Children International
Around the World
Children International: Making Change Happen

Founded in 1936, Children International is a nonprofit humanitarian organization reaching out to and supporting impoverished people all over the world. Our focus is on empowering children, youth and families to overcome the challenges of poverty. To do so, we employ strategies consistent with the guidelines of development agencies, including:

• The World Health Organization
• USAID
• InterAction
• UNICEF

We successfully achieve our goals through specialized programs and services based on the specific needs of the children, youth and families we aid. We deliver these services and programs through our community centers.

Centrally located in vulnerable, under-served communities, these modern and efficient facilities connect donors and our in-country staff – including doctors, dentists, nutritionists and other professionals – with thousands of local volunteers to help children break the bonds of poverty.

The “CI Approach” is our well-established strategy to help children and youth escape the traps of poverty.
The CI Approach

Children International’s goal is that every child graduates from our program as a healthy, educated and self-reliant adult with the job skills and drive necessary to break free from poverty while also improving his or her own community.

To reach this goal, we developed the CI Approach, a cohesive plan based on best practices and many years of hands-on experience working with destitute children around the world. Our respected presence and long history in the field have provided us with the opportunity to learn which programs and activities are most effective, what resources are required to support them and how best to implement necessary changes for successful child and youth development.

Building blocks to success
Each aspect of the CI Approach intertwines with and builds on the others to bolster each child’s achievements, strengths and skills. Upon entering our program, the CI Approach begins by ensuring each child is healthy and immediately addressing medical and nutritional needs. Soon after, we begin to emphasize and support the critical importance of education, ensuring both children and their families recognize its impact on future success.

As the children in our program grow and mature, the CI Approach focuses on enhancing self-reliance. We present preteens and teens with new opportunities that build on the core benefits gained during childhood. These activities teach the adolescents about leadership, financial responsibility, problem-solving, teamwork and civic engagement. Eventually, these empowered young adults are offered opportunities to pursue advanced education, essential job training and career counseling so they can lead richer, more rewarding lives.

Firm footing for the future
Throughout every strategy emphasized within the CI Approach are three foundational values:

Child protection. CI focuses resources on preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children. Child protection isn’t limited only to physical issues but also addresses emotional needs. Thus, we provide loving care, patient guidance and positive adult role models for children and youth to emulate.

Gender equity. Children International strives to equally serve and protect male and female beneficiaries, as well as increase awareness of gender issues. We teach all children to recognize the value and worth of one another, as well as to support equal rights and access.

Community focus. To help develop deeper engagement with local communities and support capacity building of local residents and institutions, CI identifies shared needs and generates relevant and effective solutions.
Building Blocks to Success

The CI Approach is organized into specific core areas: enhancing health, increasing education and fostering self-reliance. Via these platforms, we strategically provide the material support, training and opportunities children and youth need to become productive adults.

Enhancing health

Children International provides a comprehensive range of services, such as annual physicals and dental exams, acute medical treatment, prescription and over-the-counter medicines, and health-education programs. These programs focus on promoting good hygiene, positive attitudes and safe behaviors.

As they mature, teens are encouraged to participate in our peer-to-peer enrichment program, the Youth Health Corps. Lessons and activities educate teens about health issues, such as birth control and safe sex. Then, these newly trained, enthusiastic youth leaders organize opportunities to share their knowledge with the broader population. This multiplication effect ensures that health knowledge reaches hundreds of thousands of people beyond our sponsored population while encouraging young people to develop and practice needed leadership skills.

Increasing education

Education is a crucial component in helping children escape the traps of poverty; each year of education that a child receives increases the probability they can earn a successful livelihood as adults. Depending on local needs, we incorporate a variety of techniques to support education. For example, in areas where access to books and education is limited, we provide libraries and offer literacy programs. Where schools require uniforms and other items, which can create barriers for poor families, we make sure children have the resources to meet the enrollment requirements. Children International provides school-aged children with items such as books, pens, papers and other supplies necessary to successfully perform in a school environment. And, when financial obstacles such as school fees, tuition and transportation costs limit students’ access to education, we can deliver financial aid and scholarships.

Fostering self-reliance

Without resilience and positive attitudes, children living in poverty will continue to have limited opportunities. That’s why the CI Approach includes specific programs designed to teach life and leadership skills during the particularly vulnerable teen years. As mentioned above, our unique Youth Health Corps is a major part of this effort. We also encourage youth to participate in leadership training so they learn to work effectively with others and develop self-confidence. Those who excel are likely to be elected to their local Youth Council. These select leaders determine the best use of Youth Empowerment Funds that CI provides and then organize local community-improvement projects.

Because impoverished girls have fewer opportunities and resources than males, female empowerment is emphasized to foster self-reliance. CI counters this trend by investing in and supporting females as well as educating males about the realities of their female peers. As a result, girls who participate in CI’s programs are more likely to stay healthy, be educated, avoid early marriage and pregnancy, and pursue the life they choose to lead.
Our Strategic Core: Community Centers

Children International provides its most comprehensive programs within our community centers. Newer state-of-the-art facilities have specific youth rooms and areas – which are separate from the gathering spaces for younger children – to help encourage participation and enhance teen activities.

In these safe spaces, caring and dedicated in-country staff and local volunteers nurture and protect vulnerable children who often live in dangerous neighborhoods.

Our modern community centers typically include features such as:

- Clinics for full-time doctors and dentists
- Modern, electronic medical records systems
- Pharmacies
- Libraries
- Computer labs
- Safe, interactive playgrounds
- Gathering spaces with educational and recreational activities, including pool or table tennis and learning-focused offerings designed for specific age groups.

Where We Work

Blue indicates countries in which CI operates.

1. Child and youth development
2. Community literacy
A Key Element for Success: Caring Adults

While buildings are important, they aren’t what make Children International’s programs a success – it’s the people who invest in our children and youth who make the difference. At the local level, our volunteers and professional staff personally commit to improving the lives of children living in poverty.

Community volunteers

Children International’s volunteers are an integral part of the services we provide. They promote and lead programming that teaches children and youth how to organize projects and be leaders. Then, they encourage teens to give back by tutoring younger children and leading community-improvement projects.

Volunteers comprise a variety of individuals, from parents and other family members of children in our program to community members who commit to improving local neighborhoods. All participate in our volunteer-training programs and service opportunities.

It is not unusual for volunteers to serve for decades – well after their own children have graduated from our program.

Globally, nearly 8,000 individuals volunteer in our community centers, as well as conduct family visits in surrounding neighborhoods. They are the first to know about local and domestic situations, and they serve as an invaluable conduit of information and knowledge.

Professional staff

Our community center workforce is comprised entirely of in-country nationals, including every doctor, dentist, nutritionist, agency director, teacher and librarian. These native residents speak the local language and dialect and understand the local customs and belief systems.

Dedicated to enhancing the lives of our children and youth, their passion and compassion are obvious. This is particularly true of the many members of our staff who were former program beneficiaries themselves. These individuals, who have experienced CI’s life-changing offerings and have seen the impact on their peers, bring a particularly valuable perspective in guiding and overseeing our programs, services and activities.

Local universities also work with CI to provide training opportunities for students studying for specialized careers.

Whether they are volunteers, full-time staff members or students, though, all of the caring adults from the communities we serve act as positive role models for our children and youth.
Outside Our Walls: Impacting the Broader Community

Community centers may provide the most robust offering of Children International’s programming, but our efforts are not limited to those individuals being served within their walls. Below are highlights from our broader development efforts around the world:

Community literacy

Children International provides literacy programs in areas where books are not readily available. These offerings, which vary from simply providing reading materials to implementing robust interactive events, currently operate in more than 20 countries and impact hundreds of thousands of people.

Education + food in Zambia

Our Zambian community-school feeding program provides a daily meal for schoolchildren. This offering has a dual impact: The free meals entice children to attend school, thus delivering both education and nutrition – a powerful combination.

Disaster preparedness and response

When a severe crisis strikes, we use our community centers as hubs for disaster response and provide critical assistance through our established distribution networks. One of our highest priorities is providing children with safe spaces staffed with trained, caring adults to provide a sense of comfort during the emergency.

Housing

Children International partners with local governments to help those affected by disasters rebuild homes and lives. We also provide relocation services and advocate and acquire land for relocation.

Water, sanitation and hygiene

We see firsthand how the lack of easily accessible water negatively impacts impoverished people. Time spent fetching water daily – sometimes walking miles both directions – limits time for school and puts children, typically girls, at risk. Plus, drinking contaminated water has devastating health consequences.

To help, Children International implements programs such as helping to install wells and filtration systems, collaborating with local governments to repair existing systems, developing clean water and hygiene solutions, providing emergency water assistance and training families on the safe storage and use of water.
Program Evolution

Children International has a long history of helping children and families living in overwhelming poverty. Our child-sponsorship concept, initially started in the mid-1970s, focused on food relief. However, in the following decade, we also began providing health care, medicine and essential clothing items.

Today, our core programs create a solid foundation for children through early adolescence. Then, our comprehensive youth programs build teens’ confidence and resilience and position them for employment and a healthy, successful adulthood.

Global network & programs, local implementation

While overarching program-design concepts originate from our Kansas City headquarters, Children International’s professional in-country staff are tasked with implementing the most effective balance of programs and services for the unique communities they serve. We operate in alliance with affiliate nongovernmental organizations to conduct humanitarian work and provide additional services, as appropriate.

Ongoing monitoring & evaluation

Children International’s commitment to ensuring quality and outcome-driven child and youth development programs includes a rigorous monitoring and evaluation process. We accomplish this process with the aid of our electronic medical records system, benefit-tracking applications, beneficiary surveys, and internal and external evaluations.

Business history and capacity

Originally founded in 1936, Children International transitioned from a religious charity to a nonsectarian organization in the 1980s. Today, we are neither religiously nor politically affiliated, and our funding comes from individual and corporate contributions, international development agencies and local governments.

Offered programs are carefully vetted through an annual budget planning and review process. Independent, accredited auditors from both the United States and the countries of operation conduct semiannual and annual financial audits of Children International’s budget and financial records. Children International follows accounting procedures established by the American Institute of Certified Accountants and the Financial Accounting Standards Board. The organization applies at least 80 percent of total expenses to program activities, demonstrating our commitment to efficiency and good stewardship.
Join us. Rewrite the endings to their stories.