

CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL
YOUTH REPORT CARD
2008



**The Children International® Sponsorship Program
helps prepare youth for a brighter future.**

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Meet Mayra

Twenty-year-old Mayra is a sponsorship graduate studying to be a teacher. In her free time, she gives back to Children International by volunteering with our agency serving rural areas of Guatemala.

“Children [International] brought me out of a tunnel,” Mayra explained. “I felt like a baby bird. I was a shy girl, and I thought that if I spoke in public, people would laugh at me. The thing is that for a lot of people, we indigenous women aren’t anything more than “inditas” (little indigenous ladies) who don’t know anything. So, since I had the program, people cared about me, and they supported me. I started to change, and that change was obvious in school and at home. I don’t know if they knew it in the program, but little by little they were shaping me into a leader.”

Mayra added that the youth program was also an important and positive influence. “Thanks to the youth group, I was able to make friends that my parents trusted were healthy friendships,” she said. “We participated in field trips together, chats about youth, drug addiction, sexual education. I gained a lot of knowledge and confidence in myself during those activities.”



Children International's goal is to truly affect the lives of impoverished children, their families and communities through our programs to relieve the burdens these people face, and improve their quality of life.

Our Mission

Children International's mission is to assist children living in dire poverty. With help from our generous contributors, we provide sponsored 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.

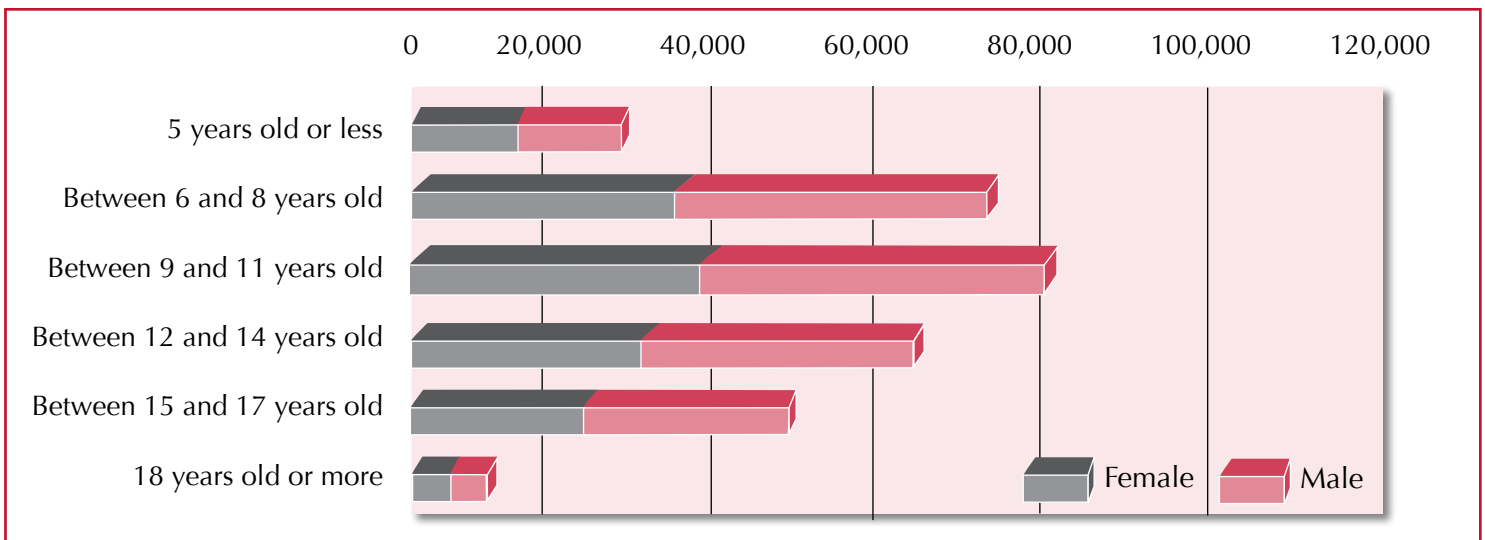
Through medical care, clothing, educational support and much more, sponsorship helps children realize their true potential, despite the many obstacles and challenges they face living in poverty.

Children International's Strategic Goal

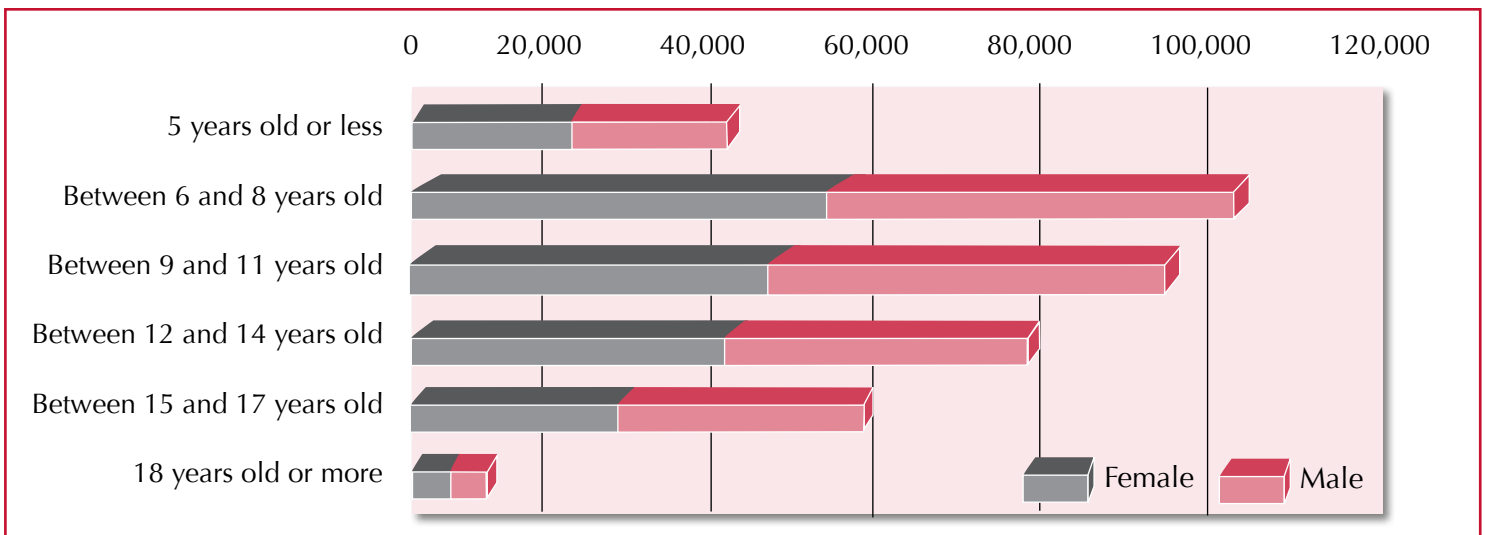
As the organization approaches its 75th anniversary in 2011, we have set a tremendous goal – increasing the number of children we serve to 400,000, while continuing to prepare them to be self-reliant and productive adults.

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

Current Population of Children Receiving Sponsorship Benefits by Age



Projected Population of Children Receiving Sponsorship Benefits by Age in 2011





It's not unusual for sponsored families to live in dilapidated shacks that provide little protection from the elements.

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 any work they manage to find. Limited income often forces them to choose between basic necessities like nutritious food and medicine.

Many sponsored families live in tiny one- or two-room shacks made of scraps of whatever 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 water can pose serious health problems. Conditions like parasite and respiratory infections, asthma, skin diseases, malnutrition, 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 set of challenges. As they prepare to 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, stopping gender inequality, and preventing environmental degradation.

The world's population included 1.2 billion young people, or 18 percent, between the ages of 15 and 24 in 2007, according to the United Nations' *World Youth Report 2007 – Young People's Transition to Adulthood: Progress and Challenges*.

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. 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

Did you know that Children International works in 11 countries around the world, serving over 300,000 children living in poverty? We provide basic medical care and medicine, new clothing and educational support to children who desperately need assistance.

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 formal 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 struggle to improve their circumstances at all. Here are just a few facts about youth poverty and its consequences from the United Nations' *World Youth Report 2005: Young People Today, and in 2015* and *World Youth Report 2007*:

- 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.
- 88 million youth are unemployed.
- Worldwide, almost every other person without a job is a youth.
- 10 million young people are living with HIV/AIDS.
- One in three women in developing countries gives birth before age 20.
- Challenging circumstances may lead impoverished youth to experiment with alcohol, tobacco or drugs.

But there is hope. The *World Youth Report 2007* found that the young people of 2007 are the best educated



generation of youth. And 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.

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History 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 crucial 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 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 is a unique package of education and health benefits tailored to meet the needs of sponsored youth, along with opportunities to be agents of change in their communities. Children International strives to provide preventive health education and encourage secondary school completion and acquisition of competitive job skills.

Sponsored children ages 12 through 19 are eligible to participate in the 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.

"One ultimate goal 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 confident, self-reliant adults."

Youth Councils and the Youth Empowerment Fund

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 youth councils. While supervised by agency professionals, our sponsored youth have taken the responsibility of overseeing these funds seriously. Each Children International youth council initiates a locally based process to identify concerns in the community. They write proposals for project ideas,

Here is just a small sample of some of the projects that have been implemented with Youth Empowerment Funds:

Philippines

- Tutorial and preparation review classes for college entrance exams
- A forum on drug dependency
- Gender sensitivity training

India

- Community campaigns against early child marriage
- Tree-planting campaigns
- Distribution of sports equipment

Dominican Republic

- A re-forestation campaign and river clean-up
- A summer leadership camp
- Family relations workshops for parents and youth

Honduras

- English language instruction
- Workshops in painting and silk-screen crafts

Guatemala

- Providing computer centers
- Workshops on violence prevention

Colombia

- Musical training classes
- Workshops and fees for vocational training

Ecuador

- Life planning workshops
- Youth micro-enterprise training

Chile

- Recreational camp
- School supplies for youth attending vocational training courses

United States

- ACT preparation classes
- An ACT resource library with study materials

decide which projects to finance, and take responsibility for planning and overseeing the projects. Each year, thousands of sponsored youth participate in this process and have excelled at using their budgets to make a real difference.

Determining the use of funds and implementing projects are not only 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 Youth Leadership Training Program

Training youth in leadership skills is one of the most effective ways to help youth meet global challenges. The Children International Leadership Training Program aims to teach youth to act as agents of positive change in their communities.

By developing strong skills in communication, decision making, conflict resolution, critical thinking and problem solving, youth can become empowered to make choices consistent with their long-term goals, enabling them to help change their communities for the better.

This program is designed to complement our signature Youth Empowerment Fund program, giving youth the training they need to better maximize the potential of their Youth Empowerment Fund and eventually encourage more youth to participate.

In 2007, we trained over 1,700 youth in our Leadership Training Program. With additional funding, we hope to expand the program and train even more youth.

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



Meet Angélica

For Angélica, being part of a youth council in Colombia changed the way she sees life.

“Before, I thought there wasn’t anything for me outside my community, but having the many opportunities that we had through the sponsorship program and the youth program, I worked hard at my studies,” she noted. “I finished my classes, and now I work, and I’m able to help a little bit with the expenses in my home. The youth council helped me to learn how to develop into a young leader, to have my opinions heard, and to learn how to listen to others’ opinions. It was a very enriching experience.”

Angélica, a 20-year-old graduate of our program, works for a small cellular communications business in Colombia. She’s studying to become an executive secretary.



Meet Alonso

Alonso, a 21-year-old sponsorship graduate, was a member of the Guayaquil, Ecuador, agency's Youth Health Corps. The group learned about sexuality, sexually transmitted diseases and contraceptive methods through a series of workshops. Then they took what they learned and taught other sponsored and non-sponsored youth.

"In spite of having finished my high school studies, there were lots of things I didn't know," said Alonso. "In the Youth Health Corps, we [learned] a lot about sexuality subjects, and these subjects are seldom talked about in schools and in the family. Parents don't talk about this with their children, and youth have lots of doubts or are unaware."

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.

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. In 2008, we plan to train 1,875 youth to be peer educators.

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.

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.

Meet Vakeyia

Vakeyia never would have believed she would visit the United Nations before she headed off to college. The recent graduate of our United States sponsorship program has accomplished so much, and going to the United Nations was the perfect ending to a great year.

“This is totally worth the hard work over the past few years,” Vakeyia explained. “This far exceeds my dreams. Not many kids my age can say they have visited the United Nations, much less be part of such a great event.”

Vakeyia had hurdles to overcome on her way to the United Nations. She was one of seven children raised by working parents in urban Little Rock, Arkansas.

In addition to serving her local youth council, Vakeyia won the Presidential Volunteer Service Award. She was valedictorian of her graduating class, and the governor of Arkansas recognized her as a top student in the state.

She currently attends the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, and it’s no surprise she is excelling.

“The youth program prepares us to become leaders in our community and shows us how to change the world for the better,” Vakeyia noted. “Going to the United Nations to meet other teens from around the world who actually work with their governments to create change is incredible. It shows you that young people really can make a difference.”



A bright future is ahead for Vakeyia, a sponsorship graduate who attends the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

Children International and the United Nations

We sent three sponsored youth to represent our organization at the International Youth Day 2007 event at the United Nations headquarters in New York City.

Telma from Guatemala, Leslie Mae from the Philippines, and Vakeyia from our United States program attended the event.

International Youth Day celebrates achievements of the world’s young people, while recognizing the vast potential they possess. The event is a global observance and an opportunity to help youth become better engaged at improving their societies.

Children International was recently recommended for special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

An Introduction to Our 2007 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 2007, Children International conducted a 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 10,684 graduates in 2007, we analyzed results from 4,345 surveys. Within the results, you will find that at the time the survey was taken, a number of graduates were already earning money and/or studying.

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



Results of the 2007 Graduate Survey

Demographics

Years Enrolled in Sponsorship

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

Gender

- 57 percent of graduates surveyed are female. Currently, more than 70,000 females are 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.

Present Situation

Education

- 55 percent of the graduates surveyed were currently studying at the time the survey was taken.





Income

- 30 percent of graduates surveyed were currently earning money.

Job Skills

- 88 percent of the graduates surveyed left our program with at least one job skill they would mention to an employer when seeking a job.
- 36 percent of the graduates surveyed left with at least two job skills.
- 16 percent of the graduates surveyed left with at least three job skills.

Career Goals

- 79 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

- 36 percent 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.
- 36 percent of graduates surveyed expressed an interest in self-employment or small business education.

Looking Forward

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 a number of youth 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 children 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 a 17 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 85,482 to a projected 96,171, almost a 13 percent increase.

While we prepare to accommodate the increased number of youth in our program, Children International also continues to look for ways to offer opportunities for more young people to consistently participate. With the continued support of our generous sponsors, donors and corporate partners, 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.



**CHILDREN
INTERNATIONAL**

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