



SOE.
STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE
IN SHORT-TERM MISSION



O.V.C. Guide

A Catalyst for Excellence in Short-Term Missions

Orphans and Vulnerable Children

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Christians have been leading the way in caring for vulnerable children since the beginning of the Church. As we continue to learn of ways to improve our support for vulnerable children and respond to the unique challenges of today, each of us can take a next step to ensure we are pursuing the very best for every child.

- Elli Oswald, Executive Director, Faith to Action



CHAPTER 1:

Introduction and Background to Guide

Thank you for your heart for orphaned and vulnerable children.

Over the last few years, countless individuals and organizations have joined the conversation and sparked a global movement toward reevaluating and redefining how we serve orphaned and vulnerable children through short-term missions. Around the world, governments and nonprofits alike are committing themselves to better serving the children in their care. [We're inviting you to join us.](#)

Because you're reading this catalyst, we know you have a heart for children and want to see your short-term mission teams have a deeper impact for the gospel. [We believe the shared research and information contained herein will help you accomplish that goal.](#)

Short-term mission teams have become a significant player on the scene of global missions, and over the last few years we've learned more and more about the impact these teams have on vulnerable children around the world. Research now shows that some common practices are having a measurable negative effect on the very children they are designed to serve. This can be hard to hear, and harder still to know what to do with such information.

[But there's hope! As we know more, we can do better.](#) Together, we're working toward a new model of short-term missions that strengthens families, empowers caregivers, and helps children thrive.

It can be easy to feel frustrated or discouraged when we learn how our best intentions may have caused harm. As you read through this information and make decisions about your involvement in short-term missions, please give yourself permission to wrestle through these complex emotions. [Change will take time, prayer, wisdom, and a large measure of grace.](#)

This is a large task, and there are no easy answers to many of the questions we'll face. Together we are working to create pathways to potential solutions by sparking creativity within each organization's unique situation and providing a team of credible, hands-on mentors to walk alongside you. Like many aspects of ministry, the process will likely be messy and complicated, yet full of unexpected beauty and marked by long-term, relational commitment - all of it designed to bring glory to God.

Many facts and resources are presented. Keep in mind that every word and idea is centered on two key goals: [what is best for children, and what keeps the gospel as the center of it all.](#) Thank you for sharing these goals and joining us as we seek the Father's heart for orphaned and vulnerable children around the globe!

// We all care about what's best for kids, and I'm grateful for organizations that help us see what that could look like. Because every situation is so different, Standards of Excellence (SOE) is committed to helping guide us toward incremental changes in how short term missions supports orphan care ministries. It will take transparency, strategic thinking, a lot of time, and God's hand as we move towards improving care for orphans and vulnerable children. **//**

- Brian Heerwagen, Chief Executive Officer, Standards of Excellence (SOE)

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background to Guide

Basic Facts about Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC)

Compiled by Rethink Orphanages

Millions of children worldwide live in residential institutions, commonly referred to as orphanages. Yet an estimated 80% are not actually orphans and have at least one living parent.

One of the main reasons for a child to be placed in an orphanage is poverty. Families are faced with making impossible choices, so they send their children to live in these residential institutions because they see this as the only way to access basic services such as education and health care.

Decades of research show that living in institutions is harmful to children. Many children who grow up in orphanages, even those that are well resourced, experience attachment disorders, developmental delays and lack the life skills and stability that come from growing up in a family environment. These problems can continue into adulthood. Young adults leaving institutional care are more likely to become victims of trafficking, exploitation, unemployment and homelessness and are at increased risk of suicide.

Caring for a child in an institution can cost up to ten times more than caring for a child in a family - making no economic sense for investing in this model of care.

In many countries where orphanages are still commonplace there is little data on the number of children who live in these establishments. Many of these institutions are not registered or monitored. If these children are not accounted for, this leaves them increasingly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. The solution has been a global effort to move away from the use of the institutional care as a response to poverty and toward supporting and strengthening families and communities. 'Family strengthening' is the provision of local services to meet the economic, educational, psychological and special needs of families to prevent family separation. This can include employment skills and job training, day care and after-school programs for children and healthcare services.

However, well-meaning support for orphanages - through donations, volunteering, tourist trips and faith-based mission work - is weakening the global care reform effort and perpetuating the cycle of children being separated unnecessarily from their families.

Despite the best of intentions of volunteers who want to care for children still living in orphanages, it can do more harm than good. Without a family to make them feel secure, the children are quick to form relationships with volunteers as they arrive, only to feel abandoned once again when they leave.

Sadly, our desire to support children overseas has even led to a rise in the number of orphanages in many countries - established to generate income from donations and volunteers, with children being exploited and trafficked from poor communities to pose as orphans.

To make orphanages a thing of the past and keep families together, there needs to be a significant shift in how individuals, organizations, corporations and governments support development overseas. The key strategic drivers inspiring these changes are:

***Volunteers** taking a stand against orphanage volunteering.*

***Volunteer operators** ceasing orphanage volunteering programs.*

***Faith communities** redirecting support for vulnerable children to strengthening families.*

***Schools, colleges, universities and graduate recruiters** stopping the promotion and facilitation of orphanage volunteering.*

***Travel companies** stopping the promotion and facilitation all forms of orphanage tourism.*

***Individuals and corporates** redirecting financial support from orphanages to strengthening families.*

***Non-profits** changing their programming focus to strengthening families and communities to help keep families together.*

***Governments** strengthening or adjusting policies to protect children from exploitation and prevent unnecessary separation and institutionalization of children.*

CHAPTER 2: 30-Minute Assessment

How does your ministry “measure up”?

There are a couple of common responses after reading chapter one and any of the background documents by Faith to Action and CAFO. One is:

- “This doesn’t apply to me, my circumstances are unique.”

The other response is more complex. It is a combination of feelings and it goes like this:

- “Wow, I had no idea. It makes sense and it makes me sad. Does it mean I’ve been doing it all wrong? Have I done more harm than good?”

The first response is to **dismiss the information**, potentially making excuses and therefore not being open to learn or to change. The second is **an overreaction** that can include guilt or the idea that you should quit altogether.

This chapter is designed to easily help you **find a balance**, to guide you through questions and thoughts that effectively “measure up” your work with orphans and vulnerable children. It will likely take a half hour to thoughtfully answer the questions and make some conclusions – but **it will be a very good use of thirty minutes!**

Two Worksheets / Two Viewpoints

The method we are using for the following exercise is known as a **rubric** which focuses on measuring a stated objective (performance, behavior, or quality) using a range to rate performance. Each set of possible answers contain characteristics arranged in levels indicating either the developmental sophistication of the strategy used or the degree to which a standard has been met.

There are two rubrics with ten questions each. The first rubric is **LOOKING IN** and is about **your organization**. The second worksheet is **LOOKING OUT** and is about your **ministry partner**. Complete a **LOOKING OUT** rubric for each ministry partner.

LOOKING IN

Looking at your organization:

- Church
- School or
- Agency

LOOKING OUT

Looking at your ministry partner:

- Agency
- School or
- Orphanage

The Heart of the Law, Not the Letter of the Law

The questions are designed to spark thoughts, to bring focus and to discover new information about where you may have gaps. The questions and possible answers are thoughtfully crafted. Consider the heart behind the topic or thought. Don't get caught up in legalism or "the letter of the law".

Read each question, and then read through the three possible answers to find the best fit. Write down a score that best represents your position within the given ranges.

The LOWER the score:

- General or vague
- Lacking certainty
- Hard to measure
- Little access to information
- Infrequent communication

The HIGHER the score:

- Specific
- High certainty
- Very measurable
- Easy access to information
- Year-round communication

Not sure of the answer? As you are working through the rubric, if you come to a category and you are not sure of the answer, set the rubric aside and contact those who can give you accurate input. Once they have responded, you can continue with the exercise.



As a movement, we are recognizing some of our historic practices in short-term missions have been based on good intentions rather than wisdom. However, when carried out with due caution, short-term missions can benefit children for the long term- especially by building up the families and communities capable of caring for them over time. More knowledge means we can transform our trips to be in the best interest of children, both in the short- and long-term. We are not the problem, we are part of the solution - and we are in this together.



- Nicole Wilke, Director, CAFO Applied Research and Best Practice Initiative

Chapter 2: 30-Minute Assessment

LOOKING IN:

Reviewing or evaluating your ORGANIZATION (school, agency or church)

	QUESTION 1:	SCORE 0-3	SCORE 4-6	SCORE 7-10
Philosophy (family-based care)	Do the leaders of our organization, team leaders and team participants understand and agree to support current thoughts and research regarding the family-based care model and its guiding direction for excellent short-term mission strategies and efforts affecting orphans and vulnerable children?	We are not really aware of the research, or have only read some data about orphan care and family-based care.	We have looked intentionally at current thoughts and research regarding orphan care and family-based care and agree with the findings and the recommendations. We are trying to implement change.	We are very familiar with resources and the research and findings about orphan care and family-based care, and we are dedicated to promote and facilitate change as senders and with our ministry partner(s).
Score:				

Reflections / Notes / Action Steps / Gaps

LOOKING IN (Continued):

	QUESTION 2:	SCORE 0-3	SCORE 4-6	SCORE 7-10
Gospel Focus	Is the Gospel message through word and deed central to the reason for our involvement with ministry to orphans and vulnerable children?	We are mostly interested and qualified to provide childcare and financial support.	We provide services and finances to our ministry partner(s) and we train our participants on how to share their testimony(ies).	We are dedicated to the Gospel message and train our participants on how to share Christ "in season and out*". The Gospel is core to WHY we serve and we believe excellent family-based care provides open doors to share the Gospel with staff, children and families. (*2 Tim. 4:2)
	Score:			

Reflections / Notes / Action Steps / Gaps

Chapter 2: 30-Minute Assessment

LOOKING IN (Continued):

	QUESTION 3:	SCORE 0-3	SCORE 4-6	SCORE 7-10
Partnership / Relationship	Are we committed to mutually empowered long-term strategic partnerships that are founded on relationships, transparency, common goals, and financial accountability?	We share very little information about our organization with our ministry partner.	We have a fairly transparent relationship with our ministry partner and share information about finances, strategies and accountabilities. We are doing what we can to align with their plans and hope we are doing more good than harm.	We take into consideration cultural differences as we strive to maintain a close and transparent relationship with our ministry partner. We openly discuss vision, expectations, strategies, finances and other important subjects as a part of our ongoing and growing relationship.
	Score:			
Reflections / Notes / Action Steps / Gaps				

LOOKING IN (Continued):

	QUESTION 4:	SCORE 0-3	SCORE 4-6	SCORE 7-10
Child Protection	Do we understand the risks to orphans and vulnerable children and apply all measures needed to insure safety and health for your participants and for the children in the orphan care system?	We do not have a clear knowledge about the risks to children in the orphan care system. We have few or no actual policies or processes in place for our participants related to child protection.	We are becoming familiar with the risks that children may face in the orphan care system. We are working to make our participants aware of those risks. While we do have some information and policies in place, we are not certain if these are sufficient.	We are actively learning about the risks to children in the orphan care system, especially related to the places where we serve. We teach our participants about the risks and require them to fulfill all child safety requirements of the sending and ministry partner(s). We review the processes and policies routinely to keep them current. We have protocols for reporting suspected abuses. There is training to help our participants understand what is abuse and what is culturally the "norm" and therefore not a concern.
	Score:			

Reflections / Notes / Action Steps / Gaps

Chapter 2: 30-Minute Assessment

LOOKING IN (Continued):

	QUESTION 5:	SCORE 0-3	SCORE 4-6	SCORE 7-10
Promotion	Do we promote our ministry opportunities with accuracy, correctly representing the purpose of the outreach as well as the specific requirements for the ministry?	Our promotion is mostly word-of-mouth, or may include a simple handout with basic information and pictures of impoverished orphans and of participants holding orphans.	Our promotion includes logistical details and a description of the ministry. We try to focus on the specific job descriptions and requirements and to be careful about what pictures we use.	Our promotion is accomplished through a variety of media and we strive for consistency. We focus on hope and family-based care, and are careful to include specific requirements to help candidates determine their fit in the strategic plans of the ministry. We select photos and text that support the relationship with our ministry partner(s) and that honor the children and their families.
	Score:			
Reflections / Notes / Action Steps / Gaps				

LOOKING IN (Continued):

	QUESTION 6:	SCORE 0-3	SCORE 4-6	SCORE 7-10
Team Selection (personnel)	Do we have a process for selecting candidates who are qualified for the specific requirements (spiritually, professionally, by age and gender, etc.) and for the focus of the ministry?	We use a sign-up sheet or have a basic registration form, but have little or no process for reviewing qualifications of our candidates. We typically take as many as express interest. The process is no different for leaders and participants.	Our process may vary year to year, but we do use a registration or application form and we rely on how well we know the candidate. We hope we make good choices.	We have a process that includes some or all of the following: an application, parental permission (for those under 18), references, an interview, and a background check. Candidates are aware of the process and we are consistent with the process year after year. We are definitive on who we will approve and we have a process for working with those we don't approve. We have separate expectations and processes for the leader and the participant.
Score:				

Reflections / Notes / Action Steps / Gaps

Chapter 2: 30-Minute Assessment

LOOKING IN (Continued):

	QUESTION 7:	SCORE 0-3	SCORE 4-6	SCORE 7-10
Training Leaders	Do we effectively equip our leaders in key areas related to spiritual leadership, short-term missions leadership and in the realities of working with orphans and vulnerable children?	We choose people to lead who hopefully have previous experience. We don't have a plan for training leaders but do recommend that they look for books to read or websites to visit.	We may be available to coach the team leader depending on the topic. We provide some documents or forms that help leaders organize their team. We are able to make recommendations for books to read or websites to visit. Most of what we provide focuses on the trip and logistics, with some information about the country or location they will visit, but not necessarily on orphan care issues.	We provide training sessions for our leaders as well as provide a handbook, forms and/or a website to help leaders organize their team. We focus on character, mission ethos, partnership and the goals of our ministry partner(s), and include training on the unique concerns related to orphan and vulnerable children care (i.e.: orphan statistics, attachment disorder, child protection, family-based care and more).
	Score:			
Reflections / Notes / Action Steps / Gaps				

LOOKING IN (Continued):

	QUESTION 8:	SCORE 0-3	SCORE 4-6	SCORE 7-10
Training Participants	Do we provide strategic and timely training for our participants?	We don't have any scheduled meetings, but we do have information on packing, travel and other logistics.	We have a training plan and scheduled meetings where we typically cover travel logistics and cultural considerations. We share some information on orphan and vulnerable children care and about our ministry partner(s).	We require that all participants attend the training events where we cover topics such as travel logistics and cultural considerations as well as details about the vision and expectations of our ministry partners. We also train in areas of orphan and vulnerable children care, risks, attachment disorder, the importance of family-based care, child protection policies and processes.
	Score:			

Reflections / Notes / Action Steps / Gaps

Chapter 2: 30-Minute Assessment

LOOKING IN (Continued):

	QUESTION 9:	SCORE 0-3	SCORE 4-6	SCORE 7-10
On-Field	Do we collaborate with our ministry partner(s) in establishing mutually agreed upon plans that fulfill the vision and strategies of the ministry and do we have trusted communication and processes throughout the ministry to insure that we are each meeting those requirements?	We serve our ministry partner(s) to bring love and care to the babies and children. It is a great entry-level program for our participants.	We tell the ministry partner(s) what we can do and how much money we can bring so that we can make plans together. We bring participants who are qualified and able to serve according to the needs. Our hope is that the ministry partner(s) will tell us if plans align with their long-term goals and we check in during our time on-field to determine if they are happy with what we are doing.	We depend on continuing communication with our ministry partner(s) to determine the best strategies and efforts for ministry. Our aim is to strengthen the plans of our ministry partner(s) by providing what they cannot provide and coming alongside in areas in which they need help. We maintain open communication throughout the project and make corrections along the way.
	Score:			
Reflections / Notes / Action Steps / Gaps				

LOOKING IN (Continued):

	QUESTION 10:	SCORE 0-3	SCORE 4-6	SCORE 7-10
Follow-through/Ongoing connections	Do we and our ministry partner(s) maintain communication and conduct debriefing and evaluations after the short-term mission concludes?	We check in with participants after the trip during a debriefing meeting. We also send an email to the ministry partner(s) to see if they are pleased with "how the trip went."	We have evaluations for participants at the end of the ministry. We ask the ministry partner(s) to let us know how things went. We may follow up with a phone call or additional emails. As possible, we may use the information from evaluations to make changes in how we do the ministry in the future.	Leadership and ministry partner(s) meet together, and using the predetermined goals and desires, evaluate outcomes and make needed adjustments. Information gathered through debriefing and evaluations is used extensively in making plans for future ministry. Communication continues throughout the year.
Score:				
Reflections / Notes / Action Steps / Gaps				
LOOKING IN FINAL SCORE (Also enter on page 22):				

Chapter 2: 30-Minute Assessment

LOOKING OUT:

Reviewing or evaluating your MINISTRY PARTNER (separate rubric for each ministry partner)

	QUESTION 1:	SCORE 0-3	SCORE 4-6	SCORE 7-10
Philosophy (family-based care)	Do the leaders of your ministry partner recognize the value of family-based care and its guiding direction for excellent short-term mission strategies and efforts affecting orphans and vulnerable children?	They appear to be unaware of the research, or may have only limited data about orphan and family-based care.	They have intentionally looked at current thoughts and research regarding orphan care and family based care. They agree with the findings and they are attempting to implement change.	They are very familiar with resources and the research and findings about orphan and family-based care. They are dedicated to promote and facilitate change as they partner with short-term mission teams.
	Score:			

Reflections / Notes / Action Steps / Gaps

LOOKING OUT (Continued):

	QUESTION 2:	SCORE 0-3	SCORE 4-6	SCORE 7-10
Gospel Focus	Do you agree with their Statement of Christian Faith and is the Gospel message through programs, word and deed central to the ministry partner's involvement with orphans and vulnerable children?	We have seen their Statement of Christian Faith and can live with the differences. They appear qualified for childcare but the Gospel is not central or part of their objectives.	We agree with their Statement of Christian Faith. They are qualified for childcare and, as possible, the Gospel is a part of their sharing and working with orphans and vulnerable children.	We agree with their Statement of Christian Faith. They are dedicated to the Gospel message and their leaders and workers are trained to share Christ. The Gospel is core to WHY they serve, and family-based care provides open doors to share the Gospel with children and families.
	Score:			
Reflections / Notes / Action Steps / Gaps				

Chapter 2: 30-Minute Assessment

LOOKING OUT (Continued):

	QUESTION 3:	SCORE 0-3	SCORE 4-6	SCORE 7-10
Partnership / Relationship	Is our partner and their leadership committed to mutually empowered long-term strategic partnerships that are founded on strong relationships, transparency, common goals and financial accountability and do they comply with local and national government requirements?	They share very little information about their organization, the leadership structure, financial practices or long-term strategies. OR, we have little or no access to that kind of information, but we provide helpers anyway. We are not sure about their compliance with government requirements.	They are very transparent and share information about their leadership, financial practices, strategies and accountabilities. They align with our plans and hope they are doing more good than harm. They seem to be in compliance with government requirements.	They consider cultural differences as they strive to maintain a close and transparent relationship with us. They openly discuss vision, expectations, strategies and other important subjects as part of our ongoing and growing relationship and clearly appreciate our input in making decisions. They are diligent in their compliance with government requirements.
	Score:			
Reflections / Notes / Action Steps / Gaps				

LOOKING OUT (Continued):

	QUESTION 4:	SCORE 0-3	SCORE 4-6	SCORE 7-10
Child Protection	Does our ministry partner understand the risks to orphans and vulnerable children and apply all measures needed to insure safety and health for their staff, the children they serve, and for our mission participants?	They are aware there are risks to children in the orphan care system but they do not have a clear knowledge about those risks. They have few, if any policies or processes in place for their staff related to child protection.	They are becoming familiar with the risks that children may face in the orphan care system. They are working to make their staff aware of the risks. Although they have some information and policies in place, they may not be sufficient.	They are actively learning about the risks to children in the orphan care system. They instruct their staff about the risks and they require them to complete training on child protection processes. They routinely review their policies and processes to keep them current. They have protocols for processing suspected abuses as they are observed or reported.
	Score:			

Reflections / Notes / Action Steps / Gaps

Chapter 2: 30-Minute Assessment

LOOKING OUT (Continued):

	QUESTION 5:	SCORE 0-3	SCORE 4-6	SCORE 7-10
Promotion	Does our partner accurately promote their expectations when working with us as a sending organization?	The information they share is typically basic information with pictures of orphans and of prior participants holding or playing with orphans.	Their promotion includes logistical details and a description of the orphanage. They may specify needs as a means for recruiting, but not on solutions such as family-based care strategies.	Their promotion is accomplished through a variety of media and demonstrates they strive for consistency. In addition, text and shared photos honor the children and their families. Their focus is on hope and family-based care and the need for STM's to support their focus.
	Score:			
Reflections / Notes / Action Steps / Gaps				

LOOKING OUT (Continued):

	QUESTION 6:	SCORE 0-3	SCORE 4-6	SCORE 7-10
Staff Selection (personnel)	Does our partner have a process for selecting staff who are qualified for the specific requirements and the focus of the orphanage?	They accept staff or volunteers with any type of background, those who are simply willing to work, and who show an interest in childcare.	They have an application and may request references and/or conduct an interview. They prefer candidates with some background in orphan care.	They have an excellent hiring process that includes a job description, an application, references, an interview and (where possible) a background check. Candidates must have previous experience in child or orphan care OR be committed to attend training.
Score:				

Reflections / Notes / Action Steps / Gaps

Chapter 2: 30-Minute Assessment

LOOKING OUT (Continued):

	QUESTION 7:	SCORE 0-3	SCORE 4-6	SCORE 7-10
Training Staff & Leadership	Does our ministry partner equip their staff in areas related in the realities of working with orphans and vulnerable children, spiritual disciplines and practices, and in the effective hosting of short-term ministry participants?	They don't have a training plan for their staff or leaders. They provide "on the job training" or "show and tell" as needs arise.	They work with staff after they are hired to help them in their understanding of service to orphans and in the importance of spiritual disciplines. They may direct employees to some reading and/or applicable websites to obtain additional information.	They provide training and a staff handbook. They focus on character, organizational ethos, goals of the organization, best practices in the care of orphans and vulnerable children, child protection, family-based care and more. They provide ongoing training, encourage continuing education and provide oversight of each staff member.
	Score:			
Reflections / Notes / Action Steps / Gaps				

LOOKING OUT (Continued):

	QUESTION 8:	SCORE 0-3	SCORE 4-6	SCORE 7-10
Training STM Participants	Does our ministry partner provide effective training for the short-term ministry participants upon arrival and throughout the ministry?	They do not provide official training, but they do share information such as schedule, planned activities and information about the ministry or projects.	They have a planned orientation upon arrival where they welcome participants and present information about the ministry, housing, transportation, schedule, outings and more. They are available for questions during the ministry.	They host a planned orientation for participants and teach about cultural considerations, provide details about the vision and expectations of the ministry, and give an overview of schedule and logistics. They introduce key leaders and decision makers. They spend time with participants throughout the ministry and are easily available to answer questions, to provide continued education, and to guide in processing experiences.
	Score:			

Reflections / Notes / Action Steps / Gaps

Chapter 2: 30-Minute Assessment

LOOKING OUT (Continued):

	QUESTION 9:	SCORE 0-3	SCORE 4-6	SCORE 7-10
On-Field	Does our ministry partner collaborate with us in establishing mutually agreed upon plans that fulfill the vision and strategies of both the ministry partner and our organization and do we have trusted communication and processes established to meet plan requirements during the ministry?	Though there are no clear plans and objectives, they are pleased that we come and encourage them by our presence and our willingness to serve in any capacity.	They expect that we share our plan for our STM. They want us to bring team members who can serve as they are needed. The host anticipates that we will review our progress and program during the time we are serving.	They communicate with us before and throughout the ministry and together, we make course adjustments as necessary. It is their aim to not only achieve practical goals related to vision and strategy, but to enable successful relationships. It is their aim to do what is best for the children and therefore they make decisions with us and for us to assure the ministry is appropriate and effective.
	Score:			
Reflections / Notes / Action Steps / Gaps				

LOOKING OUT (Continued):

	QUESTION 10:	SCORE 0-3	SCORE 4-6	SCORE 7-10
Follow-through/Ongoing connections	Does our ministry partner maintain communication and conduct debriefing and evaluations after the ministry concludes?	They do not have a formalized process for evaluating the ministry. If we ask them, they will provide feedback, though it is typically positive in nature.	Together, we discuss how the ministry went. We may exchange email letters that summarize our discussions and decisions and to help us remember things in the future. We work toward transparent communication, and hope to apply lessons learned to future ministry plans.	They conduct post-ministry evaluations through verbal and written formats. Evaluations are measured against the predetermined goals and desires based on partnership strategies. Information gathered through debriefing and evaluations is used extensively by our partner to make plans for future ministry. Communication continues throughout the year.
	Score:			
Reflections / Notes / Action Steps / Gaps				
LOOKING OUT FINAL SCORE:				
LOOKING IN FINAL SCORE:				

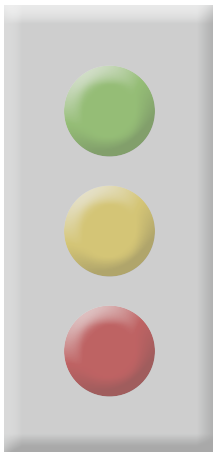
O.V.C. Guide

Outcome: Red Light Green Light

Add the ten scores together at the end of each rubric to get the grand total. The final number determines where you land at this time. This final score does not represent the future, only where things stand currently. The hope is that you can visualize making changes – changes that make the future of your ministry better for the kids and better for Gospel outreach.

[Here is the scoring key:](#)

LOOKING IN: Your Organization



76-100 Points Green light: Go

Suggests that you are doing well and should consider continuing, capitalizing on strengths, mitigating weaknesses.

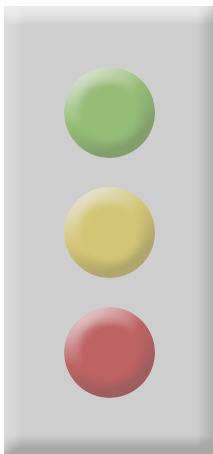
51-74 Points Yellow Light: CAUTION

Suggests that you have a lot of work to do and should study and apply all that you can. You may need to consider discontinuing this ministry if unable to make needed changes.

0-50 Points Red Light: STOP

Suggests that you should consider discontinuing the ministry until you can find solutions to the gaps that were exposed through this exercise.

LOOKING OUT: Your Ministry Partner



76-100 Points Green light: Go

Suggests that your ministry partner is doing well and you should consider continuing with the partnership, capitalizing on strengths, mitigating weaknesses.

51-74 Points Yellow Light: CAUTION

Suggests that your ministry partner has a lot of work to do, and you should attempt to assist in assessing, training, and applying where possible. You may need to consider discontinuing this partnership if unable to encourage and assist in needed changes.

0-50 Points Red Light: STOP

Suggests that you should consider discontinuing this partnership until your ministry partner has agreed to and applied solutions to the gaps that were exposed through this exercise.

So What's Next?

Green Light: **Celebrate!** While there's always room for improvement, you and your partners are working hard to protect vulnerable children as you engage in short-term missions. Let your leadership and partners know that you appreciate their dedication to serving children well!

Yellow Light: **Create** a list of action items for the areas you or your partners need to improve, and begin working to achieve those goals. Connect with an OVC Advocate if you're feeling stuck or need a sounding board for your next steps.

Red Light: Discontinue the ministry, but don't "abandon ship" just yet! Have a **conversation** with your leadership or partner. Ask questions to determine why the gaps exist and whether they are willing to work on improving. (Before you walk away from a partnership completely, please consider connecting with an OVC Advocate to talk about your specific situation!)

Chapter three includes the Seven Best Practices from Faith to Action and the Eight Principles from CAFO. They are helpful in a simple list form, but you can find more information such as research and recommendations by acquiring a copy of their main documents.

Chapter four includes recommended resources: literature, videos, websites, definitions and contact information for those who can assist you as you work to improve your ministry to orphans and vulnerable children.

// Most of us joined this work because we want to see children loved and well cared for. Our goal at SOE is to be a bridge between Christians who have responded to the biblical word to care for orphans, and to research findings that define the best ways to respond to the needs of children. My prayer is that as Christians are exposed to new learning regarding how short-term mission trips can better support orphans and vulnerable children, we can move through feelings of guilt or shame, and instead recognize the opportunity we have to make a bigger and more effective impact in the lives of children. **//**

- Brian Heerwagen, CEO, Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Mission

Connect with an O.V.C. Advocate at www.ovcadvocate@soe.org

CHAPTER 3: Faith to Action Best Practices and CAFO Principles

Worldwide experts caring for vulnerable children have researched and they are offering best practices that can be incorporated into organizations who seek to utilize short-term mission trips to better support orphans and vulnerable children.

In particular, Faith to Action and CAFO have both done extensive research and collaboration in this area. Both organizations are committed to the Gospel as central to any work done and are dedicated to promoting healthy family-based care models. Their research has enabled them to speak into the growing movement of STM's working with children around the globe. They are valued partners of SOE in our efforts to speak to the issues surrounding OVC STM's.

Following are what SOE views as **complimentary** lists of best practices, one from Faith to Action and one from CAFO, to be used as guidelines in assessing working with orphans and vulnerable children. Special thanks to Faith to Action and CAFO for giving SOE permission to include these lists in this publication.



Faith to Action

Seven Best Practices in Short-term Mission
That benefit Orphans and Vulnerable Children



1. Pursue healthy, long-term partnerships *“Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.” 1 Thessalonians 5:1*

Whether church-to-church, organization-to-church, school-to-organization, or other arrangement, healthy, long-term partnerships with local entities are the context in which STM trips can best support quality care for children. Sustainable change can be carried out only by those who are in the community day to day. Locally based partners are best suited to determine the most appropriate and effective ways to serve vulnerable children and their families and how to utilize STMs to accomplish that.

2. Support Families and Communities *“God sets the lonely in families...” Psalm 68:6.*

The most impactful way to meet the needs of orphaned and vulnerable children is through empowering their families, their communities, and the systems that will protect and care for them long after visitors return home. ACC International’s Protecting Children in Short-Term Missions: A Guidance Manual and Toolkit for Churches and Christian Organizations notes, when seeking to assist children through STMs, it is important to look at children in context; and the context of children is their families, communities and culture. STM teams should strengthen children’s support networks rather than replace them.

3. Establish Clear Goals and Healthy Expectations *“Desire without knowledge is not good, and one who moves too hurriedly misses the way.” Proverbs 19:2.*

To ensure that the best interests of vulnerable children, families and communities are protected, and to avoid disappointment, conflict, and confusion for both visitors and receiving organizations, STM trips clearly communicated and goals that are agreed upon with local partners and healthy expectations for STM team members.

4. Learn about Orphans and Vulnerable Children *“Give instruction to the wise, and they will become wiser still; teach the righteous and they will gain in learning.” Proverbs 9:9.*

Ensuring quality STMs that will benefit orphans and vulnerable children requires training focused on the children’s unique circumstances. Adequate and appropriate training prior to, during, and after a trip is instrumental to making STMs a transformational experience for both STM trip members and the communities they visit. Focused learning can help set appropriate expectations of team members and empower participants to be informed advocates, donors, and prayer partners after their trip. Include in-country voices, such as local child welfare professionals, for their perspective on the challenges vulnerable children and families face, as well as how best to support children.

5. Uphold Healthy Attachment *“Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.” Romans 13:10*

Children living outside of family-based care settings are especially vulnerable to attachment challenges. STMs seeking to serve this population must recognize this sensitivity, avoiding adding to their attachment challenges or undermining the relationship between child and caregiver. It is therefore vital to consider the specific context and vulnerability of each child when assessing if or how to engage with them during STMs.

6. Protect Children from Harm *“Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, Defend the orphan, plead for the widow.” Isaiah 1:17*

STM teams must pursue the holistic protection of children.

7. Share Stories and Images with Care *"If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it." 1 Corinthians 12:26*

Even when trips are carefully planned and implemented, to avoid harm to children, families, and communities, it is vital to consider the way information, stories, and images are shared during and after STM trips. Sharing information, stories and images can rally support for an important cause or challenge misconceptions. However, it can also lead to perpetuation of stereotypes, misrepresentation and objectification of a child, even abuse or exploitation. What team members see and hear is privileged information and demands the utmost sensitivity to protect the privacy of anyone the team meets.



Chapter 3: Faith to Action Best Practices and CAFO Principles

CAFO

Eight Principles to Benefit Vulnerable Children & Families



Christian Alliance for Orphans

1. Protection

Safeguarding children from harm is first priority. Whatever good we hope to do, our top priority must be protecting children's physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social well-being - both immediate and long-term.

2. Attachment

Support bonds between children and their parent or primary caregiver. Attachment is the emotional bond formed as a caring adult consistently meets a child's needs over time. For children who've experienced trauma or loss, attachment is especially critical to healing. Attachment affects a child's lifelong ability to form healthy relationships.

3. Caregivers

Honor the role of parents and primary caregivers. Parents and primary caregivers will be present long after trip participants return home. Honoring their role, encouraging them, and bolstering their capacity is the most impactful gift you can give to the children in their care.

4. Community

Support the communities surrounding vulnerable children. Often the most effective way to meet the needs of children is to invest in the local community capable of protecting and nurturing them over time.

5. Expectations

Make sure the trip purpose is clear and expectations thoroughly understood. Given the language, culture, and time limitations of short-term missions, these trips are generally best suited to encourage and strengthen those in a position to create lasting good over time. When travelers understand these limitations - and also the good that is possible in short visits - they're more prepared to make the most of the trip.

6. Partnership

Anchor every trip in long-term relationships with quality partners. Learn from reliable on-the-ground allies how you can best contribute to their efforts to meet needs in their community over time.

7. Training

Commit to learning before doing. Thoughtful education prior to, during and after a trip is critical to preventing harm. It is also key to making a trip a truly life-transforming experience for participants.

8. Media

Share stories and images with care. Photos, film, and stories of any person should be created and shared only in ways that respect their wishes and affirm their dignity as beings made in the image of God.

CHAPTER 4: Resource List / Information and Definitions

The resources presented in this booklet are only a sampling of what is currently available. They are meant to serve as a springboard for you and your staff to begin considering how a deeper understanding of OVC care can shape your short-term missions. Although SOE recommends these resources for further learning and exploration, it does not necessarily endorse or agree with every resource on every point.

Websites and Articles:

• Think Orphan Podcast

(thinkorphan.com) - Exists as a resource for those wrestling through difficult issues and hot topics involved in the global orphan crisis. There are hundreds of podcasts available on their website, but we suggest starting with one of these three:

- Being the Hands and Feet in Haiti (Mark Stuart)
- Orphanages, Short Term Missions, and Deinstitutionalization (Rebecca Nhep and Todd Guckenberger)
- Orphanages, Mission Trips and Child Development (Todd Guckenberger)

• Go Be Love

(gobeloveinternational.org) - A nonprofit whose mission includes caring for families and communities, orphan prevention, and missionary care. They partner with ministries and missionaries in the US and abroad, and send short-term teams to support their efforts and meet needs on the field.

• CAFO - Christian Alliance for Orphans

(cafo.org) - Unites 190+ respected organizations and over 650 church members to inspire and equip Christians to live out effectively the Bible's call to care for orphans and vulnerable children.

• The 7 Standards of Excellence in Short Term Missions

(soe.org/7-standards)

• Faith to Action Initiative

(www.faithtoaction.org/engaging-the-church-raising-awareness) - Serves as a resource for Christian groups, churches, and individuals seeking to respond to the needs of orphans and vulnerable children around the world. Encourages action that is informed by evidence-based "best practice" and that recognizes and upholds the vital importance of family and community in the life of every child.

- **Journeys of Faith Bible Study** (www.faithtoaction.org/journeys-of-faith-study-guide) - Includes helpful case studies to spark new ideas
- **Videos, Podcasts, Webinars, and More** (<http://www.faithtoaction.org/media>)
- **Blogs** (search *Faith to Action* for these titles):
 - Trips that Create Advocates for Family Care
 - Following God's Lead: My Journey into Family-Based Care
 - Family First: A Global Partnership Between Roblealto and Bethany Community Church
 - The Jubilee Centre: Transforming Zambian Communities through the Local and Global Church
 - Students Connecting Theory to Practice in Costa Rica

• Love You Give Campaign

(loveyougive.org) - Helping individuals and churches make a genuine difference as they volunteer overseas.

• Rethink Orphanages

(www.rethinkorphanages.org) - Individuals and organizations from international aid and development, child protection, tourism, philanthropic, education and faith-based communities who have come together in this shared vision of a world where no child is needlessly separating from their family, and the institutionalization of children is a thing of the past.

Chapter 4: Resource List / Information and Definitions

• Kinnected / ACCI

(www.kinnected.org.au/resources) - Seeks to preserve and strengthen families and assist children currently living in residential care to achieve their right to be raised in a family.

- [Main Page](http://ethicalmissionstrips.org) (*ethicalmissionstrips.org*)
- [Additional Resources](#)
 - [Protecting Children in Short Term Missions](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/acci/pages/145/attachments/original/1464830333/ACCI_Short_Term_Missions_Manual.pdf?1464830333) (https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/acci/pages/145/attachments/original/1464830333/ACCI_Short_Term_Missions_Manual.pdf?1464830333)
 - [Becoming a Child-Safe Short-Term Missions Team](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/acci/pages/145/attachments/original/1464830333/ACCI_Short_Term_Missions_Manual.pdf?1464830333) (https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/acci/pages/145/attachments/original/1464830333/ACCI_Short_Term_Missions_Manual.pdf?1464830333)
 - [Are Good Intentions Good Enough? Protecting Children in Short-Term Missions](http://www.accimissions.org.au/blog0066) (Rebecca Nhep, www.accimissions.org.au/blog0066)
 - [Ethical Volunteering with Vulnerable Children](http://www.worldwithoutorphans.org/_service/38803/download/id/333033/name/Ethical+Volunteering+with+Vulnerable+Children.pdf%20) (www.worldwithoutorphans.org/_service/38803/download/id/333033/name/Ethical+Volunteering+with+Vulnerable+Children.pdf%20)

• World Without Orphans

(www.worldwithoutorphans.org) - a global movement with a shared vision for orphans becoming sons and daughters. Their dream is that every child will grow up in a safe, stable and nurturing permanent family, and know their Heavenly Father.

Books

- [Helping Without Hurting in Short-Term Missions](#) (Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert)
- [Learning Service: The Essential Guide to Volunteering Abroad](#) (Clair Bennett, Daniela Papi-Thornton, Joseph Collins, Zahara Heckscher)

On Attachment

When children have experienced any early trauma, it can be challenging for them to form healthy attachments with their caregivers. In these cases, it's important for them to have consistent, safe interactions with one or two adults to help them learn how to form those crucial attachments. For a deeper dive into attachment, especially its intersection with short-term missions, please explore the resources on the next page.

- [Attachment Theory - The Basics](#) (Child Protection Resource) - childprotectionresource.online/attachment-theory-the-basics/
- [Video: Attachment Theory](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhUSA5CrYVk&v=1=en) (www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhUSA5CrYVk&v=1=en)
- [Video: What is Attachment Disorder?](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsRsmEDuqy8) (Child Psychology) - www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsRsmEDuqy8
- [Book: In Pursuit of Orphan Excellence](#) (Philip Darke and Keith McFarland)
- [Volunteering and Visiting Orphanages](http://ethicalmissionstrips.org/orphanagevolunteering) (ACCI) - ethicalmissionstrips.org/orphanagevolunteering
- [Leading short-term mission trips that do less harm and more good for orphans](http://fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/better-short-term-mission-trips) (Fuller Youth Institute) - fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/better-short-term-mission-trips

Videos

Please note, this booklet includes only a small sampling of the videos we believe capture the heart of what's possible when we shift our thinking about what's possible in STM and OVC care. There are many more videos available that address these topics. While we couldn't list all of them here, we encourage you to search YouTube or reference the media tab on Faith to Action's website for more video resources.

- [Families Not Orphanages](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrnZiDvnts8) (Child's i Foundation) - www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrnZiDvnts8
- [Harriet's Story](http://vimeo.com/164069411) (Abide Family Center) - vimeo.com/164069411
- [Kinnected Interview](http://vimeo.com/157525562) (ACCI) - vimeo.com/157525562
- [Going on a Short-Term Missions Trip](http://vimeo.com/236674151) (ACCI) - vimeo.com/236674151
- [How Volunteering Abroad in Orphanages is Harmful to Children](http://vimeo.com/166530700) (Kindea Labs) - vimeo.com/166530700
- [Broken Dreams: Why Volunteering in an Orphanage is Part of the Problem](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGVW4hJbIUs&t=12s) (Catholic Relief Services) - www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGVW4hJbIUs&t=12s

O.V.C. Guide

Definition of Terms:

Compiled by Better Care Network and Next Generation Nepal

Alternative Care

A formal or informal arrangement whereby a child is looked after at least overnight outside the parental home, either by decision of a judicial or administrative authority or duly accredited body, or at the initiative of the child, his/her parent(s) or primary caregivers, or spontaneously by a care provider in the absence of parents.

Attachment

The formation by a child of significant and stable emotional connections with the significant people in her/his life. This process begins in early infancy as the child bonds with one or more primary caregivers. A failure by a child to establish these types of important connections before the age of about five years may result in the child experiencing difficulties with a wide variety of social relationships for significant periods of time in her/his life.

Biological Parents

The family into which the child is born. It can mean both parents if they are together, or the mother, or the father.

Caregiver/Carer

A person with whom the child lives who provides daily care to the child, and who acts as the child's 'parent' whether they are biological parents or not. A caregiver can be the mother or father, or another family member such as a grandparent or older sibling. It includes informal arrangements in which the caregiver does not have legal responsibility.

Child

Every human being below the age of 18 unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Child Protection System

A comprehensive system of laws, policies, procedures and practices designed to ensure the protection of children and to facilitate an effective response to allegations of child abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence.

Children's Rights

A set of universal entitlements for every child and young person below the age of 18 enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. These entitlements apply to children of every background and encompass what they need to survive and to have opportunities to lead stable, rewarding lives. They fall into four categories: the right to survive, be safe, belong and develop.

Children's Village

A type of institutional care in which children live in small houses (rather akin to group homes) but on a large campus that also includes some communal facilities (e.g. for play, healthcare etc.).

Community Based Care

Care that is as close as possible to family based care and where the community is involved in the process of a child's recovery. Foster and extended families are examples of community-based care.

Community Based Support

A range of measures to ensure the support of children and families in the community.

Community-based Organization (CBO)

A local membership organization that relies almost exclusively on volunteers from within the community and usually receives little external funding.

Chapter 4: Resource List / Information and Definitions

Deinstitutionalization

The process of closing residential care institutions and providing alternative family based care within the community.

Do No Harm

An approach that tries to avoid unintended negative impacts of development and other interventions.

Evaluation

It is a time-bound activity that systematically and objectively assesses the relevance, performance and success of ongoing and completed programs and interventions. Evaluation is carried out selectively, asking and answering specific questions to guide decision makers and/or program managers. Evaluation determines the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of a program.

Family Based Care

The short-term or long-term placement of a child into a family environment, with at least one consistent parental caregiver, a nurturing family environment where children are part of supportive kin and community.

Foster Care/Fostering

The full-time care of a child or adolescent within a non-related family who agrees to meet the developmental, psychosocial, medical, educational and spiritual needs of a child who is not able to live with his/her own parents or extended family.

Formal foster care describes arrangements that have been ordered or authorized by an administrative body or judicial authority; it usually involves an assessment of the family for the child and the provision of some kind of continuing support and monitoring.

Informal foster care is a private arrangement made between the two families.

Specialized foster family care provides for children with special needs (a child with HIV/AIDS or psychiatric disorders, for example).

Crisis intervention foster family care is when there is an emergency and a child lives with a family until the crisis is over or another plan is made for the child.

Spontaneous fostering is when a family takes in a child without any prior arrangement. This is a frequent occurrence during emergencies and may involve families from a different community in the case of refugee children.

Gate Keeping

The prevention of inappropriate placement of a child in formal care. Placement should be preceded by some form of assessment of the child's physical, emotional, intellectual and social needs, matched to whether the placement can meet these needs based on its functions and objectives.

Group/Small Family Home

A type of residential care in which 10 children or less live in a house with a care worker(s), and are cared for in an environment that is as family-like as possible, typically with 2-3 children per bedroom.

Harm

Harm is the result of the exploitation, violence, abuse and neglect of children and can take many forms, including impacts on children's physical, emotional and behavioral development, their general health, their family and social relationships, their self-esteem, their educational attainment and their aspirations.

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Impact

Final or longer term changes as a result of project or program activities (e.g. changes in children's development, well-being, experience of violence, fulfillment of rights). They may sometimes only be realized after the lifetime of a project or program.

Impact Assessment

The assessment of the long-term and wide-ranging changes that a project or program brings about, including unintended and negative changes. Impact assessment focuses on changes beyond those visible or achieved during the lifetime of most projects or programs and is therefore usually undertaken sometime after the project or program implementation period.

Institution

A large institution is characterized by having 25 or more children living together in one building. A small institution or children's home refers to a building housing 11 to 24 children.

Institutional Care

The short-term or long-term placement of a child into any non-family-based care situation. Other similar terms include residential care, group care, and orphanage.

Integration

This is the process of a child returning to daily life in a community on a long-term basis. Integration includes reintegration, which is the specific situation where a child returns to her/his family or a familiar community. Integration also includes the long-term prospects for those children or young people who settle in a different community to their home.

Kinship Care

The full-time care, nurturing and protection of a child by someone other than a parent who is related to the child by family ties or by a significant prior relationship.

Informal kinship care is any private arrangement provided in a family, whereby the child is looked after by kin.

Formal kinship care describes arrangements that have been ordered or authorized by an administrative body or judicial authority; it usually involves an assessment of the family for the child and the provision of some kind of continuing support and monitoring.

Life Skills

Various skills children and young people can learn regarding social development and living and coping independently. This includes self-awareness, problem solving, learning to negotiate, decision-making, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship skills, conflict resolution, empathy, coping with emotions and stress management as well as money management, raising a family and running a home.

Orphan

Orphans are children, both of whose parents are known to be dead. In some countries, however, a child who has lost one parent is called an orphan.

Orphanage

This term refers to an institution providing residential care for children who have lost both parents. This term is not representative, as in practice these facilities often admit many children who are not actually orphans.

OVC

Orphans and other vulnerable children. This term is generally avoided as it implies that all HIV- and AIDS-affected children are 'vulnerable'; second, it can isolate HIV- and AIDS-affected children from other vulnerable children in the community; and third, it ignores other vulnerable children. The terms 'vulnerable children', 'children affected by HIV and AIDS', or 'children associated with fighting forces' are preferred.

Prevention (of a child needing care)

A variety of approaches that support family life and help to diminish the need for a child to be separated from her/his immediate or extended family or other caregiver and be placed in alternative care.

Reintegration

Child-centered reintegration is multi-layered and focuses on family reunification; mobilizing and enabling care systems in the community; medical screening and health care, including reproductive health services; schooling and/or vocational training; psychosocial support; and social, cultural and economic support.

Residential care

Care provided in any non-family-based group setting.

Safe Houses

These facilities are designed to provide a secure, often "closed", care environment for children deemed more specifically to require protection from outsiders, such as victims of trafficking or separated children who risk being drawn into exploitation or criminal activity.

Short-Term Missions (STM)

The mobilization of a group or individual for a short period of time, ranging from days to a year, for the purpose of serving an organization or community and spreading the gospel. Many short-term missions are called mission trips.

Voluntourism

A term used to describe short-term volunteering placements by tourists as part of their overall vacation or travels in a country. In many cases of voluntourism, the 'voluntourist' does not need to have prior skills or experience relevant to the position and the volunteering placement has been designed as much with the intention of providing an experience to the tourist as fulfilling a need within the host community. Voluntourists often pay for these experiences and tourist and volunteering agencies that offer these experiences often do so for profit-making purposes.

Vulnerable Children

Children whose rights to care and protection are being violated or who are at risk of those rights being violated. This includes children who are poor, abused, neglected, or lacking access to basic services, ill or living with disabilities, as well as children whose parents are ill, who are affected by fighting forces or who are in conflict with the law.



SOE is grateful to those organizations who participated in the development process and support of the efforts to develop and produce this guide. Some of the organizations are indicated below:



www.soe.org
1400 NE 136th Avenue, Suite 201
Vancouver, WA 98684
503-360-1865