

# THE LINK Newsletter

SUMMER 2021

Program in  
Guatemala  
Expanding!

Group  
Empowerment  
in Bangladesh



## Celebrating transformation in the midst of the pandemic

### PRAISE & PRAYER CORNER

**“Shout for joy, you heavens; rejoice, you earth; burst into song, you mountains! For the Lord comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones” • ISAIAH 49:13**

#### PRAISE

We are grateful for the unwavering support of our donors during the pandemic. Your generosity has made a huge difference in the lives of vulnerable children!

#### PRAYER

Even though COVID-19 is retreating in Canada, many of our partner countries are struggling. The virus continues to surge, shutting down schools, wiping out income, and increasing the likelihood of child labour and abuse.



## Group Empowerment in Bangladesh

### ABOUT THE PROGRAM

While the school in Naogoan has been closed for much of the pandemic, **our partner in Bangladesh has found creative ways to support the children in the group empowerment program.** Here are a few of the activities that have been continuing, despite lockdowns:

**EDUCATION** - The school has been delivering tools and educational aids to make sure children stay engaged in their learning, rather than getting lured into child labour.

**MENTAL HEALTH** - Our partner has been closely monitoring and mitigating the impact of exploitation and abuse on the mental well-being of the children.

**HEALTHCARE** - Teachers and doctors have been keeping track of the weight, height, and health of each child, and taking action where necessary.

**The children are eager to return to school, and our partner's goal is to prepare them mentally and physically for a successful transition.**

### MEET SOME OF THE CHILDREN YOU SUPPORT

#### John

**John is in Grade 3 at the Naogoan free school.** He contracted Typhoid fever at the age of 3, which left him unable to walk, partly because of the lack of medical education in his community. John wants to become a doctor so he can help similar children avoid the health problems that left him physically handicapped.





## Biswas

**Biswas' father lost his income because of the pandemic, and could no longer provide his family with education and food.** His mother works every day as a cook, but her income alone is not enough. Thankfully, Biswas and his brother have escaped child labour because of the Naogoan free school, where they also benefit from International Needs food parcels to stay nourished.



## Rita

**Rita is one of three children.** She loves drawing pictures, and wants to be a teacher when she grows up. However, her home life is not ideal. Rita's father doesn't earn enough money to feed the family, and has not been supportive of Rita's desire to get an education. Because of the pandemic, Rita has been stuck at home in this bad situation, but her admittance to the tuition-free Naogoan school in 2021 has given her and her mother hope for the future.





## Insights from Festus Addei, our sponsorship manager

**Earlier this year, we launched Group Empowerment programs in Ghana, Bangladesh, and Zambia to address increasing rates of poverty, child labour, and child trafficking that were a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.** We asked our sponsorship manager Festus to share some of his insights on this new program. After working for International Needs in Ghana and Canada for more than 14 years, Festus was instrumental in bringing the group model to life.

### Q. Why has International Needs put so much emphasis on group programs lately?

**A.** Traditional child sponsorship has helped thousands of vulnerable children over the last 45 years. However, it's not perfect. The saddest part is that many children never get sponsored, and the pandemic has made things much worse. Children are dropping out of school in record numbers because they can't afford tuition. Our group programs make sure more children are able to stay in school.

### Q. How does the group program differ from traditional child sponsorship?

#### **A. There are two main differences:**

1. With the group program, all monthly donations are pooled to support an entire group of children in a community, rather than just one child. This is how we ensure no children are left behind.
2. Programming can be expanded to services that aren't covered by traditional child sponsorship. Our partner in Bangladesh recently added mental health services for the first time.

### Q. What's the long-term plan?

**A. Our vision is to change the future of child sponsorship!** Our group programs are more **inclusive** and more **efficient**, enabling our partners to transform more lives. We hope that this new approach spreads around the world so that other organizations can do the same.

### **Would you consider becoming a monthly partner for a group empowerment program?**

Contact Festus at [sponsorship@internationalneeds.ca](mailto:sponsorship@internationalneeds.ca).



Julia Shannon  
YOUTH AMBASSADOR

## Get Active For Ghana

**This physical fitness campaign was organized by Youth Ambassador Julia Shannon to raise funds for the Ghana Group Empowerment program.** During the month of June, Julia hosted online music concerts and motivational talks about fitness, nutrition, the Paralympic Games, and the power of sport.

Julia's journey with International Needs began a few years ago when she learned about the impact of child sponsorship from a family friend. That inspired her to sponsor a child of her own in Ghana, which led to her current role with International Needs, where she is an ambassador for the Ghana Group Program, raising funds and awareness for the children it supports.

Julia had hoped to raise \$3,000, and thanks to her hard work and the generosity of many supporters, **she doubled her goal, finishing with more than \$6,000 by the end of June!** **THANK YOU** to Julia and everyone who biked, walked, ran, hiked, canoed, sang, spoke, and donated to support her goal.

**Do you know a young person 16-25 who would be a good Youth Ambassador?**

If so, send an email to [geoff@internationalneeds.ca](mailto:geoff@internationalneeds.ca)



# The program in Guatemala is expanding!

The current program in Guatemala saves the lives of mothers and babies by training midwives to identify high risk pregnancies. However, we've learned that even if a child survives childbirth, many go on to suffer from malnourishment and a lack of stimulation, which results in underdeveloped minds and bodies. In response to this, our partner is launching a new initiative called "**Survive and Thrive**", which addresses these shortcomings.

Here's a visual summary of the program:

## SURVIVE & Thrive

**SAVING** the lives of mothers and babies in Guatemala & **PREPARING** children to learn and thrive in life.

### SURVIVE



#### 1 HEALTHY PREGNANCY

Improve the baby's health and reduce risks by teaching mothers and families about prenatal checkups, prenatal stimulation, and proper nutrition.

#### 2 SAFE DELIVERY

Eliminate preventable deaths of mothers and babies by teaching midwives to recognize and refer high risk pregnancies and deliveries.



### THRIVE



#### 3 FAMILY NUTRITION

Improve the physical and mental development of children by teaching mothers and families about breastfeeding and healthy meal planning.

#### 4 CHILD STIMULATION

Prepare children for success in school and life by teaching mothers, families, and entire communities about the importance of stimulating children in the first 5 years.



## Children **HEALTHY**