

3.4 CHILD SPONSORSHIP – COMPACT FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

“The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn.”
– Ralph Waldo Emerson –

What is in the power of just ONE? Many people throughout history have asked this question. And have given different answers. World Vision has found its own unique answer to this question: taking *one* child – and linking it with *one* sponsor – in a unique *child-sponsor* relationship. If World Vision didn’t believe in this approach to transforming whole communities, it would not currently have over 3 million children in child sponsorship programs. Here is how it works:

World Vision offices around the world “adopt” entire villages into so-called Area Development Programs (ADPs) and commit themselves to these villages for an approximate time period of 10-15 years. The commitment time horizons may vary but are adapted such that these villages can be “taken by the hand” and led along the narrow path through the thicket of poverty right up to the clearing of sustainable economic freedom. Villages that come out at the other end of ADP community development programs are then “released” to march on in their own stride.

Through its ADPs child sponsorship has wrought holistic change in whole regions. Because multiple areas of community-specific development issues are addressed, children can develop in holistic ways. From education to health care, from improved sanitation and clean drinking water to reforestation and terracing of crops, ADPs bring all of a village’s

needs into developmental focus. The gradual introduction of granaries, seed banks, aquafarms, community banks, animal husbandry, borehole wells, storage tanks, enclosed latrines, irrigation dams, demonstration nurseries, fruit-bearing trees, health clinics, schools, local marketplaces where families may sell their goods, etc. are all critical elements of holistic community development (source: Vision for a Village, World Vision).

For a small amount of money (generally about \$1 per day or \$30 per month) child sponsors may “adopt” a child and ensure – albeit from afar – that the child’s needs are met. By corresponding with “his” or “her” child, sponsors may “oversee” the development of the child. The exchange of letters and photos often makes these relationships meaningful for both the child and his or her “special guardian.” Child sponsorship provides children with the hope that has inspired generations of poor people around the world – hope of obtaining education and thereby escaping the clutches of poverty. Through child sponsorship, recalcitrant students and their parents are often being cheered on and inspired to press on to the educational finish line: if someone in another country believes in me, then I must believe in myself and do my best.

“To the world you might just be one person.
But to one person you just might be the world.” —ANON

Former sponsored children have gone on to becoming teachers, social workers, seamstresses, professors, and even national leaders (source: World Vision Singapore). And it seems to work. Rosita Balunto (29) is a teacher in a tiny community school in San José in Southern Mindanao, Philippines. We had to cross a couple of rivers with a four-wheel drive vehicle and drive up some winding hills to visit her and her school children. She is a former World Vision sponsored child who was “carried through” by a Canadian sponsor from childhood right up through university.

It was the first time that I met an “adult sponsored child.” I began to grasp the exponential potential for human development inherent in child sponsorship. Meeting Rosita Balunto and watching her teach other children with her simple and joyful enthusiasm also reassured me that prolonging the investment in “my” sponsored child Melwie was a worthwhile investment that in due season would reap rich returns.

As was asked in the beginning of the section, what can only ONE do? Or what is in the power of just ONE? A modern faith-based NGO might give two answers. First:

*“The cynic says, ‘One man can’t do anything.’
I say, ‘Only one man can do anything.’”*

—JOHN W. GARDNER



Rosita M. Balunto (29), former sponsored child and present-day teacher at the community school in San José in Southern Mindanao, Philippines.



What can only ONE do? The second answer a faith-based NGO might give in response to this question is this imaginary memento:

HOW JESUS THOUGHT

My child – I’ve often heard your troubled heart’s question –
and this message is my answer to you. Hear me well:

You look at the millions of hungry children –
and you ask, “What can only one do?”
–FEED ONE

You’re haunted by the scores of homeless infants –
and you ask, “What can only one do?”
–SHELTER ONE

You ache for the hopeless and unschooled children –
and you ask, “What can only one do?”
–EDUCATE ONE

You grieve for the diseased, the bedridden, the dying –
and you ask, “What can only one do?”
–COMFORT ONE

You weep for the abused, abandoned and unwanted
orphans – and you ask, “What can only one do?”
–LOVE ONE

Remember, two thousand years ago, the world was filled,
just as today, with those in need – and when the helpless
and the hopeless cried out for mercy, God sent ONE Savior...

HOPE BEGINS, JUST AS IT BEGAN:
–WITH ONLY ONE