



## 24 Questions to Ask Before Volunteering in an Orphanage

### GENERAL QUESTIONS:

1. Is this a true orphanage?
2. What is the long term, sustainable impact of my presence and work?
3. What factors have contributed to the need for orphanages in this country?
4. If the placement is a mismatch of my skills, will I still go?
5. Can I actually “make a huge difference” during a short term program?
6. Is this orphanage located in a “touristy” part of the country? Why? And why does this matter?
7. Does this organization run background checks, ask for references, or have other systems in place to protect children from predators?
8. Is there transparency in where program fees are allocated?
9. Does this organization have language or wording geared toward tourists or very short-term travelers?

### ASK YOURSELF:

1. Do I have a working knowledge of the country’s culture, politics, history, and economy?
2. Do I understand the concept of “hero syndrome” and does it apply to me?
3. Am I an asset or a necessity?
4. What skills am I bringing to the table?
5. Do I understand what child trafficking is and its impact on foreign communities?
6. Do I genuinely believe this organization has the children’s needs as a sole motivator for their work?

### ASK THE AGENCY/INSTITUTION/ORPHANAGE/PROGRAM PROVIDER:

1. What credentials do you have?
2. What if I questioned whether you operate solely to earn profit. What would be your response? What proof or evidence can you show that proves the latter?
3. Tell me about your strategies for keeping children mentally, emotionally, and physically safe. What plans do you have in place, and how do you hold your organization accountable to accomplishing these goals?
4. Why have you chosen to seek outside help from foreigners rather than sourcing labor from within the local community? Are all local resources, including capable workers, exhausted?
5. What is your vision for the future of this project – is sustainability an objective and how does that look to you?
6. Are you sure my skills – x, y, z – are a reasonable fit for my pending projects at your organization?
7. What have you seen work and not-work with past volunteers? What is one piece of advice you’d give me as I prepare my heart and mind for this experience?
8. Do our projects allow for collaboration with locals?
9. How do you measure your impact?

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- [The Ethical Volunteer](#)
- [Better Volunteering Better Care Network](#)
- [Next Generation Nepal - Ethical Volunteering Resources](#)
  - [The Paradox of Orphanage Volunteering PDF](#)
- [Pepy Tours - The Importance of Learning BEFORE Helping](#)
- [The Plaid Zebra - How I turned a short-term volunteer trip into a full-fledged life abroad](#)
- [Find orphanage volunteer programs](#)

