





Where Are They Now?

An Update on Three Compassion Participants

Kids living in poverty face all sorts of challenges. Their needs go deep and can be complicated. When we work with them, we often see immediate changes in their lives. But the real impact of our investment can be seen best over time, as it transforms not just individuals but entire families and communities.

Join us as we catch up with three Compassion participants and celebrate the incredible ways God is working in their lives today.

Emerson registered at his local Compassion center when he was 9 years old, and we last checked in with him when he was 14 and undergoing a series of surgeries to correct a spinal abnormality. Now he is a thriving 18-year-old who recently graduated from his center and is planning to attend college.

We first met **Rihanata** when she was 7 years old and recovering from severe burns over much of her body. Through the help of her local Compassion center, Rihanata received critical medical care. Today, she is a joyful 15-year-old who is active in her local center.

Janna was a young girl of 6 when we first met her not long after her father died, leaving her and her mother in great need. Her local Compassion center quickly became a place of refuge for Janna, and now Janna is 18 and is a leader among her peers.

BEYOND MEASURE



Emerson, 18, Guatemala

To see Emerson today, thriving in his studies and actively participating in youth leadership positions, it's difficult to imagine the difficulties he has endured. But when Emerson registered to attend the Compassion center in his local community in San Martín Jilotepeque, Guatemala, he had already experienced more hardship than any 9-year-old should.

After being born prematurely, Emerson's lungs were slow to develop, and it quickly became evident that he suffered from a serious spinal condition that made it difficult for him to move and walk normally. Doctors told Emerson's mother that his spinal abnormality would eventually compromise his internal organs.

Prior to his registration at the center, other children often made fun of Emerson because of his condition. He couldn't participate in sports or activities that other children could, and the public school did not have adequate accommodations to support his education.

But all of that changed when he entered the church-based child development center, where caring and compassionate staff saw more than just Emerson's disability. The center director says, "He is special, and we realized that he had great capacity. He is a very intelligent person, and one of the things I admire about him most is his perseverance."

In addition to a place to belong, Emerson's registration at the center also created the opportunity for him to receive much-needed surgeries for his spine. In 2021, when he was 14, Emerson had a series of four surgeries at Shriner's Hospital for Children in Philadelphia. Following his surgeries, Emerson could finally engage in sports and activities he never could before. His lung function also improved since the surgeries released space for his lungs to develop.

Now, four years later, Emerson has graduated from his local Compassion center and will soon graduate from high school with a certificate in accounting and computing. In the future, he would like to attend college to study industrial engineering.

Emerson says, "Before [my surgeries], I used to think I was going to die. Now, I'm no longer afraid since I know God is in control of my life. I can make plans for my future because God is with me. I want to continue serving God. I want to graduate from university and help other children. It is so wonderful when people love you, so I'm going to love and help others, just as Jesus loves me and helped me through other people."

Watch Emerson's story by scanning the QR code with your mobile device.



Rihanata, 15, Burkina Faso

In September of 2015, when Rihanata was just 5 years old, her world changed forever. She lived in a small village in southern Burkina Faso. One morning she was visiting a neighbor's house when she slipped near a cook fire and a pot of boiling sauce spilled on her, causing terrible burns on 80 percent of her body.

When her family lacked the means to pay for her care, the church-based Compassion center she attended stepped in to help right away, covering her hospitalization and treatment.

Rihanata spent 15 months in the pediatric hospital in Ouagadougou before she was well enough to return home. Rihanata's mother says, "At a certain point, I was desperate and wanted to run away from the hospital with my daughter. But Compassion saved the life of my Rihanata following this accident."

Now, 10 years later, Rihanata is a bright and lively teenager. She still attends the child development center at her church, and the scars from her accident are still visible on her arms, legs, back and face. But despite the difficulty she has faced, Rihanata is filled with peace and joy.

Patrice, a staff member at the center, says, "[Rihanata] loves prayer, attending church and center activities. [She] is one of the best singers in the children's choir. She is not hindered by her health, and she interacts with everyone with care and respect."

When asked how she is doing, Rihanata says, "I am just me; I am the same Rihanata who is funny and friendly. I don't think I am different because of these scars on my face and arms. I praise God because I am fearfully and wonderfully made, and I thank him for good health and the gift of life."

Through the center, Rihanata has been able to focus on her studies. Two years ago, she received a top student prize, and she continues to thrive socially and academically.

As she plans for her future, Rihanata says, "I wanted to become a medical doctor, but I am now thinking about fashion, hairstyling and starting a non-profit organization to help vulnerable people."

"I have many dreams. I want to change the world and impact my generation," she adds with a big smile.

Watch an update from Rihanata by scanning the QR code with your mobile device.

Janna, 18, Philippines

In a remote village nestled deep within the cane fields of the Philippines, a young woman named Janna is bringing the light of Christ to her local church. Despite her petite stature, her influence is immense. Janna serves as a worship leader, teaches children, disciples the youth and serves as the president of the local youth organization. Her love for Jesus overflows in every area of her life, inspiring all those around her.

But life was not always this hopeful for Janna. Janna's story is marked by immense loss and resilience. Her father died when she was just 6, and she was raised by her mother, who toiled for very meager wages in the cane fields. When Janna was registered in a local church-based Compassion center, it was a huge blessing and changed the trajectory of her life. Recognizing the opportunity for her daughter, Janna's mom made sure she didn't miss program days, even though she and Janna had to ride more than 30 minutes by rickshaw over rocky, unpaved roads to get to the center.

At the center, Janna was able to listen to Bible stories, play with other children and receive medical and dental checkups as well as tutoring. Not long after her registration, Janna's mother said, "To me [the center] is her hope. I can't see any other way for my daughter to have all that the center is giving her. I am very grateful that she was chosen."

Now, more than 12 years later, Janna attributes her spiritual growth and development to the training she received at the center. "I am fueled by God's faithfulness to me," she says. "I can easily overlook the poverty, the hardships, the hunger and seeming hopelessness around me when I focus on Christ's unrelenting love."

Today, Janna is in college in Bacolod and is working toward becoming an accountant. Despite ongoing financial challenges, she remains diligent in her studies and continues to serve her community. Janna's story is a powerful reminder of God's faithfulness and the impact of unwavering faith and perseverance.

Watch an update from Janna by scanning the QR code with your mobile device.



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