

# SMALL VOICES, BIG DREAMS 2016

A SURVEY OF MORE THAN 6,000 CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD  
REVEALS THEIR VIEWS ON EDUCATION AND SAFETY IN SCHOOLS



ChildFund  
Australia

# CREDITS

**Data collection:** This survey would not be possible without the dedication of ChildFund staff, volunteers and field assistants around the world who spent weeks gathering data by talking to children, documenting their opinions and ideas, and collecting online surveys.

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**Cover:** Sina (right), 10, with her sister, Cambodia

**Back cover:** Siofra, 12, Ireland; Samuel, 12, Brazil; Melaney, 12, Ecuador; Ka Lia Lo, 11, Laos; Abu, 12, Bangladesh; Immaculate, 12, Uganda; Manuel, 10, Mexico; Yannu, 12, Sri Lanka; and Ariana, 10, New Zealand.





**“I want to be smart. I want to be smart so I can become a police officer.”**

— MARIA (right), 10, with her classmates, INDONESIA

# MISSION

**ChildFund Alliance** is an effective global network of child-centred development organisations working in the poorest countries around the world to create opportunities for disadvantaged children.

The mission of each ChildFund Alliance member is to create long-term, sustainable, community-based solutions to development problems affecting children and their families.

In joining together the great strengths of our member organisations, ChildFund Alliance combines and expands the reach and scope of our members to meet the needs of children living in poverty.

ChildFund Alliance members implement sustainable child-focused, community-based development programs in areas where children are impacted by war, natural disasters, poverty and global health issues such as HIV and AIDS.

While each member organisation retains its own distinct national identity and governance by national boards, collectively ChildFund Alliance is a voice for children and an instrument for maintaining worldwide standards of performance, efficiency and accountability.

## MEMBERS

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# THE RIGHT TO SAFE, MEANINGFUL EDUCATION



**“In some parts of the world, students are going to school every day. It's their normal life. But in other parts of the world, we are starving for education... It's like a precious gift. It's like a diamond.”**

**— Malala Yousafzai**

When ChildFund Alliance set out to survey children around the world about their views on school and education, we expected them to tell us that going to school is important. We were thrilled when a definitive 98% of the 6,000-plus 10- to 12-year-olds we talked to said that education is, indeed, important to them.

We learned that what children love most about schools includes new things and working with their teachers. Almost half said that getting an education will help them get a good job when they grow up. Many see it as allowing them to make a difference in their country or to make them a better person.

On a less positive note, only 60% of the children surveyed around the world said their school is always safe. On average, 3% of children said their school is never safe; in one country, a shocking 20% said their school is *never* safe.

This statistic is worrying, as safety is a prerequisite for learning. World leaders recognised the importance of safe, meaningful education when they adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015. SDG 4 reads: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."

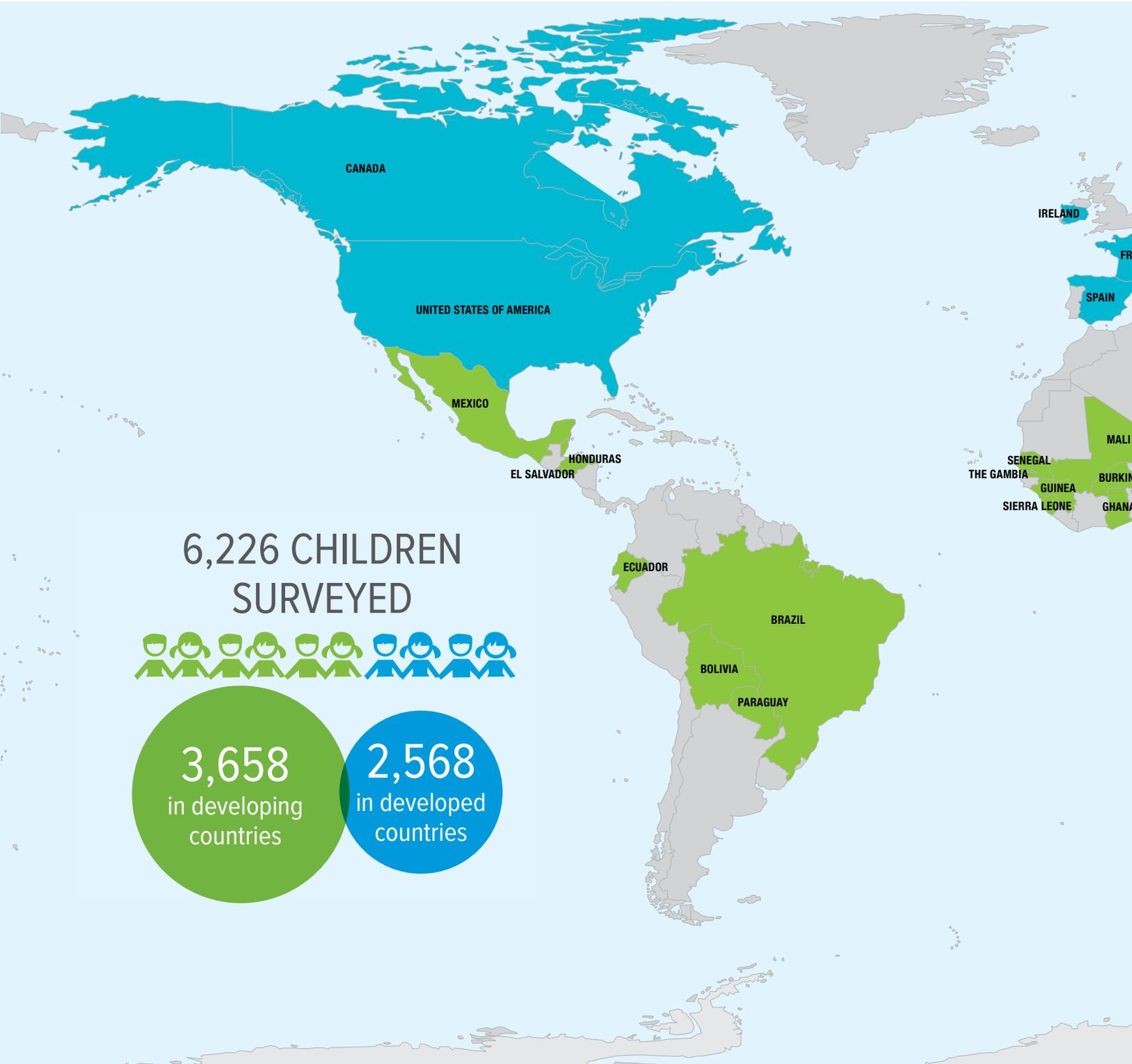
SDG 4 may seem overwhelmingly ambitious. Yet the number of children and young people not attending school has almost halved since the turn of the century and, thanks in part to the Millennium Development Goals, in most countries there are now as many girls as boys in primary school.

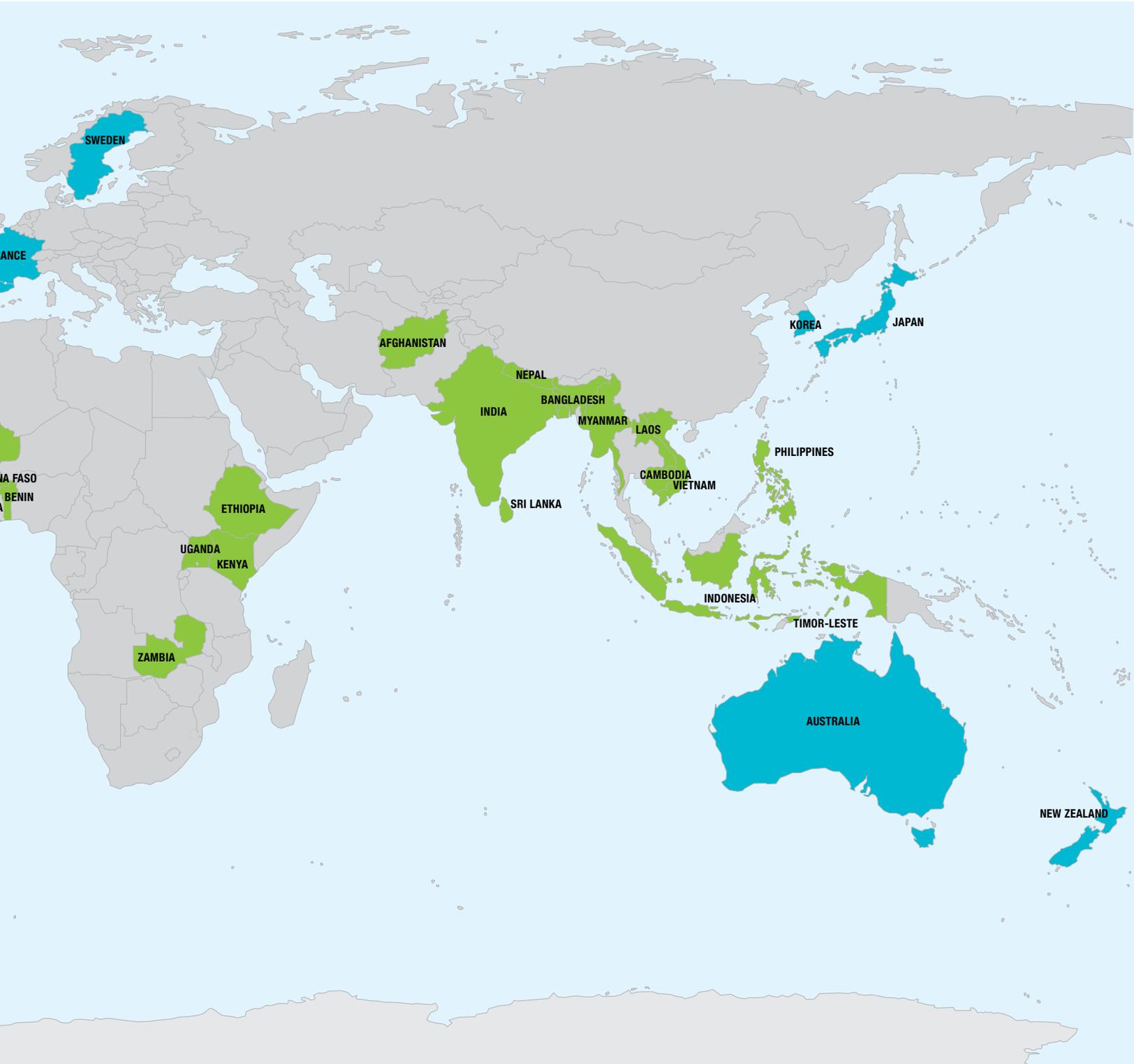
This is critical. We know that if young girls are able to access and complete primary and secondary education, the number of child marriages and early pregnancies will go down, while the opportunity for women to participate in society and contribute directly to the economy will increase. In addition, each additional year of education a child receives increases her or his adult earning by, on average, about 10%.

ChildFund Alliance is committed to providing children with a safe, quality education. Thank you for your support in making this a reality for so many children around the world. We can't do it without you.

**Meg Gardinier**  
**Secretary General**  
**ChildFund Alliance**

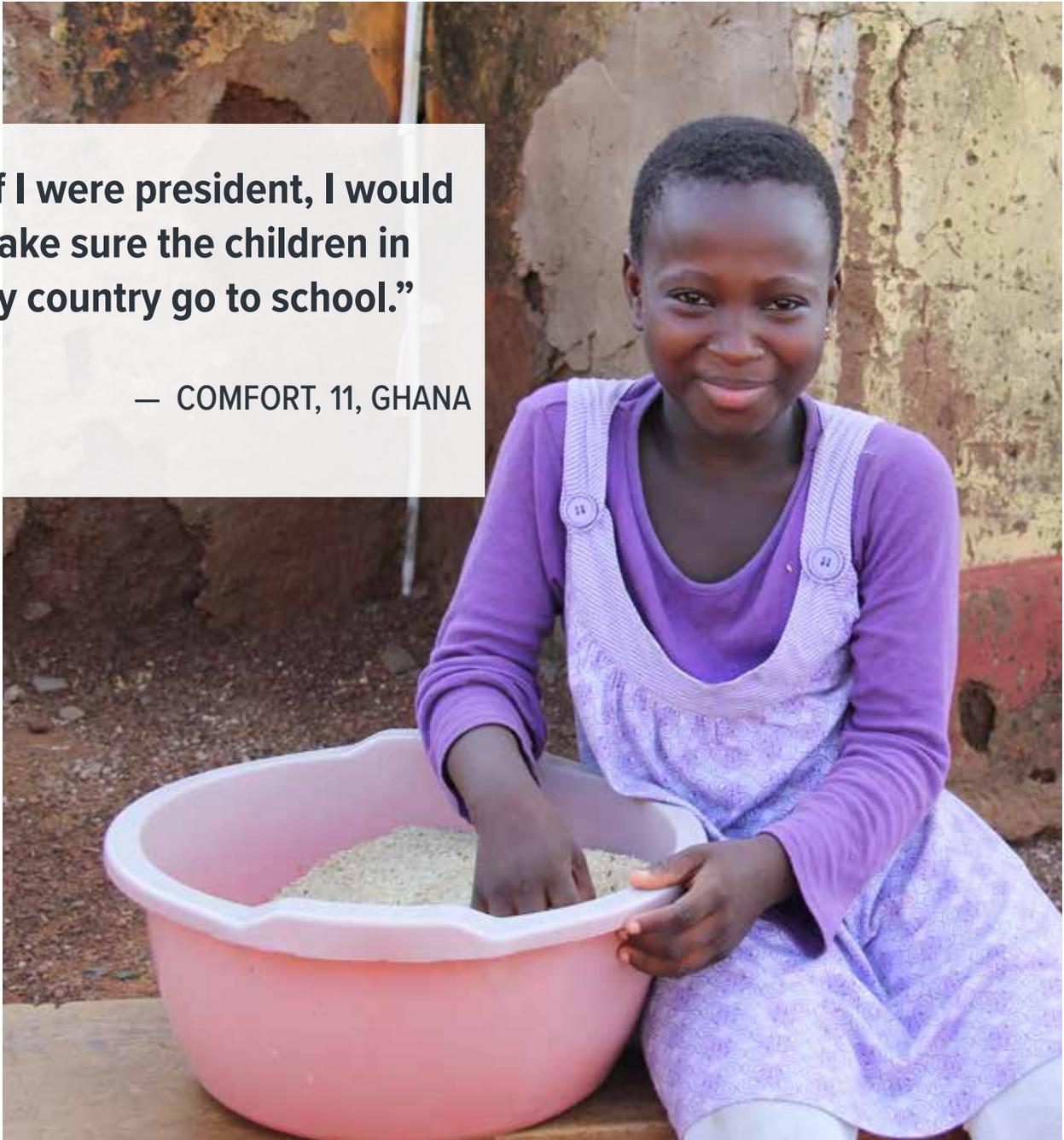
# SURVEY MAP





**"If I were president, I would  
make sure the children in  
my country go to school."**

**— COMFORT, 11, GHANA**



**EDUCATION IS EVERY  
CHILD'S ESSENTIAL RIGHT**

# INTRODUCTION

In this year's *Small Voices, Big Dreams* survey, we asked children aged 10 to 12 from 41 countries about their views on education and safety in schools. Virtually all children – 98% of the 6,226 children surveyed – say education is important to them. The survey findings also reveal some of the obstacles that stand between children and access to a high quality education.

What follows are the highest responses to the survey questions, along with some of the most interesting findings and variances. In some cases, children in developing and developed countries have drastically different responses. On other issues, children's views around the globe are united.

Regardless of where they live, one theme is consistent among the thousands of responses: children understand and value the importance of education in making their lives and the world a better place.

## SURVEY QUESTIONS

- 1) If you were the leader of your country, how would you improve education or schools? *(p. 10)*
- 2) What do you love most about your school? *(p. 14)*
- 3) Are school and education important to you? Why? *(p. 18)*
- 4a) What does it mean to be safe at school? *(p. 22)*
- 4b) Based on your definition of safety, how safe do you feel at school? *(p. 26)*
- 5) Have you ever had to miss school to help your family with work? *(p. 30)*

## QUESTION #1



**MARGARET, 12, KENYA**

“If I were president of Kenya, I would collect the street children and take them to school to get their education.”

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**IF YOU WERE THE LEADER  
OF YOUR COUNTRY, HOW  
WOULD YOU IMPROVE  
EDUCATION OR SCHOOLS?**



**“I would reduce homework and the number of exams.”**

— IGNASI, 11, SPAIN



**“I would help street boys and girls by building a shelter for them to receive love, education, food, clothes and health care.”**

— MARIBEL, 10, PARAGUAY

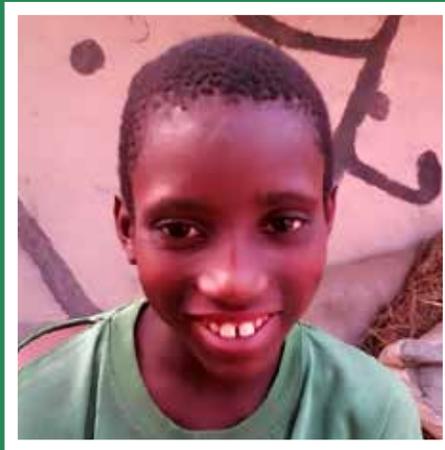


**“I would create a high school in our village.”**

— NOAH, 12, MYANMAR

# QUESTION #1

If you were the leader of your country, how would you improve education or schools?



	Total	All Developing	All Developed	Africa (Developing only)	Americas (Developing only)	Asia (Developing only)
Build or renovate school facilities, create quality learning environments	47%	56%	19%	58%	49%	58%
Equip students with uniforms, stationery; classrooms with books, technology	27%	31%	15%	41%	20%	26%
Modernise class curriculum; include sports and creative arts, greater student participation	24%	18%	43%	11%	19%	25%
Improve quality of teaching: more staff, better pay, training in child-friendly methodologies	24%	27%	14%	35%	27%	18%
Provide greater financial support to schools and students	24%	25%	22%	23%	19%	30%
Ensure children feel safe from physical and emotional harm at school	6%	5%	7%	2%	9%	6%

Above: Alex, 11, Laos; Abdoulaye, 11, Guinea; and Isobel, 11, Ireland.

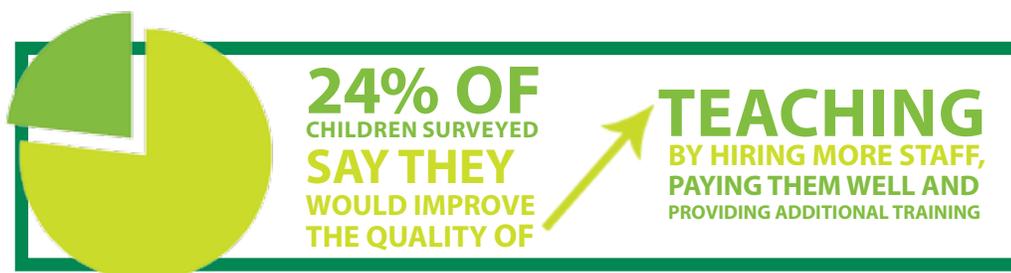
# FINDINGS

As leaders of their countries, almost half (47%) of all children surveyed say they would build and renovate school facilities and create quality learning environments.

- This is particularly important for child respondents in developing countries (56%), but less so for children surveyed in developed nations (19%).
- The lowest responses for this question come from children surveyed in the USA (11%), Sweden (13%), Australia and Ireland (both 16%), while the highest are in Cambodia (88%), Burkina Faso and Myanmar (both 79%) and Bangladesh (75%).

Children surveyed in Ghana (67%), Guinea and Mali (both 56%) say as leader they would equip students with uniforms, stationery and educational supplies such as books and technology.

- Globally, less than one-third (27%) of children surveyed say they would provide educational supplies, and even fewer children in developed countries (15%).
- In Africa, 41% say as leader they would ensure better-equipped classrooms and students, compared to just 20% of children in the Americas.



As leaders of their country, children in Ireland (61%), Canada (54%) and Australia (49%) would modernise the class curriculum and encourage greater student participation.

- In contrast, only 18% of children in developing countries would focus on modernising their education systems, with lowest responses from children surveyed in Ghana and The Gambia (both 3%) and Guinea and Zambia (both 4%).

Nearly half of all children surveyed in Afghanistan (48%) would improve education and schools by stopping war and bringing peace to their country, compared to just 1% of children globally.

While only 24% of children globally would provide greater financial support to schools and students as leader, it is a priority for children surveyed in Bangladesh (57%), Sierra Leone (52%) and Vietnam (49%).

## QUESTION #2



**DEMIAN, 10, BOLIVIA**

“I like learning new things at school, especially computer skills.”

**WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL?**



**“I really enjoy learning new things, and I’m very lucky this year that I’m in a classroom with my best friends and have a great teacher.”**

— ISABELLA, 10, CANADA



**“I love studying, taking a leadership role and listening in class.”**

— MAHALAXMI, 10, INDIA



**“I hope to learn something new each time I go to school.”**

— MUSU, 10, SIERRA LEONE

# QUESTION #2

## What do you love most about your school?

As a global community, we cannot underestimate the power of great teachers, facilities and resources in keeping the love of learning alive. These are key aspects of school the children surveyed said they love.

	Total	All Developing	All Developed	Africa (Developing only)	Americas (Developing only)	Asia (Developing only)
Learning new things	47%	51%	35%	50%	52%	50%
Working with my teachers	29%	35%	11%	34%	27%	39%
Being with friends	26%	19%	48%	10%	13%	31%
Sports, creative arts and recreation	14%	12%	19%	5%	6%	23%

**“Every day in class, my science teacher gives us new lessons with the help of experiments, which I really find interesting.”**

— THANAY, 12, INDIA



# FINDINGS

Globally, almost half (47%) of all children surveyed say what they love most about their school is learning new things.

- o This love of learning was particularly high among children in Cambodia (93%), Laos (76%) and Sierra Leone (68%), but less so for children surveyed in Korea and Benin (both 19%) and Japan (21%).



Globally, the second highest response for children when asked what they love most about school is working with their teachers, at 29%.

- o The majority of children surveyed in Nepal (59%), Benin and Paraguay (both 52%) cited working with their teacher as their favourite thing about school.

Children in developed countries (48%) were more likely than their peers in developing countries (19%) to say that being with friends is what they love most about school.

- o Only 10% of children in the Africa region named being with friends as the best part of going to school, although more children in Ghana (22%) and Ethiopia (21%) gave this response.

## QUESTION #3

**KHADIJA, 11, BANGLADESH**

“School is very important to me. It will allow me to get a good job when I grow up.”  
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**ARE SCHOOL AND EDUCATION  
IMPORTANT TO YOU? WHY?**



**“When we can study, we can be a good person and get a good job. Those who don’t study will not get good job.”**

— GEIZIANE, 12, BRAZIL



**“Learning and education make me able to achieve my dreams — to be a leader.”**

— DANIEL, 12, ETHIOPIA



**“My family knows school is very important to me, and to all the family. My parents encourage me.”**

— YACOUBA, 10, BURKINA FASO

# QUESTION #3

Are school and education important to you? Why?



Why are school and education important to you?	Total	All Developing	All Developed	Africa (Developing only)	Americas (Developing only)	Asia (Developing only)
Because it will allow me to get a good job when I grow up	45%	40%	64%	40%	39%	40%
Because learning and education make me a better person	23%	23%	24%	17%	29%	26%
Because having an education will help me care for my parents	17%	20%	6%	26%	15%	17%
Because being educated will allow me to make a difference in my country	17%	17%	16%	17%	17%	16%

# FINDINGS

When asked about the importance of school and education, participants in this year's *Small Voices, Big Dreams* survey indicated that school and education are indeed important to them. Nearly every respondent agreed. This survey allows us to see that, even at a young age, children realise education is key to their future.

Globally, almost half (45%) of children surveyed say that education will allow them to get a good job when they grow up.

- o This is particularly evident in developed countries, where 64% of children say school and education are important because of the jobs they lead to, in comparison to only 40% of their peers in developing countries.
- o Almost all children (97%) surveyed in Sweden named job prospects as to why education is important, followed by Cambodia (92%) and Ireland (74%).

More than one-third of children surveyed in the Philippines (43%), Senegal (41%) and Afghanistan (37%) say education will help them to take care of their parents.

- o In developed countries, only 6% of children say education is important for this reason, and only 17% of children globally.

In Bangladesh (40%) and Ethiopia (38%), children surveyed say education is important because it will help them make a difference in their country, compared to less than one-fifth of children in both developing (17%) and developed (16%) countries.



YooBin, 12, Korea; Kelvin, 10, El Salvador; and Nisha, 10, New Zealand.

## QUESTION #4a



DIANA, 10, MEXICO

“A safe school means I can focus on mathematics, Spanish and science.”

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO  
BE SAFE AT SCHOOL?**



**“Being safe in school means that nothing bad is going to happen while we are there.”**

— ANGEL, 10, PARAGUAY



**“I always feel safe at school.”**

— AMINA, 12, GHANA



**“Safety at school means no one is getting hurt physically, mentally or emotionally.”**

— NATASHA, 10, AUSTRALIA

# QUESTION #4a

## What does it mean to be safe at school?

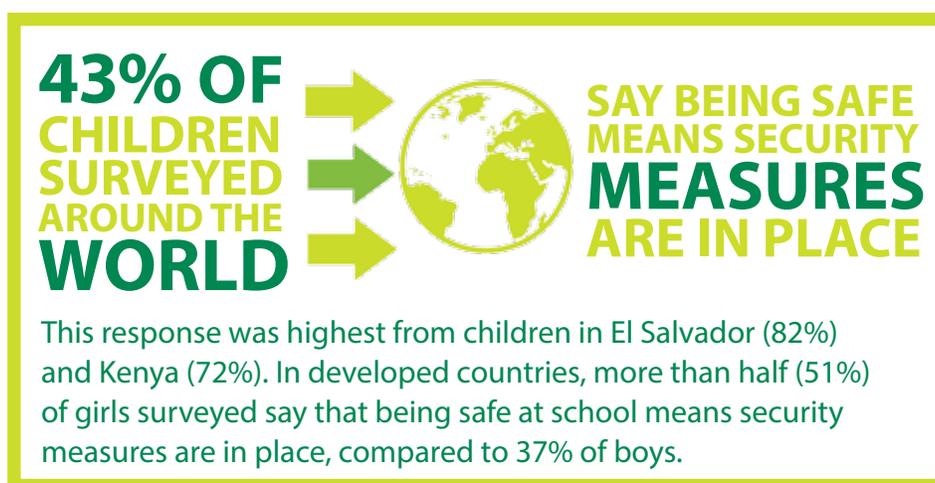


	Total	All Developing	All Developed	Africa (Developing only)	Americas (Developing only)	Asia (Developing only)
Security measures are in place at school to keep students protected from harm, so they feel safe and protected	43%	43%	44%	40%	54%	39%
Students are not at risk of physical or emotional abuse or violence	28%	28%	30%	28%	19%	33%
School feels like a second home where children are welcomed, encouraged and enjoy spending time	21%	19%	26%	17%	20%	21%
The school buildings and facilities are clean, safe and in good repair	17%	21%	3%	22%	5%	30%
The teachers are trusted and respected, and have a good relationship with students	14%	15%	11%	16%	13%	14%
School is where students can get a good education, where they can learn and study	11%	13%	7%	11%	13%	14%
Students and teachers are well behaved and obey the school rules	8%	9%	5%	9%	5%	12%

Above: Alan, 12, Kenya; Greta, 11, Sweden; and Jereco, 12, Philippines.

# FINDINGS

When asked what it means to be safe at school, children participating in this year's *Small Voices, Big Dreams* survey identify a range of factors. These include high quality facilities, feeling free from violence or abuse, having strong security protocols in place, and learning from teachers that they both trust and respect.



Globally, around one-third (28%) of children surveyed say that being safe at school means students are not at risk of physical or emotional abuse, with the highest responses from children in Bangladesh (79%), Cambodia (74%) and Zambia (65%).

For 17% of global respondents, being safe at school means school buildings and facilities which are clean, safe and in good repair.

- o This response is highest among children surveyed in India (58%), Ethiopia (55%) and Bangladesh (54%).
- o In developing countries, 21% of children surveyed say a safe school means buildings and facilities of good quality, in comparison to just 3% of children from developed countries.

Globally, 14% of children surveyed say a safe school is one which has teachers students can trust and respect.

- o This response was highest among children surveyed in Indonesia (34%), Ethiopia (32%) and Uganda (29%).

## QUESTION #4b

DYLAN, 12, IRELAND

“The teachers make learning fun. We go to museums, go on nature walks, take part in musicals and activities that are fun — but also help us learn. It feels like a safe school.”

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**BASED ON YOUR DEFINITION  
OF SAFETY, HOW SAFE DO YOU  
FEEL AT SCHOOL?**



**“In my school, the principal, teachers and friends are there for us in an emergency, or if any accident happens, they keep us safe.”**

— WARJANI, 12, SRI LANKA



**“At our school, we do something called ‘following the five’ which stands for safe, sensible, respectful, excellent learners.”**

— ELEANOR, 12, AUSTRALIA



**“The teacher is always in class with us. In the afternoon, she helps us cross the road.”**

— EMMANUELLA, 12, BURKINA FASO

# QUESTION #4b

Based on your definition of safety, how safe do you feel at school?

## My school is always safe



## My school is sometimes safe



## My school is never safe



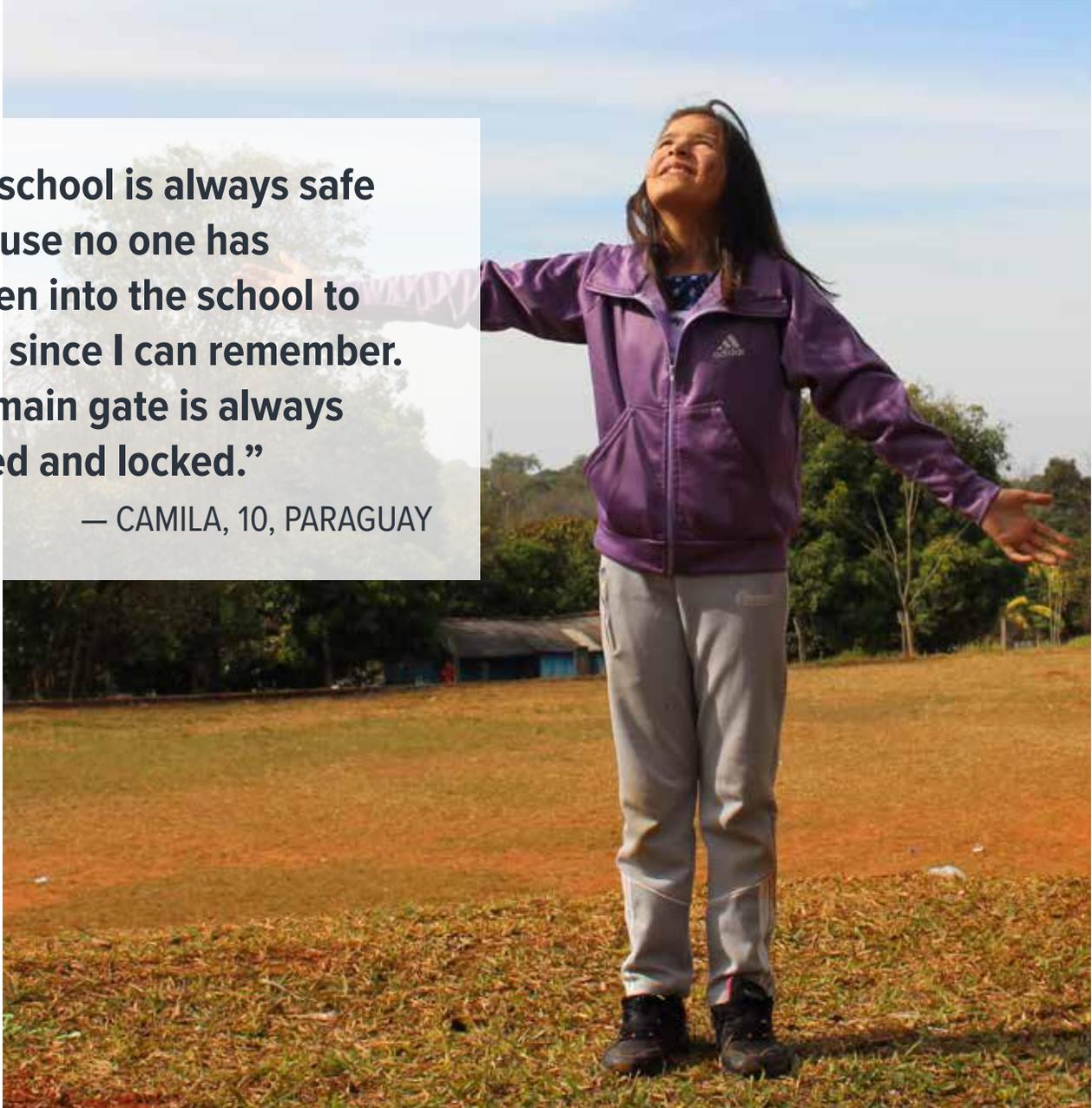
## FINDINGS

Safety is a key component to fostering a positive learning environment. One-third of children surveyed globally say their school is sometimes safe (31%).

- o Globally, 3% of all children surveyed say their school is never safe.
- o Children surveyed in Burkina Faso (20%) and Senegal (14%) are more likely to say their school is never safe.

**“My school is always safe because no one has broken into the school to steal since I can remember. The main gate is always closed and locked.”**

— CAMILA, 10, PARAGUAY



Globally, 60% of children surveyed say their school is always safe.

- o Children surveyed in Paraguay (95%), Nepal (87%) and Sierra Leone (84%) were most likely to say their school is always safe, compared with children from the Philippines (41%), Bangladesh (25%) and Cambodia (19%).
- o In developed countries, children surveyed in Ireland (71%), Canada (69%) and Spain (68%) are more likely to say their school is always safe.

## QUESTION #5



SAVIER, 12, TIMOR-LESTE

“I’ve missed school to help my family with things like harvesting coffee.”

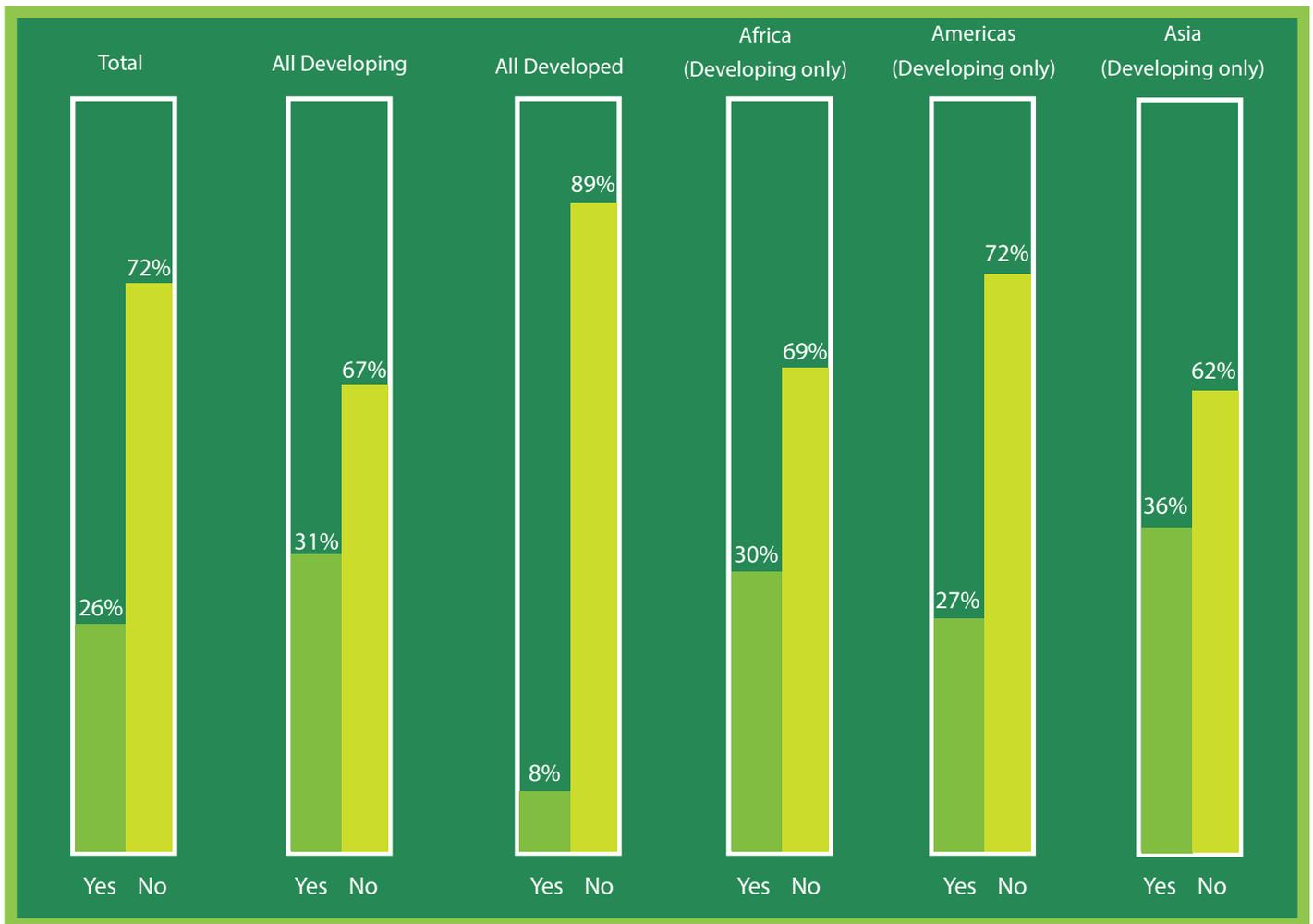
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**HAVE YOU EVER HAD TO MISS SCHOOL TO HELP YOUR FAMILY WITH WORK?**

# FINDINGS

More than one-quarter (26%) of all children surveyed report missing out on the benefits of education due to family work obligations.

- More children surveyed in developing countries (31%) report missing out on school to help their family with work than their peers in developed nations (8%).
- Children surveyed in Spain (2%), Canada and Ireland (both 3%) and Sweden (4%) are least likely to say they had missed school in order to help their family with work obligations. In contrast, children in Afghanistan (91%), Timor-Leste (84%) and Ghana (57%) are more likely to say they have missed school to work.



# AUSTRALIAN FINDINGS



**PIPER, 10**  
“My teachers protect me  
and keep me safe.”

The 7th annual Small Voices, Big Dreams survey captured the views of 248 Australian children from all corners of the country, who participated in an online questionnaire, at home and at school.

Sharing their thoughts on the importance of education and how to create safe learning environments, the results show that Australian children value their schools, the range of non-academic activities available, and the social connections that a learning environment can provide.

Australian children surveyed are also clear on how their schools could be improved, and the role that education plays in their future – in building their independence, and giving them the skills to shape their country as adults.

## IF YOU WERE THE LEADER OF YOUR COUNTRY, WHAT WOULD YOU DO TO IMPROVE EDUCATION OR SCHOOLS IN YOUR COUNTRY?

Almost half of the children surveyed in Australia (49%) would modernise class curriculums if they were the leader of their country. This includes adding more sports, recreation and creative arts to school activities, and encouraging greater student participation.

Piper, age 10, says: “I teach a lunch time yoga class for the younger grades in my school and they all love it so I would like to see it in every school.” Eleanor, age 12,

suggests providing “really good playgrounds”.

In comparison, only 24% of children globally are focused on curriculums, with almost half prioritising better school facilities (47%). This is particularly true in developing countries, where 56% say they would improve school infrastructure, in comparison to just 16% in Australia.

Providing greater financial support to both students and schools is the second highest response from Australian students, with 25% naming this as a priority, in line with global and regional results. Emilia, age 11, says as leader she would “help with dyslexia support and dyscalculia”.

## WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL?

In Australia, the majority of children (56%) say being with friends is what they love most about school.

Globally, only 26% of children gave this response, although it is a more popular result among children in developed (48%) than developing countries (19%).

## IS SCHOOL AND EDUCATION IMPORTANT TO YOU? WHY?

In common with children around the world, 96% of Australian young people say school and education is important to them. However, the results show that reasons for its significance varies among children from different countries and regions.

Around two-thirds of children surveyed in Australia (59%), and 64% in developed countries, say education is important because it means access to a good job as an adult. This is a common response globally (45%).

However, Australian children were more likely to say it is important because it allows them to make a difference in their country – 29% compared to the global result of 17%. And unlike one-fifth of children in developing countries (20%), who say education will help them to care for their parents, only 1% of children in Australia gave this response.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE SAFE AT SCHOOL?

For children in Australia, safety at school means having security in measures in place to keep students protected from harm (46%) and

A close-up portrait of a young boy with short, light brown hair and blue eyes. He is smiling slightly and looking directly at the camera. He is wearing a dark jacket. The background is a blurred green outdoor setting.

**ALASTAIR, 10**

“I would get students iPads.”

.....

ensuring that students are not at risk of physical or emotional abuse (43%).

Jock, age 12, says being safe at school means being "free from bullies in the playground and in the classroom". He adds that being kept safe from physical danger is also important: "We have quite a few snakes at school and sometimes that can be scary."

Unlike 21% of children in developing countries, only 2% of Australian children surveyed say a safe school is one where buildings and facilities are clean, safe and in good repair. Instead, when asked what it means to be safe at school, almost one-third of Australian respondents (28%) say when school feels like a second home, where children are welcomed, encouraged, and enjoy spending time.

Natasha, age 10, describes what a safe school means to her: "No one is having troubles with bullies and other careless people." Jock adds: "To be free to be ourselves. Even if we are different this is important."

### **BASED ON THAT, PLEASE RATE HOW SAFE YOU FEEL AT SCHOOL.**

Almost two-thirds of Australian respondents (63%) say their school is always safe. This is higher than the global result (60%) and among developed countries (58%).

However, almost a third of Australian children (29%) say their school is only 'sometimes' safe and 1% say it is 'never' safe.

### **HAVE YOU EVER HAD TO MISS SCHOOL TO HELP YOUR FAMILY WITH WORK?**

While around one-third of children surveyed in developing countries (31%) say they have had to miss school to help their family with work obligations, this is the case for only 11% of children surveyed in Australia.

In terms of regions, children from developing countries in Asia were most likely to say they had missed school for work (36%) compared to just 8% of children in developed countries.



**" Allow children to move about more. It would be better for everyone's health to get us moving at school."**

— JOCK, 12, AUSTRALIA



**Being safe at school means:  
"No bombs. No war."**

— EMILIA, 11, AUSTRALIA



**"As a student I can feel confident and know that I won't be criticised for what I do."**

— CALLUM, 11, AUSTRALIA

# METHODOLOGY

The Small Voices, Big Dreams survey was undertaken by ChildFund Alliance during May 2016. In most countries, ChildFund staff conducted one-on-one interviews with children in their local language. In some countries, children completed an online survey.

All non-English responses were translated by ChildFund. While every effort has been made to preserve the accuracy of the children's quotes presented in this report, some minor editing may have occurred in translation.

The survey was conducted in countries with children ages 10 to 12. This included 31 developing nations in Africa, Asia and the Americas, as well as 10 developed countries. A total of 6,226 children were surveyed — 3,658 children in developing countries and 2,568 children in developed nations.

Two of the five questions were open-ended, meaning the children were not given a list of answers to choose from. The remaining questions provided children with multiple-choice responses. All translated responses were provided to GfK Roper for analysis.

The responses from each country have been weighted to provide an equal voice to all children participating in the *Small Voices, Big Dreams 2016* survey.



A 2016 *Small Voices, Big Dreams* survey participant is interviewed in Timor-Leste.

## RESPONDENTS BY GENDER &amp; AGE

	ALL COUNTRIES	ALL DEVELOPING COUNTRIES	ALL DEVELOPED COUNTRIES	AFRICA (DEVELOPING ONLY)	AMERICAS (DEVELOPING ONLY)	ASIA (DEVELOPING ONLY)
Male	48%	48%	48%	48%	49%	48%
Female	52%	52%	52%	52%	51%	52%
Children aged 10 years	32%	31%	36%	30%	36%	29%
Children aged 11 years	32%	31%	37%	27%	35%	32%
Children aged 12 years	36%	38%	27%	43%	29%	39%
<b>Total responses</b>	<b>6,226</b>	<b>3,658</b>	<b>2,568</b>	<b>1,222</b>	<b>887</b>	<b>1,549</b>

## DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

	TOTAL RESPONSES
Australia	248
Canada	401
France	102
Ireland	100
Japan	292
Korea	101
New Zealand	804
Spain	100
Sweden	96
U.S.A.	324

## AFRICA: DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ONLY

	TOTAL RESPONSES
Benin	94
Burkina Faso	104
Ethiopia	96
Ghana	100
Guinea	101
Kenya	100
Mali	98
Senegal	108
Sierra Leone	101
The Gambia	115
Uganda	101
Zambia	104

## ASIA: DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ONLY

	TOTAL RESPONSES
Afghanistan	104
Bangladesh	104
Cambodia	153
India	239
Indonesia	151
Laos	101
Myanmar	104
Nepal	110
Philippines	100
Sri Lanka	106
Timor-Leste	102
Vietnam	175

## AMERICAS: DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ONLY

	TOTAL RESPONSES
Bolivia	105
Brazil	110
Ecuador	264
El Salvador	100
Honduras	100
Mexico	108
Paraguay	100



# LET THEIR VOICES BE HEARD **#SMALLVOICES**

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FIND OUT MORE AT [CHILDFOUND.ORG.AU](http://CHILDFOUND.ORG.AU)

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