



Encountering Abusive Orphanages in Nepal *Advice for Members of the Public*

This is a short paper produced by Next Generation Nepal (NGN) to advise members of the public and tourists who may encounter child trafficking or child abuse in children's homes or orphanages in Nepal.

Orphanage Trafficking and Abuse in Nepal

Nepal attracts tens of thousands of tourists each year who come to enjoy its stunning scenery, vibrant culture and friendly people. As with many developing countries, however, Nepal has many social problems that usually remain hidden to tourists and visitors, and one of these is the phenomenon of orphanage trafficking. Tragically, thousands of children in Nepal have been trafficked and displaced from their families in rural villages so they can be placed in orphanages and children's homes—in urban and tourist areas—where they are vulnerable to abuse, as well as being denied access to their families. Two out of three children in orphanages in Nepal are *not* in fact orphans, and many are being kept in orphanages because there are huge profits to be made from well-intentioned volunteers and charities that give funds in the belief they are supporting genuinely needy children. It is no surprise that up to 90 percent of children's homes in Nepal are registered in the top five tourist districts of the country where they can most easily gain access to foreign donors and paying volunteers. Keeping children away from their families—and often in squalid conditions to increase their value as a poverty commodity—goes against all international and Nepali laws and policies about the best interests of children, and yet sadly, it is common practice in Nepal. For more information about the problem of orphanage trafficking and orphanage voluntourism, visit the NGN website or contact us by email.

Encountering Orphanage Trafficking and Abuse

Thousands of tourists in Nepal each year may encounter orphanage trafficking without even realizing it when they donate their time and money to volunteer at an orphanage. However, as awareness of this problem grows, more and more visitors to Nepal are becoming suspicious about unusual activities they observe in children's homes, for example:

- Children claiming to be orphans (many children are forced to lie about their parentage).
- Children claiming they have parents whom they are denied access to.
- Donated items disappearing after visitors leave (so they can be sold for a profit).
- Children being kept in unhealthy conditions despite high fees being paid by volunteers.
- Children showing signs of being beaten, malnourished or denied access to healthcare.
- Outsiders being permitted to take children away from the home without supervision.

In these scenarios, it is everyone's ethical responsibility to take action to investigate the suspected abuse, and if necessary, report it to the relevant authorities.

Investigating and Reporting Child Abuse

In cases where child abuse or trafficking is suspected, in the first instance, the individual should collect as much evidence as possible to support their suspicions. Evidence may include: testimonies from the children; photographs showing injuries or malnutrition; documented cases of funds being used inappropriately, or children being put at risk. Only by having access to convincing evidence are the relevant authorities able to take further action to protect the children.

Once evidence is gathered, it should be formally submitted to the Central Child Welfare Board (CCWB), Nepal's Government-led child protection agency. **The person to contact at CCWB is: NamunaBhusal on +977 9851139474 or at namuna@ccwb.gov.np.** Remember that Nepal is a poor country and lack of resources mean that the CCWB may not be able to act as quickly as its counterparts can in more developed nations, but it is still the main portal through which all evidence of child abuse or trafficking should be directed. By not contacting the CCWB, or by “going around” these official systems, the individual may be acting illegally, and may ultimately prevent child protection agencies from being able to help children at risk.

In all cases where evidence of child abuse is submitted to CCWB, we recommend that the individual states clearly that they were referred to CCWB by NGN. Furthermore, NGN would request that the individual also submits the evidence to NGN so we can monitor cases, and keep updated on process.

Requesting Support from NGN

NGN is unable to lead on new cases involving child abuse or trafficking unless they are officially referred to us by the CCWB—this is why it is so important that CCWB is contacted in the first instance. NGN is a small NGO tackling a huge problem in Nepal, and whilst we wish we could take on every case of orphanage trafficking that comes our way, sadly this is not always possible. However, with the limited resources we have, we will always try our best to offer advice and support where we can. Areas where we may be able to offer advice include: working with CCWB, orphanage rescues, family tracing, reconnection and reunification and ethical orphanage voluntourism.

Individuals requiring advice should email NGN in the first instance to explain what they need advice on, and in response, NGN will do one or more of the following:

1. We may send you advice over email and/or provide you with guidance material to support your needs (we have a range of user-friendly guidance material).
2. We may recommend a more appropriate organization or agency you should speak to.
3. We may offer you a technical advice meeting to discuss your concerns in more detail.

NGN can be contacted at: info@nextgenerationnepal.org.

Thank you for your interest in child rights in Nepal. For more information about NGN please visit our website: www.nextgenerationnepal.org