

Changing hearts and minds with Blueberry Creatives

The problem

There are over 50,000 children growing up in orphanages in Uganda. A significant proportion of these children will suffer from neglect, starvation or abuse. The existence of orphanages is a sign that a country has limited child protection systems and lacks a skilled social work force to ensure orphans and vulnerable children are placed safely in families instead of growing up in orphanages. Historically placing a child in an orphanage has been the solution to the 'orphan crisis' however this approach is the equivalent of committing violence against a child¹.



We believe every child has the right to grow up loved in a family.

The Solution

Over the past six years Child's i Foundation (CiF) has worked in partnership with the government to develop alternative family-based services to replace the damaging outdated practice of placing children in orphanages. Our solution is to eliminate orphanages by replacing them with services which give children the opportunity to grow up loved in families. Our model programme is outlined below:

If child comes with parent, our social workers will work with the family to support them to keep their child.

In child protection cases, child is admitted to our emergency 8 bed reception centre by referral agency

Child receives a medical assessment and assigned social worker to ensure they are placed into a family within 3-6 months to avoid long-term damage.

Child is placed into foster care and provided around the clock care until a permanent family is identified

If the social worker successfully traces the child's family, they will work with the CiF Family Support Team to build the family's capacity to enable them to provide for their child and place the child into their family. A CiF social worker will monitor the child until they are confident they can close the case.

If no family is traced, social workers will match the child with an approved adoptive family in Uganda and place and monitor the child until they receive an adoption order.

If family are traced, but are unable to provide for the child, CiF will place the child with an approved long-term foster family to provide love and care until the child reaches 18 years old.

On 3rd March 2016, as a result of our work with the Ministry and other agencies in Uganda, the Children's Act was amended by Parliament to prioritise the care of children in families instead of orphanages.

¹ ¹¹ Barter 2003, UNICEF 2002

Changing Hearts and Minds

Since Day One, TV professionals have visited our project in Uganda and given us their love, time and expertise to share our story. Sadly orphanages are seen as the 'solution' however over the past 6 years we have produced high quality videos showing that there is a better alternative = families.

We would like Blueberry Creatives to work in partnership with our team in Uganda to identify TV professionals to produce powerful campaigns to change hearts and minds. Over the past 8 years we've learnt some lessons that we would like to share through videos because without knowing these facts we will continue to place the worlds most vulnerable children in danger.

#Lessonslearnt

Orphanages are a Very Bad Idea

When I talk about the work of Child's i Foundation in Uganda and how we want to eliminate orphanages people look at me as if I'm mad. No matter how much money you spend no orphanage can replace the security of a family. This is backed up by UN and decades of research showing the mental and physical damage caused by orphanages. The greatest challenge we face is people still believe that they are necessary. This is legitimised by celebrities visiting and setting up orphanages and we need to produce a campaign to show that no child should ever grow up in an orphanage.

'Orphans' in orphanages are not orphans.

80% of children in orphanages have families. Many of these families, who with the right support, could provide care for them. And if their families cannot look after them there are foster families like [Betty and Frances](#) who can provide a home. We would like to produce a campaign and series of videos to show the reasons why so many children are in orphanages and how the solution to the 'orphan crisis' is to return them to their families and provide support to their families to provide for them.

By volunteering in orphanages you are doing more harm than good.

Millions of volunteers visit orphanages thinking they are doing good. I know. [I was one of them](#). However the unintended consequences creates more 'orphans'. If there was no orphan tourism, orphanages would not need children and support could be redirected to keeping children in their own families. We would like to produce a set of videos highlighting the unintentional damage done to children by volunteers.

Care leavers personal journeys

It's not just us or the UN saying how bad orphanages are. We have many [care leavers](#) – adults who have spent their life growing up in orphanages - who want to speak up about their experiences and how no child should ever be placed in care. We would like to identify a media professional to equip care leavers tell their story and produce powerful VT's about their experiences to encourage donors to invest in their families, instead of orphanages.

What are the alternatives to orphanages?

Closing orphanages is a very complex and if it's done badly it can cause more harm. CiF have partnered with Hope and Homes for Children to do this properly. The process is called De-institutionalisation or DI for short. It is not simply about putting children back into their families. It's about working with the Government to build a system that protects children and strengthens families. It's about working with every child to find them a permanent family and monitoring the placement. It's about training teams of Social Workers to ensure the protection systems are in place when we leave (and no one comes along and builds another orphanage). We would like to

produce a set of films on how this is done properly and why people need to invest in DI to ensure all children grow up safe in their families.

There are families in Uganda who want to foster and adopt children.

We were told there were no Ugandan families who wanted to adopt, but thanks to the [Ugandans Adopt](#) campaign and professional TV volunteers every day [families](#) are signing up. The main justification for international adoption is the premise that there are no local families. In Uganda, this is simply not the case and the challenge now in partnership with the Government, is to work with the orphanages to ensure that children are given their right to a loving family in Uganda.

No child under 3 should ever be placed in an orphanage.

We set up a 24-bed facility to prove it was possible to place children into families but our plan was always to close when we proved there was a better alternative. Together, we developed an Emergency Foster Care service and as a result abandoned children are placed in a foster family until they are found a forever family. The difference between the children in our foster care and our babies home was so stark we closed our home. We would like to produce a campaign to show how we did this and why we did this to convince the world that there is a better solution.

Power to you. It's you- the donor - who has the power to change the situation.

By continuing to fund orphanages, donors continue to deprive children of their families. I don't believe anyone thinks that's what they are doing when they fund an orphanage – I certainly didn't to begin with. We would like to develop a campaign to showcase donors who have made the change from funding an orphanage to a project that supports children in families. If there are

Volunteer scheme

The media volunteer placement is for a minimum period of 3 months and we look for experienced, enthusiastic and adaptable people that can hit the ground running. No day is the same as the next so you need to be able to deal with the unexpected. It is an amazing opportunity to expand your skills but we still require volunteers that have an extensive and varied media background as the role requires using a lot of initiative and creativity.

When looking for a media volunteer we require the following:

- Extensive experience in field producing with a focus on producing/directing
- Experience and confidence with shooting on SLR
- Knowledge of using basic sound equipment
- Highly experienced and efficient in using Final Cut Pro

The media volunteer will be involved and privy to very sensitive, personal issues and stories surrounding abandonment, babies and families. Confidentiality and sensitivity to the nature of this content is essential as is respecting the cultural aspects in the Ugandan environment.

For all past videos please visit our YouTube page - www.youtube.com/user/childsifoundation

Thank you

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