

# Questions to ask before you support a children's organisation



1

## Do you have residential care?

Tip: you know it's a residential care facility if the children have rotating carers, if there are lots of children under one roof—more than is common to see in a family setting—and if most of the children are unrelated.

Best answer is: **NO**.

If the answer is **YES**, ask the following questions:

- 1 Why are the children living in residential care rather than with their family?  
Tip: poverty or providing access to education is not a good answer.
- 2 Have you conducted family tracing and family assessments to find out if the children have family or relatives who could be caring for them?
- 3 Do you have a plan in place for all the children in your care to be reintegrated into family-based care, i.e. back to their immediate or extended family, into foster care or local adoption?
- 4 Have you successfully completed reintegration? Do you provide follow-up assistance to the family after the children have returned to family-based care?
- 5 Are you registered and licensed with the appropriate government ministries? (**Remember:** many unregistered homes are operating and being funded by overseas donors.)

2

## Do you allow visits to places where children live?

i.e. dormitories, family homes etc. (*Remember: all people have a right to privacy at home and should never be made to feel like they are tourist attractions.*)

Best answer is: **NO**.

3

## Do you allow visitors to interact with children?

Best answer is: **NO**.

If the answer is **YES**, ask the following questions:

- 1 How are these visitors vetted? How can you be 100 per cent sure the visitors interacting with children are not predators?  
Tip: ask yourself if you would feel okay about a stranger having the same access to your children.
- 2 Is the interaction for the benefit of the child or the visitor? (**Remember:** policy should be drafted only in the best interest of the child, even if interaction does help with fundraising. It is worth noting, though, that it may be necessary for some organisations to allow visitors to observe operations for monitoring, evaluation, and transparency purposes. However, such visits should be kept to a minimum, respect the privacy and dignity of the beneficiaries, create minimal disruption to activities and adhere to a strictly professional agenda.)

4

## Do you have volunteers working for the organisation in roles that have direct contact with children?

Best answer is: **NO**.

If the answer is **YES**, ask the following questions:

- 1 Do these volunteers have relevant, professional qualifications and adequate training for the role? (**Remember:** *unskilled volunteers with inadequate training place children at risk of unprofessional and neglectful care practices. A rotation of adults coming in and out of a child's life contributes to attachment disorders and has negative impacts on a child's development. Therefore, unskilled volunteers should not be working, playing, or interacting with vulnerable children.*)
- 2 Are volunteers adequately screened? (**Remember:** *skilled volunteering for the purposes of capacity building and training of local staff can be a great way to help, but even skilled volunteers should have to provide criminal background checks or Working With Children Check.*)
- 3 Where do volunteers/visitors reside? (**Remember:** *even skilled volunteers should never stay onsite where vulnerable children reside.*)

5

## Do you have a child protection policy?

Tip: make sure you read it!

Best answer is: **YES!**

But make sure you ask the following questions:

- 1 Have all staff been trained on how to implement and abide by the policy?
- 2 Are local and international staff adequately screened before commencing their roles?
- 3 Is there a system in place that allows children to safely and confidentially report complaints and concerns?

### Remember: You can be part of the solution

Check out **Rethink Orphanages: Better solutions for children:**



This Australian network, of which Tara is a founding member, is working to prevent the unnecessary institutionalisation of children by shifting the way Australia engages with overseas aid and development.

[www.rethinkorphanages.org.au](http://www.rethinkorphanages.org.au)

