

CHILD VOICE

SPRING/SUMMER 2020

KEEPING CHILDREN LEARNING

**Accessing education
beyond the traditional
classroom**

**Campaign brings two
worlds together**

Meet the stars of our new ad



childrenbelieve.ca

Pandemic relief

Your support means everything

With education systems disrupted around the world due to COVID-19, Children Believe's work to help children access education—inside and outside of classrooms—has never been more urgent.

We can't thank you enough for your continued loyalty and support.

Together with our partners, we've been focusing on helping prevent COVID-19 from spreading in communities, keeping children learning, and delivering immediate support to those most severely affected. As the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 continue to rise, so too does concern of major outbreaks in the countries where we work. Children Believe's global team is helping where we can.

We're focusing on keeping families healthy and safe with accurate information and hygiene kits; supporting healthcare services with protective equipment and other medical supplies; nourishing vulnerable children through the distribution of food; preventing violence through community outreach activities; and helping children access education. You can learn more about our life-saving work and efforts to provide safe, continuous learning in our COVID-19 update (p. 5).

Inside this Spring/Summer issue of *ChildVoice* we share education activities you support, which are temporarily suspended due to COVID-19. Meet a youth-led theatre group, which teaches children about social issues in Nicaragua (p. 7) and hear from a teacher and student about the joy and benefits of after-school groups in India (p. 9).

And, if you've been watching TV in recent months or going online, you may have seen our new Children Believe commercial. Find out why this particular commercial is so special to us, with amazing donors and staff taking part in the production (p. 12-13).

Thank you for continuing to believe in the potential and possibility of every child through such unprecedented uncertainty in the world. **We're so grateful for all you do to help children live and dream fearlessly and be a voice for change.**

Keep safe,



Dave Wilson, Interim CEO
ceo@childrenbelieve.ca



☺ Children Believe is providing protective equipment to help children be safe during COVID-19.

Inside

- 4 What's happening
- 5 Helping in the time of COVID-19
- 6 Playing and learning in Ghana
- 8 Student broadcasters in Ethiopia
- 11 Teen has his sights set high in Paraguay
- 12 Children Believe's new commercial brings worlds together
- 14 An unforgettable meeting between sponsor and child



Cover: Suarika sits in class in Ghana, where Children Believe recently filmed a new commercial. More on Suarika on page 12. (Photo by Dave Tsigoulis)

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YOU ASK. WE ANSWER. HAPPILY.

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OUR VISION

We dream of a world where every child has a voice and the ability to achieve their full potential.

OUR MISSION

Children Believe creates a future of hope for children, families, and communities by helping them develop the skills and resources to overcome poverty and injustice. For 60 years, we have followed the example of Christ by serving the poor regardless of their faith, cultural, and ethnic background.

OUR VALUES

Across our work, we aim to uphold the values of results, respect, integrity, teamwork and excellence.

Member of
ChildFund
Alliance

ACCESSIBILITY

We seek to recognize and remove the obstacles faced by persons with disabilities. All communications are available in alternative formats upon request.

What's happening



An experience of a lifetime

James Duthie visits his sponsored child in Ethiopia

This past January, Children Believe ambassador and TSN host, James Duthie, had a life-changing experience. Together with his daughter, Gracie, James toured our programs in rural Ethiopia, meeting many children and youth, including his own sponsored child, Yideneku. **“One guy from Ottawa can make a difference in a child’s life halfway across the world,”** James told us, adding, “that warms my heart.” Visit childrenbelieve.ca/memories-from-ethiopia to learn more.

Chalkboards for Change

Dreams are inspirational. Whether your childhood dreams came true or not, they helped you believe anything is possible. Many children have big dreams, but more than 260-million children and youth around the world do not get to go to school. Many obstacles stand in their way.

Children Believe has launched Chalkboards for Change, a campaign to help raise awareness of the need for more children to access education, inspire positive action and help children everywhere live and dream fearlessly. Canadians can share their childhood dreams to inspire children to dream big. There’s also a contest to enter if you dream of visiting a country where Children Believe works. To learn more, visit childrenbelieve.ca/chalkboards-for-change.



Ⓐ Donors Susan Boon and Lindsay Kuch at Chalkboards for Change in Calgary with Children Believe’s Chief Marketing and Development Officer, Aki Temiseva, and Gabriel Ollivier, Chair, Board of Directors.



Ⓐ Canadian youth ambassadors Shania, Sangeetha, Sandhya and Swati present their \$2,000 donation to Children Believe Paraguay Country Director, Jorge Mendez. Also present, GRECER Partner Director, Angelina Enciso.

Youth ambassadors

“I want to change the world!” This is one of the main reasons people join an international charity like Children Believe. But what if you’re still in school? How can you make a difference?

You can join our Global Youth Ambassador Program. **There are already 25 youth volunteers from Canada, Paraguay and Ghana putting their hearts to good use.** Aged 16 to 25, they’re working with peers to lead community projects that will change children’s futures for the better.

Visit childrenbelieve.ca/youth-ambassador-program or email Niko Moniz, coordinator, at nmoniz@childrenbelieve.ca for more information.



☺ Children are being provided with new ways to access learning while schools are closed.

COVID-19 update

Ensuring safe, continuous learning despite school disruptions

When a child's daily routine is interrupted, they can feel anxious and fearful. Many factors can harm their sense of safety and security, such as: lack of adequate food; deepening family poverty; scarce health resources; and an increased risk of witnessing or suffering violence and abuse. These are just some of the ways COVID-19 causes serious concerns for children in our supported communities.

That's why Children Believe's priority, during lockdowns and other restrictions, has been to provide safe, continuous learning for children, along with giving immediate support to those most severely affected.

Thank you for helping us do this critical work.

School closures in most countries where we work are an important preventive measure to curb the spread of COVID-19. So, too, are efforts to encourage frequent handwashing, social distancing and other precautionary measures. We've been sharing prevention information through radio, pamphlets and other channels, and handing out hygiene kits, soap, sanitizer, gloves and masks.

But vital support is also needed to help children in our communities stay on course to complete their education.

Together with our local partners, we're providing alternative learning methods to ensure education continues, especially for girls. The longer an adolescent girl is away from school, the greater the barriers to her future education as she may be forced into early marriage or become more vulnerable to sexual exploitation or forced labour.

Whether through radio, TV broadcasts, WhatsApp groups, online portals, printed pamphlets or other methods, we're helping children access new ways to learn.

We're producing and sharing relevant content to enhance academic skills as well as providing protection-focused messages about mental health and psychosocial support, and promoting child protection for children in supported communities.

"Having lost the ability to earn an income, many families are struggling to provide food for their children, and, due to school closures, children no longer have access to nutritious school meals," says Dr. Belinda Bennet, Chief International Programs Officer, Children Believe.

For the most vulnerable families in Children Believe-supported communities, we're distributing emergency food packs. We're also delivering personal protective equipment and supplies to remote, hard-to-reach health centres to help keep health workers safe while caring for families.

"In a time of crisis, a child needs to feel a sense of normalcy and control over their own life. With your help, we can provide it," Dr. Bennet concludes.

Playing to learn

Sparking a thirst for education in Ghana

By William Anim-Dankwa

There's a buzz in the classroom of this school in Ghana, where children are excitedly shouting as they take part in a game. "It's my turn!" they call out as the teacher oversees, pleased the students are learning while enjoying the activity. Learning Through Play (LTP), a methodology developed by the Hincks-Dellcrest Centre and the City of Toronto's Department of Public Health and implemented by Children Believe, is clearly popular with the class.

Rukaya, a 35-year-old mother-of-four, says when LTP was introduced in her community, she and other parents were too busy to get involved with what their children were doing at school. But once they saw it incorporated old games children used to play in the community, while teaching them moral lessons such as respecting adults and bonding with parents, her respect grew. Rachiya, 37, raising five children, agrees.

Rachiya loved the storytelling aspect of the program, and the fact that her children now pay attention in class. As a result, they're all doing better in school.

Mr. Amadu, head teacher of another primary school, says, "LTP brought awareness about the role parents and caregivers should play in their children's education. Even the men, whom (before this) were not fond of playing with their children, have now joined hands with the women to do so."

LTP improves teaching and learning, particularly in early childhood development. According to UNICEF, "Optimal brain development requires a stimulating environment, adequate nutrients and social interaction with attentive caregivers."

But the re-introduction of early learning into mainstream public schools came with challenges. Among them were a lack of teachers, infrastructure and resources, including teaching and learning materials.

The Children Believe-supported program has had a positive impact.





A stage for learning

A Nicaragua youth theatre group teaches children about their rights

By Enmanuel Castro

Donning a flowing, traditional Nicaraguan red skirt, Ana enters the stage carrying a cardboard radio in her hand. She pronounces that she is a grandmother who loves music, but complains that the rooster in her village is so loud every morning she can't sleep. The audience laughs.

This is the opening scene of a children's play created, directed and performed by Children-Believe supported Nicaraguan youth.

The play engages children to learn about the importance of preventing teenage pregnancies, a serious problem in their community and country.

The group is changing the face of education in their community through costumes and characters. The teens use performing arts to make a difference for the kids, who love their shows.

"Doing theatre came from the need to reach more children," says group member, Zabdiel.

"It's a great feeling when our message reaches them. Sometimes when we perform the children call us by our character names; they remember us from previous shows. I have learned that in the simplest things there is great happiness."

Zabdiel's passion for teaching through performance is shared by his fellow actors. In the teen pregnancy play, there are six performers: Sandra, Giancarlo, Christian, Zabdiel, Ana and María Teresa. They've all participated in a Children Believe child-rights program since age four.

The group comes up with ideas for their plays by observing life in their own community.

"Children identify with the stories we tell, and they also enjoy the way we do it," says Sandra. **"We help them to choose their actions wisely and avoid making bad decisions."**



Ⓒ (Left to right): Zabdiel, Ana, Giancarlo, Christian, María Teresa and Sandra.



Ⓒ Amanuel, left, and Mulunesh.

Hello, we're on the air!

Two Ethiopia teens broadcast positive change through radio

By Gezahegn Gebremariam Sinke

In this rural Ethiopian community, children are listening intently to an FM radio broadcast devoted exclusively to them.

“Hello, we’re on the air!” states Mulunesh, 15. Amanuel, 19, jumps in: “Hi, everyone.” **These two teens are harnessing the power of local radio to have their voices heard and to educate peers about important issues in their community.**

The broadcast is possible thanks to donor support of a Children Believe project, which provides learning on child-protection issues. The experience has been a valuable education for the young radio producer-hosts, as well.

About 540 children living within 20 kilometres of the FM signal regularly listen to the broadcast, which is shared through a mini-media player. The project goal is to empower children to use digital technologies

such as tablets, smartphone text systems and call hotlines. Results have been positive.

Community leaders and Children Believe partners report that child marriage, child labour, child exploitation, abuse and neglect, have all been reduced in the community. One example shows how life-changing the broadcasts can be.

“Thanks to the awareness generated, last year two girls who were abducted were reunited with their families and were able to continue their schooling thanks to the intervention of children and community members,” report the project leaders.

Mulunesh and Amanuel are both in secondary school and serve on student parliament. They are excited to have the opportunity to learn and provide a valuable community service. Their messages help children understand the importance of personal hygiene, environmental sanitation, adolescent reproductive health and communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

Creating awareness is safeguarding children and youth, especially girls, from having their education, health, growth or overall life potential, compromised.

Education outside the classroom

An after-school program in India helps children flourish

By Farida Banu and Siju Mathew

“I used to be afraid of going to school, because it was very difficult to understand the subjects, especially math and science,” says 10-year-old Yugala, a daughter of Dalit (lower caste) seasonal labourers in a remote village in India. “But after attending the Creative Learning Centre (CLC) regularly, my performance in academics has been improving.”

Mourya, a first-year student at Vignan Degree College, is studying computer science. Also the child of a poor Dalit family whose parents are seasonal wage labourers, Mourya is a part-time teacher at the learning centre Yugala attends. To continue his own education, Mourya earns much-needed income and more.

“After my college hours, I used to sit with my own village children informally and help them with their academics,” he says. “As a CLC teacher for the past one-and-a-half years in Ragimanupenta village, I am proud to say it has brought many positive changes among the children. We use science and math kits, and I get a wonderful experience working with the children.”

Having Mourya’s help through the CLC has made a big difference for her schooling, Yugala says.

“I now dream of one day becoming an engineer.”

The CLCs offer a free learning environment after school. Children explore and engage in a natural manner for two hours with a teacher like Mourya there to guide them as needed. Participants use kits with the materials needed and don’t have to

stop talking or worry about making mistakes, much different than the structured and disciplined method of learning used in government-run public schools.

“Our teacher is like a friend and helps us a lot to learn through play,” Yugala says.

“We have made vacuums, printing machines and a digging machine with working [hydraulics].”

In Ragimanupenta, Children Believe partner Rural Organisation for Poverty Eradication Services implements the CLC. There are now 130 CLCs, with facilitators trained in innovative teaching methods.



(above) Yugala with a digging machine she made.
(left) Mourya, at centre, with the Creative Learning Centre students.



☺ Pogouli, centre, with a loom she acquired with the support of Children Believe donations.

Sewing freedom

A girl becomes an entrepreneur and feeds her family

By Patrice Zongo

Life for a child in rural Burkina Faso can be challenging for many reasons. Losing your father at a young age makes it even more difficult. That was the case for Pogouli, a young girl who, with the help of Children Believe and access to education, overcame a life destined to involve a forced child marriage.

Among the changes that came as a result of her father's death, Pogouli's primary-school education was interrupted. She was sent to live with her uncle, a common practice in rural Burkina Faso. In Grade 5 at the time, Pogouli lost her motivation to learn, because her uncle decided Pogouli would have to marry someone she had never met.

In Grade 6, at the age of 14, Pogouli was forced to drop out of school. Her uncle pursued his plan

to marry her off to a rich farmer. Neither Pogouli, nor her mother, wanted the child marriage but their desires had no weight against the will of her uncle. **Pogouli was losing hope and faith in her future.**

At this point Pogouli's mother turned to Children Believe for help. Pogouli received training in sewing. Through dialogue, her uncle agreed to postpone the marriage.

Fast forward to today and Pogouli has put her lessons to good use. **She has learned to sew and as a young adult, just 19 years old, is an independent entrepreneur.** Pogouli has created her own small workshop at home and, with a little more help thanks to your donations to Children Believe, purchased weaving equipment to help her operation grow.

"I was given a few rolls of threads," Pogouli says. "I also benefited from a small capital investment to start my business. I spend (\$12) to make a piece of fabric that I can sell at (\$30)."

"I can make four to seven pieces a week," she proudly adds.

"Now, I no longer worry about it. I'm rather thinking how I can expand my activity. And I will marry when I am ready," says Pogouli.

From sponsored child to global leader

Teen dreams of becoming President of Paraguay

By Karen Nuñez and Rosanna Menchaca

Dreaming big could easily be described as the life motto for Alcides, a young Paraguayan teen who at age 18 has set a lofty goal for himself.

"I would like to become the President of my country, and have people remember me as the change-maker that Paraguay needs," he says.

Alcides has taken a number of steps toward that objective, thanks to Children Believe. Sponsored since he was nine years old, Alcides took full advantage of the access to education sponsorship afforded him to excel in his studies, and the teen recently represented his peers at an international child-rights



Ⓐ Alcides, centre, was among the panellists leading discussion at the 2019 Pan-American Forum of Children and Adolescents in Colombia.

forum. He was one of only two representatives from Paraguay to attend the annual Pan-American Forum of Children and Adolescents last October in Cartagena, Colombia. Young leaders shared progress and challenges on child protection and participation in their country.

"We talked about how we learned to exercise our right to contribute in matters that affect us," he says. "The presentation of Paraguay was highly valued, since we could show that the participation of children and adolescents is growing in our country, and is becoming the model to follow. This is a very important achievement for us."

In Paraguay, Alcides is a member of two youth and adolescent rights associations at regional and national levels.

"I've learned so much at every stage of this process," he says. "Each one of us is an agent for the transformation of our lives, families and communities."

"My message to young people is, pursue your dreams, and don't get tired of making positive change in your communities," says Alcides.

Reaching for the stars



Donors and children bring two worlds together

By Dave Stell

Suarika, a Ghanaian teen, wakes and prepares for school in her rural home. A youth doing homework in Canada dreamily sings of holding “one hand up to the stars.” The contrast of these two young women, geographically separated, but joined by love, is the opening for a new Children Believe TV and online ad. Best of all, Children Believe donors are the stars of the production.

“Our new commercial uniquely expresses who we are and what we do,” says Aki Temiseva, Chief Marketing & Development Officer, Children Believe. **“We break barriers to education so children can live and dream fearlessly. Canadians help by sponsoring a child and supporting their education, and we sincerely appreciate their amazing generosity.”**

The ad features Suarika on her walk to school. In Canada, Julia Fung of Markham, Ont., the lead

Canadian donor singing in the ad, is joined by a gifted chorus of donors and Children Believe staff.

While Julia’s singing talent is evident, the teen says she was both anxious and excited to be in the recording studio and on camera. It was an opportunity to overcome stage fright, she says, and to be a part of creating change for children.

“I won’t lie, seeing myself on screen was surreal,” Julia says. “I sang in the hope that my voice could help spread the message and encourage more people to make a difference.”

The popular Canadian rock band, The Strumbellas, gave Children Believe permission to use the words and music from their hit song, “One Hand Up.”

The commercial was produced in Ghana and Canada. Donors who answered our call for talent spent time both in an audio recording studio and video studio. Along with Julia, most admitted to some performance jitters but were proud to lend their support.

Laurie Allen, Maria Cruz, Jennifer Scenna and Pancheta Barnett sang, and all except Laurie were able to take part in the video shoot. Each has had friends



(left) Maria Cruz and Pancheta Barnett
(below) Julia Fung



and family express pleasant surprise at seeing and hearing them in the ad.

“People contacted my parents and my husband because they didn’t know I was involved,” Jennifer says. “They recognized me in the ad! It’s been wonderful hearing that people are seeing it and responding so positively.”

Maria adds, “The commercial sends a powerful message of how far we’ve come and how much more still needs to be done.”

Laurie explains, “I have been a supporter for about 40 years. I think it’s important to help those less fortunate than ourselves, and Children Believe looks out for vulnerable children.”

Dave Tsigoulis, Director of Marketing at Children Believe, says, “The children we met in Ghana for the video shoot were not professional actors, they were sponsored children. But they learned and adapted so quickly,” he says. “Namzooya, who you don’t see in the final cut, ended up being an even better producer/director. She became part of the film crew ... helping us set up the scenes and giving advice on wardrobe and the setting. She made the commercial more successful.”

For the two girls, it was an opportunity of a lifetime. “It was my first time, and I really enjoyed everything about it,” Suarika says. “It was a dream come true.”

For their participation, each of the girls received an education fund to help them pursue careers.

Both dream of becoming a doctor and helping their community. Suarika adds, the Children Believe sponsorship program has been a crucial support to her community and the pursuit of her dream.

“Children are able to pay for their basic school needs,” she says. **“My school has benefited from a children’s club, received computers, a playground, dual desks and so much more.** The current toilet facility is a blessing to us. The sponsorship program is providing for children what their parents are not able to give them.”

Visit childrenbelieve.ca
to see the new commercial.



(above) Laurie Allen
(right) Jennifer Scenna



(far right) Namzooya and Suarika



Meeting Warahama

Sponsored child visit an unforgettable experience

By Dave Stell

Sitting in the shade of a tree in rural Africa, the anticipation was building, Lindsay Kuch recalls, as she waited to meet an eight-year-old girl she'd known for more than two years but had never met. Lindsay was nearly speechless, she says, as the girl approached and a companion asked "Is this her?" "It is" Lindsay whispered.

What happened next, over the course of an afternoon, is something Lindsay said she'll never forget, and looks forward to telling her grandchildren about some day.

A University of Calgary student, Lindsay was meeting her family's sponsored child, Warahama, in the Tamale region of Ghana, in May 2019. The visit was made possible through her school studies in Global Development.

"I had always assumed we were a relatively small part of their lives, but it became clear that in fact their family thought about and prayed for us quite often," Lindsay said. **"When we write a letter, the whole family and many others gather around to listen to it being translated and read out. This was so touching to me.**" I responded by saying that I felt incredibly privileged to have been able to visit them and that I knew the rest of my family wished they could be there with me."

Her professor and guide for the trip, a native born Ghanaian, was Dr. Rita Yembilah who helped with translation. During the visit, Lindsay was presented with a gift—three hand-woven cloths from Northern



🕒 Lindsay enjoying some smiles with Warahama's family.



Ghana. The family, community members and Children Believe staff asked Lindsay to stand and Warahama's grandmother wrapped the cloths around her, as they do with traditional Ghanaian clothing. Lindsay was overcome by the moment, she remembers.

"By the end, the community was laughing and clapping, and my professor exclaimed, 'Lindsay, you are now from Northern Ghana!'" Lindsay said. "These three pieces of cloth hold more value than anyone could ever guess for my family. **What a priceless gift from a family that had so little. Their generosity was astounding.**"

Lindsay was invited into the family's home, and despite knowing what to expect, was taken aback by the living conditions. **"Seeing the small room the entire family shared, with chickens and only a small window and clay urn for the family's water, shook me to my core.** I thought I would have been better prepared, but I wasn't. And then I remembered, this is what I am fighting for as a development student. This is what I will keep in mind when I come across obstacles in the future that try to keep me from being the best development practitioner I can be."

Lindsay showed the family a video of her own mother, Susan, who recorded a message to be played for the family and Warahama. It is Lindsay's mother back in Canada who writes to Warahama and is most involved in the sponsorship through Children Believe.

"I was so touched by the expressions and smiles on all of their faces as they nodded and "awwwwed" along with my mom's words," Lindsay says. "I had to try really hard not to cry in front of them."

A little bit about Warahama...

Eight-year-old Warahama lives with her mother and father and six other family members in a village in the Savannah Region of Ghana. Her parents are subsistence farmers and, along with two younger brothers, the family includes her grandmother, an uncle, his wife and their daughter. They share a house that is three mud rooms and a compound with their livestock.

Warahama helps the family by running errands and washing dishes. She also babysits her little brothers so that her mother can prepare meals and do other household chores. She dreams of becoming a teacher.

Having a sponsor to provide support has made it possible for the family to start building new living areas, so they can have a comfortable place to rest and sleep.



COVID-19 alert:

You can keep vulnerable children nourished

Emergency Food Pack \$50

Your gift will feed a family for two weeks...

- rice
- pasta
- corn
- wheat and more




Food is critically needed in the communities where we work due to the COVID-19 crisis. Your support will help parents who no longer have the means to feed their children, who also lost access to nutritious school meals.

We need your help
Donate an emergency food pack today:
childrenbelieve.ca/COVID

VISIT [CHILDRENBELIEVE.CA/COVID](https://childrenbelieve.ca/COVID), OR CALL 1.800.263.5437



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