



# CAMBODIAN CHILDREN'S FUND

[www.cambodianchildrensfund.org](http://www.cambodianchildrensfund.org)

## CHILD SPONSORSHIP GUIDELINES



## GUIDANCE ON SPONSORSHIP WITH CCF

Thank you for becoming the sponsor of a CCF child. The bonds that you create will benefit everyone - you, your sponsored child, the family and community involved, and CCF. To help you make the most of your sponsorship, we've compiled the following guidelines. While it is impossible to provide guiding principles that are entirely comprehensive in scope and detail, we hope you will find these guidelines informative and useful. That said, we encourage you to be in touch with any questions and/or concerns along the way. Communication is an essential component of a sponsor's relationship with CCF and the sponsored child.

### Sponsorship

Receiving a sponsor is a major milestone for the children at CCF. For those able to communicate, either on their own or via CCF's translators, their joy is almost always reflected in their initial, often effusive, communications. You will be a very new part of their lives and we know from experience that you can have a hugely positive influence on them.

Child sponsorship is \$150 USD per month or \$1,800 USD per year and contributes towards the cost of education, nutrition, medical and dental healthcare, social services and support for the child. Additionally, your contribution extends beyond the child to help their family and the community, as per CCF's model.

### The CCF Model

The two fundamental pillars of CCF are education and leadership. Education is the driving force of CCF's operations, and provides a pathway out of poverty for students and their families. The leadership program ensures that students graduate with a strong sense of social justice and a commitment to make a better future not just for themselves, but for their community and their country.

We learnt early on that transforming the lives of impoverished children wasn't as simple as opening free schools. We needed to do more - we needed to address the issues and dysfunction that keep children out of the classroom. It's only by addressing these barriers to education that we could achieve our goals to help students build the skills, confidence and integrity necessary to



become progressive spokespeople and leaders of change in their communities.

To meet these goals, CCF has taken a comprehensive approach that includes working with families to build plans for improving food security, escaping debt, educating their children and developing job skills for parents and older children. In doing so, CCF is working at the grassroots level to develop integrated, practical solutions to the complex issues of poverty.

CCF's program model is a blueprint for poverty reduction, community development and social cohesion. Based on the belief that a single child has the potential to lift a broken family out of poverty - and thereby power to restore an entire community through education - CCF promises each child a path to higher education and employment by creating an environment where food, housing and healthcare programs support and incentivize education. Once health problems are taken care of, income difficulties resolved, abusive factors such as domestic violence removed, and schooling costs covered, both the children and their families can commit to education. It's a long-term approach that can permanently lift a child out of poverty and provide a path to an independence that was previously unattainable.





## Communication with Your Sponsored Child

When a sponsorship is established for a child (except the very youngest children, 0- 6 years old), one of the first things we do is provide the sponsored child with their own email address to communicate with you. All contact will be through CCF's team of dedicated Sponsorship Relation Officers (SROs). It is their task to help the children compose their emails and, as necessary, translate them into English and/or Khmer. Some of the children are sufficiently competent in English to be able to communicate directly, in which case they usually write their own emails and send them to you through their SRO.

## Contact - How often?

It's best to set expectations in your first email but we usually expect some form of communication at least once per month. If you are unable to write more than once or twice a month, it is fine to say so. Disappointment only occurs when an expectation is not met, but our children understand if you have a busy schedule, travel or other priorities. Whatever the arrangement is, once made with the child, it is important to do your best to keep to it. Your child will likely respond to your email within a week (though sometimes it can be a bit longer if our translators have a backlog or there is a significant holiday period) and may occasionally just write to say hello. You set the pace.

Cambodian children can be forthright in expressing their feelings. They love to love and be loved, and they are very excited to have a sponsor. If your sponsored child says "I love you" in his/her first email, don't be shocked and don't be wary. It's spontaneous and our translators simply translate what is given to them. Some sponsors worry that the child is coached or led and when they read a complex word. Remember that our translators write the English version. The emails you receive are from the child and if you have any concerns, please feel free to contact us.





## THIS BIT IS VERY IMPORTANT, SO PLEASE READ IT CAREFULLY:

The sponsorship system matters in two essential ways:

- **First, it generates a portion of the money necessary to allow CCF to help and educate the child in question and to assist the child's family and community.**
- **Second, and no less important, it gives the sponsor and sponsored child a chance to create a real relationship. Relationships cannot exist without communication, so the level of communication matters. Nearly all CCF children have lived with inconsistency and in some cases abandonment. The arrival of an email tells them that someone out there genuinely cares for them. No contact for weeks or months on end can result in hurt feelings and a reduced self-esteem. Even if your email simply states that you are busy, that they are in your thoughts and you will write a fuller email later, it does wonders.**

To ensure regular communication, CCF operates a four-month rule. When a sponsor has not been in touch with their sponsored child for 4 full months, CCF will assume that the active sponsorship is at an end. It would be unfair to deny the child access to a communicative sponsorship, so he/she may be paired with another sponsor. If we are unable to contact you, the funds will be reallocated to our Education Program. In practice, this is rare and most sponsors grow closer through time. But please don't worry about the 4-month period passing without your realizing it - we'll make sure you know. If it looks as if you've gone a bit quiet and you haven't written for 2-3 months, we'll send you a reminder. If we don't hear from you in the next month, we'll send another. If you are still quiet, we'll send a third email to let you know that the deadline is approaching. If we don't receive a reply to our final email, we'll find a new sponsor to correspond with your sponsored child; and at this time your donations will be reallocated to support our Education program.





# GIFTS TO YOUR SPONSORED CHILD

## *Can I send gifts?*

Many sponsors do like to send gifts and it should be acknowledged that children here, as anywhere, love to receive them. However, in CCF's situation, gift giving can also be a source of problems. These tend to fall into three main areas:

### **1. Perceived fairness**

CCF must be careful not to do anything that might cause jealousy or tension between children or within families, neighborhoods or communities. The arrival of anything that looks lavish or that could mark the child or family as specially favored should be avoided.

### **2. Logistics**

The next issue is that of logistics, and the challenge of getting things here. The standard mail is just not secure and courier services such as DHL or FedEx, while reliable, are very expensive. You might be surprised to know that almost anything can be obtained locally here in Phnom Penh. If you let us know what it is that you'd like to provide for a birthday, to celebrate your child becoming an award-winner, or gift for another special event or achievement, we can almost certainly source and provide it on your behalf. If you do decide to send a gift, please contact us in advance for a CCF address to which you can send it and we will take it from there.

### **3. The cost of the gift**

Sponsors do like to be generous, but generosity has risks. CCF aims to help the children in its care become upright, educated, independent, involved contributors to their developing society. It does not want to encourage them to become dependent, to link sponsorship with personal gain or to equate a sponsor's care and friendship with access to expensive presents. Please do not send gifts such as cameras, iPods and the like. Generosity on this scale has the potential to be disruptive and damaging not only to the individual concerned but to the community in which they live. Accordingly, no gift should exceed USD \$50 in value. The old cliché that "it's the thought that counts" is still often very true. We do not want to turn the children into people who value a gift by its cost. We need you to understand this and to help us with it.

So yes, gifts can be sent and are welcome, but to maximize their impact, they should be rare, limited to a birthday, a special event or success, and should follow the valuable suggestions in these guidelines.

Finally, if we receive a gift and the student has been absent from classes or has exemplified some challenging behavior, we will keep the gift in storage and once the attendance/behavior has improved we will present the gift to the student. CCF must ensure that undesirable behavior/attitudes are not rewarded, we encourage our students to demonstrate good behavior/attitudes and attend class; for this they receive many rewards.

## *But I can afford to send something more expensive than usual.*

Sponsors who wish to send items such as cameras and musical instruments should be aware that CCF's approach to the arrival of such gifts is that the recipient child will have initial early access. Thereafter, the gift will be held and used in common; in the classroom or residential facility, under the guidance of CCF staff. This arrangement has worked well to date but in all honesty, CCF does prefer to discourage expensive gifts.

## *So, what do the children like?*

This section outlines examples of arrangements we make when we receive gifts and how much money is appropriate to send. We normally ask the child what activities they would like to do with their sponsor's donation and we will also follow your guidance and direction where suitable.



## Birthday outings

A birthday outing at CCF involves more than just a birthday cake. The children usually like to bring one or two of their friends along to enjoy a meal and shopping to be part of a special memory. We encourage the birthday child to bring friends who are unsponsored or have rarely joined any special outings. The same is true for other gift outings, and they usually involve a selection of these activities:

- \$5 - \$10 USD: Birthday cake
- \$5 - \$10 USD: Shopping for stationary, books, art supplies
- \$5 - 10 USD: Visiting new places such as Wat Phnom, the Royal Palace, museum, local parks and playgrounds
- \$5 - \$20 USD: Ice skating, tenpin bowling, cinema, Kid's City recreation center and swimming at a water park
- \$10 - \$15 USD: Going for a meal (many of the children like fast food as it's an infrequent and special treat. Fried Chicken and pizza are usually top of the list.
- Health conscious sponsors - please note that these are very rare occasions and a vast departure from the nutritious, balanced meals served daily at CCF.
- \$10 - \$20 USD: Shopping for a new outfit



## Suggested gift amounts:

To ensure your gift is arranged in time for the special occasion, please give us at least 4 - 7 days to process your donation.

- Under 4 years old: \$25 USD
- 4 to 7 years old: \$30 USD
- 8 to 13 years old: \$40 USD
- Over 14 years old: \$50 USD

If you wish to donate for a gift, please click on the link: [donation online](#)

Amounts above these suggestions will allow more children to participate in the birthday celebrations. Any left over money is usually allocated to Family support in the form of rice or rent subsidy, or saving for the child's future needs.



## VISITS AND OUTINGS WITH YOUR SPONSORED CHILD

### Can I visit?

Almost every sponsor thinks of visiting his/her sponsor child, and every child would certainly love a visit. We are happy when sponsors can come here, and surprisingly many have done just that. If you intend to visit, please let us know as far in advance as you can and we'll do what we can to help. Once we know that you're coming, we'll send you some information about the country and the city that we hope you'll find useful.

One important point though: it sometimes happens that sponsors plan surprise or short notice trips at times when the children are on holiday. CCF is very supportive of family links, and family togetherness is seen as very important especially at the time of some of the main national festivals, such as Khmer New Year (April), Pchum Ben (Sept - Oct) and Water Festival (Nov). So please always check your intended visit dates with us before you commit. We don't want you or the children to be disappointed.

It is important to note that if you are a sponsor and either spend a lot of time in Cambodia or live here: to ensure there is fairness amongst our students and to also limit feelings of jealousy, we prefer to limit sponsor outings trips and visits to two or three times per year.



### Please don't just turn up

Please do not just turn up at any of our facilities. We are sure you'll understand that we take the safety and stability of our children very seriously, and staff will not allow access to anyone who is unannounced, unexpected and unescorted.

### Can I meet my sponsor child?

Not only will you be able to meet your sponsored child but you'll have the opportunity to:

- Take your sponsored child for a sponsor outing (see below).
- Visit the facility/school where the child studies with CCF.

### What to expect on a sponsor outing:

- 2 - 3 hours with your sponsor child who, if OK with you, will bring 1 or 2 friends along.
- The outing will be in Phnom Penh and can be in the morning or afternoon. We will make sure that the scheduled outing does not conflict with the child's public school schedule.
- The outing will be chaperoned by one of our Sponsor Relation Officers, who will also act as a translator and supervisor.
- We ask that the sponsor pay for the activities of the outing with their sponsored child, their friends and the chaperone - and thank you for your generosity!
- The sponsor is welcome to bring a gift for their sponsored child (in line with the gift guidance section).

### Appropriate activities include:

Going for a shopping trip (to the mall or local market, bookshop), going out for lunch or ice cream, visiting the park or Wat Phnom, a visit to Think Big Cambodia or Kids City, tenpin bowling, or going for a swim at your hotel pool or local water park.

We are open to outing suggestions but encourage sponsors to find out what the child would like to do and be led by that.

### What we cannot do

Please bear in mind that all the children are under CCF's Duty of Care and that CCF focuses its resources on them and their welfare. We prioritize stability and harmony in the children's lives. Most of the children have seldom experienced anything but uncertainty and all have been raised

in desperately poor circumstances. Visits are enormously valued but they must be carefully inserted into the child's normal life. This means that while we will do everything we can to make your visit special and enjoyable, there are some things that we cannot do.

### **We cannot:**

- Allow unsupervised access to the children. There must always be a CCF local staff member present.
- Allow sponsors to give money directly to children or their family. Any funds intended to help the child or the child's family must be channeled through CCF.
- Allow multiple trips out or an unduly large amount of time to one sponsor's visit.
- Allow the sponsor child to have an overnight stay with sponsors.
- For child protection and privacy reasons, it will not be possible to visit the family's home.

### **CCF's Child's Protection Policy**

The CCF Child Protection Policy has been developed to ensure the safety, security and well-being of all children in CCF's care. It applies to everybody who encounters our children - staff and visitors alike. If you are going to visit your sponsored child, we need to meet with you in advance to:

- a. Discuss the visit to ensure that you understand the important points highlighted in these guidelines so as to provide the best possible experience with your sponsored child;
- b. Ensure that you have read and understood the CCF Child Protection Policy; and
- c. Have you sign a Code of Conduct signifying your understanding of the CCF Child Protection Policy and its requirements.

Our track record of happy sponsors is excellent. We have had many sponsors visit over the years, and although some have wished they could have done more and seen more and spent more time with their sponsored child; most have reported that the experience was unique and positive.

### **A final word about visits**

The children are some of the brightest, nicest people you could ever hope to meet. They have

a great sense of fun, love to share their happiness with each other and with visitors, and genuinely seek to enjoy any new experience that comes their way. We are certain that you'll enjoy being with them and having them in your life.

We will always do our best to help you have a good time, but our resources are limited and the numbers of the children CCF cares for are in the thousands. That said, we aim to be flexible and positive and strive to help you build and maintain the links to create a successful and sustainable relationship. So, if we can help, we will. But please bear with us and try to understand if sometimes we cannot.





## TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

The “CCF Promise” is a pledge to all children in our care that we will support them until they are self-sustainable. There is no cut-off age and no set rule book. If children are academically able we will support them throughout University and with job placements. If not, we will look to internal or external vocational training opportunities. Whether vocational or educational, the goal is to provide the necessary training and support so that they become independent adults and reach their full potential.

With CCF’s guidance, quality education and holistic programs, we translate this motivation into results. The model has also led to an over 97% retention rate of our students each year. When our students complete grade 12, they will be given the following options:

- a. To continue their education and apply to local or international universities to complete a bachelor’s degree in their chosen field.
- b. To join a vocational training course
- c. To work and live independently

If your sponsored child is in university or in vocational training and still receiving support from CCF, as a sponsor you will be given the following options:

- a. To continue to sponsor your child and communicate with them as normal
- b. To contribute in part or full to their university fund and continue to communicate as normal
- c. To transfer your sponsorship payments to one of our younger students and start a new journey with them. You can also continue to communicate with your previous sponsored child as a pen pal.

### University Costs

With CCF thriving after more than thirteen years in operation, more and more young children who once toiled in the Steung Meanchey garbage dumpsite are nearing adulthood. Part of CCF’s commitment to create tomorrow’s leaders is a pledge that we will support our students to further their studies in university.

And, wow - our kids really have responded to that pledge! In 2016-2017, CCF has 131 university students and we estimate to have 400 in 2021-2022. These numbers do present a big funding challenge for us; however, it’s exactly the sort of problem we want to have!

Many sponsors, having shared in their sponsor child’s journey at CCF, are interested in continuing their support when their sponsored child decides to pursue university.

Part of our funding plan to cover this expense is to package university costs as a four-year scholarship for each student. The average cost of a four-year degree is \$10,800 USD. This includes: university tuition fees, study materials, textbooks, shared



laptops and/or tablets, career guidance, job placement support, transportation costs and free medical healthcare. Although living expenses are not included, CCF will continue to ensure that all CCF students attending university are fully supported with access to accommodation, food, and clothing as needed.

As a sponsor, you may opt to pay for the full cost of a four-year university scholarship or contribute partially toward the costs, which will be gratefully received into CCF’s general university fund. Your contribution can be set up as a monthly, annual or lump sum payment depending on your preference.

If you are unable to contribute to the university costs, please be assured that it will not ultimately affect whether your sponsor child goes on to study at university. CCF remains committed to sending all children to university should they be successful in their studies and applications. We will seek funding as necessary from external partners, find individuals who are interested in providing a university scholarship or supplement university costs through general fundraising. Of course, whatever you decide, we hope that you will continue to communicate with your sponsor child.

## WHEN DOES MY SPONSORSHIP END?



There are several situations that can lead to children leaving our care and programs. Before exploring these, it is worth highlighting 2 key points:

1. Children are in our care on a voluntary basis. We require permission, from a child's parents or guardians, before accepting them into CCF. Guardians retain all legal custody of their children, even when they are in our care.
2. We always act in the best interest of the child, regardless of sponsorship. If a child is better off at their homeland, living with relatives or partaking in another vocation, we will never force them to stay for the sake of retaining your sponsorship.

### Children going to live in their homeland

A move back to their homeland is the best possible outcome for the children in our care. No matter how hard we work, a life in Steung Meanchey is incredibly tough, hence our focus on serving this community. Children are exposed to many risks in this environment, from the quick spread of diseases in the toxic surroundings to drug, alcohol and child abuse prevalent among the community. For those living in one of our residential centers, a stable home life with relatives in their home land is a more suitable situation - and can free up space for the most vulnerable children.

That said, we will always make sure that a move home is truly in the best interest of the child. We will ensure that there is access to schooling nearby and the child is registered in the appropriate

classes. We will investigate and assess the domestic environment, ensuring it is safe, loving and able to provide for the needs of the child. We may also offer an Education Assistance Package (EAP) to the family to pay for the local school fees and, per the needs of the family, provide rice and other essential materials.

Provincial Cambodian living is basic, but it is far less hazardous than growing up in the slums around Steung Meanchey. Living safely with relatives and studying there is a good outcome and we will not try to convince the child to stay within Steung Meanchey unless it benefits the child.

### Expulsion from CCF

There are rare occasions in which a child is expelled from CCF. Such situations fall into two main categories:

- continued absence from school without reason
- continued unacceptable behavior, which may include failure to adhere to 'house rules' in our residential facilities and an unwillingness to improve.

We never want these situations to arise but, as with all schools, we have an overriding duty to protect the children enrolled in our programs and to cultivate a safe, fair and positive environment for those committed to study.

We have a counselor based at each of our residential facilities who works with children experiencing behavioral issues. Children are provided every opportunity to turn poor behavior around and with hundreds of teenagers in our care, we understand that certain hiccups are inevitable. We've all been there ourselves!

CCF has a thorough process to deal with these issues and all the children in our program are aware of the consequences of being absent from school or demonstrating inappropriate behavior. Depending on the situation, the child will receive an 'event note', '1st warning', '2nd warning' or 'serious warning'.

Expulsion for unacceptable behavior or absenteeism is the last possible option and even in these situations our outreach team will ensure that public schooling remains easily accessible and the child is registered into the appropriate classes. We will also investigate and do our utmost to ensure that the domestic environment is safe, loving and able to provide for the child.



Independence and self-sufficiency  
CCF's ultimate goal is to have each child in our care become a gainfully employed and self-sufficient adult who no longer requires support from CCF. We hope that through your communications with them up to this point you will be as comfortable as we are that they are ready to be independent. Furthermore, we would be more than happy for you to continue contact with your adult sponsor child directly. After all, your emotional and financial support played a major role in their success.

### Letting you know

Our sponsorship program is designed to build close bonds and we tirelessly work to foster natural relationships between our sponsors and their sponsored children. Bringing these to a premature end is the hardest and most upsetting part of our job.

But we owe you the truth and will never sugarcoat or hide from a situation.

We will let you know at the earliest possible opportunity if your sponsor child is moving back to the homeland or if concerns over their behavior or attendance arise. There have been several cases where an encouraging email from a sponsor has resulted in a turnaround in a child's behavior; although, if you are uncomfortable getting involved in such a scenario, that's fine as well. In these situations, we always invite sponsors to start a new journey with one of our (many) unsponsored children, but there is no obligation to do so. If you have any concerns, please contact us so we can discuss our reasoning and the underlying issues - recognizing that there may be a need to protect the child's privacy





# THANK YOU!

## *Any questions?*

That's about it. We know that the above guidance may not have answered every question you might have, so please do not hesitate to contact your local office or our sponsorship department in Cambodia [sponsor@cambodianchildrensfund.org](mailto:sponsor@cambodianchildrensfund.org) at any time with questions, concerns or feedback. And finally, very many thanks for your support of CCF and for your generosity and kindness to the child you sponsor. We hope and believe that your sponsorship will be special and good for both of you.

**Thank you for your support.**