

Compassion Field Experience: Visit Handbook



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1. Introduction

Thank you for your desire to see children released from poverty in Jesus' name. We are excited to facilitate your upcoming Field Experience Visit and pray it will be a memorable time.

Seeing the work of Compassion and our local church partners firsthand is unforgettable. On your visit you'll see for yourself how children are known, loved and protected by their church communities.

This Visit Handbook is designed to help you prepare for your Compassion Field Experience. Please read it before you depart, and we'd also recommend that you keep it handy for easy reference.



1.1.

Compassion's ministry

Compassion is part of a global neighbourhood of over 40 countries, united in our mission to release children from poverty in Jesus' name.

We partner with over 8,000 local churches and support over 2 million children in reaching their God-given potential.

Compassion has three key distinctives:

- **Christ-centred.** We are driven by Jesus' love for all people. We ensure every participant has the opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel in a culturally-relevant way.
- **Child-focused.** We support the physical, spiritual, cognitive and relational needs of children through tailored care.
- **Church-based.** We partner with local churches who are best placed to identify the needs within their community and drive change.

1.2.

Our programs

Holistic child development is a long-term approach that ideally starts before a child is born and continues through school age and into early adulthood. Our approach comprehensively addresses all areas of a child's development through three core programs.

Mums and Babies

For mums and babies living in poverty, the first year of a child's life is critical for survival. Compassion works with caregivers and babies to prevent premature death, secure good health and enable positive development for babies and their parents or guardians.

Child Sponsorship

The Child Sponsorship Program provides holistic support for a child's unique needs, including nutrition, clean water, healthcare, education and leadership skills. We surround each child with support from a local church and a caring sponsor so they can realise their God-given potential.

Critical Needs

Every child will, at some point, require additional care beyond what sponsorship alone can provide. At decisive times in a child's life, Critical Needs provides support such as disaster relief, access to clean water or covering fees for further education.



We recommend watching [this video](#) to gain a better understanding of Compassion's approach to development.

“The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion.” —PSALM 116:5 (NIV)



2. Compassion Visits

2.1. Who will lead your visit?

During your visit, a trained local host, usually a Compassion staff member or an external certified guide, will ensure a safe and engaging field experience. They will offer guidance and provide an interpreter if necessary. While your host may not be an expert on all Compassion programs, they will be knowledgeable about the local community, customs and culture and it is important to follow their guidance during your visit. We encourage you to get in touch with Compassion Australia when you return home if you would like more information about anything you see or hear.

2.2. What will Compassion arrange for you?

- All transport on the day of your visit, including pick up and drop off at your accommodation
- Your host and interpreter who will accompany you throughout your field experience
- Meals and activities for the duration of your visit
- A gift for the family of your sponsored child

All costs associated with your visit will be charged to you, but we will send you a cost estimate ahead of your visit for you to review and approve.

2.3. What will you need to arrange?

- All personal travel outside of your Compassion Field Experience Visit
- Travel insurance for your time overseas
- Your own accommodation (unless we have agreed to arrange this for you)
- Local currency to cover, at a minimum, all cost estimates

3. Activities and Opportunities

Every Compassion Field Experience Visit is unique. However, your visit will include one or more of the following activities.

3.1. Visiting a child development centre

While your visit may not coincide with a program day at the local child development centre, it is an exciting opportunity for you to meet program staff, see how your sponsored child's development is recorded or experience other program initiatives.

3.2. Home visits

On your visit, you may have the opportunity to visit the home of your sponsored child, or another Compassion assisted child. You'll get to see what life is like for their family and spend a few hours connecting with them.

It is an honour to be welcomed into a family's home. Though conversations will most likely take place through a translator, it's best to directly address the person you are speaking with as much as possible.

Enjoy your time chatting with the family and consider praying for them before you leave.

3.3. Alternative options

If it is not possible for you to visit your sponsored child's home or child development centre because of distance or security reasons, we may arrange for your sponsored child to meet you at another suitable location. If this is the case, all these details, including any additional costs, will be discussed with you prior to your visit.

3.4. Meeting your sponsored child

We hope you will enjoy deepening your relationship with your sponsored child and be encouraged by the incredible impact your support and the local church are making.

Here are some helpful tips to make the day special:

- When you meet your sponsored child, he or she may appear very shy. In some cultures, children are not used to being the centre of attention or directly being asked questions. In these situations, they will most likely appreciate your patience and encouragement.
- Remember, this experience is just as exciting for your sponsored child as it is for you. When you first meet him or her, take a few moments to bond before you give any gifts. Consider giving your gifts at the end of your visit as a way to say thank you.
- During your time together, ask about their life, family, school and hopes for the future—and share about your own life too. This is a wonderful opportunity to encourage your sponsored child.
- Consider doing an activity together, such as drawing pictures, playing with a skipping rope, frisbee or ball, or another age-appropriate activity. You may want to bring some stickers, colouring books or sports goods that can also be given as a gift.

When speaking with staff:

- What do you most enjoy about working here?
- What is the most difficult part of your work?
- How may I pray for you?
- Do you have any questions for me?

When speaking with parents or caregivers:

- In what ways is the church supporting your children?
- How would you describe your children?
- What does a typical day look like for your family?
- How may I pray for you?
- Do you have any questions for me?

When speaking with children:

- What is your favourite part of your time at the child development centre?
- What is your favourite sport or game to play?
- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- Do you have any questions for me?

True connection is built through two-way conversation. You may not always be asked a question in return, but please feel welcome to share about your own life to keep the conversation going.

Children may also appreciate you initiating an activity to do with them.

Activity ideas:

- Playing games such as 'rock paper scissors' or 'duck duck goose'
- Blowing bubbles
- Drawing pictures
- Playing sports, such as kicking around a soccer ball
- Sharing photos of your family and life, being mindful of displays of wealth





4. Gifts and Assistance

4.1. Can I give a gift to my sponsored child or their community?

We appreciate your generous heart to share gifts with children living in poverty.

Please be aware that to maintain the integrity of Compassion's work within local communities, it is our policy that no cash gifts are to be given. If you would like to give a monetary gift to your sponsored child, their family or their child development centre, you can do so through [My Account](#) or by contacting Compassion Australia. We ask that you do not make promises to the child or their family before doing so. Rest assured that 100 per cent of these gifts are sent through to the child development centre, where staff assist the children and/or families in the purchase of appropriate goods.

You are more than welcome to give a physical gift to your sponsored child or to the child development centre, provided they meet any customs requirements. We recommend small, simple items such as skipping ropes, soft toys, soccer balls, books, pencils, etc. If you bring a gift for your sponsored child, you may also consider a small gift for their family members. For caregivers, we recommend items such as toothbrushes/toothpaste, sheets, towels, serving spoons, etc.

4.2. What if I feel led to support a particular child or their family?

We are thankful for your heart to help. Please contact Compassion Australia upon your return to explore sponsorship. We ask that you do not discuss your ideas with or make promises to the child or their family. Our local church partners know their communities best and you can trust them to facilitate initiatives that will effectively meet the needs of children and families.

5. Cross-Cultural Relationships

5.1. Representing Compassion

During your visit, you are a representative for Compassion within the local community.

Please dress modestly to show respect for the local culture and avoid apparel with overtly Christian symbols if you are travelling in areas that are primarily Buddhist, Hindu or Muslim. We have provided further guidance on how to dress appropriately for the program country you are travelling to in the relevant Country Handbook.

Please refrain from smoking or consuming alcohol while representing Compassion to uphold the positive reputation and witness of the local church within their community.

5.2. Culture shock

Culture shock is a condition caused by the anxiety from being in new surroundings without familiar social cues. Issues like the inability to communicate and understand the culture, as well as physical problems resulting from new foods and the weather, may make you feel uncomfortable.

Remember it's normal to be homesick, and bringing your worries to God can help you overcome culture shock and make the most of your opportunities to connect with the local community.

5.3. Strengthening cross-cultural relationships

Preparing yourself for cross-cultural challenges can help you build better relationships with the people you meet.

- **Ask God for help.** It's important to take time to reflect on your motivations for your visit and surrender them to God. Pray that God will help you develop positive cross-cultural relationships and that, through this visit, He will be shaping you to be more like Jesus.
- **Expect to leave your comfort zone.** Encountering a different culture and devastating poverty can naturally lead to frustration. Expect to have your worldview called into question as you explore complex issues. Try to maintain the posture of a learner.
- **Always be respectful.** Despite their situation, remember to always extend respect to the people you meet. Though it may look like they own little, they will most likely be very proud of what they have.

5.4. Reverse culture shock

You may also experience what's known as "reverse culture shock" upon your return home. You may become frustrated with or critical of your own culture after witnessing the inspiring response of the global church to poverty.

If we can support you in any way, or if you would like more information about how you can further get involved in Compassion's ministry, please feel welcome to contact us.



6. Health and Safety

6.1. Our risk framework

Your safety is paramount to us. We use the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) risk rating to make sure you do not travel to high-risk areas.

DFAT Travel Advisory Rating	Definition	Source of Travel Approval
1	Exercise normal safety precautions	Compassion Australia's Field Experience Team
2	Exercise a high degree of caution	Compassion Australia's Field Experience Team
3	Reconsider your need to travel	Compassion Australia's leadership
4	Do not travel	The Field Experience is not approved. Does not apply to Field Experiences already in progress.

We will avoid making cancellations or changes to your visit where possible, but we reserve the right to do so at any time in order to ensure your safety.

6.2. Health and safety recommendations

- Maintain a low profile. Dress in appropriate attire, refrain from wearing expensive jewellery or carrying valuable items or excess cash.
- If you are carrying cash, consider splitting the money into different locations on your body.
- Ensure you comply with all local laws.
- Drink bottled water only, practice good hygiene and avoid high-risk foods to prevent common health problems like traveller's diarrhoea.

7. Child Protection

7.1. Safeguarding

Compassion is committed to safeguarding the children in our programs from all forms of abuse and exploitation.

All travellers over the age of 16 must have official clearance to visit children by providing one or more of the following:

- Working with Children Check number
- State or national police check, or
- Teacher's registration card

When interacting with children, please make sure you:

- Speak in an age-appropriate manner
- Are always in visible places and accompanied by a Compassion staff member
- Report any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns immediately
- Do not share your contact information (including social media) or have any contact with children that is not coordinated by Compassion Australia. Do not share any private medical information
- Use only your preferred name. Do not disclose your full name or ask a child to share theirs

7.2. Media

We know you'll want to take photos and videos to capture your incredible memories and share them with others. While doing so, it's important to protect the privacy and dignity of Compassion program staff and participants and the communities we work with.

Here are some important things to remember:

Consent

Please always ask the children or individuals you are photographing for their consent. In some circumstances, they may feel obligated to agree to your requests out of a sense of hospitality or politeness. It is vital that you let them know that they can say 'no'. If they agree, but you believe they may still have reservations, then please do not take the photo or video.

Dignity Standards

Please ensure that any images or film you capture represent the subjects with honour and dignity. We ask that you only capture images of people who are dressed appropriately and are happy to be photographed. Please do not take images of anyone who appears unwell, unclean or uncomfortable to be photographed.

Social Media

We are happy for you to share content on social media where consent has been given and the photos or videos uphold the dignity of the subjects. However, to ensure the safety and protection of Compassion participants, please be careful not to disclose any full names or specific locations (including addresses or geotags) of any children.

We also encourage you to consider the story you are telling when sharing with friends, family or on social media. Ask yourself the following:

- Is it an accurate depiction of the situation?
- Is the child or adult presented as an agent of change in their own life?
- Is the child or adult photographed in a way that gives them dignity and respect?



8. A Final Word

We are thankful for your desire to witness how God is working through His church to release children from poverty. Your heart for your global neighbours is a great encouragement to us. The impact of Compassion Australia is only possible because of the partnership of faithful and generous supporters like you.

We are excited to facilitate this visit and hope that God will use the connections you make to grow your faith and deepen your understanding of Compassion's ministry.

We pray that, through this visit, God will bless you and that you will be a blessing to others.

8.1.

Contact Us

We are here to support you. Please reach out to us at fieldexperience@compassion.com.au if you have any questions.

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!” —1 JOHN 3:1 (NIV)



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