



Together we can ensure vulnerable children and families receive the holistic, sustainable support they need to thrive. Photo by Philip Laubner/CRS

80% to 90%
OF CHILDREN LIVING
IN ORPHANAGES

HAVE A LIVING PARENT

Strengthening Families: *Changing the Way We Care*

Imagine a world where no parent is forced to make the heart-wrenching decision to place their child in an orphanage. Catholic Relief Services is committed to making this vision a reality by leading a global movement to keep families together and strengthen the systems that help them grow stronger.

Going Far

Families are the heart of our solution. A loving family fosters a child's growth and is a building block of healthy communities. Through **Go FAR: The Campaign for Catholic Relief Services**, CRS is reuniting children with families and helping families grow stronger. **Because we should, and because we can.**

The Need

Millions of children around the world live in orphanages. But the shocking fact is that most of these children are not orphans. They have a living parent—a parent who often wants to care for them but lacks the resources to do it.

Poverty is driving families apart. Too many parents cannot afford food, education or health care. Out of desperation, children are placed in orphanages where their basic needs can be met. It's a devastating decision that no parent should have to make.

While many orphanages seek to improve a child's well-being, they cannot provide the kind of individualized attention and bonded relationships that are critical to healthy growth and development. More than 80 years of extensive research proves that children who grow up in orphanages suffer challenges to their physical, emotional and intellectual development—and are more susceptible to violence, abuse and exploitation.

According to research, **for every three months in an institution, an infant or toddler loses one month of development.** The futures of millions of children are at risk if we don't act now. Each day matters.

Orphanages are a symptom of poverty, never a solution to it. The Lancet Group Commission, a leading global researcher, recently called for child protection systems to be reformed so as to prioritize the role of families, gradually redirecting funding toward family-based programs rather than institutions.

The Opportunity

When disaster strikes, lives are upturned. Safe homes are the first step to recovery. CRS has decades of experience in strengthening families by ensuring they have the resources and skills they need to raise their children. Our approach is also cost-effective. Research shows that **it costs 6 to 10 times more to care for a child in an orphanage than in a family.**

In 2018, CRS' flagship program for strengthening children and families—called Changing the Way We Care—was selected as a finalist in the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's 100&Change competition. The competition, which sought innovative solutions for critical problems, provided seed funding for work in Kenya, Moldova and Guatemala. We must act fast to build on this momentum.



Campaign support is reaching children like Reyna, back row center, who is back home with her mom now. Photo by CRS staff

Learn More

about our vision for children and families
gofar.crs.org

The Impact

Through our Vision 2030 agency strategy, CRS is ready to create a model that can be adapted globally. We will strengthen families, reform national care systems and work with others to promote safe, nurturing family care. Our goals are to:

- **Help children remain with or return to their families.** Teach caregivers parenting skills and provide economic support, train community members to promote family care, return children to their families and transform orphanages into community service providers.
- **Direct resources and advocacy efforts to support families.** Promote commitment of people worldwide to support strong family-based care through advocacy and awareness-raising to advance policies, best practices, and direction of resources toward care for children in families.
- **Work with governments to establish policies and systems.** Train social workers, medical professionals, teachers, caregivers, civil servants and policy makers to promote family-based care and transform orphanages, and help establish case management systems to understand, monitor and document children's and families' situations and progress.

Using lessons learned in Kenya, Moldova and Guatemala, we will influence other countries to change family care practices and policies. Initial countries include Haiti, India, Lebanon and Indonesia.

A Family Reunited in Guatemala

Reyna was 10 years old when her mother, Ana Maria, left their small town in Guatemala to work in Zacapa City. Ana Maria hated to leave, but as the family's only breadwinner she had no choice. Reyna cared for her four small cousins until local authorities discovered the children had no adult supervision. They were taken from their home and placed in a state orphanage.

Luckily, two CRS staff—a social worker and a psychologist—began work in the orphanage. They sought out cases where children could be reunited with a willing relative if only that relative was provided the necessary support. Cases like Reyna's.

Ana Maria was overcome with joy and relief when, after six months apart, the family was reunited. With guidance from CRS staff, Ana Maria was able to enroll her older children in school and earn sufficient household income. Today, Ana Maria is working with our team to achieve her family goals, like continuing to build her income and improve her parenting skills—all with the goal of keeping her family together for good.

The Legacy

A family is where a child belongs. Over the next 10 years, CRS will help **1 million of the world's most vulnerable children** reach their full potential by reuniting them with their families or preventing them from being separated. Together, we can transform the way we care for children.