

Gymea Baptist Church: Cambodia Update - February 2020

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to outline some of the process and considerations that have led to the decision to conclude our GBC led short-term trips to Cambodia and its related activities. This decision has not been made lightly or quickly and comes with a broad range of considerations that go beyond Cambodia itself. While the decision may appear sudden to our wider congregation, we have been working on it collaboratively for more than 3 years.

We acknowledge our GBC family will have a range of feelings and responses to this decision and we hold space to walk through that together. In making this decision, we do so with the big picture in view and the desire to lead our faith community well toward to the future. We still remain committed to mission. We still remain committed to creating pathways for our congregation to develop a deeper heart for mission through mission exposure. We will still continue developing our work across all our areas of mission.

We appreciate you taking the time to read this overview. This paper is long, because the process we have gone through has been long and non-linear. If you have any questions arising from this paper, we welcome a conversation to clarify and develop mutual understanding.

We express heartfelt gratitude to Richard Dwyer (GBC Section Leader) for his generous, faithful presence through this process, along with the Cambodia Support team for their contributions. To honour and celebrate our historical connections in Cambodia over the years we have three GBC representatives (Richard Dwyer, Helen Dwyer and John Cox) traveling to Cambodia late Feb/March 2020. They will be hosting a dinner in Phnom Penh on 29 February and joined by key people we have connected with over the years to thank and bless them as they continue their ministry. We will also be having a celebration moment for Cambodia with our wider GBC community at all services on Sunday 29th March 2020. On this day, we will also be sharing our new unfolding direction for GBC Mission.

We are thankful for the doors that God opened for us to connect with Cambodia over the past decade, and as this chapter closes, we look forward with anticipation to God's unfolding plans for the future to expand our heart for local and global mission.

Jodene Watling
GBC Associate Pastor

Marc Rader
GBC Senior Pastor

Overview

The GBC Mission Department (which includes the Mission Action Group, Cambodia & Catalyst) has been working through a process of evaluation over the past 3 years to clarify and consolidate who we are, and how that informs what we do as we move into the future.

Through this process we have made the decision to conclude GBC led short-term mission trips to Cambodia. This means that GBC will no longer directly lead short-term trips to Cambodia annually. Our historical activities and connections specifically related to that process of the short-term trip will also conclude. The rationale for this decision is in response to the changing nature of mission, consolidation of our mission activities, and our capacity to deepen mission partnerships.

This does not mean we will never have opportunity to go on trips again as part of our GBC community. We have been exploring other opportunities of mission exposure trips, which are facilitated by external, partner organisations, instead of GBC. If we do introduce these, the model and approach of how we do them will be different, moving towards best practice for where we are today in mission and complying with current legislation.

This decision also does not mean we will never have connection to Cambodia again. In fact, we are supporting a Cambodian based organisation and project in May Mission Month 2020 for another year.

This decision does not mean that we discourage individuals from personally connecting with organisations and contacts they have in Cambodia. If God is inviting them to participate in that, we encourage them to do so in a thoughtful way that embraces best practice.

This decision has been made in collaboration, by Associate Pastor for Mission & Evangelism (Jodene Watling), with the Cambodia Section Leader (Richard Dwyer), and the Cambodia Support Team. Consistent consultation with the Senior Pastor (Marc Rader) has also been part of this process, plus referral to the Church Leadership Team (CLT) as we came to this conclusion December 2019.

We recognise much time, energy, resource and passion has been invested into Cambodia over the years, which we honour and are deeply grateful for. We celebrate all that has been achieved through them. As mentioned, this decision has not been made lightly or quickly. Our aim was to develop a deeper heart for Cambodia and more broadly develop partnership models across all our mission spaces. This has taken significant time to work through and required addressing wider considerations, beyond Cambodia, of how it connects to other teams and the broader GBC.

Our church has a longstanding passion for mission, which has been expressed in a variety of ways throughout our 70-year history. Whilst the nature of mission and the world around us has significantly changed, our passion for mission has not. How we do mission may look different in the future, but our unwavering desire is to see lives changed by Jesus, through the restoration and renewal of all things by Him.

The process in brief (.... well, as brief as we could make it!)

The rationale for this decision to conclude GBC led short-term mission trips to Cambodia is in response to the changing nature of mission, consolidation of our mission activities, and our capacity deepen mission partnerships - this will be expanded further in the next section.

Our GBC led short-term trips to Cambodia evolved over the past decade with connections to multiple organisations, which assisted us in creating a trip itinerary. This gave trip participants a range of different experiences; it widened our window of connection, but not necessarily our depth with them. Beyond the trip, we had minimal relationship to these organisations throughout the year. Individuals may have kept in touch with various groups or individuals, but that did not extend to the wider church in a meaningful way. These organisations had been described at various times as partners, but there had been no formalised mutual agreement on what that looked like beyond an annual trip.

One of the challenges of this evolving space is that we did not have a coherent view that connected to the wider church. People's experience, understanding and expectations of Cambodia will vary, depending on, if they went on a trip, what trip they went on and if they had a passion for Cambodia. This is not a criticism of the trips or the people running them, but an observation of necessary stage of growth. If we wanted to go deeper with Cambodia, our next faithful step was to clarify our commitment and intentions.

A team was brought together (Cambodia Support Team) to work through this process. We carried out an audit of previous trips and began the process of working towards legitimate partnership. The team considered the multiple organisations that we had connected with throughout the years (over 15) narrowed the field and chose two organisations, being Heart of Hope and H.O.M.E.

These were grass-roots organisations that were independently operating in Cambodia and chosen by the team due to a genuine affinity with them, practical alignment where they provided easy tasks that we could accomplish on trips (ie. providing resources for outreach day, village visits, running events, sharing testimonies, painting walls, fixing things). Communication was easy with these organisations and they also appeared to have a need for resources and support. At this point, we focused solely on these two organisations and unpacking what it would mean to potentially partner with them.

As we were going through this process, new legislation from the Australian Federal Government called the External Conduct Standards (ECS) came into effect July 2019. This legislation is managed by the ACNC (Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission) and requires that we as a registered charity take reasonable steps to ensure appropriate behaviour in four areas. This legislation affects every registered church, not for profit and mission organisation in Australia that manages activities or resources overseas. Compliance is necessary but is no small task and multiple organisations are now seeking legal advice on how to implement these changes immediately and effectively. [You can read further about the External Conduct Standards and their application here](#), or in the included resources at the end of this article (Appendix 1 & 3).

This instantly and dramatically changed the landscape of mission activities. This not only impacts Cambodia, but also May Mission Month and our missionaries. We are yet to work out

how this all looks but know it will take significant time and work. Now facing new and uncharted legislative standards, we engaged an experienced development consultant who was in country in Cambodia. We sent them the new standards to review plus necessary feedback to and collaborate and seek guidance.

The challenge was, if we were to partner in any meaningful and legal way with these two grass-roots organisations - they would need to comply with these new Australian regulations, and or, become registered Australian Charities themselves with all that entails. We as a team were in no position to facilitate this on their behalf or support that transition and there was no guarantee should we go down that path, compliance standards would be met.

The process to do this would be lengthy and indeterminable; it would include cost for all parties (time, energy, resource, finance) and it required commitment in a way that we were not ready or prepared to pursue. Namely, because it is beyond our skill set and capacity, and to move forward put GBC's own ACNC registered charity status as a church at risk. We thought through other alternative solutions, but it was increasingly clear, this was no longer feasible.

Upon recognising this, we decided to conclude our short-term trips to Cambodia and the pursuit of partnership with the two organisations. We advised our Senior Pastor, Marc Rader to discuss the rationale. We met with the Cambodia Support Team two more times to work through a pathway to conclude our activities. They were disappointed and disheartened that we could not pursue this further. We began talking through what it would mean to finish well and what was a roadmap to conclude our connections regarding trips to Cambodia. We have been so appreciative of their persistence and commitment to stick with us through this extensive process. Mid-December 2019 we notified the Church Leadership Team (CLT).

In parallel, we were also doing other work in our mission teams. Whilst this door was closing, it reaffirmed the steps we had been taking towards a partnership model May Mission Month. From 2019 we started moving towards a partnership model with organisations and this will launch in May 2020. All the organisations that we partner with through May Mission Month are ACNC registered, so their compliance to existing and new legislation is a necessary benchmark for their continued operation. While we could not achieve partnership in the Cambodia space, we can continue to consolidate it through May Mission Month. It is worth noting that Cambodian organisations are open to apply for May Mission Month, however they need to meet specific criteria to be eligible. This is a separate process to the Cambodian space, although we have declared an interest in Cambodia the past 3 years on our application guidelines. Several Cambodian organisations have applied for May Mission Month and a number of them have been successful.

This is the way forward and the area we need to 'cut our teeth', so to speak, for mission partnerships. It is the first time we have committed to partnership and we need to be faithful in this, so we have proven capability and confidence before we move to bigger challenges. We now have Partnership Agreements with organisations, we have developed a more robust, regular reporting system, we work collaboratively with the organisations and we are broadening our congregations' interactions throughout the year. The partnership model is a long-term commitment that will be worked out, monitored and evaluated across several years.

Broadly speaking, the nature of mission has also changed and in effect, the environment and culture that enabled the freedom our trips from 2008-2018 to engage in particular ways and activities, no longer exists. Best practice limits interactions with children and vulnerable people and has put in place different protocols on how visitors engage. It limits teams coming over to do things, preferring observation and learning from the locals about where God is at work amongst them.

Our Cambodia trip (or any trip) is dependent on a minimum number of people, with an appropriate ratio of genders and ages to run. If sufficient people do not apply, a trip will not proceed, training will not occur. For some people it was cost prohibitive, age restrictive and was unsuitably time bound. Having all our energy, training and resource channeled into one prescriptive trip narrowed our window to empower and release people into the diversity of mission God has for them.

Another observation is the changing nature of the lives of our congregation members, who are potential participants in trips. With increasingly busy lives, diverse passions, callings and skills - a one-size fits all approaches to mission exposure was becoming limited. Some people may not have a specific interest in an overseas trip, Cambodia or cross-cultural mission in general, so whilst the door was open for some, it was not available for others. As part of our thinking, we recognised that another key to this was to broaden our platform for mission development and exposure but focus our pathway to empower individuals.

Moving forward, we want to offer the opportunity to release all people in our congregation into mission, to participate in the invitations God is giving them. Our congregants spend the majority of their daily life at work, school, and university, responding to health situations, with family, colleagues, friends, volunteering or with interest groups. They are at all different ages and stages of life and have different needs and perspectives based on their generation. We need to develop our people in this space so that they see mission everywhere, not just limited to an overseas trip.

In response, it has caused us to imagine the possibilities and opportunities in the face of these challenges and write a new story for GBC moving forward. We are now moving towards creating a facilitated growth pathway (incubator) that intentionally cultivates a missional exploration process for GBC congregants to:

- 1.) discover who God has called them to be (identity in God), and in light of that,
- 2.) what is God's invitation to them to participate in the renewal and restoration of all things, and what is their next faithful step in being sent (activity with God).

The necessary elements for the mission exposure / incubator space include:

- a.) A pathway that is accessible, intentional, flexible & scalable. A generative pathway that is continually evolving in its practice and content through feedback from participants and in tune with broader cultural shifts in mission.
- b.) Offer local and international options for diverse mission exposure that fit the sense of direction God is giving the participant, pursues best practice and meets legislative requirements. The pathway does not require participants to go on a trip, however they have local & international options they can 'add on' and engage with, or the opportunity to pursue their own chosen course with accountability (i.e. through GBC ministries, their work, study, broader volunteering options, vocation, their job or

current life commitments). Local options could include Hopefield + existing GBC ministries (Playtime, Kidzone, Youth, Services, Music Team, Coffee, Hospitality, serving at our one-off events like Carols, FTM).

- c.) Compliant with legislation (creating safe spaces, working with vulnerable people, ECS etc.)
- d.) Clear objectives and measurable outcomes.

We are also testing facilitated mission exposure trips with ACNC registered mission organisations. Jodene Watling participated in a trip to Lebanon with Baptist World Aid in July 2019. Richard Dwyer, Helen Dwyer and John Cox will be participating in a facilitated mission exposure trip led by Baptist World Aid in Cambodia late February 2020 to observe and learn from some of their in-country partners. This to experience and evaluate the option of an externally led model of exposure trip, which is implementing all the required best practices.

They will also be meeting with the Cambodian organisation we are partnering with in May Mission Month 2020. We have also spoken with partner organisations for May Mission Month 2020 about the potential of them hosting facilitated trips in the future for GBC. This way, the church will have a pathway to visit the organisations and projects we support through May Mission Month. It is the organisations that we are investing the most time, prayer, finance and energy – so it seems fitting that we would expand the opportunity to have a greater connection through visitation.

GBC is also in the process of developing pathways for Discipleship (Marc Rader), Leadership Development (Leanne Smith) and Evangelism (Jodene Watling), and Mission incubation will be a connected part of this wider suite of options for GBC congregants.

While we have been thinking towards the future in the midst of this process, one of our necessary steps is to finish our related activities to Cambodia. Our Cambodia Support Team will finish up, GBC representatives will be celebrating with some of our connections in Cambodia, and we will conclude our communications to Cambodian organisations related to short-term trips.

Changing Nature of Mission

In general, mission has shifted from a historic model of ‘west to the rest’ (Western nations going to non-western nations) now to ‘everyone to everywhere’ (people of all nations sent in all directions). Short-term mission trips, in general, are a practice that began in the 1960’s and grew in popularity from 1980-2000’s due to the accessibility and affordability of travel, for mostly, Christians from Western churches.

The challenge with short-term trips is often they benefit the travelling team more than it does the people on the ground. If our need to do things is critical to the trip, it can re-affirm Western power dynamics that may unconsciously undermine where God may already be at work. It is necessary to recognise God at work through the local people, who know the culture, language and have long-term on-going relationships.

Finding things to do for a newly formed team with mixed skills and personalities can become a transactional exercise to legitimise a team’s presence, more than empower the host organisations strategic direction. Seeing as teams do not speak the language or have a robust

understanding of the culture, it can be presumptuous to assume the outcome of that interaction for beneficiaries, even though a team may view it as helpful. Often the tasks given to teams are basic, low-skill activities, which raises whether that work would best be offered as employment to local workers, rather than an international team that has flown in at a lot of expense and preparation for a brief window of time. This is not to diminish the mutually beneficial work (i.e. collaborative specialised skill trips) that can be done or doubt peoples intention, but to consider the complex dynamics at play.

Another change is upholding and protecting the dignity of the in-country beneficiaries. The methodology for working with vulnerable people and children has drastically changed and any interactions with beneficiaries overseas need to be facilitated wholly by the organisation. Policies and procedures need to be in place, mutually agreed on ahead of time and complied with. New sector standards encourage no physical contact with children, or any private interactions or conversations without the facilitation, permission and presence of the organisations staff. While this may be difficult to understand the impact, if we imagined international teams from another culture visiting our own GBC kids' ministries regularly for interaction, and photos with them we could comprehend the distress this could cause. Police checks, Working with Children checks, briefing, agreeance to and compliance with protection policies are all part of the new normal.

Another change is informed consent for media, which is best practice for gaining media of people and events (photos, footage, recordings). Informed consent of the person/s involved requires mutual understanding and advice how and where that media will be used. Permission of staff, and facilitation by staff with appropriate release forms is also necessary. It is also encouraged that team members no longer take or post photos of themselves with beneficiaries without appropriate consent. It is not appropriate for team members to maintain on-going contact or relationship with beneficiaries (in particular vulnerable people) beyond trips (i.e. via Facebook, social media, email or apps).

These are some of the areas that the approach in best practice has changed, but the view needs to extend holistically.

Consolidation of our mission activities

We see the value of consolidating all local and international partnerships under MAG through May Mission Month space, because the MAG has the strongest processes, systems and capacity to wrestle with these new regulations. There is also opportunity for exposure trips to be conducted by the organisations we are partnering with, to see the projects we are actually supporting in May Mission Month. This creates an opportunity for greater depth of engagement with the organisations and projects we are supporting, as well as diversity of opportunities.

Historically, we have been quite broad – connected to a range of different organisations and people, but not committed to any of them. May Mission Month is similarly going through the same process refining our focus and assisting the church in shifting our perspective. This season requires us to be honest about our own capability and intentions, to move towards spaces where we show up whole-heartedly and on-purpose.

Our capacity to deepen partnerships

Our intention in the mission space has been to develop a partnership model, so that we can be clear about why we do what we do, and who we partner with. We have been working at this process with all our Mission Department teams. GBC has rarely engaged in partnership beyond annual once-off events and now we are moving to that across the board. At this point, MAG is the best team to embed this for local and international mission.

Moving forward, our preference is to cultivate partnerships that are long-term, centred on asset-based development and focused on mutually empowering outcomes, which are collaboratively evaluated. In lieu of galvanising particular activities, we will focus on particular areas, from which our activities will be generated and evaluated:

Evangelism – As part of our GBC community, we are developing a team that cultivates expression of faith of those on a journey of faith and intentional spaces for those on a journey to faith to explore Jesus.

Advocacy - As part of our GBC community, Catalyst is a team that advocates for social justice. We do this through faithful advocacy, a graceful presence and a prophetic voice. We focus on the areas of Domestic Violence and Ethical Consumerism.

Partnership - As part of our GBC community, MAG is a team that collaborates with individuals (missionaries) and organisations (through May Mission Month) for the purpose of sending and partnership. We do this through the facilitation of partnerships in local & global contexts.

Incubation - As part of our GBC community, we are developing a team that cultivates spiritual formation in followers of Jesus by intentionally cultivating a missional exploration process for GBC congregants to unearth their invitation to participate in God's mission, through exposure to mission concepts and experiences.

We are moving towards an integrated spectrum on how we view these areas. We see them as an interrelated pathway, and we want to speak and engage with them in that way, so it promotes growth and maturity.

We are yet to prove that we can maintain the partnership model through May Mission Month. We have commenced that process and it has (and still is) taking significant work, energy and collaboration to embed our processes and systems to support that. This in effect becomes a significant goal for the continuation of our mission endeavours.

Australian Christian Churches International have done a lot of work thinking this through so far and [made their findings available online](#) (or refer to Appendix 3).

BACKGROUND: The shape of GBC Mission

There is a bigger picture at play and this section frames how we have moved through this process from a broader perspective. In the past 5 years GBC leadership teams have developed

our vision, mission, purpose, strategic priorities and values, to discern who God is calling us to be as a church. It is from this identity, we understand, evaluate and shape our activity.

Alongside this development, we have shifted to a High Impact Volunteer model, which enables greater empowerment of leaders, teams and volunteers. As we embrace these frameworks, the ongoing endeavour is to integrate teams to this model and align them to the vision and direction of the church.

Historically, many teams functioned as separate entities, relied heavily on a few passionate people, and often lacked connection to the wider church. This is a natural stage of growth for any organisation. In an effort to bring greater continuity, we consolidated teams and activities into related areas, being (1.) Services, (2.) Care, Connect & Grow, (3.) Youth & Families, (4.) Local Mission and (5.) Global Mission.

As part of Local and Global Mission, the Mission Department was also created under which was moved the existing teams of the Mission Action Group (MAG), Cambodia and Catalyst. The desire was to increase connectivity between like-minded teams and leverage our strengths-based assets collaboratively.

Section Leaders were appointed to each of these teams: Sarah Foxe (MAG), Richard Dwyer (Cambodia) and Barb Higgins (Catalyst). These leaders have continually met and worked together with the Mission Department leader (Jodene Watling). They are also part of our wider Leadership Team that meets every 6 weeks (since 2017) with Staff and Section Leaders from all areas. Our purpose for meeting is to grow together in our unity and leadership of GBC.

For all teams and Section Leaders across GBC, we are working to collectively to realign towards GBC's direction and integrate all we do. This has taken a lot of time and energy and slowly the fruit of these efforts is starting to emerge. The opportunities and challenges that the Mission Department faces are in relation to our next stage of our growth – these include:

- Our activities are mostly annual, once-off events that take considerable effort, but have limited connectivity to the congregation and different generations for the rest of the year (i.e. May Mission Month, Fair Trade Market, Cambodia trips).
- We are in the process of fully integrating and aligning our historical activities to GBC's wider direction.
- We've had breadth of connection with a wide range of organisations and people but have limited capacity to commit in any long term, mutually accountable and sustainable way.
- We cannot maintain the broad range of connections we have at any depth, so we are in the process of focusing in and distilling who we are, what we can do and who we partner with.
- We are at a tipping point, where it is necessary to develop systems and processes, so our work is clear, sustainable and transferable. The need for clear processes and systems enables us to have collective assets that help develop our teams; onboard new team members well and make our work transparent and auditable for legislative requirements.
- We need to develop our culture of evaluation and feedback, so that we can better measure what we do, and strengthen our collective resilience.

We're all still on that journey, but are continually increasing our sense of connection, awareness and unity in our direction.

One of our first steps for the Mission Depart was to consolidate our understanding of how we described mission. We created a '[Perspective of Mission](#)' (see [Appendix 2](#)), which affirms that God's mission is to seek the restoration and renewal of all things in Jesus Christ. This has helped us understand our approach, priorities and measures for mission. This is a broad definition, because we recognise that God's plan to restore and renew all things will take a myriad of different things. We see that evangelism, development, advocacy, partnership, worship, education, prayer, legislation, and a multiplicity of activities are all part of this.

Additionally, as one of the 300+ churches that make up our denomination, we have been on-purpose in strengthening our support of the NSW/ACT Baptist Association through our presence, service and contribution to their direction. We have additionally spent time learning from other churches around Australia how they implement mission in their faith community.

Our next faithful steps

As we've collaborated and consolidated how we operate, we have ended up moving towards a different way forward, although with the same intent expand our hearts for mission. The world around us is changing in extraordinary and unimaginable ways. It can feel overwhelming, disorienting and easy to jump to fear to fill in the blanks of uncertainty - but Jesus invites us to view the shifting world around us through the lens of courageous faith.

We live in a global village that is multi-cultural, intergenerational and the new village square is online and digital. The church of yesterday will look radically different to the church of the future, as will mission – but Jesus's good news to restore and renew all things remains constant. Same message, different packaging.

We are finalising administrative records and processes for the historical work of Cambodia. We will be sharing our new unfolding direction for GBC Mission on Sunday 29th March at all services, in conjunction with a celebration moment of our time in Cambodia through short-term trips. The Cambodia Support Team will have a final celebration together on Sunday 29 March. Richard Dwyer is continuing to be involved in discussions about the Mission Incubator and will determine his level of involvement as we go.

As we move toward the future, our teams' purpose is to see people take up their unique invitation to participate with God's mission; whatever season, age or stage of faith they are at. Our core activities are around sending, evangelism, advocacy, mission exploration and partnership. We are creating accessible pathways that connect our diverse, inter-generational congregation with mission in meaningful ways, which are flexible, sustainable and innovative – with the vision to see lives changed by Jesus. It's going to be a wild ride that relies on the Holy Spirit's leading and everyone getting involved to take our next faithful steps together.

OVERVIEW: GBC's history with Cambodia

For reference, this is an overview of GBC's history with Cambodia over the years.

In October 2007 a desire was birthed by the leader of Missions (Paul Summers) not just to donate money to May Mission Month, but to go. There was a thought to go to Myanmar, but Cambodia was chosen for its closer proximity for travel. At that point, GBC had not supported a Cambodian based project or organisation through May Mission Month. All the projects we had supported were in a diverse range of other nations (India, Bolivia, Malawi, Burma, Uganda, Kenya, Australia, Niger, PNG, Nepal, East Timor and Central Asia). Our first time supporting a Cambodian based project through May Mission Month was a Village Health Care project, with Baptist World Aid.

From 2008, Richard Dwyer volunteered one day per week at GBC to support this developing interest in Cambodia. Through a contact in International Teams, connection was made to assist in providing training for churches on short-term mission trips. A small 3-person reconnaissance trip (Sept 2008) was set up to make contacts and find groups to connect with where we could participate. From then, teams from GBC were sent over annually, for 2-weeks to engage with various organisations and activities. The 2 weeks was generally always in January-February because it was less humid, and people were more often able to take leave/holidays then. The participation in trips was as follows:

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
People	14	19	10	19	13	12	3	9	11	11

There were 90 unique individuals who participated in a Cambodia short-term trip; the additional numbers were repeat participants. During this time, connection was made with groups such as Gospel Commission Fellowship, Heart of Hope, Peace Bridges, Samaritans Purse, International Teams, Daughters of Cambodia, Asia's Hope, SALT Academy, H.O.M.E, Chab Dai, Cambodia Global Action, Hagar, Futsal Life, Teen Challenge, Mother's Heart plus other churches and individual contacts.

May Mission Month continued in parallel, and amongst other projects in other nations supported different Cambodia projects in 2009, 2011 and 2012 (Samaritans Purse).

In 2013 the GBC staff leader of Missions (Paul Summers) moved on to another role to serve as a key leader in another church. A reflection is that Cambodia trips lost momentum after his departure.

In 2016, Marc Rader now in the Senior Pastor role, visited Cambodia with Richard Dwyer (June 2016) to meet some of the organisations we had been connecting with. At the end of 2016 Richard Dwyer finished his volunteer role facilitating Cambodia trips. A team went in 2017 and Marc Rader was part of that to get a better understanding of its purpose.

In October 2016, Jodene Watling was appointed to Associate Pastor for Mission and Evangelism and was tasked to facilitate a deeper heart of mission and social justice, facilitate sending, and develop deeper partnerships, in MAG, Cambodia and Catalyst. Jodene Watling was part of the 2018 team that travelled to Cambodia to meet organisations (GCF, H.O.M.E, Heart of Hope, Daughters of Cambodia and Peace Bridges) and individual contacts.

There were other ways we began building the profile of Cambodia through different teams. As our mission teams were collaborating (MAG, Cambodia & Catalyst), we wrote new May Mission Month Guidelines in 2017 and added Cambodia as an area of interest that we were open to supporting. We have since supported a Cambodian project every year: 2017 Daughters of Cambodia, 2018 Daughters of Cambodia and 2019 Mother's Heart. In 2018 we arranged for Ruth Elliot to fly in and speak at our May Mission Month presentation, plus an extended interview. Katrina Gliddon from Mother's Heart also flew in to participate in the 2019 May Mission Month presentation. Catalyst also facilitated a table at the Fair Trade Market for a number of years to sell products from Daughters of Cambodia and intentionally raise funds. We have also sought to reflect the stories and culture of Cambodia in other events (Game of Life Simulation by Baptist World Aid, Cambodian faith stories in evangelism program, video media, online presence, sermon illustrations and references). We updated the Cambodia trip information, application forms and integrated them online into GBC Links for accessibility. Richard Dwyer assembled the Cambodia Support Team with distinct roles so that a broader support network could assist in facilitating trips and partnership.

In 2018, through April and in May Mission Month we implemented an extensive multimedia campaign sharing the heart and visual dynamic of Cambodia trips. We had a handful of people attend an information session for the proposed 2019 trip. Two new applications were received to go on the trip, plus two applications were received from previous attendees. That later reduced to 3 people due to personal circumstances of an applicant. Due to the low numbers and gender dynamics, we did not feel it was logistically feasible or culturally appropriate to proceed with the trip for 2019. As a result, the corresponding training for the trip did not run and there was a distinct lack of anything to do for the rest of the year for the team, because it was dependent on a trip running. Despite our best-laid plans, the fragility of that model then became apparent.

Understanding the passion and desire to engage in mission, we offered the two new applicants an alternative opportunity for an exposure trip (Baptist World Aid, Lebanon travelling with Jodene Watling & other Australian church representatives, July 2019). However, for individual reasons, it was not possible for either of them to attend.

From 2016, due to the popularity and passion for particular projects, MAG began supporting the same organisation and the same project for consecutive years. Previously, new projects were chosen every year for May Mission Month, so that the GBC congregation would learn about different projects and it would maintain interest. The burden of that was MAG went through an exhausting application process, vetting projects and organisations, plus creating new media and facilitating presentations every year. For the organisations, it was also a significant time investment putting in an application, which would only be supported on a once-off basis. For those applicants not chosen, we received feedback that it was a frustrating and disheartening process.

We recognised this was not sustainable or healthy for MAG. Additionally, for organisations who were applying, a once-off cash injection, whilst gladly received, was not helpful for long-term development. When dealing with complex poverty, and systems of injustice, long-term investment and partnership yields a higher impact plus makes planning and program implementation more stabilised for organisations and their beneficiaries.

From 2018, MAG started considering how we move towards high impact and high sustainability in all we do. We updated our media to a consistent repeating design that matched GBC's developing design style. We overhauled the paper-based application process to an online platform and created an online assessment process framework that allowed MAG to assess projects in a consistent and time efficient manner. We began considering supporting the same projects consecutive years, to better steward the generosity of our congregations' donations, as well as our teams' resource and time. Taking a further step, we decided to move towards formalised partnership with organisations and projects from 2020.

As we went through this process and saw the benefit with MAG, we started considering how we could apply a similar sustainable model of partnership to Cambodia. Not only would this provide continuity in how we approach mission between different groups (MAG & Cambodia), but this would deepen relationships and clarify what our commitment to Cambodia was, beyond a 2-week trip. Historically, we connected with a diverse range of organisations, namely driven by our need to do things and create an itinerary for the trip. There were not any particular guidelines or continuity on how the organisations were chosen (aside from being Christian, a good connection and being open to us visiting), so we began a consultative process to understand our deeper 'why' and 'what' would drive our decision, before we considered 'who'. To honour 11 years of activity in Cambodia (2008-2018) and consider going deeper for the future, our next faithful step was to explore the potential of partnership.

Our next step to clarify our direction with Cambodia involved interviewing previous GBC Mission leaders to gain insights into GBC's own historical motivations and patterns. We engaged with external direction and advice from development sector consultants who gave us questions and frameworks to think through and explore our intentions and capacity. From those insights, we then worked through with the Cambodia Support Team which organisations we would consider choosing to partner with, amidst the many we had connections with. Two grass-roots organisations that were operating in Cambodia (Heart of Hope and H.O.M.E) were chosen due to a genuine affinity between the teams and practical alignment where they provided easy tasks that we could accomplish as a team as part of trips (ie. providing resources for outreach day, village visits, running events, sharing testimonies, painting walls, fixing things). Communication was easy with these organisations and they also appeared to have a need for resources and support. At this point, we focused solely on these two organisations and unpacking what it would mean to potentially partner with them.

Through 2019, to engage the team while we worked through partnership options, we also began an intentional training exercise for the Cambodia Support Team. This was so we could develop clarity and unity around our own mission and development approach. This was to get everyone on the same page. It proved challenging to get everyone in the same room at the same time; something that many GBC teams face, due to work schedules and life commitments. It was also fatiguing for the team, not having clarity on our way forward and feeling like we were in limbo.

From July 2019, Australian Government legislation came into effect immediately from the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. The [External Conduct Standards](#) are a set of standards that govern how a registered charity must manage its activities and resources outside Australia. The ECS require charities to take reasonable steps to ensure appropriate standards of behaviour, governance and oversight when undertaking activities or providing funding overseas. Not only does it include money going overseas, but also people going on

trips overseas and any resources sent. As GBC is a charity organisation, our compliance is necessary to maintain our own status. We went through a number of meetings as a team, plus seeking advice from external consultants. From these, we came to the conclusion that we were unable to facilitate partnerships in Cambodia and additionally GBC led short-term trips.

As mentioned earlier, in parallel, we were moving through the new May Mission Month Partnership process late 2019, that would be implemented in 2020. We created new Partnership Guidelines, created a further reduced online application for organisations so to relieve some of the administrative time in applying. We also engaged our Mission department Section Leaders from MAG (Sarah Foxe), Cambodia (Richard Dwyer) and Catalyst (Barb Higgins) in the assessment process, because of their strategic insight into the direction of GBC and to further bring continuity and collaboration amongst our teams. Our aim was to focus on 3 partnerships (along with our GBC supported missionaries) for MMM 2020. Collaboratively, we short-listed four organisations, and moved to interviews to determine the outcome for our final 3 partners organisations. For 2020, we did choose a Cambodian project. Because we were still unclear on our commitment to Cambodia at the time of this decision, we only offered a 1-year partnership, with the view to evaluate with MAG at the end of 2020. The difference with this organisation (and all our May Mission Month partners) is that they are an ACNC registered charity and their on-going operational status is reliant on complying with these standards. Whilst this does not guarantee they will comply, it is the more robust line for us to take for international projects, while we work out compliance and continue to improve our processes and reporting.

We see the value of consolidating all local and international partnerships under MAG through May Mission Month space, because they have the strongest processes, systems and capacity to wrestle with these new regulations. There is also opportunity for exposure trips to be conducted by the organisations we are partnering with, to see the projects we are actually supporting in May Mission Month. This creates an opportunity for greater depth of engagement with the organisations and projects we are supporting, as well as diversity of opportunities.

Whilst the process has been lengthy, we were committed to exploring it as far as we could. It has been hard to update the wider congregation on what is happening with Cambodia along the way, because while the process of working through the historical trips was slow, we were evolving Cambodia's presence and support through MAG and Catalyst. We couldn't find a way forward, and then the final decision came at the end of 2019 when everything was winding down. We were not keen to report to the wider church until we had clarity on what we were committing to. The most opportune time for us to communicate our decision was in February, once most people had returned from Christmas and summer holidays. We recognise change is difficult and while our intention is to finish as best as we can, we take courage and follow Jesus as we go (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Whilst this is a lengthy report and we hoped to cover the key aspects, if you have any questions, or if there was something that was not covered – we are happy to arrange a conversation.

Appendix 1:

Extract from the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission:

<https://www.acnc.gov.au/for-charities/manage-your-charity/governance-hub/acnc-external-conduct-standards>

What the External Conduct Standards are

The **External Conduct Standards** are a set of standards that govern how a registered charity must manage its activities and resources outside Australia.

The Standards require charities to take reasonable steps to ensure appropriate standards of behaviour, governance and oversight when undertaking activities or providing funding overseas.

They are intended to promote transparency and provide confidence that resources sent, or services provided, overseas reach legitimate beneficiaries and are used for legitimate charitable purposes. The Standards also seek to protect vulnerable people overseas.

Which charities must comply

Charities that operate outside Australia are required to comply with the External Conduct Standards.

Importantly, 'operate outside Australia' is not limited to major programs or projects. A charity is generally considered to operate outside Australia even if its overseas activities are just a minor part of its work or if it only sends a small amount of money overseas. This is true even when such activities are conducted through a third party.

Basic Religious Charities must comply with the External Conduct Standards if they operate outside Australia, even though they don't have to comply with the **ACNC's Governance Standards**.

Charities that do not operate outside Australia are not subject to the External Conduct Standards. However, these charities still must comply with the Governance Standards.

Read our detailed guide that explains [when the External Conduct Standards apply and when they do not apply](#).

The External Conduct Standards

There are four External Conduct Standards that cover certain aspects of a charity's overseas operations.

Standard 1: Activities and control of resources (including funds)

This Standard covers the way a charity manages its activities overseas, and how it is required to control the finances and other resources it uses overseas.

Standard 2: Annual review of overseas activities and record-keeping

This Standard covers the requirements for a charity to obtain and keep sufficient records for its overseas activities.

Standard 3: Anti-fraud and anti-corruption

This Standard covers the requirements for a charity to have processes and procedures that work to combat fraud and corruption in its overseas operations.

Standard 4: Protection of vulnerable individuals

This Standard covers the requirement for a charity to protect the vulnerable people that it works with when conducting its overseas operations.

How the ACNC regulates the External Conduct Standards

The ACNC regulates the External Conduct Standards according to our regulatory approach. We expect each charity that is required to comply with the External Conduct Standards takes the time to understand the Standards and how they affect its operations. We also expect that each charity required to comply with the Standards takes steps to ensure it meets them.

The ACNC expects most charities will be meeting the External Conduct Standards, and we focus on charities that have seriously or deliberately breached them - taking action where required.

Charities do not need to submit anything to the ACNC to show they meet the External Conduct Standards but must be able to provide evidence of meeting the Standards if requested.

However, we will ask organisations seeking registration with the ACNC (and charities applying for new charitable subtypes) about the steps they have taken to comply with the External Conduct Standards if they operate overseas.

External Conduct Standards and Governance Standards

The External Conduct Standards apply in addition to the existing [ACNC Governance Standards](#).

The External Conduct Standards operate in a similar way to the Governance Standards - both impose reasonable levels of oversight and standards of governance rather than specific steps for charities to take.



PERSPECTIVE OF MISSION

At GBC, we see God's mission is to seek the restoration and renewal of all things in Jesus Christ. God has given us a vision for a world made right by which people are able to realise right relationships with God, one another and the earth. We believe that through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God has set about overturning injustice, violence, poverty and exclusion; and creates communities of faith, justice, inclusion, hope and peace. GBC seeks to support mission activities that enable people to experience restoration, renewal and realise right relationships with God, one another and with the earth. This constitutes life in all its fulness (John 10:10).

As followers of Jesus, we are invited to participate in His grand plan to restore all things through the enabling presence of the Holy Spirit in order to see lives changed by Jesus. We see this invitation extended in John 20:21 "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

Approach to mission

We recognise that God will work in diverse ways. The key areas where restoration and renewal will occur are amidst:

- individuals
- households (families, extended family, share house etc.)
- communities (neighbourhood, schools, institutions, geographic regions, sub-cultures)
- the world (nations, cultures, governments, systems, ideologies, people groups)
- creation (earth, resources, ecologies, productivity, atmosphere).

We believe that transformation begins with us, then naturally flows outwards, to our household, communities, the world and creation.

Priorities for mission

Our priority for mission at GBC is to:

1. Cultivate spiritual formation in followers of Jesus
2. Incubate God's invitation to participate in his mission
3. Collaborate with others to participate in God's mission

Measures for mission

Our measures for mission at GBC will be based on:

Vision alignment: there is a clear connection with GBC vision, mission, purpose, strategic priorities, our values, our story, our call, our community and culture.

Right relationships: that we will do everything in our capacity to ensure right relationship to ourselves, to each other, to our community, to creation and God.

Practical outcomes: that we will have clear objectives in everything we do, that we will evaluate in qualitative and quantitative ways to ensure vision alignment and right relationships.

Appendix 3:

Extract from Australian Christian Churches International on the ECS:

<https://www.accimissions.org.au/ecs>

ACNC External Conduct Standards

The ACNC External Conduct Standards will impact on how your church manages its overseas missions program. ACCI Missions & Relief has had to comply with external standards of good practice in overseas missions for many years and we have in place existing policies and procedures that will ensure our compliance with these standards. Based on our experience and our understanding of ACC Churches and their missions programs, we have tried to provide you with a pathway through this challenging new area of compliance.

New Standards

What has changed?

The ACNC Governance Standards deal with how your charity is run (including processes, activities and relationships) and these have applied to all ACNC registered charities since July 2013. The Governance Standards are principle-based, and it is the responsibility of the charity to decide how it will meet these standards based on its size, complexity and the nature of its operations.

For a typical ACNC registered, Australian church, there has never been any additional regulations, standards or restrictions around how they approach operating their overseas activities. Those churches with a tax-deductible charitable arm may have faced some additional requirements.

The introduction of the external conduct standards in July 2019 has meant that for the first time, churches are now faced with reviewing their overseas missions program in the light of a set of external standards.

Do these new standards apply to your church?

These standards apply to every registered charity that is operating outside Australia, or working with a third party operating outside Australia, no matter how small. These operations could include:

- sending money or other resources overseas;
- sending staff, volunteers, members or beneficiaries overseas;
- conducting activities or working overseas;
- buying goods and services from overseas suppliers (including online purchases); or
- working with individuals or organisations located overseas.

So, if your church is ACNC registered and has an overseas missions program, then you will almost certainly be required to comply with the new External Conduct Standards.

So what are these new standards?

Standard 1: Activities and control of resources (including funds). This covers the way a charity manages its activities overseas, and how it controls the finances, people and resources it uses in relation to these overseas activities.

Standard 2: Annual review of overseas activities and record-keeping. This covers the need to keep sufficiently detailed records for its overseas activities.

Standard 3: Anti-fraud and anti-corruption. This covers having appropriate processes and procedures in place to address the risks of fraud and corruption in its overseas operations.

Standard 4: Protection of vulnerable individuals. This covers the requirement for a charity to protect the vulnerable people that it works with when conducting its overseas operations.

Why is this important for my church?

Let's begin with the attention-grabbing headline first...

Failure to comply could result in revocation of your church's charity status!

If a church missions program fails to comply with the External Conduct Standards, it could result in the revocation of your church's ACNC charitable status, meaning your church will lose access to all Commonwealth charity tax concessions, exemptions or benefits to which your church was previously entitled.

The ACNC is in the business of improving charity compliance, not closing them down, however that is not a case for complacency. They are willing to make an example out of charities that have seriously or deliberately breached their standards and will use this action as a deterrent for poor compliance. We really want to avoid being their example. According to the ACNC, "Charities do not need to submit anything to the ACNC to show they meet the External Conduct Standards but must be able to provide evidence of meeting the Standards if requested."

Once again, this is not a case for complacency, in fact, it is the opposite. If the ACNC is asking you for evidence of your compliance, and compliance means you have kept records of your compliant overseas activities, then they will expect those records to be promptly produced. A request for time to prepare those records, means you did not keep the required records (Standard 2), therefore you are already non-compliant.

These External Conduct Standards now sit alongside the ACNC Governance Standards and the ACNC annual reporting requirements as part of their church board's basic compliance and risk management responsibility. This makes it a very, very important consideration for every church.

Can I limit my church's exposure to these standards?

Yes, in fact there is one particular way that you can significantly reduce exposure. The External Conduct Standards do not apply to your church's overseas missions' activities when they are carried out through another ACNC registered charity. This is because it will be the other ACNC registered charity, that will have their own obligation to comply with the External Conduct Standards.

For example, if your church supports an overseas missionary through ACCI Missions, then your church does not need to comply with the External Conduct Standards in regard to this particular overseas activity. ACCI Missions, as an ACNC registered charity, is already responsible for complying with the External Conduct Standards in relation to our missionaries and our project partners. You can view our ACNC External Conduct Standards Compliance Declaration [here](#).

You will still need to comply with the ACNC Governance Standards in regard to any organisation that you donate funds to, and the External Conduct Standards for the management of funds sent for overseas activities. However, it is possible for you to significantly reduce your church's exposure.

What will the ACNC expect from my church?

The ACNC does not prescribe what a charity must do to meet these External Conduct Standards. Each church will need to decide what is appropriate based on the circumstances of their own overseas missions' program. The sorts of factors they would need to consider include:

- the nature, scale and complexity of the church's overseas activities and funding;
- the size and the number of staff and volunteers;
- the locations in which it operates;
- the church's level of knowledge and experience in managing similar projects or activities;
- the involvement of third-party organisations in these activities and their particular circumstances;
- the effectiveness of current policies and procedures that govern its activities or funding; and
- any issues or difficulties it has experienced with previous overseas activities or funding.

The ACNC also expects a church to have considered the risks associated with its overseas activities and funding. This means that the reasonable steps that a church must take, and the reasonable procedures it must have in place, will depend on both its particular circumstances and the associated risks involved.

A large charity with operations in several countries and formal partnerships with several overseas third parties will likely need to do more to comply with the External Conduct Standards than a small charity providing a small amount of funding to one low-risk overseas activity.

Meeting Compliance

How can we make a basic assessment of the potential compliance work required for a particular overseas activity?

The ACNC understand that charities operate for a specific charitable purpose. For a church missions' program, we are often driven to see positive, holistic, sustainable change take place in the lives of individuals and communities overseas. We have a desired change goal, which we want to see occur in people's lives. Often this is a combination of spiritual change, social change as well as changes to their physical circumstances.

The ACNC guidance materials advocate for charities to take a risk-based approach in regard to their overseas activities. This means you need to first identify and understand those risks, before you can evaluate and document an appropriate response.

We have developed an [online Due Diligence Self-Assessment Tool](#), to help you make an initial basic assessment of the compliance work that might be required for a particular overseas activity.

So how do you suggest that a church should approach its compliance with the External Conduct Standards?

If you are supporting overseas activities through ACCI Missions or ACCI Relief, then try our [Due Diligence Self-Assessment Tool](#) to see how we can reduce your church's compliance burden.

If you are not working through ACCI or another ACNC Registered Charity, then we suggest that you consider working through these steps:

1. Overseas Activity

- Detailed Activity Assessment (including change goal, methods, motives and good principles)
- Identify High Risk Activity Flags (including vulnerable people, specialist skills, legal/regulatory requirements and inherently high risk)
- Activity Risk Mitigation (including sound policies and procedures, good practices standards, codes of conduct, technical skills, training or experience, legal structures and appropriate registrations, oversight bodies and external accountability and reporting)

2. Implementing Organisation (or Individuals)

- Partner Alignment, Compatibility and Reputation
- Legal Structure (including legal status, registrations, governance, accountability, oversight, in-country teams, partners)
- Organisational and Technical Capacity
- Financial Controls and Systems
- Policies and Safeguarding (including children and other vulnerable persons)

3. Your Church Involvement

- Your Contribution (including funding, people, equipment and other resources)
- Your Financial Controls, Systems and Processes
- Your Policies and Procedures (including HR, child safeguarding, conflicts of interest, counter terrorism, complaints handling and whistleblowers)

4. Partnership Plan

- Written Agreement (clearly setting out roles and responsibilities)
- Document Overseas Activities
- Budget and Funding/Resource Commitments
- Risk Management Plan (addressing the overseas activity risks, implementing organisation risks and your involvement risks)

5. Implementation

- Progress Reporting (which you require from the implementer)
- Monitoring and Evaluation (including an annual review of overseas activities and partnership plan)
- Your Record Keeping (paying special attention to the Standard 2 requirements)

So the end result will hopefully be that your church missions program has participated in a meaningful overseas activity, which has made a positive impact in people's lives. But it should also mean that you have been able to comply with the External Conduct Standards in the following ways:

Standard 1: Activities and control of resources (including funds). The plan above documents your sound approach to complying with the control of your resources in regards to the overseas activity.

Standard 2: Annual review of overseas activities and record-keeping. The need to keep sufficiently detailed records of your overseas activities has been factored into your implementation.

Standard 3: Anti-fraud and anti-corruption. This has been addressed through your review of the implementing organisation, your own policies and procedures, the progress reporting and annual review.

Standard 4: Protection of vulnerable individuals. The activity risk review should identify up front the degree to which vulnerable individuals may be involved in this activity. Ongoing compliance by the implementor and your own church with the appropriate safeguarding policies will be required. Any other appropriate responses should be specifically documented as part of your risk management plan and reviewed as part of your annual review (at a minimum).

Does ACCI have an External Conduct Standards Compliance Declaration?



ACC International Missions Ltd

ABN 66 077 367 223

ACC International Missions is an accredited member of Missions Interlink and operates in compliance with Missions Interlink Statements and Accreditation Standards.

ACC International Missions has in place existing policies and procedures that will ensure our compliance with all four of the ACNC external conduct standards, specifically:

1. Activities and control of resources (including funds)
2. Annual review of overseas activities and record keeping
3. Anti-fraud and anti-corruption
4. Protection of vulnerable individuals

ACC International Missions is already positioned to more than meet the requirements of the ACNC external conduct standards.



ACC International Relief Inc

ABN 26 077 365 434

ACC International Relief is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and has been a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct since 2006. The ACFID Code of Conduct (the Code) is a voluntary, self-regulatory industry code of good practice. The aim of the Code is to improve the outcomes of international development and increase stakeholder trust by enhancing the transparency and accountability of signatory organisations.

You can read more about the Code [here](#). To see how the ACFID Code compliance lines up with the External Conduct Standards [click here](#).

ACFID's members already comply with the ACFID Code and undertake annual reporting and continuous internal governance and compliance work to uphold our own rigorous self-regulatory Code. In choosing to regulate ourselves, ACFID's members choose to pursue compliance with a standard that is much higher than government regulation.

The enactment of the external conduct standards will not impact our current standard of work as the requirements of these new ACNC minimum standards are already extensively covered through our compliance with the ACFID Code.

ACC International Relief is already positioned to meet and exceed the ACNC external conduct standards through our ongoing compliance with the ACFID Code of Conduct.

Where can I find your Due Diligence Self-Assessment Tool?

We have developed an online Due Diligence Self-Assessment Tool, to help you make an initial basic assessment of the compliance work that might be required for a particular overseas activity.

We are in the process of updating our due diligence guidelines and checklist for those assessing their partnerships with overseas organisations but you can find our [previous version here](#).

Working With Children

What impact will this have on those working with children in residential care?

Implications of the ACNC External Conduct Standards for Australian Charities

The External Conduct Standards (ECS) introduced by the ACNC in July 2019 specifically recognises children in residential care as being of heightened risk and vulnerability.

Therefore, Australian charities, including churches, involved in running, supporting or sending teams to overseas residential care services are now expected to put in place comprehensive measures to prevent harm and safeguard against abuse and exploitation. We often assume that residential care settings (e.g. orphanages, children's homes, shelters), are inherently safe places for children. However, global evidence shows orphanages, even well-run ones, can cause harm to children due to the effects of institutionalisation and can also expose a child to an increased risk of abuse and exploitation.

ACCI strongly believes that God designed family as the best place for the holistic development and care of a child. Therefore, we believe as Christians we should be on the forefront of promoting families and supporting standards which promote the best interests and wellbeing of orphaned and vulnerable children. Therefore, we recommend churches:

χ Ensure **funding is allocated to support children in families**, including family-based alternative care or working with existing residential care services to reintegrate children

with families. (If you are interested in how ACCI is working with alternative care options, you can read more [here](#))

How are the Standards Relevant to Churches involved in Residential Care?

Whilst charities must comply with all four ECS, Standards 1 and 4 have a direct bearing on churches who are involved in residential care activities as outlined below.

Standard One: Activities and Control of Resources

This standard aims to prevent Australian donors from funding organisations which are seeking profits and exploiting beneficiaries. Unfortunately, residential care facilities are prone to this as it is common for orphanages to recruit children into their care or keep children in care longer than necessary to access foreign funding, leaving children needlessly separated from their families. All churches who fundraise for or send teams to residential care settings, are exposed to this risk and therefore must ensure they complete the following:

χ Conduct thorough **due diligence assessments** on all partners

Including ensuring supported overseas organisations are registered and duly licensed per law and have demonstrated sufficient will and capacity to conduct activities appropriately. For ACCI's due diligence tool [visit here](#).

χ Put in place **formal partnership agreements** with all partners

Agreements should include the terms, expectations, standards, code of conduct, roles and responsibilities of both parties and designation of funds.

χ Ensure proper **financial controls** are in place

Including ensuring bank accounts and assets are not in individuals' names, more than one signature is required to withdraw funds, regular financial reports are required including periodic audited reports. This could be built into the partnership agreement or be captured in a financial management policy.

χ Ensure there is a robust **child protection/safeguarding policy** in place

Including strict child safe employment recruitment procedures and clear mechanisms for reporting allegations and incidents including means by which children can safely report concerns or allegations to someone other than staff.

Standard Four: Protection of Vulnerable Individuals

Children in residential care are a highly vulnerable group and therefore Standard Four requires charities to ensure the protection of the safety and rights of orphaned and vulnerable children. Due to harms caused by separation from family and community and the institutional nature of care in residential settings, the risks of residential care activities cannot be entirely mitigated by high standards of care alone. It is for these reasons that churches should prioritise supporting activities that strengthen and preserve families and communities.

Residential care should only ever be used in limited situations as a last resort and for the shortest duration possible. Extensive work is required by charities and churches to ensure that the residential care activities uphold this principle and comply with relevant local legal minimum standards and international conventions including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children. Churches engaged in residential care activities should ensure:

χ residential care activities are fully compliant with the alternative care policy and minimum **standards of care** per local law.

χ **admission procedures** are strictly in accordance with the national gatekeeping policy or the Guidelines on the Alternative Care for Children. Including:

- A requirement for child and family assessments, carried out by competent and authorised professionals and for decisions to be made in the best interests of the individual child and free from discrimination.
- A means of directing children towards the type of care most appropriate to their needs and with priority given to family-based care (through case management and/or referral networks).
- A requirement for admissions into alternative care to be approved or mandated by the competent authorities.
- A prohibition on active recruitment of children for placement in residential care.
- A requirement to conduct regular reviews of all children's placements to assess for ongoing necessity, suitability and to work towards reintegration.

χ a **reintegration policy** is in place

Including requirements for the organisation to have case management and time bound reintegration plans in place for all children.

χ a **child safe visiting and volunteering policy** is in place

This policy should include restrictions on receiving visitors, volunteers or missions teams, due to the well-known harms of orphanage volunteering and tourism. For more info [visit here](#).

χ **children are involved in making decisions**, where those decisions affect their lives.

χ **aftercare services** are provided to ensure children and young people leaving care are supported to integrate safely and successfully.

You can download the ReThink Orphanages guidance note [here](#)

You can download the ReThink Orphanages Partnership Due Diligence Assessment Tool [here](#)

For more information and resources visit - kinected.org.au