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Abstract | Institution-based sexual exploitation, including within orphanages, is on the rise in South-East Asia. While the drivers of this increase are complex, the growth in volunteer and orphanage tourism creates opportunities for child sexual exploitation by allowing contact between vulnerable children and child sex offenders, stimulating demand for orphanages and orphaned children through child trafficking and paper orphaning, and providing the necessary conditions for orphanage scams.

This paper summarises the processes by which children become vulnerable to sexual exploitation and related harms within or facilitated by orphanages. It concludes by canvassing the international, regional and domestic initiatives that respond to these risks, as well as strategies designed to prevent the sexual exploitation of children living in orphanages.

Benevolent harm: Orphanages, voluntourism and child sexual exploitation in South-East Asia

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This paper reviews the literature to explore the risks of sexual exploitation faced by children living in orphanages in South-East Asia, as well as the links between orphanages and child trafficking, illicit adoption, and orphanage scams. It is unknown how many orphaned, separated and abandoned children there are worldwide—including how many are living in some form of institutional care—although researchers, advocates and policymakers agree that the number is substantial. Estimates have placed the number of orphaned and separated children at 153 million globally (Gray et al. 2015), with up to eight million living in institutional care (Pinheiro 2006). In South-East Asia, the number of orphanages is thought to have grown substantially since the 1990s. In Indonesia, for example, approximately 500,000 children are estimated to be living in 8,000 childcare institutions (Csáky 2009), while in Cambodia the number of residential care facilities for children is reported to have increased by 75 percent between 2005 and 2010 (MoSVY 2011). However, the extent of orphanage care is thought to be underestimated due to the unreliability of data collection methods and reporting (Browne 2009).

Terminology

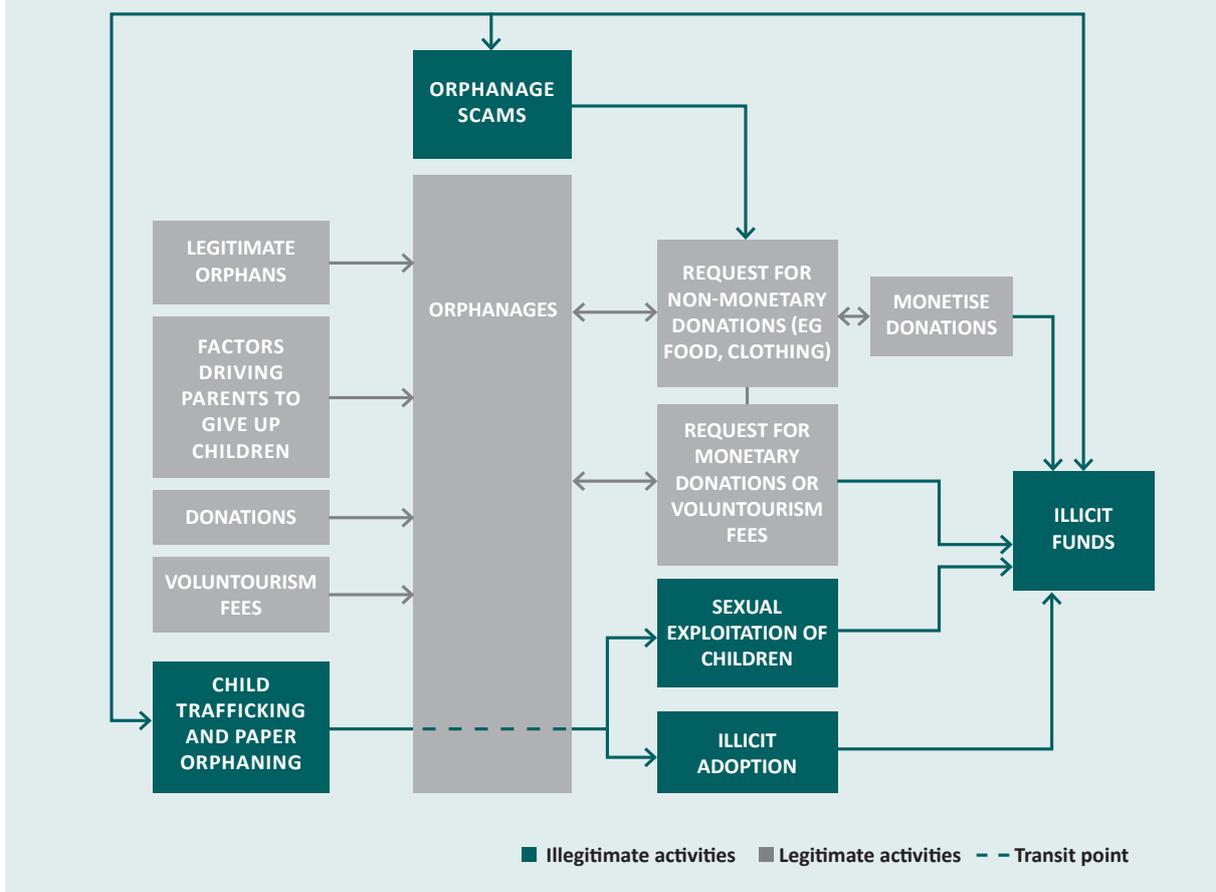
Different terms are used to describe facilities where children live in non-family group settings, including 'orphanages', 'institutional care', 'residential care' and 'children's homes'. These terms are used interchangeably to refer to structured group living arrangements involving a professional rather than parental relationship between adults and children (Browne 2009; Farrington 2016). The term 'orphanage' is most commonly used throughout this paper; however, the term is a misnomer. The vast majority of children living in orphanages—perhaps 80 to 90 percent—are reported to have at least one living parent (Browne 2009; Csáky 2009). Interpretations of 'child sexual exploitation' also vary markedly and there is considerable overlap between definitions of child sex trafficking, child prostitution, commercial sexual exploitation of children and child sex tourism. For this paper, child sexual exploitation broadly refers to the sexual abuse of persons aged under 18 years, with or without the exchange of money, gifts or favours, and with or without the consent of the child (Farrington 2016).

Orphanages and associated harms

Children are placed in orphanages for reasons including poverty, natural disasters, armed conflict, homelessness, family conflict and neglect, illness, discrimination, and disability (Ebbe 2008; Williamson & Greenberg 2010). Parents who place their children in orphanage care may believe that orphanages can provide better standards of material support, including the provision of food, shelter, clothing, health care and education (Dunn, Jareg & Webb 2007). To this end, orphanages are perceived to provide a safe environment for vulnerable children who cannot be cared for by parents or other relatives. However, the harms and variable quality of orphanage care are well documented (Dunn, Jareg & Webb 2007; Williamson & Greenberg 2010). Children living in orphanages are vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse (Pinheiro 2006; Sherr, Roberts & Gandhi 2017); intellectual, developmental and cognitive delays (Browne 2009; Gray et al. 2015; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child 2012; Sherr, Roberts and Gandhi 2017); and social and behavioural problems (Williamson & Greenberg 2010). More recently, concerns have been raised about the vulnerable conditions created by the expanding popularity of volunteer and orphanage tourism, which may expose children to sexual abuse and exploitation.

Institutional care settings are emerging as the third most prominent site of child sexual exploitation in South-East Asia, behind exploitation occurring on the streets (ie in public places such as beaches, parks, markets and transit areas around bus and train stations) and in commercial establishments such as brothels, massage parlours, karaoke venues, restaurants, bars and clubs (ECPAT International 2011; Farrington 2016; Shaw & Frugé 2016; Sofian, Krisna & Ardian 2016). There is a complex relationship between orphanages, child sexual exploitation and other harmful practices that increase children's vulnerability. Orphanage tourism exposes children to the risk of sexual exploitation. It also creates a financial incentive for unscrupulous operators to use illegitimate methods such as child trafficking, illicit adoption or paper orphaning to manufacture orphans to meet the demands of tourists and generate funds. Orphanage tourism also creates opportunities to scam those who volunteer or donate money. Figure 1 illustrates the interactions between these harmful practices and the legitimate activities of orphanages.

Figure 1: Processes by which orphanages are used for legitimate and illegitimate activities



The legitimate activity of running an orphanage results from the supply of children into orphanage care either as a result of becoming a genuine orphan or due to parents being unable to care for their children. These orphanages are supported by donations and tourism fees. To ensure the continued operation of an orphanage, further requests for donations are made and orphanage tourism is promoted. In a legitimate operation, these funds are used to care for the children.

In an illicit operation, child trafficking and paper orphaning may be used to increase the number of children living in orphanages, and facilitate sexual exploitation or illicit adoption. Here, orphanages may be the site of or the transit point for exploitation. Orphanage scams may also be created to elicit money from charitable persons seeking to donate to orphans or purchase volunteer tourism (or ‘voluntourism’) packages. All of these illegitimate activities generate illicit funds, which may then be used to facilitate the cycle of illegal activity involving orphanages.

Volunteer and orphanage tourism

Volunteer and orphanage tourism underlies many of the harms to which children in orphanages may be exposed. South-East Asia has the fastest growing tourism industry in the world (Farrington 2016), with voluntourism being a significant driver of tourism in the region (ECPAT International 2016). Voluntourism is the combination of voluntary work with travel for leisure, study or paid work and is popular among Australian travellers (ECPAT International 2016). Orphanage tourism is a form of voluntourism and is particularly popular among faith-based organisations, education providers, young people on gap years, employees of businesses that encourage participation in corporate social responsibility initiatives, and people wanting to help developing and disadvantaged communities (van Doore, Martin & McKeon 2016). Orphanage tourists often spend leisure time with children, help with English language lessons and provide manual labour, money or material support (Punaks & Feit 2014; Reas 2013). Orphanage visits range from day trips to longer stays where voluntourists live in or near the orphanage to care for and interact with the children (van Doore, Martin & McKeon 2016). Voluntourism is often planned in advance, with packages available from specialised tour providers or through humanitarian aid projects. Voluntourism can also be undertaken spontaneously once an individual is travelling.

Experiences are generally paid for through a volunteer agency or tour provider, or directly to the place where the tourist is volunteering (Punaks & Feit 2014). As a result, voluntourism is a marketable product and one of the most lucrative sectors of the tourism industry (ECPAT International 2016). Some unscrupulous orphanage operators have capitalised on the demand for socially conscious tourism experiences as an alternative source of funding (ECPAT International 2016). Consequently, privately owned, and therefore generally unregulated, orphanages have proliferated in popular tourist destinations to attract more volunteers and donations (van Doore, Martin & McKeon 2016; USAID 2005).

Child exploitation facilitated by orphanage tourism

Sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism (SECTT; also known as child sex tourism) refers to child sex offenders and accomplices seeking to sexually exploit children in the context of travel and tourism (Farrington 2016). SECTT relies on tourism-related services, such as flights, accommodation, transportation and tours to facilitate access to children for sexual exploitation (Perera 2016; Sofian, Krisna & Ardian 2016). Evidence suggests that some providers of tourism services may be involved in facilitating the sexual exploitation of children by arranging sex tours, acting as brokers or intermediaries to provide access to children, or overlooking suspicious behaviour (Sofian, Krisna & Ardian 2016).

Travelling sex offenders can be classified as either preferential or situational offenders. Preferential child sex offenders travel with the deliberate intent of engaging in sexual acts with children (Perera 2016) and use tourism infrastructure to gain access to vulnerable children (Farrington 2016). In contrast, situational child sex offenders are opportunistic offenders and do not travel with the specific intent to sexually exploit children. Rather, their offending is supplementary to their travel or tourism experience (Farrington 2016) and is enabled by a situation in which a child becomes accessible (Sofian, Krisna & Ardian 2016).

The increase in child sexual exploitation in institutions has been attributed to volunteer and orphanage tourism because it facilitates contact between vulnerable children and child sex offenders (APLE Cambodia 2014; Farrington 2016). The voluntourism industry may therefore be attractive to travelling sex offenders who perceive easy and direct access to children living in orphanages through a seemingly legitimate channel (Farrington 2016; van Doore, Martin & McKeon 2016). Most reported cases of sexual exploitation in orphanages have involved travelling sex offenders who engaged with children via professional and volunteer roles (ECPAT International 2016; Nijholt 2016; Renault 2006). Orphanage managers and workers have also offended or been complicit in facilitating access to children—for example, by allowing tourists to spend time with children outside of orphanages and even take children away to stay overnight in their hotel (MoSVY 2011; Renault 2006; Sofian, Krisna & Ardian 2016).

Travelling sex offenders engage victims through voluntourism activities such as play or the exchange of money or gifts in order to manipulate them into voluntarily participating in sexual activities and refrain from reporting (APLE Cambodia 2014). Offenders have also been known to approach orphanages ostensibly to sponsor a child in order to make contact with children (Renault 2006), and have asked managers directly about children's availability for sex (ECPAT International 2016). The 'open door policy' of some orphanages has further contributed to children's vulnerability to child sex offenders, with tourists able to visit as they please and remove children for excursions. Unsupervised access allows exploitation by preferential offenders, but also creates opportunities for situational child sexual exploitation (van Doore, Martin & McKeon 2016).

Child trafficking

The growth in voluntourism has raised concerns that child trafficking can be used to separate children from their families to increase orphan numbers and encourage further orphanage tourism. Child trafficking is defined by the United Nations (UN) *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children 2000* (Article 3(c); the UN Trafficking Protocol) as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation in this context includes, at a minimum, sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (Article 3(a)). Approximately one-third of human trafficking victims in South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific are children (UNODC 2016, 2014).

The relationship between child trafficking and orphanages is two-fold. Orphanages may be the destination point, whereby the child is recruited and placed in an orphanage for the purpose of exploitation, or the orphanage may be a transit point in the trafficking process before the child reaches the final destination of exploitation. Recruiters use varied methods, which can include inducing parents to place their children in orphanages by offering money and promising that the child will be educated and returned in the future (Smolin 2006). As part of the trafficking process, traffickers may create new identity documents and fraudulent parental death certificates to present the child as an orphan—a practice known as 'paper orphaning' (van Doore 2016).

Where the orphanage acts as a transit point, illicit adoption may be used as a method of obtaining illicit funds or moving the child into an exploitative situation. Illicit adoption uses intercountry adoption to illegally remove children from their birth parents to create legally adoptable orphans (Smolin 2006). It occurs as a result of 'shortcomings in legislation, law enforcement, birth registration and social welfare systems' that allow the falsification of adoption papers to go unnoticed (Bosco, Luda di Cortemiglia & Serojitdinov 2009: 54). While there are inherent harms in illegitimately removing a child from their family and adopting them illegally, illicit adoption constitutes child trafficking only if the exploitative elements of the Trafficking Protocol are met (ie the child is sexually exploited, forced to provide labour, placed into servitude etc; UNODC 2015).

Orphanage scams

Orphanage scams have also been linked with the rise in voluntourism. Orphanage scams are a type of fake charity scam and play on people's benevolence to garner donations or facilitate money laundering (ACCC 2016). Media, non-government and research reports have revealed the methodologies of orphanage scammers, which may include the indirect or direct involvement of children. Scammers may pose as charities collecting donations for orphanages or asking for sponsorship of what are actually fake orphans (Weibel 2011). Donations may be elicited via telephone calls, emails or scam websites, using photographs and stories of fake orphans to garner sympathy. Corrupt orphanage operators have also been known to directly scam international tourists who have volunteered in orphanages (Beck 2013; Saxe-Smith 2015; Watson 2014).

Such scams do not involve direct contact with children but reflect an environment where unscrupulous individuals profit off the vulnerability of orphans and create a context in which harms are more likely to occur. However, direct contact can occur in cases where a donor wishes to meet the orphanage children. In these cases, scammers have been found to seek out children who are not orphans and display them for the length of the tourist's stay (Weibel 2011). The children may be forced to actively solicit funds from visitors through performances and begging (MoSVY 2011). In some cases, children have been kept malnourished to stimulate tourism, volunteering and donations (van Doore 2016).

Prevention and response measures

Orphanages appear to provide a straightforward response to the complex problem of orphaned, separated and abandoned children (Csáky 2009; Williamson & Greenberg 2010). They have therefore been used as a primary response to children in need of care and protection in South-East Asia (Dunn, Jareg & Webb 2007). However, evidence of the harmful effects of orphanage care has prompted a policy shift, and they are now largely considered an over-used and inappropriate response to the situation of orphaned and separated children. Prevention and response measures to address the problem of sexual exploitation and related harms affecting children in orphanages are largely derived from the broader move to reduce the use of institutional care and promote family-based care. The dominant response has therefore been to avoid institutional care as a means of caring for orphaned and separated children or, if institutional care is used, to reduce the amount of time children spend in such care (Browne 2009; Lumos Foundation 2014; Save the Children 2014; Williamson &

Greenberg 2010). Fewer measures specifically aim to prevent the exploitation of children living in orphanages and reduce related risks, particularly those resulting from the vulnerabilities created by the orphanage tourism industry. The international, regional and national efforts to protect children living in orphanages from exploitation and related harms are discussed below.

International measures

A number of international legislative and policy instruments exist to combat and prevent harms experienced by children living in orphanages. These multi-faceted instruments aim to:

- reduce the number of children in institutional care, including orphanages;
- promote family- and community-based care as the most appropriate form of care for children;
- promote appropriate alternative care that ensures the safety and wellbeing of children, only in circumstances where family- and community-based care is not possible; and
- prevent the abuse and exploitation of children in alternative care.

The UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989* (UNCRC) is the pre-eminent instrument outlining the minimum standards of orphanages and residential care. The UNCRC articulates the fundamental rights of all children with a focus on family- and community-based care and protection, child freedoms and agency, recovery and reintegration of child abuse victims and cooperation among international entities. All South-East Asian nations have ratified the UNCRC.

The UNCRC recognises that family- and community-based care is paramount to the wellbeing and development of children, and only when this is not possible should alternative care be used. The United Nations *Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children* (United Nations General Assembly 2010) support the implementation of this principle. These guidelines are designed to aid the development and implementation of policy and programs relating to issues around alternative care, mainly the unnecessary institutionalisation of children and maintaining the rights of the child when alternative care is needed (CELCIS 2012).

Other key international instruments governing the protection of children from sexual exploitation include the following:

- UN Trafficking Protocol;
- *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography 2000* (the Optional Protocol); and
- International Labour Organization (ILO) *Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour 1999* (ILO Convention No. 182).

The Optional Protocol extends various articles of the UNCRC to ensure the protection of children from all forms of sexual and economic exploitation. Singapore is the only South-East Asian nation yet to ratify this protocol. ILO Convention No. 182 prohibits the sale and trafficking of children, procuring or offering a child for prostitution, and the production of pornography or pornographic performances. All South-East Asian nations have ratified this convention. These legislative instruments are important because, after ratification, countries are obliged to uphold the standards of the UNCRC in their respective jurisdictions.

Regional measures

Regional initiatives have primarily been developed through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). These initiatives promote regional cooperation to combat child sexual exploitation, support family stability and, where this is not possible, promote family- or community-based care. Specific instruments include the following:

- *Declaration on the Commitments for Children in ASEAN 2001*—a broad commitment to protect children from exploitation, promote the welfare and wellbeing of children, prioritise family-based care, and ensure that alternative care is family- or community-based;
- *ASEAN Tourism Agreement 2002*—commits member nations to take stern measures to prevent tourism-related abuse and exploitation of children;
- *ASEAN Declaration Against Trafficking in Persons, Particularly Women and Children 2004*—a commitment to improving regional responses and networks to trafficking in persons, especially women and children; and
- *ASEAN Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance on Criminal Matters 2004*—a treaty to facilitate the cooperation and collaboration of law enforcement agencies in the investigation, prosecution and punishment of offenders of transnational crimes such as SECTT.

Sub-regional initiatives have similar objectives and include:

- *Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region*—a formal alliance for transnational cooperation and collaboration in responding to human trafficking; and
- Project Childhood—an Australian Government initiative to combat SECTT in the Mekong Sub-Region.

In addition, there are a range of bilateral agreements between South-East Asian nations regarding cooperation to eliminate and combat human trafficking, and provide victim support.

National measures

The legislative and policy response at the international and regional levels is comprehensive; however, there is substantial variability in the enactment of relevant protections among individual South-East Asian nations (Hamilton 2015; see Table 1). Most countries have adopted domestic legislation and policies broadly aligned with the standards of the UNCRC (Flagothier 2016), and all have specific laws against child trafficking and exploitation (Hamilton 2015). However, many countries fail to address the situation of children in orphanages and other forms of institutional care, and they often lack provisions related to non-penetrative child sex offences and neglect. Therefore, as noted by Farrington (2016: 41):

The regulated implementation of rigorous child protection policies and practices, and the monitoring of these policies and practices, in all child contact-related professions throughout the region should be a priority for governments looking to ensure that vulnerable children are kept safe from predators.

Table 1: Relevant child protection legislation enacted by ASEAN members

	Child neglect ^a	Child Trafficking and exploitation	Unlawful removal from parent/guardian	Abduction by force	Inter-country abduction	Extra-territorial jurisdiction over travelling child sex offenders	Non-penetrative child sex offences
Brunei	P	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Cambodia	P	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	P
Indonesia	Y	Y	Y	P	N	N	P
Laos	N	Y	P	P	N	Y	P
Malaysia	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	P
Myanmar	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Philippines	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	P
Singapore	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	P
Thailand	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	P	P
Vietnam	N	Y	P	P	N	Y	P

a: Includes physical, emotional, mental and educational neglect, and abandonment

Note: Y=Largely complies with international instruments. P=Partially complies with international instruments. N=Not compliant with international instruments

Source: Adapted from Hamilton 2015

Broadly, the Philippines *National Strategic Framework for Plan Development for Children 2000–2025* outlines a strategy for public and private entities to protect the rights of the child by strengthening families; prioritising children in the allocation of resources by families, communities and government; transforming the education, health, justice and legislative system to meet the needs of children; transforming values and practices in the labour market to better protect children from abuse and exploitation; and improving information and information-sharing (Council for the Welfare of Children 2000).

More specifically in relation to child sexual exploitation, the Cambodian *National Plan of Action of The National Committee for Counter Trafficking 2014–2018* aims to enhance national and local law enforcement, preventative efforts, interagency collaboration and victim services relating to child trafficking and exploitation. Similarly, Cambodia’s Ministry of Tourism released the *Strategic Plan on the Promotion of Child Safe Tourism to Prevent Trafficking in Children and Women for Labour and Sexual Exploitation in the Tourism Industry in Cambodia 2007–2009* to minimise the negative impacts of tourism such as SECTT.

Regarding orphanage and institutional care, Malaysia’s Department of Social Welfare offers financial assistance, psychosocial support and community-based activities to improve socio-economic circumstances and quality of life for families in crisis in order to decrease the need or desire to place children in institutional care (UNICEF EAPRO 2006). Similarly, the Indonesian province of West Java established the Child and Family Support Centre to provide children at risk of being separated from their families with case management services (CELCIS 2012). Support workers determine the most appropriate course of action for a referred child based on their needs, making sure that alternative care is offered only if necessary.

Addressing the specific harms of volunteer and orphanage tourism in South-East Asia

In addition to the broad legislative and policy environment outlined above, more direct strategies for addressing child exploitation linked to South-East Asian orphanages involve raising awareness, regulating orphanages, and conducting background checks on potential voluntourists.

Education and awareness raising

Media attention in Western nations has illuminated the harms associated with orphanage voluntourism. Campaigns promoting ethical volunteering are becoming more evident, as is the awareness of the need for family- and community-based alternative care. For example, the *Children are Not Tourist Attractions* campaign, developed with support from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), includes a website where potential voluntourists can find information about appropriate volunteering practices and tips to prevent unintended harms to children (Friends-International nd). Similarly, the Cambodian Children's Trust—established by Australian Tara Winkler—advocates for family preservation and reintegration and, where this cannot be achieved, family-based alternative care. The Trust also assists orphanages to transition to a family-based care model, and raises awareness in Cambodia and internationally about institutional reforms and deinstitutionalisation (Cambodian Children's Trust nd). Most recently, the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade launched the *Smart Volunteering* campaign 'to prevent Australians from inadvertently contributing to child exploitation through the practice of orphanage tourism' (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2018: np). The campaign discourages Australians from engaging in any form of short-term, unskilled volunteering in orphanages.

Resources available to Australian and international volunteers and tourists include:

- *Smart Volunteering*, an Australian Government booklet and checklist to assist orphanage voluntourists to be informed, child safe and prepared (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2018: np);
- *Orphanages: Not the Solution* website, which provides information on orphanage scams and alternative options for donors, travellers and volunteers who wish to give their time or money;
- anti-scam websites that publish emails from scammers posing as orphanage workers (eg Christensen 2010);
- the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, which provides a web-checking service to identify whether a charity is registered (Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission nd);
- Scamwatch, an Australian Government online service that provides information on current scams (ACCC 2016); and
- information from travel agents, tour operators, and travel and volunteering websites warning of orphanage scams and corruption (eg Karsten 2019; Murdoch 2013).

Further, the public can report orphanage scams to the Australian Cybercrime Online Reporting Network (ACCC 2016).

Registration and regulation of orphanages

A substantial number of South-East Asian orphanages are unregistered and therefore operate without scrutiny. It is estimated that up to 70 percent of Cambodian orphanages and 99 percent of Indonesian childcare institutions are opened without being officially registered (Csáky 2009; MoSVY 2011).

In response, Indonesia has developed a regulatory framework for childcare institutions, including National Standards of Care and the establishment of a regulatory authority and licensing system (Csáky 2009). Further, the *Child Safe Organisations Framework and Training Toolkit*—developed by ECPAT International in collaboration with Save the Children UK and UNICEF Thailand—‘promotes the development and implementation of child protection policies, particularly within centres providing care to children’ (Farrington 2016: 59). As a result, training for organisations working with children has subsequently been offered in Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam (Farrington 2016).

Regulation ensures orphanages operate within the law and meet minimum standards for the care and protection of children (MoSVY 2011). Regulation improves the safety and wellbeing of children by setting minimum quality standards for orphanages and orphanage volunteers. This allows orphanages to be monitored and inspected. However, regulatory frameworks have not been implemented in all South-East Asian nations. Without this oversight, orphanage staff and volunteers may be allowed to engage with children without proper training, qualifications and legal authority (Dunn, Jareg & Webb 2007; ECPAT International 2016: 2).

Background checks for voluntourists

The majority of volunteers and workers seeking employment in South-East Asian orphanages are not subjected to background and criminal checks (APLE Cambodia 2014; Farrington 2016). National Police Checks for Australian volunteers are available online to orphanage operators and staff through the Australian Federal Police; however, orphanage operators often lack knowledge of and are limited in their capacity to use this service. Where volunteers are placed through a third party, orphanages may assume checks have been carried out and that a volunteer is suitable. Finally, where orphanage tourism is undertaken spontaneously, there may be no opportunity for background checking to be conducted.

The unregulated nature of voluntourism activities has recently been highlighted through international research. As part of the *Global study on sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism* (ECPAT Germany, Tourism Watch, Bread for the World 2015), 44 voluntourism projects offered by 23 voluntourism providers were analysed for child protection measures. Of these:

- 96 percent of providers did not have a child protection policy;
- 75 percent of providers did not have a code of conduct outlining appropriate behaviour towards children;
- 56 percent of projects did not require a police clearance certificate;
- 79 percent of projects did not ask for a resume and 93 percent did not conduct a personal interview; and
- 96 percent of projects did not require the volunteer to undertake a pre-departure preparation course (ECPAT Germany, Tourism Watch, Bread for the World 2015).

Conclusions

Institution-based sexual exploitation, including within orphanages, is rising and is now the third most prevalent form of child exploitation in South-East Asia, behind exploitation on the street and in commercial establishments (Farrington 2016). The drivers of this increase are complex, but the popularity and profitability of volunteer and orphanage tourism has created opportunities for sex offenders to gain access to potential victims. These factors have also resulted in the practice of paper orphaning and the trafficking of children into orphanages to boost orphan numbers, as well as illicit adoption. Voluntourism is also linked with orphanage scams.

Legislative and policy responses to prevent harms experienced by children living in orphanages have several aims. The primary aim is to reduce the number of children living in such institutions by promoting family-based care and addressing the conditions which lead families to relinquish their children. If family-based care is not possible, the policies aim to promote the safety and wellbeing of children placed in alternative care. This includes the prevention of child abuse and exploitation.

However, legislative instruments across international, regional and domestic levels generally do not focus specifically on the issue of child exploitation within orphanages. Instead, specific responses are found in strategies that create awareness, ensure regulation of orphanages and require background checks of potential voluntourists. These initiatives aim to prevent voluntourism and promote more ethical forms of assistance, to ensure orphanages are registered and can be monitored, and to prevent harms towards children by implementing rigorous screening processes for volunteers.

Effective prevention strategies and interventions require a solid understanding of the issues and how they affect victims. Research examining child sexual exploitation in South-East Asia has overlooked the vulnerabilities of children in orphanages. The rise in orphanage tourism has seen a proliferation of practices and institutions that can facilitate the exploitation of this particularly vulnerable population. Thus, strengthening the evidence base around sexual exploitation in orphanages is the first step in addressing this problem and ultimately ensuring children in residential care are protected and nurtured and have their rights and dignity maintained.

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