

Suggested writing prompt (~250 words)

In Cambodia, many children in so-called orphanages are not actually orphans—rather, their families, often in deep poverty, place them in residential care facilities believing the children will receive better food, education, and protection. Yet the institutions themselves have become a “growth industry,” many children live without consistent caregivers, and the cost of institutional care is far higher than supporting a child in their family. NGOs and the Cambodian government are now working to reunite children with their families and reduce the number of children in orphanages.

In an essay, analyze this situation by addressing the following:

- Why do many families in Cambodia choose to send their children to orphanages, and what assumptions underlie that decision?
- What are the major drawbacks of institutionalizing children versus keeping them in family-based environments?
- Who holds responsibility for changing the “orphanage-as-poverty-solution” dynamic—families, communities, governments, international NGOs, or all of them?
- Consider: what could be done to support families so they don’t feel compelled to send children away, and how might policy or practice shift to prioritize family-based care?