

The Educational system in the Philippines

The educational system in the Philippines fails many of the poor. Many simply cannot attend school due to poor health caused by poverty. Although schools in the public education system are affordable, the school uniform, transportation costs, money for food, school supplies etc., make it all too expensive for many living in poverty.

Q. What is the Child Sponsorship Programme?

A. The Child Sponsorship Programme is an education sponsorship programme facilitated and administrated by Hands of Mercy, whereby children from kindergarten to college levels living in urban poor communities receive a scholarship for the academic year.

Q. What is a Hands of Mercy Sponsor?

A. A Hands of Mercy sponsor is a concerned individual willing to personally contribute to the growth and development of a Filipino child living in poverty. Your sponsorship will enable your sponsored child to receive help with:

- Education
- Health Care
- Personal and Character Development
- Christian Discipleship

As a Hands of Mercy sponsor, you will have the opportunity to develop a meaningful and long lasting relationship with your sponsored child and family. The child you sponsor will know your name, will write to you, and benefit directly from your sponsorship as you take an active role in the development of the child.

Q. What benefits will my sponsored child receive?

A. The child you help through Hands of Mercy will benefit from your sponsorship in the following ways:

- **EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS:** This means providing the costs of school or college fees, clothing and supplies so a child can pursue their academic studies at a Government school or college. As a sponsor you will have the opportunity of sponsoring either an able-bodied child or a disabled child living in poverty. We currently have over 150 children enrolled in different Government schools and colleges through the Child Sponsorship Programme. Our child beneficiaries live in different urban poor communities or informal settlements in Mandaluyong City (part of Metro Manila) as well as cities in the north of the country – Baguio and La Trinidad.
- **HEALTH BENEFITS:** Should special health needs be detected (e.g. Prescriptions medicines, surgical treatment) we will place that child under the relevant programme, which is funded separately.
- **SOCIAL BENEFITS:** Sponsored children are part of a church-based programme where Christian adults provide training and guidance for their personal and character development.
- **SPIRITUAL BENEFITS:** Most important, your sponsorship will provide the child you sponsor with the opportunity to attend regular spiritual discipleship training and to receive encouragement through a local church committed to Christ and the children in its community.

Q. How will the child I sponsor be chosen?

A. Hands of Mercy partners with local Mercy Community Churches in coordinating its programmes of compassion. At each church, a Hands of Mercy team, which consists of church members and leaders, is responsible for developing and implementing the Hands of Mercy programmes that best suit the needs of the beneficiaries in the communities being reached by the church. Or staff comprise of volunteer Filipinos who live in the urban poor communities where Hands of Mercy coordinates its compassion programmes. They experience the same living conditions as those they are seeking to serve. Because our volunteer staff have lived in their respective communities for many years, they are able to use their intimate knowledge of concerns within the community to identify children suffering the greatest need.

Q. How will my support affect the child I'm helping?

A. The child you sponsor will not only receive help with education and health needs, but will also be encouraged to fully enter into the spiritual life of his or her local church by attending Sunday worship services, and age appropriate discipleship training groups. It is during these discipleship groups where Christian adults provide training and guidance for personal and character development. Our goal is to minister by personally sharing God's love and God's ways with both child and his or her family. When children discover the extent of God's love and His value upon their lives, their self-confidence grows. This allows them to impact the lives of their friends and family with their renewed values, attitudes, and beliefs, providing long-term stability and hope for their communities.

Note: Our child beneficiaries are never forced to attend the spiritual activities of their local church and they are certainly not excluded from receiving help from Hands of Mercy if they decide not to be involved.

Q. Do I have the choice of sponsoring an able-bodied or a disabled child?

A. Yes. The Child Sponsorship Programme embraces both able-bodied and disabled children (either hearing impaired or mentally challenged). Able-bodied children are enrolled in a local Government school, while disabled children, who are either hearing impaired or mentally challenged, receive specialized tuition at a 'special needs' school.

Q. Will anyone else be sponsoring the child I am helping?

A. No. All of our sponsored children only have one sponsor assigned to them. That's why your prayers, letters and support will mean so much to your sponsored child as he or she gets to know you as a special caring friend.

Q. How will I communicate with my sponsored child?

A. When you first begin your sponsorship, we encourage you to send your sponsored child a personal photograph and a letter of introduction. If necessary, a Hands of Mercy staff member will translate it into the Filipino language of Tagalog, and then forward it to your child. You can write to your sponsored child as often as you wish. Filipino children love to receive letters and photos, especially from friends abroad and your child will treasure all the correspondence you send. When writing, please DO NOT include your contact information (e.g. phone number, mailing address, email address) as we require communication to and from the sponsored children to go through the Hands of Mercy office.

Q. Will my sponsored child write to me?

A. Yes. Your child will write to you during the year. Letter writing is developmental for children as it improves their basic literacy, self-awareness and ability to put thoughts and feelings into words.

As the exchange of letters with your sponsored child grows over the years, you can build a scrapbook of letters and photos from your child. Your scrapbook will serve as a constant reminder of the relationship you have developed with the child you are helping, and how you have contributed to his/her growth.

Q. Will I be kept informed about my sponsored child's development?

A. Yes. In addition to personal letters from your sponsored child and family, Hands of Mercy will send you your child's final grading school report card or college class card at the end of the academic year. We will also inform you of any health concerns and the appropriate action taken.

Q. Is it appropriate to send gifts to my sponsored child?

A. Yes. Hands of Mercy encourage sponsors to give additional monetary gifts to their sponsored children for special occasions e.g. birthdays, Christmas. These gifts are another way you can express your loving concern for your child. One hundred percent of all child gifts go to that child. As a guideline, we ask that sponsors keep these gifts to £15 - £20 for each occasion.

Q. Can I visit my sponsored child?

A. Yes. Meeting your sponsored child will be one of the most memorable days of their life and indeed one of the most memorable days of yours. Hands of Mercy can arrange for you to meet with your sponsored child in the Philippines and will provide a staff member to accompany you. Your visit will be at your child's home or a Hands of Mercy ministry centre, or at a convenient location depending on your travel plans and the location of your child's home. Visits are generally between two and four hours long.

For child protection reasons, we do not allow children to be taken on overnight excursions. However, if appropriate, a supervised day trip could be arranged with your sponsored child and family.

You will need to provide us with your itinerary details.

Cultural awareness - you will need to be culturally sensitive about the clothing that you wear. Avoid wearing short skirts, shorts or t-shirts with narrow straps.

Without meaning to you might overwhelm the child and their family, so please don't bring too many gifts. It is good to bring practical gifts that the whole family can benefit from and not just toys.

Please do not give money to the family or promise anything when you are there. If the family do have specific needs that you would like to help with, then contact Hands of Mercy on your return so we can make suitable arrangements.

Please contact the UK office on 01582 416151 for more information.

Q. How important is prayer in the Child Sponsorship Programme?

A. Your prayers for the health, education and spiritual development of your child are very important. Filipino children are greatly encouraged when they hear that their sponsors are praying for them. The child you sponsor will likely pray for you too, as you share some of your own prayer needs.

Q. How long should my sponsorship last?

A. The Hands of Mercy Child Sponsorship Programme offers you the opportunity to support the needs of your sponsored child until they complete their high school or college education. However, each year you will have an opportunity to renew your sponsorship. Sponsors will receive a renewal notification during the month of April, which is before the new academic year begins. We recognize that sponsors' circumstances sometimes change, so you may therefore discontinue your sponsorship at any time. Please understand that a sponsored child's circumstances may change too. For example, sometimes families move beyond the reach of the Hands of Mercy ministry and children have to leave the Child Sponsorship Programme. We will inform you as quickly as possible if any such occasion arises, and will offer you another child to support.

Q. If I have to discontinue my sponsorship, what happens to the child I am helping?

A. If you need to discontinue your support, we will immediately look for a new sponsor for your child and continue the child's support without interruption.

Q. How much does it cost to sponsor a child?

A. It costs **£144** a year to sponsor a child through Hands of Mercy. It's a commitment that will make an incredible difference to a child in need. You can begin sponsoring a child at any time. You can either pay the sponsorship money as an annual payment by cheque or as monthly payments of £12 by standing order.

Q. How will my sponsorship money be used?

A. Your sponsorship money will be used to cover the following...

Kinder

Tuition, study materials, uniform, shoes, bag, Christmas party, Christmas gift and the administrative costs of the Child Sponsorship Programme.

Elementary/High School

Tuition, study materials, projects, uniform, P.E. uniform, shoes, bag, graduation fee, Field trip, Boy/girl scout uniform, Personal tutoring (if recommended/needed), Christmas party, Christmas gift and the administrative costs of the Child Sponsorship Programme.

Elementary/High School (children with disabilities)

Tuition, study materials, uniform, shoes, bag, graduation fee, transportation expenses, Christmas party, Christmas gift and the administrative costs of the Child Sponsorship Programme.

College

Tuition, books, projects, Christmas party, Christmas gift and the administrative costs of the Child Sponsorship Programme.

Q. What happens once I have paid my sponsorship money?

A. Once you have paid your sponsorship fee, we will provide you with a Photograph and Profile of your sponsored child with practical suggestions about writing to the child you are helping. (Please be patient with us as it takes time to carefully choose a needy child and to process and mail their sponsorship details).