



# Group Sponsorship Program

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BANGLADESH | Summer 2021

**Child Sponsorship has been a staple of International Needs' work in Bangladesh for 47 years.** However, due to the nature of individual sponsorship, many unsponsored children in the Naogoan and Jashore regions missed out on lifechanging support from our partner in Bangladesh. Sponsored children were happy, healthy and educated, while their unsponsored peers struggled.

**The new group empowerment program was launched in 2020 with 150 children, and it has been a tremendous success.** The COVID-19 pandemic has made community support as essential as ever, as the people of Bangladesh struggle with joblessness and hunger. As this report will demonstrate, the children of Jashore and Naogoan have benefitted greatly from the generosity of donors like you over the past 17 months.

**For the first part of the year, the Group Empowerment Program has focused on:**

- Healthy bodies
- Educated minds
- Spiritual development
- Life skills



## Ensuring Health Security

During the pandemic, school teachers visited the homes of students to educate them about the risks of COVID-19, and how to combat the spread of the virus. Leaders enforced personal hygiene guidelines from the World Health Organization, instructing children on hand washing techniques and the importance of wearing a mask.

## Distribution of Health products

Each child's family was given products to protect against contracting COVID-19. They each received five masks and two bars of soap; one for bathing, and one for hand washing. Education has been key in the fight against COVID-19, as training children is an efficient and effective way to spread public health information in the community.

## Adolescent Health

Teachers have been paying special attention to adolescents between the ages of 8-15. They teach the students about the mental and physical changes that occur during this time, while also distributing sanitary products to keep the girls healthy. Only 33% of girls in Bangladesh use sanitary pads, with the rest using simple cloth napkins. Many families cannot afford proper sanitary products, causing infection and health problems.

## Weight and Height monitoring

Teachers also measure the weight and height of their students every three months. Because this is a crucial time for their physical and mental growth, they are given special care to make sure they are developing properly. If any discrepancies are noted, International Needs provides the children with a doctor who prescribes medication.



## Food security

The Naogaoan region suffers from malnourishment for two main reasons:

1. They lack the education required to make informed dietary decisions.
2. They do not have the money to afford nutritious food.

Teachers in the International Needs school educate their students about proper nutrition, while our partner distributes healthy food to their families. COVID-19 has made this problem worse, as many of the country's most vulnerable have lost their income. **Through the Group Empowerment Program, unsponsored children are getting the help they need.** They receive food parcels with basic food items every month, including rice, lentils, beans, flour, salt, malt, potatoes, and eggs. Families like this are extremely grateful for this programming change.

## Free Education

Education is one of several factors (food, shelter, medical care, education) that determines the long-term prosperity of a child in Bangladesh. Because it is so essential, International Needs has been working hard to ensure equitable access to education for all, especially among the poor, neglected, and oppressed.



Children all over the world are being deprived of education because of COVID-19, but the situation is very poor in developing nations like Bangladesh, where virtual learning is not possible.

International Needs teachers are doing as much as they can to enhance the lives of their students, visiting them in their homes to teach reading and writing skills, and making sure they aren't falling too far behind. Special attention is given to those who aren't excelling in this learning environment, while games and toys are delivered so children of all ages can stay mentally and physically stimulated.

### Children's mental health

**One of the most exciting additions to the group empowerment program in Bangladesh is the special attention teachers are giving to the mental health of their children.** Educators in Bangladesh are just beginning to learn about the importance of mental health in a child's development.

Teachers have been given training in this area for the very first time. Basic psychological needs are monitored when children are visited in their homes, as teachers try to learn the individual struggles of each child. Teachers then discuss these struggles with the parents, informing them on how they can help.

This mental health monitoring has been especially helpful during the pandemic, where children are more isolated than ever. To combat this, teachers regularly visit their students at home, bringing them school supplies, sharing joys and concerns, and catching up with them and their families. These in-person visits are more important than ever, especially now that teachers are being trained to recognize and psychological issues in the home.



## Stories from Bangladesh

### Rita

Rita's father is a day laborer and her mother is a housekeeper. She has one brother and one sister. Rita was just admitted to the International Needs school in 2021, where her siblings also attend. She loves making art, especially drawing, and wants to be a teacher when she grows up. However, her home life is not ideal. Her father doesn't earn enough money to feed the family, and has not been supportive of his daughters pursuing an education.



### How the group program is helping:

International Needs has supplied Rita's family with rice, lentils, malt, salt, flour, potatoes, and eggs, as well as masks and soap for protection from COVID-19. Rita was also seen by the doctor, who gave her the medicine she needs to stay healthy. She has also been provided with Bengali, English, and Math books, notebooks, and pencils, to stay on top of her school work, which are brought by her teachers, who visit frequently.

Rita's mother is extremely grateful for the love, support and care given to her family by International Needs. They have been filled with hope and happiness now that they have access to education, medical help, and nutritious food.



## Sajib

Sajib's father is a fisherman, and he has two brothers. He's in eighth grade at the International Needs school, while his younger brother is in grade three. Sajib is eager to study because he wants to become a police officer when he grows up, so he can earn a more predictable income than his father.

His father had to stop fishing because of COVID-19, and this loss of income has made it difficult for him to pay for food, education, and the medical bills of Sajib's grandfather. His parents are trying their hardest, but still aren't able to give their children three meals per day.



### How the Group Program is helping

International Needs is supplying Sajib's family with essential food items that will keep them fed and healthy, including rice, lentils, malt, salt, flour, potatoes, and eggs. Sajib and his brother were also given textbooks, notebooks, and pencils so they can continue their studies, and medication has been prescribed by the doctor.

Sajib's family is extremely thankful for the work and generosity of International Needs through the pandemic. Food, education, and healthcare make all the difference in the lives of Sajib, his family, and their community.



## The impact of the Group Empowerment Program can be summed up in 3 points:

1. **No child left behind.** Because donations are pooled, all children in the community are given equal access to education, nutritious food, and healthcare.
2. **Transformative Education.** Allows children to escape child labour, and gives them and their families a more promising future.
3. **Efficient Empowerment.** More children are eligible for the program, and our partners can provide a greater variety of programming.

Thank you for joining hands with other generous donors to make sure unsponsored children get the help they need during these trying times. Together you are making a difference, creating a beautiful space for children to grow.

