

Christian Children's Fund

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Post Pals Makes Our World a Bit Smaller

Richmond, Va. – Tuesday, March 24 – In a classroom in Sweden, students are laughing and getting creative as they each contribute to the plot of one collective story. They've made up characters, set the scene and reached a climax.

But the story suddenly stops there. How does it end? They will have to wait to find out.

In a classroom in The Gambia, students open their assignment and anxiously read the beginning of a familiar story. They balance on the edge of their seats and burst into laughter, just as the Swedish children had hoped.

Now it's their turn. How does the story end? Only their imaginations will tell.

Thanks to **ChildFund Sweden** (Barnfonden) and **Posten** (the Swedish postal service) these groups of children are able to connect with one another through the program, **Post Pals**.

Post Pals is a classroom-based pen pal program that matches classrooms in Sweden with children in Christian Children's Fund-supported classes in The Gambia, Ethiopia, India, Philippines, Uganda and Zambia. But going beyond mere letter writing, the program also encourages the cultural exchange and enhancement of classrooms for children ages 8-12 through curriculum-based assignments.

"Now we know about Sweden," said one child from India.

"We have seen the flag of their country and the type of houses. People of Sweden are different, but their children have thoughts like ours, and they also prepare the same type of drawings and letters like us, including ones of their family and pictures of their house."

In Uganda, Post Pals is new. 948 children are participating from 25 classrooms. Their lesson plans are based on the Swedish curriculum with topics that include history, geography, creative writing, home economics and sports among others.



Christian Children's Fund (CCF) is a global force for children, helping the world's deprived, excluded and vulnerable survive and thrive in order to reach their full potential. Serving children since 1938, CCF works in 31 countries and assists approximately 15.2 million children and family members worldwide, regardless of race, creed or origin. CCF is a member of the ChildFund Alliance.

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Swedish children will exchange a fourth grade history assignment by compiling photos, drawings and stories of their own country's history to share with their Gambian counterparts.

The Gambian classes then answers the same questions for the same time period. Not only will both classrooms learn about one another, but they will each gain an understanding of their historical similarities and differences.

From an academic program perspective, Post Pals improves reading, writing, analytical and self-expression skills. Because it's integrated into the classroom, it infuses excitement and creativity with learning.

But for these children, Post Pals allows the chance for expression; the chance to share their own voice and perspective in exciting new ways. The joy they find in art, writing, photography and song now holds even more meaning. Not only are they learning, they are becoming increasingly confident.

"We learn about creative writing, drawing and other information," said a teacher from India. "All of which will be useful in the overall development of these children."

Post Pals, a three year-program that began with 500 Swedish and 500 CCF classrooms last year, already has increased to 800 in each this year and will reach as many as 1,200 classrooms in both Sweden and the participating CCF countries next year.

For more information about CCF, visit www.christianchildrensfund.org.

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