

# CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL YOUTH REPORT CARD



# 2009

**EQUIPPING YOUTH TO MEET THE CHALLENGES AHEAD**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS



- 3 A Legacy for Change**
  - 4 Our 2009 Youth Report Card**
  - 5 Children International: A Lifetime of Serving**
  - 6 The Children We Serve: A Foundation of Support**
  - 7 Our Youth Program: Developed to Meet Changing Needs**
  - 8 Children International and the United Nations: Building Partnerships**
  - 11 Our Youth Program: Guiding Young People Down the Right Track**
  - 19 Program Benefits: Uplifting Impoverished Youth**
  - 20 Looking Ahead: Opportunities to Create Change**
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## A Legacy for Change

There is something very gratifying in watching children grow up and become capable young adults. It's almost magic how it happens, given the right care and nurturing over the years.

That is exactly what I see when I visit the young men and women who have been enrolled in Children International's sponsorship program from the time they were very young...it's wonderful to see how much they've developed when they reach their mid- to late-teens.

The transformation is so dramatic that it never fails to make a significant impression on me. And never is that more true than when I get to meet with a group of young people enrolled in our Youth Program. Without exception, their maturity, confidence and responsibility – all of which are clearly evident in even a short conversation – make me as proud as if they were my own children!

In every instance, their demeanor and poise belie the extreme poverty they've had to overcome to realize that they can actually have real hopes and dreams. And even achieve them.

From the time they enroll in the sponsorship program at a young age, we work to instill in them a sense of confidence and potential. We want them to dream about what the future holds and grow into self-reliant young adults who possess the skills, ability and self-esteem to make those dreams come true... and contribute to their futures, give back to their communities, and lay the groundwork for generations to come.

In the pages that follow, you can learn more about some very amazing youth. It's gratifying to see how far they've come and exactly how much they're capable of...now and in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Cook". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Jim" and "Cook" being significantly larger and more stylized than the rest of the letters.

Jim Cook  
President



## Our 2009 Youth Report Card

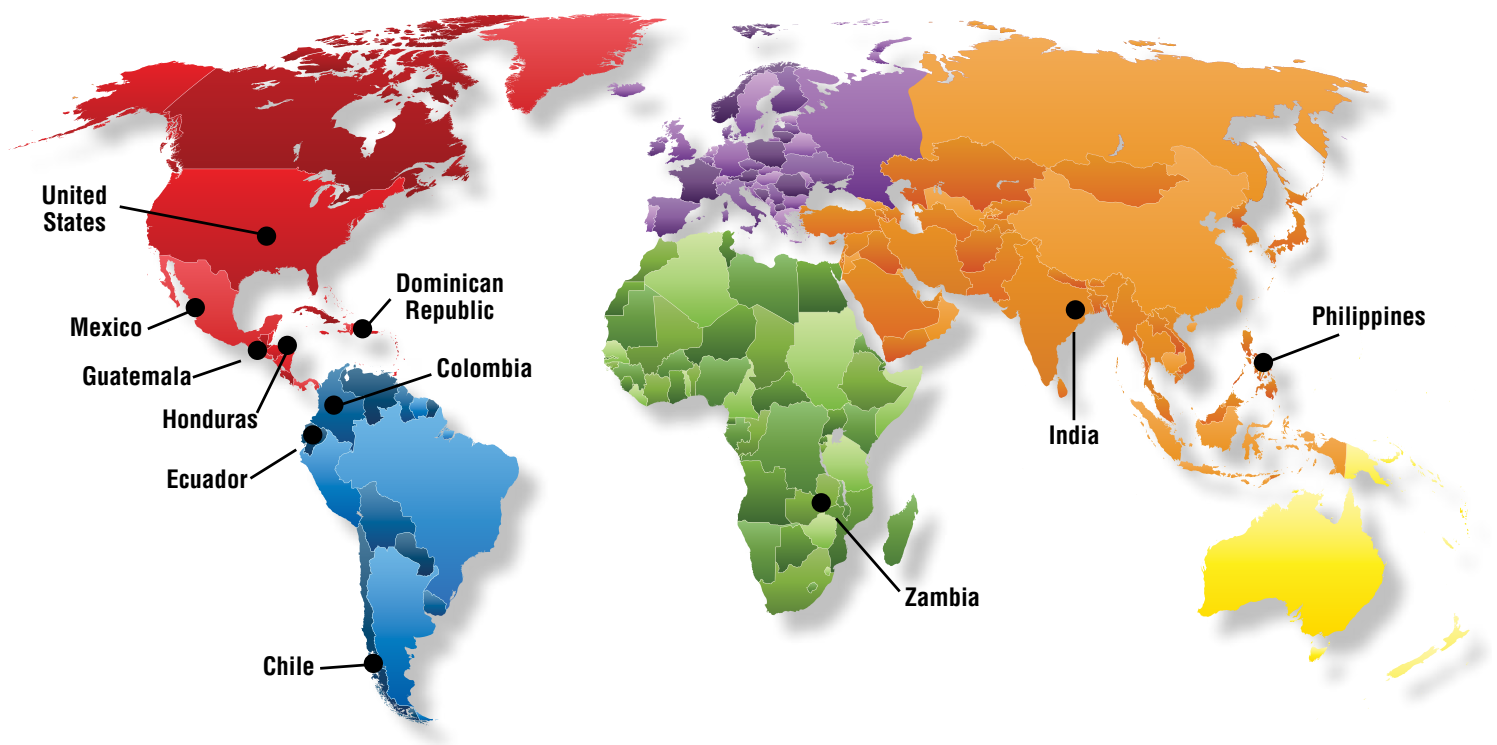
The Children International® Youth Program strives to offer impoverished youth the education, life skills, preventive health education and leadership training needed to make a successful transition to adulthood.

Our goal is to help all the children in our program grow into healthy, educated and self-reliant adults who have both the skills and desire to change their communities for the better.

Our third annual Youth Report Card, which showcases the results of a survey given to youth graduating from our program, demonstrates how our support is making a positive difference in their lives. Like any report card, it shows areas of achievement and areas where additional effort, resources and funding could make a greater impact in the future.



# Children International: A Lifetime of Serving



For more than 70 years, Children International has been dedicated to helping children living in extreme poverty.

Since 1936, we have had a proven track record of offering real help and real hope to needy children. Today, we help more than 325,000 children in 11 countries across the globe, including Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Mexico, the Philippines, Zambia and the United States. Of those, about 136,000 are between the ages of 12 and 19.

Our signature program pairs one needy child with one compassionate donor, allowing them

to establish a personal and lasting connection. Regular contributions from our donors help us provide the children in our program with much-needed medical care, new clothing and shoes, educational assistance, and other essential support.

Children International community centers serve as the base from which we distribute the many benefits of sponsorship. Our community center campaign is underway to build additional centers to help between 5,000 and 7,000 children each. These new centers typically include medical and dental clinics, a pharmacy, a library and more.



## The Children We Serve: A Foundation of Support

When you're poor, visiting the doctor or buying new clothing can mean the difference between eating nutritious food or going hungry. That's the sad reality for many of the children we serve. Their families survive on dollars a day, scrambling to make ends meet.

Impoverished families often build makeshift shelters from materials like scrap wood, pieces of discarded metal, and in some cases, even sheets of cardboard and plastic bags. They usually cook with substandard stoves...if they're lucky. Far too often, it could be a single burner, small gas stove or even an open fire. Unhygienic cooking and living environments coupled with a lack of sanitary facilities and unsafe drinking water can lead to serious health problems.

Conditions like parasitic and respiratory infections, asthma, skin diseases, malnutrition

and intestinal distress are common. And without our programs, many children would go without needed medical care or medicine because their families can't afford it. The Children International® Sponsorship Program has been developed and refined over time to provide the care that children desperately need, such as new clothing and shoes, basic health care and educational aid.

With help from Children International, sponsored children have a place to turn. A caring doctor to visit when they're sick...a community center where they can receive medicine to cure an infection... and sympathetic field staff to talk to when times are tough. Children International and our supporters help give the families in our program much-needed relief from the stress of everyday life...and the hope that little by little, things can – and will – get better.





## Our Youth Program: Developed to Meet Changing Needs

As children become teenagers then young adults, they face a host of new challenges. Peer pressure, drugs and alcohol, violence, and premarital sex are ever present. Low family income and self-esteem and a lack of education make these temptations even more difficult to avoid.

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 - Young People's Transition to Adulthood: Progress and Challenges*:

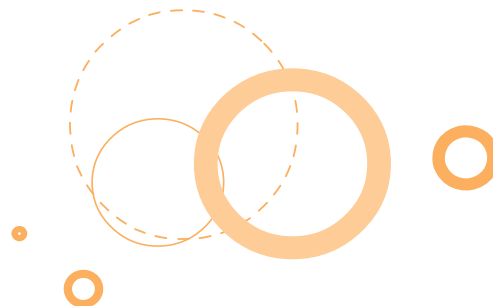
- More than 200 million youth between the ages of 15 and 24 live on less than US\$1 a day, and 515 million live on less than US\$2 a day.
- While the number of children who complete primary school has increased, education eludes many youth, 130 million of whom are illiterate.
- 88 million youth are unemployed.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

Today's youth are our future leaders who will be charged with handling global issues and development. They must receive adequate education and learn the necessary skills to meet these challenges.

Children International's Youth Program was developed specifically for youth ages 12 to 19 to help them make successful transitions to adulthood. A unique package of health and education benefits, our Youth Program is designed to help sponsored youth become self-sufficient adults.

We strive to equip our youth with the knowledge and life skills needed to seek gainful employment and become agents of change in their communities. By learning leadership skills and civic responsibility, the children in our program can be the leaders of tomorrow.



## Children International and the United Nations: Building Partnerships

Children International is proud to report that we have Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, and we work with the United Nations Programme on Youth on issues facing young people. Children International's programs directly support and contribute to the United Nations goals to end extreme poverty by 2015.

Four of our outstanding sponsored youth were chosen to represent Children International at the 5th Annual Youth Assembly Conference at the United Nations in August 2008 for International Youth Day. And in 2007, the United Nations Programme on Youth invited three youth to represent Children International at the International Youth Day 2007 event at the United Nations headquarters.

International Youth Day celebrates the achievements of the world's young people, while recognizing the vast potential they possess. The event is a global observance highlighting the opportunity to help youth become better engaged at improving their societies, an initiative that Children International not only supports but encourages.



Rocío



Jiyaul



Charday



Lara



### Did you know?

Children International is a consultant to the United Nations on youth issues. Children International is a non-governmental organization (NGO) in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, and is associated with the Department of Public Information of the United Nations.





## Youth for Change: Meet Lara, a youth achiever

Seventeen-year-old Lara Villanueva knows that youth have the ability to create positive change in the face of adversity.

The sponsored youth experienced it firsthand growing up in poverty in Tabaco, Philippines. Her family was plagued with serious financial problems, which created stress in the home. Life changed in third grade when she joined Children International's sponsorship program.

"My mother no longer had to worry about buying me clothes because it's part of the regular benefits I receive from Children International," Lara explained. "I get new clothes as a birthday gift, school supplies before class opening, and new shoes. So instead of spending [money] for my needs, [my parents] use it for my older sisters' education."

Sponsorship benefits made life easier for Lara and her family and helped pave the way for her to eventually be inducted into the agency's Youth Program. Thanks to the Youth Program, Lara had the opportunity to work with other sponsored youth and engage in constructive activities outside school. "Children International helped me stretch my boundaries, and deal with other youth, other age groups and even with adults," Lara admitted.

Lara was honored to be among the youth chosen to represent Children International at the 5th Annual Youth Assembly Conference at the United Nations in August 2008. "Being part of that conference made me confident that even a simple youth like me can make a difference," Lara confided.

Back home in the Philippines, Lara serves as president of her agency's youth council and has been involved in numerous activities to better the lives of youth and the community. At the United Nations gathering, Lara and her fellow sponsored youth Jiyaul Piyada from India were thrilled to receive Youth Achievement Awards for their work to improve their communities.

Lara is currently studying nursing and hopes to finish her studies, pass the nursing board exam, and find a job. Eventually, she plans to help her family, give back to her community, and even sponsor a child.

In her own way, Lara hopes to make her community – and the world at large – a better place to live. According to her, if the youth sector is empowered, significant changes can occur.



# AL ILUSTRE MAR EN EL SINDICATO DE T



Seventeen-year-old Zurama is interested in the medical field, and a HOPE scholarship is helping her pursue her education.

# Our Youth Program: Guiding Young People Down the Right Track

## Our 2008 Graduate Survey

Shortly after they turn 19, Children International youth achieve an important milestone. They graduate from our program and transition to the adult world, where they can begin putting everything Children International has taught them into practice.

In 2008, we surveyed youth graduating from our program and asked them about their experiences with Children International, their evaluation of our programs, their current situations, and how our organization could help them with their future plans.

Of the 7,785 sponsorship graduates in 2008, 4,416 completed our survey. While the results show that sponsored youth surveyed are achieving success and feel Children International programs are beneficial, there is always room for improvement. With additional resources and funding, we can expand our existing benefits to serve more impoverished youth and start up new initiatives to bring greater change to their lives.

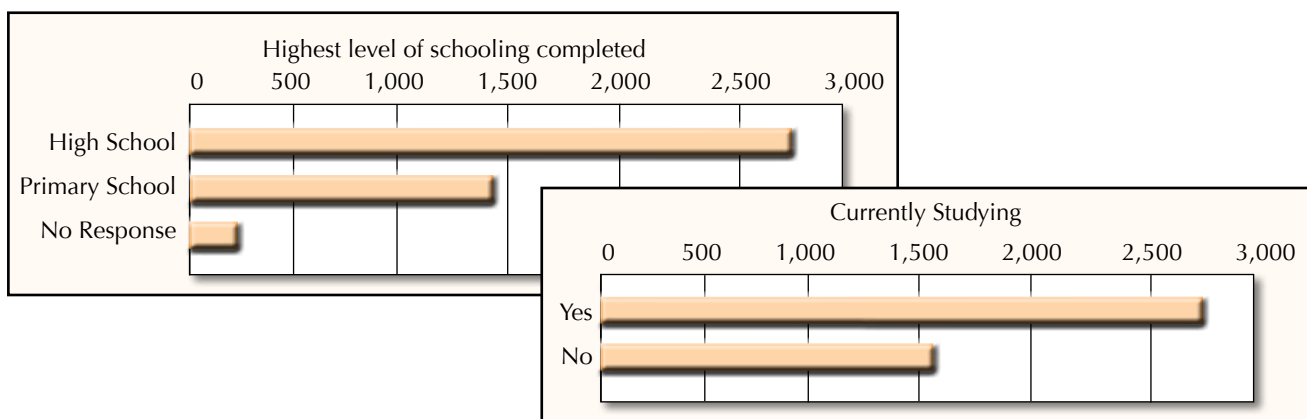
✓ **Nearly 62 percent of survey respondents agreed that they have had more schooling because of Children International.**

Whether it's by providing school supplies or a school uniform, Children International distributes vital educational benefits to impoverished children. These benefits can mean the difference between them dropping out of school or completing their educations.

- Over 62 percent of survey takers had completed high school when the survey was taken.
- Nearly one-third of respondents had completed some vocational or technical-skills training.
- Almost two-thirds of survey takers were continuing their educations at the time the survey was completed.

Education and job skills can pave the way to a better life for children living in poverty. Children International strives to make additional educational opportunities available to sponsored youth as our resources allow.

### Educational status







## The HOPE Fund and Vocational Training

Our HOPE Fund does just as its name implies; it gives sponsored youth hope. Standing for Helping Overcome Poverty through Education, our HOPE scholarships help qualified youth attend vocational education classes or college.

From 2004 to 2007, Children International awarded 3,316 HOPE scholarships. Of those, 2,257 were used to support vocational education and the remaining 1,059 were used to pursue a university education.

Sixty-seven percent of HOPE scholarships awarded from 2004 to 2007 were given to females in an effort to promote gender equity. Children International recognizes the

additional barriers that girls in developing countries often face. For example, in many communities where we work, parents can't afford to send all their children to school. When faced with this situation, they often encourage a boy to attend over a girl. Parents may also ask their daughters to drop out of school to help take care of younger siblings. And, in some cultures, girls may be pressured to leave school and marry at an early age.

In addition to HOPE scholarships, many of our agencies offer a number of youth additional educational opportunities and vocational training.



## Youth for Change: Meet Tatiana, a face of HOPE

Tatiana Zamora Crespo's father used to say that the best inheritance he could give his children was an education. He worked hard when Tatiana was younger to support her and her siblings in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

But once Tatiana completed high school, she thought her dream of studying languages was over because of her lack of economic resources.

"But then I received Children International's support with the HOPE scholarship," the 19-year-old explains.

That scholarship helped her pay for her first year of college. Today, the 2008 sponsorship graduate continues her education, studying language and linguistics, and she also works as an English teacher.

"This kind of scholarship helps and encourages youth to continue [their] educations," Tatiana emphasizes.

While she greatly appreciates the educational assistance from Children International, one of her best sponsorship experiences was her involvement with our Youth Health Corps.

"We learned how to take care of our own bodies, to break the sexuality taboo, and also to be trained in important matters and afterwards to train other youth like me," Tatiana notes. "It's amazing to know that only through a chat you may change somebody's life and stimulate others to care about themselves."



It's just as amazing how a youth's life can be changed through a scholarship. Tatiana hopes to become a professional, travel the world, and help support her family who has sacrificed for her. For Tatiana, a HOPE scholarship – and the education she received from it – has been quite the inheritance.

# Youth Councils and the Youth Empowerment Fund

✓ *Over half of survey participants agreed that Children International has made their community a better place to live and that they have learned to solve problems in their community because of our programs.*

*Eighty percent of survey respondents rated Children International agency staff's attitude toward youth as excellent or good in terms of listening to youth, respecting youth, and including youth in making decisions about programs.*

The youth Children International serves have a strong voice in the development of our programs. It starts when youth participate in a democratic process by electing peer representatives to serve on their agencies' youth councils. In turn, the councils organize and implement programs and activities to address pressing needs in their communities.

Children International allocates annual funds to agencies for youth councils, which then plan programs to address social, cultural or economic problems in their communities. This year, each agency received between \$5,000 and \$40,000 depending on its size. While agency staff oversee the process, sponsored youth decide how to spend their Youth Empowerment Funds.

In 2008, Children International allocated \$292,000 to implement the global Youth Empowerment Fund program. All together, sponsored youth identified, planned and carried out 79 projects, providing a total of 42,260 opportunities for sponsored youth, children and community members to participate or benefit. Fifteen percent of the global fund was spent on vocational and micro-enterprise training. Other popular programs or activities included sports, scholarships and school materials, and community-service projects.



## Did you know?

In 2008 alone, Children International allocated \$292,000 for Youth Empowerment Funds to allow youth to plan and carry out programs to address needs in their communities.



## The Leadership Training Program

Designed to complement our signature Youth Empowerment Fund program, the Children International Leadership Training Program works to teach youth to act as agents of positive change in their communities. Over the short term, the program's goals are to increase knowledge about community organization and development, and to build confidence in youth leaders. The longer-term goal is for youth participants to continue their involvement in community initiatives and be a positive influence on their peers.

The program provides training to help sponsored youth develop strong skills in communication, decision making, conflict resolution, critical thinking and problem solving...skills that are essential to meeting global challenges. In addition, our program teaches youth leaders to pass on their knowledge to peers in their neighborhoods to reach even more impoverished youth.

In 2007 and 2008 combined, we trained more than 3,000 sponsored youth in our leadership program. Globally in 2008, 60 percent of the trainees were girls. The participating average number of training hours provided to each youth was about 50.

✓ *From a list of skills, such as public speaking, using a computer, accounting, sewing, taking care of sick people, and more, nearly half of survey respondents selected at least five job skills they possess.*

*Sixty-six percent of survey takers agreed that Children International has motivated them to reach their goals.*

## Youth for Change Meet Esvin, a youth leader

For 19-year-old Esvin Gómez Hernández in Guatemala, Children International's Youth Program was a lifesaver.

He entered the Youth Program at age 12, and the timing couldn't have been better. Living in extreme poverty with an alcoholic father, home life was difficult at best. Esvin had low self-esteem and suffered from poor nutrition because his family didn't have enough food.

The Youth Program offered him a place to escape and a support system of other youth his age. "The other youth talked to me as if I was already their really old friend, and that made me feel good," Esvin explains. "I'd rather spend more time [at Children International] than at home. This was a peaceful and cheerful place, and at home there were only problems and hunger."

Youth activities quickly left their mark on Esvin's life. In fact, he considers the leadership camp he attended through Children International to be the best time of his life – at least so far.



"It was amazing," the 2008 sponsorship graduate exclaims. "The activities, the games, the challenges, the friendship bonds that we built with all the attendees were very strong."

According to Esvin, the leadership camp can open new doors for sponsored youth while helping close doors that lead to negative influences like gangs, drugs, and alcohol.

"What I can assure you is that entering the Youth Program when I was 12 changed my life because I didn't want to be at home," Esvin emphasizes. "If I hadn't found refuge [at Children International], who knows where I would have ended up."

Esvin has also been involved with the Youth Health Corps. And based on his leadership skills, he was able to serve as a Youth Program facilitator and help other youth.

In short, Esvin's experience with our Youth Program can be summed up in a simple sentence: It helped him become a better person.





*Sixty-seven percent of survey takers agreed that they are healthier because of Children International.*

## Youth Health Corps

Young people ages 15 to 24 make up 45 percent of new HIV infections, but many lack knowledge about how to avoid being exposed to the virus, according to the executive summary of the *2008 Report on the global AIDS epidemic* by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

Educating youth about sexually transmitted diseases is just one of the many goals of Children International's Youth Health Corps (YHC). The YHC also aims to reduce preventable illnesses, substance abuse and unwanted pregnancies. Younger children learn about personal and household hygiene, while older youth learn about reproductive health and issues affecting youth.

Our agencies train sponsored youth to serve as peer educators, who in turn educate others during informal presentations, which can include skits and other creative teaching methods. In 2008 alone, 1,735 sponsored youth completed peer educator training. Since the YHC's inception in 2005, over 3,600 peer educators have been trained, and more than 350,000 sponsored and non-sponsored youth have received health messages. Not only are peer educators receiving valuable training themselves, they are spreading their health knowledge to friends, family and their communities at large.





## Youth for Change: Meet Roel, an educator

Roel San Juan, a 20-year-old sponsorship graduate, credits Children International with helping him become what he is today – a teacher.

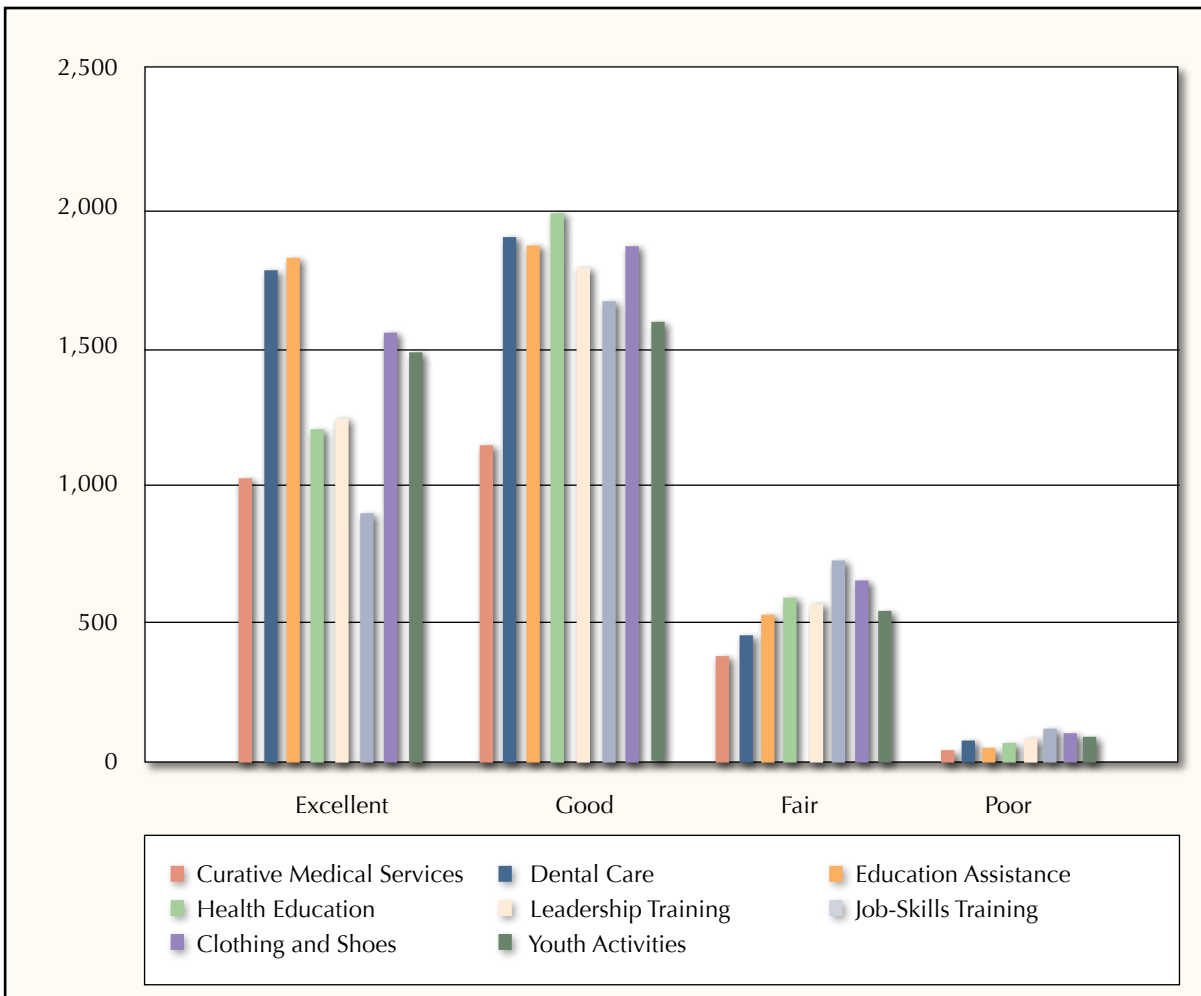
As a sponsored youth served by the Manila, Philippines, agency, he was actively involved with his agency's Youth Health Corps (YHC), which gave him a taste of teaching. It was through the YHC that Roel learned how HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases can be contracted, and he was eager to share his knowledge with other youth.

"It's important that they know about proper relationships because young people take this for granted," the 2007 sponsorship graduate noted. "My key message is prevention." Roel counts education benefits – such as a HOPE scholarship he received to help further his schooling – as the most significant assistance he received through Children International. They have truly helped him reach his goals. "I liken sponsorship to a pair of crutches," he explains. "I have dreams, but it is like I have a disability, and [Children International] helped me to get there."

# Program Benefits: Uplifting Impoverished Youth

Impoverished youth put a high value on the benefits that Children International offers. Overall, the survey results show that most respondents believe our organization is improving their lives.

Program benefits rating



A majority of survey takers agree that they have had more schooling and are healthier because of Children International. And more than half of respondents feel Children International has taught them to solve problems in their community and motivated them to reach their goals.

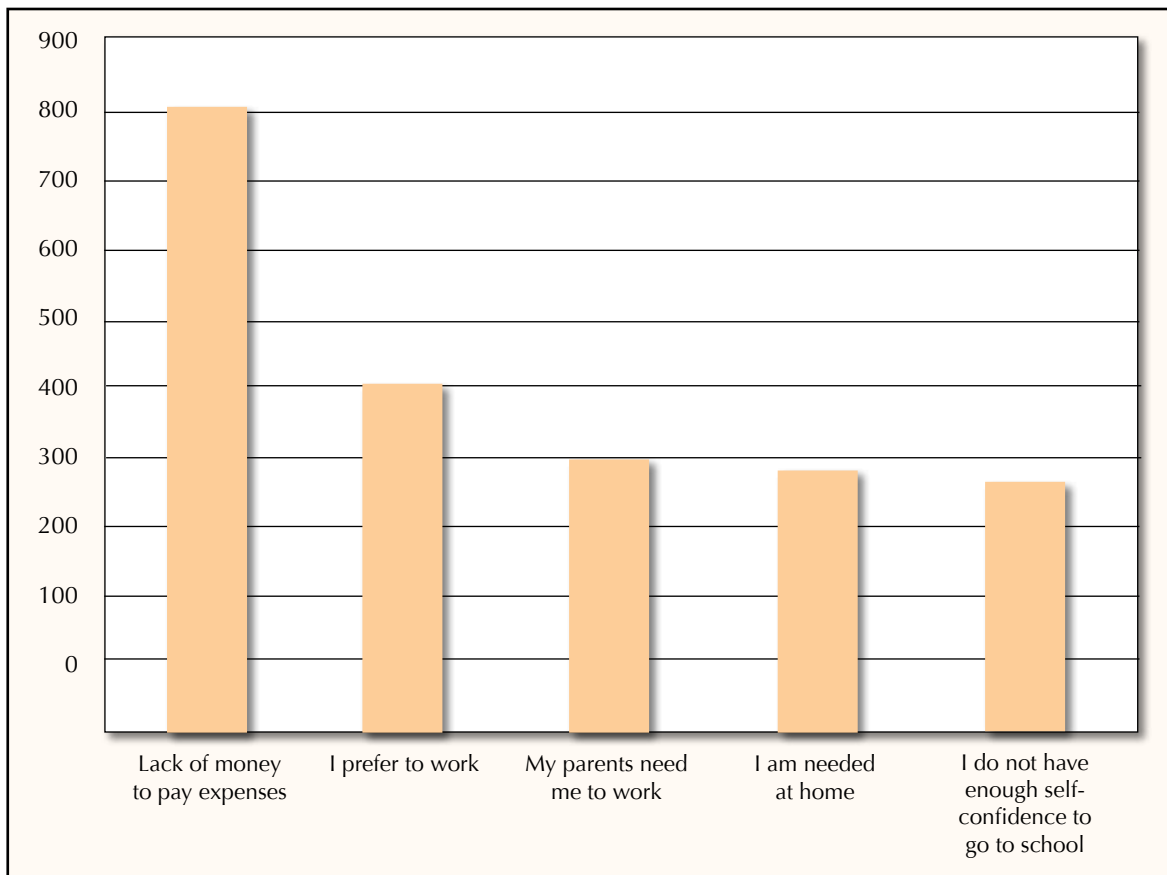
Not only is Children International providing impoverished children and youth with basic necessities, we also strive to give them the knowledge they need to create better futures for themselves...full of opportunity. And in doing so, not only do we improve sponsored children and youth's lives, we uplift their families and entire communities.

## Looking Ahead: Opportunities to Create Change

While the survey results affirm what Children International has always known – our health, education, and development programs are positively affecting impoverished children and youth – there are still opportunities to do more. Seventy-one percent of respondents planned to work in a job for which they need further education or training. And our survey also showed that of the 1,589 survey takers who were no longer studying:

- Over half counted a lack of money to pay for expenses as a top-three reason they were no longer studying.
- A quarter noted that they preferred to work as one of their top-three reasons, while 36 percent were not studying because their families need them to work or stay at home.
- And 17 percent indicated that they don't have enough self-confidence as a major reason they were not studying.

**Top reasons for not studying**





Clearly, a lack of money and resources, job training and life skills are holding some youth back. Right now, we're only able to provide good quality vocational training and educational scholarships to a limited number of youth.

When asked how Children International could help them with their future plans during their last months in the sponsorship program\*:

- Nearly 44 percent of survey takers marked job and career guidance
- About 43 percent noted skills training
- About 36 percent suggested referrals or recommendations for employment
- And 31 percent indicated referrals for education programs.

Job skills and employment are real concerns for youth getting ready to graduate from our sponsorship program. Additional support and resources from individuals, foundations and corporations would help Children International expand or start up the following programs:

- Reach even more youth with our existing Youth Health Corps and Leadership Training Program
- Tutoring programs for children and youth to help them keep up with their studies and prevent them from dropping out
- Vocational training and advanced job-skills preparation to give more youth knowledge they need to seek decent jobs
- Computer training to offer youth a marketable skill that can help them maintain an interest in learning and academics, conduct job searches, earn income and develop small businesses

(CONTINUED)

*\*Note: Respondents could mark more than one choice.*





- Volunteer training, which can provide youth with job skills, leadership skills, networking opportunities, increased self-confidence and a sense of fulfillment
- First-aid/disaster-management training, which can improve youth's self-confidence and leadership skills while boosting their community's preparedness for family and community emergencies
- Sports leagues to offer youth constructive activities, keep them away from negative influences, and help teach them life skills, such as goal-setting, teamwork and conflict resolution.

The road out of poverty is a long one filled with many obstacles along the way. With continued support and dedication, we can help youth free themselves from poverty...reach their full potential...and become the leaders of tomorrow that our world desperately needs.

### **Did you know?**

Children International's Youth Program has 136,000 members between ages 12-19.



Thanks to the following individuals for contributing to the 2009 Youth Report Card:

- Joel Abelinde** of our Manila, Philippines, agency
- Patricia Calderón** of our Barranquilla, Colombia, agency
- Javier Cárcamo** of our Guatemala agency
- Patricia Huerta** of our Guayaquil, Ecuador, agency
- Miriam Lemus** of our Guatemala agency
- Nivedita Moitra** of Sahay, India, agency
- Sarah Jane Velasco** of Tabaco, Philippines, agency





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