



Youth Report Card



**The Children International® Sponsorship Program
prepares youth for the challenges of adulthood.**

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Our Mission

Children International's mission is to assist children living in dire poverty. With help from our generous contributors, we provide children with program benefits and services that meet basic needs, enhance their self-esteem and raise their physical and educational levels in meaningful, lasting ways.

We strive to help the children in our program grow into healthy, educated and self-reliant adults who can work to change their communities for the better.

About Children International

Since 1936, Children International has been dedicated to assisting needy children.

Today, we currently help more than 300,000 children in 11 countries around the world, including Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Mexico, the Philippines, Zambia and the United States.

By creating a personal and lasting connection between one needy child and one compassionate sponsor, our signature sponsorship program gives our contributors a chance to establish a personal, one-on-one relationship with a child living in poverty.

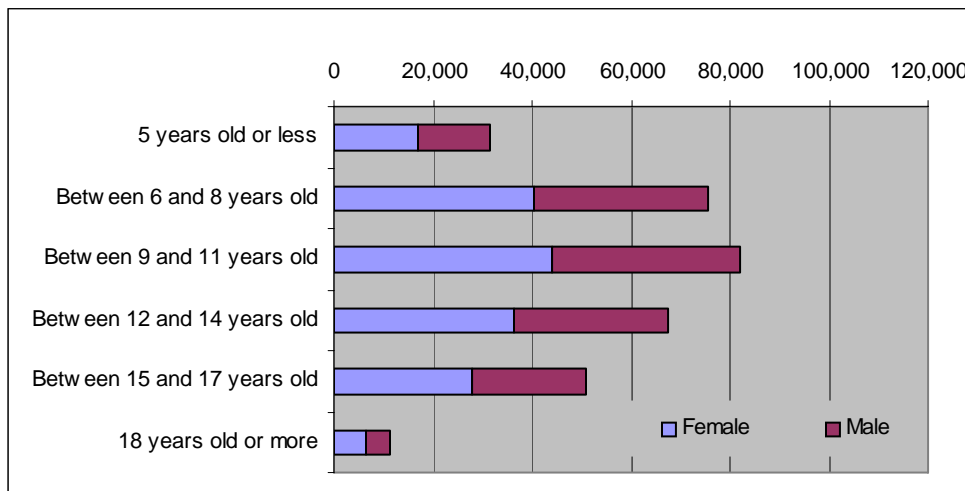
Through medical care, clothing, educational support and much more, sponsorship helps children realize their true potential, despite the many obstacles and challenges they face living in poverty.

Children International's Strategic Goal

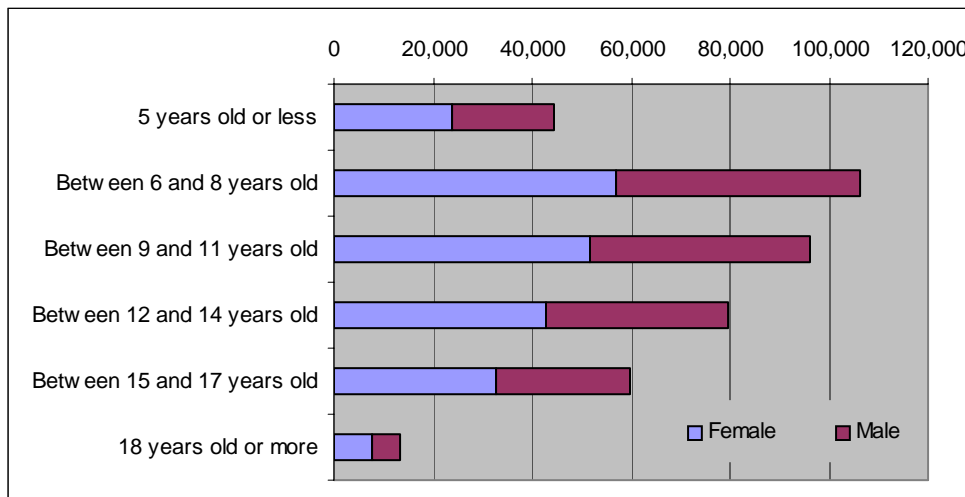
As the organization approaches its 75th anniversary in 2011, we have set a tremendous goal – increasing the number of children we serve to 400,000, while continuing to prepare them to be self-reliant, productive adults.

To help meet this goal, we are in the process of expanding existing operations and opening new agencies, as well as evaluating and strengthening existing programs.

Current Population of Sponsored Children by Age



Projected Population of Sponsored Children by Age in 2011



Children We Serve

The children our programs benefit are among the poorest in the world. It's not unusual for our sponsored families to live on less than \$100 a month, with parents taking on whatever work they manage to find. Limited income often forces them to choose between basic necessities like nutritious food and medicine when they're sick.

Many sponsored families live in tiny one- or two-room shacks made of whatever scraps of material they can gather. These shelters don't always keep out the wind and rain, leaving families scrambling to protect their meager belongings.

Lack of cooking and sanitary facilities and clean running water can pose serious health problems. Conditions like respiratory infections, asthma, skin diseases, malnutrition, parasitic infections and intestinal distress are common. For needy families, the future can seem hopeless.

Thanks to programs designed to help meet vital needs, children can visit the doctor and receive new clothing – some for the first time. Sponsorship gives them a new outlook on life and hope for a better future.

Unique Challenges Youth Face

Youth face a unique – and enormous – set of challenges. As they prepare to enter the adult world and become the leaders of tomorrow, they will be the driving force in global development. They will also play a decisive role in meeting obstacles that transcend national borders – including preventing the spread of infectious diseases, curbing displacement and violence, and preventing environmental degradation.

The world's population includes 1.2 billion young people between the ages of 15 and 24, according to the United Nations World Youth Report 2005. And almost half of the world's population is under 25.

By default, youth will inherit the responsibility of solving global problems. And they need to be well prepared.

But that's no easy task. Most of the world's youth live in developing countries and must overcome many personal challenges before they can begin to think about becoming leaders. Lack of income, education, self-esteem, decision-making skills and opportunities are hindering them from moving forward and achieving success. The temptation of drugs and alcohol, as well as gangs, violence, delinquency, early pregnancy and HIV/AIDS can easily steer them off course.

Education is key to creating a better life, yet children living in poverty face many obstacles in order to acquire a high-quality education, according to Sheila Mahony,

Children International's program officer for youth and education. Many secondary schools in impoverished countries aren't teaching students to think creatively and solve problems – vital life skills necessary for success.

Mahony also pointed out the harsh reality that some impoverished children must find work at an early age to help support their families, while others may live in remote areas and have difficulty affording transportation to attend school. Therefore, youth lack the opportunity to invest in their education. And even those who make it to school are often crowded into poorly constructed classrooms and learn from teachers with little or no training. Mahony noted, "Specialized education is expensive and hard to come by. Even if they are able to afford the fees, there are a lot of barriers to being able to participate and learn."

It's easy to see why many youth cannot live up to their full potential. In fact, many are unable to improve their circumstances at all. Here are just a few statistics from the United Nations World Youth Report 2005:

- More than 200 million youth between the ages of 15 and 24 live on less than US\$1 a day, and 515 million live on less than US\$2 a day.
- While the number of children who complete primary school has increased, education eludes many youth, 130 million of whom are illiterate.

Fortunately, government leaders, businesses, celebrities, citizens and nonprofits like Children International are realizing the profound impact poverty and a lack of education have on our youth.

At the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000, world leaders signed the Millennium Declaration, which set forth eight primary goals called the Millennium Development Goals, with a deadline of 2015 for achieving the goals. The goals are to:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

By definition, Children International's mission shares many of these same goals. Promoting health and education for children and working to eliminate poverty are the foundation of our organization.

With the creation of the Millennium Development Goals, the world is seeing what Children International has recognized for years – that poverty is hindering the future of our youth, and it must be eradicated. With the right resources and continued dedication and commitment, we are working hard to make our mission a reality.

Development of the Children International® Youth Program

Now, more than ever, youth face daunting decisions and issues. Conversations with sponsored youth reveal they are concerned with community violence, failing in school or work, and resisting peer pressure to engage in unsafe sex or drug abuse. The environments in which many sponsored youth live do not provide them with the information and skills they need to meet these challenges and make choices consistent with their long-term goals and aspirations.

As they struggle to find their way in the world, they need guidance to help them become informed, make educated decisions and have the tools needed to seek a better future.

The Children International® Sponsorship Program has been developed and honed over time to provide the guidance that children and youth desperately need. From the time children enter our program, they begin to receive a number of benefits – tangible and intangible. We distribute new clothing and shoes, offer basic health care and medicine and provide educational aid.

Our caring sponsors, who make regular contributions, write letters of encouragement, and in some cases visit their children, play an important role in helping us develop children's self-esteem and self-worth. Our experience has shown how important high self-esteem is and how it can play a role in determining children's decisions to stay in our sponsorship program, remain in school and set goals for the future.

As the younger children in our early sponsorship program began to grow older, we quickly realized the need for programs geared specifically for youth, to help them make successful transitions to adulthood and create better lives for themselves.

About Our Youth Program

The Children International® Youth Program has evolved over the years into what it is today – a unique package of education and health benefits, tailored to better meet the needs of youth in our agencies around the world, along with opportunities to become agents of positive change in their own communities. Children International strives to provide youth-appropriate health care and preventive health education, while our education programs encourage secondary school completion and acquisition of locally competitive job skills.

All sponsored children between the ages of 12 and 19 are eligible to participate in the Children International® Youth Program, and today, that number totals more than 130,000. Our goal is for all our sponsored youth to become active participants.

Children International’s Youth Program is vital because it helps fill the gap in education, teaching youth skills they might not otherwise learn at school or from their families.

“One ultimate goal of the Youth Program is skills acquisition,” Mahony said of our pragmatic approach. “We want kids to acquire skills that are useful and relevant to their local circumstances so they grow up to be self-confident, self-reliant adults.”

While the programs available to individual sponsored youth may vary depending on the country in which they live, here are some highlights of our Youth Program:

Leadership Training and Youth Councils

Leadership training is a vital component of Children International’s global strategy for youth development. Developing strong skills in communication, decision making, conflict resolution, critical thinking and problem solving will empower youth to make choices consistent with their long-term goals and enable them to help change their communities for the better.

Children International teaches youth leadership, life skills and democratic values that they can carry with them throughout their lifetime. At our agencies around the world, young people learn the democratic process firsthand as they elect peer representatives to serve on their agency’s Youth Councils. The councils then work to solve social, cultural and economic problems of their communities through a variety of programs and activities.

We have shown our commitment to this process by awarding each agency \$20,000 annually for their councils. While supervised by agency professionals, our sponsored youth have taken the responsibility of overseeing these funds seriously. Each Children International® Youth Council, made up entirely of sponsored young people between the ages of 12 and 19, initiates a locally based process to identify the direst needs in the

community. The youth then write proposals for project ideas and debate each one. They ultimately decide which projects to finance through their fund, and they take responsibility for planning and overseeing the projects. Each year, thousands of sponsored young people participate in this process, and they have excelled at using their budgets to make a real difference.

In India, Youth Councils used the funds to install streetlights to make their communities safer at night. In the Philippines, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic, Youth Councils funded environmental awareness campaigns. And in Guatemala and Ecuador, Youth Councils supported micro-enterprise projects and scholarships.

These are just a few examples of what our outstanding youth are accomplishing. Not only have determining the use of the funds and implementing the projects been skill-building exercises, they have also shown youth what is possible with hard work and dedication. These youth have proven to themselves, their peers, their families and their sponsors that young people are capable of positively contributing to society.

The HOPE Fund and Vocational Training

Each year, our HOPE (Helping Overcome Poverty through Education) Fund helps provide hundreds of qualified youth with the means to attend job fairs, career counseling, vocational education classes and even college. As the name suggests, the fund truly helps youth pursue careers that will allow them to support themselves and their families.

Beyond the HOPE Fund, many of our agencies offer youth a variety of vocational training, which could be anything from receiving computer training to learning a trade like auto mechanics.

Margalida Villarruel De Hoyos in Colombia is just one of our outstanding youth who benefited from the HOPE Fund. When she learned about the opportunity to receive a scholarship, her dream to study nursing was suddenly within her reach.

“When I came to know about the HOPE scholarship, I got very excited and knew that such strategy could offer me a ray of hope to become someone,” Margalida explained. And she is becoming someone.



Margalida Villarruel De Hoyos received a HOPE scholarship that allowed her to pursue her dream of studying nursing.

Now after having studied to be a nursing auxiliary, Margalida wants to work and save money so she can continue her studies and become a nursing chief, working in pediatrics. Eventually she plans to help her family and another poor child like herself.

Youth Health Corps

The Youth Health Corps (YHC) is designed to reduce preventable illnesses, substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. Our agencies train sponsored youth to serve as peer educators, who in turn educate others during informal presentations. Since 2005, more than 1,000 sponsored youth in eight countries have been trained to be peer educators.



Members of our Youth Health Corps in India teach other sponsored children and community members about important health issues.

Sponsored children learn about personal and household hygiene, the proper handling of water and other vital practices, while older youth learn about reproductive health and issues affecting youth. It is our hope that by educating children and youth about these topics, we will help them live healthy lives, and one day use this knowledge to help their own children make informed choices.

According to Pablo Arias, our YHC facilitator in Chile, drug use is a problem in many communities. Many youth tell him they feel “strong pressure” from some of their peers to engage in negative behavior. But with programs like the YHC, Pablo says, this pressure is offset when youth are shown alternatives – positive ways they can join others and improve their communities.

Leisure Activities

Thanks to our Youth Program, many young people have the opportunity to take part in fun events and activities, such as athletics, theater, music and educational field trips, which help build teamwork and provide positive avenues to spend leisure time free from drugs, gangs and violence.



Positive activities like sports help keep youth away from negative influences.

An Introduction to Our 2006 Graduate Survey

Youth generally graduate from our program shortly after they turn 19, a point when we feel they are becoming adults and can take the skills and education they've gained from sponsorship and put them to use.

In 2006, Children International conducted a baseline survey of youth graduating from our sponsorship program in an effort to learn more about the graduates' current situations and their plans for the future.

Of the 5,431 graduates in 2006, we analyzed results from more than 3,000 surveys. Within the results, you will find that at the time the survey was taken, many graduates were already earning money and/or studying.

While the survey is still in the development stage, as we continue to refine it and collect new data each year, it can help us tailor our programs to meet the growing needs and desires of the young people sponsorship serves.

Results of the Graduate Survey

Demographics

Years Enrolled in Sponsorship

- Graduates surveyed spent an average of 13 years in the sponsorship program.

Gender

- 59 percent of graduates surveyed are female. In 2006, more than 71,000 females were eligible to participate in our Youth Program.

Girls in developing countries face more challenges than their male counterparts. If a family needs a child to drop out of school to work and help support the family, they often choose a girl over a boy. Girls may be asked to quit school to help look after younger siblings while their parents work. They also may face pressure to get married or become pregnant at an early age before they've completed their education, which only perpetuates the cycle of poverty.

Children International recognizes the additional barriers that girls face, and we work to address the issue by requesting that our agencies enroll 60 percent girls in our program and 40 percent boys. Our enrollment rates, coupled with programs that promote educational achievement, encourage girls to complete their education and learn necessary life skills to pursue a healthy and successful future.

Country

- 1,686 graduates who completed the survey were from the Philippines, while the remaining countries where we work with graduating youth in 2006 had anywhere from 291 to 4 graduates complete the survey.
- While a high percentage of survey participants were from the Philippines, we also had a high percentage of 2006 graduates from the Philippines, about 33 percent.

Present Situation

Education

- More than half of the graduates surveyed were currently studying at the time the survey was taken.

Currently Earning Money

- More than 30 percent of graduates surveyed were currently earning money.

Job Skills

- 95 percent of the graduates surveyed left the sponsorship program with at least one job skill they would mention to an employer when seeking a job.
- 52 percent of the graduates surveyed left with at least two job skills.
- 23 percent of the graduates surveyed left with at least three job skills.

Future Plans

Career Goals

- More than 80 percent of graduates surveyed planned to pursue a technical or professional career.

In many countries where we work, a technical or professional career is generally considered to be employment that requires some type of additional education or training beyond high school.

Interests

- More than one-third of graduates surveyed expressed an interest in services or skills training programs, which can include a wide variety of educational training, such as language courses or web development classes.
- About one-third of graduates surveyed expressed an interest in self-employment or small business education.

Looking Ahead

As the results show, many sponsored youth surveyed were studying at the time they took the survey. Some were already earning money, a step toward becoming self-reliant, a major goal of our sponsorship program.

Perhaps most encouraging of all, a vast majority surveyed planned to pursue a technical or professional career, which, in many cases, will help them seek more stable or better-paying jobs than their parents. And many left our program with multiple job skills they would tell an employer when seeking a job.

Not only is it important for youth to actually have job skills, it's vital that they can recognize their talents and abilities so they can transfer those talents into earning power. "If we see more kids describing more of their own skills in detail, that shows us they have a higher self-confidence that will carry over into their efforts to pursue a job or higher education," Mahony explained.



Many parents of our sponsored children and youth are unskilled workers, taking on whatever jobs they can find just to feed their families. The fact that graduates of our program have – and are able to identify – job skills they possess will help them seek gainful employment.

As Children International prepares to reach its strategic goal of serving 400,000 by 2011, we will substantially increase the number of young people eligible to participate in our Youth Program, from more than 130,000 currently to a projected 152,894 in 2011, representing an 18 percent increase. The number of children between the ages of 9 and 11 who are preparing to enter the Youth Program will also substantially increase, from the current 81,830 to a projected 96,171.

While Children International prepares to accommodate the increased number of youth in our program, we also continue to look for ways to offer opportunities for more young people to consistently participate. With the continued support of our generous sponsors and donors, we can continue to expand our Youth Program, offering more meaningful activities to help give sponsored youth the skills they need to leave poverty behind forever.

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