



INVESTING IN AN EDUCATION

Education opens up opportunities in life, especially when entering the job market. And for a child living in poverty, a good education can become the means by which she lifts her family out of poverty. But education isn't a guarantee for much of the world, and for many children it's a luxury their family might not be able to afford.

In many of the countries where Unbound works, families are often required by the schools to pay for things like textbooks and cover additional fees, or families of school-age children view education as a low priority compared to other needs of the family.

In some families, children and youth may be expected to leave school at a young age so they can work to provide additional income or help take care of younger siblings. These families are faced with the decision of sacrificing their child's education in favor of feeding the family and keeping a roof over their heads.

With help from sponsorship, students are able to stay in school longer. By the time they leave the program, 75 percent of sponsored children

achieve a level of schooling comparable to or above their national peer averages. Peer averages were calculated with data reported by the World Bank. This outcome means that Unbound students — who experience marginalization based on economic, social and geographic factors — are able to compete and excel alongside students from all socioeconomic brackets and areas within their countries.

Of these former sponsored children, 51 percent achieve educational levels a year or more above their national peer averages. The number jumps to 59 percent when looking at the experience of sponsored girls. That's a big achievement considering that education for girls is seen as a lower priority than it is for boys in many places where Unbound works.

Diram, a 21-year-old formerly sponsored youth from Kenya, has seen firsthand some of the challenges facing girls who want to get an education. She's part of a community that according to her has many positive traditions but also practices early marriage and female genital mutilation or FGM. ➤

Yuda is a former sponsored youth from Uganda who has earned a master's degree and is now a teacher. "My sponsor has played a big role in my life," Yuda said. "The support, encouragement and financial help I have gotten made me reach my goals and dream."



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Jane, a 6-year-old sponsored child from Kenya, is in the beginning years of her educational journey. Her parents will be able to pay for school fees, supplies and uniforms through the sponsorship. This assistance has allowed children like Jane to stay in school longer.

Like many of her peers, Diram is already betrothed to a man who has paid a dowry to her parents, though he has not yet asked for the marriage to take place.

With help from her sponsorship, Diram was able to graduate from high school and continue her education. She's now working on a degree in accounting. Getting married would likely mean she would have to leave school.

"Unbound made me realize that I have rights as a girl and that I have a choice," Diram said.

"I have seen my friends drop out of school to get married. It hurts me because I know that their future has been cut short. The girls are scared to go against their parents' wishes. Their voices are stifled, but not mine. I am willing to be vocal and make a difference in my community."

In other countries, different factors play a part in limiting educational opportunities. Gladys Martin has worked with Unbound since 2000 and serves more than 1,400 sponsored friends and their families in her role as a regional program coordinator in Merida, Mexico.

Though she has celebrated successes with many families and individuals over the years, one of the most memorable for her is Jose, who dropped out of school in the second grade.

"It seemed that education was not a priority for his parents and they were even willing to drop out of the Unbound program," Gladys said. "We [Unbound] initiated a consciousness process with the family, especially with his mother. We stressed the importance of Jose's education and how it would help his future.

"If not for education, Jose would have been destined to work in the fields without even the ability to read and write and face life."

Because of the counseling offered to Jose and his parents, he was able to re-enroll in school. Now 22, Jose is working on a degree in agricultural engineering and, in addition to his sponsorship, he has a scholarship through Unbound to help with school expenses.

While most parents agree that education is important, they may not have the means to act on those values. That's where Unbound support through sponsorship and scholarships comes in by making those resources available.

Scholarships are made possible through donations to our Education program, which provides funds to secondary and post-secondary students in need of additional support to complete their educations. In 2015, almost 8,000 scholarships were awarded and \$2.5 million was sent to local Unbound offices to support scholarships around the world.

Gladys is proud of the achievements Jose and other sponsored friends like him have made. His example gives her hope for the future.

"I am convinced that Unbound is supporting families to fulfill dreams and goals, especially for those sponsored friends who believe in themselves and give priority to education as a means to achieve a better quality of life," Gladys said.

"I think that if we teach the youth to have a better vision of their future, they will be encouraged to give their best effort to make a change in their lives." ❄



Former sponsored youth Diram didn't let cultural expectations end her dreams of getting an education.