



CREATE

impact | partnership | refuge



MWANA VILLAGES

DISCUSSION BOOKLET

STARTING POINT

discussion questions

1. What factors do you think contribute to orphanhood? If you were in a difficult circumstance and operating in a survival-mode mindset, what issues might you be facing? How would these issues bring additional difficulty in supporting a family?
2. The term "ethical orphan care" implies that there may be some orphan care which is *unethical*...what do you think that means?
3. What would it look like to have a holistic approach to caring for vulnerable children and families?
4. How can adoption fees lead to corrupt practices?
5. How much do you think it costs to care comprehensively for a child at the Mwana Refuge?



TRUE *or* FALSE

1. Life in Africa is inexpensive.

FALSE! It costs the organization \$17/day to care for ONE child at the Mwana Refuge. That is JUST the cost in country: from water to utilities to rent (\$2,000 a month!), life in Congo is EXPENSIVE!

2. Adoption is the best solution for a child.

TRUE and FALSE! When a child can be reunified with biological family or extended family, we always prioritize that family preservation. Sometimes, that's not possible, and in those circumstances we seek loving adoptive families for children.

3. An orphan is a child with no parents.

TRUE and FALSE! An orphaned child is defined as a child who has lost one or both parents. The loss of one parent classifies a child as a "single orphan," and the loss of both parents as a "double orphan." We prefer the term "orphaned child," as we believe that a child's circumstances does not equate to his/her identity.

4. Most children in orphanages have no living parents.

FALSE! It is estimated that more than 8 out of 10 children in orphanages around the world have at least one living parent. Since the Mwana Refuge's opening in 2014, we have been able to reunify approximately 70% of children who have come into our full time care. We also work to keep children with their families (avoiding full time care at the Refuge) in a family-preservation model.

for **DEEPER DISCUSSION**

(courtesy of faithtoaction.org)

1

Most of us don't donate to a charity or volunteer our time based on things like an organizational mission statement or a list of persuasive statistics. Before we commit our time, energy, or money, we have some kind of personal connection that motivates our involvement. For example, people who commit to learning more about orphan care might have:

- Experienced personal trauma related to the loss of one or both parents
- Grown up with a friend whose family life was abusive
- Participated in a church or school that was active in reaching out to vulnerable
- neighborhood kids
- Encountered vulnerable children on a mission trip
- Felt moved when they heard someone share a heartbreaking personal story

How would you describe the personal connection you have to learning more about and responding to the needs of orphaned and vulnerable children?

2

The mental image we have of orphaned children might be shaped by many things, including news reports and personal relationships as well as books and movies. Listed below are several fictional orphaned children depicted in classic books as well as popular culture. Briefly read through the list and consider three to five of the names whose stories you're most familiar with.

Little Orphan Annie, Luke Skywalker (Star Wars), Snow White, Cinderella, Tarzan, Batman, Harry Potter, Lord Voldemort (Harry Potter), Cosette (Les Misérables), Anne Shirley (Anne of Green Gables)

Based on these names, how is their experience of living as an orphaned child depicted?

What similarities and differences do you recognize between these characters and what you know about the experience of real orphaned children in the world today? For example, how might fictional characters accurately reflect the experience of orphaned children? How might they be inaccurate or misleading?

3 Imagine you live in a developing country and are the parent of two small children ages two and five. Over the past two years, you have experienced a series of catastrophic events, including the death of your spouse, the failure of your small business and the subsequent loss of your home. You feel overwhelmed and hopeless and realize you no longer have the physical, financial or emotional resources necessary to provide for your children.

Briefly review the following list of whom you might choose to care for and raise your children. Prioritize the options you'd consider:

Close friend, Foster care, Aunt/uncle, Grandparent, Group home/family-style orphanage, Adoption agency, Institutional orphanage, Grandparent, Extended family member

Overall, what similarities and differences do you notice in the options each of you chose?

Where did the two orphanage options fall on your list? Near the top, the bottom, or somewhere in between?

Generally speaking, do you think the options you would choose would be very similar to or very different from parents in developing countries who may find themselves in similar circumstances? Share the reasons for your thinking.



CASE STUDIES & discussion

In adherence to our confidentiality agreement, names have been changed and adult consent has been given for sharing these stories.

When Claire's father died in her late childhood, she was sent to live with extended family. She was abused and regarded as an enslaved person. Claire recounts the day that her aunt forced her to trade her long skirts for more revealing clothing, the day when everything changed.



Months later when Claire saw Mwana's sign, she risked everything and escaped. She was afraid to explain her situation, but as she recounts, "But Mama Madie comforted me. She prayed with me. And I say thank you...because without Mwana Villages I don't know what I would have become."

Claire had just learned she was pregnant and was planning to abandon her baby. Mwana cared for her and showed her new hope. She is now the proud mother of a beautiful daughter, named for Mama Madie and Papa Jean. Through trauma counseling, Claire has worked through some of her fears. She was trained, cared for and employed as a caregiver at Mwana for several years and now lives independently with her daughter, working as a seamstress and maintaining very close contact with her Mwana family.

What are the main issues at hand?

For example, there is cyclical nature of the orphan cycle where an orphaned child may grow up to repeat the same actions.

How are these issues interconnected?

What are the key challenges to lasting impact?

How can the global Mwana family engage in this story?

Five of Elisabeth's ten children have died.

From two sets of twins, one from each set passed away due to preventable diseases. When we met Elisabeth, she bore deep trauma from years of abuse from her husband (who had abandoned the family), from the loss of her children and from extreme poverty. Over the years, we continued to minister to Elisabeth and her family: supplementing food and providing household essentials, paying school fees and supplies for her children and providing water filter and hygiene training to prevent the same diseases that had ravaged their family.

Through all of this, it was evident that true, lasting transformation was not taking root. Over the years, Elisabeth continued to practice animism, a religious, occult practice. It was not until Elisabeth accepted Christ and His eternal hope for her life that the transformation took place. From the outside, Elisabeth's circumstances have not largely changed. Her family is still poor and the family still bears wounds from the trauma they have experienced. But there is one thing that is unmistakable: the peace. You can see it in her eyes and in her demeanor. There is hope in spite of circumstances.



What are the main issues at hand?

How are these issues interconnected?

What are the key challenges to lasting impact?

For example, circumstantial changes may not bring the true healing needed.

How can the global Mwana family engage in this story?

MARIE

Born at just over 2 lbs, with a twin who did not survive, Marie defied all odds in her survival. Mwana was called when Marie's parents left her in the NICU, and as soon as she was strong enough to leave the hospital, she joined us at the Mwana Refuge. She grew and thrived for months in our care, all while our team continued a diligent investigation of any trails that may lead to known family members. One day, in a city of over a million (and yet again against all odds), our team found the mechanic named Joseph, for whom they had been looking.



The father shared the painful story of his wife's premature delivery of twins. One died, and the other was transferred to the NICU at another hospital. For days, she and her sister cared for baby Marie, spending every last franc they had for medicines and care. One day, the father returned home to find his wife in tears, without the baby. The nurses had told her that the baby would never survive, so she chose to leave her there.

Until that day, they had long assumed Marie had died. Having since given birth to another baby, Marie's parents have barely provided for themselves and the two children in their care. Mwana continues to work with the parents toward eventual reunification, a process which can often take months or years to effectively and safely accomplish.

What are the main issues at hand?

How are these issues interconnected?

For example, financial poverty leads to an inability to access adequate healthcare.

What are the key challenges to lasting impact?

How can the global Mwana family engage in this story?

ORPHANAGE X

A short drive from the Mwana Refuge will bring you to another orphanage. A perceptive tour through Orphanage X will reveal a few notable observations. Children are mostly silent. While waiting for baths, toddlers sit perfectly still on their plastic toilets. No toys are in sight, and indiscriminate, inauthentic affection for whatever volunteer walks through the gates is immediately perceptible.

One thing that you won't often see at this orphanage: girls. It's not that girls are not brought to the orphanage after having been found abandoned, nor is it that authorities don't place them there. It's that they don't stay. Girls, from reasons ranging from mildly unethical to disturbingly sordid, are trafficked within a few weeks' time. And everyone gets a cut of the profits.

This Orphanage X actually exists by another name, but it's also representative of many institutional orphanages around the world. These orphanages are silent (children have learned not to cry when their needs go unmet). The children easily go to strangers (a revolving door of caregivers and a lack of healthy attachment produces dangerous indiscriminate affection). There are hidden profits tied to the children who walk through the doors.

What are the main issues at hand?

How are these issues interconnected?

What are the key challenges to lasting impact?

How can the global mwana family engage in this story?

For example, sharing stories like these illuminate the realities of child trafficking and how it happens practically.

"DIVE DEEPER" VIDEOS

Hover your phone's camera over QR codes



**WHAT BEGAN
IN BROKENNESS**

MWANA + FAITH



**MWANA
2010-2020**

HOW CAN YOU TAKE A NEXT STEP TO BE INVOLVED WITH MWANA?



See some ways to
get involved here!





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