

## Sponsor FAQs

### How does sponsorship help a child in India who is at a high risk for human trafficking?

With 40% of its 1.2 billion people under the age of 18, India has the highest population of children in the world, as well as the largest number of children in poverty. Extreme poverty puts them at risk for child labor, forced labor, or bonded labor and makes them especially vulnerable to being trafficked. Nearly 30% of the students at our Good Shepherd Schools have parents who are bonded laborers, a modern form of indentured servitude relatively unknown in the western world. In most poor villages in India, education is not available. Consequently there is no hope of children ever rising above the economic hardship and the limitations of their parents. As a child sponsor, you make it possible for your child to receive an English language education and in doing so, you invest in the freedom and future of India's most vulnerable children.

### What is my commitment as a sponsor?

Your generous donation is the first step to building a future for the child you sponsor. Each year students have the opportunity to write to their sponsors and you are welcome to write to them and send cards via your account on Dalit Child. Since the main goal of sponsorship is to free children by providing them with a complete education, our hope is that you will remain committed to sponsoring your child until he/she graduates from the Tenth Standard, which is the Indian equivalent to completing an American high school education. Most of our Good Shepherd Schools offer education through the Tenth Standard.

### What do my child sponsorship donations cover?

Your faithful donations cover tuition, uniforms, school supplies, midday meals (where necessary), textbooks, teacher salaries, and administrative costs for your child's education. As a child sponsor, you help to provide a top-quality, English-medium, values-based education for India's most at-risk children, and help launch their courageous journeys toward dignity, equality, safety, and security. Not only does your sponsorship donation cover all education fees and costs, but it also strengthens the community. Each Good Shepherd School (GSS) becomes the central hub for all education, economic development, healthcare, and social justice initiatives in that specific community.

### How do I correspond with my sponsored child?

All correspondence to and from your sponsored child is routed through our Virginia Beach office. Please note that due to the general unreliability of international postal services, as well as to avoid issues of jealousy between children who receive gifts and those who do not, DFN and our Indian partners request that you DO NOT send packages or gifts to your child. With your letter, you may include anything that is small and flat and fits inside a standard-sized envelope. Options include, but are not limited to, photographs, bookmarks, stickers, postcards, and coloring book pages. Additionally, we ask that you please be respectful of the varying religious backgrounds of our students. Please know that you initiate communication with your child. Other than an annual letter which every student writes to their sponsor as part of a classroom activity, your child will only write in response to your letters. There are two ways you can communicate with your child:

1. Send a letter by post on your own stationery or with the Write Your Child form we provide. If you choose to use your own stationery, please be sure to include the following at the top of the letter: your first and last name, your child's name, your child's code, and the date. Please send your letter to:

Dalit Freedom Network  
PO Box 3459  
Virginia Beach, VA 23454

2. Send an electronic message using one of our online templates through your sponsorship account or by emailing the Child Sponsorship team directly. To access your account, please visit [www.DalitChild.com](http://www.DalitChild.com) and log in with the information provided on your enclosed receipt. If you prefer to send your message via email to [childsponsorship@dalitnetwork.org](mailto:childsponsorship@dalitnetwork.org), please be sure to include your first and last name, your child's name, your child's code, and the date.

### **How long will it take for my child to respond to my letter?**

Your child's response may take several months to reach you. Upon receiving your letter in our Virginia Beach office, we will process and send it to India within a week. Electronic correspondence is received by our India partners immediately, whereas postal mail usually takes a few weeks to travel overseas and clear customs. Our India team then forwards your letter on to the appropriate Good Shepherd School (GSS). Since many GSSs are located in remote parts of India, in-country mail can take weeks to reach them. There are other factors which may at times be responsible for delays, such as heavy monsoon rains, civil unrest, or children being absent from school. Furthermore, when schools are not in session, our Indian partners will hold sponsors' letters until the students return to class. Due to the extensive journey your letter must take, your child may receive your letter a few months after you send it. Similarly, when your child replies, his or her letter must take the long journey back to our office.

### **What are the children in the Good Shepherd Schools (GSSs) being taught?**

In each of our GSSs, children study a preparatory, government-approved, India-standardized curriculum, with English as the language of instruction. Without the ability to speak and write English, Dalit children will not be able to excel in Indian society. They also receive a values-based education that promotes the principles of freedom, equality, and human dignity for all. Every one of our GSSs provide education to children regardless of their class, creed, or faith.

### **Can I support additional projects at the school my child attends?**

Yes. Donations can be designated directly to your child's school for items such as computer stations, playground equipment, desks, chairs, the school library, and other supplies. Please visit the Campaigns page of our website ([www.DalitNetwork.org](http://www.DalitNetwork.org)) to see current giving initiatives.

### **What happens to my child if I am no longer able to give?**

The donations for child sponsorships are gathered into a pool designated for specific schools. By using this approach, if you are unable to continue your sponsorship, your child will be able to remain in school and will be eligible for sponsorship again. This also allows unsponsored children to attend school. The goal, of course, is to have every child sponsored.

### **What if my child is no longer able to attend school?**

Unfortunately, there are times when students withdraw from school. This can occur in all of our schools for a number of reasons, such as the child's family moving too far away for the child to walk to school, or family economic needs that require a child to supplement the family income or remain at home to take care of family members. If this occurs, we will automatically assign you another deserving child in need of sponsorship and notify you of this change with an email or letter. Your sponsorship will remain active unless you notify us otherwise.

### **When do the GSS schools begin and end their school year?**

In South India, schools start in the month of June and finish in the end of March or beginning of April. In North India, schools open in the middle of June or beginning of July and end in the middle of May.

### **Can I visit my child?**

We would love for you to meet your child! DFN arranges organized trips to India several times each year and you are certainly welcome to participate in these. You may also arrange a visit when you are traveling for personal or business reasons. However, for safety and security purposes, both for you and your sponsored child, these visits must be pre-approved and pre-arranged through DFN and our India partners. Please contact [info@dalitnetwork.org](mailto:info@dalitnetwork.org) for more information.