

BRUNEL UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES AND SOCIAL CARE

**DEVELOPING AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE  
EXPERIENCE OF CHILDREN WITH INTERNATIONAL  
SHORT-TERM VOLUNTEER TOURISTS - A CASE STUDY  
IN AN ORPHANAGE PROJECT IN GHANA**

BY

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**DECLARATION**

I declare that this Dissertation is the result of my independent investigation, except where I have indicated my indebtedness to other sources.

I certify that this Dissertation has not already been accepted in substance for any other degree, nor is it being submitted concurrently for any other degree.

Signature:.....

## Abstract

*This research project aims to respond to the growing phenomenon of international volunteer tourism in which volunteers from developed countries undertake volunteer tourism activities in less privileged areas of the world. A review of the literature reveals both negative and positive impacts. On one hand, it is a form of civic service that has the potential to reinforce global solidarity and to build up social capital. On the other, it could promote post-colonialism by reinforcing dependency and stereotypes of the 'other' through its simplistic notion of 'doing development'.*

*Being one of the few studies that addresses not only the host community, but its children in particular, this dissertation is a reaction to the lack of research about their experiences with volunteer-tourists. The fieldwork was conducted in an orphanage in Ho, the capital of the Volta Region of Ghana and investigates the local children's understanding of the experience.*

*A qualitative approach was used involving participant observation, participatory workshops with the children and semi-structured interviews with the orphanage founder and the local project coordinators. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed thematically. The workshop material was photographed, scanned and analysed through the explanations of the children. Field notes were used to support the reflection and helped to produce results. The data was collected over a period of five weeks in the summer of 2012.*

*Evidence from this research suggests that the volunteer projects are beneficial to the children's lives as the volunteers provide the children with a range of activities and gifts and demonstrate valuable emotional care and attention. Nevertheless, it also reports the underlying structures, power relations and financial interdependencies that clearly limit the impact of the volunteers in sustainable improvements to the children's and their community's development.*

*In conclusion, this study provides insight into the experiences of children growing up in an orphanage used as a volunteer tourism site in Ghana. It contributes to the ongoing debate around the use of participatory methods as a way to satisfy children's rights to participation, and, more significantly, to the controversy concerning the effects of child-centered volunteer tourism projects in the developing world. Since it is a small-scale case-study, it is not generalisable per se; however, it has the potential to make predictions about similar projects within Africa or possibly even globally, and could be utilised as a model research design for further research.*

# Table of Contents

Title Page.....	i
Declaration.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Tables.....	v
List of Figures.....	v
List of appendices.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction and Background .....	1
1.1 Overview of the research topic.....	1
1.2 Background.....	2
1.3 Why did I choose this research topic? .....	2
1.4 The Research site: Ghana.....	3
1.5 The Research Rationale.....	5
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	7
2.1 International voluntourism.....	7
2.2 Historical perspective .....	10
2.3 Volunteering providers and the images in their promotional materials.....	11
2.4 Notion of 'Doing Development'.....	11
2.5 Impact .....	14
2.6 Empowerment and participation.....	21
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	23
3.1 Philosophical foundation.....	23
3.2 Research Design.....	24
3.2.1 Research Framework.....	24
3.2.2 Research Methods and Data Collection.....	24
3.3 Sampling.....	29
3.4 Ethical considerations.....	30

3.5 Positionality and Reflexivity.....	31
Chapter 4: Discussion of the Findings.....	36
4.1 The children's perception of their experiences with international volunteers.....	36
4.2 The relationship between the children and the volunteers.....	41
4.3 The effect of the experience on the images the children have of themselves and the volunteers.....	44
4.4 The role of the volunteers in creating sustainable changes in the orphanage.....	47
Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	52
References .....	56
Appendix 1: Adult Research Participant Information Sheet.....	63
Appendix 2: Questions for the semi-structured interviews.....	65
Appendix 3: Child Participant Information Sheet .....	68
Appendix 4: Schedule of Field work.....	69
Appendix 5: Recommendations for local coordinator.....	71

## List of Tables

Table 1: Overview of Research Methods.....	25
Table 2: Participatory Methods with Children.....	27

## List of Figures

Illustration 1: German Volunteers Flag Wall.....	38
Illustration 2: Volunteer playing 'Twister' with them.....	41
Illustration 3: Volunteer building a goal using wooden sticks.....	41
Illustration 4: Children clinging .....	43
Illustration 5: Children happy to be held and hugged.....	43
Illustration 6: Volunteers working on the construction of a new library/computer room....	50

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# **Chapter 1: Introduction and Background**

This chapter gives a brief background of this study about the children's perspectives on their experiences with international short-term volunteer-tourists in an orphanage in Ghana. In addition, the research questions are outlined and the objective of the study is specified. Lastly, the structure of the dissertation is set out.

## ***1.1 Overview of the research topic***

Through the increasing awareness of global inequalities and their impact on children's lives, large numbers of young people volunteer abroad with the desire to promote peace and contribute to well-being (Sherraden et al., 2008). This booming phenomenon of 'voluntourism' - a combination of travel and voluntary work - has led to the establishment of a million-dollar industry dominated by commercial gap-year companies (Fulbrook, 2008). It raises questions about their role in international development, their negative and positive impact on the host communities, and their effects on the children involved as the primary stakeholders of many projects.

Generally, volunteer tourism remains an under-researched topic (Lewis, 2006; Moore McBride et al., 2007). The perceptions of local children involved in volunteer tourism projects in developing countries is not considered in most research, a surprising omission considering Article 12 on participation in the UNCRC and the shift in the social studies of childhood conceptualising children as active social agents rather than 'social beings'. As a reaction to this finding, this study has been developed to address the need for further research that critically looks at the impact of volunteer tourism on children as the primary stakeholders of an orphanage project. It provides an exciting opportunity to expand research on the effects of volunteer tourism within the host community and demonstrates the notion of children as active social agents with a right to participation. Since volunteer projects often concern them (for instance in orphanages, child-care projects or English-teach-

ing projects), their views especially need to be taken into account in conformity with the UN CRC and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

The overall objective of this study is to gain an understanding of the children's experience with the volunteers. This is needed in order to evaluate the claim that the volunteer tourism industry plays a role in community development and sustainable change. Additionally, this research will help to better understand the impacts of volunteer tourism on host communities while also investigating the current constraints it might have in meeting goals of development.

## **1.2 Background**

Since the emergence of the *New Social Studies of Childhood* in the 1990s, which was strongly influenced by Aries' *Centuries of Childhood* from 1965, the image of children began to shift as the focus developed on children as human beings in their own right (James and Prout, 1997). For the first time, children were framed as full social actors of the society rather than human beings striving to reach adulthood. This implies a shift in children's rights (Alanen, 2000, 503). Rather than simply adapting to changes happening around them passively, children are seen as active participants within their cultural and social environment and as directly involved in any process leading to change or the reproduction of society (Kesby et al., 2006). As a result, a strong emphasis is put on children's actual subjective experiences, their beliefs and understandings of the society and their realities. This leads to the incorporation of the children's voices being an essential element when doing research about their lives (Holloway & Valentine, 2000).

## **1.3 Why did I choose this research topic?**

During the course, I began to increasingly question the ethical issues concerning people with good intentions from the Western world going into developing countries to volunteer in order to 'do development' and improve people's lives sustainably. I kept asking myself



why human beings have the urge to help the needy far away rather than doing volunteering or community work in front of their doorstep. I became passionate about empowerment and participation, because I see it as the only long-term solution that will actually promote sustainable change. Yet, I quickly realized, even though there has been much debate about this in academia, much is left to be done in order to use the acquired knowledge for actual implementation in practice, as many development projects lead to a relationship of control and long-term dependence rather than empowerment.

Looking at the rapidly growing volunteer tourism industry which primarily focuses on the volunteer's benefits, I wanted to do a research project that would give the children and young people of the host community a voice. Oddly enough, even though children have a right to participation (UN CRC, Article 12) and many projects deal with vulnerable children directly (for instance in projects concerning street children or orphanages), their voices are completely left out of any decision-making processes. As there was a major gap in research, I found this topic worth investigating further since it is of concern “to involve young people based on the assumption that children and young people have simply been ignored by policy makers and academics alike” (Gaskell, 2009,160).

#### ***1.4 The Research site: Ghana***

After centuries of being colonised and inhabited by the British, the Portuguese and others, Ghana gained independence in 1957. It is situated in West Africa and has a population of about 25 million people (CIA). 45% are under the age of 18 years and 14% are under the age of 5 years (UNICEF, 2010). The current life expectancy is 62 years of age (CIA). Ghana ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1990 and the progressive Children’s Act in 1998.

It is estimated that Ghana has a total of 1.3 million orphaned children (about 12 percent of all children) and 127,000 double orphans (both parents passed away). Apparently, only 13.3% of orphans and 25% of vulnerable children actually live in orphanages. There are

varying views in the Ghanaian society on whether or not that encourages the construction of orphanages since some feel that the extended family system is capable of taking care of the orphaned children and that orphanages are not appropriate within the Ghanaian culture. Others stress the importance of finding qualified and caring staff (Tuakli et al., 2006). In addition, “many Ghanaians stress the importance in their culture of the need to welcome strangers, to be polite and to avoid confrontation” (Porter, 2003,137). Furthermore, having a white person in the community is often regarded as an important status symbol, which many traditional leaders aspire to (Pink, 1998). As these cultural aspects can influence a research process and its results, it was essential to take their impact into consideration while doing research in Ghana and analysing behaviours and mentalities.

The orphanage is located in Ho, the current capital of the Volta Region in East Ghana. Currently, 22 children between the age of two and 14 live there and over 60 children attend the local primary school daily. The children living there are either half-orphans or were brought there by parents who could not afford to raise them due to famine, poverty, and unemployment. However, after they turn 18, they are sent back to their families in order to be re-integrated for which there is currently no concrete process. The local organisation is made up of two local coordinators who are responsible for the organisation of volunteer activities in the orphanage, a nearby school, and the construction project at the orphanage. Basically, their job is to be the 'middlemen' between the sending organisation from Germany, the local project staff, and the volunteers, to oversee the volunteer's activities, and to ensure everything runs smoothly. They have a contract with the overseas sending organisations which bind them to the set terms and conditions and who portray them as mentors for the volunteers. A certain amount of money is received for each volunteer, which is only a *very* small percentage of the amount the volunteers paid to the organisations in advance (my estimate is around 10 percent maximum). It is supposed to cover their living expenses and the running costs of the projects.

## **1.5 The Research Rationale**

### ***Aims and Objectives***

The overall purpose of this study is to acquire a better understanding of the way the experiences with international volunteers in this specific volunteer project is perceived by the children and the adults in their lives. Since it is a small-scale case study, the goal is not to make general claims, but to provide credible information that could then be used to influence future projects. It could also lead to new directions for further research and advocacy (Harcourt and Conroy, 2011). The approach is based on the desire to study the children's experiences in a contextualised way by trying to gain an understanding of their perspective as social actors with expertise on their lives (Smith, 2011).

### ***Research Questions***

These research questions will guide the study in gaining an understanding of the children's perceptions:

#### ***1. How do the children perceive their experiences with international short-term volunteers?***

With this question, I aim to get an overall understanding of their views on this experience. To what extent do they enjoy the experience and what aspects do they see critically? In the eyes of the children, what impact do the volunteers have on their social and emotional development?

#### ***2. What kind of relationship do they establish and what role does it play in their lives?***

The goal is to find out what role the built-up trust and relationship play and to learn about children's views on the fact that volunteers are only there for a short time and their constant arrivals and departures. Once the volunteers leave, is there a clear cut end to the relationship or further follow-up or long-term connection? To what extent do these volunteers en-

able positive change and development for the children? What role do they play and of what importance are they for the children emotionally?

***3. How does the experience affect the images the children have of themselves and the volunteers?***

Images refer to the way they perceive themselves as a result of the experience, but also to how they view the volunteers and their countries and the 'Western world' respectively. What image do the children have of the volunteers? Furthermore, how does the experience alter the image they have of themselves? It will be a key question to find out what effect there is on the conceptualisation of the 'other'. This refers to stereotypes - are they reinforced or lessened? Does the experience bring them closer or does it create more dichotomy between the two communities?

***4. What role do the volunteers play in supporting sustainable development of the orphanage and community?***

What are the benefits for the sustainable development of the orphanage and the community and where are clear limitations and constraints? As an additional question that came up during the research process, this inquiry was added in post-field work as it turned out that it is vital to reflect upon role of volunteers in the community development in order to evaluate the claim of the volunteer tourism industry of 'doing development'.

In the subsequent chapters I will provide a thematic overview of the academic literature addressing volunteer tourism and then go on to explain the methodology used in the research. Following is a discussion of the findings in connection to the literature. The thesis will finish with a concluding chapter which summarises these results and draws conclusions for further research needed in the area.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Due to the rise of international volunteer-tourism, there is an emerging academic discourse on its effects on the local communities of developing countries, NGOs and the volunteers themselves.

Concurrently, a relatively large number of researchers have demonstrated positive outcomes for the volunteer tourists, their identity formation and their sense of self (Wearing, Deville, & Lyons, 2008; Brown, 2005; Sin, 2009; Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004; Wearing, 2001; Wearing & Neil, 2000). So far, only a limited amount of research has focused on the host communities (McGehee & Andereck, 2008; Valentine; Knopf, & Vogt 2005; Ap, 1990) and none was found which deals with the perspective of the local children and young people involved. Generally, there is a lack of evidence concerning the sustainability of international short-term volunteer projects and even though many of them are children-based projects, the voices of children as direct stakeholders have not been heard.

### ***2.1 International voluntourism***

In the academic literature, volunteer tourists are defined as “those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organised way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment” (Wearing, 2001,1). *In other words*, they work “outside their own country in a developing community, at its request, for an extended period under local conditions, with some assistance to cover basic needs and with some support from a facilitating agency” (Devereux, 2008, 369). International volunteering is often undertaken in the context of a gap year which includes “any voluntary work, which is part of an individual’s time out of formal education, training or the work place, and where the time out sits in the context of a longer career trajectory” (Jones, 2004,

8). This is often full-time, undertaken as part of an international travel experience and involves a substantial financial contribution on either their or their parents' part.

According to the Tourism Research and Marketing Statistics of 2008, volunteer tourism is an expanding sector with an estimated 1,6 million participants per year. It exists globally and is organised by a variety of sending organisations that claim that every volunteer can make a difference by promoting peace and change (Guttentag, 2009). The projects involve volunteers from developed countries who work and travel in less privileged areas of the world, mostly Africa, Asia and Latin America.

21% of the projects concern vulnerable children and young people directly, especially orphans (Jones, 2004). Richter and Norman (2010) are worried that there is a newly emerging trend within volunteer-tourism which they refer to as 'AIDS orphan tourism' where “individuals travel to residential care facilities, volunteering [...] as caregivers” (217). This raises questions of children's rights and protection and the need for further research and policy making due to the common assumption that children, especially when faced with hardship like orphanhood, are in need of stable emotional relationships in order to develop healthily. According to Guttentag (2009), another major problematic aspect which differs voluntourism from long-term projects like VSO or Peace Corps is that most projects do not have any requirements for participation. As a result, volunteers are mostly unskilled, improperly trained and only stay for a very short time.

Wearing (2001) believes voluntourism can be categorised within the sphere of alternative tourism and should be viewed as “a development strategy leading to sustainable development” (12) which benefits locals and the visitor. When analysing the volunteers' perceptions, he noticed that most volunteers consider themselves to be good citizens and involved in community development rather than at leisure since they believe they are forming links to the community and seem to express their social values by building relationships with local people. Simultaneously, they see the benefit for themselves in terms of shaping their personal development and leading to greater self-awareness and identity formation. Consequently, the role of the sending organisations is to provide an experience that falls out-

side of the boundaries of mass tourism and the role of the host community would then be to provide services to volunteers, including an introduction to local customs and traditions.

The volunteer tourism experience can be defined by four reoccurring characteristics: 1) it is a personal experience chosen for its uniqueness, 2) it involves intrinsic motivation, 3) it can potentially benefit the participant's life, as well as the well-being of the host community and 4) it is given meaning through social interaction which may lead to an adjustment in identity (Wearing & Neil, 2000). Interestingly, the benefits are only a potential rather than a guaranteed and required prerequisite to making the experience ethically legitimate.

At the same time, it is argued that the boom in voluntourism is related to a profit-oriented million-dollar industry dominated by commercial operations. Apparently, more money is spent across the world on short-term than on long-term missions to bring people to developing areas, when instead that money could be invested to help more people in need as well as to provide jobs for unemployed locals (Armstrong, 2006). However, one major characteristic is the voluntary ethic which is grounded in reciprocity (Randel et al., 2004). Volunteers work without expecting anything materialistic in return with the aim of making a contribution. According to them, the experience reinforces values of trust, civility, and 'going the extra mile'. This promotes community level action and being a role model or agent of change (Randel et al., 2004). Furthermore, as Callanan and Thomas (2005) argue, individuals offer their services to change some aspect of society for the better through goodwill activities due to the roots of volunteer-tourism in volunteering. Their research with volunteers has shown that the motivation to volunteer is a combination of altruism and the desire for self-development. Nevertheless, although intentions might be positive, volunteers do not have the required knowledge of international development to understand their role in the process. Therefore, volunteer tourism agencies should have the obligation to make them aware of the larger implications of their participation. Volunteer tourism could also lead as an example of 'justice tourism' since it involves "individuals from Western countries paying to come to the Third World to assist with development or conservation

work, as they desire to achieve something more meaningful than a pleasure-filled, self-indulgent holiday” (Scheyvens, 2002,102). Likewise, Stoddart and Rogerson (2004), who researched the perceptions of community members, demonstrate that volunteers seek a personal and unique experience, which in return allows for relationships to be built up creating awareness of justice issues.

## **2.2 Historical perspective**

Several authors have analysed the connection between volunteering and post-colonialism. Palacios (2010), Simpson (2003) and Thomas (2004) suggest volunteer tourism to be a new form of neo-colonialism through its notion of “helping” which is humanitarian on one hand, but reproduces global patterns of inequality and Western dominance on the other. Vodopivec and Jaffe (2011) agree, expressing that volunteer tourism is “a particular, neo-liberal form of development practice, in which development is not only privatised, but can be packaged as a marketable commodity” (111). They claim that it is grounded in neoliberal ideologies of the outsourcing, privatisation, and commodification of development. Problematically, this reflects a “new, seemingly depoliticised form of neoliberal hegemony, in which governability is more important than empowerment” (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011,112).

McGee (2002) and McBride and Daftary (2005) look at the historical roots of international service in the transition from colonialism to globalisation. At the outset, development aid provided colonial nations a means of continuing engagement with the post-colonial world. For service work providers though, this quickly raised the issue of the duality in an approach between reciprocity and paternalism. As a positive result of this debate, the emphasis shifted from working *for* to actively working *with* the disadvantaged as active participants in development efforts (McGee, 2002) and towards efficient reciprocity (McBride & Daftary, 2005). When looking at international volunteer tourism, it seems though that this approach is not always implemented, a fact on which the authors do not elaborate.



### ***2.3 Volunteering providers and the images in their promotional materials***

A sending organisation is “any organisation which develops and organises a volunteer tourism program and can range from a locally based, non-profit organisation, to a multinational, commercially run organisation” (Raymond & Hall 2008, 49). Volunteer providers “operate at the intersection of a tourism industry shifting towards alternative niche markets and a development industry that promotes private initiative” (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011,112). There are two types of sending organisations: Firstly, altruistic ones which established themselves in response to a direct need for assistance and secondly, profit-oriented travel agencies which claim to work with a conscience (Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004). The latter “seek to open the eyes of affluent Westerners to global problems, but also, perhaps idealistically, make these people part of the solution to these problems” (Scheyvens, 2002,113). However, Hill, Russell and Brewis (2009) assert that in some respects, sending organisations essentially play the role of brokers since they charge a fee of between 500 and 2000 pounds, are profit-oriented and strongly geared towards the needs of the volunteers. In addition, they do not provide any critical pedagogy for international volunteering.

### ***2.4 Notion of 'Doing Development'***

Brochures and websites of sending organisations often make a range of statements about what volunteering can supposedly achieve, including alleviating poverty, supporting the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and bringing much needed expertise to fill local gaps in skills and knowledge. The ways in which these goals can be achieved through volunteering are not explained further nor grounded in theoretical concepts (Wallace, 2009). As Thomas (2004) formulates, volunteers are being used to promote Western interests in developing countries and are manipulated by promotional material making it seem like their volunteering would be a major contribution to needy communities.

Volunteer tourism is based on the notion of development as a simplistic process that can apparently be accomplished by young, non-skilled, but enthusiastic volunteers as active development agents. This way, the notion of 'needs' legitimises their existence since their role seems to be to provide support to those in need of shelter, food, education and assistance in all areas of living (Simpson, 2004). This raises the question of social justice which Scheyvens (2002) addresses through the notion of *Justice Tourism*. To him, social justice means recognising existing inequalities and seeking social change. The problem is that there is limited impetus in volunteer projects to question the causes of global differences and the way people's lives are globally interconnected (Simpson, 2004). Sending organisations tend to stay neutral and apolitical using lotto-logic/luck to explain inequalities. The focus is on individual advancement rather than building structural relationships between the two communities (Wallace, 2009). The language in promotional materials reflects this simplistic stance, presenting development and 'making a difference' as a pleasurable leisure activity. This, again, legitimises the role of international volunteers as a development solution and reduces development to individual acts of charity (Brown & Hall, 2008). Key concepts of 'needs' and 'help' are not elaborated on and volunteers are constructed as the help-givers to the 'needy' beneficiaries (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011). From the way the sending organizations portray the host communities, it seems as if they were disconnected, apolitical and homogeneous places. Sending organisations tend to focus on altruism on one hand, but on the notion of differences between the volunteers and the locals through clear-cut boundaries and distinct categorisations (for instance local-global, developed-developing) on the other. Through this process of simplifying complex and heterogeneous relations into homogeneous units of 'helper' and 'helped', boundaries and zones of inclusion and exclusion are reinforced (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011). This does not lead to intercultural understanding and respect, but quite the contrary.

The promotional materials used by sending organisations encourage the same conceptualisation since they promote a simplistic view of the other through the generalisation of the host community and a lack of critical engagement with the experience. As a result, already existing ideas are confirmed. In addition, poverty is trivialised and assumptions are made

about the host community, for instance that they simply accept their fate of being ‘needy’ and it is due to luck and a lotto-logic that some are in more need than others (Raymond & Hall, 2008). Problematically, these categories are deeply rooted in historic power relations of colonial times, and it is not sufficient to blame the sending organisations alone since they ‘only’ reinforce already existing stereotypes and prejudices.

Concurrently, due to globalisation, the challenges of global poverty, inequality, and insecurity remain more acute than ever. This leads to the need for a global civil society with a worldwide responsibility. Within these challenges, international service work as a growing sector may be increasing in significance as a social institution. According to Lewis (2006), development can be defined by its three aspects of hope, administration, and critical understanding. Therefore, international volunteers provide a humanising force in the face of rapid globalisation changes. They might also promote international understanding and solidarity since the experience offers the possibility of prompting shifts in the relationships.

Sherraden et al. (2001, 2003, 2007) approach international development and volunteering as forms of civic service. They define civic service as “an organised period of engagement and contribution to society sponsored by public or private organisations, and recognised and valued by society, with no or minimal monetary compensation to the participant” (Sherraden, 2001, 5). Its aim is to have a positive impact on both the host communities and the volunteer.

There have been changes in the way international civic service is done. It increasingly adopts a development-centered approach focusing directly on capacity-building within communities where volunteers engage local residents in development projects, improve organisational relations within the community and provide forums to share viewpoints on issues of mutual concern (Sherraden & Benítez, 2003). Volunteers could be viewed as external catalysing agents that accelerate the development process of communities since they contribute to the served communities by promoting public education and health, enhancing community relations and social capital and encouraging economic development (Sherraden & Lough, 2007). Therefore, they may have significant potential to contribute to interna-

tional peace, cooperation and could be a key to sustainable development (UNV, 2002). It is also claimed that international civic service could have implications for the way in which nations work together since volunteers have the power to develop a global civil society. Even though international civic service has its limitations, Daftary and McBride claim that it “has incredible potential as a social and economic development strategy” (2004, 2). This might apply to long-term volunteer projects with skilled professionals, but the question remains as to where international volunteer tourism fits within this framework and what role it should and could play in development.

## **2.5 Impact**

Depending on whether the focus is on the volunteer or the host community as a beneficiary of the experience, impacts vary in strength and level. Generally, as McBride and Daftary (2005) point out, the opposing forces of globalisation and regionalism affect the implications of volunteer tourism. For the volunteer, the experience promotes the development of a global identity of being a world citizen and contributes to the blurring of boundaries between countries. This goes in favour of the notion of a global solidarity, but simultaneously leads to greater fragmentation, differentiation, and highly unequal power relations. These power relations can lead to negative effects marked by elitism, state interests and traces of imperialism, which create the possibility of host communities being exploited (McBride & Daftary, 2005). Ideally though, international volunteer projects should be conceptualised as a two-way development and mutually benefiting experience which demonstrates global responsibility (Wallace, 2009).

### ***Negative impacts***

There is growing critique on international volunteer tourism, not only in academia, but also in the news. Sites ranging from *The Guardian* to CNNgo.com have stated that volunteer-tourists do more harm than good (Budd, 2012). In fact, there is a danger of volunteer tourism harming the communities they are actually supposed to be supporting. To counteract this, the UN General Assembly set three basic criteria for volunteering: Firstly, actions are

carried out freely and without compulsion; secondly, financial gain is not the main motivation; and thirdly, the primary beneficiary is not the volunteer. Volunteer tourism might not meet these criteria, as it provides personal career-advancement, but is not likely to have long-term benefits for the host community, creating instead a higher potential for harm and the reinforcement of stereotypes (Simpson, 2004). It also produces a negative notion of developing countries and 'the other' being less developed and less capable than the Western world leading to further dichotomy between developing and developed countries. Rather than promoting solidarity and intercultural understanding, it thus reinforces the stereotypical "poor-but-happy-image" of the third world where the public image of development is dominated by western ' [patently] good intentions' (Simpson, 2004). This perception is supported by VSO which warned of the risk that the proliferating gap-year programs might become a new form of colonialism, reinforcing a self-focused attitude by emphasising short-term 'helping' over learning (Devereux, 2008).

In addition, Guttentag (2009) points out a variety of possible negative effects which include a disregard of local people's wishes, the obstruction of progress and completion of inadequate work, and the disruption of the local economy. Furthermore, the programs could reinforce the concept of the 'other', rationalise poverty and provoke cultural changes. As a result, cultural and economic differences are accentuated which could lead to jealousy and unrealistic aspirations (Guttentag, 2009). There is also the potential risk of exploiting the host communities through too much commercialisation since gap-year companies are often geared towards profit rather than actual needs (Wearing, 2001; Fitzpatrick, 2007). One major danger is that the volunteers are put into the role of "experts" even though they are usually not required to have any particular skill-set. Often, they also perform jobs that locals could do instead. This leads to questions regarding their benefits to the host community (Hill, Russell & Brewis, 2009).

Raymond and Hall (2008) claim that volunteer tourism may be a form of neo-colonialism or imperialism since the role of westerners as superiors is promoted through the appearance of being an expert. This leads to the reinforcement of existing stereotypes, deeper categor-

isation and power inequalities. Palacios (2010) agrees that the roles to which volunteers are often assigned, such as those of an expert or a teacher, are inappropriate for them. He explains that evidence has shown that young volunteers do not have enough competencies or time to get truly involved with local communities in order to create sustainable change. Their ideal aid would be one that emphasises service delivery and the transfer of knowledge, skills, and technology. The possibility of volunteers playing a role in development is not ruled out, but the volunteer programs would need to be altered accordingly (Palacios, 2010). Furthermore, there is the possibility of harmful attitudes on both sides: Firstly, locals often have Eurocentric attitudes and perceive volunteers as experts from the West. This promotes their dependency while at the same time empowering and putting pressure on the volunteers, which can make them feel uncomfortable since they feel they do not have the expertise to fit this image. Secondly, there is the possibility of intra-group-work conflicts and thirdly, of role ambiguity (Palacios, 2010). Interestingly, volunteers might be aware of their lack of expertise, but then are not given the space to reflect on the consequences and questions this raises in terms of their legitimacy.

Moreover, there is a lack of training about the power relations and biases among volunteers and locals (McBride & Daftary, 2005). It is not addressed that even if projects would be adjusted, the danger of promoting inequality and post-colonial power relations remains through the simple fact that volunteers from one country go to provide help to another country.

Kumi Naidoo (2008) argues that there is a strong dichotomy between those who volunteer and those who benefit and is convinced that “the volunteer probably gets much more than they give or leave behind”. VSO also warned several times that volunteers might actually be doing harm to the communities they are supposed to be helping. There is also usually no handover between old and new volunteers, a misconception of the capability of the volunteers and a lack of understanding that volunteers are not 'made of money'. The authors of the Dev-Zone magazine (2008) conclude that short-term, unskilled volunteers cannot promote real change, but *do* connect people with communities.

Vodopivec and Jaffe (2011) criticise the images the sending organisations promote since they only strengthen the process of ‘*Othering*’, focusing on differences rather than similarities. The images demonstrate opposing distinctions, those of privileged Western help-givers and poor, needy help-receivers from developing countries. In addition, the volunteers are shown to be different from tourists, since the former seem to come to provide support to anyone in need rather than simply travelling for leisure purposes. Problematically, there is no space for a critical reflection of their own lifestyle and habits. The sending organisations are to blame for this one-sided identity formation since they are the ones making the powerful decision of producing these categories through their promotional materials, use of media, and lack of appropriate training and critical discussion. These reinforce the separation of two distinct, homogeneous worlds which are presented as clearly bounded entities rather than social constructs (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011).

Raymond and Hall (2008) perceive volunteer-tourism programs as extremely harmful since they can lead to the reinforcement of cultural stereotypes and cross-cultural misunderstandings if they are not carefully managed. Of course, there are exceptions to this, but the majority of sending organisations promote neo-colonialism and the usage of developing countries as training grounds for future professionals to acquire skills. In addition, the positive impact of the experience is very limited, because “even where cross-cultural appreciation does occur at an individual level, this does not necessarily lead to changes in broader perceptions of nationalities or cultures” (Raymond & Hall, 2008, 536).

As demonstrated, there is a strong correlation between the increasing demand for volunteer experiences and the boom of the volunteer tourism industry. Since its legitimacy is based on actual needs, this correlation shows the debatable issue of a strong focus on the volunteer and profit-making rather than the host community. The increase is actually not linked to rising needs in the host countries.

### ***Positive impacts***

Even though there is an increase in criticism of international volunteering, there are a number of benefits for both host community and volunteers which should be mentioned to provide a broader understanding of its impact.

For the host community, it can potentially be beneficial, particularly in the areas of health and education, environmental management and protection, construction and physical resources, and various social supports leading to capacity building. Volunteers may develop trust-based relationships which result in grassroot development and provide an alternative to conventional development strategies (Sherraden et al., 2008). This might be true for skilled, carefully selected professional volunteers with experience to share, but it is debatable whether or not this is true for young, unskilled students with no or little work experience or qualifications. However, the volunteers of today are the potential businessmen of tomorrow, which might make more informed and humane decisions when collaborating with companies from developing countries in the future (Brown & Hall, 2008).

It is a lot easier to pick out the positive outcomes for volunteers since a large volume of research has already analysed these. The experience can potentially promote intercultural understanding, global perspectives, respect for diversity, enhanced conflict management as well as higher interpersonal and employment skills. Volunteers are also more likely to participate in political and global affairs. In comparison to domestic volunteers, international volunteers commit themselves to another culture temporarily making their contribution a distinct period in their lives rather than a few spare hours a week. Overseas volunteer work is an excellent opportunity for those at the beginning of their careers and for those seeking promotion to develop higher order skills (Thomas, 2001). One of the advantages of volunteers is that they receive no payment for their services, but rather fund themselves and also don't require specific skills in comparison to long-term professional volunteers (Roberts, 2004).

These personal benefits could lead to increased human capital for the society as a whole since volunteers act like positive altruistic role models and teach local children reciprocity



and the value of giving back to the community. Moreover, volunteer tourism is considered a meaningful interpersonal and intercultural encounter which also forces volunteers to reflect on themselves since it is much more in-depth in regards to interactions with the local community and culture compared to regular tourist encounters (McIntosh & Zahra, 2007). Unfortunately, volunteers tend to return to their countries, using their newly gained skills and knowledge there, which raises the concern that their personal growth might benefit their communities of origin in the end rather than the host community they visited.

According to Hill et al. (2009), the experience is life-changing for the volunteers since it boosts their educational and career development, life and soft skills and social values. It also leads to the development of a reflective approach to life, self-fulfilment and a greater understanding of diversity. This might be beneficial to the volunteers personally, but due to the lack of reflection and training, they do not acquire an actual understanding of the role of international volunteering in development (Hill et al., 2009). As Stoddart and Rogerson (2004) show through interviews with former volunteers, they have a strong desire to contribute to a change in perceptions of their home countries and the establishment of international friendship. Volunteers also perceive it to be rewarding because of its element of 'giving' without the need for something in return. Generally, it is seen to foster a reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship between the volunteer and host community members (Gutentag, 2009).

Randel et al. (2004) make an interesting link between volunteering and the production of social capital which is based on the notion of a society that goes beyond narrow national borders. Social networks have real value to development and since volunteering creates links and trust between people, it is an investment in sustainable social relations. Consequently, it could lead to collective action needed for development interventions since the concerns of developing countries can be more effectively factored, and more contact and mutual respect is established through the created bridges. In the end, this could lead to less need for welfare benefits from the government. According to them, it seems to promote solidarity, anti-racism and also could also challenge xenophobia. Through broadening the

host community's social network, the local community can access and share information more easily. This creates opportunities and space for social interaction and could be viewed as a catalyst of global social capital. Moreover, volunteering promotes partnership through its people-centered approach that is based on motivations beyond making money and openness to international sharing of ideas and perspectives. In addition, it raises awareness of mutual rights and responsibilities, fostering of transferable skills, and the ability to adapt to different cultural environments (Randel et al., 2004).

Volunteering might have the potential to build intercultural understanding, but Palacios (2010) points out that it clearly lacks the power to address the goal of development efforts. However, even though limited in its sustainable impact, volunteering is valuable because of the personal encounters and spaces for social exchange with the locals. As a result, it produces strong economic, social and learning outcomes for both hosts and students through fostering a genuine emotional connection and a frame of action at a personal level. Also, since it is only short-term, it does not lead to dependency and labour replacement (Palacios, 2010). Still, the question remains, if there would still be enough legitimacy for the expansion of the volunteer tourism industry in the case of young local community members doing the tasks instead and possibly better.

There is a major difference between long-term and short-term volunteering. According to Devereux (2008), effective long-term volunteering is characterised by six important criteria: humanitarian motivation, reciprocal benefit, living and working under local conditions, long-term commitment, local accountability and North–South partnership to tackle underlying causes rather than only symptoms. In contrast, organisations that are focused on shorter-term assignments are likely to provide fewer long-term benefits. They might have greater potential for adverse impacts, but “international volunteers [still] make an important contribution that differs from conventional in-country projects or policy interventions because of the implication for two-way understanding and change between North and South” (Devereux, 2008, 368). Highly beneficial, externals can make contributions that complement local resourcefulness and could potentially consult in areas such as finances,

training or advising. They can often also be catalysts for action or bridges to resources and networks (Devereux, 2008). Once again, the problem is that this benefit only occurs with skilled professionals with the capability to make these contributions. Even though volunteers might be talented in some respects, they do not have the expertise to contribute to the same extent.

## ***2.6 Empowerment and participation***

As is widely known (Sherraden and Lough, 2007; McBride and Daftary, 2005), it is important that both host and sending organisations participate in the planning and delivery to increase their effectiveness. The involvement of the host communities in the process also increases ownership and empowerment to invest in local projects. It is of great importance that transnational collaboration and co-management is established due to the implications concerning power distribution and differences in histories, attitudes and notions of expertise as well as possible discrimination. In addition, it is vital to consider the views of the members of the host community, since they or locally-based volunteers could often achieve the same or better outcomes than international volunteers, who, lacking local expertise, are often ineffective in comparison (McBride & Daftary, 2005). It is also a matter of ethics that the host community is in control due to the underlying power relations. Ideally, shared power and purpose develops gradually between the host and volunteer (Raymond & Hall, 2008).

In conclusion, there seems to be a strong discrepancy between the wording of sending organisations regarding the role of 'making a difference' and the actual impact of volunteers. Still, even if the wording would be altered, this would not change the potentially negative impact on the host community and the lack of participation and empowerment in international volunteer tourism. Even though there has been a fair amount of research on international volunteering, the views of the locals affected by these programs are not considered in the majority of research that has been done. Particularly in regards to the notion of chil-

dren as active social agents within their own right, their opinions should be considered when judging the appropriateness and effectiveness of volunteer programs. Generally, a central issue of concern is that many programs focus more on the volunteers than the actual beneficiaries. This leads to questions regarding the reciprocity and benefits of the experience and calls not only for more research, especially on the impact on the beneficiaries directly, but also for further critical debate, advocacy and regulation on the side of policymakers and sending organizations. Since 21% of all gap year volunteer projects abroad concern children and young people directly (Jones, 2004), this research project aims to provide a starting point for further research in this gap.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This chapter discusses the strategic approach adopted during the research process, including an explanation of the philosophical foundation of this study as well as a description of the research design. It entails a description of the methods used, a reflection on their challenges and limitations faced and an explanation of the sampling strategy. Lastly, I will contemplate the issues of ethics, positionality and subjectivity encountered during the research process. This reflection is vital due to the political nature of research of intruding into people's lives (Lindsay, 2000).

### ***3.1 Philosophical foundation***

Since this research project is based on examining subjective experiences, it is grounded in the philosophical approach of constructivism, which is based on the understanding that there exists not one objective truth, but rather multiple, socially constructed realities (Coll & Chapman, 2000). Therefore, knowledge is context- and time-dependent and created through the subjective meanings attached to an experience (Cousins, 2002). The role of the researcher is to describe, analyse and interpret the contextualised social phenomena found in the perspectives of children. This interpretive approach seeks to understand the social world from the participants' point of view. The data and findings are detailed narratives, 'insider' knowledge, perspectives that carry their own subjective truth and meaning (Greig et al., 2007).

## **3.2 Research Design**

### **3.2.1 Research Framework**

This project is considered child-centered research as the children are treated as subjects rather than objects (Hill et al., 1996). It attempts to negotiate an understanding of its aims in a way that make sense to the children (Fraser, 2004). Therefore, vocabulary and conceptions are used that relate to the children's perceptions of the world. The children and the researcher are both contingent to different contexts and cultural references and communication is established between the two conceptual outlooks through child-friendly methods (Fraser, 2004). In addition, as an ethical obligation, this study attempts to inform policy and practice with the intention of improving the lives of the children involved (Bell, 2008). In order to meet this goal, the framework is grounded in participation perceived as a process involving partnership between the children and adults (Wilkinson, 2000). In the widely known *Ladder of participation* by Hart (1997) this study would be on the second stage since I as an outsider conducted the research and analysis, but still involved the participants through a participatory approach. In a way, this research paradigm is also rights-based as it is in compliance with human rights and the specific rights of children stated in the UN CRC (Hill, 2005).

### **3.2.2 Research Methods and Data Collection**

A combination of methods was used, a detailed list of which can be found in Table 1. This produces diverse data and is also supported by the notion that children have varying competencies, preferences and interests that should be taken into account (Boyden & Ennew, 1997). It helps to triangulate and cross-check data but also to prevent biases arising from over-reliance on one method (Punch, 2009). Furthermore, using participatory methods is vital due to the marginalised social status of children and their lack of power in interactions

with adults (Punch, 2002). Moreover, the methods were chosen since they were suitable for the specific research questions. The visual and active methods were selected in order to make the research appropriate and enjoyable for the children (Kefyalew,1996) and take away the pressure from responding in a manner that might seem 'correct' to specific interview questions (Punch, 2009). They also allow for greater reflection, do not require literacy and do not focus only on verbal articulation (O'Kane, 2000). The decision to include the adults is grounded in the notion that experiences are embedded in socio-economic and political contexts which include adult-child power relations (Christensen & Prout, 2002). It is also important to consider the perceptions of the people that the children are surrounded by in order to get a better understanding of their overall situation.

*Table 1: Overview of Research Methods*

<b>Participant Group</b>	<b>Research Method</b>
Children (6-14 year olds): Group 1: Boys (8 boys) Group 2: Girls (6-8 girls)	Participation in activities with the children, unstructured observation and participatory methods
Adults: Head Guardian of the orphanage and the two local project coordinators	Semi-structured interviews
Volunteers, local coordinators, head guardian, cooking staff of orphanage, children	Informal conversations

### ***Semi-structured interviews***

The semi-structured interviews were based on an outlined set of topics and questions (Wiersma, 1991) (see Appendix 2 for Interview guide). This interview process seemed most appropriate as it leaves space to change questions or go into depth on certain points, but simultaneously enables a relatively structured and systematic data collection (Coll & Chapman, 2000). They also seemed more culturally appropriate since they do not put as much pressure on the participant as a formal interview and provide space to express views in an open-ended manner (Wiersma, 1991).

Ultimately, I only conducted an interview with the local coordinator, his colleague and the orphanage founder since the other two women working there do not speak English well and their main task is cooking rather than spending time with the children. In my first week, I explained the research to the founder and received her informed verbal consent. I also asked the local coordinator and his colleague for the opportunity for an interview to which they gladly agreed.

Due to major power relations, financial interdependence and lack of trust, the validity of the statements made remains a limitation since I do not know to what extent statements were based on reality and what facts might have been left out or altered to portray the situation in a better light. There might have also been concerns that if negative aspects would be raised, fewer volunteers would come or there would be consequences for their future relations with the sending organisations. Furthermore, since in the Ghanaian culture the younger one has to show respect to the older one, age hierarchies influenced the research. As a result, I do not know to what extent the statements of all research participants reflect the realities of the orphanage project authentically. However, since this research is based on constructivism, the aim was not to discover objective 'facts' but rather to interpret the subjective 'true' realities of different individuals.

### ***Participant Observation***

Even though observation is a traditional ethnographic method normally used in long-term studies and this project only allowed for short-term observation, it was vital, as it produced rich data and provided a better understanding of the relationship between the children and the volunteers, as well as their daily lives and behaviour. It enabled a close, authentic investigation of the social processes occurring in the natural setting of the children (Atkinson et al., 2007). The use of field notes helped to record the observations and proved to be useful in the process of 'sense-making' and data analysis. However, they are limited as they are written accounts of selective interpretations (Emerson et al., 2007) and my social position of being a researcher influenced my observations (Bell, 1969).



### ***Participatory methods with children***

A wide range of participatory methods were used with the children of the orphanage a detailed description of which can be found in Table 2. This led to more shared control of the research process (O'Kane, 2000) thereby enhancing its ethical acceptability and validity (Sime, 2008). Through the visual methods, the children were able to construct a representation of their social worlds (Clacherty & Donald, 2007). To an extent, the methods broke down power relations, as the children were perceived as the primary experts on their experiences (Wilkinson, 2000; O'Kane, 2000). They draw on a variety of academic and practitioner resources including Boyden & Ennew (1997), the International HIV Alliance (2005) and Wilkinson (2000).

*Table 2: Participatory Methods with Children*

<b>Aim</b>	<b>Method</b>
To make the children comfortable, introduce them to the topic and start reflecting	<b>Story telling</b> As an introductory activity, the children do story-telling about specific individuals who are volunteers.
To learn about their conceptualization of the volunteers and their images of themselves	<b>Spider Diagram/ Thought showers</b> A large circle with 'volunteer' in it is drawn given several legs. Children think about words they associate with the volunteers or adjectives to describe them. The same is done with the key word "ME" independently.
To learn about the children's experiences with the volunteers and give them a space to demonstrate their views	<b>Questions Game</b> Questions are written on pieces of card and placed in an envelope. The children are invited to take turns to read out the questions, which leads into a focused discussion. A talking ball is used to 'take turns', if necessary, to ensure that everybody has a chance to express their view and the group is not dominated by a few speakers.
To learn about the children's perceptions of the way in which the volunteers have had an impact on their lives	<b>Problem Tree/ Graffiti Wall</b> The researcher makes a large drawing of the tree of a trunk and labels it 'Volunteer'. The fruits hanging on the tree are the effects and consequences of the volunteers' stays. The children are asked to write the impacts they noticed, good or bad. The researcher writes down the effects for those who are not able to read.
To learn about the children's perceptions of the volunteers and their impact on the children's lives	<b>Put it on a Post-it</b> Three flipchart sheets on the wall state "good", "bad" and "ideas to make it better" (in colours green, red, and yellow). The children are asked to write/draw on the different coloured post-its: Green for things they like about the volunteers, red for things they don't like about the volunteers, yellow for things they want to change.

To learn about the interactions between the volunteers and children	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Picture stories/ story boards</b></p> <p>They are divided into pairs. Each group gets a topic and draws a picture story. When they are finished, they are encouraged to discuss what their stories show.</p>
To reflect on the outcomes of the last three participatory sessions	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Focus Group</b></p> <p>As a group, the children and the researcher reflect on the outcomes and findings of the last three sessions and remaining questions or concerns.</p>

### ***Challenges and Limitations***

Even though I had prepared my data collection well in advance, there were many challenges during the process due to the nature of field work with children in a foreign setting for a short time.

Firstly, even though I reminded them of the group agreement which we had developed at the beginning of the first session and I also introduced a 'speaking stone', they had difficulties listening to each other. Furthermore, they often told each other what to say and so I ended up with one common perspective which was often times repeated by each child (field notes, 28/05/2012). The children also struggled when I asked them to think of negative aspects of the volunteers. Generally, prompts and examples would help them to understand the task, but their drawings and answers would mostly stay on a rather superficial level making it difficult to go into depth. In summary, the observations, informal conversations and verbal articulation revealed a lot more data in the end than their drawings and written words. However, they truly seemed to enjoy the activities and the fact that someone created a specific task for them.

Moreover, I had initially planned for another volunteer to take care of the other children concurrently, but due to unforeseen family circumstances, she had to leave suddenly. As a result, I was left alone with all the 20-30 children who were at the orphanage each afternoon for the first week of my workshops. This led to the children of the second group often sitting nearby, curious to see what they were missing out on. As a result, the children were often distracted and it was quite noisy. Another challenge was that Vanessa (13) could not

be part of the group since she had to assist in the kitchen after school. In order to include her opinion, I talked to her separately each afternoon.

Generally, the participatory methods were not as successful as hoped in generating actual data. The children would copy my example rather than thinking of their own and repeat each other's sentences. They did not seem to fully understand the concept of creating something new and individual. To a certain extent, it was due to language barriers and their young age, but primarily, the cause seemed to be that in school, they are taught to copy, repeat, and memorize rather than to think and express their views individually. This is connected to their marginalised position in society - they are not used to being treated as competent citizens, but are accustomed to generational hierarchies and unequal power relations between adults and children (Langevang, 2007). Participatory methods were therefore rather foreign to them.

### **3.3 Sampling**

Due to the complexity of the research questions, I had initially planned to work with the eight- to seventeen-year-olds and to separate them by age into two smaller groups of four to six children. As it turned out, the oldest children are only fourteen years of age and the children culturally make a strong differentiation between girls and boys. Consequently, I decided to work with all the seven- to fourteen-year-olds and to split them up into two groups according to their gender. I ended up with a group of eight boys in one and a group of six to eight girls in the other on paper. However, since each afternoon different children would show up at the orphanage to play, it was not possible to organise fixed groups. Instead, I made an agreement with them to alternate between an all-girls- and an all-boys-group in order to include all. This did not always work since children were generally curious and at times inattentive. In addition, since it was based on voluntary participation, I asked them to join or return to the group but left the decision up to them. Thus, the groups were generally not fixed and I had to adjust flexibly to the varying number of children and ages.

Before the data collection started, I would have preferred to also include the younger children living at the orphanage in order to avoid social exclusion and jealousy between them. However, I had to prioritise finding answers to the research questions and realised the research objectives would be too complex for their age. As it turns out, my decision not to include them was well-made as I quickly realised that they only speak the local dialect 'ewe' and are not able to communicate in English or understand the activities.

### ***3.4 Ethical considerations***

The rights-based approach leads to several key ethical principles of self-determination, privacy, dignity, anonymity, confidentiality, fair treatment, and protection from harm or discomfort (Hill, 2005) as well as informed consent and voluntary participation (Gallagher, 2009). Especially when working with children, ethical provision also requires an ongoing sensitivity towards the dynamics of power relations (Christensen & Prout, 2002).

#### ***Pseudonyms***

The names of the community and of all the respondents were changed to pseudonyms in order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality to protect the identities of the participants (Punch, 2009; Gallagher, 2009).

#### ***Informed consent***

Based on the rules of informed consent by Gallagher (2009), I did my best to ensure transparency and voluntary participation. Firstly, I explicitly explained my research and informed them about the methods, aims, limitations and time frame. I did this in verbal and written form (see Appendices 1 and 3 for Participant Information Sheets). I acquired the verbal consent of the orphanage founder and the local coordinator and told the children daily that they could choose not to participate or to stop at any point. However, power relations played a role. Although the founder functioned as a gatekeeper and was supposed to protect the children from potential harm, she might have used her position of power to cen-

son for the children who are already used to a context of obedience and respect towards adults (Masson, 2004).

### ***Privacy and confidentiality***

The amount of privacy and confidentiality given has major effects on the willingness of participants to share information (Gallagher, 2009). The need to have a safe, private location led to all research with the children being conducted in their own living spaces in the orphanage. I still had difficulties ensuring confidentiality though since the Ghanain staff was often nearby, leading to privacy being compromised at times. This and the general inferior status of children in this cultural context (Abebe, 2009) might have affected the degree of disclosure.

### ***Compensation***

The topic of compensation is widely discussed in literature. Some perceive it as bribery, some as a fair acknowledgement of a participant's contribution (Hill, 2005). In order to show appreciation while simultaneously avoiding jealousy, I brought supplies of food for the kitchen to thank the adults, similar to studies with low-income participants that used remuneration options adapted to the practical needs and cultural context (Mosavel & Oakar, 2009). To thank the children, I took them to see a Euro-Cup match on television and spent my last weekend living with them.

## ***3.5 Positionality and Reflexivity***

*“Research is always carried out by an individual with [...]a personality, social context, and various personal and practical challenges and conflicts, all of which affect the research, from the choice of a research question or topic, through the method used, to the reporting of the project’s outcome” (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998, 4).*

According to number of authors (including Barker & Smith, 2001; Horton, 2008; Matthews, 2001), reflecting upon one's position in the process is essential in any research, as it enables the researcher to address faced conflicts and can help to produce an honest report of the experiences (Foley, 2001). Even though the research project was fully approved by the Ethics Committee of the School of Health and Social Science, I encountered several issues of positionality and ethics during the field work and was in a constant state of reflection. This was especially important, as reflexivity is not only central to any qualitative research (Mason, 2002) but particularly significant in participatory research in order to ensure that the perceptions of the participants are valued. In addition, since executed in an African context, this field work particularly required careful reflexive practice (Langevang, 2007).

### ***Subjectivity***

I had to accept that being a qualitative researcher meant that I would present a story that was based on “meaning rather than measurement” (Holloway & Biley, 2011). In the end, all encounters were subjective experiences. Since knowledge is socially produced and this research entailed personal involvement on a research journey in an unknown field, I was not able to exclude myself from the narration. As a result, I acquired an attitude of “mindful inquiry” (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998), a stance of general curiosity based on my dedication to the voices of the children. In addition, I tried to maintain a self-critical approach of constant reflection on the extent to which I influenced the research process and outcomes (Mason, 2002).

### ***Insider vs. outsider perspective***

As explained earlier, this research is grounded in a qualitative approach, which means that I intended to explore the experiences from the informants' perspective and to gain a deeper understanding of the studied phenomenon (Cousins, 2002). This can be described as an attempt to take an insider perspective (Hallberg, 2008) and raises the question of the value of an insider vs. outsider experience. I quickly became confronted with the fact that I would only gain partial access to the children's lives due to my privileged position. This became

clear through the material differences of having a camera, sunglasses, proper shoes, etc., as well as the symbolic differences of my white skin colour, nationality and education which led to them placing me in certain categories automatically (a phenomenon Sultana (2007) also experienced in her research in Bangladesh). Even though there are limitations to the 'outsider perspective', this position also entailed being able to provide a new insight into the participants' perceptions. Furthermore, it helped to theorise from a distance (Holloway & Biley, 2011). The question remains though if the research would have produced different results had I been a black researcher from the same community and background. Lastly, it was clear that the benefits to me as the researcher would far outweigh those to the children's lives.

### ***Trust***

I faced a constant tension between establishing trusting bonds and acknowledging my position as the 'other'. Nevertheless, it was clear that unless trust would be established, the participants would not provide me with a full account of their experiences with volunteers. In relation to this, it was ethically important to demonstrate confidentiality, as the different participants did not seem to trust each other and I had to assure them that I would not reveal anything they would tell me. As a result, I was in constant negotiation with my varying positionalities in order to build rapport with the different participant groups (similar to Sultana, 2007 and Abebe, 2009). While trying to be on one level with the children and to fit in without receiving special treatment, I had to be careful not to offend the hospitality of the orphanage's founder towards me as a guest in her home, for example when she would offer fruits and I would not be allowed to share them with the children. In other words, the research involved “negotiating relationships that simultaneously are respectful and allowed the research to proceed” (Sultana, 2007, 380). Furthermore, a lack of trust and certain suspicion manifested on her side at times, for instance when she would not let the cooking lady translate in my focus group and would constantly come to the kitchen to check what she had revealed to me.

Simultaneously, the general “naturalised acceptance of my presence” (Sultana, 2007, 379) by all participants allowed me to integrate into their lives without any major constraints. It was very easy to build up relationships with the children, even though it naturally takes time to develop a deep trust-based relationship (Punch, 2002). I felt this was a big challenge, as I knew my time was limited and I needed to gain their trust in order to get insight into their experiences, especially the potentially negative aspects. As a result, if I had had more time to immerse myself in their daily routines and played a bigger role in their lives, the research might have revealed more information. Furthermore, I found myself in a persistent ethical dilemma since I knew I would leave after a very short time and would fundamentally seem no different from the short-term volunteers. It also seemed that due to being accustomed to 'white' volunteers, they simply assumed I would be one of them. In the end, I am convinced that the children neither entirely understood the difference between me and the volunteers nor were fully aware of my role as a researcher, even though I tried my best to communicate it clearly.

### ***Responsibility and Representation***

I was in a difficult position between all parties involved: I was accommodated with the volunteers, worked in the orphanage with the children and their guardian and was also in close contact with the local coordinator and occasionally the sending organisation in Germany. This meant that four perspectives were presented to me as the only truth. As a result of my position between the different parties, I felt an added sense of responsibility to ensure that the way I represented the perspectives of the children would be empowering and meaningful to them. In addition, the adults involved would frequently demonstrate scrutiny through addressing concerns with no direct link to my initial research objectives and seemed to have the expectation that I could provoke change. Simultaneously, I wanted my work to be validated within the academic community and therefore strove to find answers to my initial research questions (concerns also addressed by St. Louis & Calabrese Barton, 2002). Oftentimes, I felt powerless and a bit overwhelmed facing the underlying structural and cultural issues in the volunteer projects and felt the urgent need for drastic re-structur-



ing and better collaboration strategies between the parties involved. Frequently, I had to clarify to them as well as to myself that I could make recommendations, but that my role was not to create broader changes. As a way of resolving this dilemma and demonstrating transparency, I gave the local coordinator constructive recommendations in person and decided to send a child-friendly summary of the results to the children, as well as a general summary to all adults who were involved. This respects their agency and right to receive information concerning their lives (MacHaughton & Smith, 2005).

In summary, fieldwork in unknown cultural surroundings very different from one's own was certainly a challenging and emotional journey. As stated by Sultana (2007) “[c]onducting international fieldwork involves being attentive to histories of colonialism, development, globalization and local realities” (2007, 375). As a result, it was not only a research process, but also a journey of personal development involving emotions. My findings might always stay interpretive and partial, yet I'm telling a story that might otherwise not have been told which could reveal broader patterns in volunteer tourism projects involving children that could lead to more general conclusions. Because, like many feminists have argued for a long time, 'giving voice' to marginalised groups of society, is essentially about effecting social change in the long run (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1996).

## **Chapter 4: Discussion of the Findings**

The following findings are based on five weeks of intensive primary field work. There was a combination of long-term and short-term volunteers at the orphanage and the children did not differentiate between them in their descriptions. Therefore, these findings reveal their experience with of both types of volunteers. They will be discussed on the basis of the initial research questions (see Chapter 1) with links to the published literature (see Chapter 2). Finally, I will reflect on the perceived impact of the volunteers on sustainable change in the community and the power relations and financial interdependencies between the parties involved.

### ***4.1 The children's perception of their experiences with international volunteers***

#### ***Constant Arrivals and Returns***

Generally, it became quite clear that the children thoroughly enjoy the presence of the volunteers. They become very excited when new volunteers arrive. In their own words, they like “plenty, plenty” of volunteers. At the same time, they have become accustomed to the constant flow of arrivals and returns of volunteers. Since they are aware of this structure of the system and “have grown to understand the situation” (Interview with Peter), they frequently ask if one will return the next day, what the duration of the stay will be and when it will be one's last day. As one boy (11) phrased it: “I like it when they are here, I don't like it when they are not here”. They are used to the constant arrivals and departures of volunteers, seem to get attached quickly, but are very conscious of the fact that there is a leaving date. According to the local coordinator, the children constantly approach him asking when the next volunteer(s) will come since “without volunteers, everything in the house is quiet. [...] Yes, there is nothing happening, no playing, nothing” (Interview with Peter).

Their experience has taught them that volunteers are there for a short time to play with them and give them presents. As a result, they confront the volunteers with this expectation, especially on the day of departure. I observed this on the last day of a female long-term volunteer: They immediately ran up to her asking for goodbye presents and when she left, they did not show any emotional reaction since the new volunteers and I had already arrived (Field notes, 24.05.2012). However, they are indeed sad when volunteers leave, but do not cry every time, only for those that they got attached to due to extreme commitment or a long duration of stay. In most cases, when volunteers would leave, they would expect goodbye presents in the form of sweets and consumable things, would remind the volunteer to write his/her name on the wall (see photo) near his or her home country's flag and then say goodbye. They would not seem sad for long because of the distraction of the constant flow of new arrivals. Since there were always volunteers around, they were never completely alone and happy about every visitor that would come by.



*Illustration 1: German Volunteers Flag Wall*

Nonetheless, the children made it clear that they are not happy about having to say goodbye and volunteers leaving. One boy (8) clearly said “I don't like it when they leave” and that if he had the choice “they should stay with us every day”. The other children agreed that they would prefer it if the volunteers would actually sleep and lives with them and if they would also come on the weekends rather than in the afternoon on weekdays. Another girl (7) said “I like all the volunteers. The one that have gone already and the one that have not gone. I want all of them should come back and the one that did not go already, they

should not go, they should stay” and would finish the sentence with “If they are going they bring us a lot of things before they will go”, to which the other girls collectively agreed. Several times, the girls would state that they are sad when volunteers leave and happy when they come.

When they leave, many volunteers promise to come back in ten years time, which the children presume to be true even though it is highly unlikely. On the part of the volunteers, there is no long-term commitment. According to the children's accounts, once the volunteers leave, they do not keep in contact; they simply leave and the next cohort of volunteers arrives. Only Maria, one long-term volunteer, occasionally still sends them letters and once talked to them via Skype. Vanessa (13) said, she likes 'Sister Maria' especially because she remembered them after she left, kept in touch, and promised never to forget them and to visit one year later.

The fact that most of the volunteers depart without staying in contact or establishing a long-term bridge between host and guest community refutes the statements made by Randal et al. (2004) who argued that volunteer tourism could potentially produce sustainable social relations and create social capital in the long run. It indeed creates opportunities for social interaction, but does not seem to broaden the social network of the children nor make information more accessible for them.

### ***Giving and Receiving***

*“I like Sister Maria because she give us a lot of toffees, jeezes, pancake. She cook pancake for us. And she give us toothbrush and pencils and she give us hat. And she give us fruit. And she give a lot of things.” (Boy, 8)*

This is an example of statements the children would frequently make about enjoying the volunteers' presence because of the gifts they would give to them. The children also often mentioned that they like the volunteers since they would play games with them and provide them with sweets, stationery items for school, shoes, clothing, colouring pens, fruit and photographs. The act of giving is what they seemed to associate the most with volun-

teers. One boy (11) clearly said: “I like volunteers because if you ask them for something, they give it to you”. In addition, the children seemed to have developed certain expectations and strategies to convince volunteers to give them something or take them on a trip (field notes 18.05.2012), likely as a consequence of the customary giving and receiving. One Friday afternoon, when I told them I would be going on a hiking trip that weekend, several children pretended to cry and told me, this strategy worked with other volunteers who as a consequence took them on a field trip. Since they wanted me to take them to a waterfall I had planned to go to, they tried this strategy on me.

These findings have major implications for the children's notion of 'volunteering' as well as their understanding of the Western world. This relationship of giving and receiving reflects the distinct categorisation and dichotomy between wealthy 'help-givers' and 'needy' beneficiaries (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011) and reduces support to individual acts of charity (Brown & Hall, 2008). Furthermore, in relation to the historical roots of colonialism (Thomas, 2004), these observations and statements are significant as they demonstrate a clear discrepancy between Wearing's definition of volunteering (2001) and the actual understanding by the local children. The children conceptualise volunteers as white, mostly female young students, who enter their lives in order to distribute things and spend time with them. On the side of the volunteers who would constantly bring gifts, it seemed to reinforce the 'lotto-logic' (Raymond & Hall, 2008) and their concept of African children being 'poor, but happy' (Simpson, 2004).

### ***Positive impacts***

During the field work, the positive impact of the volunteers also became increasingly apparent: The children learn group games such as catching games, games in a circle and football. Furthermore, they are stimulated to participate in activities with guidelines such as arts and crafts activities and they learn to play as a group (observation, 17.5.2012). Thus, the children were able to tell me about and show me a variety of games they had acquired throughout the years and have fun, rewarding experiences (see photos below). They also

told me about several football matches they had played and a trip to the monkey sanctuary they had taken.



*Illustration 2: Volunteer playing 'Twister' with them*

*“Volunteers provide them with fun activities and experiences they probably would not have if volunteers would not come”*

*(Field notes, 18.05.2012)*



*Illustration 3: Volunteer building a goal using wooden sticks*

Furthermore, some children stated that volunteers have an effect on their behaviour as well since they teach them about what is morally right and the importance of wearing shoes, brushing your teeth, education and hygiene. Through the volunteers they also learned that hitting is not appropriate as a punishment or conflict resolution and is prohibited in other countries. In addition, according to the founder of the orphanage, their English language improves through their interaction with the volunteers because the children copy the correct pronunciation and also practice English more frequently. They often ask how to spell words when writing letters and consequently improve their English writing skills. If there

were no volunteers they would probably only speak Ewe, the local language, amongst each other and their English might not be as fluent as a result. These positive outcomes demonstrate the contribution the volunteers are able to make as Jones (2004) argues. In a way, the experience is valuable for the children because it involves personal encounters and emotional connections with people from other countries (Palacios, 2010) who can function as role models for solidarity and good behaviour (Jones, 2004). Considering these valuable effects, the volunteer tourism experience is mutually beneficial and leads to a two-way development since the children and the volunteers gain positive experiences (Wallace, 2009).

## **4. 2 The relationship between the children and the volunteers**

### **Appreciation and Recognition**

*“Anytime, the volunteers reach here, you will see the love.[...] They light the place before you reach.” (Interview with founder)*

Even though the majority of volunteers are at the orphanage for a very short period of time (between 2 and 6 weeks), one could speculate the situation of the children would be worse if no more volunteers came. As I observed and realised in my field notes “The volunteers are the only ones actually dedicating time and energy to the children. The Ghanaian staff is around but their job is only to cook and the head guardian is an old woman who only sits, prepares food or receives visitors. They don't actually get involved in activities” (15.05.2012, field notes). The children have respect towards the Ghanaian staff and are extremely quiet and behaved when the founder is around (observation, 15.05.2012). They are afraid of them because they fear being beaten as a punishment (Interview with Peter).

*“They are always happy. They are able to give up their past, they're free, and ahm, they thought that 'Oh, we have somebody that we can play with. Somebody, who understands our needs.'” (Interview with Peter)*



The children feel recognised, loved and appreciated since volunteers seem to come only to spend time with them (field notes; Interview with Peter). These observations were confirmed by the coordinator who stated that the teachers and staff in the orphanage do not treat the children as well as the volunteers due to a lack of time and energy and because children are simply treated differently in their culture. In the brainstorming exercise about volunteers one girl (14) wrote that the volunteers are “helpful, laughing, chatting, funny” and they enjoy “playing, reading, dancing, and staying with us.”

### ***Emotional attachment***

The children got attached quite quickly and many young girls would frequently cling to one's arms (see Illustrations 4 and 5).



*Illustration 4: Children clinging*



*Illustration 5: Children happy to be held and hugged*

According to the local coordinator, the volunteers are like big siblings to the children, which they demonstrate by calling them “Sister...” (Interview with Peter). During my stay, the children would frequently write letters addressed to me or other volunteers and would



ask me for help spelling words. They usually stated “I love you.” or “I love Sister...” and would then include a volunteer's name. One wrote “I love you. You are beautiful. I don't want you to go because you are my friends. If you want to go to Germany, I will cry” to me already in my first week. Interestingly though, many times the children would write these letters addressed to any volunteer. If one volunteer was not available, they would give it to another without hesitation. In the story-telling session, the children would repeatedly make statements similar to “I like Sister Maria but I didn't like others should go” (girl, 7).

Even though they seemed emotionally attached to them, they did not cry at the farewells of any of the short-term volunteers. Apparently, they only cried when Sister Maria left, who was an extremely dedicated long-term volunteer who had spent most of her time also living at the orphanage. They refer to the long-term volunteers as 'my friends'. The short-term volunteers only come in the afternoon during working days and play and entertain the children, but are not actually integrated into their daily routines and lives (conversation with cooking lady). One boy (11) stated “it pains [him] that they go” when I asked about the farewell situation. Nevertheless, according to the children, most of them only cried for Sister Maria because they liked her more than the other volunteers, since she really cared for them, bought them things, played, cooked and celebrated Christmas and her birthday with them and really demonstrated her dedication and love. In all the workshops, conversations, and observations, the children would frequently talk about three specific long-term volunteers and the memories they shared and would draw them as well, but would only mention other volunteers when I specifically asked about them.

When I asked the local coordinator about the volunteers' effect on the children's attachment behaviour and emotional development, he did not see the constant lack of stability as a problem:

*“I don't think it's dangerous, because [...] they are always assured that someone will come and replace the person that went. I always tell them 'You will have another friend, don't worry.' They will always ask me 'When is one person coming? When is someone coming?’” (Interview with Peter).*

The initial concern of Richter and Norman (2010) about children's rights, protection and emotional development turned out not to be the primary concern since it seems that the children only get genuinely emotionally attached to the long-term volunteers who truly participate in their daily lives and routines. Since they were well aware of the constant volunteer turn-over, they adapted a strategy of only getting superficially attached. Furthermore, it became clear through observations that the children gave each other emotional support and also had the Ghanain staff as stable attachment figures as well as their original families, to whom most of them returned during the school holidays and occasionally on weekends.

#### ***4. 3 The effect of the experience on the images the children have of themselves and the volunteers***

##### ***The children's image of the volunteers and their countries***

Generally, the children have an extremely good image of the volunteers and their countries. Frequently, I would be confronted with statements similar to “I like all the volunteers. All the volunteers are good. They play with us.” (boy, 8). Interestingly enough though, they associated white skin and the female gender with volunteers, as most boys wrote down “White lady” in one of the workshops. This is due to the fact that most volunteers are indeed female and no effort has been made to invite African volunteers. According to the local coordinator, this is because African people “don't really understand the concept of voluntary work” and are not willing to commit fully “just as foreigners do”, especially if it is without compensation (Interview with Peter). However, when I asked her informally, the cooking lady did not agree and told me she saw no reason for Ghanaians not to volunteer as well. My assumption is that young Ghanaians would surely be capable of volunteering, but are not encouraged to do so due to the financial dependency of the NGO on the volunteers' program fees. The founder of the orphanage said that she can clearly see that “white

people have love for the orphans and the needy children” but didn't know why there were no volunteers from African countries.

The children would frequently draw flags of the volunteers' countries and Ghana. They were happy when I stated that I was from Germany and right away assumed I knew all of the former German volunteers who had left long ago. They showed me all the names on the wall and told me they love all people coming from Germany and want to be taken there. Since the majority of volunteers have been from Germany, the children seem to have the image of Germany as a nice place with good-hearted people, cars, and airplanes. As the local coordinator stated, it is not surprising that their image of Germany is so positive, since it is only natural for a volunteer to only state good aspects of his or her country which leads to the children “fall[ing] in love with whatever you tell them” (Interview with Peter). In addition, many of the children would make drawings of airplanes or tell me they aspired to become pilots to fly to Germany. They seem to have a good understanding of the value of education and the quality of education in Europe since many have “big dreams for the future” (Interview with founder) to go to Germany in order to acquire higher education and then return to Ghana. As the local coordinator added, the children have a good understanding of their own situation and assume that if they had the opportunity to go abroad, their life would be better. As a result, “they begin to imagine, 'Come on, it's better I live at this place, I have this, I have that” (Interview with Peter).

To a small extent, the children learn about other countries through the volunteers which widens their horizon. The children told me for instance that volunteers taught them that hitting is not permitted in Germany and that children can get taken away from their parents if the parents hit them. They also seemed to have internalised the importance of education and that the quality of higher education is better in the Western world. Many aspired to learn a profession such as teacher, doctor, nurse, pilot, accountant, or police girl in Germany and then return to Ghana.

### ***Desire to live in Germany***

*“I want to live in Germany because I want to be like your colour. I want to be your skin colour because it's nice for me. Black is too dark. If it's like chocolate, I like it. But this is too dark, it's like kacka or charcoal.” (boy, 10)*

This statement shocked me as it clearly demonstrated a preference of white over dark skin. Since volunteers are always white skinned because there are no African volunteers at the orphanage, the children have concluded that white skin apparently equals good intentions and presents. According to the local coordinator, this belief is also due to the influence of Hollywood films shown on television and to the fact that most community members who have gone abroad seem to have acquired wealth, since they usually bring material goods and money when they return. “So the mentality is that once you travel there, you become another person, you have a lot of money [...] once you go there and come back, you are a rich guy, a rich person” (Interview with Peter). Since this is apparently the only basis of the children's image of the Western world, when they learn that a volunteer is from a Western country, they immediately assume that he or she is wealthy because “they always know that white people are very rich people” (Interview with Peter).

These research results show that intercultural exchange might be promoted (Raymond and Hall, 2008) by volunteer tourism but that at the same time it produces stereotypical, overly positive images of the Western world in the children's minds which might ultimately widen the dichotomy between the host's and the volunteer's home community, as Simpson (2004) argues. These findings are also closely linked to Ghanaian people's expectations and images of white foreigners (Pink, 1998).

#### **4.4 The role of the volunteers in creating sustainable changes in the orphanage**

*“It is important to situate our understanding of helping [...] in terms of local people’s understandings of the roles that rich foreigners play in local culture and society.” (Pink, 1998,9)*

As a result of the volunteer tourism, the children are spoiled but poor. On one hand, they are besieged with material presents and have constant entertainment in the afternoon through the continuous flow of volunteers. On the other hand, it is appalling to what little extent the volunteers actually make an impact in terms of sustainable improvement of the children's living situation or their intellectual development. Even though several dozen volunteers pass through the orphanage every year, the children living there still receive poor education due to poorly trained and unpaid teachers. They also have no health insurance, no mosquito nets, no proper mattresses, and not enough rooms or beds to sleep in. As widely pointed out in literature (for example Palacios, 2010; Jones, 2004; Simpson, 2004; Guttentag, 2009), volunteers lack the power, expertise and resources to successfully address development efforts and have the impact on capacity-building that Devereux (2008) discusses. This refutes the argument made by Wearing (2001), UNV (2002), and Daftary and McBride (2004) of international volunteering presenting a form of alternative tourism which is key to sustainable development.

Nevertheless, there are ways the volunteers support the orphanage through their program fees. The small proportion of the program fee the volunteer are required to pay to the international sending organisations is given to the local coordinator who decides upon how it will be used (Interview with Peter). According to him, he draws up a budget which includes the expenses of the volunteers, organisational expenses and lastly, a donation to the respective volunteer projects in schools and orphanages that he coordinates. As one way of supporting the orphanage, upon the request of the founder, he occasionally buys rice and oil in order to replenish their food supplies. Previously, he and volunteers would personally

donate supplies and money, but the founder was apparently not able to manage it well so that he decided to make it an NGO policy to give her food and supplies rather than money. For each entire year, the local coordinator decides on one particular construction project that is funded through the program fee donations. Thus, one single construction project is finished per year, in this case a library/computer room for the orphanage (Illustration 6).



*Illustration 6: Volunteers working on the construction of a new library/computer room*

One could argue that through their program fees, volunteers indeed have the potential to function as external catalysts of community development (Sherraden & Lough, 2007) as they make construction projects possible and support the work of a grassroots organisation without alternative funding resources.

However, there are certain constraints which limit the effectiveness of their financial help. In this case, there is an age-based hierarchy which applies to the decision-making process. As the local coordinator explained, he does not have the power or the right to provoke changes at the orphanage; only the founder has this right, since she is the elder person and the actual owner. “She is the founder, she is the decider, the final decision maker” (Interview with Peter). In spite of the fact that there are not enough beds for all the children liv-

ing there, the kitchen has been broken for three years, and currently, three grades are taught in one classroom due to a shortage of classrooms, the orphanage founder prioritised the construction of a library/computer room. Even though he did not agree with this decision, the local coordinator had no choice but to cooperate and obey. Decisions are clearly neither based on the children's right to participation, since they were not asked for their views, nor on their best interest, since a place to sleep, food, and education are more significant to their development than a library/computer room might be.

As it seems, the volunteer tourism projects are closely linked to questions regarding finances:

*“When we have [...] less volunteers, there is always a challenge to fund our projects. When we have more volunteers, then we are able to do more. So we think that next year, we'll start [...] linking with others, the same. They don't have classrooms [...] so we are thinking of putting up a classroom next year. So let's see, maybe two classrooms, depending on the money that we receive” (Interview with Peter).*

The implications of this statement are tremendous since it evinces a certain accountability towards the sending organisations which apparently focus on construction projects as proof of the legitimacy and sustainable impact of a volunteer tourism project. It also indicates the gradualness of progress, as only one small building is constructed in an entire year, a project which would only take one to two weeks if the necessary material and financial resources were readily available.

*“Without volunteers, you can't work. We don't get money for anything, we can't do any projects and other things, you know? Supposing we don't have volunteers, how would we be able to construct a classroom block in the village and [...] a computer lab [...]?” (Interview with Peter)*

In the eyes of the coordinator, the volunteers are helpful to the orphanage because they provide the financial basis for the survival of his organisation and they occasionally donate needed supplies. One volunteer for instance donated books and computers. They also provide word-of-mouth recommendations for his volunteer projects when they have had a satisfying experience (Interview with Peter). The only concern he mentioned regarding the partnership with the volunteers was the constraint of the sending organisations on him as the local coordinator not to disclose financial matters to volunteers because it leads to distrust on the part of the volunteers and hence “does not encourage [them] to support further” through continuous financial donations (Interview with Peter). Thus, his primary focus did not seem to be on the children's well-being, but rather on the existence and growth of his own organisation.

As a result of these financial interdependencies between the volunteers, sending organisations, and the local coordinator, the coordinator aims to receive as many volunteers as possible and the sending organisation gladly cooperates as it makes enormous profit through each volunteer sent abroad. This leads to a constant overflow of volunteers at the orphanage and to their dissatisfaction due to a lack of full-time employment with fulfilling tasks.

As demonstrated, the volunteer projects are grounded in strong power relations, a general lack of trust, intercultural communication issues and a prioritisation of financial resources due to a strong dependency on external funding. These factors lead to inefficiency and a general lack of sustainable impact on the community's development. Although volunteers pay large sums of money, only a small proportion ends up in Ghana in the hands of the local coordinator. Since it is needed in order to keep up the existence of his NGO, the orphanage receives an even smaller amount. In addition, there is no established structure that volunteers can integrate into. Even though they are mostly inexperienced, young, and in a foreign cultural context, they are expected to show maximum pro-activity and initiative to develop their own ideas for activities with the children. There is no established support system, preparation, training or mentoring while the project takes place, as a result of which they do not understand the larger implications of their short stay. Moreover, volun-



teer tourism projects similar to this one further promote the post-colonial dependency addressed by Thomas (2004) as they only further encourage the expectation on the part of the locals that development needs to come through external funding from the Western world. The local staff of the orphanage and the NGO were used to this culture of dependency and did not demonstrate any self-initiatives which could have lead to change.

In conclusion, the volunteers produce valuable contributions to the children's daily lives through the variety of enjoyable activities they provide, their expressions of emotional care, and their financial contributions which are vital to the existence of the local NGO and its projects. However, the concerns that volunteer tourists lack the necessary means and qualifications to contribute to sustainable improvements to the children's lives and the community's development have only been confirmed by the results of this study. Furthermore, volunteer tourism contributes to the continuation of colonialist structures and mentalities since local NGOs rely on external funding through the volunteer program fees and the children conceptualise the volunteers from Western countries in the light of wealth and 'giving'.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

Overall, this study was developed in order to provide a better understanding of the experiences of children with international volunteer tourists in an orphanage in Ghana which is used as a volunteer tourism site. Since it is a small-scale case study, the goal is not to make general claims about the children's experiences, but to provide credible information that could be used to influence future programs or to provide potential new directions for further research and advocacy (Harcourt & Conroy, 2011).

Due to the desire to study the children's perspectives in a contextualised way and the prevailing notion of children as competent citizens whose voices should be heard, the field work focused on their participation and rights. To ensure ethical correctness, it turned out to be a journey of constant self-reflection. Written field notes were used to support the analysis and adjust the research design when necessary.

The research process focused on the general perception of the experience with volunteers, the relationship the children establish with them and their effect on the images the children have of themselves, the volunteers and their countries. Additionally, I also reflected upon the volunteers' impact in terms of providing sustainable improvements to the host community.

As a result, this study has produced some interesting findings on the nature of volunteer tourism involving children. It has added tremendously to what is already published since it gives a rare insight into the perceptions of the local children. The findings have revealed that the children thoroughly enjoy the volunteers' presence since they provide them with a range of enjoyable activities and gifts. Since the volunteers specifically come for the children, they receive emotional care in form of appreciation, recognition and attention. Their horizon is widened as the children learn about other countries and mentalities, for instance that hitting is not permitted and education is of value and quality in many Western countries. Nevertheless, the images the children produce of Western countries as a result are ste-

reotypical and overly positive and strengthen the differentiation between their own and the volunteers' realities. This confirms arguments made by Simpson (2004) and Pink (1998). As other authors (Jones,2004; Palacios, 2010; Wallace, 2009) argue, these benefits that are valuable contributions to the children's development. On the contrary, the relationship of 'giver' and 'receiver' between the volunteers and the children shows the widening dichotomy (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011). It also demonstrates the critique that this tradition reinforces the 'lotto-logic' and the simplistic notion of African children being 'poor, but happy' in the minds of the volunteers (Raymond & Hall, 2008; Simpson,2004). Concerns made by Richter and Norman (2010) regarding the harmfulness of volunteer tourism for the children's emotional development were rather disarmed since the children only get rather superficially attached to the volunteers, seldom cry at their departure and also have a sufficient number of local stable attachment figures in their lives.

In contradiction to statements by Randel et al. (2004), the volunteer projects do not produce social capital since there is no long-term commitment to the children and their host community once the stay finishes. As argued by Guttentag (2009), they are also limited in their long-term impact, since volunteers lack the capacity and resources to provide sustainable community improvements. Concurrently, the local NGO relies entirely on the volunteers' program fees which leads to dependency and slow progress in the construction of needed buildings. Therefore, volunteers might play a role in supporting community development as argued by some authors including Wearing (2001), but their impact is rather limited. The observed power relations and interdependencies also confirm the colonial roots addressed by Thomas (2004) amongst others that volunteer tourism is a particularly neoliberal form of development. This study therefore confirms the concerns about volunteer tourism regarding post-colonial dependency, the promotion of 'the other' and a further categorisation between the host and the guest community.

As a result, this research project has enabled me to produce recommendations for policy and practice which could potentially enhance the experience for all stakeholders, especially the children. These recommendations (see Appendix 5) were personally discussed with the local coordinator and were sent to the orphanage founder and the sending organisation. A

child-friendly version will also be given to the children. They include the proposal to establish a volunteering scheme which would require volunteers to stay for a minimum of three months and to become more integrated into the children's daily lives through an established routine. As a result, volunteers might have a greater impact, become more aware of their concrete tasks and responsibilities and locals might develop a better understanding of the concept of volunteering.

One constraint of this study is the fact that there are both short-term and long-term volunteers at the orphanage between which the children do not differentiate. Therefore, many of the positive effects on their development might mainly be a result of the work of the long-term volunteers. If I would conduct this study again, I would, if possible, take more time to gain the children's trust and would be more careful not to judge too quickly. The fieldwork this study is based on was a subjective experience where it was not always possible to stay neutral. Central to it were my own reflections, emotions and the challenges and limitations of the participatory methods which provided a great basis for my learning as a qualitative researcher.

Overall, this study demonstrates the need for further research focused on the perspectives of the children and adults of the host communities of volunteer tourism projects. It also emphasises the need for an in-depth investigation of the relationship between sending organisations, local NGOs, the staff at the project sites and the volunteers. Specifically, the financial interdependencies and issues of communication and power remain unexplored territories within the volunteer tourism industry. It might be useful on a larger scale, as it has potential to explain the phenomenon of international volunteer tourism with children growing up in orphanages within African or possibly more globally. In the future, it would be helpful to conduct more research on similar volunteer tourism projects with vulnerable children in order to find out if these results are generally applicable. They might not be directly transferable, but could be utilised to support critical debates about the impact of the volunteer tourism industry on children. The study could also provide a starting point for discussions concerning needed improvements of the current practices and policies since it demonstrates that good intentions are not sufficient to ensure sustainable development.

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## Appendix 1: Adult Research Participant Information Sheet

### RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



Hello

My name is Hanna Voelkl and I am currently a student at Brunel University in London, England. Right now I am doing a research project. This is why I will be at the orphanage for the next five weeks.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

***What is the purpose of this study?***

I am very interested in finding out more about your and the children's experience with the volunteers who come to the orphanage.

The organisation *Students go abroad*, which organizes their stay in Ghana, has given me permission to do my research here.

I will do several workshops with the children which will include drawing and interviewing. I want to find out what their perceptions are, but to get a better understanding of the overall context and situation, I would like to include your views and observations as well through doing a one-on-one interview with you.

#### ***Why have I been chosen?***

It seems that you have the most knowledge and experience with the children and I believe your views and observations will be of great value for me to get a full understanding of the overall situation.

#### ***Do I have to take part?***

No. As participation is entirely voluntary, it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to participate, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

#### ***What will happen to me if I take part?***

I will ask you for a good time and place to meet for the interview. It will be one interview of 45min-1 hour duration. If you

don't mind, I will record it in order to include everything you say.

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Any information about you which leaves Ghana will have your name and address removed so that you cannot be identified from it. This is to ensure the protection of your identity and is very important.

***What will happen to the results of the research study?***

The results of this study will be written up as my master's dissertation and a summary of the results will be sent to you in October 2012. Your name will not be found in any report or publication. The data will be stored for five years in a safe place at the University.

***Who has reviewed the study?***

This study has been approved by the School of Health Sciences and Social Care Research Ethics Committee, Brunel University.

If there are any questions or doubts, feel free to approach me and ask me at any time or contact my supervisor Fiona Smith ([fiona.smith@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:fiona.smith@brunel.ac.uk)).

If you have any complaints about this research please contact [shssc-ethics@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:shssc-ethics@brunel.ac.uk).

Thank you for your time. I look forward to working with you and spending time in Ghana.

Hanna Voelkl

E-mail: [hannavoelkl@yahoo.de](mailto:hannavoelkl@yahoo.de)

## Appendix 2: Questions for the semi-structured interviews

- What is your name?
- How would you describe your relationship with the children? (*for instance: is it a close bond, a mother/father figure, etc.*)
- How long have you been working at the orphanage and what is your role?
- How did the volunteer project start?
- How did the collaboration with the student-abroad-company start? (*in case it's different from the question before*)
- How is the relationship between you and the sending organization? (*example: is the relationship 'excellent', 'good', 'could be better', etc.?*)

How much input can you give in the decision-process? (*Are you asked for feedback and comments? Are they taken into consideration? Who makes the decisions on which volunteers come and when?*)

- Are the children involved in this? If no, do you think they should be involved? (*To what extent are they listened to?*)

### TOPIC 1: The experience with the volunteers

- What do you think is good about the volunteer's visit? (*Give examples*)
- What do you think is difficult or bad? (*Give examples*)
- What do you think should be changed in the future to make them more beneficial to the children and your community?
- If you could travel ten years into the future and see how the orphanage had changed through the volunteers, what do you think it would be like if nothing changes?
- Ideally, what would you like it to be like in 10 years time?
- What are the jobs/tasks the volunteers usually do?
- To what extent does it affect your work load? (*Are they an additional burden or do they support and decrease the work load?*)
- In your eyes, are they skilled and capable enough to really work and benefit the orphanage and children?

- If not, what do they lack?

General Information:

What should or could be changed to better meet the needs of the orphanage and children?

- What do you think about the volunteer's impact? Do they 'make a difference'? If yes, to what extent and in what way? *(like it always states in the 'promotional materials' from sending organizations that volunteers can make a difference in Africa. Ask for examples.)*

TOPIC 2: The relationship between the volunteers and the children

- How would you describe the relationship between the children and the volunteers?
- What role do the volunteers play in the children's lives? *(especially in terms of an emotional connection? How important are they for the children? For example like a sibling, a role model, a parent)*
- What is it like when the volunteers come? What is it like when they leave?
- How, do you think, does it affect the children that the volunteers are only here for a short time and come and go?

Do you think it could be harmful since vulnerable children need stability? *(There are worries about children would get attached to the volunteers who would then travel back and leave them. Do they think the children might need more stability?)*

- Do you think there are any risks involved with having the volunteers here?
- In your eyes, to what extent do the volunteers enable positive change and development for the children in the long run?
- Do you think it would be different if volunteers were from Ghana or another African country?

TOPIC 3: The images

- What images do you have of the volunteers?  
Are they the way you expected them to be?
- What images do you have of the countries they are from?
- Has the experience with them changed the way you see them?

- Has it changed the way you see the Western world?
- Do you think it has changed the way the children view volunteers?
- Do you think it has changed the way the children view the Western world?
- Have you noticed any changes in the way the children view themselves as a consequence?*(For instance by comparing themselves to the volunteers? Do they develop aspirations or dreams, for example to study, become a doctor or something, move away, or in terms of owning materialistic things (laptops, mobile phones, mp3-players etc)?)*

Closing:

Thank you very much for your time.

How do you feel about this interview?

Do you have any questions you'd like to ask me?

Is there anything you'd like to add?



## Appendix 3: Child Participant Information Sheet

Hello Everybody



My name is Hanna. I am studying at a university in England at the moment and will be staying in Ghana for the next five weeks.

I would like to know what your experience is like with the many volunteers from other countries. Do you enjoy spending time with them? How do you feel when they leave? Do they keep in touch?

In the next five weeks I would like to find answers to these questions with your help. You are the experts and I want to listen to what you want to say.

We will have two sorts of meetings:

### 1) Drawing Workshop

Here you get to draw and collage different things and then explain them to me so that I can understand better.



### 3) Radio Reporter Workshop

Here you get the chance to be a reporter yourself and interview each other and discuss things in a group with me being the reporter.



### IMPORTANT

You do not have to take part, only if you want to. You can say YES or NO.

After you said YES, you do not have to stay in the project. You can stop at any time.

The project will run for five weeks.

If you don't feel comfortable doing something, you don't have to do it.

I will take notes and record our workshops, so that I remember everything you said, but I will NOT show them to other people.

I will not use your name in anything I write and I will not tell anyone what you told me.

If you have questions, you can always ask me.

I am looking forward to having a great and fun time with you.



Hanna

## Appendix 4: Schedule of Field work

<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Tool/Method</b>
Week 1 and 2	<p><b>Observation</b> and participation in activities to gain the children's trust and find a position in their lives that they are comfortable with as well as many informal conversations with adults and young people involved in order to gain an understanding of the surroundings</p> <p>The participating children are split up into two groups and informed about the research project and aims, as well as their rights during the process.</p>
29/05/2012	<b>Semi-structured interview</b> with orphanage founder
30/05/2012	Semi-structured interview with local coordinator
31/05/2012	Semi-structured interview with co-worker of local coordinator
Week 3, 4 ,5	Participatory workshops with the children
At the beginning of each session	<p><b>Group Agreement and time for questions</b></p> <p>Informed assent (Verbal and for those able to write, written as well). The group creates a group agreement together with rules. This is hung up on the wall and the children will be reminded of its content at the beginning of each session.</p>
Week 3, Session 1	<p><b>Story telling</b></p> <p>First, an introductory activity is done to introduce the topic of volunteers, where the children do story-telling about specific individuals who are volunteers, rather than making generalizations right away.</p> <p>Then, when they seem comfortable to reflect further, the researcher prepares a story about a “typical volunteer” who arrives at the orphanage to volunteer. The first two sentences are shared, then it goes around the circle with the children suggesting how it might continue, each child a few sentences. They are encouraged to include a lot of details about the volunteers and how it makes the children in the story feel and what they think about what is happening. This story telling continues until the story reaches an end or has covered several important points.</p>
Week 3, Session 2	<p><b>Spider Diagram/ Thought showers</b></p> <p>Large circle with 'volunteer' in it which is given several legs. Children think about words they associate with the volunteers, adjectives to describe them. This is done as a group.</p> <p>Large circle with key word “ME” with several legs. Children think about words to describe themselves independently and then present themselves to the group.</p> <p>The researcher gives children prompts to think about behaviour, their country, skills and feelings towards that person, but only as possibilities, not requirements.</p>
Week 3 Session 1	<p><b>Questions Game</b></p> <p>The researcher writes out questions on pieces of card and place them in an envelope. The children are invited to take turns to read out the questions, like a quiz show host.</p> <p>This leads into a focused discussion which stays on topic.</p> <p>A talking ball is used to ‘take turns’, if necessary, to ensure that everybody has a chance to express their view and the group is not dominated by a few speakers.</p>

Week 3 Session 2	<p><b>Problem Tree/ Graffiti Wall</b></p> <p>The researcher makes a large drawing of the tree of a trunk and labels it with “Volunteer”. The branches or Apples hanging on the tree are the effects of the volunteer on their lives and also the consequences of their stay. The children are asked to write the impacts they noticed, good or bad. The researcher writes down the effects those who are not able to read or write mention in the discussion.</p>
Week 4, Session 3	<p><b>Put it on a Post-it</b></p> <p>Explain the research topic and put three flipchart sheets on the floor/wall stating “good”, “bad”, and “ideas to make it better” (in colours green, red, and yellow).</p> <p>Then ask the children to write or draw on the different coloured post-its: Green for good things, that they like about the volunteers, red for bad things they don’t like about the volunteers, yellow for things they want to change, ideas to make it better</p>
Week 4, Session 4	<p><b>Picture stories/ story boards</b></p> <p>They are divided into pairs. Each group gets a topic and draws a picture story. When they are finished, they are encouraged to discuss what their stories show.</p>
Week 4, Session 3	<p><b>Picture Codes</b></p> <p>Show them pictures of volunteers and different situations with volunteers. Split participants up into pairs and distribute the picture codes. Picture Codes: 1. Volunteer, 2. Volunteer leaving, 3. Volunteer coming, 4. Volunteer and children, 5. Children alone, 6. Orphanage</p> <p>Ask in turn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does the picture show?</li> <li>• How do you feel about the situation?</li> </ul>
Week 4, Session 4	<p><b>Focus Group</b></p> <p>As a group, the children and the researcher reflect on the outcomes and findings of the last three sessions.</p>
All throughout the time	<p><b>Evaluation and Feedback</b> through “Feedback Box” or “Feedback Poster” where they can write down or draw any views, ideas, and suggestions. This allows for comments to be made anonymously. It will be available throughout the whole time.</p>
Week 5	<p><b>Thank you</b></p> <p>All children of the orphanage receive a thank-you- gift. The founders of the orphanage and the local coordinator will also be given presents at the same time to say thank you. The presents will be things, that the orphanage needs in order to benefit them as a whole community.</p>

## Appendix 5: Recommendations for local coordinator



11.06.2012

Dear Peter,

I noticed that the current system in many ways is inefficient since volunteers are only here for a very short time and their stays often overlap. It also seems that the same issues re-occur with every cohort of volunteers and there is no strategy to implement change. Both sides, the volunteers and you seem to confront problems and it seems that neither side is fully satisfied with the way it is run at the moment. ***Volunteering can and should be a mutually beneficial experience which aims at development on both sides, so I would recommend some changes to reach this goal.***

Please always make sure that projects aim at a 2-way development, being beneficial to both sides. This means taking into account the perspectives of all stakeholders involved, including the children and youth, and making sure that they benefit the most.

Please read this and see the following points as recommendations that I would strongly advise to follow in the best interest of the children, your organisation and the volunteers. Feel free to ask me, if anything is unclear or you would like to have further support in their implementation. I assure you that my goal is to make a difference in the children's lives and to leave a sustainable impact by improving the system.

Recommendations:

1. Volunteers are young and unskilled and lack the experience, knowledge and training to develop projects on their own in a short time. They need ***more guidance*** in order to be used in the best interest of the children. Rather than leaving them too much space for creativity and own projects, it would be better to have them work alongside local volunteers/staff on already established projects and in an ***established structure***. The day and week should have a ***constant routine*** to it that volunteers and children can easily follow. The structure should be based on a developed ***impact strategy*** with concrete goals which target the children's healthy development (physically, mentally, and emotionally). The goal should be not only to provide afternoon entertainment for the children, but to support them sustainably in their development so that they can eventually get higher education and get out of poverty. These targets should be clear and the way they will be achieved with the help of the volunteers

should be clear and set in a time frame. This will enable the local coordinator and the volunteers to do self-control and check their own efficiency and monitor progress. Furthermore, a **volunteering scheme** should be created on the basis of the impact strategy which includes a clear role description for the volunteers, their tasks and responsibilities, and the impact they should make. Support them in this and advise them whenever necessary.

2. Volunteers come and go frequently and so far, there is no system for take-over. It would be better to have a **maximum of two volunteers there at once** and to have a kind of **take-over** on their last days for the volunteers that come after them and start at that time. That way, volunteers have a better understanding of the context and culture and children's lives and can immediately start working. It would also be very helpful if the volunteers had a notebook with information about the children, the materials, the games they know and the activities one could do with them. That way, the volunteers do not start over at 0.
3. There is too much volunteer turn-over, too many come and go too quickly and there is no consistency to their stays. This really confuses the children and is very harmful for their development, as children need stability and consistency in the people they care about. Therefore, I would strongly (!!!) recommend that volunteers stay for an absolute **minimum of 3 months** to really make a difference in the children's lives. This might not generate as much money, but it is in the best interest of the children. A minimum of 2 months is the standard for any internship in Germany and since it is abroad in a different culture and volunteers need to adjust first, a minimum of 3 months is absolutely vital! Anything less is only tourism which harms the local community.
4. In conversations with the children, it became clear that only the long-term volunteers stayed in their memory and really had an impact on their behaviour. They said they **preferred the volunteers who stayed a long time and who also stayed with them overnight** and would come on weekends. Therefore, it would be better to have volunteers accommodated near or at the orphanage and to have them **rotate on the weekends**, so that there is always a volunteer at the orphanage. Also **make sure that the volunteers are needed** when coming. If children are on holidays or away for another reason, volunteers should not be coming since not needed. This needs to be coordinated with the sending organisations.
5. There seem to be constant communication issues between the parties involved. It is absolutely essential that the **communication and coordination** is improved. This includes the communication with the teachers in the school- make sure they understand the purpose of the volunteers, are interested in them coming, and integrate them into their curriculum!. **Make sure the purpose of the volunteers is understood at local level** and supported by staff members of the schools and orphanages (teachers, cooking ladies and Mama Viak) so that they can cooperate better and work together properly. Remember: the purpose of

volunteers is not firstly to bring money in, but to provide useful practical support to children and the community. If it's not needed specifically, then do not accept volunteers.

6. Also make sure that volunteers understand their role and what is expected of them and make sure you understand what they expect from their experience here. Before they arrive do an **expectation cross-check**, so that you are on the same side. In relation to this, you are not only a coordinator, but a **mentor**. This role means **regular check-up of projects**, showing interest in the projects and their success and the satisfaction of volunteers. It means not waiting for problems to occur and people to approach you, but rather **approaching volunteers and project holders regularly** to make sure that they are running as best as they can and that changes are made, when problems occur. It means taking the concerns and feedback of volunteers seriously.
7. Short-term volunteers often lack understanding and knowledge of the country and context they are going to and their role. You should do **a more detailed background check of the volunteers**: what are their motivations, capabilities and skills? In what projects and in what way can they be used most effectively to benefit the host community the most? Volunteers that only aim to go on holidays and do tourism activities should not be accepted. Only volunteers with good intentions and a clear understanding of their role should be selected. It would be good to do a selection process and to only select volunteers who match the role description, skills, and experience needed.
8. Establish a **proper feedback system** and listen to the feedback and concerns of volunteers from the past. We can all learn from mistakes of the past to constantly improve the projects.
9. In terms of general project management in your NGO, I would advise to have one staff member be a **certified accountant** managing the finances and one being a **qualified project manager**. It would also be better to focus on one project at a time rather than trying to manage several projects that are started and then put on hold. Also, rather than relying on external funding, be creative in generating income: if you have a staff member at the office, you can use it as an internet cafe for example. You need to find a way to become more independent from funding.

Thank you for your cooperation and the opportunity to do my research here. I really enjoyed my stay in Ghana and hope to work together continuously in order to implement these changes and improve the lives of the children and the work of your organisation.

All the best,

Hanna Voelkl, Brunel University, West London

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## **SUGGESTIONS:**

### **WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

Monday- Friday:

- Volunteers should live at the orphanage if possible (2 at a time only though!!)
- Morning: wake up children, help them get take a bath and get dressed, eat breakfast and get ready to go to school. While children are in school, volunteers help to clean orphanage and do any domestic activities where support is needed.
- Afternoon: When children are done with school, they will do one hour of free play and then meet at 3pm for homework/tutoring/studying. The volunteers support them actively.

4:30- 6pm, the volunteers provide activities that should alternate between arts and crafts, music, dance, sports, games, and free play.

- Evening: children all eat together. Then at 7pm, there is circle time where the children sit down together and can talk about anything that concerns them, what they liked, what they didn't like and how they thought the day went.
- Between 7 and 8pm: Volunteers help the children take a bath and bring the children to bed.

Saturday:

- once every 2 months: trip (waterfall, monkey sanctuary, hiking, cocoa plantation, Volta lake etc.)
- free play and washing

Sunday:

- church and free play

## **Volunteering scheme**

1. Selection:
2. Preparation: Fundraising and Awareness-Raising in own community
3. Preparation Workshop (training on the country, cultural differences and how to deal with them, culture shock, the role itself, reflection on own's own identity, issues of international development, colonial times → extended ICLS concept)
4. Stay abroad (constant support through e-mail and phone calls, if necessary!!!)
5. Return
6. Return Workshop (topics should include: self-reflection, feedback, exchange with other volunteers, self-development, finding ways to continue to support the host community through own projects back home)
7. Volunteers create their own projects at home to raise awareness and to continue supporting the children and the orphanage

## **Volunteer orphanage: Role discription**

### **Overview of Role:**

The role of a volunteer at the orphanage includes being a caretaker and person of emotional guidance and care for the children, as well as a support concerning their education and healthy development overall.

### **Tasks and Responsibilities:**

- domestic work at the orphanage
- waking them up, getting them ready for school
- afternoon activities with the children: arts and crafts, music/dance, sports, whatever suits the needs of the children and the talents of the volunteers
- support with school work and studying through regular encouragement of reading and writing activities to improve their english language, encouragement of fun math exercises to improve their mathematical skills, and encouragement of geography, history and intercultural learning
- bringing them to bed, helping them take a bath and brush their teeth, watch their hygiene



- being a trustworthy, caring emotional guidance person they can come to, who will listen and take them seriously
- teaching them behaviour, morals and being a role model for good behaviour

**Skills and competencies needed:**

- experience working with children
- preparation of concrete activities to do with the children that will help their physical, emotional and educational development
- strong motivation and intention and interest in the children
- Soft skills: perseverance, trustworthiness, patience, energy, empathy, tolerance, intercultural preparation, ability to adjust and adapt to circumstances and cultural differences, flexibility, openness patience, frustration. tolerance