



ALONGSIDERS IMPACT ASSESSMENT

an independent research study

2013

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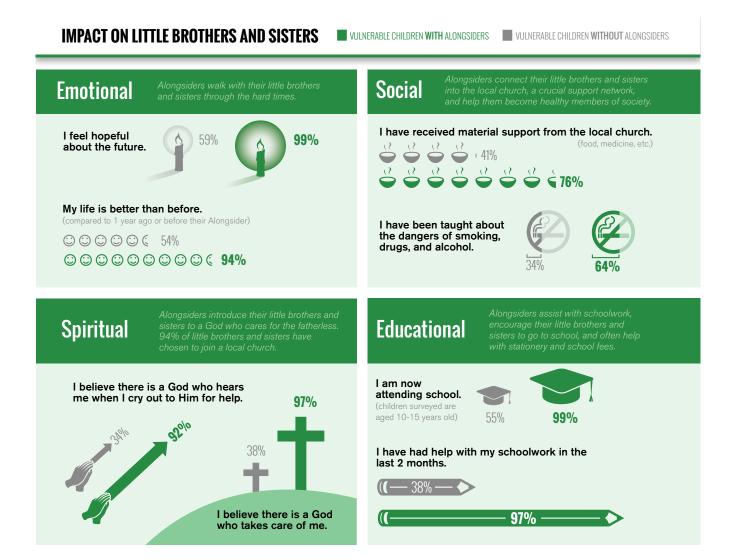
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2013, an independent research team carried out an extensive study of the impacts of Alongsiders International in Cambodia. Alongsiders International (AI) is a grassroots movement equipping young Christians in the developing world to walk alongside the most vulnerable children in their own impoverished communities.

A total of 333 young Cambodians from the Alongsiders Cambodia movement participated in the research. In particular, little brothers and sisters were compared to a control group of similarly vulnerable children in the same communities.

Researchers found a significant impact in all areas of child development: social, spiritual, physical, family, educational, and emotional. Highlights are represented graphically below.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SECTION PAGE 3

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Alongsiders Cambodia was established in 2003 in partnership with the Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia (EFC - Youth Commission), and now partners with DOVE. At the time of writing there are approximately 600 participants (Alongsiders Mentors and their little brothers and sisters) in the Alongsiders Cambodia movement. Alongsiders Cambodia is currently active in six provinces.

During ten years of operation, many of the early little brothers and sisters have grown up and become Alongsiders Mentors themselves, as well as pastors, church and community leaders.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The primary purpose of the evaluation was to assess whether the Alongsiders Cambodia movement has been successful in promoting positive changes (impacts) in the lives of vulnerable Cambodian children. The specific impacts to be assessed were based on the holistic development of children in the following areas:

- Spiritual Impacts
- Family Impacts
- Physical Impacts
- Emotional Impacts
- Social Impacts
- Educational Impacts

EVALUATION TEAM

The assessment was led by Mr. Steve Gourley, a Khmer-speaking expatriate with 17 years of experience in the research, design and evaluation of child protection projects in Cambodia. Assistance in qualitative data collection & analysis was provided by Mr. Thav Kim San, a child rights specialist with 18 years experience in community-based approaches to the prevention and protection of child abuse. Quantitative data collection, entry, processing and analysis was led by Mr. Tep Soksan, a researcher with 10 years of experience in conducting large-



scale surveys for both the corporate and humanitarian sectors. The survey utilized several additional freelance enumerators that were recruited, trained and supervised by Mr. Tem specifically for this evaluation. Mrs. Margaret Posnett wrote the initial Research Report.

PAGE 4 SECTION EVALUATION TEAM

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The assessment was conducted in four phases as follows:

PHASE ONE

Planning and preparation was conducted via interviews with the Founder of Alongsiders International, Craig Greenfield, consultations with experts in impact assessment, and reviews of similar evaluations utilizing both statistical and participatory approaches. The objectives of the evaluation were then identified along with the appropriate sampling and data collection methods. As baseline indicators were not available it was decided that the use of a "control group" would be useful to compare changes in the lives of children who have participated in the project with those from adjoining villages who have not been exposed to similar interventions. The evaluation team believes that this allowed for a more accurate assessment of impacts than by just focusing on the target groups alone. In addition the control group data can also serve as baseline indicators to support planning, monitoring and evaluation of the project in the future.

PHASE TWO

Qualitative Data Collection was then conducted via Focus Group Discussions with the little brothers and sisters (LBS) and Alongsiders Mentors in various target locations as described below. The evaluators utilized participatory and child-friendly methods in order to allow the participants to reflect on their lives and experiences in a relaxed and non-threatening manner. Similar questions were asked of both Alongsiders Mentors and LBS separately, in order to validate their answers regarding impacts in the lives of children.

PHASE THREE

Quantitative Data Collection was subsequently conducted to determine exactly how many LBS had experienced the impacts described by the focus group participants, in comparison to a control group as described above. This was done by the use of a KAP (Knowledge, Attitude and Practice) survey consisting of approximately 30 closed and 15 open-ended questions. As in the qualitative phase, Alongsiders Mentors were also surveyed in order to validate the answers of the LBS and determine how helping the children had affected their own lives.

PHASE FOUR

The final stage of *Analysis* involved identifying the key findings of the assessment, presenting the results to Alongsiders International for feedback, and developing recommendations to improve impacts of the project in the future.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY SECTION PAGE 5

SAMPLE SIZE, LOCATIONS, AND METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Data Collection was conducted in four of the project's target locations including two urban areas (Phnom Penh's Stung Meanchey and Chehak Angre districts) and two semi-rural (Takeo's Krane Knong and Sanrong Young districts). A total of four LBS and three Mentor¹ focus groups were conducted with an average of 9 persons each. As the qualitative phase was intended to provide examples of the types of impacts achieved in the lives of both LBS and Mentors, the ET asked Alongsiders staff to select the participants based on their length of time in the project and ability to articulate their experiences. All LBS were 10-17 years old and 43% of all FGD participants were female. In all, seven FGDs were held in the qualitative phase with a total of 58 persons, including 37 LBS and 21 Mentors.

Quantitative Data Collection took place in all seven of the project's target locations including two urban areas (Phnom Penh's Stung Meanchey and Chehak Angre districts), two semi-rural (Takeo's Krane Knong and Sanrong Young districts) and 2 rural locations (Kandal and Kompong Chhnang). For each location Alongsiders provided a list of Mentors as well as LBS aged 10-15 years old, which the ET used to randomly select survey respondents. Children in the control group were selected from the same communes as the target groups and randomly sampled from lists of poor families (according to government criteria) provided by village chiefs.



Prior to interviews the ET further screened the control group to ensuring that they came from vulnerable backgrounds similar to those of the LBS. Criteria used for this included children aged 10-15 living with single parents, grandparents or other guardians; lacking adequate food, clothing and housing; weak students or out-of-school children and not currently attending a local church.

In all, 84 LBS, 91 Mentors and 100 Control Group respondents were surveyed in the quantitative phase for a total of 275 persons, 53% of which were females.² All LBS were age aged 10-15 years old to ensure they could accurately understand and answer the survey questions.

To sum up, the evaluation covered 58 persons in the qualitative phase and 275 in the quantitative phase, resulting in a total sample size of 333 persons including 52% females. The breakdown for each phase is listed in the table on the following page.

¹ As the Mentors were also randomly sampled they were not necessarily the mentors of the LBS respondents.

² See Appendix 1 & 2 for detailed sample demographics.

Final Sample Selection for Qualitative & Quantitative Method **Alongsiders Cambodia Evaluation (August 2013)**

	LITTLE BRO/SIS		CONTROL GROUP		MENTORS					
	ATTRIBUTE	М	F	TOTAL	М	F	TOTAL	М	F	TOTAL
O constitutions	Kampong Thom	8	6	14	8	11	19	11	7	18
Quantitative Method	Kampong Chhnang	4	20	24	11	13	24	6	18	24
	Kandal	8	8	16	5	13	18	8	7	15
	Takeo (Krang Knong)	3	2	5	3	3	6	2	3	5
	Takeo (Samrong Young)	7	2	9	8	3	11	6	3	9
	Phnom Penh (SMC)	5	2	7	6	4	10	5	3	8
	Phnom Penh (CAL)	3	6	9	6	6	12	5	7	12
	Subtotal	38	46	84	47	53	100	43	48	91
Qualitative	Takeo (Krang Knong)	10	3	13						
Method	Takeo (Samrong Young)	7	4	11						
	Phnom Penh (SMC)	3	4	7				8	8	16
	Phnom Penh (CAL)	2	4	6				3	2	5
	Subtotal	22	15	37				11	10	21
	TOTAL	60	61	121	47	53	100	54	58	112



SPIRITUAL IMPACTS

"THE FIRST TIME I LEARNED ABOUT GOD IS WHEN MY ALONGSIDER INVITED ME TO CHURCH. NOW I AM THE ONLY CHRISTIAN IN MY FAMILY; MY PARENTS ARE STILL BUDDHIST BUT THEY ARE NOT OFFENDED BY MY FAITH." - Little Sister, Phnom Penh

Alongsiders is explicitly Christian in its approach, mobilizing and training young Cambodian Christians to be active in their own communities by identifying vulnerable children and being part of their protection and development but also introducing these children to the local church and to God (discipleship).

Alongsiders are encouraged during their initial training to choose a little brother or sister (LBS) who is not already part of the church congregation.

Subsequently, 94% of LBS surveyed have chosen to **join the local church.** The majority of these attend every week. The church provides a crucial support network to vulnerable children who may be otherwise isolated from sources of assistance and care.

When asked about **learning about Jesus** 88% of LBS reported that they had experienced Christian teaching on an individual basis (as opposed to learning in a classroom or church environment). From the control group, 52% had heard about Jesus in this way.

There was a bigger differential between the two groups when they were asked about belief in a God who hears them and in a God who cares for them.

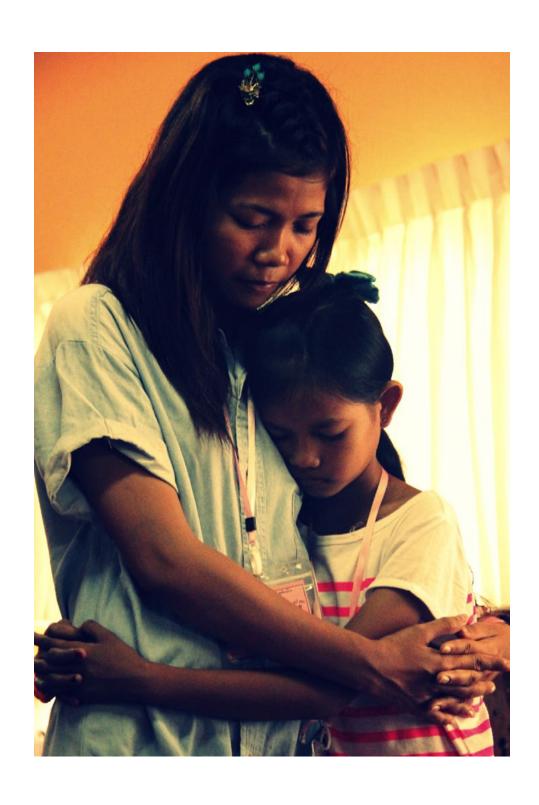
Believe that God hears them: 91.9% of LBS and 34% of the control group expressed that they believed there was a God who hears them when they cry out for help.

Believe that God cares for them: 96.5% of LBS compared to 38% in the control group.

The LBS were asked if their Alongsider had helped them in the following areas:

	Yes	No
Becoming a Christian, being forgiven	82.6%	17.4%
Having an increased faith	94.2%	5.8%
Knowing that Jesus loves them and what he did for them	95.3%	4.7%
Learning Bible stories / verses and or songs	83.7%	16.3%
Attending church more regularly	88.4%	11.6%

There is evidence of a strong spiritual influence on the lives of the LBS from their relationship with their Alongsiders Mentor.





FAMILY IMPACTS

"MY ALONGSIDER IS VERY CLOSE TO MY FAMILY; HE CAME OVER TO EAT DINNER WITH MY PARENTS AND SIBLINGS AND PRAISED ME FOR HOW WELL I WAS DOING IN SCHOOL."

- Little Brother, Phnom Penh

For all children the optimal place for their holistic development is within their own family. Strengthening the family structure of vulnerable children helps them to grow holistically within a safe environment where they are known and loved.

It has been recognized that in supporting and encouraging parents or guardians in their role as carers helps them feel valued and therefore to have more appreciation of child care, which leads to a safer place for the child to grow and prosper.

Some LBS reported that their Alongsider Mentor is very close to their families, and that they are such a good example that their families trust their children to go out with them.

Although the primary aim of Alongsiders is for individual Mentors to walk with individual children, there is a positive impact on the family life of each one of those children.

Researchers looked at the help that vulnerable children received to assist them in their daily life, often because their families struggle. Children were asked about people who had helped them and their family with relational problems or physical difficulties like lack of money for medications or food.

"I HAVE MET A LOT OF NEW FRIENDS SINCE MY ALONGSIDER STARTED TAKING ME TO CHURCH. NOW I GO REGULARLY AND THEY ARE LIKE A NEW FAMILY TO ME."

- Little Brother, Phnom Penh

Receiving prayer for problems within the family: 70% of the LBS reported receiving prayer from either the pastor or a member of the church. Interestingly, 49% of the control group also reported receiving prayer which indicates that local churches with Alongsiders Mentors may be motivated to be more aware of the needs of vulnerable children within their communities.

Help with conflict or discrimination either within the family or the community: 50% of the LBS reported that they had received help in comparison to 24% of the control group.

Practical help with food or medication: 76% of LBS reported that they had received such material support. However, 41% from the control groups also reported receiving practical help with food or medication. In Kandal both the control group and the LBS reported similar levels of receiving help from the local Christian community.

It is encouraging to note that although LBS are receiving significantly more relational and practical help within their families, it is not at the exclusion of others in the community. This could suggest that the training and equipping of Alongsiders Mentors results in a flow-on effect within their local churches that raises awareness of vulnerable children and provides some strategies for how they can support the children and their families.



"MY ALONGSIDER HAS HELPED ME TO KNOW HOW TO HAVE A BETTER **RELATIONSHIP WITH MY FAMILY."**

- Little Brother, Takeo Province



PHYSICAL IMPACTS

"WHEN I BEGAN HAVING MY PERIOD MY ALONGSIDER EXPLAINED WHAT IT MEANT AND WHY IT WAS HAPPENING; SHE ALSO TAUGHT ME ABOUT PERSONAL HYGIENE AND EVEN BOUGHT ME TAMPONS." - Little Sister, Takeo Province

For children and young adults to grow and develop physically they need regular food, physical exercise, timely health care and a safe home.

In Cambodia there continues to be a high rate of undernourishment within the general population. The World Bank in 2011 estimated that 25% of the population were undernourished. 2012 rates for stunting (low height for age) in children under 5 at 49.9%.

Researchers found that having an Alongsider Mentor increased the capacity and ability of parents or guardians to ensure that children **received regular food.**

81% of children with an Alongsider Mentor reported never missing meals compared to 54% of the control group. Just 1.2% of LBS reported missing meals often compared to 15% of the control group.

Children suffering from malnutrition are more susceptible to illness and infections. As stated above the children with Alongsiders Mentors are more likely to **receive help with needed medications** and with **assistance with food**, all of this contributes to better physical care and development.

There were also examples of **personal health messages** being taught on an individual basis, as demonstrated by the introductory quote





EMOTIONAL IMPACTS

"MY ALONGSIDER IS LIKE A GOOD-HEARTED FRIEND TO ME - SHE BRINGS ME ENCOURAGEMENT AND WARMTH."

- Little Sister, Takeo Province

Healthy emotional development begins with children receiving unconditional love. Children need to form attachments to parents or guardians or other responsible adults; have a place where they belong and from where they can develop self-esteem, self-confidence and ultimately self worth. From this foundation, as adults they will be able to give and receive love, and will be able to express their own and understand others' emotions.

One of the most essential needs for any child's emotional development is encouragement and additionally, being able to share problems and worries freely. These needs are much greater for vulnerable children.

Closeness of relationship with their Alongsiders Mentor: 41.9% of LBS reported that they are close and 53.5% reported that they were like family. Just 4.7% reported that they are not so close to their Alongsider Mentor. When the same question was asked of the Alongsider Mentors 39.6% reported that they have a close relationship with their LBS and 48.4% reported that they were like family.

The results show that the biggest contributing factors to the strength of this relationship are proximity (living in the same village), regularity of meeting together (at least once a week) and the length of time they have known one another.

Being praised by someone in the last 3 months: 87% of LBS reported praise, with 13% reporting no praise. Asked to mention just one person who had praised them, 34% of the LBS mentioned their parents, 22.3% noted that their Alongsider Mentor had praised them, 14.7% their sibling, 13% mentioned relatives or others (eg. teachers) and 1.3 % their pastor.

Asked whether they have someone to share problems with 73.8% of LBS reported having someone to share with whereas only 48% of the control group identified having a person they can share problems with. The main person identified from the LBS group was the Alongsider Mentor, while from the control group it was their parents.

94% of LBS reported **feeling better than before** compared to 54% of the control group. The most prevalent reason given was that they felt less depressed and had increased happiness.

Hope for the future: 98% of LBS reported having hope compared to 59.9% of the control group. When each group were asked about where the hope for the future came from 66% of the LBS said having an Alongsider Mentor, whereas the most common answer from the control group was in having a special talent that they could use for their future job.



"MY ALONGSIDER SHOWED ME SO MUCH LOVE WHEN SHE COMFORTED ME WHEN MY PARENTS WERE ANGRY WITH ME."

- Little Sister, Takeo Province



SOCIAL IMPACTS

"I GET INTO LESS FIGHTS AS MY ALONGSIDER TAUGHT ME HOW TO USE KIND AND GENTLE WORDS WITH OTHERS SO THAT THEY WILL SPEAK NICELY TO ME IN RETURN."

- Little Brother, Takeo Province

Developing social skills is a crucial aspect of child development, including how to communicate and negotiate with others and how to behave in a way that is acceptable to others in different community and cultural situations.

Researchers found that there has been significantly more teaching on acceptable social behaviours for the LBS in comparison to the control group. Please see the table below which displays the answers to **'Has someone older talked to you about this':**

Subject	LBS % who said they have been taught	Control group % who said they have been taught
Speaking politely	97.6%	66%
Respecting/obeying parents	97.6%	66%
Fight less/do not have gangster style behaviour	77.4%	34%
Go out less especially at night	86.9%	54%
The dangers of using drugs	64.3%	34%
Watching pornography	54.8%	32%
Rape / Sexual assault	63.1%	31%
Domestic Violence	53.6%	34%

There were also reports of changed behavior as a result of advice given - please see below:

"MY ALONGSIDER TOLD ME NOT TO WATCH PORNOGRAPHY BECAUSE IT IS NOT GOOD FOR ME; AFTERWARD SOME OTHER KIDS WERE LOOKING AT PORNOGRAPHY ON A PHONE AND THEY ASKED ME TO WATCH IT WITH THEM BUT I REFUSED."

- Little Sister, Takeo Province



"I HAVE TO WORK TO HELP MY FAMILY AND I USED TO GET SO FRUSTRATED WITH THE PEOPLE WHO HIRE ME TO WORK FOR THEM, BUT I GET ALONG WITH THEM BETTER BECAUSE MY ALONGSIDER EXPLAINED TO ME HOW I CAN BE MORE PATIENT AND CO-OPERATIVE WITH THEM."

- Little Brother, Phnom Penh

These examples are an indication that Alongsider Mentors not only teach their LBS about social skills but are in a position to teach them what they need for their particular needs in their daily life. Alongsiders Mentors are part of the practical social development of the LBS's lives.



EDUCATIONAL IMPACTS

"MY ALONGSIDER IS ALWAYS ASKING ME HOW I AM DOING AT SCHOOL AND HAS EVEN BOUGHT ME NOTEBOOKS AND SCHOOL SUPPLIES"

- Little Brother, Phnom Penh

There is within Cambodia an increasing understanding and drive to receive an education. Within the present educational system the quality of education is low. Teachers continue to be underpaid and generally unsupported in their work. Families are often poor and unable to support their children's school attendance, and they may need the children to contribute to the family income. Thus, vulnerable children are at a heightened risk of not completing their education. Greater support is needed.

Helping children with their schoolwork is a way to encourage and support them. 97% of LBS reported receiving help within the last 2 months compared to 66% within the control group. Of the 97% who reported being helped 46.3% identified their Alongsider Mentor as being the main person who had helped them. Within the control group the person identified as helping the most was their parents.

"MY PARENTS CANNOT READ, SO I ASK MY ALONGSIDER FOR HELP WITH MY LESSONS AND HOMEWORK."

- Little Brother, Takeo Province

Alongsider Mentors confirmed this with 91.2% affirming that they had helped their LBS with school work within the last 2 months. This help took the form of encouragement, practically helping to complete the schoolwork, and rewarding the LBS for improvements.

Both LBS and Alongsider Mentors reported that the Mentors often provided assistance through the purchase of stationery or provision of school fees. These forms of practical support were given using the Alongsider Mentor's own money.

Have you seen any changes in your LBS's educational attainment? 89% of the Alongsider Mentors said yes with the main change being that they had observed their LBS studying harder (49%).



IMPACTS ON ALONGSIDER MENTORS

Finding volunteers to be Alongsider Mentors has never been a difficulty and in the majority of churches or groups where the vision of Alongsiders is presented there are young people recognizing the importance of this work and expressing interest in becoming an Alongsider Mentor.

MOTIVATIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF VOLUNTEERS

When asked about the top reason they decided to become an Alongsider Mentor, the responses were as follows:

A feeling of compassion for vulnerable children	57.6%
Serving God and/or the Church	25.7%
An opportunity for training / a work opportunity	12%
Opportunity to go to camp and take part in other activities	4.7%

It is interesting that the most prevalent answer is compassion for vulnerable children as this matches the sense that LBS have about the care and love that they receive from their Alongsider Mentor.

When asked about what **the top two changes that they have experienced in their life** since becoming an Alongsider Mentor they answered as follows:

Having the opportunity to help vulnerable children	27%
Ability to show God's love to others / having the opportunity to serve God	17.9%
Gained life experience / gained work experience	15%
Having a sibling	14.5%
Learning about responsibility	14.5%
Increased understanding of children	11.1%

All of these changes that the Alongsider Mentors have experienced, they recognize as beneficial to themselves. All of these changes must also impact their own family, community and local church.

IMPACTS ON ALONGSIDER MENTORS SECTION PAGE 31

BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

The Alongsider Mentors were asked **what the biggest blessing** they had experienced through being a Mentor. They identified the following benefits:

Having increased knowledge / Gaining work skills / gaining life skills	29.5%
Feeling pride in themselves / having honour within their community / Increased self-worth	21%
Having the opportunity to serve God	20.5%
Saving children / contributing to their future life	16.7%
Having the opportunity to go camping and other outings	6.8%
Don't know	3.8%
Getting support from the Alongsider project	1.5%

PAGE 32 SECTION IMPACTS ON ALONGSIDER MENTORS

CONCLUSION

Alongsiders Cambodia is having a significant impact in meeting the holistic needs of vulnerable children within their own families and communities. These impacts range from emotional and spiritual, to practical, social and educational. All contribute to the wellbeing and development of some of Cambodia's most vulnerable children.

Additionally, Alongsiders Cambodia is impacting young Christians in Cambodia by giving them an opportunity to participate in helping others, serve God, receive training and learn vital leadership and life skills.

This approach is easy for the Alongsider Mentors, the LBS, their families, communities and local church communities to understand, accept and see the value of being a part of.

Even in cases of minimal or recently initiated contact between the Alongsider Mentors and the LBS there are reports of a significant impact. However, the more frequent the contact, the closer the proximity between the Alongsider Mentor's home and the LBS home, and the longer the relationship, then the greater the impact is on the well-being of the LBS.



CONCLUSION SECTION PAGE 33

APPENDIX 1: DEMOGRAPHICS FOR SURVEY RESPONDENTS: LITTLE BROTHERS/SISTERS & CONTROL GROUP

AGE OF RESPONDENTS

Little Brother/Sister	10-12 yrs	32.1%
	13-15yrs	54.8%
	15-17yrs	13.1%

	10-12 yrs	25%
Control Group	13-15yrs	69%
	15-17yrs	6%

ARE YOU CURRENTLY ATTENDING SCHOOL?

Little Brother/Sister	Yes	98.8%
Little Brother/Sister	No	1.2%

Control Group	Yes	55%
Control Group	No	45%

IF SO, WHAT GRADE ARE YOU IN?

Little Brother/Sister	Primary School	69.9%
	Secondary School	24.1%
	High School	6%

Control Group	Primary School	65.5%
	Secondary School	30.9%
	High School	3.6%

WHO ARE YOU CURRENTLY LIVING WITH?

Little Brother/Sister	Father	7.1%
	Mother	20.2%
	Both	47.6%
	Relative	25%

Control Group	Father	11%
	Mother	19%
	Both	46%
	Relative	24%

HOW LONG HAVE YOU HAD AN ALONGSIDER MENTOR?

Little Brother/Sister	Less than 7 months	23.3%
	7-12 months	18.6%
	13-18 months	3.5%
	19-24 months	17.4%
	More than 24 months	37.2%

APPENDIX 2: DEMOGRAPHICS FOR SURVEY RESPONDENTS: ALONGSIDER MENTORS

GENDER OF ALONGSIDER MENTORS

Male	47.3%
Female	52.7%

ARE YOU CURRENTLY STUDYING? (MENTORS)

Yes	72.5%
No	27.5%

IF YES, AT WHAT LEVEL ARE YOU ATTENDING?

Primary School	1.5%
Secondary School	15.2%
High School	45.5%
Bachelor/Masters Degree	37.9%

AGE OF ALONGSIDER MENTORS

17-18 yrs	19-21 yrs	22-24 yrs	25+ yrs
37.4%	28.6%	13.2%	20.9%

HOW LONG HAVE YOU HAD A LITTLE BROTHER OR SISTER?

Less than 7 months	18.7%
7-12 months	20.9%
13-18 months	1.1%
19-24 months	16.5%
More than 24 months	42.9%

