



A SERIES SPECIALIZED ON HOW PARENTS AND TEACHERS WORK TOGETHER TO

ENSURE CHILDREN'S EDUCATION



Unity Foundation

ONG DEPUIS 1991

Created in 1991, **Unity Foundation** is a Luxembourgish NGO officially recognized by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MFEA).

Unity Foundation collaborates with a network of **local partners** in Latin America, Africa and Asia, and our main objective is to provide financial resources to the **educational projects** they carry out within the framework of three lines of action : (1) the Community Schools (CS) are dedicated to the schooling of children from pre-school level, (2) the Preparation for Social Action (PSA) program is dedicated to young people who wish to undertake concrete actions to improve the social and economic aspects of their communities, and finally, (3) the training centers which enable the continuous training of teachers and coordinators of the CS and PSA.

All the projects supported by Unity Foundation are **co-financed by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs**.

Celebrate World Children's Day on November 20th



EDUCATING CHILDREN DESPITE THE PANDEMIC

Dear readers,

The Unity Foundation team always keeps all the people affected in any way by COVID-19 in their thoughts and prayers.

Humanity is facing this crisis collectively, reminding us that we are intrinsically equal and that we are all part of the same human race. We must therefore have faith that together we will go through this crisis and come out of it with new strength and strong bonds.

As you know, since the rapid evolution of this crisis, we have kept in touch with our partners in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Being also subject to restrictions and preventive measures such as quarantine and the closure of schools and other public places, our local partners have had to adapt quickly to their new reality, despite the many hardships along the way, and find new ways to continue their regular activities.

On the occasion of World Children's Day on November 20th, which marks the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 by the United Nations General Assembly, we wanted to share with you some stories of how our partners have stepped up their efforts with flexibility and enthusiasm in finding creative ways to protect and educate children in their villages, while helping communities to the best of their ability.

It is stories like these that motivate us to continue our efforts to promote our vision and support our partners. We hope you will join us in supporting them!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Fernand Schaber'. The signature is stylized and fluid.

Fernand Schaber
President

THE POWER OF EDUCATION

Children are the most precious treasure a community can possess, for in them are the promise and guarantee of the future. They carry within them the seeds of what the future society will be like, provided that their environment offers them the opportunities to flourish. We are convinced that every human being, and in particular **every child in the world, is endowed with immense potentialities that can be revealed through adequate education**. Such education must take into account the physical, intellectual and moral development of individuals and make not only the students but also their teachers and parents active agents of their own education.

Our seven partner organizations are committed to providing such education to an ever-increasing number of children and young people around the world, and **girls and women make up more than half of** Community School students and PSA participants. In 2019, **11,340 children were enrolled** in community schools and **1,624 youth and adults** were participating in the PSA program.



“ It is just the diversity and variety that constitutes its charm; each flower, each tree, each fruit, beside being beautiful in itself, brings out by contrast the qualities of the others, and shows to advantage the special loveliness of each and all. Thus should it be among the children of men!”

HOW A CHILD AND HIS FAMILY CAN CHANGE A VILLAGE IN CAMBODIA

Chouen Vattanak is a four-year-old boy living with his two brothers, his parents and grandparents in the Battambang Province of Cambodia. In Som Bok Ork village where they live, his family is well known for their kindness and helpfulness to others in the community.

Chouen's teacher, Sokunthea, was very impressed about how the children never say unkind things about others, they are very mindful not to back-bite and gossip. She has even watched them correcting other children at school if they hear them saying unkind words about others.

When the students recently returned to school, Chouen was not only

happy to see his friends, he was so excited to be back learning! He took a leadership role in demonstrating to the other students how to wash their hands properly. Sokunthea feels that his confidence is a result of the encouragement he receives at home from his parents and grandparents, and he is lucky to live with a family that has a strong moral foundation.

His family is an example in the village and because of their example, others also try to do better. Sokunthea hopes that with the school's continuing support of this moral foundation, Chouen and other students will grow up to be leaders in their community and help to build a better society for all.

BECAUSE EDUCATION SAVES LIVES... CHILDREN AND YOUTH AS PROTAGONISTS OF CHANGE.

In Zambia, Peter Kuzhila serves his community through early childhood education

Peter Kuzhila is a former student of the PSA program and is now serving as an experienced tutor. With his students, they have established a community preschool for the youngest of the village in February 2020. Here is his experience :

“... in early 2019, I started thinking about how I could come up with a community project which would benefit and unite my PSA students and the community as a whole... My students welcomed the idea and we therefore started discussing and planning how we were going to involve the community. ...40 pre-school aged children were registered in February 2020, and classes started thereafter.

As COVID-19 disturbed the classes, my students and I devised a plan to involve parents to continue with the teaching of children although at a very slow pace. Having been assisted with liquid hand wash by Inshindo Foundation and using face masks, we shared the households where children were coming and we used the field accompaniment to share information about the COVID-19 pandemic. I was accompanying 21 children coming from 9 families once a week for a maximum of one hour per household.

It has been amazing seeing parents involved in the education of their children, of course with challenges, and to see elder siblings, especially those still in school, also helping their young sisters and brothers.

Serving the children in this manner kept us going and also gave us all hope that the pandemic will pass in due course. We just thank God that Mwinilunga was not badly affected compared to other towns like Kabwe and Lusaka.”



Children taught by a sibling while parents keep an eye.



Children learning with parents also participating at a distance.



The younger family members of Gelora on her visit to her village to teach about the coronavirus.

In Indonesia, Gelora visits her family to talk about the coronavirus.

The education of girls and young women is also crucial for the sustainable progress of communities, because, as the first educators of children, they play a key role in the advancement of the following generations.



Coloring an Indonesian translation of the book "What is Coronavirus" in Sidikalang.

Gelora, a teacher at a school of our partner YBTI, in the city of Medan in Indonesia, used an opportunity on a visit to her village in Sidikalang, five hours away in the mountains of North Sumatra, to teach her younger family members about the coronavirus.

The next day, one of the parents asked, "What book did you give my son, Mei, yesterday?" I answered, "It's an explanation about Corona". Interestingly, she said, "Mei was angry with me. He said, "Mama, this is a lie. So far you have said that only mothers can wear a mask. It turns out that we have to wear masks too. Please buy me one, because even children can get Corona". Mei also told us that he was taught how to properly wash his hands and he showed us how to do it". Mei's mother jokingly complained that not only did she have to buy her son a mask, but she also had to buy hand soap.

Gelora's story not only shows the dedication of a teacher, but also an example of how children can be a positive influence on their parents!



“ So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.”

Ferina, principal of the Sirilogui Creative Education Center (YBTI) in Mentawai, West Sumatra, Indonesia, teaching a child at her home.

THE COMMITMENT OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS IN INDONESIA

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools in Indonesia have been closed since early April. Depending on the remoteness of the location and local regulations, pre-school children are being taught through a combination of online sessions, home visits by teachers, and occasional sessions at school for a few children at a time.

4000 copies of a twenty-page children's book entitled *What is Corona Virus?* were distributed to all YBTI schools with the purpose of both educating communities about the coronavirus and as a tool for teachers to have meaningful conversations within communities about their children's education.

From these conversations, parents shared their challenges to assist their children. While one parent started enjoying the process and as it made her feel closer to her child, others had problems assisting their children because of their limited literacy skills. They asked the teachers to directly teach their children and therefore took their children to the teacher's house every day. Other parents consulted with the teachers to learn techniques to better help their children with their lessons.

Other parents that had to take their son to their field every day promised to teach their child while in the field and turn in the work to the teacher.

"There is also a good thing about this coronavirus, as I am closer to my child, and we pay more attention to the child and family," said Tomas, Azka's father.

The many conversations around the *What is Corona Virus?* book have enabled teachers and parents to begin to work more closely together to ensure the education of their children during the pandemic.

The aim of our local partners and the teachers they engage is not just to establish a set number of schools and impose a specific working model. Instead, teachers are very much involved in raising awareness amongst the community that everyone is ultimately responsible for the development of their community. Here, the community starts to take ownership of their school and thus their own educational and moral development.



EMPOWERING YOUTH IN LUXEMBOURG

Since 2016, Unity Foundation has been engaged in an awareness campaign around the award-winning film "Mercy's Blessing". Addressing profound themes such as poverty, privileges, sacrifice and justice, it also encourages participants to find creative ways to serve others and bring hope and joy to those around them.

Thanks to the training and accompaniment that UF has been offering to teachers and social workers since 2018, the workshops have carried on after the lockdown in a face-to-face setting and have notably allowed the youth to express and discuss together the difficulties and questions they faced during the confinement.

An online version was also created to allow the teachers, students and parents, to watch the film and conduct the workshop together at home. A total of 32 students participated in the activity, and teachers reported the responses as very satisfying and inspiring. Here is one student's response: "To make a difference in a person's life, you don't have to make big sacrifices or make big efforts, you just have to do small things. For example, if you know that your brother likes a cake very much, and there is only one piece left, instead of eating it, you give it to him, and similar to this there are a thousand other little actions, that even if for you they don't make a big difference, they make someone else a little happier." [translated from spanish]

Drawing: A student illustration from Mercy's Blessing workshop

WORK IN PROGRESS 2021

At UF, 2021 is synonymous with change!

We are entering the last year of our current framework agreement with the MFEA and we are preparing for the next agreement.

2021 is also a pivotal year for our activities with young people and children in Luxembourg and for our team; our dear collaborators Claudine and Nika have left us and Sarah and Anne joined us in September 2020! Finally, we are currently moving to a new location and preparing the festivities for the 30th anniversary of Unity Foundation!

For more information, visit our recently renewed web page!

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