

## ***Ministry Insight***

# How To Respond To Those Who Claim Sponsorship Is Not Good For Children

Critics of child sponsorship argue that the relationship is expensive, inequitable, and ineffective. Compassion addresses these concerns through high-quality programming, accurate record-keeping, and other program controls (like regular audits and evaluations). For example, we ensure that partners explain the sponsorship process to children, children write letters to sponsors, and that administrative costs are minimal. Some criticisms of child sponsorship are more difficult to answer because they are based on philosophical assumptions about children and child development.

### **The one-to-one relationship is primarily for the good of the sponsor and not the child.**

Research shows that one caring adult outside the immediate family can impact the life of an at-risk child. Sponsorship can provide support and encouragement to a needy child and his or her family. Moreover, sponsorship allows Compassion to advocate for impoverished children, educating sponsors and moving them toward action on behalf of children, thus widening Compassion's impact.

### **Helping an individual child is divisive. The child is exposed to envy and ridicule.**

Unfortunately, not all children who need assistance can receive it. Compassion works with a community's neediest children, and we distribute sponsorship and one-time gift money in such a way that sponsored and non-sponsored (enrolled) children may participate in development activities. Children make excellent teachers as well as students. For example, many children share their education with parents, other siblings, and friends. They may teach people to read, learn a skill, or discover the gospel message.

### **The sponsorship process encourages dependence.**

Compassion's child development ministry is not based on material handouts. We facilitate individual child development by providing learning opportunities that a child may not encounter in another situation. Learning is central to Compassion's mission—we provide life skills that foster each child's success. Learning opportunities also are



provided for parents, which enables them to improve their parenting skills and provide for their families.

### **It doesn't matter if poor children have a formal education. The educational system in many developing countries is unfair.**

Most impoverished children lack opportunities. Most Compassion-assisted programs provide children with a variety

of learning opportunities, including formal (classroom) and non-formal (skill-building) education. Additionally, we offer educational opportunities that help children succeed in school and learn practical life and job skills. Our program gives children more chances for success within their own system.

**Evangelism violates children's rights to choose their own beliefs and shows little respect for their culture.**

Through our Christian approach to child ministry, Compassion motivates staff members and supporters to act on behalf of poor children in the name of Jesus. Additionally, Christian principles show children that they matter—and that they can overcome the vicious cycle of poverty.

**Sponsor money goes for community development projects even though child sponsorship implies child development interventions.**

There are many levels of program intervention that can impact a child's well-being. Community development is one level; however, Compassion commits to child development. For Compassion's purposes, child development means that we work to develop an individual child's physical, spiritual, and mental health. Once a child has developed and matured, he or she is more likely to improve his or her own environment.