

CHILD VOICE

2023 ANNUAL REPORT ISSUE

NEVER TOO LATE

Earning a skill, even as an adult, can turn a life from difficulty to success

Fast friends

A Canadian sponsor meets a child in Nicaragua

A victim no more

Finding a new purpose in life after kidnapping and rape



Children Believe

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Believe in girls...



☺ Sarah, top, is a teacher in Ghana who has overcome challenges to achieve her goals. Children Believe CEO Fred Witteveen, above, spent time with her and learned how sponsorship helped her reach a dream to complete her education.

...they can change the world

While in Ghana earlier this year, I met Sarah, a former sponsored child. Sarah had to overcome a lot of challenges growing up. Her family struggled to afford the cost of school, and as a girl, she was discouraged by discrimination. But thanks to her fierce determination and the support of a generous Canadian donor, she chose to become a teacher – and is now an inspiration for the young girls in her classroom.

This is just one story, of one young woman, but Sarah represents Children Believe's purpose. She represents the incredible potential of every child in every community we work in. We are proud to report that in the past year, 285,539 girls benefited from sustained access to inclusive and quality education in our project areas.

In this edition of *ChildVoice*, you will read more examples of young women like Sarah. Sadly, some have endured horrific circumstances, including gender-based violence. But they have bravely chosen to share their stories as proof of the positive change that is possible.

In Nicaragua, Jahoska has been able to continue her education despite battling poverty and is taking university courses while helping as a youth group leader to inspire other girls (p. 10). In Burkina Faso, Mounia suffered sexual violence, but she is proud to report that with help, she is on track to earn a degree in psychology. She dreams about being an aid worker in her country to help other young girls overcome tragedy, as she did (p. 12).

At Children Believe, we're proud to share and celebrate these small victories that make a big difference. But there is still much to be done. Every day, we identify more youth that need help through sponsorship and the programs we offer to help them break down the barriers to education so they can change their world.

I cannot thank you enough for your support. None of this work is possible without your generosity.

Sincerely,



Fred Witteveen is Children Believe's chief executive officer. ceo@childrenbelieve.ca

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Cover: Miriam is using her skills as a seamstress, gained through training classes, to change her life (p. 14). Photo: Samuel Abdul-Rahaman

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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, and cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

OUR VALUES

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



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

Take a world tour, in the kitchen

Are you a foodie? Then you need to check out our new Believe Bites food series.

With popular recipes from the countries where Children Believe works, we have developed an extraordinary culinary journey with chefs here in Canada and around the world helping us learn how to prepare treats and cuisine from around the globe.

Learn about a beloved Indian classic, Aloo Gobi, or one of Burkina Faso's most famous dishes, Gnon, a tantalizing and nutty delight, along with several more recipes.



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD 2023

Education is the key to unlocking a brighter future. Join me in promoting girls' education because when girls are educated, we all benefit.

#DayoftheGirl #IDG2023 #BelieveInGirlsLikeMe #EducateGirls

DIANCA COREA

Children Believe

International Day of the Girl 2023: Amplify girls' voices, end child marriage

On International Day of the Girl, Children Believe and her supporters promoted the #BelieveInGirlsLikeMe campaign to end child marriage and promote girls' education.

Our advocacy efforts included a powerful video and social media campaign, as well as articles in City Parent and Macleans.ca. Our staff, donors and supporters shared personalized messages on social media, helping champion the importance of ensuring girls around the world can all access education! Join our ongoing efforts to empower girls through education and advocacy and end child marriage.



TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon a big success!

In a remarkable display of community spirit and determination, a team of 20 runners came together this year to raise over \$13,000 during the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon on October 15. Children Believe was thrilled to return as an official charity partner for the Charity Challenge, uniting runners in a unique fundraising event. Our team believes that together, we can dream big and make a significant impact. Donations are still being accepted: Just follow the QR code below.



THINGS CHANGE. YUP, JUST LIKE OUR ADDRESS.

Children Believe has a new home!

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us many things. An important adjustment for Children Believe was the realization we had more physical operating space than needed. As a result, we moved to a hybrid-working environment so that we could make even better use of the gifts provided by our donors. Moving to a hybrid-work model made it possible to sell our former office location and relocate to smaller leased space.

If you need to reach us by mail, please note that we are now located at 90 Allstate Parkway, Suite 101, Markham, ON L6R 6H3. We'd love to hear from you!

Bridging two worlds creates unforgettable memories



Keyling, her mother, and Sylvia Calleri, enjoyed getting to know each other, taking selfies during a tour of the sights in Managua and sharing gifts over a meal.

"I feel grateful. This is a wonderful opportunity to be able to share and get to know her," she says. "I was waiting three years to make this visit, but due to COVID-19, I had not been able to do it."

With the support of Children Believe staff, Keyling and her mother bonded for a day with Sylvia over meals and shopping at a local mall. Keyling quickly overcame some initial shyness and really enjoyed her time with her Canadian supporter. It was a great learning experience for both of them.

For Sylvia, meeting Keyling face-to-face brought out emotions she hadn't experienced in their letter exchanges.

"I have been a sponsor since Keyling was a little girl, and being able to see the teenager that she has become, with clear goals to continue studying, fills me with great joy," she says. "I will continue to support her dreams and her studies, to help her become a professional."

Looking back at her time in Nicaragua this past April, Sylvia Calleri easily pinpoints the instant that stood out most for her, from what was a remarkable journey.

"My favorite moment of the visit was when I saw Keyling for the first time, because I recognized that smile of hers from the photograph when I first became a sponsor, when she was only seven years old," Sylvia explains.

It was a trip years in the making for Sylvia, who was in the country to volunteer her time with another organization. For her, it was a perfect opportunity for her to meet the young woman she has written to and supported faithfully for seven years.



What can Barbie teach us about girls' education?

Children Believe addresses systemic barriers through learning

⌚ Children Believe intervening to make education accessible to girls.

The real world represented in the film shows patriarchy from a narrow lens of male-female relations.

Left out are the complex, intersecting relationships and barriers that women and girls from diverse backgrounds experience daily, based on race, class, ethnicity, caste, abilities and other forms of difference.

While Barbie the film was never intended to be a sociological study, it allows us the opportunity to think about the linkages between education and gender – an issue of primary concern for Children Believe. Take, for example, Ghana. Here, our Centre of Excellence research and advocacy focuses on early childhood education

⌚ Teacher Wendy Ruiz during a Nicaragua virtual learning session.



By Mona Ghali

This summer entertainment news was awash in pink as Barbie hit screens worldwide. The movie invited explorations of gendered relations of power that hit close to home for Children Believe.

Since Mattel released the iconic doll in 1959, Barbie and dolls like it have been a constant feature in toy boxes globally. While she had no backstory then, she was well known for her slim body, blue eyes and blonde hair. Partly because of this blank slate, children could imagine who the doll was to them, her life and activities, although it was always harder for girls who did not look like Barbie to share fully in that experience. Over the years, Mattel released new versions to better reflect racial and ethnic diversity, evolving social norms and roles of women in the workplace, from the farm to the operating room. From this fluffy world, movie director Greta Gerwig's interpretation explored the serious issue of patriarchy and gender discrimination against women and girls. So, what can be learned from Barbie's adventures in Barbie Land and the real world, when it comes to girls' education?

for girls and boys to support girls' learning outcomes from the start. Providing early childhood education to disadvantaged children increases the likelihood that they will complete more years of schooling. Then there is Ethiopia, where we enable girls displaced by armed conflict in the Amhara region to resume education and reduce the risk of later dropout. In Nicaragua, Children Believe provides youth with training in entrepreneurial skills and business practices to enable women to exercise greater financial independence. Achieving gender equality in education is part of the intergenerational struggle for women's rights, which includes removing other systemic barriers to health care, credit, labour markets, equal pay, and protection under the law.

In supporting our local partners, women's groups and expanding girls' access to education, Children Believe challenges barriers to educational access, academic learning, and employment in tangible and measurable ways. Our work seeks to enable women and girls to exercise their agency, release their imagination, and take ownership of their lives and decisions.



⌚ Young girls in Ghana carrying water.

First, we embody social values of gender equity and protect the right to education for girls and boys, engaging both women and men, girls and boys. Second, we model action by removing or mitigating barriers to education with infrastructure building, teacher training, learning materials and raising awareness among parents and communities. By doing so, we reduce the social and economic harms that result from gender disparities, including child marriage, poor health outcomes and low



⌚ After school learning in India.

income. Third, we provide a platform for women and girls to share their lived experiences and for readers to reflect on our collective responsibilities that come with a shared humanity. Fourth, we choose to love. As the Black feminist scholar and activist bell hooks writes, "There can be no love without justice...abuse and neglect negate love. Care and affirmation, the opposite of abuse and humiliation, are the foundation of love."

In this edition of *ChildVoice*, we explore girls' education and its positive impacts, through stories. In reality, there is no escape to a mythical Barbie Land. But in the ongoing and reversible struggle for gender equality, addressing conflict—and climate-induced displacement and migration, child labour, and human trafficking, education is both a shield and a gateway to address systemic barriers for women and girls everywhere.

Girls deserve equal opportunities

Children Believe helps girls and boys enjoy equal opportunities to learn, lead and pursue their dreams.

We support training and awareness campaigns on gender equality; promote the benefits of education for girls; and boost girls' knowledge and confidence through girls' clubs and youth groups.

We also boost income-generating activities for women's economic empowerment and engage boys and men as champions for change.

Your donations help champion equality between girls and boys.

Going back to school

Gowri learned how to speak out for her own good

☺ Taking part in youth clubs gave Gowri confidence to advocate for herself, so she could return to classes and pursue her goal to be a doctor.

By Jins Joseph (With contributions from Ms. Shakina Abraham.)

“While my friends were learning and growing in school, I had to stay at home and take care of my younger sisters. I felt left out and missed the chance to play, learn, and experience new things with them. Not being able to go to school had a big impact on me.”

This was a very difficult time for Gowri, a 16-year-old girl in rural India. Due to her family's financial situation, her parents needed her to stop attending school. She stayed home and took care of her two younger siblings. Unhappy, but obedient to her parents, she did as she was asked. But the feeling in the pit of her stomach wouldn't go away.

“In our community, it was common for girls to stop going to school, especially when they reached a certain age,” she says. “It was disheartening for me when my siblings asked for help with their homework, and I couldn't provide the assistance they needed. All these experiences brought me disappointment and sadness. I felt like I was useless and inferior.”

However, there was one place where Gowri found relief and eventually the inner courage and conviction to challenge the status quo. At a Children Believe youth club provided through a partner, Rural Organization for Poverty Eradication Services (ROPES), she continued her education in a different way. One that would change her life.

“The first meeting initially made me feel shy, but the

ROPES team provided the support and encouragement I needed to overcome my hesitations,” she says. “They empowered me to speak up and express my ideas without fear.”

Meetings focused on building confidence and social skills, imparting crucial knowledge about child rights, protection laws, and child participation. Our work seeks to enable women and girls to exercise their agency, release their imagination, and take ownership of their lives and decisions. Gowri and other children were encouraged to take active roles in discussions and decision-making processes. Coupled with the conducive environment provided by local government schools, the door was open for Gowri to find a path back to school.

“The counseling sessions offered by the ROPES team had a profound impact on both me and my parents,” the young woman explains. “They helped my parents understand the importance of education for every individual. With this newfound understanding, they became supportive of my educational pursuits.”

And now she feels like the sky is the limit for her dreams to come true.

“Continuing my education has given me a dream — to become a doctor — and the confidence to chase that dream,” she says. “It's instilled in me the belief that I can make a difference in the lives of others. I even taught my mom to write her signature, which enabled her to acquire benefits for herself and her self-help group. This opportunity would have been impossible otherwise.”

VISIT THE CHILDREN BELIEVE GIFT CATALOGUE TO HELP GIRLS LIKE GOWRI.



☺ Blanca became alienated with school, for a number of reasons. But given counselling, she found a new passion for education and is back in class now, pursuing a path in law enforcement.

Coming alongside the family, they learned that her demotivation had grown through the pandemic when she found herself isolated and out of touch due to lockdowns and school closures. School was already a place where she found it difficult to communicate due to language barriers.

“My classmates did not call me during that time,” says Blanca, speaking in Guaraní, a native language of Paraguay. “I used to go to visit some of them and ask them for their notebooks so that I could also complete lessons. During that time, I missed much of the homework.”

Blanca goes back to school

Engaging with Blanca and her mother and grandmother, who she lives with, program staff discovered her difficulties communicating. Spanish is the exclusive language of the school system, used for lessons and in textbooks, so she experienced great difficulty adapting from her first language of Guaraní.

With encouragement and help through the program, Blanca agreed to return to her education, even finding a goal to help drive her to reach success.

“My teacher (program staff) and my family urged me a lot to choose to return,” she says, explaining why she decided to pursue education again. “I thought ‘what will happen to me if I don't go to school anymore; I'd better go back to class.’

“I know I want to be someone in life, I want to achieve something, and that is why I went back,” she concludes. “Now I want to be a policewoman.”

There are more young women like Blanca choosing to pursue education through the program, and with donor support, Children Believe can continue to reach even more.

—With notes from Karen Nuñez and Rosanna Menchaca.

☺ Blanca has the support of her grandmother, Lidia, in overcoming challenges to education.



Determined to pursue education

Blanca is back in school with a new purpose

Blanca, 17, left school last year, one of many vulnerable youth whose drive and ambition were affected by COVID-19's devastating disruption to children's education. In fact, in Paraguay, regular school attendance for youth aged 15 to 19 dropped from 97.7 to 70.2 percent in just a few years.

Compounding the difficulty for young people to stay in school is a lack of infrastructure with schools in need of learning materials and improvements, bullying and the absence of vital learning support for children with disabilities or learning needs. “It didn't interest me anymore,” she says, describing her simple reason for leaving school.

This trend has become a priority focus for Children Believe and its partners in Paraguay. In countries where gaining an education is already difficult, dropping out of school severely reduces career options and likely means a life of disadvantages.

Blanca's decision didn't escape the notice of staff from Children Believe's Remansito program, implemented in her community in alliance with local partner, Global Infancia.



Leading by example

Youth group changes Jahoska's life

By Dianca Massiel Corea Pulido

Jahoska, 24, shakes her head as she describes what might have happened if she had missed what turned out to be a life-changing opportunity.

"Where I live, there were many groups that encouraged young people to fall into bad habits such as drinking alcohol and using drugs; if I hadn't been part of the Children Believe programs, I'm sure I would have taken one of those paths," shares Jahoska.

However, she chose a different life.

At 14, sponsored by a Children Believe donor, she first attended a youth group called JUPAC, a Spanish acronym that translates to: "Youths United, Thinking and Acting." There she received communication materials that taught youth like herself about violence prevention, women's empowerment and making good decisions. When she joined, Jahoska did not like

☺ Jahoska has become a major influence for youth, especially girls, participating in JUPAC youth groups.

to talk, share or speak in public, but she developed confidence in herself and strengthened valuable life skills, leading to academic success. She achieved the grades needed to attend university, where she is currently attending weekend classes to earn a degree in marketing and advertising.

"I went from being a quiet girl to participating in different programs, representing other teenagers," Jahoska shares.

Throughout her involvement, Jahoska learned the value of sisterhood and the benefits of fostering mutual help among women to support each other, something she values greatly. Together, they identify harmful practices and work through challenging life situations in a safe space.

Thanks to the support of donors, JUPAC groups

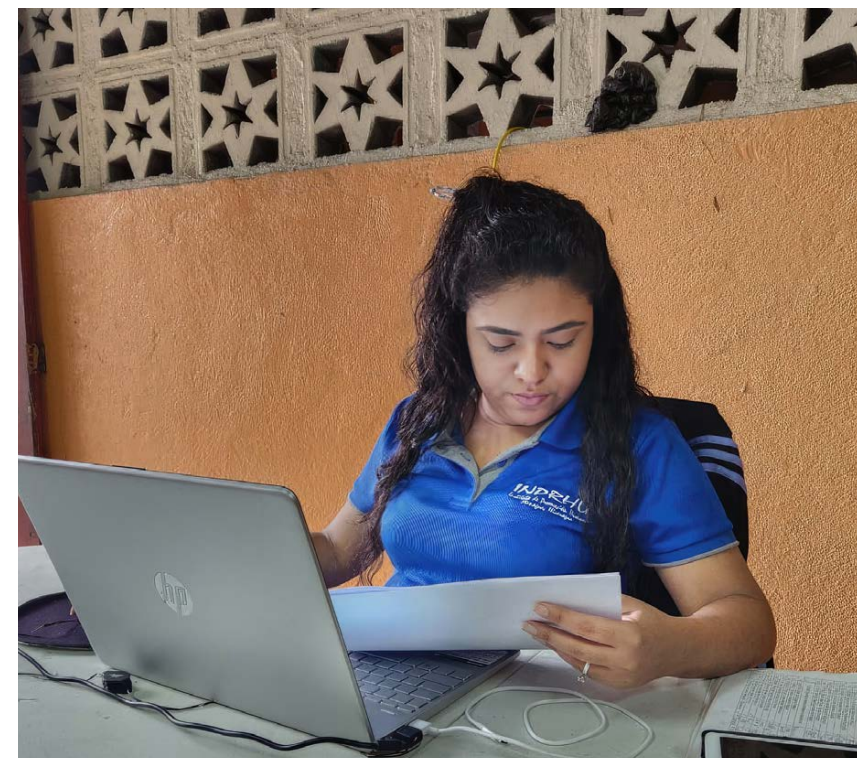
have also been responsible for awareness campaigns that help boys recognize their responsibility in teen pregnancies and they encourage parents to educate their children about sexual health. Creating and strengthening youth groups is especially important in communities where children are marginalized.

staff point to Jahoska as an example of the Children Believe program's success, one example among many who have excelled in life, thanks to their involvement.

"She went from being a reserved teenager to being an example and leader for other teenagers in her community," says Martha Prieto, an INPRHU program coordinator. "She became very interested in the protection of girls and together with other young people developed many initiatives to prevent violence in her community.

"If I had to say what is the change she had, for me it is that she is totally another teenager than the one we knew, the way she dedicated herself to learning and the interest she put into it is what has allowed her to reach her potential."

Maria Isabel Lopez, Children Believe's Regional Director for Latina America, says, "Jahoska's story beautifully highlights the significance of fostering mutual help among youth, especially women. By working together and supporting one another, young people can overcome challenges, identify harmful practices, and create safe spaces for personal development. I encourage everyone to continue supporting organizations like Children Believe that make a remarkable difference in children's and youth's lives."



☺ Jahoska studies marketing and advertising through university classes on weekends, pursuing a degree.

Harnessing youth potential

Jahoska is a role model for other young people, teenagers and children. She is using her experience and knowledge as a staff member working for INPRHU, a partner agency helping to provide care to children sponsored through Children Believe. She has impressed everyone as a facilitator, applying lessons learned in the youth group to promote digital empowerment, manage the group's social media presence, and through workshops, raise awareness about gender-based violence.

As she engages with youth, Jahoska draws from her own experience: "If we are included from a young age, if we are given participation and heard, we are going to be great professionals and contribute a lot to our communities."

Jahoska adds that she wants to inspire other teenagers to create a life plan and realize that, with effort, they can achieve their goals, too. At INPRHU,

☺ Martha Prieto, INPRHU program coordinator.



Turning tragedy into triumph

By Fanta Konde and Assetou Zalle

Ⓞ Mounia suffered through being raped, but with psychosocial support and her personal determination, she overcame the trauma and is now studying psychology for a career helping other young women who suffer similar ordeals.

"I was a victim of rape during the security crisis in my community," says Mounia, a young woman in central-northern Burkina Faso whose name has been changed to protect her identity. "(Because of the attack) I was left out of school and marginalized by those around me."

Even before the attack, Mounia's impoverished family had been hit by one tragedy after another. Mounia's father had died two years earlier, and her mother couldn't provide for the family due to being partially paralyzed.

"I had difficult living conditions with my mother, who was ill and had no financial means to pay my school fees," Mounia recalls.

Things continued to turn for the worse for Mounia and her mother. They were forced to flee their home because of the worsening conflict in the region, and it was on their journey Mounia was raped. Eventually, they ended up at a camp for displaced people with a very uncertain future. It was a time of darkness and despair.

Hopeful new beginnings

But she didn't give up. Mounia was determined to be more than a statistic. About a month after settling into the camp, she finally found a glimmer of hope through the helping hand of a social worker from a Children Believe program.

That was when Mounia chose to participate in a program she desperately needed so that she could begin to heal emotionally from being forced from her home and raped. The program, part of a partnership

between UNICEF and Children Believe, provided mental health and psychosocial support services to thousands of displaced people in north Burkina Faso. Because of donors like you, Mounia and many like her, had the choice to receive school fees and food supplies to help them get their lives back on track.

Four years later, Mounia continues to raise her much-loved daughter (born as a result of the rape) while pursuing a higher education. After completing the schooling needed, she entered university, where she is in her first year of psychology and psychosocial intervention. After her daughter, this new career opportunity is her main passion so that she can help other young women who suffered from similar acts of violence.

"I want to specialize in psychology in order to provide solutions to these crimes," she says. "I want to one day become a humanitarian aid worker who will be responsible for taking care of people who have been subjected to gender based violence."

There are more young women like Mounia in search of this help, but thankfully Mounia can pursue her life ambition both inside and outside the classroom. Beyond her studies, she is already becoming a community leader, working for an association that integrates youth into a local support centre. And this industrious young mother and student hasn't stopped there. She also makes and sells liquid soap in her neighbourhood to help earn income for her and her family.

Rebuilding her life

Finding hope after a horrific assault

By Gezahegn Gebremariam

Jamila's life changed in an instant when four men with weapons kidnapped her while she was on her way home. After being raped by one attacker, they tried to force her to marry him while she lay blindfolded and in pain on a cold floor, begging not to be killed.

Thankfully, the community discovered what had happened and Jamila was brought home.

"As a result of a social worker intervening, the police were called and all of my kidnappers, including the one who had raped me, were caught," Jamila says. "My life was undoubtedly saved, and I was liberated thanks to the community workers' hard work, the police and the community's awareness."

The men responsible for the crime were charged and received prison sentences.

Recovering and rebuilding

One ordeal was replaced by another though, as Jamila, just 16, began a difficult road to recovery from her experience. Sexual assault and rape are severe examples of gender-based violence, which can have a devastating impact that can last a lifetime. Fortunately, she got the help she needed.

"Professional counsellors assisted me with ongoing psychosocial counselling," she says. "When I returned to school in Grade 10, I was able to successfully complete my high school education. I currently attend one of the private colleges as a second-year diploma student, studying accounting on the weekends and at night."

All of the support, from helping her escape

kidnapping, accessing counselling, and continuing her education to follow her career dreams, came through a Children Believe partner working in this area of Ethiopia. The need continues to grow, but thanks to the support of Canadian donors, Bole Bible Baptist Church Child Care and Community Development (BBBC) staff are better equipped to help young women like Jamila at every stage of an ordeal like she experienced, from the community watch that alerted police, to guiding her through counselling as part of the healing process.

Staff with BBBC report she has been an active participant in their school-girls clubs where victims of gender-based violence get free legal, medical and psychological support. In partnership with Children Believe, the agency has wide-scale programs to prevent such violence in the community and leads Community Conversation programs with the Child Protection Committee they established. They also launched Child Rights Clubs, Girls Clubs, and a Child Parliament to raise awareness of child protection issues.

Jamila has found a way to seize her own future. She works as a waitress at a hotel to save money for her roadside tea-coffee business while taking classes on weekends to complete her studies in accounting. She lives with her sister in a rental house, caring for their single mother with a mental illness.

"My sincere thanks go to the Children Believe programs which, have helped to heal my wounds and restart my academic career," Jamila says.

Ⓞ Kidnapped, held against her will and raped, Jamila was helped to escape by social workers in her community.

Seizing opportunities and never giving up

By Samuel Abdul-Rahaman

Miriam is grateful for the life she lives now as a business owner. But her success has come through a lot of long, hard struggles and many setbacks.

She was married at 16 because her parents were unable to meet her basic needs. They couldn't afford school expenses, including school supplies, uniforms or shoes. Pregnant soon after with her first child, Miriam's childhood and education were suddenly over.

As a girl from a small village in northern Ghana, without an education or skills, her options were extremely limited. She became a street vendor to try and earn money for their family.

"My husband got some small capital for me to sell

⌚ Miriam and her family, husband Kamaldeen, son Hidir, and daughter Ahlam.

maize. I was carrying it in a basin and moving from one location to the other to sell."

She was able to earn a little bit of money for her hard work, but when her child was born, followed by a second child, a girl, she had to switch her focus to raising her children. Her husband continued to train to be an electrician, but his income would be low for a number of years until his apprenticeship was complete. There was no time or money to support her career aspirations.

Looking for a solution for Miriam to pursue skills training, it was decided she would move to the capital city of Accra with their infant daughter to find work as a "head potter." Often sleeping in the streets, head potters in Ghana are mostly teenage girls who migrate

to the city to carry goods for businesses in pots on their heads. It's physically demanding work in a dangerous place for women who are living on their own.

Six months later, Miriam's life took another turn for the worse when she was robbed. As a result, she was forced to go home with nothing to show for all her hard work. Her dream suffered another serious setback.

Never giving up

But she never gave up hope, even in this dark time. Then her patience and persistence were rewarded.

"Children Believe supported me to enroll in a dressmaking shop to learn," she explains. "This came to me as a relief since I was not doing anything at home."

Miriam applied for the program and was accepted; her determination made her an excellent candidate. The program helps young women like Miriam, who've been forced to drop out of school. But the assistance doesn't stop when the training ends. At the training centre, Miriam learned to sew and operate her own business, with money management and budgeting. After three years of apprenticeship training, she graduated. Her life was finally moving forward.

"Even after graduating from the training, I still received start-up support (funds)," Miriam says. "I got an additional new sewing machine to support me to establish my shop. I also received other materials like a table, chairs, scissors and more."

Miriam is eager to share her good fortune, and has been advising other young women on how to follow in her footsteps.

"I want to help others so they will not have to go

⌚ Miriam and her husband Kamaldeen are saving together so that she can move her sewing business into a new location away from their family compound.



Employment opportunities for young people

Thirty-six young women and eight young men received vocational and technical skills training and have access to employment opportunities in the past year. These young people were trained in dressmaking, hairdressing, carpentry, welding and weaving. Five hundred young people have benefitted from the skills training program.

through what I went through," she smiles. "I want them to learn a skill like I did."

"I want to help others so that they would not have to go through what I went through," she smiles. "I want them to learn a skill like I did."

Turning dreams into reality

Today, Miriam earns money by sewing dresses and school uniforms from her home, living with her husband and their two children, now nine and six. Their traditional Ghanaian home includes other extended family members, such as parents, brothers and sisters, their wives and children. The household is a small community of about 20 people.

But Miriam is ambitious and is striving for a new level of success. Her next goal is to earn enough to purchase a shipping container to house her growing business. But to have her own shop, away from the family compound, means taking on her own apprentices to train in order to grow her business and client base. Miriam's supportive husband has already bought a small parcel of land for the new shop and they are working together to save money for it.

Believing in children

Miriam's story is one example among many of Children Believe's programs in Ghana, which have changed the lives of hundreds of women like her in recent years.

"The skill-training program provides an opportunity for out-of-school young people to be empowered to acquire livelihoods through vocational and technical skills," explains Esenam Kavi De Souza, Associate Country Director for Children Believe Ghana. "We're very proud of the accomplishments of those who have participated and made the most of their training."

Other women, like Miriam, could benefit from the opportunity with donor support to build capacity in the program. For Miriam, she is grateful for the opportunity she had to fulfill her dream of learning a valuable skill.

"Since I graduated, my life has changed and it is better now than it used to be. I am very happy and grateful."

A life's experience reinforces the "transformative might of education" in the world of a child

My journey, from growing up in Ethiopia, has instilled in me a profound perspective on the world. Witnessing both the stark economic disparities and the incredible potential for change has ignited my belief in our collective power to break the chains of poverty and injustice. More recently, as a member of Children Believe's board of directors, I've directly experienced similar stories from Africa, South Asia and Latin America that have left an enduring mark on me. Thankfully, Children Believe, alongside our local partners, is shattering barriers that hinder children's access to education, forging a path for them to flourish and learn.

Through our expansive network of country offices, our global movement remains resolute in confronting the adversities that deprive children of their potential. From combatting child marriage to ensuring access to clean water, promoting gender parity and championing children's rights, we are cultivating strong and resilient communities. United, we are touching the lives of 1.3 million children and community members annually.

As an educator and one who benefitted from my family's commitment to education, I recognize the transformative might of education and the doors it opens for those who receive it. The profound impact education has on a child's trajectory is immeasurable.

Globally, parents share a common thread, an unconditional love for our children and an unyielding desire to equip them with the tools for a promising future. It's with immense privilege that I stand as part of an organization committed to levelling the playing field, ensuring every child has the chance to unfold their true potential.

To our cherished community of supporters, and Believers, I extend my heartfelt gratitude. Your unwavering dedication propels us towards our objectives. Special



☺ In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Aklilu, second from right, supports a number of projects to help youth overcome barriers to education.

acknowledgement goes to our outgoing chair, Gabriel Olivier. His leadership, steadfast support and resolute advocacy have set an exceptional precedent for our work. Every child deserves the liberty to dream without constraint. Our mission is to forge a path of education that empowers them to shape their own destiny, detaching their future from the shackles of injustice and vicious cycle of poverty.

Thank you for your continued dedication and generosity. Over the past five years, I've had the privilege of closely collaborating with our remarkable board members, witnessing firsthand the outstanding endeavors undertaken by our dedicated staff and partners, who tirelessly work towards our goals. And now, as I assume the role of Board Chair at Children Believe, I feel truly honoured and privileged.

With humility and gratitude, I embrace the opportunity to be a catalyst for change, together with all of you, on this remarkable voyage.

Aklilu Mulat
Chair of the Board



Through the generosity and support of our many donors and partners, Children Believe breaks down barriers to education to create a future of hope for children, families, and communities, giving them the ability to make their own choices and determine their own future, so they can dream fearlessly – stand up for what they believe in – and to be heard.

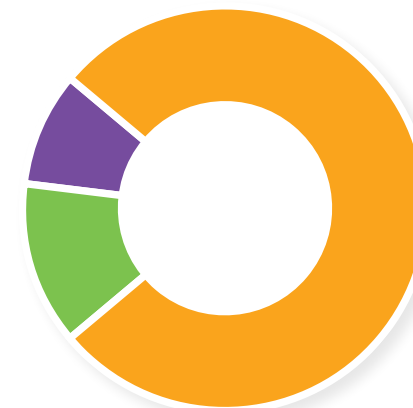
Summarized Statement of Revenue and Expenditures

Year ended March 31, 2023
[in thousands of dollars]

	2023	2022
REVENUE		
Cash donations	22,915	21,437
Grants	5,786	5,042
Gifts-in-kind	6,711	2,504
Investment & other income	565	415
TOTAL REVENUE	35,977	29,398
EXPENDITURES		
Programs		
Education	12,885	12,450
Health and nutrition	9,300	5,730
Sustainable development	4,910	3,766
Emergency response	717	214
Total programs	27,812	22,160
Fundraising	6,526	3,706
Administration	3,940	3,023
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	38,278	28,889
(Deficit) Surplus	(2,301)	509

☺ Children show their appreciation at a school in Ghana where they have access to school classes thanks to generous donor support through Children Believe.

Expenditures



76% Programs
14% Fundraising
10% Administration

This chart is based on a five year average of our annual expenditures.

CHILDREN BELIEVE is an independent, autonomous organization that directly funds programs and projects in our country offices, working with trusted national partner organizations. We proudly support local communities, employing passionate, highly qualified national personnel to manage and lead our work.

Our Board of Directors

As of September 1, 2023

AKLILU MULAT, CHAIR

KAREN FONSETH-SCHLOSSBERG, VICE-CHAIR

GABRIEL OLLIVIER, PAST-CHAIR

MICHAEL RUTHARD, TREASURER

ANTHONY RUFFOLO, SECRETARY

VAFA AKHAVAN, DIRECTOR

JUDITH D'SOUZA, DIRECTOR

MARY KOSTA-CADAS, DIRECTOR

MONA MITCHELL, DIRECTOR

MELISSA SARIFFODEEN, DIRECTOR



Thank you to our valued supporters for helping to make a lasting change in the lives of children.

Donors making a big difference

Your support is changing lives around the world



OVERALL REACH

1,353,300 children, families and other socially vulnerable people in 466 targeted communities were helped by Children Believe programs across six countries.



EDUCATION Improving access to education

503,500+ boys and girls, teachers, caretakers and parents benefited from sustained access to inclusive and quality education.

48,206 children (between 36 and 59 months) enjoyed early childhood education and care services.

55,789 young women and men participated in vocational, life and skills training to pursue better quality employment opportunities.

57 classrooms and libraries were newly reconstructed or renovated to support learning.

167,109 items of school supplies were provided to equip 177 schools.



HEALTH/NUTRITION Supporting thriving communities

263,803 children, young women and mothers received maternal and child health care services.

56,415 childbirths were attended by skilled health personnel and delivered in health facilities.

58,550 women (age 15-49) were able to have at least two or more antenatal care visits during pregnancies.

36,359 people (52% female) provided with life-saving essentials like emergency food, child nutritional support or cash for relief assistance.



CHILD PROTECTION Keeping kids safe

Over 337,000 children, youth, women, parents and other duty-bearers from 466 community groups benefited from Children Believe's work to prevent various forms of violence, neglect and abuse.

96,386 children under age five were registered with authorities for legal birth registration to ensure their identity and safeguarding through government recognition, social services and the exercising of all rights.

171 school communities were equipped with extracurricular and recreational facilities essential for creating safer and conducive learning environments.

390 community-based child protection systems were established through partners to protect children from abuse, exploitation, trafficking and violence.

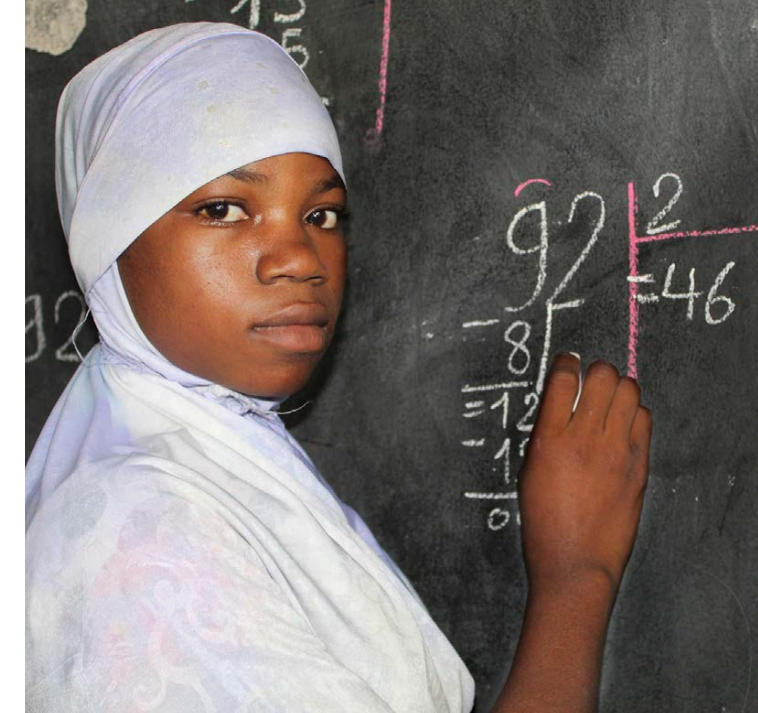


GENDER EQUALITY Promoting equal opportunities

218,652 children, youth, parents and caregivers were empowered to stand for the rights of girls and women and took legal and community-focused preventive measures to avoid child marriage and other forms of gender discrimination.

614,504 family members and community leaders were trained through sessions in best practices for positive child raising and wellbeing, including violence prevention and gender equality.

24,573 women assumed leadership roles and meaningfully participated in community and public decision making that influences gender equality.



EMPOWERMENT Involving youth in decision-making

160,114 children and youth meaningfully participated in community actions and grassroots decision making.

27 local development partners increased capacities to address child rights and facilitate actions in fragile and underdeveloped communities.

Over 48,715 youth and women organized and formed 2,461 Village Savings and Loans Associations to promote self-employment and business entrepreneurship.



12,030 young women and men mobilized to advocate against unfair and misguided environmental policies that adversely affect lives.



START HOLIDAY SHOPPING WITH GIFTS FOR GOOD!

'Tis the season! (Almost.) Shop early with 51 gift ideas that will make holiday giving extra meaningful. **Choose a gift featuring our 5X or 7X multiplier, and your goodness will go even further to help those most vulnerable!**

LIZ' PICKS:

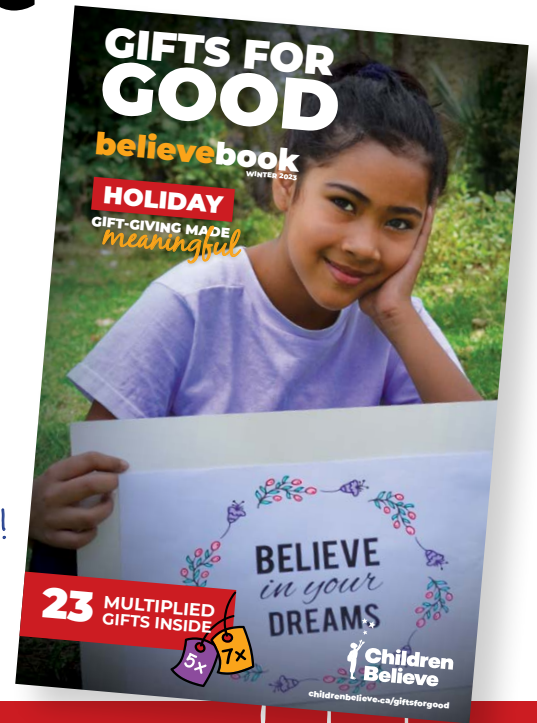
-  **Send a girl to school for a year > \$100 x5 = \$500 impact!** 😊
-  **Help where the need is greatest > \$100 x7 = \$700 impact!**
- Give a goat or flock of goats > \$100 or \$250 x7 = \$700 or \$1,750 impact!**



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Leaving a legacy of hope

A gift in your Will to Children Believe continues your compassion and generosity towards vulnerable children. Your legacy can bring powerful change and opportunity to the children, families and communities we support for generations to come!

Please contact Christina Beeston, Legacy giving manager, for more information: cbeeston@childrenbelieve.ca or 1.800.263.5437 ext. 402.



DID YOU KNOW? You can create a simple, legal Will for free by visiting childrenbelieve.ca/legacy-giving.

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