

Spiritual State of the World's Children

El Salvador





**Spiritual State of the World's Children
A Quantitative Study**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR MINISTRY

El Salvador

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ONEHOPE

OneHope is a non-profit organization with a mission to *affect destiny by providing God's eternal Word to all the children and youth of the world.* With programs in over 125 nations OneHope has reached over 500 million children and young people with a special presentation of the life of Jesus. Committed to presenting God's Word in a format that is relevant and dynamic, research is a critical step in the development of country and age specific products and programs.



The Metadigm Group is a non-profit research organization with the goal of equipping other organizations to conduct research and improve their efficacy. Processes necessary to achieve organizational priorities and embed research skills into day-to-day organizational operations are developed through seamless processes offered in data collection, strategic planning, market profiles, and outcomes development. For more information, please visit www.metadigmgroup.com or email us at info@metadigmgroup.com.

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Section I: Key Issues Analysis

Key Issues

- Strong family ties and high expectations for personal future family satisfaction.
- Potential to influence value systems and offer clear answers in areas of uncertainty.
- The relative homogeneity of youth populations.
- Lack of clear and influential role models in society outside of the home.
- High level of Christian influence in their lives and society as a whole.

Strengths & Opportunities

- They have a high value on marriage and entering marriage as virgins.
- They have a high level of satisfaction with their life.
- Students show a high level of acceptance regarding Christian teaching.
- They believe in the Bible and Christian practices.
- They have a high regard for family and parents. Parents remain highly influential in children's lives.
- Music has high influence in the lives of youth and technology has potential to engage in immediate future.
- They do not exhibit an extremely high materialistic value system.

Weaknesses & Threats

- They do not have a high regard for the influence of religious and secular leadership.
- There is little certainty that spiritual influences; such as, the Holy Spirit is part of daily life.
- There is confusion over their morals of honesty and its relationship to God's plan and purpose.
- Fathers are disengaged from their children more than mothers and are not involved as role models in Christian formation of children.
- Children show little interest in reading.
- Youth groups intended to promote Christian discipleship are little evident as influences in the lives of the youth.
- Youth are unclear in their attitudes towards sexuality and are increasingly influenced toward more promiscuous behavior

Recommendations

- Address the issues of family and divorce with clear biblical teaching.
- Develop programs to strengthen family spirituality particular to encourage fathers' leadership in spiritual practice.

- Identify and promote social role models that offer direction for youth.
- Develop programs to strengthen the influence of the church and to disciple and engage youth for leadership.

Section II: Project Description

Acknowledgments

This project was made possible in part by funding from the Maclellan Foundation and Global Ministries - OneHope.

Overview

OneHope seeks to understand what children and youth deal with in their day-to-day realities. We know that children and youth face a variety of social challenges and experience psycho-social needs to which they are often left without effective responses. We do know that the needs of children vary from country to country and even regionally within countries. However, without information we are unable to tailor our products and distribution programs to address needs specific to particular contexts.

While the issues and challenges facing children and youth in developed countries are researched and documented, those in developing countries are not. Without an accurate analysis of their contexts these populations are treated as though they share a common reality. An awareness of the immediate reality of children is often only discovered after ministry has begun and resources have been committed to a project.

The Spiritual State of the World’s Children project will capture the following information about children in El Salvador:

- typical family situations, relationships and parental contact
- behaviors and moral values guiding relationships with peers of the opposite sex
- daily occupations and pass times
- worldviews, influences, beliefs, future goals and religious affiliation
- theological perspectives and commitment

This information will allow us to build a profile of the youth in El Salvador and apply what we learn in our distribution there to other countries where youth have a similar profile based on the survey information. The data can also be used by Book of Hope to design ministry products and programs. It is a priority for Book of Hope that this data be made available to other ministry partners as we seek to reach the children and youth of the world for Christ.

Research Methodology

The SSWC survey is a stratified random survey of secondary school children. The survey was stratified by degree of urbanization and gender for El Salvador. Additional strata that offer analysis are age, economic status, family composition, ethnicity and religious affiliation.

The core survey is constructed using the Survey of Juveniles designed by Chris Sleath of Josh McDowell Ministries and used in Mexico. The survey was administered in secondary school instruction in Spanish and will be supplemented by focus groups if warranted. Surveys were administered in randomly selected schools segregated by population density (proportional to national population distribution of urban-rural residents) to students in the schools randomized by gender (proportional to the national ratio of male-female).

Project Overview

The data was collected early March through mid-May of 2007. The local coordinator for the research conducted in El Salvador was Eli Ernesto Perez Tovar, assisted by Paula Ramirez. Oversight was provided by Belinda Cruz and Dr. Allen Reesor of Pompano Beach, Florida. The research followed the project design instructions (see below under Logistics).

Data was entered by Liz McMahan, Autumn Blakely, Carly Bergsma and Christine Ringue into a web based data base. The data base was hosted by Philip Issa of Elite Survey and assessed by Dr. Rene Paulson, Ph.D. The final report employs Dr. Paulson's analysis of the data and is supplemented with secondary data drawn from research projects and primary qualitative data.

The final report will be made available to ministry partners who promote ministry to children and youth through collaborative research.

Logistics

Review

National leaders reviewed the survey and recommended only minor changes.

Randomization

Reliability of the survey results depends upon consistent randomization of the participants. Two strata of randomization that govern participant selection are gender and population density distributions.

The National Coordinator provided a list of schools segregated by population density.

Population density was interpreted as urban/rural. This list was used to select randomly identified schools at Book of Hope Headquarters. The list of randomized schools was returned to the National Coordinator to evaluate the potential for access. Schools that were inaccessible were replaced by following randomization procedures.

Randomization by gender was done when students were selected for participation, to ensure that gender participation reflects the male/female ratio of the national population.

Verifying Access

The National Coordinator met with the administration of each school to explain the survey and obtain commitment for participation. Schools that were inaccessible were identified and replaced by following randomization procedures.

Survey Printing

A master copy of the survey was forwarded electronically to the National Coordinator who received bids for the printing of 5,000 collated and stapled copies.

Quality Control

Hard copies of the survey are randomly assessed to evaluate survey validity. Hard copy surveys will be retained by the BOH National Coordinator for one year to provide the opportunity of verifying the accuracy of data entry and as a back up to electronic data files. The surveys must be kept confidential and will be turned over to a

designated BOH Headquarters representative on or about 12 months following the survey. This person will oversee the shredding of the hard copy surveys after 12 months.

Implementation & Survey Administration

Data Collection

The survey was administered in the schools identified by randomization and previously contacted. The research agent will identify the number of classes in session on the day of the survey.

- If the class size averaged less than 30 students, 15 classes were randomly selected, and 15 students from each class were randomly selected proportional to the male/female ratio statistically representative.
- If the class size averaged greater than 30 students, 10 classes were randomly selected, and 22 students from each class were randomly selected proportional to the male/female ratio statistically representative of the national demographic.

Students were asked to voluntarily participate. Those willing to participate in the survey were segregated by gender, and randomly selected proportional to the male/female ratio statistically representative of the national demographic. Participants were administered the survey in groups that could be accommodated in a classroom. A sample set of at least 200 students was collected in each school.

Surveys were conducted by two people. A brief scripted introduction was read. The students were given the opportunity to ask questions. The survey was read aloud, with each question being read alternately by one of two surveyors.

Data Entry

OneHope Team members in El Salvador were responsible for accurately inputting the data into a web-based survey interface.

Section III: Profile of Youth in Country

Demographic Profile

The survey was administered to slightly more than 4,000 students in secondary schools. Seventy-five percent of the students were between the ages of 13 and 16 and primary represent 6th, 7th and 8th grades. The majority reports that their grades are good.

Most students reported parents' occupation as "other" or otherwise selected primarily "professional" as the category describing their parents' work. The category "other" may indicate that the students' parents were unemployed or worked from home. That "professional" was the most frequently selected category may also indicate that secondary students are from a higher social status.

About half report that they are living with both parents and twenty percent report that their parents are divorced or separated. Divorce or separation is reported at a slightly higher rate in urban populations. Although most report living in a family with two parents, twenty percent report living with only their mother.

Family Relationships

Students generally define a family as people who love each other and share common values. Only fifteen percent identify blood relationship as the primary factor when identifying family members. They also indicated that the presence of children, whether the parents are married or not, are significant in identifying whether a household comprises a family.

Families are fairly close with half reporting a very close relationship with their father and three-quarters with their mother. Although they speak with their mother a great deal more than with their father they are willing to seek advice from both parents.

Most children feel that their home environment is a positive one. Two-thirds identify their home as a "safe place." Of those reporting that their home is "unsafe" girls and urban students are more likely to experience this.

Although students report a sense that marriage is more difficult now than in the past they are very optimistic about the future of their own marriage. Although only half would aspire to a marriage like their parents. Overall, two-thirds expressed the intent of desire to enter marriage as virgins. This is significantly less true when broken out by gender with girls expressing this desire more frequently than boys.

Relationships with People of the Opposite Sex

Overall, students are more likely to have experience and to accept sexual activity at less intense levels. More in depth analysis also indicates that older children are more likely to engage intense sexual activity than younger ages. There is also a gender difference with girls far more conservative than boys in both experience and intent.

The most influential factor in deciding whether or not to engage in sexual intercourse is a sense of being in love. Equally important and more significant for this study is that parents approval/disapproval and/or knowledge of sexual activity is a factor when deciding to engage in sexual intercourse.

The factor most frequently reported as a source of sexual information is text books in school. Friends and movies are also influential but reported less frequently as a primary source of sexual information. Sex magazines or books and the internet are reported as having little influence.

Beliefs and Perspectives on Daily Life

Christianity has formed to a large extent the beliefs of El Salvadoran youth. Christian faith and the church, including the Bible, are very influential. Parents are the most influential people in their formation. Teachers, friends and siblings are less influential but important. Political and religious leaders and non-Christian leaders are influential in less than fifteen percent of the population. The most influential media is music.

Most, about sixty percent, believe that spirituality is an important factor in having a satisfied life. However, about the same percentage believe that lying and rule breaking are morally acceptable if there is a good reason and others are not hurt.

When identifying factors that will produce satisfaction in life the most important of these by rank order are; health, education, high paying job, purpose for life, relationship with God, owning a large home and stable marriage. Influence, fame and sexual fulfillment in marriage are the least important factors for this population.

When looking at future interest technology is identified as being the area of greatest interest.

Religious Background and Practice

Nearly all accept a traditional Christian definition of God and accept the existence of God, heaven and hell. Most reject the validity of other religious non-Christian practice. When reporting their religious affiliation seventy percent claim to be Christian equally divided between Roman Catholic and “born-again” affiliation. Sixteen percent claim no religious faith and nine percent a “personal” faith. Of those professing faith forty-five percent indicate daily participation in some religious practice, an additional twenty-five percent report regular religious practice. In family practice of religion siblings are reported at about the same rate as those surveyed. Mothers are reported as more likely to be involved in religious practice than fathers. Fathers are reported “rarely involved” twenty-seven percent of the time. The most often practiced devotion is prayer. Females report higher levels of involvement in all spiritual disciplines than male population.

About half of those surveyed report being involved in a Christian youth activity. However, over seventy percent of their youth group involves fewer than thirty people in their regular activities.

Religion is considered to be very important and well over half of those surveyed believe that attending religious services will continue to be part of their life after leaving school. Most report that their information about Jesus and the Bible came from a family member(s) and the church. Friends, missionaries and textbooks are also sources of information but at a significantly lower rate.

Theologically most (Seventy-five percent or greater) believe in the infallibility of the Bible, the historical person of Jesus, judgment after death and the importance of prayer. However, only about half believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus and about seventy percent doubt the activity and existence of the Holy Spirit and the devil in day- to -day life. Although the idea that salvation is available through Christ and that there will be judgment is held by over sixty percent, they are less certain about the idea of sin and its clear definition.

Of the 65% who responded to the question of commitment to Christ, 63% indicate that they have made a commitment that is still important to them. For most this decision was made between the ages of 9-15. It is not clear whether this commitment is limited to a born again personal decision or indicates other ritual initiation or affiliation with Christian religion.

Section IV: Country Secondary Data

This data is drawn from CountryWatch.com, World Health Organization, and public domain data. Statistics are generally from 2005 but may be earlier if none more recent are available.

Demographics and Population	
Total Population	6,569,953
Population under age 15	36.5%
Population % of children in child labor (5-14)	7%
Number of Radios in homes (national #)	2,750,000
Number of televisions in homes (national #)	600,000
Radios per capita	440.9 per 1000
Televisions per capita	89.4 per 1000
Computers per capita	19.2 per 1000
% of Population urban vs. rural	65% /35%
Largest City (population & % of National Population)	534,409 (8%)
Persecution Index	No toleration of abuse
Religious Groups	
Roman Catholic	86%
Protestant and other	14%
Ethnic Groups	
Mestizo	90%
White	9%
Amerindian	1%
Languages / Dialects	Spanish Nahua
Life Expectancy Rate	70.9 years
Infant Mortality Rate	25.1%
Birth Rate	27.01/1000

Education/Literacy	
Literacy rate (over 15)	80.2%
Education (free primary education and 3 years secondary)	
% of children enrolled Primary education (% completing)	92% (86%)
% of children enrolled Secondary education	39.3%
Literacy broken down by sex (rate of literacy male/female)	equal

Economics	
Per Capita Income (2005 GNI per capita)	2,450 USD
Gross Domestic Product (2000)	14.5 B USD
Poverty Rate (% below poverty line)	36.1%

Social	
Human Rights (*HDI Ranking out of 177)	101
*Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite index that measures the level of well-being in 177 nations in the world. It uses factors such as poverty, literacy, life-expectancy, education, gross domestic product, and purchasing power parity to assess the average achievements in each nation. It has been used in the United Nation’s Human Development Report since 1993.	
Divorce Rate as Percent of Marriages (per 1000)	0.41
Unemployment Rate	6.5%
Murder rates	1.9/1000
Children (0-17 years) orphaned due to all causes	150,000
Youth Populations in Prison/Crime	No Data
Estimated number of people living with HIV (in 1000’s)	14-50
Governmental children’s organizations and agencies (secular)	No Data
Homelessness	No Data

Teen Pregnancy (births per 1000: ages 15-19)	81
Drug Usage /Alcoholism	No Data
Suicide Male per 100,000	13
Female per 100,000	6
Child Prostitution	No Data
Child /Teen Soldiers	None
Street Children	No Data