



Your guide

to visiting your sponsored child



- › We hope and pray that your visit will be memorable and encouraging for both you and your sponsored child!
- › The day that you spend with your sponsored child will provide a unique insight into their culture and community. This valued time of relationship building will give you a deeper understanding of the challenges your sponsored child faces, as well as the opportunity to affirm and encourage them in their studies and walk with Jesus.
- › We recommend that you take this small guide with you on your travels as it contains handy hints about how to make the most of the experience.

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“I ALSO WAS SO HAPPY WHEN I KNEW THAT MY SPONSOR WAS COMING UP TO VISIT ME. DURING THE VISIT I GOT SO EXCITED THAT I RUSHED TO HUG HIM. I LOVE HIM VERY MUCH AND ALWAYS KEEP HIM IN MY MIND AND HEART. I ALWAYS PRAY TO THE LORD FOR HIM.”

Jeny Lizzeth Sevilla Cortez,
sponsored child, Honduras

“POVERTY IS SO OFTEN FACELESS, BUT MEETING JOSEPH IT REALLY HIT HOME THAT BEHIND THE PICTURE ON OUR FRIDGE IS A REAL BOY.”

Tish Bloomfield,
sponsor of 12-year-old Joseph in Kenya



BEFORE YOUR VISIT



In the weeks leading up to your visit, we encourage you to:

➤ Research the country and culture you are about to visit. We have an easy-to-use map guide at www.compassionuk.org. For more detailed information about the poverty context in a country visit www.unicef.org. For general travel information we recommend www.lonelyplanet.com.

➤ Take the time to learn a few words and phrases in the local language – we have enclosed a useful fact sheet to get you started. You could even practise a word a day for ten days before you go.

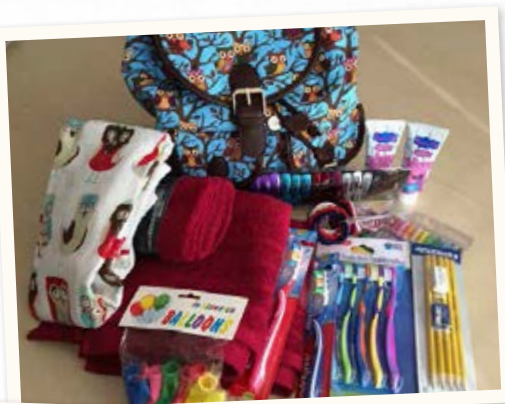
➤ Read about Compassion's programmes – learn more about how a Compassion project works at www.compassionuk.org.

➤ Why not offset the carbon emissions from your trip? Visit www.climatestewards.org to calculate and offset the carbon footprint of your trip.

➤ Find a photo of you and your family to take with you – this will be a great conversation starter! You could also bring a photo album with blank pages at the end for photos you send after your return.

➤ You may like to take a few well chosen small gifts with you.

One suggestion is to buy a small school backpack and place a few items in it. It is easily transportable when you get there and you can leave the backpack behind as a gift too. Children like to have backpacks to take their books to school in.



We recommend gifts such as:

- Clothes, shoes, hair ribbons and clips
- Pens, pencils, crayons and paper
- Books
- Soap, toothpaste and toothbrushes
- A wind up torch or radio (remember battery operated items will require replacements which the family probably can't afford)
- A football (deflated and with a pump and connector for travel purposes), doll or skipping rope



TIP

We strongly recommend that you don't give too many gifts as this can overwhelm a child. If your gifts do not fit into a small backpack, you've probably bought too much and may need to reconsider. Your sponsored child will share their gifts, so you could give something for the entire family such as towels, flat bed sheets, blankets, tea towels, tablecloths or kitchenware. Remember that your visit itself is an amazing gift which only a few sponsored children and families have the opportunity to experience.

If you have a real desire to do more for your sponsored child and their family, you can send a Family Gift on your return. This allows the family to choose what they really need.



We want you to enjoy a wonderful visit and have included a few suggestions to help make your stay safe and enjoyable. If you are at all anxious, or even if you have travelled widely, these tips will help.

Top tips for adapting to the local culture:

- Ask your visit host questions about what to expect so that your expectations will be realistic. They will be happy to assist your understanding of their culture.
- Have a positive regard for others, showing respect and love.
- Accept differences and remember that there is always more than one way to do something.
- Be open-minded and receptive to new experiences.
- Greetings are often lengthier and more elaborate than we are used to. Please take the time to return the greeting and have a chat.
- Keep your sense of humour.



Top tips for staying safe:

Whilst you are abroad, theft and pick pocketing pose risks. Here are some common sense rules which may be of use:

- Avoid carrying large amounts of money with you.
- Make sure that your passport, identification documents, money, insurance and credit cards are not kept together.
- Be careful when paying for something. Do not allow bystanders to see how much money you have. Ideally keep money in two separate places.



Top tips for staying healthy: Top tips for avoiding waterborne diseases and sunstroke:

- Any cooked food you eat should be hot.
 - Only eat fruit that needs peeling – bananas or plantains are ideal.
 - Don't eat uncooked vegetables, including salads, as they may have been washed in unsafe water.
 - Don't eat undercooked or raw meat, fish or shellfish.
 - Avoid drinking unpasteurised milk or other dairy products.
 - Avoid eating food purchased from street vendors.
 - Wash your hands before eating anything – we recommend taking anti-bacterial hand wash or wet wipes.
 - You are likely to be given food such as ground nuts, unfamiliar vegetables and previously unknown cuts of meat. For example, depending on where you are travelling to you may encounter beans, cassava or maize meal. If you are at all concerned about the food, you could take some cereal bars with you.
- Drink only hot beverages or bottled water – where you break the seal on the bottle.
 - Don't use ice cubes – they are made with local water.
 - Use bottled water to brush your teeth.
 - Drink far more water than you would at home to keep hydrated.
 - Spend less time in the sun.
 - Wear a hat and use sunscreen.
 - Try to keep your skin covered as much as possible. Clothes that are light weight, loose fitting and long sleeved are ideal.
- We recommend that you consult your local GP or travel clinic for information on vaccinations and avoiding serious diseases such as malaria.

Top tips for what to wear:

Please ensure that your clothing will be considered modest by the people you will be visiting.

Women should wear skirts that reach below the knee when visiting their sponsored child. Trousers, shorts, jeans and shoestring tops are not appropriate. Men should wear long trousers. Shorts and jeans are not appropriate.



CHILD PROTECTION ADVICE



We want to make your visit as memorable as possible but we also have the best interests of the children at heart. We know that our sponsors share our concerns for children too. These guidelines are intended to protect children in Compassion projects from abuse as well as Compassion sponsors from wrongful allegations of abuse. For everyone's protection, it is essential that sponsors avoid even the appearance of inappropriate conduct. You should always be aware of the way in which your behaviour towards children and young people could be perceived.



Therefore we ask that you adhere to the following guidelines during your visit:

- You will be accompanied by a Compassion visit host at all times.
- The length of your visit is up to six hours, for one day only.
- You cannot stay overnight with your sponsored child.
- If you have the opportunity to visit your sponsored child's home, you must be accompanied by a Compassion visit host.
- It is not appropriate to ask for or accept accommodation at the project or with your sponsored child's family.
- Be culturally sensitive in expressing affection towards your sponsored child.
- Avoid flirting, unwelcome flattery or suggestive comments.
- Your personal contact information is not to be given to your sponsored child or their family.
- Do not ask for, or record, your sponsored child's contact information.
- Please do not give cash to your sponsored child, their family or the project staff. If you are touched by a family's circumstances, you should give through the Compassion UK office on your return. This will ensure that the money is spent wisely, as well as protecting the family from becoming a target of jealousy in the community.





MEETING YOUR SPONSORED CHILD



The day of your visit

When you meet your sponsored child, they are likely to be very shy at first. The visit host will help with translation, giving you the opportunity to chat and get to know each other better. As the day progresses, your child will usually become more relaxed. Games are a great way to break the ice – why not try a game of football or have a go at skipping?



Visiting your child's home

You may have the opportunity to visit your sponsored child's home, which the family will consider a great honour. Please appreciate their hospitality and take an interest in their life. Before you leave their home, please ask if there is anything that you can pray for and spend some time in prayer with the family. Your visit host will be on hand to translate.

We have included a few questions that you may like to ask during your visit:

- Have you lived here a long time?
- How many people live here?
- How many family members are there?
- Can you describe a typical day for your family?
- Do you go to church?
- What does it mean for you to have one of your children sponsored and attending the project?

When visiting a home, guests seldom leave empty handed. If you are given a gift, accept it graciously. If you do not want to or cannot take the gift home with you, share it with the project or the family. In the case of live animals and birds, ask your sponsored child to take care of it for you. This will give you something to talk about in your letters.

For your own safety, as well as that of your sponsored child, please do not revisit the family or project director during your time away and never give out your address. If you are feeling



pressured to do so, please use the Compassion UK office address:

Compassion UK, 43 High Street, Weybridge, Surrey, KT13 8BB.

Visiting your sponsored child's project

You may have the opportunity to visit the project your sponsored child attends. If you do, please take time to chat with the project staff and, if it is a project day, play with the children. Please go ahead and take lots of photographs but remember it's polite to ask first.

Please note: Not all of the children in the projects will be sponsored. If you meet a child that you would like to support, please do not promise the child that you will sponsor them. Instead, mention to the visit host that you are interested in supporting the child and then speak to Compassion UK on your return. There are a number of reasons why it might not be possible to sponsor the child, and we want to protect both of you from disappointment.



Many sponsors find that following their time in a developing country, and having met their own sponsored child, they have a new found passion for speaking out on behalf of children in poverty.

AFTER YOUR VISIT



Take one more step

In the weeks following your return home, a member of our team will be in contact to collect your feedback. We'll be excited to hear how you got on. If things went well, it encourages us, if things didn't go so smoothly, we want to make sure we improve for next time. If you visited a Compassion project, we'll ask if you have any photos you can send us to share with other sponsors. We'll also follow up on any outstanding expenses connected to your visit which can be paid by debit or credit card, Direct Debit, cheque or bank transfer.

Many sponsors find that following their time in a developing country, and having met their own sponsored child, they have a new found passion for speaking out on behalf of children in poverty. It is our prayer that everyone who visits their sponsored child is able to find at least one more sponsor.

With this in mind, we're committed to providing you with the support and resources you need to share your experiences with others. We'll give you further information upon your return, but you may want to think about whether you can:

- Share your experiences and photos on social media.
- Organise either an informal evening to share with friends or ask for a short slot at a church service or event.
- Get in touch with your local press. We can write the story for you and provide you with all the help and guidance you need.
- Join Compassion as a volunteer. There are exciting opportunities to release children from poverty and network with others who are passionate about making a difference. See www.compassionuk.org/volunteering for more information.



“AS A SPONSOR I FELT LED TO DO MORE FOR CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY. VOLUNTEERING HAS BROUGHT FUN AND FRIENDSHIP AND HAS OPENED MY EYES TO WHAT GOD IS DOING IN THE WORLD TODAY, AND TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT I MIGHT PLAY A SMALL PART IN HIS GREAT SALVATION PLAN.”

Chris, Swindon



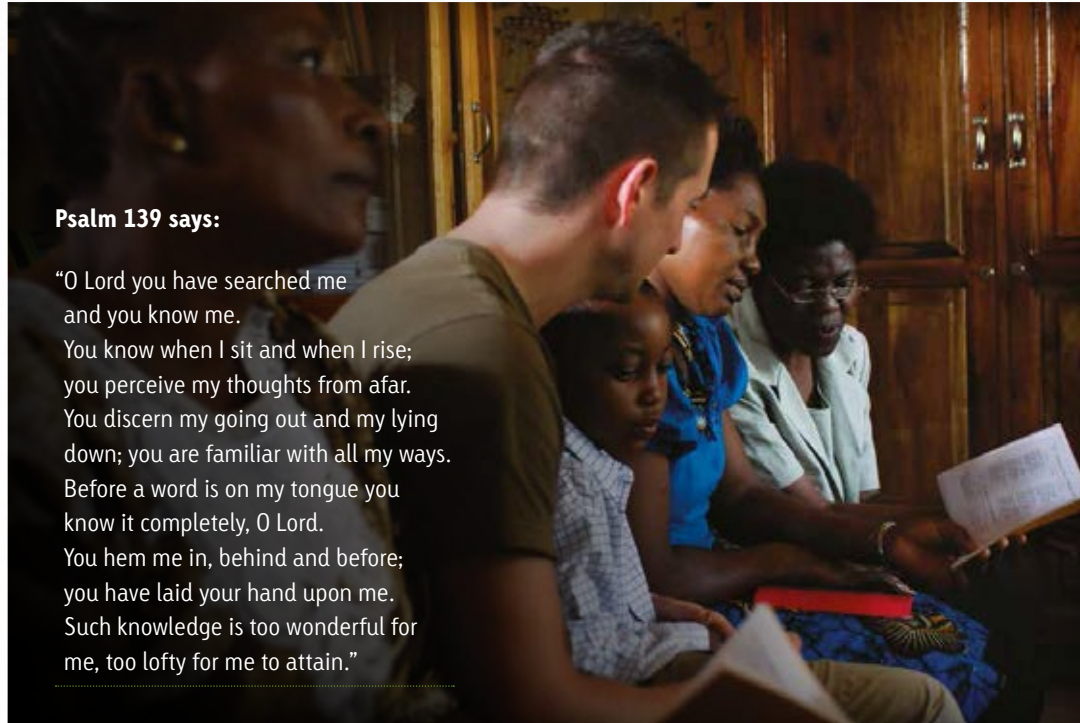
Passion. Shared.



1 week before the trip

Just one more week and it's time to go! You've raised the money, updated your passport, looked the other way during your jabs, been prayed for at church, purchased your sunscreen and filled a rucksack with goodies. This time next week you'll be on a plane en route to visit your sponsored child! This is going to be a life-changing experience. Prepare to be blown away!

Now that everything has been organised, take time to prepare yourself in the run up to the trip. Just travelling to the developing world with a totally different culture to yours may be a brand new experience where you feel out of your comfort zone, let alone meeting this little person you have been writing to all this time. But God knows your heart and He knows your mind!



Psalm 139 says:

"O Lord you have searched me and you know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely,
O Lord.
You hem me in, behind and before;
you have laid your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain."

Why not take one of the following things each day during the next week to think and pray about?

- **Nervous about travelling such a long distance?** – "I can do all this through him who gives me strength." Philippians 4:13
- **Apprehensive about what lies ahead?** – "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7
- **The country you are visiting.** Why not research some statistics and facts?

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, it is with a sense of happiness and apprehension that I approach this trip. Thank you for making it possible.

I ask that you would prepare my heart and cause it to grow bigger. I ask that you would deal with my mind and make it obedient to you. I ask that you would open my eyes to have compassion on those in need and open my ears to the cry of the broken. I offer my hands to serve and to give and I give you myself to bring peace, joy and hope! Amen.

- **Health issues** – pray for God's protection.
- **Read the webpage about how and why Compassion began.** Thank God for all the lives which are being touched by His grace. Pray for the staff that you will meet who serve Him so faithfully.
- **Ask God for words of encouragement** – "When your words came I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight." Jeremiah 15:16
- **How would you define poverty?** Open your heart to let God reveal His heart for the poor to you.

This is such an exciting opportunity and something you will never forget so be prepared to drink in every moment - both the ones that create smiles and the ones that produce tears.





The day of the visit

It's finally here! The day you get to meet your sponsored child. It may be a day that has taken a lot of planning but it's a day that God has known about even before you were born. "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (Psalm 139:16). This is an opportunity that the majority of our sponsors won't have, but for some reason God has ordained that the child He has connected you with will have the joy of meeting their sponsor. What a privilege. Make the most of this incredible blessing. Younger children may be overwhelmed and hold back while older ones may be more open

but give it time; it's a day to be with your child and do some kind of activity, a time to talk, to play and a time to encourage. Take lots of pictures but remember, if you're stuck behind a camera the whole time then you rob the child and yourself of meaningful interaction. This is going to be a visit that they and their family will never forget!

I love how Jesus makes time for children:

➤ "Whoever welcomes a little child in my name welcomes me." Matthew 18:5

This experience will bring you closer to Jesus. You will discover His presence in a very special way.

➤ "Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to pray for them." Matthew 19:13
One of the most special moments during this time is the chance to pray for your child and their caregiver or family. It's a holy moment and will bring so much encouragement to them as you ask God to lift their burdens and bring His peace.

➤ "Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to lay his hands on them." Matthew 19:13,15

Appropriate physical contact has great emotional and spiritual benefits. Your love and laughter, gifts, hugs and prayers will be something they treasure forever.

➤ Sadly the visit will come to an end – it's always hard to leave but God has other days planned full of purpose for you. This experience will help to shape that.



A prayer before the visit

Dear Father. Thank you that I am your child and that I can call you Father. Today help me to reflect your love to _____ and their family. Help me to know what to say and what to do, how to respond if they are a little shy, when to hug and when to hold back. May my attitude be that of a servant, my love be that of a parent and my commitment be that of a friend who sticks closer than a brother. Teach me to listen to your voice through this child

and to discover you afresh in my own life. May I be a bringer of hope and joy to this child today. In Jesus' name – Amen.

As you return to your hotel you may be trying to process your emotions. Journalling your experience while details are still clear may help you to share your story clearly in the future and keep those memories alive.

Have an amazing time! "This is the day that the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it."



After your trip has ended

Having been exposed to the challenges of poverty, coming back to the comforts of home, culture and lifestyle can initially provoke different emotions in us as we are faced with the greed, extravagance and the waste of consumer society. Sometimes it can make us angry and judgemental so be careful you don't direct this at others who haven't just experienced what you have. First of all we need to be challenged to make changes in

our own lifestyle where necessary, but also begin to be a voice of hope for change and transformation not of judgement and anger. Let your experience of encountering poverty and seeing the difference that the local church and Compassion is making cause you to speak up and be a voice for the voiceless.

One of the greatest things we can do is always make time for children – Jesus did! Sadly, adults don't always recognise the value of children. The disciples got a little carried away with their own self importance asking Jesus "Who is the greatest?" Jesus' response is brilliant! "He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.'" Matthew 18:2-5

Did you hear that? Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes a child welcomes me!" If we want the presence of Jesus in our lives and churches then there's a powerful key! Children have something to offer and can lead us in our worship of God. The chief priests in Jesus' day got angry and offended at the praise he was receiving as the children shouted "Hosanna!" in the temple courts. "Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him. "'Yes' replied Jesus, 'have you never read, "From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise?"'" Matthew 21:15-16

Over and over again in scripture we read how God used children in His purposes:

- Samuel, who learnt to hear God's voice from an early age.
- David a shepherd boy, turned giant killer and King of Israel.
- A little girl who pointed her master Naaman to the man of God who could heal him of his leprosy.
- A boy who gave his lunch to Jesus and saw thousands of hungry people fed as Jesus took his little and made it a lot!

Who knows how God will use your sponsored child as you continue to pray for and write letters to them? However all children are precious to God whether living in poverty or in plenty. Now that the visit is over, the work can begin! What would our churches look like if children were valued more, catered for and listened to more? Inspired by the experience you have just returned from maybe we can



help others to welcome children. This could be by regularly praying for the children in your church, school and community. You could let those who work with children know that you are praying for them or get involved with the children's ministry in church (if not already) or become a Compassion Volunteer and encourage others to sponsor a child.

Jesus said "When you did it for the least of these, you did it for me" [Matthew 25:40]. If we want to serve the Lord and know His presence in our lives then it would seem from the word that it is inextricably linked to our attitude towards children.



PRAYER:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you for all you have revealed to me in these past few days. Please cause my heart to always be open to children and to see Jesus in each one! Show me how I can help others to welcome the least of these.

In Jesus' Name,
Amen.

If you have questions, please call us on **01932 836490** or e-mail info@compassionuk.org

“DEFEND THE CAUSE OF THE
WEAK AND FATHERLESS;
MAINTAIN THE RIGHTS OF
THE POOR AND OPPRESSED.”

PSALM 82:3



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Registered charity in England and Wales (1077216) and Scotland (SC045059).
Registered in England No. 03719092

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Charity No. CHY 19426, Registered Company No. 493955