

THANK YOU so much for choosing to sponsor an orphan from the Zion Home for Children!

This is information to help you understand better how sponsorship works and the world of your child.

Who They Are

Most but not all the children of Zion are orphans. In Africa a child is labeled an orphan if at least one parent is missing; a “total orphan” has both missing. When a father dies or leaves, in most cases the family income also disappears; then the mother with usually several children is left to somehow feed and clothe them and send them to school. There are very few jobs, mostly sporadic maid-type work which pays little. Most remain in the family home and do a little gardening (also very difficult due to the arid climate) and rely on help here and there to survive. Often school is the first “luxury” eliminated due to cost (see below). When the mother dies the father usually remarries, and it is common for the step-mother to reject or mistreat his children. Sometimes grandparents try to care for them but cannot due to health or poverty. We accept children from various situations, but only the most desperate. The background of your child is likely similar to the others in Zion. Those who still have family homes are sent to visit between school terms to maintain the relationship, but they are eager to return to Zion where there is ample food and clothing, their own bed, education, hope, LOVE, and God.



Their World

Your child lives in a very different world than yours – a world consisting mostly of friends, church, school, and the orphanage. He never travels (except as mentioned above), never shops, has no cell phone or laptop, knows little of toys. He has maybe 3 changes of clothes, walks to school, washes clothes by hand, studies hard because school is very competitive, plays some soccer (football) and other basic games for recreation, worships frequently, lives in a very basic dorm, and sometimes is shown a G movie or some video clips. Don't feel sad for him though; all our children are happy in Zion, and are much better off than most of their peers. Strangely, many possessions create discontent and even depression.

Schooling

The year is divided into 3 school terms of about 3 months each. There is a final exam at the end of each term, with a maximum score of 500 (usually). Great emphasis is placed on the score, because it is the key to further education and opportunities. While primary schools admit most anyone, secondary schools are selective based on exam scores, similar to US college admissions. And the universities in Kenya are even more selective, so nearly all students are constantly striving to improve their grades. While public school salaries are government-paid, that is deceptive because there may be far fewer teachers salaried than are required. To supplement them and pay for other infrastructure and the normal boarding in secondary (the British system), all schools charge fees per term, ranging from \$20 or so per primary student to \$300 or more for secondary, depending upon the quality of the school and whether public or private. School costs also include required uniforms and supplies. If fees are not current, students are sent home. Your monthly support includes the costs of schooling. After 8th grade the total cost increases significantly, so this is a challenge which grows with the children and may result in an appeal for additional support.

Letter Writing

Your child will write to you personally every 2 weeks -- **and pray for you daily!**. Remember that English is his 3rd language, so depending upon age and mastery the letter may be a colored picture, not make much sense, or not be very imaginative.

While you are not required to write your sponsored child, consider how difficult it is for him to write faithfully with no feedback, and to sense your love if you never communicate. Like a foundation, your monthly giving supports his life, but a personal letter brings light and warmth. So you are encouraged to write at least monthly even if only a short message. You can include a photo with it, but the child may only see it on a laptop since printing color photos is expensive, except that a family photo will be printed so he can refer to it continually. So although difficult, avoid topics that he knows nothing about or can only hope for, such as shopping, vacations and traveling, restaurants, on-line activities, video games, US-style housing, etc. **Your goal is to love and encourage him in developing godliness, character, and academics, which are ultimately the only things which matter, to protect him from “the deceitfulness of riches”, to help raise him in “the instruction and discipline of the Lord”.**

Never make promises you can't or are unlikely to keep, like going to visit him (unless you have concrete, approved plans) or having him visit you. Especially do not mention adoption since it has been severely restricted due to child trafficking. Also avoid questions on painful topics like the status of his parents, although if he raises the subject you can reply. We will monitor the letters and will remove what we consider potentially detrimental to your child.

This makes it seem that much of life is off-limits, and for Americans that is true. Your child's life is much simpler than yours, making it challenging. But your letters will be treasured as a sign of love, even more than your monthly support which is foundational.

Your Financial Support

Your faithful, monthly donation pays for all the costs of caring for your child 24/7 except for housing which was funded through other donations. **100% of your donation is sent to Zion for child care.** We can do this because we are all-volunteer in the US. Your donation is combined with that of others so that all the children receive equal care and opportunity. However, your child knows that you are his sponsor, his ONLY sponsor, which is a great emotional boost. Other organizations often assign multiple sponsors or provide only limited services (like Saturday-only programs), so if you compare costs be sure to determine those details. We believe that you will not find a more efficient program anywhere, and we pledge to strive to keep it that way.

Payment methods are by check either mailed or passed in person. We do not have any means to set up auto-pay ourselves, but your bank may have this. PayPal will allow monthly invoicing but to pay in response it charges slightly less than \$2. We can set this up if you prefer. Because of our relationship with the Church of God World Missions, you can give on-line or set up automatic credit card donations by phone at 1.800.345.7492. Just be sure to reference the project number shown in the footer. The advantage of giving through it is that you will receive a receipt for each donation and an end-of-year statement, plus 100% of the amount is passed to COH. Even standard credit card fees are reimbursed to us. Because we are all volunteer, the COH does not send individual receipts to direct donors; only an end-of-year total. Of course, all donations are fully tax-deductible.

Visiting

We encourage you to consider visiting the project because we know that you will find it to be everything described and more. Such a trip will be transforming for both you and your child. We do not have scheduled trips but will set them up depending upon interest. Expect the cost to be approximately \$1500 (depending upon airfare). The location is not dangerous nor wild!

Contact Us

Anytime you have questions, please email or call us as below. Or you may ask director Nate Schwenk or treasurer Brad Harris or any other COH board member in person.

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