

Q. What is the Family Support Programme?

A. The Family Support Programme is a programme facilitated and administrated by Hands of Mercy, whereby families living in urban poor communities receive supplementary food assistance on a monthly basis.

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 family in need. Your sponsorship will enable your sponsored family receive help with:

- Supplementary Food Assistance
- Health Care
- Christian Discipleship

As a Hands of Mercy sponsor, you will have the opportunity to develop a meaningful and long lasting relationship with your sponsored family. The family 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 family.

Q. What benefits will my sponsored family receive?

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

- **HEALTH BENEFITS:** Sponsored families receive supplementary food assistance on a monthly basis. Should special health needs be detected (e.g. prescription medicines, hospital treatment) we will place that family under the relevant programme, which is funded separately.
- **SPIRITUAL BENEFITS:** Most important, your sponsorship will provide the family you sponsor with the opportunity to attend regular spiritual discipleship training and to receive encouragement through a local church committed to Christ and the families in its community.

Q. How will the family 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 has lived in their respective communities for many years, they are able to use their intimate knowledge of concerns within the community to identify families suffering the greatest need.

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

A. The family you sponsor will not only receive help with food assistance and health needs, but they will also be encouraged to fully enter into the spiritual life of their 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 all family members so that with their renewed values, attitudes, and beliefs, they can provide long-term stability and hope for their communities.

Note: Our 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. Will anyone else be sponsoring the family I am helping?

A. No. All of our sponsored families only have one sponsor assigned to them. That's why your prayers, letters and support will mean so much to your sponsored family as they get to know you as a special caring friend.

Q. How will I communicate with my sponsored family?

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 families to go through the Hands of Mercy office.

Q. Will my sponsored family write to me?

A. Yes. Your family will write to you during the year. As the exchange of letters with your sponsored family grows over the years, you can build a scrapbook of letters and photos. Your scrapbook will serve as a constant reminder of the relationship you have developed with the family you are helping, and how you have contributed to their growth.

Q. Will I be kept informed of the development of my sponsored family?

A. Yes. In addition to personal letters from your sponsored family, Hands of Mercy will send you periodic updates.

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

A. Yes. Hands of Mercy encourage sponsors to give additional monetary gifts to their sponsored family. These gifts are another way you can express your loving concern for your family. As a guideline, we ask that sponsors keep these gifts to £25 per family.

Q. Can I visit my sponsored family?

A. Yes. Meeting your sponsored family 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 family in the Philippines and will provide a staff member to accompany you. Your visit will be at your family's home or a Hands of Mercy ministry centre, or at a convenient location

depending on your travel plans and the location of your family'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 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 family, so please don't bring 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 Family Support Program?

A. Your prayers for the health and spiritual development of your family are very important. Your family will be greatly encouraged when they hear that their sponsor is praying for them. The family 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 Family Support Programme offers you the opportunity to support the needs of your sponsored family indefinitely. We recognize that sponsors' circumstances sometimes change, so you may therefore discontinue your sponsorship at any time.

Please understand that the circumstances of a sponsored family may change too. For example, sometimes families move beyond the reach of the Hands of Mercy ministry and families have to leave the Family Support Programme. We will inform you as quickly as possible if any such occasion arises, and will offer you another family to support.

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

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

Q. How much does it cost to sponsor a family through the Family Support Programme?

A. It costs **£144** a year to sponsor a family through Hands of Mercy. It's a commitment that will make an incredible difference to a family in need. You can begin sponsoring a family 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 fee be used to help my sponsored family?

A. Your sponsored family will receive the following items on a monthly basis:

- 24 kilo sack of rice (Filipino staple diet)
- Choice of grocery items (e.g. can goods, noodles), milk formula (for needy babies) or vitamins

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

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