacked the right knowledge and expertise to lead the centres through the transition process and reintegrate children into the community. Kinnected agreed to support and guide CLC in its transition to family-based care.

► **POINT TO NOTE:** Being convinced of the need to change is essential.

PREPARING KEY PARTICIPANTS

First, Kinnected helped CLC to think about preparing key participants before making any significant changes. This included donors, board members, employees, community leaders and local government officials.

► **POINT TO NOTE:** It is important to educate everyone involved about the need to transition to family-based care, and how this can be done. Emphasising the benefits for children can help convince people.

BUILDING CAPACITY

The next step Kinnected took was to build and strengthen Pastor Myint's capacity as leader of CLC. Beginning in 2013, he went on a field visit to meet with another Kinnected partner doing family strengthening work in a similar context. This helped him see for himself the benefits of reuniting families, arranging foster placements or kinship care, and joining peer networks.

► **POINT TO NOTE:** It is important for orphanage leaders to picture what the transition might look like in their community. They are likely to need additional training in topics such as child protection, child development, case management, family-based care, and monitoring and evaluation. They should develop links with government departments and other organisations working in child welfare, so they can work well together.

📍 Children in an early years programme in Myanmar. Orphanages can transition to provide community services such as this. Photo: Alice Keen/Tearfund



PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION

Together, Kinnected and CLC developed a plan for the organisation's transition. This included writing down its mission, vision, strengths, future goals and direction, outputs to measure, activities, resources, and areas where CLC needed education or experience. Kinnected trained CLC's staff to make sure they would support the process and had the right knowledge and skills.

► **POINT TO NOTE:** Developing a detailed transition plan for the institution is vital. It is important to hire social workers and ensure they have the right skills. Professionals may need training in ways of working with vulnerable children and their caregivers. Topics may include assessment, evaluation, family tracing (ways to find children's relatives) and mapping the services available.

STEPS IN THE TRANSITION

Wherever possible, Pastor Myint traced the family members of the children in his care. He and his team then assessed their suitability and willingness to provide adequate care.

Pastor Myint knew that poverty was the reason some of the children had been placed in residential care. He therefore helped family members to set up small businesses such as tailoring, grocery shops and livestock farming. The families could also be connected to support systems or other community services.

Pastor Myint began with three orphanages where the donor church was eager to transition. There were a total of 53 children in these homes. So far, he has reintegrated two children back into their biological families and 22 into kinship placements. A further two older teenagers have moved into semi-independent living.

► **POINT TO NOTE:** It is important to keep children safe throughout the process. Families should be properly assessed before a child is placed with them. Reuniting children with their original family is the ideal, but if this is unsafe or inappropriate, other options should be explored. This can include kinship care, foster care and adoption.

'I'D LIKE MY ORPHANAGE TO TRANSITION! WHAT NOW?'

Most orphanages will need technical support from an organisation such as Kinnected to help them transition well. This support enables them to put the right frameworks in place for a safe transition.

Kinnected welcomes enquiries from orphanages that are interested in transitioning (see contact details below). Kinnected will then assess what level of support it can provide.

A helpful resource is Faith to Action's *Transitioning to family care for children* manual. Visit www.faithtoaction.org/resources to download a free copy.

A care plan is developed with and for each child that highlights what needs to happen to prepare the child for placement. After this, a family support plan is created. This lists the changes and support needed to allow both the child and the family to make a successful transition.

Pastor Myint and CLC's social worker regularly monitor all of the children who have been placed with a family. The monitoring process becomes less frequent over time for placements that are working well, until the child's case is closed. This process takes at least 12 months, sometimes longer. Monitoring is done in person, sometimes with phone calls between visits (particularly for children in remote areas). If visits reveal a need for additional support, social workers organise the help required.

► **POINT TO NOTE:** After children are reunited with their families, monitoring is vital to ensure the placement is stable and the child is safe.

CLC has now completely closed its first orphanage. The orphanage has transitioned into a family health clinic and community learning centre. The centre offers vocational training, which helps community members to find employment or start their own small businesses. This can help prevent family breakdown in the first place.

Pastor Myint has also set up an emergency foster care service to provide

temporary care for abandoned or abused children. These children are referred by the local police or community leaders. Pastor Myint and his social worker then begin the process of family tracing and assessments. They aim to find a suitable, safe family placement for the child, either through family reunification, kinship care or foster care.

► **POINT TO NOTE:** When residential care centres transition, the buildings and resources can be used to provide services to strengthen families and the community.

PARTNERSHIPS

Pastor Myint is now an advocate for family-based care, and shares his experiences with other orphanage directors. He is part of the alternative care working group in Myanmar.

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This article was partially adapted from CAFO's document Replicable models for transition to family-based care. See www.cafo.org/resource/replicable-models-for-transition-to-family-based-care

USING ART AS THERAPY

FOR ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN

Creating art and talking about it can help children heal from difficult experiences. Activities can include drawing, painting, modelling, collage and any other type of art. The activities below can help orphans and vulnerable children to express their emotions, grow in self-esteem and work through difficult memories.

The caregiver needs to listen well, to express understanding and to offer full acceptance and love. It is important to be sensitive to how much a child wants to share. The atmosphere should be relaxed and friendly, and children should have fun while doing the activities (eg using different colours and materials).

BEFORE YOU START
Find out the details of a trained local counsellor who works with children. If children show signs of distress, stop the activity, comfort them and consider arranging for them to meet with the counsellor.



IDEA 1: THE SAFE PLACE

A good place to start with children who have experienced something traumatic is to get them to draw a 'safe place'. This activity is also useful for children who are becoming anxious.

Encourage the child to close his eyes and imagine a place where he feels very safe. This could be a real or imaginary place. Give him plenty of time to imagine this place; this might be difficult for recently traumatised children. Tell him that only the people he wants are there,

and nothing bad can happen to him. Ask questions to help him create an image of the place, such as, 'Have a look around. What do you see? What do you smell? What do you hear? You are very happy and safe... What are you doing?' Ask 'What else?' to encourage the child to give more details. When the child has finished imagining the place, he could draw or create it with colouring pens, pencils, paints or different materials. Encourage him to remember this place and think of it when he feels afraid or sad.

IDEA 2: THAT'S ME!

This activity can help strengthen a child's sense of identity and build self-esteem.

Get the child to look in a mirror. While she is still looking, ask the following questions:

- What do you see?
- Who created you?
- How many people in the world look exactly like you? (Point out that God created the child in a unique and special way. Tell her that everything from the hands of God is good and beautiful – including the child.)
- What do you look like? Can you describe yourself?
- What do you like about yourself? What is special?

Then create a piece of artwork with the child on this theme. Here are some ideas, but feel free to think of your own.

- Using non-toxic paint or ink, get the child to make a handprint in the middle of a piece of paper. Alternatively, the child can draw around her hand and colour it in.
- Ask the child to write on or around the handprint, 'I am unique.'
- Encourage the child to write on every finger of the hand the things she likes about herself.
- Measure the child and write the result on the paper with the date.
- Get the child to glue a strand of her hair to the paper.

This can be part of a set of art activities on themes such as 'Where I'm from', 'Friendships' and 'My hopes for the future'. Children can collect these into a folder and decorate the cover.



IDEA 3: CHANGING THE MEMORY

This activity can help children to deal with frightening things that have happened in their life.

Simply allowing children to draw or paint whatever they choose, and showing interest in what they create, will help them express their thoughts and feelings. Ask questions such as, 'Tell me about your picture', 'Who is in it?' and 'What are they doing?' If this reveals the child is feeling afraid, you can use the following activity.

Tell the child a story about people or animals who were very afraid of something. In the midst of this situation, something happened that brought them

out of danger. Perhaps another person or animal came along and so their fear disappeared. (An example from the Bible is the story of Jesus calming the storm when the disciples were afraid.)

Go back to the picture the child drew of the situation where he felt afraid. Ask him what helped him in this situation and how his fear left. If the child cannot think of anything that helped, encourage him to imagine something by asking, 'What *would* have helped you?' Ask the child to draw this person or thing that helped onto the picture, so that it changes the memory.



by Godfrey Turyatamba and Susan M. Otai

REUNITING CHILDREN WITH THEIR FAMILIES

Reintegration means helping children move back into families and communities.

Children and families both need careful support before they can be reunited. The exact process they will follow will depend on their unique situation. It is important not to rush the process. For children who have been on the street or in an institution for some time, it would usually take at least six months.

The child follows this process:

- **Rescue:** Children may be referred from hospitals, social workers or the police. Sometimes babies are found in dustbins or at the roadside.
- **Rehabilitate:** Social workers should carry out an initial child assessment. This shows how the child is doing physically, mentally, emotionally, medically, psychologically and intellectually. Immediate needs are identified and dealt with before a child is resettled back into the family.

- **Care plan:** A care plan should include information about the child's needs and how the reintegration will take place. It also has details of the time frame, person responsible, costs involved and steps for completing the resettlement. It is important to help children prepare emotionally for reintegration.

Work with the family includes:

- **Family tracing:** Support workers trace the child's biological family or find a foster family. They visit the family and talk about the child.
- **Assessment and preparation:** Social workers assess whether the family is able to take care of the child without putting the child at risk.
- **Family visits:** The child visits the family and begins to bond before going to live with them permanently.

- **Building support networks:** Visits are arranged to link the family up with support services in the community. This includes health workers, social workers and community and religious leaders.

Once all this has taken place, the child can be settled into the family. After the child is placed with the family, a social worker should visit within seven days to see how they are doing. A social worker will visit the family regularly until the child is fully settled. Visits usually take place once a month for the first three months, and then once every three months for up to a year, depending on the family's situation. The organisation should keep in touch with the child even after the child has left the programme.

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CRANE is a network of Christian organisations in Uganda and a partner of Viva. They work to inspire lasting change in children's lives through collective action.

Website: www.cranenetwork.org
Email: administrator@cranenetwork.org

WHEN 'FOSTERING' IS A NEW WORD



Participants from Honduras, Panama, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic finishing a Casa Viva training course. Photo: Casa Viva

Casa Viva is the only organisation actively implementing foster care in Costa Rica. Working through the local church, they encourage families to offer a home to children in need.

Philip and Jill Aspegren started Casa Viva in 2003. Before this, they ran a children's home in the Dominican Republic for six years. Although they loved their work, they wondered if there were better alternatives to residential care. In 2003, the organisation Viva invited the Aspegrens to investigate this question in Central America.

Philip and Jill chose Costa Rica as their base. When they began, the word 'fostering' was not even used in Costa Rica.

FIRST STEPS

The Aspegrens began by building relationships with the local and national government. They reviewed Costa Rica's laws and policies to see what they would be permitted to do. Then they began sharing their vision with churches. Casa Viva hired professional staff, such as social workers, and developed a training curriculum for churches and families.

After eight months, the first child was placed with a local church family. Since then, more than 400 children have been fostered through Casa Viva's efforts. The government's child protection department now regularly refers children to them.

STRATEGIES

Casa Viva always begins by organising a short-term foster placement. This provides for a child's immediate needs while longer-term solutions are investigated. Casa Viva's first choice is always to reunite children with their biological family, with appropriate support. But when this is not possible or safe, they seek a permanent placement through adoption. If no family is willing to adopt, they arrange short- or long-term foster care.

Partnering with the local church is at the heart of Casa Viva's work. They have found that churches are inspired by the biblical idea of showing hospitality to those in need. Churches are responsible for recruiting foster families, and they support families once children have been placed. Casa Viva's professional staff members carry out assessments to make sure the placement is suitable, and help prepare and accompany the family.

SPREADING THE MESSAGE

Changing mindsets can be very challenging. Casa Viva now offers training to churches, organisations and governments from other Latin American countries. Philip and Jill welcome enquiries about their training courses, which are available in English and Spanish.



IDEAS FOR USING THIS ARTICLE

- In a group, discuss how common fostering is in the place where you live. Would people in your church or community consider offering foster care to orphans and vulnerable children? If so, who do you need to connect with to start the process?

With thanks to Philip and Jill Aspegren. This article was compiled using CAFO's Replicable models for transition to family-based care. See www.cafo.org/resource/replicable-models-for-transition-to-family-based-care

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CASE STUDY: 'A FAMILY, FOR ME?'

When Rosa's mother and grandmother died, there was no one left to look after her. She was taken to a government orphanage, where it seemed she would spend the rest of her childhood.*

A year later, a couple called Stefano and Marielos heard Rosa's story. They had been trained by Casa Viva and were willing to give her a long-term home.

A government social worker told Rosa the news. At first, Rosa was so surprised she could not speak. At last, she said, 'A family, for me? For me, when I am already so old?' Eleven-year-old children in her situation have little chance of ever living with a family.

On Rosa's first day with her new family, she found a box of art materials. She spent

time playing with her new 'sister' and expressing her feelings through her art.

That night, when Stefano and Marielos went to bed, they found Rosa's artwork (above) tucked under the sheets. She had drawn a family tree, and had given herself a place in the new family. She belonged.

*Names have been changed.





WE ARE ALL PART OF GOD'S FAMILY

Some children have a big family. Some have a small family. Some children are orphans. This means their mum or dad has died or is no longer looking after them. Some children are waiting for a family to give them a home.

But the Bible tells that God wants to adopt all of us as his special children! This means we never have to feel alone. We can always talk to God about anything we are thinking and feeling.

Do you know any children who might feel alone? How can you help them feel better? Write your ideas below.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Can you find these words hidden in the grid?

Words can go up, down, forwards, backwards or diagonally.

We don't want orphans to feel...

- LONELY
- SAD
- SCARED
- IGNORED
- DIFFERENT

We want orphans to feel...

- LOVED
- HAPPY
- SAFE
- VALUED
- NORMAL

N	D	E	U	L	A	V	E	W	T
O	K	U	N	V	O	V	U	N	U
R	H	U	X	Q	I	N	E	Z	O
M	Y	I	G	N	O	R	E	D	A
A	G	P	E	H	E	S	D	L	V
L	F	F	P	F	C	F	E	Y	Y
S	A	D	F	A	J	H	V	D	E
S	E	I	R	S	H	P	O	W	C
G	D	E	I	Q	U	E	L	U	D
B	D	L	W	K	D	R	Z	V	N



BIBLE VERSE MEMORY CHALLENGE!

Can you learn this Bible verse by heart?

'I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.' (2 Corinthians 6:18)



by Jude Collins

STANDING UP FOR THE RIGHTS OF ORPHANS

LESSONS FROM CENTRAL ASIA

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 caused widespread family breakdown in the Central Asian States. This led to large numbers of children being taken into orphanages.

A Central Asian friend explains: 'In one week, people lost everything. Factories closed and there was no money to pay salaries. Many men really struggled. They started to drink and take drugs. The women suddenly had to take responsibility for providing for their families, and many went to Russia to look for work. The children were left with relatives, neighbours or even strangers. Many of them ended up homeless or in orphanages. Now, many thousands of children are in orphanages or living on the street.'

When children reach the age of 16, they are expected to leave the orphanages. However, they often lack essential life skills and have nowhere to go. This makes them vulnerable to exploitation,

trafficking and addictions. Some do not have identity cards. This means they cannot access housing, employment, medical care or legal support, and are not able to vote when they are older. Many become involved in crime or prostitution, or end up living on the streets.

A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

Genesis* was the first organisation in the Central Asian States to focus on the issues these young people face. Working closely with local churches, they help the young people become part of society again. They offer mentoring, training, careers advice and legal support. They also provide transition homes until the young people find somewhere permanent.

But Genesis did not want to treat only the symptoms of the problem. They decided to lobby the government and advocate for the rights of these young people (see box opposite).

At first the government was suspicious and refused to listen. But over six years, Genesis lobbied and built strong relationships with the local and national government. Their perseverance was finally rewarded. In 2016 they were asked to help develop some new laws to protect the rights of children leaving orphanages.

ENCOURAGING FOSTER CARE

Another organisation, Transform*, runs a crisis centre for vulnerable children. This centre provides temporary care for children before they either return home or join a foster family. When Transform started doing this, fostering was a new idea in the Central Asian States. Many people questioned what they were doing. But Transform had a clear vision. They longed for any child who could not live with their natural family to find a new place in a foster family. They knew that their government had signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (see page 3), making it more likely they would support a new national law.

The breakthrough came when a social worker put Transform in contact with the national government's ministry responsible for children and families. Transform then created a network with other organisations interested in fostering. Together, they lobbied the ministry until a national law was passed, governing everything to do with fostering.

Now they are putting the law into practice by making sure children in their town are always found a suitable home. Each foster family receives

📷 Many families in the Central Asian States are living in very basic conditions.
Photo: Alice Keen/Tearfund



CREATIVE WAYS TO LOBBY DECISION-MAKERS

What is lobbying?

Lobbying can be understood as 'direct contact with decision-makers'. Its main aim is to influence decision-makers to bring about changes in laws, policies and practices.

Lobbying can include:

- Writing a letter
- Making a phone call
- Arranging a visit or a meeting
- Conducting a visit or a meeting
- Enabling a decision-maker to go and meet with a community affected by the issue.

Using role-play creatively: an example

Genesis* staff were asked to present their case to members of parliament. They took some young people from the transition centres with them. Together, they set up this very effective role play:

- Each government minister was given a card. Written on each card was a typical situation a young person might face after leaving an orphanage.
- The ministers were asked to play the part of these young people during a role play.

- The young people played the part of local officials (medical, housing, employment etc).

- The ministers spoke with the 'local officials' and were 'denied access' to most of the goods and services they requested. This was because their characters had criminal records or no money, education, identity cards etc.

By the end of the role play, the ministers were deeply moved. They formed a working group to look more closely at the problem.

training, ongoing support and a financial allowance per child.

Because of this, over the last ten years not a single child from the town has had to enter an orphanage.

SPEAKING UP FOR FAMILIES

Alongside local churches, Transform also works with vulnerable families to try and prevent family breakdown in the first place. They provide counselling and vocational training, leading to more stable families.

Local-level advocacy is an important part of Transform's work with families. They help families regain lost documents such as identity cards and property papers. They also write letters to the local authorities on behalf of children who have been denied access to schooling. This problem can arise when children do not have the proper identity papers, pre-school education, clothing or shoes. It can also happen because of prejudice against poor families. Sometimes these letters achieve results, and the local authorities ensure that schools accept these vulnerable children.

Government organisations now cooperate with Transform when they become aware

of vulnerable children. They see them as professional and trustworthy.

KEY LESSONS LEARNT

Apply biblical principles. Genesis and Transform are motivated by the biblical principle, 'Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow' (Isaiah 1:17). Their desire to share God's love with the most vulnerable people motivates them to keep going, even when they experience opposition.

Involve the local church. This greatly increases the impact that small organisations can have. In the Central Asian States, many Christian families foster vulnerable children. Church members teach the children in transition centres new skills such as cooking and sewing. They also provide pastoral support and counselling. Lawyers from the church give time and expertise for free to help restore identity documents and lobby for children's rights.

Persevere! It took Genesis and Transform many years to convince the government and other organisations that there was a problem, and also that they were serious about being part of the solution.

Eventually, though, their hard work and integrity achieved results. They can now influence the development of laws relating to vulnerable children at both local and national level, and can help ensure these are put into practice.



IDEAS FOR USING THIS ARTICLE

- In a group, discuss the policies your local and national decision-makers have on caring for orphans. Do you agree with these?
- Could you use any of the ideas in this article to lobby decision-makers about orphans' rights?

Visit www.tearfund.org/advocacy_toolkit for free advocacy resources.

Jude Collins is a Project Information Officer for Tearfund. She has previous community development experience in Nepal and Honduras.

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*Names have been changed.



PREVIOUS FOOTSTEPS

- FOOTSTEPS 98: HIV
- FOOTSTEPS 72: Family life
- FOOTSTEPS 55: Families under pressure
- FOOTSTEPS 38: Child participation
- FOOTSTEPS 28: Street children
- FOOTSTEPS 8: Mother and child care

Visit www.tearfund.org/footsteps to download a free copy, or contact us to order paper copies.



FROM FAITH TO ACTION

Second edition

An introduction to family and community-based care for orphans and vulnerable children. This book highlights key strategies that help children remain in families. Available in English only. Visit www.faithtoaction.org/resources to download a free copy.



HOME: A CAMBODIAN STORY

By Andy Grey and Sao Sreymao

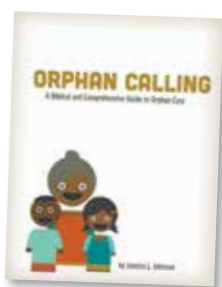
A moving story, told in comic book format, of one child's journey home after living in an orphanage. In English only. Visit www.worldwithoutorphans.org/search and type 'Home' to download a copy.



ORPHAN CALLING

By Jessica Johnson

An online resource looking at orphan care from a biblical and practical point of view. The booklet looks at topics such as 'What does the Bible say?' and 'If not orphanages, then what?' Available in English only. You can search for this booklet online using any good search engine.



GUIDELINES ON CHILDREN'S REINTEGRATION

Detailed guidelines on helping children rejoin their families and community. Visit www.familyforeverychild.org/report/guidelines-childrens-reintegration to download a copy. Available in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic and Russian.



CHILDREN, ORPHANAGES AND FAMILIES

Published by the Faith to Action Initiative

An overview of research on the care of orphans and vulnerable children, providing examples from specific countries. Download a free copy from www.faithtoaction.org/resources in English, French or Spanish.



USEFUL WEBSITES

These websites are available in English only unless otherwise stated.

www.kinnected.org.au

Useful resources on strengthening families and helping orphanages transition. See their 'Resources' page for a list of frequently asked questions and the Kinnected information pack.

www.worldwithoutorphans.org

A Christian movement working towards family-based care. Their website contains information, news, resources and videos.

www.faithtoaction.org

The Faith to Action Initiative helps Christians to respond to the needs of orphans and vulnerable children. Their website contains research reports, Bible studies, stories and more.

www.bettercarenetwork.org

The Better Care Network is a group of organisations that support children without suitable family care. Resources include a toolkit for practitioners. Available in English, with French and Spanish sections.

www.cafo.org

Christian Alliance for Orphans (CAFO) inspires and equips Christians to care for orphans and vulnerable children.

www.childreninemergencies.org

A toolkit for helping children in emergency contexts.



 **HELPING SOCIAL ORPHANS**

We were happy to hear you are producing a *Footsteps* edition on orphan care. There are many 'social orphans' in the Philippines who are neglected or abandoned by their parents. Some are victims of extreme poverty, natural disasters or armed conflicts. Sometimes, children we have worked with have ended up on the streets despite our best efforts. This is disheartening and frustrating. Our community workers would cry during office prayers for children like these.

With the high risk of disasters in the Philippines, more children are in danger of becoming social orphans. We hope Tearfund can provide concrete tools on how to sustainably address this issue.

LINGAP (TEAR NETHERLANDS PARTNER)

 **KNOTTY PROBLEM**

Question: 'If an orphanage is run like a family, can it still cause difficulties for children?'

Answer: Some orphanages try to provide 'family-like' care. They may only care for small numbers of children. Or they may put children into 'family groups', where they are looked after by a caregiver in smaller homes within a compound. While this is much better than large institutions, it still does not replace a family in a true sense.

Even small family-like orphanages have staff changes and more fixed rules and routines than a family. Orphanages that arrange themselves as small homes in a compound still create their own community. They do not place a child

 **TACKLING STIGMA AGAINST CHILDREN**

Footsteps 86 on stigma had a great impact in my village. We had children who were deaf, dumb, lame and HIV-positive, as well as two young girls who were almost raped. These children were being mocked, and could not go to school and play with their friends. Even their parents were locking them in the house, fearing shame.

I visited these children with the help of village headmen committees. We talked to their parents and guardians about how Jesus loved the children, the lame, the blind and everyone. After two months of convincing them, they allowed their children to start mixing with their friends. We also had a talk to their friends and told them to imagine it was them and how they would feel. We then started a village community school and sports club. After hearing about love, people changed their attitude and behaviour towards orphans and disabled and vulnerable children.

SAMSON, ZAMBIA

in a real community and the broader society. This will affect the children when they leave. Orphanages care for a large number of children over the years. They cannot be parents to all of those children through every stage of their life.

The negative effects of growing up in an institution can be reduced through family-like environments, but not necessarily removed. Therefore, while family-like residential care is better than large institutional care, it is still not the best option if appropriate family or community care can be found.

Answer adapted from ACCI Kinnected's Frequently asked questions document.

*Do you have a knotty problem you would like the *Footsteps* community to help with? Contact us using the addresses below.*

FOOTSTEPS

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Footsteps is free of charge to grassroots development workers and church leaders. Those who are able to pay can buy a subscription by contacting the Editor. This enables us to continue providing free copies to those most in need.

Readers are invited to contribute views, articles, letters and photos.

Footsteps is also available in French as *Pas à Pas*, in Portuguese as *Passo a Passo* and in Spanish as *Paso a Paso*. It is also available in Hindi.

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NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

Children with disabilities are among the most at risk of being placed in orphanages. Many parents do not know how to cope with a disabled child, and often there is very little community support available. Care for Children is changing this reality for disabled children in China, with incredible results.

In 1998, the Chinese government asked Care for Children's founder, Robert Glover, to start a trial project moving children out of orphanages and into families. Partnering with Tearfund, Robert moved with his family to Shanghai. At this stage there was not even a term for 'foster care' in the official language of China, Mandarin (similar to Casa Viva's story on page 18). But within three years, 500 children had been placed with local families.

Eighteen years later, Care for Children has helped 300,000 children move into loving family homes. The organisation is now also working in Thailand, and will start up in Vietnam and Malaysia in 2017. Their vision is to move 1 million children out of institutions and into families.

Robert gives several reasons for why people in China are eager to offer long-term foster care:

- In China, family and community are very important. Until recently the Chinese government had a one-child policy, meaning many couples were only allowed one biological child (though there were exceptions). But parents want to care for more children.
- Many of the foster families are Christians and are motivated by their faith to show love to those in need.
- The Chinese government has helped spread the message about family-based care. They honour families who have taken in a child, placing a plaque outside their home.

FOSTERING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Care for Children helps to find new families for both non-disabled children and those with disabilities. Many people assume it is very hard to find foster families for disabled children. But in Care for Children's experience, many families in China and Thailand are happy to foster children with disabilities. This is partly because of Care for Children's model and the specific support they provide for families of disabled children.



📷 Xiao Long was born with a cleft palate and was abandoned by his birth parents. But through Care for Children's support, he now has a new foster family who love and encourage him. Photo: Care for Children

When children move out of orphanages and into families, Care for Children helps the institution to transform into a community support centre. This can include programmes to support children with special needs, such as physiotherapy services. Care for Children retrains the orphanage staff to become family support workers, who each work with 20 families. This makes it much easier for foster families to care for a child with disabilities.

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With thanks to Robert Glover. To watch a video of Care for Children's work, visit <http://youtu.be/r5Q-AmcrHag>

*Website: www.careforchildren.com
Email: info@careforchildren.com*



CASE STUDY: AN AMAZING VILLAGE NEAR KUNMING

Yang Jia is a small village in the mountains near Kunming, China. It might seem like a normal village – but it has done a remarkable thing. Fifty-three families in this community have taken in 166 children from a nearby orphanage. More than 90 per cent of these children have severe mental or physical disabilities.

'This is a very special project,' says Sun Yuan Jie, China Project Manager for Care for Children. 'People here give their heart to the

children. They love the children and they support each other.'

First, Care for Children spent time in the orphanage in Kunming, training the parents and preparing the children. After the children were placed in their new families, workers trained by Care for Children offered ongoing monitoring and support.

'Of course there are challenges,' says one foster father from Yang Jia. 'But we work through them. The joys outweigh

the challenges.' With the love and care of their new families, the children begin to thrive and smile again.

'We really love them,' one foster mother adds. 'We love them as if they were our own children, and they love us like we are their parents.'

The parents in Yang Jia say that their happiest moment in the last ten years was when they heard the children start calling them 'mum' and 'dad' for the first time.