



Guidelines for Communicating with Sponsored Children and Families

Our child sponsorship program is built upon the highest sense of moral and ethical standards, meticulously designed to keep children, their families, and their communities safe and respected. The guidelines below are built to set us all up for success and safety.

We are committed to fostering a secure, trustworthy connection with people around the world who wish to support CERI children and families around the world for all the right reasons. This initiative is deliberately designed to be the opposite of the "imperial colonizer" narrative, instead focusing solely on authentic connection: it is a relationship between one person who is currently able to provide support and another who needs it, with the profound understanding that in the universal human experience, those roles and abilities can always switch.

We champion dignity, mutual respect, and the belief that every person—regardless of circumstance—is an active participant in their own life and future.

Drawing on years of experience in this field, these guidelines are based on a deep understanding of the potential risks, unintended pitfalls, and missteps that can occur in international connections

As you step into your role as a sponsor, here is what we ask you to agree to as we join hands to lift up children and families in need.

1. Prioritize the Child's Safety and Privacy

- Do **not** request or share personal data such as full addresses, phone numbers, social media accounts, or identification documents.
- Use only the communication channels approved by the CERI.
- Avoid sharing photos that reveal sensitive information (e.g., your home address, workplace, or children's schools).

2. Keep Communication Age-Appropriate

- Use simple, positive language suited to the child's developmental level.

- Avoid discussing topics that may be frightening, confusing, or inappropriate (e.g., romantic relationships, violence, politics, or explicit content).

3. Maintain Healthy Boundaries

- Do not make personal promises you may not be able to keep (e.g., “I will visit you soon,” “I will pay for your future university”).
- Avoid discussing your wealth, vacations, or possessions in ways that can create unrealistic expectations.
- Keep the relationship focused on encouragement and support—not dependency.

4. Be Consistent and Reliable

- Write on a regular schedule if possible (e.g., monthly or quarterly).
- Keep messages warm and supportive even if the child’s responses are brief.
- Understand that some children may write infrequently due to school, translation delays, or cultural norms.

5. Show Respect for Culture and Faith

- Ask questions respectfully about the child’s interests, traditions, and celebrations.
- Avoid pushing your own religious, political, or social beliefs.
- Refrain from criticizing local customs, government, or community practices.

6. Encourage, Don’t Compare

- Celebrate the child’s achievements without comparing them to standards in your own country.
- Use positive reinforcement—highlight strengths, interests, and character.

7. Give Thoughtful, Appropriate Gifts

- Provide gifts through official channels only.
- Choose items approved by the program, such as school supplies or small necessities.
- Do not send money, electronics, or luxury items directly to the child.

8. Protect Emotional Well-Being

- Be mindful that children may form strong attachments.

- Avoid sharing disturbing personal information (e.g., illnesses, family conflict).
- Do not ask intrusive questions about trauma, family issues, or living conditions.

9. Communicate With Cultural Sensitivity

- When asking questions, frame them gently:
 - “What activities do you enjoy?” instead of “What toys do you have?”

10. Honor the Program’s Mission

- Follow all rules and recommendations provided by CERI.
- Report any concerning communication from the child to CERI, such as requests for money, unsafe disclosures, or signs of distress to safe.report@ceri.org.
- Remember that the sponsorship exists to support the child’s well-being—not to form a private or exclusive relationship.

11. Be Humble, Compassionate, and Encouraging

- Share stories about your hobbies, family, and daily life in a modest and positive way.
- Express celebration of the child’s efforts and admiration for their resilience.
- Let communications be a source of hope, motivation, and friendship.