

Global Survey Reveals Children Value Education Despite Major Obstacles to Learning

November 14, 2016

New York, NY – Children around the world consider education a priority, despite less than ideal circumstances for learning. According to a survey by ChildFund Alliance of more than 6,000 children aged 10 to 12 in 41 countries, 98 percent of respondents say education is important to them. However, the findings also show that learning isn’t as accessible or safe as it should be. More than one-third of children polled say they feel unsafe at school either sometimes or all the time. They also say that more and better schools are needed.



Grown-up Concerns; Childlike Optimism

“The *Small Voices, Big Dreams* survey reveals that many of the children polled believe their education is in need of improvement,” said Meg Gardinier, Secretary General of ChildFund Alliance. “They are worried about issues ranging from unsafe facilities, disaster protocols and lock-downs, to weapons, drugs and bullying in schools. These are not issues children should have to contemplate. School should be about learning, not about fears for their personal safety.”

The good news is that despite these concerns, children love to learn. “Learning new things” is the number one response from 47 percent of those polled when asked what they like most about school. This is followed by “working with teachers” (29 percent) and “being with friends” (26 percent). And, at this young age, children know that education is the key to their future. Almost half of all respondents (45 percent) say education can help them get a better job, while nearly a quarter are confident it will make them a better person. Others believe school will prepare them to care for their parents (17 percent) or help improve their homeland (17 percent).

Children Want to Be Safe at School

When asked what it means to be safe at school, children identified a range of factors. These include high quality facilities, feeling free from violence or abuse, having strong security measures in place, and learning from teachers that students trust and respect. However, 34 percent of those polled say their school is never or only sometimes safe. Surprisingly, these figures do not vary between developing or developed countries. When asked about solutions, 43 percent of all respondents say they would feel safe at school if security measures existed to keep students protected from harm.

“The fact that so many do not feel safe at school is of great concern, as safety is a prerequisite for learning,” said Gardinier. “The world’s leaders recognized the importance of safe, meaningful education when they adopted the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal #4 in September 2015: ‘Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.’”

A High Premium on Quality Facilities and Teachers

ChildFund Alliance asked children what they would do to improve education if they were the leader of their country. Almost half (47 percent) would build and renovate school facilities and create high quality learning environments, while 24 percent would focus on the quality of teaching by hiring more staff, paying them well and providing additional training.

For children in some countries, providing greater financial support to schools and students is a top priority.

Work Vs. School

Many of the children polled for Small Voices, Big Dreams feel torn between family and school obligations. A bigger concern in the developing than in developed countries, it is nonetheless restricting childhood activities around the world. One-quarter of all respondents (26 percent) say they have missed school to help

One-quarter of all respondents (26 percent) say they have missed school to help family with work. In developing countries, the number climbs to 31 percent, versus 8 percent in developed.

Despite Challenges, Encouraging Progress

“We are encouraged that almost all children recognize the importance of education,” said Gardinier. “While achieving inclusive and equitable quality education for all seems ambitious, there has been much progress. The number of children and young people not attending school has almost halved since the turn of the century and in most countries there are now as many girls as boys in primary school.

“ChildFund Alliance is committed to doing all we can to provide children around the world with a safe, quality education.”

To download the Small Voices, Big Dreams report, [click here](#).

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– 30 –

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About the Small Voices, Big Dreams Survey

The Small Voices, Big Dreams survey was conducted by ChildFund Alliance member organizations in May 2016. In developing countries, member organizations' staff conducted one-on-one interviews with children in their local language. In some countries, children completed an online survey. In developing countries, participants are from program communities where ChildFund member organizations have sustainable development programs, and in developed countries, children were selected at random.

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

The survey was conducted in 41 countries with children aged 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.

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

About GfK Roper

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