

MACARTHUR 100&CHANGE COMPETITION:

CHANGING THE WAY WE CARESM PROPOSAL FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

■ ■ BIG PICTURE

- Getting children out of orphanages and into safe and nurturing families
- Partnership between CRS, Lumos, and Maestral International.

■ ■ FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How many children are living in orphanages?

There are about 8 million children living in orphanages around the world.¹ Many studies show that an estimated 80-90% of children living in orphanages have a living parent.²

Why are children living in orphanages?

Children usually enter residential care due to poverty combined with one or more other factors---their disability or the illness of a caregiver, for example. Sometimes a lack of health or social services in a particular country causes parents or caregivers to feel that their child would be best cared for in an orphanage.

Aren't orphanages helping children?

Many orphanages have children's wellbeing as their primary goal, and such care facilities may meet some basic needs such as clothing and food. However, research has shown that living in orphanages causes long-term effects on children's physical, intellectual and psychological development. Effects are particularly severe in young children. On average, for every three months in an institution, an infant/toddler loses one month in development.³

We also know from research that as teenagers "age out of care" they can feel overwhelmed by the shock of independence they face when leaving a facility. It can also be challenging for young people to create new relationships or to try to be a part of a family they have lived apart from for years.⁴ In a family or family-like environment there is no "aging out" of care.

But sometimes families, through abuse or neglect, are the reason children end up in orphanages in the first place. How will you help a child who comes from a harmful family environment?

Though it is not the main reason children enter residential care, tragically, some of the greatest harm to children comes from their own family members. We will provide support to family members who can adequately care for their children, which many of them desperately want to do. In the cases where a family member is unable or unwilling to provide safe and nurturing care, we will explore other options such as kinship care (aunts, uncles, etc.), foster care, small group homes or adoption.

¹ D. Tolfree, *Roofs and Roots: The care of separated children in the developing world* (London, Save the Children UK, 1995).

² Williamson, J. & Greenberg A. (2010). *Families, Not Orphanages*, Better Care Network Working Paper.

³ Loman, Michelle M., Wiik, Kristen L., Frenn, Kristin A., Pollak, Seth D., Gunnar, Megan R. (2010) *Postinstitutionalized Children's Development: Growth, Cognitive, and Language Outcomes*. *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics*.

³ Januario, K., Hembling, J., Kline, A., and Roby, J. (2016) *Factors Related to Placement into and Reintegration of Children from Catholic-affiliated Residential Care Facilities in Zambia*.

What about faith-based actors who believe it is their mission to care for the most vulnerable in orphanages?

Many faith-based organizations have responded to the most vulnerable in many positive and affirming ways, and many of the faith-based actors caring for children in facilities believe they are providing the best care they can to those children. Through research, we are learning of the harm that may result from living in an orphanage and the benefits of living in a safe, nurturing family. In order to provide the best care for these vulnerable children, it is important to share our knowledge of better ways to care for them. And not only to share this information, but to help facilities transform how they help children and their families in order to ensure the best possible futures. We respect and appreciate the work of faith-based organizations and see them as integral partners to our solution.

How will you solve this problem? What evidence do you have that your proposed solution will work?

With our partners, Lumos and Maestral International, we will prevent children from entering residential care, reunite children with safe and nurturing families, strengthen families through parenting support and increased economic stability, transform orphanages into family and community social service providers, and redirect donor resources to support these comprehensive efforts. We are confident that we will be successful because of the growing recognition of the negative impacts of residential care on children and the positive effects of nurturing family care. Many governments around the world have developed policies and processes for closing or transforming residential care facilities for children. Countries such as Bulgaria, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Moldova, Rwanda, and Uganda have shown that the reintegration of children from orphanages is possible and effective. Lumos reported a 71% reduction in the number of children in institutions in Moldova⁵. We will advance our efforts building on the momentum already in process by many countries.

Where will this take place?

During our next phase of proposal design, we will be working closely with CRS staff and local partners in countries where we work, as well as with our international partners, Lumos and Maestral, to identify priority countries across a number of regions globally. We will look carefully at the current operating environment, the government policies around child protection and social services and the ability to scale change.

Many generous people from all over the world give financial and material resources to orphanages as a way of giving back. What could donors do instead?

Well-meaning individuals, churches and schools perform acts of charity by sending financial, material and, at times, human resources to orphanages around the world. We believe that these individuals may not be aware that 80-90% of the children they work to help have a living parent.⁶ Research has shown that it costs 6 to 10 times more to care for a child in an orphanage than in a family setting. We believe that if donors were aware of this and knew that many children have families who would like to care for them, they would contribute toward community- and family-based services that could help many, many more children and families for the same donation amount. We intend to work with institutions and individuals to better understand their knowledge, attitudes and the social norms that have cultivated the environment to give to orphanages and will work together to engage their constituencies. These contributors will become partners in fundamentally changing the current system to one that will provide the best environment for children's optimal growth and human development.

⁵ Lumos. (2014). Ending the institutionalisation of children: A summary of progress in changing systems of care and protection for children in Moldova, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria.

⁶ Williamson, J. & Greenberg A. (2010). Families, Not Orphanages, Better Care Network Working Paper.