



## Sponsor Visit Guidelines

We're very happy you decided to visit your sponsored child and hope you have an incredibly rewarding and memorable trip. This visit will be something you and your sponsored child will both cherish and remember for a lifetime.

We have developed these guidelines to help our sponsors successfully deal with some of the unique issues involved in visiting children in different cultures, including appropriate child protection policies. Since the experiences of our visiting sponsors are varied, we realize that some of the guidelines will seem obvious or unnecessary, but we do ask for your indulgence. We are concerned about avoiding the embarrassment that can result from inadvertent violation of local norms and we also want to advise our special visitors about our child protection standards.

### **I. Child Protection Standards**

Like other responsible child sponsorship organizations, we have adopted standards for the protection and safety of the children we work with. Most of those policies deal with employees of the local project who have daily contact with the children, but a few apply to anyone coming into contact with the children, including visiting sponsors, our visiting board members and headquarters staff.

In accordance with those child protection standards, we do not allow unaccompanied visits. A staff member and member of the child's family need to be present throughout the visit.

Unannounced and unsupervised contact with the sponsored child or the child's family, even if the sponsor or their friends/relatives live in the same country, is not allowed. Visits must be coordinated through our staff. To maintain privacy and security, we also ask that sponsors not share personal contact information with the child or their family.

### **II. Physical Contact**

Cultures vary widely on the issue of physical contact. Please follow the guidance of our local staff to help avoid violating cultural norms. You are encouraged to ask our staff about local norms and any other question about appropriate contact.

To make sure your child and his/her family are comfortable during your visit, we suggest you allow the child to maintain his or her personal space and, if inclined, to initiate contact, such as hugging or holding hands.

Also, please remember that it is culturally unacceptable in Zambia, India and the Philippines for visitors to:

- o Suggest or allow a child to sit on one's lap,
- o Place one's hands on a child's shoulder or head,
- o Hold a child's hand while walking or talking, or
- o Kiss a child.

When visiting in Central America, South America and the United States:

- o Visitors should not hold the hand of a *youth* or allow him or her to sit on one's lap.
- o It *is* acceptable to hold the hand of a *child* or allow them to sit on one's lap as long as the child is the one to initiate the contact.

### III. Clothing

- o While dress standards are different in each country, modest attire is always safe. Because of the different cultures we encounter in the field, we ask that sponsors dress conservatively during their visit. Most sponsors find jeans or khakis along with plain T-shirts or polo shirts to be both comfortable and appropriate. Visitors may encounter problems when wearing shorts, shirts with low necklines, halter-tops, miniskirts, and excessively tight clothing, and we advise that such items should not be worn.
- o When visiting Zambia, India or the Philippines, local customs require pants or skirts that fall below the knee. Due to cultural restrictions, shorts are discouraged.

### IV. Alcohol, Drugs and Smoking

- o We realize it is stating the obvious, but it is important that visitors not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs when visiting a sponsored child.
- o We request that sponsors who smoke do so out of the presence of the child.

### V. Guests

Bringing a guest along on your visit is a great way to share the joys of sponsorship. We encourage bringing a friend or family member, but ask that all guests conduct themselves in an appropriate manner as their actions, including the way they are dressed, reflect upon our agency and Children International. Guests will be expected to comply with our guidelines and policies. Please remember that many cultures are very conservative about public displays of affection; we ask you to minimize overt displays of affection with any guest while visiting your child.

### VI. Giving Gifts

Often, sponsors like to bring gifts to the visit, or purchase them during the course of the day. We encourage this. However, for a number of important reasons, we ask that all gifts be reviewed by a staff member before they are given to a child and his or her family. If you would like to donate to your sponsored child during your visit, please give your donation to the Children International staff member. You will receive a follow-up letter once the donation has been used to purchase items for your sponsored child.

#### **A few gifts that can't be allowed:**

- o Cash. (Please do not give cash of any amount to your sponsored family, as this can cause a number of problems for the family within the community once you have left.)
- o Clothing items that are not age-appropriate or contain questionable designs or labels. Feel free to ask our staff members if you have questions about whether a particular design or clothing style might create problems.
- o Music containing profanity or other offensive language.

**Thank you for taking the time to read the Sponsor Visit Guidelines. We hope you enjoy your visit!**

*I have read and will follow the Sponsor Visit Guidelines during my visits with my sponsored child (children).*

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_