

childvoice

2016 SPRING/SUMMER

ON THE MEND

Skills-training offers youth new hope in Ghana

SMALL VOICES, BIG DREAMS

Global survey reveals children's fears



FOX Sports' Rachel Bonnetta visits Ghana, page 6



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The right to feel safe

Every child has the right to be free from violence and exploitation. That was one promise set to be met with the adoption of the United Nation's (UN) Sustainable Development Goals, 2015-2030 last September. Now it's on the global agenda to protect children from harm, such as child labour and early marriage.

Christian Children's Fund of Canada (CCFC), along with non-governmental organizations across the globe, is committed to supporting the UN's goals. The need to protect children is real. Look no further than the sixth-annual *Small Voices, Big Dreams* survey results (see p. 4). Nearly half of the 6,000 10- to 12-year-olds surveyed in 44 countries don't feel safe at home (42 percent) or at school (42 percent). It's clear we have work to do.

The good news is CCFC is always working to keep children and youth in developing countries safe. We help female runaways escape poverty and violence on city streets (see p. 7); discourage early, forced marriage (see p. 9); and build schools to keep teens from having to move away alone to earn an education (see p. 11). Check out six stories about gender-specific issues CCFC is addressing, starting on page 7.

Keeping children safe also means reaching out in times of crisis. Follow us as we visit Nepal, one year after we responded to an earthquake that killed 8,800 people (see p. 13).

Of course, it's thanks to local and international teams, our partners (see p. 15) and our donors (see p. 14) that we can positively impact the lives of



approximately 500,000 children and families annually. And, after recently visiting Habetamua (*above*), the girl my wife and I sponsor in Ethiopia, I can assure you your gifts bring hope and joy to children, their families and entire communities. They thank you.

Blessings,

MARK LUKOWSKI
CEO and child sponsor
Christian Children's Fund of Canada

P.S. To learn more about our work:
facebook.com/ccfc
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twitter.com/ccfcCanada



On the cover

Photographer Philip Maher caught up with Salamatu, a youth who was rescued from a life on the streets in Ghana, as chronicled on page 7.

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SMALL VOICES, BIG DREAMS

Children say they need to feel protected in annual international survey

Love is almost all we need. The proof is in the sixth-annual global *Small Voices, Big Dreams* (SVBD) survey, which found one in four children think parents should love kids more to make them feel safe. Astoundingly, nearly half of those surveyed in all countries don't feel safe at home (42 percent) or at school (42 percent).

"We hope these survey results act as a wake-up call to countries around the world to keep children #FreeFromViolence," says Meg

Gardinier, secretary general of the N.Y.-based ChildFund Alliance, a global family of 12 child-centred development organizations — including Christian Children's Fund of Canada (CCFC) — which commissioned the study of nearly 6,000 10- to 12-year-olds in 44 countries (11 developed, 33 developing).

The world is listening. Thanks to a global-advocacy campaign, involving ChildFund Alliance and a coalition of other non-

governmental organizations, global leaders agreed to include the need to protect children from violence and exploitation in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for 2015 to 2030.

"The next step is implementation," says Gardinier. "By working together, we can help improve the lives of children."

To start, read excerpts from the report below, listen to children's fears and find out what they need to feel safe. — *Brianne Binelli*

Nearly half (42 percent) of survey respondents in developing and developed countries said they were keen to change rules and laws to keep children safe from violence. More specifically, they would strengthen laws and punish abusers.

Speaking UP...



Jonathan, 11, is from Mexico where **41** percent of survey respondents think girls and boys are most at risk from harm at home.

"I think this happens mostly when parents get really stressed and use drugs or get drunk."

Speaking UP...



Maximus, 11, lives in Canada where **64** percent of children surveyed feel at risk from harm at school.

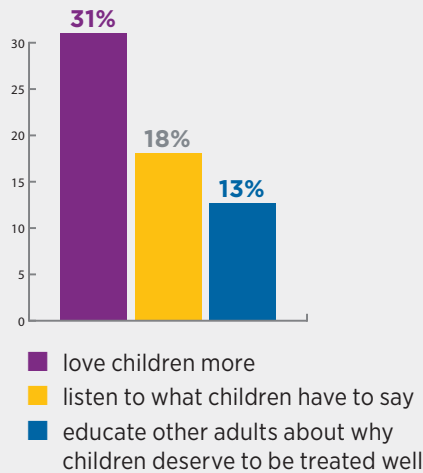
"We could put security cameras at schools, which can record the classrooms and the school grounds."

In Canada, more than half (64 percent) of survey respondents think children are at risk from harm at school. In developing countries, children are more worried about being safe from harm at home (46 percent) than school (41 percent). Overall, most are afraid of being harmed while walking alone (58 percent).

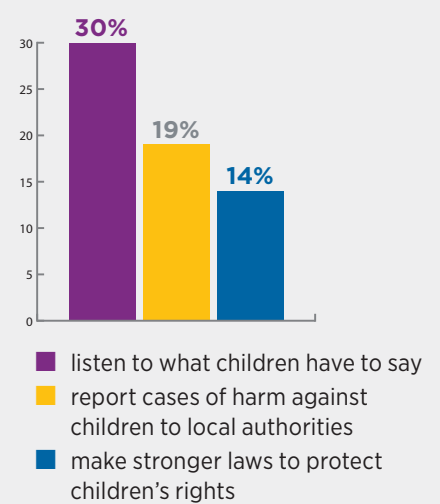
Visit smallvoicesbigdreams.org to download the full *Small Voices, Big Dreams* report, including a list of participating countries.

What is the most important thing adults — especially parents or other caregivers — could do to keep children safe from being mistreated?

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES



DEVELOPED COUNTRIES



Survey respondents think adults mistreat children because they have power (38 percent), as punishment (35 percent), because the guardian was a victim of abuse (30 percent) and because it's the child's fault (30 percent).

Speaking UP...



Breezy, 10, is from Nicaragua where **38** percent of survey respondents think adults mistreat children, because they don't value them enough.

“They believe we must do whatever they want, because they are adults; they are older, we are younger, and if we tell people, they will not listen. We do not feel we are being heard.”

Speaking UP...



Watson, 11, lives in Zambia where **28** percent of survey respondents believe adults should educate others about why children deserve to be treated well.

“Adults who abuse children must be educated on the importance of young people and how they should be treated to grow into better adults.”

INFLUENCING CHANGE

Following three years of advocacy with national governments worldwide, and the collection of 680,000 signatures, the ChildFund Alliance — a global family of 12 child-centred development organizations, including Christian Children's Fund of Canada (CCFC) — celebrated a victory. Late last year, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030) were ratified, including target 16.2, a goal to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children. As part of plans to implement the goals, global partnerships have been in the works, including conversations with Paraguay, a CCFC country of operation. “The Secretariat of Childhood and Adolescence truly appreciates and thanks CCFC and ChildFund Alliance for their support, which has allowed us to be seen as a country that cares about our children,” said Ricardo Gonzalez Borgne, Vice Minister of Childhood for the Government of Paraguay. For more news about this advocacy work in Paraguay, visit ccfcanda.ca. — BB

By Bonar Bell | CCFC communications manager, Canada

SMILES OF HOPE

The road less travelled is full of surprises. That's what Rachel Bonnetta (*pictured*), a Christian Children's Fund of Canada (CCFC) volunteer ambassador, learned during her recent 13-day trip to Ghana. "The people I've met have

been incredible," says the effervescent 24-year-old FOX Sports host. "I half expected to be greeted by sad children and community members. What I found was quite the opposite: laughter and joy emanated from communities

working together to improve their futures." Bonnetta was visiting CCFC program areas, learning about the online monthly giving program, Community Rise, and although well-versed in capturing authentic moments on film, travelling to Africa was a completely new experience. "I wanted to get an up-close-and-personal view of the work CCFC is doing," she says. "It's extremely important to know I'm supporting a charity doing what they say they will." Armed with jerseys and equipment donated by Major League Soccer, the ambassador travelled to Ghana's Northern Region. "We visited a clinic that provided new hope to a community. Before it was built, pregnant women with birthing complications had to walk 48 km to the nearest hospital," explains Bonnetta, who was also encouraged by education and water projects in CCFC-supported communities. "Driving through the small, dusty villages, I was amazed to see how much CCFC has been helping the people here."



UP CLOSE

Christian Children's Fund of Canada's new mobile-responsive website, ccfcandada.ca, has updated photos and videos as well as blogs with news from the field. For example, Lariba, a former sponsored child, talks about putting herself through teacher's college, and children share their career ambitions: "I will become a vet to take care of animals and increase livestock," says Abdoul in Burkina Faso. Read our blogs at ccfcandada.ca/about-us/blog.

GHANA CHANGE THE WORLD

In 2015, students and staff from Sinclair Secondary School in Whitby, Ont., sold T-shirts and tickets to an original performance to raise funds for a school library in rural Ghana. Congratulations to the fundraisers who inspired 800 students to contribute to the cause, raising more than \$7,000.



Watch bit.ly/BonnettaInGhana • bit.ly/ChildAmbitions • bit.ly/HostCCFCFundraiser

Keeping them safe

Thousands of Ghanaian girls flee to urban hubs for work and end up on the streets, but CCFC is affecting change

By William Anim-Dankwa | CCFC communications manager, Ghana

Salamatu sits turning the handle of a manual sewing machine. She slides the cloth purposefully through her fingers — her confidence in crafting clothes for schoolgirls is growing. It has a special meaning, as the 18-year-old passed up the chance to complete school when she joined the bandwagon of girls who troop to urban centres to be “head porters” or *kayayei*.

A 2011 study by the People’s Dialogue and Ghana Federation of Urban Poor puts the number of *kayayei* at approximately 15,000, the majority of whom are drawn from the country’s north. They leave for similar reasons. “Things were difficult at home, there was not enough food, there was no money, and we were just hanging around. So when the girls from the cities came with their flashy clothes, I could not resist the temptation of joining them to work for money,” recalls Salamatu. She makes a confession: “The work did not turn out the way I anticipated.”

That work involves carrying goods for shoppers in the market for a fee. The loads are usually heavy, and the shoppers pay what they want, often cheating the porters who are between nine and 18 years old.

In the evenings the girls don’t have anywhere to go. They sleep in front of shops and anywhere they can find — even on cardboard boxes, exposed to the elements and vulnerable to abuse from boys and men. They pay to bathe, to go to the bathroom and for protection from gangs. Some are raped, some become pregnant.

In 1996, this information prompted Christian Children’s Fund of Canada (CCFC) to intervene, opening an office in the north to tackle the problem. Since then, CCFC has created school infrastructure, provided training for teachers and taught community members about the importance of sending their children to school.

Skills-training centres have also opened in five key communities, providing instruction in dressmaking, hairdressing and cooking for girls. Initially, many former *kayayei* were set up and repatriated back to their communities, but some drifted back to the cities.

Today, the skills-training centres are drawing young porters home. Salamatu apprenticed with 16 girls at one such centre in Yong. And, CCFC has worked with Global Affairs Canada to lead more than 200 youth, including 120 girls, in a



12-week life skills-training session, so they can take care of themselves without having to move away from home. “The skills-training centre not only keeps the girls from going for the *kayayo*, it also prevents them from early marriages and pregnancies,” says Adam Baba, a local assemblyman.

Change is underway. None of the girls from Yong left for *kayayo* last year — that’s down from a high of approximately 30 girls leaving each year for the past five years.

The outlook is promising for Salamatu and her peers.



Enabling Change

Christian Children’s Fund of Canada organized a national stakeholder’s conference in Ghana in February 2015 to strategize about how to convince girls under the age of 17 to get off the streets and back in school. Ghana’s government has acknowledged the need for legislation to accomplish this goal and is expected to enforce the Children’s Act preventing children from exploitation and child labour.

Photos by Philip Maher

Freedom to thrive

Economical sanitary napkins introduced in Koilvilai, India bring independence and income to girls and women

By Lipi Jobson | CCFC communications manager, India

Ambika,* 24, is tired of looking for a discreet place to dry the “awful cloths” from her monthly cycle. “Women and girls in our village who are menstruating are treated as untouchables, impure,” she says. “We are prohibited from visiting or participating in religious functions.” Using sanitary napkins isn’t an option. “Women like me, in poor families, can’t afford to buy such luxurious items just for four to five days’ use every month,” Ambika explains politely.

Sanitation has been a concern in Koilvilai, India, where females comprise 49 percent of the population, according to a local partner. Overall, only 10 percent of women in Koilvilai who needed sanitary napkins had access to them before Christian Children’s Fund of Canada (CCFC) contributed to the opening of a much-needed sanitary napkin production facility.

“Adolescent girls in our village have been unable to attend up to 30 days of school a year,” explains Perumal Vasanthi, team member at the Koilvilai-based Best Sanitary Napkin Production Centre. “The majority discontinue their studies due to lack of sanitary pads and inadequate sanitary facilities in schools, which are neither gender-segregated nor private. It’s no better at home — embarrassment lurks here, too. The [girls have been] pressured to keep their menstrual rags hidden; they hide them in dark places and reuse them before they have been properly washed or dried.”

This practice can cause bacterial infections and other reproductive health concerns, which could, if not treated properly, lead to serious



complications.

Economical feminine hygiene products were urgently needed. “We launched a unit of sanitary napkin production as a double boon — we could have a hygienic life at a low cost and earn a regular income for our families,” says Muthukumar Pousu, who works with CCFC partner, Panchayat Level Federation (PLF), based in Koilvilai, India.

In August 2014, the Best Napkin Production Centre opened in Koilvilai. At the onset, a team of 10 women were producing 40 pads per day each; the goal is to produce 100 pads per woman per day, garnering a daily salary of \$3. Packs of six disposable Best Napkins are \$0.40 — 15 percent less than branded products.

Led by PLF, the Best Napkin team is negotiating sales to hospitals and women’s colleges; government

officials have committed to buying 25,000 pads monthly as part of a free giveaway program, benefiting more than 4.1-million youth, 700,000 new mothers and more than 700 female prisoners.

Back in Koilvilai, the fierce sun shines with a heat that crushes everyone with its energy — everyone except women like Ambika who can confidently hold their heads high every day of the month.

* Ambika’s name has been changed to protect her identity.

Safe and sanitary

Thanks to generous donations to Christian Children’s Fund of Canada, 102 private toilets have been installed in Koilvilai, India, providing women with a safe facility.

A second chance

Aminata,* 16, has hope for a better future since escaping an early, forced marriage

By Patrice Zongo | CCFC communications manager, Burkina Faso

Aminata's* future was determined before she took her first breath. Promised to be married before she was born, the 16-year-old's fate was sealed, until two years ago when she escaped her marital home.

According to custom in Aminata's village in Burkina Faso, a man has the right to offer his eldest daughter as a gift. So while still in her mother's womb, she was promised to one of her father's best friends.

Her betrothed was impatient. After Aminata's 15th birthday, he began pressuring his future father-in-law to let him take his bride home. He didn't want to risk losing a potential wife to abduction, a common threat in the eastern area, where girls are frequently snatched for early, forced marriages. As the pressure mounted, Aminata's father gave his consent to avoid being held responsible for the potential kidnapping of his promised daughter.

Married life was not easy — Aminata cried without comfort and tried unsuccessfully to fend off her husband's sexual advances, often being raped and physically abused. One day she'd had enough and ran away. "I was worth more

than a gift," she says emphatically. "That's why I fled from my husband's house." Her in-laws, parents and friends searched for her for five days.

Luckily, the local child-protection network — and CCFC local partner, Eglise Evangélique de la Société Internationale Missionnaire — took the case, and Aminata was found in some bushes. After a long and hard battle — as some rural customs aren't in line with law — Aminata was liberated from her husband. She was placed with a family in the city of Diapaga, and, although she can visit her parents, it's safer for Aminata to live in foster care where she's learning to weave.

The struggle to avoid early, forced marriage in the region continues. In fact, between January and October 2015, the local child-protection network handled just half of the 21 early marriage cases reported by the local Social Action Office. Thankfully, Aminata is celebrating a new future, with a promising career as a weaver on the horizon. And, she can proudly *choose* a husband when she's ready.

* Aminata's name has been changed to protect her identity.



Another world

In developing countries, one in three girls is married before the age of 18, 14 million are married annually, 39,000 are married daily and one is married every three seconds, according to UNICEF and the New York-based United Nations Population Fund.



Making a difference

Christian Children's Fund of Canada (CCFC) has launched a new project in Burkina Faso to tackle early, forced marriages by working with local partners to create an advocacy campaign and determine best practices for creating a cultural shift. For example, the local CCFC office led a silent march earlier this year to raise awareness and mobilize stakeholders to create sustainable solutions to end early, forced marriage.

Strength through advocacy

Ana Marcela Gutiérrez transforms from the role of victimized housewife to community leader

By Giselle Alemán | CCFC communications manager, Nicaragua



Many Nicaraguan women form the pillar to a successful society by staying home and taking care of their family while living a life of anonymity.

That's how things were for Ana Marcela Gutiérrez (*pictured in yellow*). Born to humble parents, she studied accounting but left her career when she married more than 20 years ago. "I became a mother of two boys, but the first few years of marriage weren't as I had imagined," she confesses. "I [experienced] domestic violence. Those years were very hard.... My world was reduced to the four walls of my house; my husband wouldn't let me go out alone on the street or talk to anyone."

The situation changed unexpectedly. "One day, [my husband] was selected as a community leader, and he made me accompany him to

every meeting.... What he didn't know was he was [securing] my freedom," she recalls.

As work demands escalated, Gutiérrez's husband asked her to attend meetings on his behalf. Gradually, the homemaker took on a more active role in the community, and people started asking for her help — a community leader was born.

Gutiérrez received CCFC's support through Masaya-based Asociación Casa Ave María, a local partner. Through this network, eight committees representing eight communities coordinate responses to emergency

situations with authorities and empower leaders to improve school infrastructure, address local sanitation issues and organize preventative health campaigns, among other duties.

That's where Gutiérrez steps into the picture. The budding activist was trained and attended CCFC workshops. "The workshops addressed the problems at home, and my perspective completely changed," she says. "My main problem had been lack of self-esteem. But once empowered, working for my community, undertaking projects and leading processes in the neighbourhood, I realized I was a valuable woman who had rights. So I began to demand to be treated with respect and dignity; I [invited] my husband to the training. Together we began to break the cycle of violence."

Since becoming involved in her community 10 years ago, the leader has improved water and sanitation infrastructure, initiated street paving and promoted community

clean-ups, among other initiatives. "The key to my success is seeking reconciliation in the community and keeping my word — that has made people trust me."

But, perhaps the biggest benefit of becoming a community leader may be a more personal accomplishment. "Now I realize I'm worth it," says Gutiérrez.

At the root
Domestic and sexual violence is the second-leading reason for needing legal medical care in Nicaragua, according to UNICEF Nicaragua.

Watch bit.ly/CCFCGutierrez

Saving Godino's girls

Ethiopian teens in a small town can now attend Grades 9 and 10 in a safe place

By Ahmed Yusuf (with files from Semereta Sewasew) | CCFC communications managers, Ethiopia

Student life has been rife with struggle and fear for many teen girls from Godino, Ethiopia. Up until 2014, youth from the small town who wanted to attend high school had to move 20 kilometres away from their families to the city of Debrezeit. It's too far to travel daily, so some parents who earned up to US\$5 per day were paying approximately US\$60 per month for their child's room and board in the city. That wasn't the only cost — many girls, some between the ages of 14 and 17, dropped out of school due to rape, pregnancy and/or HIV/AIDS.

Shewa saw the danger first-hand when she moved to Debrezeit in Grade 9. She recalls struggling for subsistence and evading violent situations. "I know many stories of young girls being raped. This made me scared to walk alone to school. I would always check my back and wait for my friends," she explains. "My friends dropped out, because they were pregnant; I did not want that for my life."

Meanwhile, Shewa's mother was working as a labourer, earning US\$1 per day; she saved and borrowed to cover the US\$60 it took to pay for her daughter's food and rent. It still wasn't enough. "I didn't have time to study, because all I could think about was what I was going to eat, how to [get] home safely or how to get enough money for rent,"



recalls Shewa.

The 15-year-old's outlook changed when news came that the Godino school, which has been supported by the Christian Children's Fund of Canada (CCFC), was going to be accepting students for Grades 9 and 10 following the CCFC-enabled construction of four classrooms and other rooms to house a library, staff room, laboratory and IT centre.

Shewa was rescued from facing the fate of many of her Debrezeit

schoolmates. "Sixty-five percent of children who leave Godino to attend high school in the city drop out, and the majority are girls," notes Alemayehu Bekele, principal of Godino High School. He's relieved the school now accepts these girls who have been victims of abuse. "Their health has improved, and [so has] their academic performance," he says with a smile, noting that many are rising to the top of their class, thanks to the availability of tutorial classes as well as the on-site library and lab.

Last year, the school accepted 400 teens in Grades 9 and 10.

Today Shewa lives with her mother, two sisters and one brother, happily combining family life and school life in her hometown.

Roll call

Before CCFC welcomed Godino, Ethiopia into its sponsorship community in 1998, most of the children weren't enrolled in school; if they were, the average child started attending at the age of nine. Today, 360 children from Grades 1 to 6 attend the local school, and the average student begins at the age of four.

Motorcycle Mama

Monserrat Ojeda overcame gender stereotypes and launched a career in motorcycle mechanics

By Brianne Binelli (with files from Rosanna Menchaca | CCFC communications manager, Paraguay)

Monserrat Ojeda has big plans for her career, and they go beyond cleaning house, cooking or taking care of her family at home in Paraguay. “My dream is to have a well-equipped motorcycle shop,” says the 27-year-old.

Recent World Bank statistics show women comprise 39 percent of Paraguay’s workforce, and Ojeda is joining the ranks as a motorcycle mechanic — an important job in a country where the machines are a main mode of transport. “I always liked motorcycles,” and used to tinker with my husband’s bike, she says, explaining why she jumped at the chance to take a motorcycle mechanic’s course offered through Christian Children’s Fund of Canada, local Asunción-based Fundación Alda and a governmental training office. “It was a great opportunity to learn and earn money without leaving home,” she says.

The mother-of-two wasn’t deterred when she discovered she was the only female in a class of 30. “I was gratified to challenge myself to learn a trade that [had previously] only been offered to men in my community,” Ojeda says.

Thankfully, she was welcomed by her peers and supported by her husband who looked after their



children while she attended the three-month course five evenings a week. Men don’t often take care of their children in Paraguay, but Ojeda’s husband was proud of his wife who learned about the motorcycle clutch, fuel and electric systems, shock absorbers and more.

Today, the mechanic is working out of her home, earning between \$5 and \$18 per job. Of course, it will

take time to build the business, and Ojeda admits there are other challenges, too — like being a woman in a male-dominated sector. But, she’s grateful. “My life has changed,” she says. “[My family has] opportunities we did not have before.”

The entrepreneur’s dream to own a thriving motorcycle shop is becoming a reality.

A woman’s work

Many women in Paraguay work in the domestic sector as nannies, maids, housekeepers and cooks. They’re only paid 60 percent of the national legal minimum wage — up from 40 percent — due to recent legislation. The changes also established an eight-hour work day, one day off per week, a pension and a rule against employing youth under the age of 18. It remains to be seen how well the laws will be enforced, and there’s still more work to do. “We’re going to keep pushing,” a domestic labour group representative said in a statement, as quoted by Florida-based fusion.net. “One day, Paraguay is going to finally realize what’s fair.”

REBUILDING LIVES, RESTORING HOPE

CCFC helps people in Sindhupalchowk, Nepal recover from last year's devastating quakes

By Philip A. Tanner, Ph.D. | CCFC director, Programs & Strategic Initiatives

As I returned to Nepal more than six months after a humanitarian-aid assignment following the quakes of 2015, the stories of overcoming seemingly insurmountable challenges reminded me of the unshakable spirit of the Nepali people. "The earthquake in April 2015 took our home and much of our personal belongings," recalls

Ramri Maya Shrestha who has four daughters between the ages of four and 18. "Life was hard, and we slept outside until we could build a temporary shelter from supplies we took from the debris."

The Shrestha family was living beside their destroyed home, waiting for any support. Before the earthquake, Ramri and her husband, Tirta Bahadu, harvested enough rice, maize, millet and wheat to feed their family for six months. For the rest of the year, Tirta worked as a day-labourer in Kathmandu, sending money home.

After the earthquake, the Shresthas needed income, and it came. "We received four female goats and one male goat," says Ramri of the livestock that was provided to 10 families by Ontario's Uxbridge Chapter of the Rotary Club of Canada, through Christian Children's Fund of Canada (CCFC). "We plan to sell the male goat in six months. This sale will allow my husband to stay home [instead of going] to Kathmandu. I'm pregnant, so that's good," she said in December.

Within two years, the family hopes to double their herd and earn approximately \$735 per year — more than what Tirta made in Kathmandu after six months of work as a day labourer.

And, although those who received aid through livestock distribution are finding opportunity, it will be a difficult road ahead for more than 1,000 other families in Sindhupalchowk recovering from the earthquake. Still, the Nepali people anticipate a brighter future where they will be supported in rebuilding their homes, lives and dignity.



Responding to crisis

Thanks to the support of Global Affairs Canada, nearly 4,530 children and their families affected by the 2015 earthquakes in Nepal have received aid. Among other resources, the following was provided:

- 44 temporary learning spaces in 24 schools, benefitting approximately 3,260 children
- 18 child-centred spaces, benefitting approximately 1,560 children
- three latrines
- 350+ teacher supply kits to keep classes running in 45 schools
- 18 recreational and early-childhood-development kits
- supplies, uniforms and more for 4,440+ students at 45 schools
- training in psychosocial counselling for 355 teachers and principals
- psychosocial counselling for 450 children

Lest we forget

On April 25, 2015 a 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck Nepal, impacting 14 of the country's 75 districts.

- 8,800 people died — 30 percent of them were children
- 22,000+ people were injured
- 600,000+ homes were destroyed
- Nearly 290,000 homes were damaged
- Approximately 8,000 schools across 49 districts were damaged

By Brianne Binelli | CCFC managing editor

From bodybuilder to child advocate

Alan Quesnel makes \$500,000 pledge to help children through Christian Children's Fund of Canada

Alan Quesnel is not your average retiree. The 47-year-old former bodybuilder and business owner has donated much of his life's resources to The Alan Quesnel Family Foundation to support those in need. The man who's supported more than 200 families in Haiti, and recently pledged \$500,000 to benefit children through Christian Children's Fund of Canada's (CCFC) African countries of operation, has become a full-time philanthropist. He contends: "[If] you give half of your money away a week before you die, what are you forfeiting?"

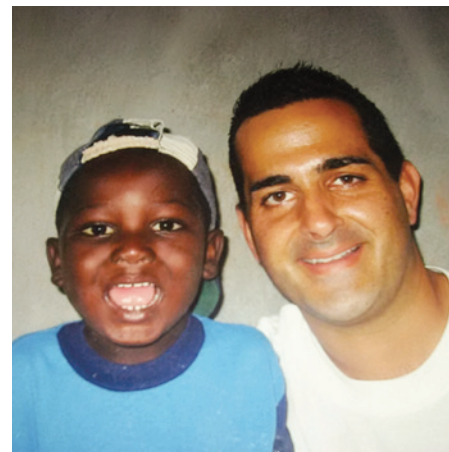
BUSY LIFE, BIG REWARDS

Quesnel has been in business since the age of 21, and although he has been involved in various industries

— from landscaping to foodservice and real estate — The Athletic Club group of 12 fitness facilities was his lifeblood. In 2014, he sold his company shares to focus on humanitarian efforts.

CALLED TO SERVE

It's been nearly 20 years since Quesnel began his journey into philanthropy, with much of his energy focused on assisting communities in Haiti, supporting 200 families and operating two schools educating more than 1,000 children. He's also an avid supporter of the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Catholic Church and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Windsor Essex in Ontario, among other charities.



ALAN QUESNEL HAS SPONSORED MANY CHILDREN ACROSS THE GLOBE

A HEART FOR CHILDREN

Although Quesnel has sponsored a child with CCFC since 1997, it was a special television commercial appeal to help 712 in need that compelled the philanthropist to reach deep into his wallet once again, pledging to donate \$500,000 to help children and their families. "There are a lot of organizations that claim to do good work, and a lot of the money doesn't end up in the right hands; I know [CCFC does] good work," he says.

A grand gesture

Arthur Lightfoot's support of more than 100 children through CCFC lives on beyond his death

Giving back came naturally to the late Dr. Arthur Stanley Lightfoot. He enlisted in the navy to help his country, served his community through his medical practice and expressed his philanthropy by supporting more than 100 children through Christian Children's Fund of Canada (CCFC), among other charities. Now, 15 years after the 80-year-old's death, his devotion to the cause lives on in the 15 children still benefiting from the funds he left behind.

THE JOURNEY

Lightfoot attended medical school at the University of Toronto, thanks

to scholarships and a job as a paper boy. He eventually moved to Flint, Mich. and opened a medical practice where he brought hundreds of babies into the world.

SERVING HIS COUNTRY

Lightfoot enlisted in the Royal Canadian Navy in the forties and was posted to a hospital in Dartmouth, N.S. where he attended to Atlantic Command sailors until the end of the Second World War.

SPONSORED CHILDREN

Lightfoot was sponsoring 105 children when he died. Since then, thanks to the bequest he left, the

Get involved: askus@ccfcana.ca



THE LATE ARTHUR LIGHTFOOT'S ESTATE CONTINUES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD, INCLUDING IN ETHIOPIA

number of children he has helped — in countries, including India, Paraguay and Ethiopia — has ballooned to 183. Interestingly, he only became a CCFC sponsor in August 2000, months before he passed away New Year's Day, 2001.



A LIFE'S WORK

Arunothayam Erskine, of CCFC partner organization SPEECH, shares insights from the field in India

Interview by Lipi C. Jobson | CCFC communications manager, India

Christian Children's Fund of Canada (CCFC) works with local non-profit organizations in our countries of operation to help carry out our mission. The Madurai, India-based Society for People's Education and Economic Change (SPEECH) is one such collaborator, which brings equity to the most marginalized. Arunothayam Erskine, project director, and 30-year SPEECH employee, sat down with us to talk about rescuing girls from child marriages, roadblocks to humanitarian aid and more.

ChildVoice: Why did SPEECH start working with CCFC in 1993?

Arunothayam Erskine: At that time, children in Sivakasi were not going to school, [they were] working in hazardous industries with firecrackers and matches; they didn't realize the danger, [but many people died], and 60 percent of them were children.... SPEECH partnered with CCFC to release children from bondage and help them realize their rights.

ChildVoice: Can you share an example of a recent successful CCFC collaboration?

AE: Through the support of CCFC, SPEECH has addressed the issues of gender inequality and early, forced marriages. So far, 13 child marriages have been prevented in our target villages in Thiruchuli. One such marriage involved Usha, a fatherless 15-year-old girl [being] forced to marry her maternal uncle who was

more than 14 years older than her.... After repeatedly pleading with her mother, she left a complaint in the box kept by SPEECH/CCFC.... Subsequently the issue was taken to Childline 1098 (a 24-hour national Virudhunagar-based emergency helpline), district administration and the anti-human trafficking unit police department. A team rescued the child and put her in a hostel while the government took care of her academic expenses. This [story could deter] other parents in the neighbourhood who intend to impose early, forced marriages on their daughters.

ChildVoice: What are the challenges of helping marginalized children in India?

AE: Laws in India that pertain to children contradict basic human rights, so implementation is a problem. Moreover, adults are not sensitive to child rights, and children are considered objects.

ChildVoice: What has been your most memorable moment in the field?

AE: A Dalit — group of people considered to be below the lowest Indian caste system — village, consisting of 73 families, was under the control of an upper-caste village. The Dalits were dependent on the upper-caste people for their livelihood, terribly harassed by them ... and treated like slaves. The Dalits were empowered, particularly with a SPEECH land-development

program. Now that the Dalits are landowners, they employ upper-caste people. Their self-esteem and confidence have been boosted. It was unforgettable to see the positive change that took place.



Leading Change

SPEECH helps small-scale farmers, the landless, women, the marginalized Dalit people group and children in its targeted communities. Here's a sampling of what's been accomplished:

- 95 percent of children are continuing their education
- 27 percent more girls are continuing higher education than they did eight years ago
- 420 families improved their nutrition, thanks to organic and bio-intensive gardens

Even the playing field for girls

Girls in developing countries face tremendous hardships. Due to improper sanitation and inadequate financing, among other challenges, they are frequently unable to attend school – severely limiting their opportunities. You can help by offering gifts that give girls hope for a brighter future. Visit ccfcanada.ca/gift-catalogue to purchase one of the following much-needed gifts today.



▶ **Send a girl to school for a year - \$100**

Equip a girl with a year's worth of school supplies, a uniform, money for transportation and more. Your gift will truly change a life.

▶ **Girl's hygiene kit - \$35**

Personal hygiene is often challenging for girls in the developing world and is one of the main reasons they drop out of school. Your gift will provide essentials such as soap, dental supplies, supplements and a wash basin. Help a girl thrive by giving her an education.

▶ **Toilet and hygiene facility (share in) - \$150**

Give the gift of dignity and good health. Finance the construction and installation of a sanitation facility such as a toilet, latrine or waste-water management system. Your gift will make a difference, especially to girls and women. The Canadian government is matching* this gift, so your **\$150 donation will be multiplied five times for a \$750 impact!**



CVGCF16


Visit ccfcanada.ca/gift-catalogue, or call 1-800-263-5437, ext. 610, to purchase a gift through our catalogue.

*Global Affairs Canada supports the international work of Canadian organizations, which reduce poverty in developing countries. Combined contributions from the Canadian government and CCFC supporters have five times the power to help children and families.



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