

Viva 2018 Global Christmas Parties

More than 400 churches worked together to give over 8,000 children a Christmas Party to remember. Every party is different and tailored to the children attending but they all have the same end result: children experience love in action, learn about the Christmas story, and build relationships with churches and organisations who continue to champion them throughout the year.

“Christmas Parties are a unique opportunity for different ministries to come together on the occasion of Christmas and to reach out together to many vulnerable children.” – Network Coordinator in Ranchi, India



“As soon as we heard about Christmas Party from our Sunday school teacher, we got very excited for programme. I and my two friends have gone to the stage and sing a song that tells all the name of the books included in the Bible. Especially for this program our Sunday school teacher taught us this song. We have practiced it a lot. We are very happy to present it in front of our friends. Next time we will prepare another song to perform. We are very happy to received gift boxes as well.” – 11-year-old child in Nepal

KEY NUMBERS:

- **26 networks** organised a Christmas Party
- **76 parties** were held
- **443 churches and organisations** collectively ran the Christmas Party
- **8,365 children** attended a party; for 30% of the children, it was their first contact with Viva.
- On average, it cost **\$5.16 for each child** to attend a party
- **Viva contributed \$10,264** to the parties and the networks and its members raised an additional \$15,163 towards the parties

Picturing the party

Most Christmas parties took place over a whole day, with plenty of time for fun, games and good food. There were dramas, songs, prayer, imaginative tellings of the Christmas Story, dance, puppet shows, magic shows and even haircuts.

From over ten of the parties, children went home with a gift to remind them that they are loved and precious. These gifts ranged from sports equipment in Colombia to sleeping mats in Patna, India.



Always learning

At each party, the churches took the opportunity to teach children valuable lessons in a fun way through games, plays and puppets. These included lessons on:

- **Good treatment** of children in **Delhi, India; Nepal, Paraguay** and **Costa Rica**
- **Fire safety** in **South Africa**
- **Protection from sexual abuse** in **Nepal**
- **Washing and sanitation** in **Ranchi, India**
- **Trafficking prevention** in **Patna, India**
- **Dangers of drug abuse** in **Uganda and Zimbabwe**
- **Child protection** in **Venezuela and Bangalore, India**

"Some of my friends are involved in substance abuse and the community I come from it is normal... I am grateful for today's party for I was equipped with information on how to help my friends and protect myself from becoming a victim of substance abuse." 16-year-old boy, Zimbabwe

More than just a party

Whilst the parties are fun, they have valuable lessons integrated into them. The parties can have a lasting impact on children who attend because these children have the opportunity to hear about God who loves them, and form the start of relationships with other children and churches who can support them as they grow up.

The parties also serve to deepen connections between churches and Christian ministries, which enables greater collaboration. As confidence increases, churches and organisations who have had a positive experience of working with others then go on to take part in larger-scale collective programmes. These can achieve far more for children than a single organisation could do on its own – which is really exciting!



Christmas light for children

Children experienced God's love in action and some were also encouraged to help run the parties for other children. Here are a few highlights from around the world:

Colombia: For the **young leaders**, this experience has been very enriching, since serving the children of their next generations is an opportunity for a great generational legacy and means connecting generations.

Venezuela: The children were very happy; they accepted the gifts and the refreshment as a **gift from God**. For these children it was a special time where they experienced the love of God as a provider and loving Father, that they are special for Him and that in the midst of the crisis in our country they were able to receive a gift and have a party.

Shillong, India: A child composed his own Christmas song, and was given a platform to **show his hidden talent**. Other children also got such opportunities.

Tanzania: The mentioned above project activities added **trust and hope** to children as witnessed by thanks given by child spokespeople during the event. The party also increased parent engagement and collaborative desire of having time with children in more **bonding** activities.



Uganda: The event was specifically for children living and working on the streets. By the end, nine children expressed a need to learn **livelihood skills**. Two organisations willingly took them on and the boys are currently learning skills in building, plumbing, making products such as belts and sandals out of leather. The children also experienced a mini **medical camp**, had their **hair cut** and taught about **personal hygiene**.

Zambia: Children were involved in the preparation. Some **children sat in planning meetings** to give their view, some thought of the performances they would like to have and what games they would want to play.



Nepal: "I am happy to attend the Christmas programme and received the gift box. A month back I had a road accident and in rest. I have thought I will not be able to attend this event due to my injuries but praise to the Lord! God has a bigger plan for me; he is healing in my injuries so fast that I am able to come to this event with my little brother and Sunday school teacher. I had so much fun. I feel the presence of God."
- 14-year-old girl.

Bangalore, India: Three girls from a particular family expressed their desire to study and but how they weren't being sent to school because the father was alcoholic and mother had a means only job. A volunteer who heard the story and prayed with us at the party offered to pay their fees and sponsor

the children's education for the next few years. Those kids are now being connected to the local church at the party who offers free tuitions.

Zimbabwe: After a Bible Discovery Survey Session on Hope, Tsitsi (not her real name) who is 11 years old, boldly explained that she is an orphan and had dropped out of school as a result of lack of school fees but she still strong and hopeful that the Lord loves her and has plans for her life.

Trust and growth of the Church

For some churches, it was a leap of faith to trust other churches and organisations and work together to reach out to new children in the community. Here are a few highlights from around the world:

Venezuela: “For the volunteers who are also part of the church it was an experience that allowed them to see the reality of God's provision, since, in the crisis that our country is going through, it is difficult to have people and organisations that support children. It is really because of the grace of our beloved Father that moves donors to plant at the Christmas party. Everyone was happy to serve in this beautiful party and seeing the smile on the faces of the children was our best gift.”

Hyderabad, India: “Through this program in the slum, one of the Christian community leaders restarted his ministry work in the slums. We also had good relationship now with a small church in the slum.”

Patna, India: Assembly of God Church, Nehru Nagar, has been participating in the children Party for past couple of years. Their participation has encouraged the church to start intervention with the children of nearby slum. This year they brought 20 children to the Viva Children Party. These children went back with gifts.

Paraguay: The members of the network felt that they also learned a lot from the teachings, above all that the children are very observant, they listen and see everything that happens and they can understand their context and situation in a profound way although sometimes they do not express it because adults do not give them that space to express everything they feel in relation to a case or situation. They gained the ability to listen to children, to attend to their points of view because they are richer than adults and that they discern very well what violence is and do not agree with it.

Cambodia: Unity is important to us and we found we all real united through the joint project together and have fun together. Christian and non-believers valued each other through sending their children to participate and non-believers accepted Jesus Christ.



The Multiplier Effect: how running these parties through a network makes them more than a party

As the churches come together, they are experiencing working as a body of Christ. For many in the network, they are comfortable with this, but inviting new churches and organisations to participate helps to grow the network and activate new churches into working with children. Here are highlights from around the world starting with a new network, for whom this was their first collaborative Viva Christmas Party:

Mexico: Confraternity, unity, leadership, churches and teams working in harmony, a revival, an awakening to the social impact that the church needs to develop. Optimization of resources, diversity of talents employed in the service of children. Scope of greater number of children, implementation of strategic actions. It generated an awareness for attending to the needs of children, cultivating a work culture in co-operation network and strategic work.

Venezuela: It was an extraordinary experience to be able to serve parents and children in a party that was born in the heart of God and use the Network as a provider agent to achieve it. The impact on parents to see their children being cared for in a special way and that they could receive a gift at this time, was a very emotional moment. They showed a lot of gratitude.

Bangalore, India: This party was a platform for different churches in the city who have a common vision to come together to work together for children and not in isolation. As a network we could follow up with them and fulfil our vision of bringing different players to create a safe city for children. It helped the network to improve our networking capacity and helped bring better understanding to new churches. It helped the local projects to come together as they all had a common vision and focus and not to work in isolation or try to re-invent the wheel (They shared what each of them were doing).

Uganda: The network demonstrated the power of collective action. Each member of the street children-working group had a role to play that made the party possible to take place. It would not have been possible to reach out to the street children without everyone's input. The local council and government leaders had opportunity to see how big the problem for street children is and to hear from the children directly. We believe that they will spread the message about the dangers of children living on the street and deter other children from joining the bandwagon.

