

Voluntourism

Should I volunteer overseas?

With volunteering overseas on development projects rapidly growing in popularity and increasing numbers of adventure tour operators offering “voluntourism” packages, serious questions have arisen about how some projects are managed and how benefits are being shared.

It is also a challenge for prospective volunteers to identify organisations that embrace best practice.

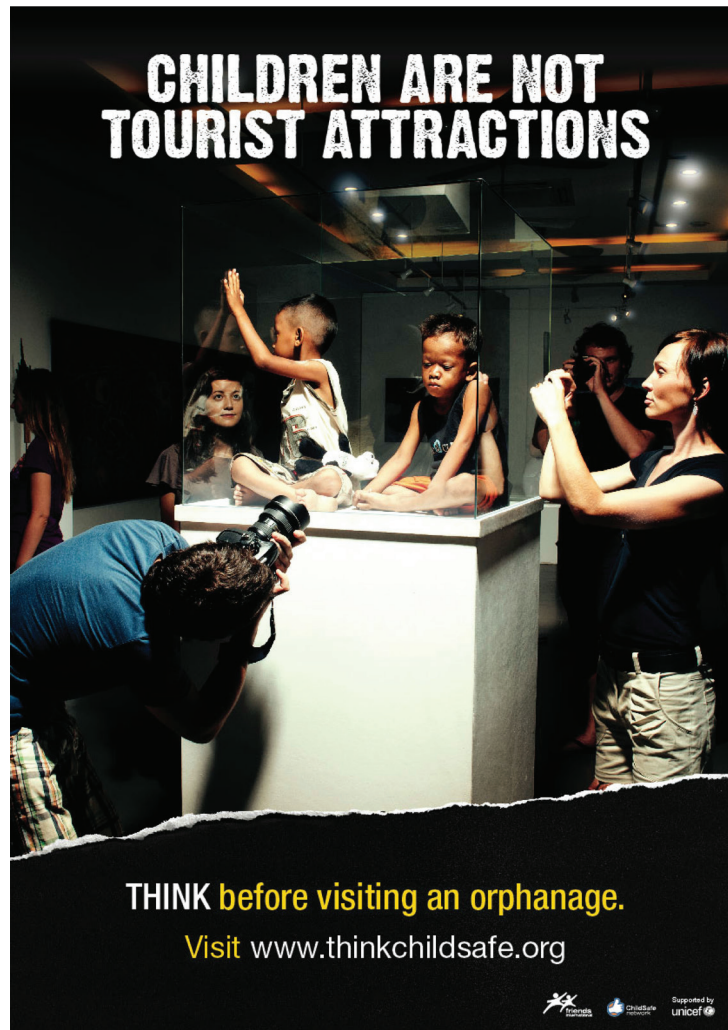
Ask yourself.....

- What do I want to do and why?
- Will I know if I am achieving my goal?
- Do I just want to travel the world and meet people?
- Do I have any particular skills to offer?
- Will I be able to fulfil the role expected of me – am I adequately skilled?
- Would I be accepted for this type of volunteering in my home country?
- Will I be taking work opportunities from the local community?

Which organisation should I volunteer with?

Who is organising the trip or project? Is it a registered charity or a large tour operator? What will you actually be doing? What has the project achieved so far – what's the evidence? Beware of statements e.g. “We've

sent thousands of people” “Our volunteers have life changing experiences” Can you talk to previous volunteers with this project? What pre-departure training will be provided and how much support is given when you arrive? Will you be asked for references or any legal checks if working with children?



Some key facts:

- Many of the volunteering placements being offered by commercial companies are little more than expensive holidays.
- A high turnover of caregivers has been shown to negatively impact children in care, who must repeatedly try to form emotional connections with different adults. (1)
- The evidence would suggest that orphanage voluntourism is having the very opposite effect to that which was intended. Children have become a lucrative poverty commodity in Nepal and the willingness of voluntourists and donors to provide funds ensures the ongoing demand for children to be unnecessarily displaced from their families. (2)

(1) A Study of Attitudes Towards Residential Care in Cambodia 2011 www.unicef.org

(2) The Paradox of Orphanage Volunteering – Combating Child Trafficking through Ethical Voluntourism. Report 2014. Next Generation Nepal. www.nextgenerationnepal.org

Further information and web sites:

Tourism Concern. International volunteering, filling the gaps – report 2014. www.tourismconcern.org.uk
www.orphanages.no
www.learningservice.info



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