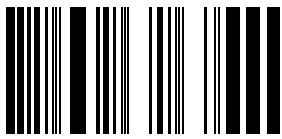




**STOP
WEES
HUIS
TOERISME**



ORPHANAGE TOURISM: REPORT ON A SURVEY CONDUCTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

Better Care Network Netherlands



#GOODINTENTIONS BADIDEA



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1. INTRODUCTION

Every year, 1.6 million people worldwide go abroad to volunteer (ATLAS & TRAM, 2008). Among these so-called volunteer tourists are thousands of people from the Netherlands, according to research by Sèrah van den Brink (2014) commissioned by the Volkskrant newspaper. Volunteer tourists spend two million euros worldwide on volunteer projects at an overall average of 2,000 euros per trip (ATLAS & TRAM, 2008). Most volunteer projects take place in developing countries and attract mainly young people from Western countries. For many, personal development is the main motivation for participating in these projects (Lepp, 2008). According to Czarnecki et al. (2015), projects involving children are the most popular among volunteer tourists. One of the most well known and most damaging forms of the volunteer tourism phenomenon is orphanage tourism, which is the subject of this research.

THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING IN ORPHANAGES

There are an estimated eight million children living in orphanages around the world. Eighty per cent of these children are thought to have at least one living parent, although the term «orphanage» might suggest otherwise (Csáky, 2009). Volunteers are often unaware that most children are placed in orphanages because of various underlying reasons. For example, most of the children living in orphanages in developing countries have been brought there by families because of poverty. In addition, discrimination, lack of support for parents of children with disabilities, and child abuse, can lead to placement of children in orphanages.

In the past 50 years, much research has been done on the consequences of growing up in orphanages. The evidence of the harmful effects is overwhelming. Growing up in an orphanage is detrimental to the social-emotional development, health and future life prospects of children. In effect, orphanage volunteers and donors are helping to perpetuate a system of unnecessary institutionalization (Torres, 2017; Cheney & Rotabi, 2015; Punaks, Feit & NGN, 2014). It is therefore of utmost importance that both volunteers and organizations become aware of the significant negative impact of orphanages on children and choose responsible alternatives instead.

RECENT RESEARCH IN THE NETHERLANDS

In 2014, Van den Brink carried out research on volunteers sent overseas from the Netherlands. The research established an inventory of Dutch providers of volunteer tourism and surveyed how these providers have implemented international guidelines on volunteer tourism in their policies. The research shows, among other things, that the guidelines for volunteers recommended by the Better Care Network Netherlands (2014) were the most commonly used, with 26% of participating organizations incorporating them in their policies. This represents a positive step towards responsible international volunteering and the protection of children against possible harm.

However, Van den Brink's inventory (2014) provides little insight into volunteers' interest in projects involving children, and specifically projects in orphanages. Nor does it tell us the extent to which organizations that send volunteers abroad are familiar with the negative consequences of orphanage tourism and how this awareness influences their policies. Moreover, Van den Brink's is the only recent study of volunteer tourism with children conducted in the Netherlands. In order to investigate further, in October 2017 Better Care Network Netherlands conducted a survey of organizations that send volunteers abroad.

” IN THE ORPHANAGE IT ALL REVOLVED AROUND THE VOLUNTEERS, NOT THE CHILDREN.

Teresia is six years old and is living happily with her aunt Regina. One day a man appears at the door. The man promises a better future for Teresia if she comes to live in a nearby orphanage. Teresia's aunt agrees to it. At last she can give her niece a good life.

Free education, food and shelter, that's what the man promised. Teresia's aunt Regina had no choice: «I wanted to take care of her, but I had little money.» The offer was too good to be true. And that was right. School, food and safety proved false promises to entice Teresia to the orphanage. Because a full orphanage meant many volunteers - and many donations.

Teresia: 'My life was about the volunteers, who came to help us with all good intentions. They paid a lot of money for that. Sometimes we were told not to go to school because a volunteer is coming, so you had to entertain that volunteer. I was also not allowed to say anything to them about the conditions in the orphanage, and at school.'

Michelle Oliel was a volunteer at Teresia's orphanage in Kenya. She says she collected thousands of dollars for the orphanage, but that money never reached the children. 'They were often starving, were forced to work, and some were not even sleeping at the orphanage.'

Michelle started Stahili, an organization that works to bring an end to orphanages and to reunite children with families. Not all orphanages are guilty of corruption and human trafficking. Yet Stahili, the UN and other organizations have warned about the dangers of child trafficking to orphanages worldwide.

Teresia is now continuing her studies at university in Kenya. She hopes to become a human rights lawyer, and to advocate against orphanages. Once forced to be quiet, Teresia has regained her voice: «The hidden agenda of orphanages is being revealed. Children do not remain children, they become older and can defend themselves better. They also learn what their rights are. I'd like to help them with that.»

Under pressure from Stahili and the community, Teresia's old orphanage is now closed. Everyone is actively working together to combat child trafficking.



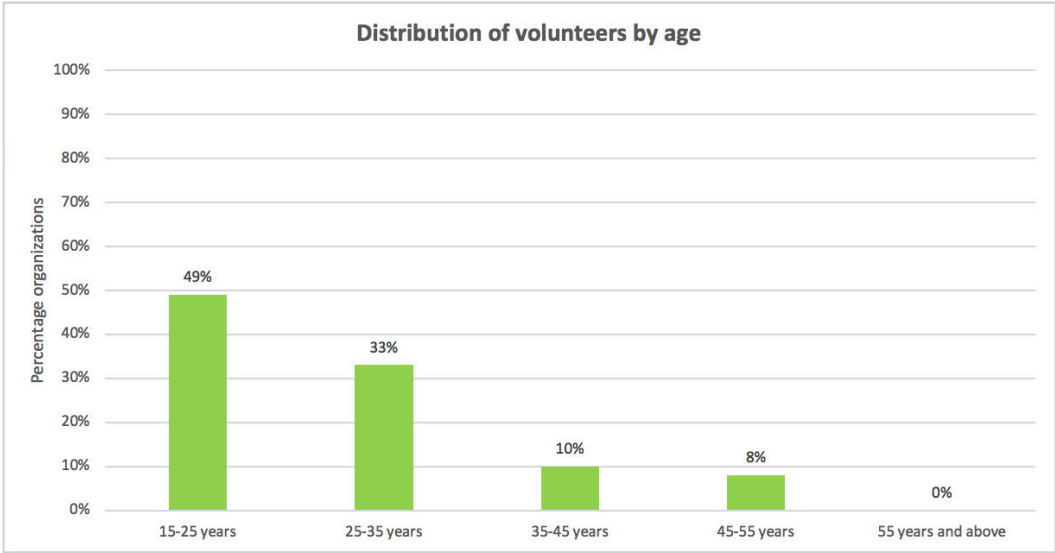
⁵ See: <http://nochildleftbehind.co.uk/>

2. RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

In order to map volunteer trends, and in particular trends in orphanage tourism, the Better Care Network Netherlands undertook research into several aspects of international volunteering from the Netherlands. An online survey was created for this purpose and sent to 135 volunteer sending organizations in the Netherlands, of which a total of 39 responded. This number represents an acceptable response group for an online survey. The survey examined the profile of volunteers and the type of projects which volunteers are most interested in doing. In addition, it investigated the forms of volunteer work offered by organizations and whether there are indications of increase or decrease in the supply of orphanage volunteering projects. Finally, organizations were asked whether they were aware of the harmful effects of orphanage tourism, how this awareness is incorporated in their policies, and whether they offer alternatives to orphanage projects. The results of the research are summarized below.

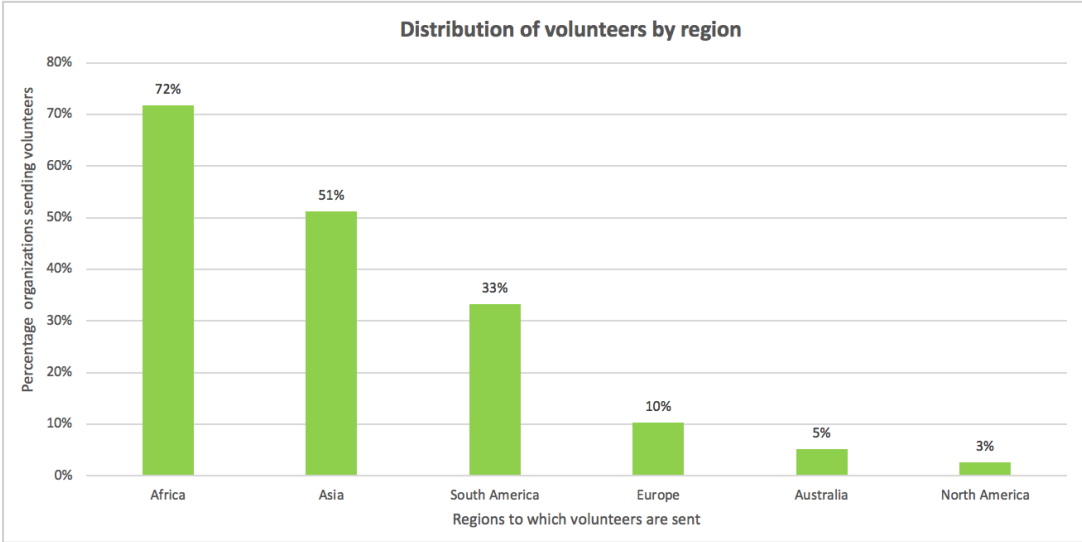
WHO IS THE TYPICAL VOLUNTEER?

On average, 72% of the total number of volunteers surveyed are female. According to the surveyed organizations, most volunteers who are sent overseas are between 15 and 25 years old.



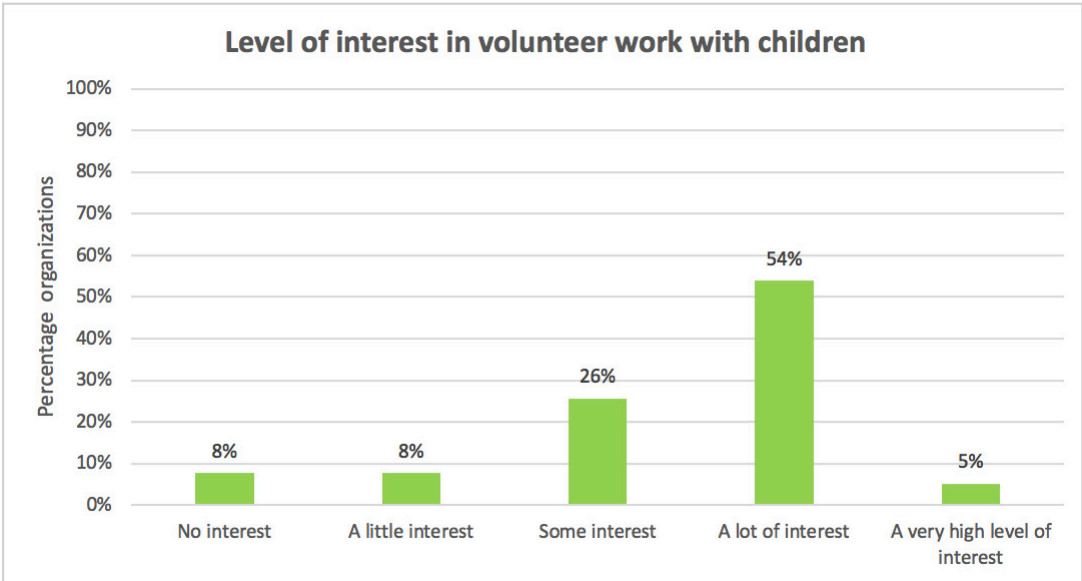
TREND 1: AFRICA AND ASIA ARE THE MOST POPULAR DESTINATIONS

Of all the participating organizations, 72% send volunteers to Africa, 51% send volunteers to Asia, and 33% send volunteers to South America.



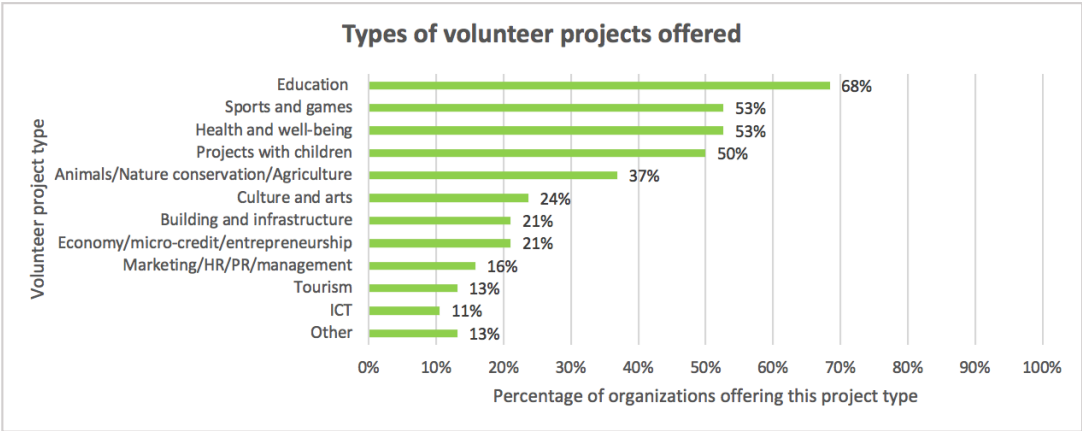
TREND 2: VOLUNTEERING WITH CHILDREN ATTRACTS HIGH LEVELS OF INTEREST

There is considerable demand for volunteer projects in which volunteers come into contact with children. 54% of the surveyed organizations indicated that the volunteers who contact them are very interested in working with children.



TREND 3: ORGANIZATIONS OFFER MANY VOLUNTEER PROJECTS WITH CHILDREN

The high level of interest in working with children is reflected in the types of projects that are offered to volunteers by the surveyed organizations. The most commonly offered types of projects are in education, sports and games, and healthcare and well-being. These types of projects typically lend themselves to working with children. In fact, half of the organizations surveyed specifically state that they offer volunteer projects working with children.





AN INSECURE START IN LIFE CAN LEAD TO SOCIAL, BEHAVIOURAL AND EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS IN THE FUTURE

Naomi Vandamme is a clinical psychologist, founder of the NGO Child-Flower, and a member of Better Care Network Netherland's working group on quality of care. As an actively committed professional, she is currently conducting doctoral research on psychotrauma in children.

"A high percentage of children living in residential care institutions suffer from mental health problems. These children have, for whatever reason, been abandoned. That experience can deeply affect a child. It is therefore very important that children feel safe, both emotionally and physically. Emotional security means that they feel safe in their own bodies with their own emotions, in their close relationships with others, and in the situation in which they live. This requires affection, good continuous care, and a sense of predictability. When strange people walk in and out continuously, these children are taken out of their familiar structures. This is harmful, especially for children who need specialized care. However good their intentions, volunteers – who are often young - usually lack this expertise.

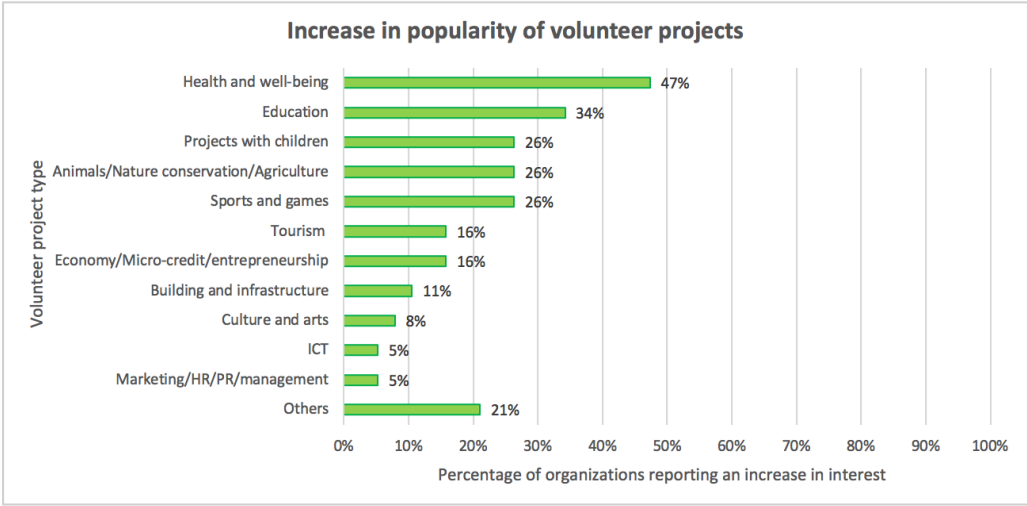
Unfortunately, there are also people without good intentions. This puts the physical safety of children at risk. In an orphanage or children's home someone might have free access to a group of very vulnerable children. Even people with the right intentions might sometimes take a child on their lap or give him or her a hug. Well meant, but this is how you learn as a child that strange people are allowed to have physical contact with you. This blurs the boundaries with the outside world, so that children can no longer distinguish between desired and unwelcome intimacies.

At least as important for these children is the feeling of attachment. The feeling of safety has already been compromised. This is why they need regular caretakers. In this way, the basis for healthy identity development, social and emotional development, and problem-solving ability, is formed. Volunteers who leave after one month disrupt this process and deprive these children of the opportunity to develop healthy attachments.

What I would like to say to volunteers and voluntary organizations is this: let experts and professionals work with these children and think of what is best for the child. It's not about you. Support the caregivers out there, the people who do the work. Strengthen them by respecting their knowledge. By all means learn and observe, but do not take on the role of the rescuer. And encourage self-reliance. Ask yourself: how can I help to strengthen the caregivers so that they can act by themselves? How can I help them discover what they already have and strengthen it? For example, by improving their access to tools so that they can have resources available when they find themselves in difficult situations. That must be our approach: building resilience."

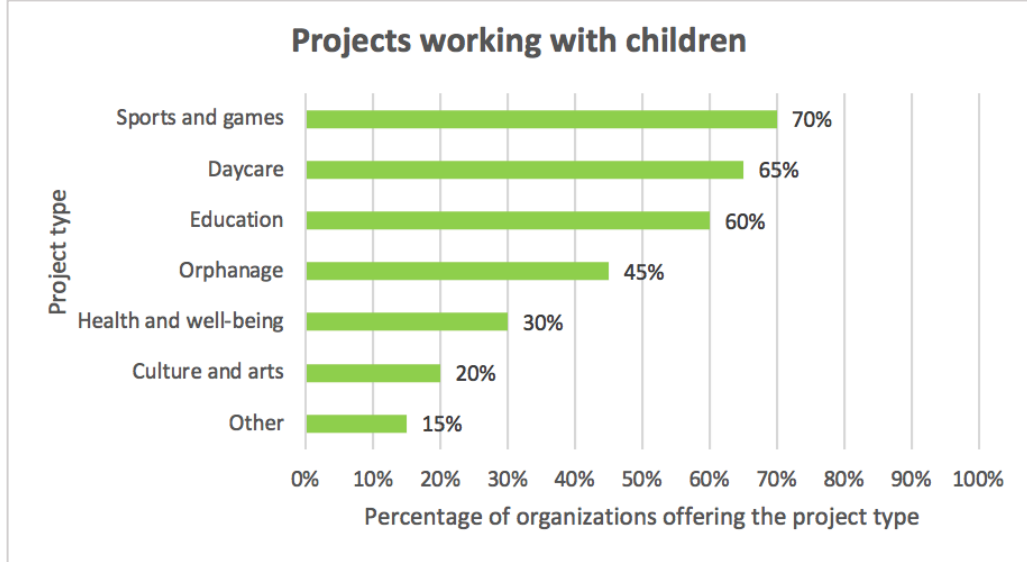
TREND 4: INTEREST IN VOLUNTEER PROJECTS WITH CHILDREN IS INCREASING

Of the organizations surveyed, 26% state that the popularity of projects working with children has increased among volunteers over the past three years.



TREND 5: THERE IS NO DECLINE IN VOLUNTEER PROJECTS IN ORPHANAGES

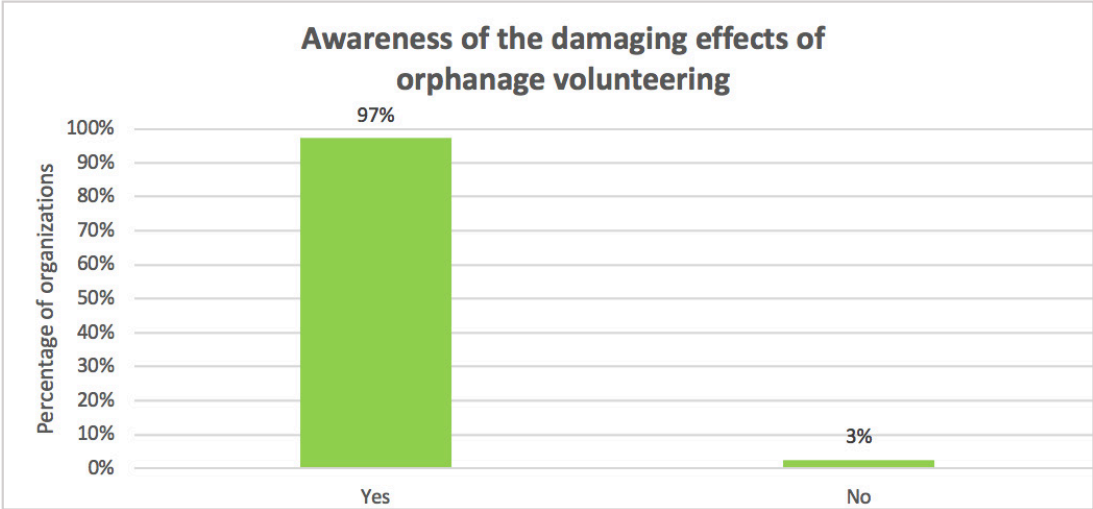
Of the surveyed organizations who offer projects working with children, 45% offer projects in orphanages. Of this group, 67% indicate that they offer as many orphanage projects as they did three years ago. All organizations that offer orphanage projects indicate that the level of interest in these projects has remained the same over the past three years.



TREND 6: ORGANISATIONS ARE AWARE OF THE HARMFUL CONSEQUENCES OF VOLUNTEER WORK IN ORPHANAGES

Of all participating organizations, no less than 97% indicate that they are aware of the potentially harmful effects on children of volunteering in orphanages. Of these organizations, 88% state that they have incorporated this awareness into their policies, for example by making the harmful consequences known through providing information and publications on their websites. However, this is clearly not enough to protect children from the harmful effects of volunteering in orphanages. Some organizations indicate that they no longer offer orphanage projects because of the damaging consequences, but this represents only a minority of the organizations surveyed.

As an alternative to orphanage projects, many organizations offer educational or childcare projects. However, with these types of projects it is equally important that measures are taken to limit the possible negative effects on the children involved.



3. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the survey results, Better Care Network Netherlands concludes that there is great interest among volunteers in the Netherlands in working with children and that there is a correspondingly large supply of volunteer projects with children offered by volunteer sending organizations to meet this demand. Despite the fact that almost all volunteer organizations in the current study indicate that they are aware of the negative effects of orphanage volunteering, a significant proportion continue to offer projects in orphanages. Moreover, organizations indicate that the number of orphanage projects they offer has remained the same in recent years, as has the interest in such projects among volunteers. It is therefore very important that organizations are aware of responsible volunteering with children and the negative impact of volunteering in orphanages, and that appropriate action is taken. In addition, it is important that young people who are interested in doing volunteer work with children are also well informed about the damaging consequences of orphanage tourism.





LOOKING BACK, I AM NOT PROUD OF MY WORK AS A VOLUNTEER

Sanne Heijnis (29) works as a drama teacher in primary and secondary schools. At the age of 21, after completing her teacher training studies in social pedagogy, she was eager to explore the wider world. Her starting point was to volunteer in a developing country. Now she looks back on the experience with little sense of pride.

‘Straight after completing my training I did an internship in psychiatry and worked with children aged nine to fifteen. Children with behavioural and attachment problems. After my education I wanted to go on a long journey, for example to Nepal. I thought that volunteering in an orphanage would be a good basis for getting to know the rest of the country better. Moreover, I was interested in working with children. A great combination.

Through an acquaintance I ended up in an orphanage that was founded by a Dutch woman. ‘Orphanage’ is actually not the right word, it was more like a children’s home. Almost all the children had living parents. They were mainly street children who offered help to the woman. She did not set up the home until after she had traced the parents and got their permission.

However well the owner went about it, I had very mixed feelings about it all. It was obvious that the children had psychological problems. Not surprising when you consider that they all lived on the streets. But I have a background in psychiatry and I know what attachment disorders look like. It was definitely like that. Especially with the little ones, it was noticeable. They were all over me straight away, hugging me and wanting to give hand kisses. I tried to create a healthy distance without appearing unkind. That was quite a challenge.

Of course, as a young volunteer it is nice to travel, and you can learn a lot if you combine it with volunteering. You learn how hard the life of an orphan is, which ultimately can have a positive effect on your life. But that is thinking from your own point of view. What does it really mean for the child? Your need for self-knowledge does not outweigh the damage you might inflict on children. But I also consider it a responsibility of orphanages themselves to pay attention to this issue and to tell volunteers if they come too close to children.

I was lucky enough to be in a good place with only Nepalese employees. And a Dutch owner with some business know-how. The children were being well looked after. Nevertheless, as time has passed I feel less proud to say that I have done volunteer work. Especially because I have seen first-hand that visits by volunteers are not really in the interests of children.’

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the survey findings, Better Care Network Netherlands offers the following four recommendations to organizations that send volunteers overseas and to (potential) volunteers themselves.

RECOMMENDATION 1: CONVERT AWARENESS INTO ACTION

Many organizations are already aware of the negative effects of volunteering in orphanages. However, it is important that this awareness is converted into real action. As a first step, the Better Care Network (2014) guidelines on volunteering with children can be used to help organizations in the Netherlands develop responsible approaches to projects which involve volunteering with children. The guidelines state, for example, that volunteers should be required to sign a code of conduct and child protection policy by the organization receiving volunteers, and submit a declaration of good conduct or criminal record background check.

RECOMMENDATION 2: MAKE SURE THAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE INFORMED

It is very important that not only the organizations that send out volunteers, but also the potential volunteers themselves, are fully aware of responsible volunteering and are familiar with the harmful consequences of participating in orphanage tourism. This awareness can be created through public information campaigns, but also through the information that is given to volunteers by the volunteer sending organizations themselves. Since it is mainly young volunteers who go to orphanages, it is also important to involve educational institutions in providing this information. If (potential) volunteers know the risks of volunteering in orphanages, they will be less willing to participate.

RECOMMENDATION 3: ENSURE THAT ONLY QUALIFIED VOLUNTEERS WORK WITH CHILDREN

Despite the big demand for volunteer projects with children, organizations should only offer volunteer work with children to volunteers who are qualified to take on the specific responsibilities. This means that the volunteers should not come into direct contact with children if they do not have the necessary qualifications. Unskilled volunteers may not be aware of how their behaviour can negatively affect the emotional and social development of children.

RECOMMENDATION 4: STOP ORPHANAGE TOURISM

To the greatest extent possible, it is important that children grow up with their own parents and within their own communities, and not in orphanages. It is therefore better to offer help that is aimed at supporting vulnerable families. Sending volunteers to residential care institutions is contrary to the vision of appropriate care of children laid down in the internationally recognized Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (United Nations, 2010). Several organizations have already stopped offering volunteer work in orphanages. They serve as an example to other organizations that seek to change their policies.

Better Care Network Netherlands aims to bring together organizations that are active in the Netherlands in the field of alternative care of children and to inform them of the most recent insights into what is best for children who are temporarily or permanently separated from their families. Working together, we are stronger in providing vulnerable children with the appropriate care that they need.

Better Care Network Netherlands calls on organizations that are still sending volunteers to orphanages to learn from the experiences of organizations that have stopped offering orphanage projects, and to join forces with them. Better Care Network Netherlands provides workshops and advises organizations that want to stop offering volunteer work in orphanages, and helps them to develop alternatives.



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ANNEX 1:

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Better Care Network Netherlands conducted exploratory research on trends in overseas volunteering from the Netherlands with a specific focus on orphanage tourism. An online survey in Dutch was sent to 135 organizations that send volunteers abroad to other countries. Within a one-week timeframe, 29% (39) of the organizations completed the survey. This can be considered a satisfactory result, especially given that 10% (14) of the total sample did not have Dutch-speaking employees and therefore may not have been able to complete the survey. In addition, 19% (26) of the organizations could not be contacted due to lack of availability or invalid telephone numbers.

The response group comprised 24 volunteer organizations sending volunteers to one or more local partners in another country, 14 organizations sending volunteers to their own development or aid projects in a developing country, and 1 organization that sends volunteers to local partners and also has its own development or aid project. Together these organizations offer 682 projects, with an average of 21 projects per organization. Every year, 4,202 volunteers are sent to these projects, with an average of 108 volunteers per organization.

FORMATION OF THE SURVEY RESPONSE GROUP

In order to prepare for the survey, relevant literature was consulted, such as the study by Sérah van den Brink (2014) commissioned by the Volkskrant newspaper and recent research by Jessica Rongen (2014). Assistance from Volunteer Correct was sought in compiling the list of organizations approached for the survey. Volunteer Correct is a non-profit organization based in the Netherlands that advocates for transparency in international volunteering.

On 23 October 2017, an email was sent to 135 organizations explaining the purpose and context of the research and asking whether the organizations wanted to participate in the survey. The email contained a direct link to the survey. A follow-up email was sent to the organizations that had not yet responded on 25 October. Organizations were also contacted by telephone on 25 and 27 October with a request to complete the survey. The survey was available to the organizations for a period of one week.

Better Care Network Netherlands is aware of the possible influence of social desirability bias on the formation of the response group and thus the research results. As Better Care Network Netherlands is publicly committed to preventing orphanage tourism, it is possible that organizations offering volunteer work in orphanages may have been discouraged from participating in the research. There is, therefore, a likelihood that the percentage of organizations that engage in orphanage tourism is higher than can be determined on the basis of this survey.

THE SURVEY

The data on which this research report is based was collected by means of an online survey using SurveyMonkey. At the start of the survey there was an explanation of the purpose and context of the research. Respondents were then asked to confirm that they had been informed about the investigation and that they agreed to further participation. Respondents who did not agree with the conditions were forwarded to a disqualification page, explaining why they were excluded from further participation in the study. The other respondents were forwarded to the survey itself.

The survey made use of both multiple choice and open questions and one question that required an answer using a 5-point Likert scale distribution (Likert, 1932). Respondents were first presented with a series of questions about the geographical locations of volunteer projects they offer, followed by more in-depth questions about the types of volunteer projects, the interest of volunteers in these projects, and the extent to which the organizations are aware of the effects of orphanage tourism. Respondents who indicated that they do not offer volunteer projects with children could skip further questions about such projects. Respondents who indicated that they offer volunteer projects with children, but not orphanage projects, could skip further questions regarding orphanage projects. Three respondents stated that they do not offer orphanage projects, but answers to open questions elsewhere in the survey showed that these respondents do in fact engage in orphanage projects. These respondents have been included as providers of orphanage projects in the survey results, although due to the survey design they were not able to respond to questions about a possible increase or decrease in the supply of and interest in orphanage projects.

At the end of the survey, the respondents were thanked for participation and were given the option to leave a comment or to contact Better Care Network Netherlands with any questions about the research. The survey questions are given below in Annex 2.

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ANNEX 2:

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Below is a translation of the Dutch survey questions as entered in SurveyMonkey and sent to respondents. The prompts referring respondents to relevant questions are given in square brackets.

Do you declare that you have been informed about Better Care Network Netherlands's research into overseas volunteering in orphanages by Dutch volunteers and do you agree to participate in the research?

- Yes
- No [respondent is referred to a disqualification page and can no longer participate in the research]

1. What type of volunteer organization are you?

- Volunteer sending organization working with one or more local partners in a developing country or countries
- Organization sending volunteers to own development or aid project(s) in a developing country or countries
- Other (please specify)

2. To which regions does your organization send volunteers?

(more than one answer is possible)

- Europe
- Africa
- South America
- North America
- Asia
- Australia

3. In which of the following age groups do the majority of the volunteers who participate in your organization's projects fall?

- 15-25 years
- 25-35 years
- 35-45 years
- 45-55 years
- 55-65 years
- 65 and older

4. What is the percentage of female volunteers who participate in your organization's projects?

Slide the bar to indicate the percentage of the total number of volunteers who are female.



0% of our volunteers
are female

50% of our volunteers
are female

100% of our volunteers
are female

5. How many volunteer projects does your organization offer?

(open question)

6. What is the annual total number of volunteers who participate in projects offered by your organization? (open question)

7. In your opinion, has the number of volunteers decreased, stayed the same, or increased in the last three years?

- Decreased [respondent is referred to question 9]
- Stayed the same [respondent is referred to question 10]
- Increased

8. On average, by what percentage has the number of volunteers increased in the last three years?

- 0-10%
- 11-20%
- 21-30%
- 31-40%
- 41-50%
- 61-70%
- 71-80%
- 81-90%
- 91-100%
- Meer dan 100%

[respondent is referred to question 10, regardless of answer]

9. On average, by what percentage has the number of volunteers decreased in recent years?

- 0-10%
- 11-20%
- 21-30%
- 31-40%
- 41-50%
- 61-70%
- 71-80%
- 81-90%
- 91-100%
- Meer dan 100%

10. To what extent is there a specific interest amongst volunteers in working with children? (5-points Likertscale)

- No interest
- A little interest

- Not a little, but also not a lot of interest
- A lot of interest
- A very high level of interest

11. In your opinion, which types of volunteer work have risen the most in popularity in the last three years?

(more than one answer is possible)

- Health and well-being
- Education
- Sports and games
- Animals, nature conservation and farming
- Culture
- Economy, micro-credit and entrepreneurship
- Information technology
- Marketing, HR, PR and management
- Tourism
- Building and infrastructure
- Projects with children
- Others, please specify: (open question)

12. Which types of volunteer work does your organization offer?

(more than one answer is possible)

- Health and well-being
- Education
- Sports and games
- Animals, nature conservation and farming
- Culture
- Economy, micro-credit and entrepreneurship
- Information technology
- Marketing, HR, PR and management
- Tourism
- Building and infrastructure
- Projects with children
- Others, please specify: (open question)

[Respondents who indicate among their answers 'projects working with children' are referred to question 13. Other respondents are referred to question 14]

13. Which types of projects with children does your organization offer?

- Health and well-being
- Education
- Sports and games
- Culture
- Orphanage [respondent is referred to question 15]
- Childcare
- Others, please specify: (open question)

14. Do you offer volunteer projects in orphanages?

- Yes
- No [respondent is referred to question 22]

15. How many volunteers annually work in orphanages overseas through your organization? (open question)

16. Has the interest in volunteer projects in orphanages increased, stayed the same, or decreased in the last three years?

- Increased
- Stayed the same [respondent is referred to question 19]
- Decreased [respondent is referred to question 18]

17. By what percentage has the interest in orphanage projects increased in the last three years?

- | | |
|--------|-----------------|
| 0-10% | - 61-70% |
| 11-20% | - 71-80% |
| 21-30% | - 81-90% |
| 31-40% | - 91-100% |
| 41-50% | - Meer dan 100% |

[respondent is referred to question 19, regardless of answer]

18. By what percentage has the interest in orphanage projects decreased in the last three years?

- | | |
|--------|-----------------|
| 0-10% | - 61-70% |
| 11-20% | - 71-80% |
| 21-30% | - 81-90% |
| 31-40% | - 91-100% |
| 41-50% | - Meer dan 100% |

[respondent is referred to question 19, regardless of answer]

19. Has the number of orphanage projects offered by your organization decreased, stayed the same, or increased in the last three years?

- Decreased [respondent is referred to question 21]
- Stayed the same [respondent is referred to question 22]
- Increased

20. What is the reason for the increase in the number of orphanage projects offered by your organization? (open question)

[respondent is referred to question 22]

21. What is the reason for the decrease in the number of orphanage projects offered by your organization? (open question)

22. Is your organization aware of the potentially harmful consequences of volunteer work in orphanages?

- Yes

- No [respondent is referred to question 24]

23. Has your organisation incorporated this awareness in your policies? If so, how?

- No

- Yes, please specify (open question)

24. Is your organization familiar with types of projects that could be offered to volunteers interested in working with children as alternatives to orphanage projects?

- No

- Yes, please specify (open question)

- End of survey -



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