



Some Guidance on Sponsorship with CCF

1. *Thank you for becoming the Sponsor of a CCF child. We're sure the bonds that you are about to start building will be good for you, for the child you sponsor, for the family and community involved and for CCF. To help you get the most out of the relationship we've put together the following guidelines. We hope you'll find them informative and useful. It is impossible to be fully comprehensive, to cover every point and answer every possible question in advance, so if there is anything that you would like to know that isn't included in what follows, please do get in touch and let us know. We will get back to you.*

Sponsorship

2. *Getting a sponsor is a major step for the children here and, for those able to communicate either on their own or via CCF's translators, this is almost always reflected in their initial, often effusive, communications. You will be very new in their lives and we know from experience you can be very good for their lives too.*

Contact – How does it work?

3. *When a sponsorship is established for all except the very youngest of the children, one of the first things we do is to provide the sponsored child with an email address of their own, which we provide to you. Your contact will be through CCF's team of dedicated translators. It is their task to help the children who are able to communicate write their emails and put them into English for you and into Khmer for them when necessary. Some of the children are sufficiently competent in English to be able to communicate directly and in that case they usually write their own material and send it to you through the team.*

Contact – How often?

4. *It's best to set expectations in your first email. If you are unable to write more than one or two times a month, it is fine to say so. Disappointment only occurs when an expectation is not met and our children understand if you have a busy schedule, travel or other priorities. Whatever the arrangement is, once made with the child, it is important to do your best to keep to it. Your child will likely respond to your email within a week (though sometimes it can be a bit longer if our translators have a backlog or there is a major vacation period) and may occasionally just write to say hello. You set the pace.*
5. *Our children are very forthright in expressing their feelings. They love to love and be loved and they are very excited to have a sponsor. If your sponsored child says "I love you" in his/her first email, don't be shocked and don't be wary. It's spontaneous and our translators simply translate what is given to them. Some sponsors feel that the child is coached or led and we sometimes hear that a child so young would use such a complex word. Remember that our translators write the English version. For example, if your 7 year old child writes that: "My friends play sports but I don't participate because it's too hot", then that may be the translators version of "My friends play sports but I don't like to be part of it as I get too*

hot". The emails you receive are from the child and if you have any doubts, please feel free to contact us.

6. **This bit is really important** so please read it carefully. The Sponsorship system matters in 2 essential ways; first, it brings in some of the money needed to allow CCF to help and educate the child in question and to assist the child's family and community. Second, and no less important, it gives the sponsor and sponsored child a chance to create a real relationship. Relationships cannot exist without communication, so the level of communication matters. Nearly all CCF children have lived with inconsistency and in many cases abandonment. The arrival of email tells them that someone out there cares for them for their own sake. No contact for weeks or months on end can result in hurt feelings and a lessened self-esteem. Even if your email simply states that you are busy, that they are in your thoughts and you will write a fuller email later, then it does wonders. No-one wants to see any of the children hurt, however we recognize that sometimes sponsors, with the best will in the world, simply run out of the time or impetus needed to sustain the writing relationship.
7. To address this situation, CCF **operates a four-month rule**. When a sponsor has not been in touch with their sponsored child for 4 full months, then CCF will assume that the active sponsorship is at an end. It would be unfair deny the child access to a communicative sponsorship, so he/she may be paired with an alternative sponsor in such situations. In practice, this is rare and most sponsors grow closer through time. In such a case, the previous sponsor remains free to write to the child on a pen-pal basis. You can also opt to stop your payments or request a refund, otherwise your payment will be used for overall program expenses.
8. But please don't worry about the 4 month period passing without your realising it – we'll make sure you know. If it looks as if you've gone a bit quiet and you haven't written for 2 months, we'll send you a reminder. If we don't hear from you in the next month, we'll send you another. If you are still quiet, we'll send you a final email to let you know that the deadline is getting near. If we don't hear from you then, that's when we'll re-sponsor.

What to talk about

9. Some sponsors have told us of times when they simply don't know what to write to their child. The answer is: Anything. What do you do? Why? How? Who's in your family? What's the weather like? What are your friends like? What food do you eat? Where do you live? Are you happy? What makes you laugh? The children will be happy to learn about any or all of these. And they will ask you more. But do make sure, when the questions come your way, that you answer only those that you feel comfortable answering.

Asking about life before CCF

10. Every one of the children in CCF's care comes from backgrounds which are marked by a level of poverty which is hard for most of us to fully comprehend. Many have faced neglect and abuse and with homes in impoverished communities, utterly unsupported by official agencies and services. But the children often have quite a remarkable degree of resilience and tend to be very forward thinking so there is no need to worry unduly about asking, gently, about their lives and hopes prior to and after joining the program.
11. We encourage the children to be open and honest when they write and they may well share problems with you. Please resist the temptation to try to solve any such problems through direct contact. Provide sympathy and empathy – often that is all that is needed and wanted. But if the child raises any issue

that troubles you and that you feel needs specific attention, **do let us know**. Our staffs are very experienced in these matters and will be able to advise or to help as appropriate.

Can I send Photos?

12. Any photos you send will be well received. The children will be delighted to see your home, your family, your workplace – anything that tells them and shows them you! They can of course be emailed as attachments – but please keep in mind that the Internet in Cambodia is not strong and that what is an everyday 5mb attachment in one country can bring a receiving system in another to its knees. Please, **always compress photos before you send**. Please don't send us more than 1MB!

Can I send gifts?

13. Many sponsors do like to send gifts and it has to be said that children here as anywhere love to receive them. However, in CCF's particular situation gift giving can also be a source of problems. These tend to fall into 2 main areas:
 - a. Perceived Fairness. CCF has to be careful not to do anything that might cause jealousy or tensions between children or within families, neighbourhoods or communities. The arrival of anything that looks lavish or that could mark the child or family as specially favoured has to be avoided.
 - b. Logistics. The next issue is that of logistics – getting things here. The standard mail is just not secure and courier services, which you can be sure will get through, such as DHL or FedEx, are expensive. You might be surprised to know that almost anything can be obtained locally here in Phnom Penh. If you let us know what it is that you'd like to provide for a birthday, to celebrate becoming an award-winner or something for another special event or achievement we can almost certainly source it, get it and give it on your behalf. **If you do decide to send a gift, contact us in advance for a CCF address to which you can send it and we will take it from there.**
 - c. The Cost of the Gift. Sponsors do like to be generous, but this has risks. CCF aims to help the children in its care become upright, educated, independent, involved contributors to their developing society. It wants to do **nothing** that will encourage them to become dependent, to link sponsorship with personal gain or to equate a sponsor's care and friendship with access to expensive presents. Please **do not** think of sending gifts such as cameras, iPods and the like. Generosity on this scale has the potential to be disruptive and damaging not only to the individual concerned but to the community in which they live. Accordingly, **no gift should exceed \$20-\$30 in value**. The old cliché that 'It's the thought that counts' is still often very true. We do not want to turn the children into people who value a gift by its cost. We need you to understand this and to help us with it.

14. So yes, gifts can be sent and are welcome, but to maximise their impact, they should be rare, limited to a birthday, a special event or success and should follow the value suggestions above.

So what do the children like?

15. A new set of clothes, for either girls or boys, is always highly welcome. A full outfit (top, jeans, shoes) can be bought for around \$15 - \$20. Other gifts can be tailored to individual tastes, such as Art supplies. A good set of coloring pencils and a drawing pad can be had for \$10 -\$15 while footballs, serviceable

badminton racquets and other sporty goods come into the same price range. And they love to go out too, so when it's a birthday or a special celebration, we'll be happy to arrange to take the child you sponsor and some friends out on your behalf.

But I can afford it and I still want to send something more expensive than usual.

16. *Sponsors who wish to send items such as cameras and musical instruments should be aware that CCF's **approach to the arrival of such gifts is that the recipient child will have initial early access. Thereafter the gift will be held and used in common, under the guidance of CCF staff.** This arrangement has worked well to date but in all honesty, **CCF does prefer to discourage expensive gifts.***

Can I visit?

17. *Almost every sponsor thinks of visiting their sponsor child and every child would love a visit. We are happy when sponsors are able to come here and surprisingly many have done just that. If you intend to visit, let us know as far in advance as you can and we'll do what we can to help. Once we know that you're coming, we'll send you some information about the country and the city that we hope you'll find useful.*
18. *One important point though. It sometimes happens that sponsors plan surprise or short notice trips at times when the children are on holiday. CCF is very supportive of family links and family togetherness is seen as very important of some of the main national festivals, such as Khmer New Year (April) and Pchum Ben (October). So **please always check your intended visit dates with us before you commit.** We don't want you or the children to be disappointed.*

But please don't just turn up

19. *Please do not just turn up at any of our facilities. We're sure you'll understand that we take the safety and stability of our children very seriously and staff will **not** allow access to anyone who is unannounced, unexpected and unescorted.*

Can I meet my sponsor child?

20. *Not only will you be able to meet your sponsored child but you'll be able to;*
- a. Take your sponsored child, if he or she is of a suitable age, together with some other children if you are open to that, for a morning or afternoon trip out to see the sights, visit a market or mall or play some games.*
 - b. Visit the facility where the child studies with CCF.*
 - c. See more of what CCF does through a visit to another CCF facility.*
21. *For child protection and other reasons, it will **not** usually be possible to visit the family home. But rest assured that your visit to CCF will enable you to appreciate the reality of the life of the child and family you are helping.*

CCF's Duty of Care.

22. *Do please bear in mind that all of the children are in CCF's legal care and that CCF focuses its resources on them and their welfare. It prioritises stability and harmony in the children's lives. Most of the*

children have seldom experienced anything but uncertainty and all have been brought up in desperately poor circumstances.

23. Visits are enormously valued but they have to be fitted in with the child's normal life. This means that while we will do everything we can to make your visit special and enjoyable, there are some things that we cannot do. We **cannot**;
- a. Allow unsupervised access to the children. There **must** always be CCF local staff on hand to act as guide, translator and supervisor.
 - b. Allow sponsors to give money directly to children. Any funds intended to help the child or the child's family must be channelled through CCF.
 - c. Allow multiple trips out or give over an unduly large amount of time to a sponsor's visit.
 - d. Allow the sponsor child to have an overnight stay with sponsors.

Our track record of happy sponsors is excellent.

24. None of the many sponsors who have visited have reported any disappointment with their experience. Many have wished they could have done more and seen more and spent more time, but all have recognised and enjoyed the experience as unique and positive. We are sure that if you decide to visit, you'll be one of them.

A final word about visits

25. The children are some of the brightest, nicest people you could ever hope to meet. They have a great sense of fun, love to share their happiness with each other and with visitors and genuinely seek to enjoy any new experience that comes their way. We're absolutely sure that you'll enjoy being with them and having them in your life.
26. We'll always do our best to help you have a good time, but do bear in mind that our own resources are limited too and the numbers of the children CCF cares for are in the hundreds. But that being said, we aim to be flexible and positive and do want to help you build and maintain the links that make a successful relationship. So if we can help, we will. But please bear with us and try to understand if sometimes we cannot.

And a small point about promises or hopes for the future...

27. Please be extremely careful about saying or promising anything about bringing the child to your home country, be it for study or visits. Visas, immigration and local law can all help make this almost impossible and a child's own psychological state might itself be a major obstacle. In short if any such promise is made by even the most determined and sincere sponsor, it is one that will prove highly difficult to turn into a reality.
28. Please also be very careful about future promises. We hope that your relationship with your sponsored child and with CCF will be a long and good one. There will be opportunities to address issues such as future study or work plans and arrangements as they occur naturally. Resist the temptation to try to make firm plans for these contingencies. When they arise, we can tackle them together if there is a need.

Any questions?

29. *That's about it. We know that the above guidance probably might not have answered every possible question you might have, so if you have any that you need addressed, please do feel free to contact us at any time with questions or feedback, at: cambodia@cambodianchildrensfund.org.*

Thank you

Very many thanks for your support for CCF and for your generosity and kindness to the child you sponsor. We hope and believe that your sponsorship will be special and good for both of you.

Scott Neeson