

world family

The magazine for Plan UK supporters Autumn 2013



the Plan:
changing children's
lives thanks to
your support



Plus news from **Indonesia, Egypt, Guatemala, Colombia** and much, much more...

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Contact Us

If you have any comments on this edition of World Family, or suggestions for future articles, we'd love to hear from you. Please write to World Family, Plan UK, Finsgate, 5-7 Cranwood Street, London EC1V 9LH, telephone 0300 777 9777, or email worldfamily@plan-uk.org

Photos: Shawn Baldwin, Alison Baskerville, Jane Hahn, David Mutua, Mardey Ohui Ofoe/ FFP, Bea Urhart

Cover: Plan is helping children like these in Senegal to get a decent education

World Family is printed on recycled paper. Some names have been changed for child protection and privacy reasons.

Tanya talking

Dear Supporter,

Welcome to World Family for Autumn 2013 and thank you for being a Plan supporter!

Your support is making a huge difference around the world, enabling us to help children and communities lift themselves out of poverty in fifty developing countries.

The photostory at the centre of the magazine shows how we are supporting much-needed nursery schools in the troubled city of Cairo, for example. And on pages 8 to 9, you can read about how we are galvanising whole communities – led by children – to improve sanitation in Indonesia.

None of this, of course, would be possible without the support of people like you – and the regular generosity and commitment of Plan sponsors in particular.

That's why one of my favourite articles is the one written by sponsors themselves, describing why they have chosen to support Plan. It's on pages 10 to 11.

If you'd like to tell us why you sponsor, we'd love to hear from you. Please email worldfamily@plan-uk.org to share your story.

None of this, of course, would be possible without the support of people like you – and the regular generosity and commitment of Plan sponsors in particular

I've only been Plan's Chief Executive for nine months now, and it has been a massive learning experience for me. One of the things which strikes me is the way



Plan works to solve causes of poverty and disadvantage which aren't immediately obvious to the outside observer.

A good example is the way teenage girls are affected by disasters like war, famine, flooding and drought across the developing world.

Plan's new Because I am a Girl report focuses on how teenage girls miss out on education, don't get the sexual and reproductive healthcare and advice they need, and can suffer from the lack of something as simple as clean, sanitary toilets in refugee camps.

It also shows how Plan's approach of preparing girls and boys for future disasters can really pay off. You can read more on pages 14 to 17.

Thank you very much for supporting Plan.

Tanya Barron

Tanya Barron
Chief Executive
Plan UK

News update



The Wedding Busters

In Bangladesh, two-thirds of girls get married before they are 18. All too often they are pulled out of school and never get the chance to fulfil their ambitions

With support from Plan sponsors and other donors, we're able to help groups of children and young people themselves to clamp down on child marriage. The Wedding Busters are one such group. So far they have successfully stopped seven child marriages in their community.

The Wedding Busters swing into action as soon as they hear news of

a child wedding – intervening with a doorstep visit to the family contemplating such a match.

Changing lives

Sharina is one of many girls who have benefited. She was about to get married at 16 until the Wedding Busters spoke to her father.

"I wasn't aware that marriage under 18 is illegal and I didn't think her education was important," says Sharina's father. "I learned all this from the children."

Now with the wedding cancelled, Sharina is thriving at school and excited about her future. "When I finish school I want to be a nurse," she says.

You can watch a film about the work of the Wedding Busters at www.plan-uk.org/weddingbusters

Supporting Syria's children

Thanks to everyone who gave so generously to our Syria Crisis appeal earlier this year

Plan has been working with the charity War Child in Lebanon to support the Syrian children who have suffered so much as a result of this complex and protracted conflict.

We are working with local partners to provide play, counselling and psychological support for children aged eight to 18. The aim is to help children cope with the trauma and process what has happened to them and their families.

We are also supporting educational activities for children whose schooling has been disrupted and have no other options for continuing their education.

Over 3 million Syrian children still need help. You can give to our Syria Crisis appeal at www.plan-uk.org/syria or by calling 0800 1300 230



Day of the Girl – save the date

11 October is International Day of the Girl. It's going to be a celebration of girls' potential around the globe – and an opportunity to erase the barriers to girls' education

Last year Plan's celebrations kicked off on the EDF Energy London Eye and half a million people signed our Raise your Hand petition, a key part of Plan's Because I am a Girl campaign.

This year, we're aiming to organise something even bigger and better, with a day of fun, engaging and thought-provoking activities for children and adults in central London.

There'll be lots of ways to get involved online too. To find out more about Day of the Girl and how you can get involved, go to www.dayofthegirl.org.uk

And don't forget to tweet about it with [#dayofthegirl](https://twitter.com/dayofthegirl)

Want to shrink your carbon footprint?

With World Family now online, many sponsors have told us they would prefer not to receive a copy through the post

However, others are not so keen to use the internet or still want the convenience of a paper copy of the magazine, so we're offering sponsors a choice.

If you want to continue to receive World Family by post, you don't need to do anything. You'll continue to receive your copy as usual. If you'd like to stop receiving a copy and view future issues online,

please let us know on 0300 777 9777 or email supporterquestions@plan-uk.org remembering to include your sponsor number.

You won't miss a thing as the whole magazine is now available free online at www.plan-uk.org/world-family

If you're online a lot, please remember that you can follow Plan on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/planuk](https://twitter.com/planuk)



Favourite photos

People often comment on the great photos of children in World Family

Why not drop World Family a line and tell us your favourite photo from this issue? You can email worldfamily@plan-uk.org or write to the address on page 2.

The most popular picture will be added to the library of images on Plan Postbox, for sponsors to send to their sponsored children.



the Plan:
get regular updates on Plan's work and how you can get involved, straight to your email inbox.

Go to www.plan-uk.org/enews to register today!

Home truths from Africa's newest state

When Sky News presenter Gillian Joseph told her husband she was visiting South Sudan and taking their two daughters with her he had his concerns. What responsible parent would want their children to visit a country famed for Africa's longest running civil war?

However Gillian, who is best known for her weekend Sunrise newsreading slot, had good reason for taking daughters Tiwa, 14 and Dara, 10, on the five-day trip.

Gillian is an ambassador for Plan's Because I am a Girl campaign. She wanted her daughters to know the hurdles girls their age have to overcome just to get to school in developing countries.

Despite South Sudan being Africa's newest country (the South broke away from the North in July 2011) it is still following age-old practices including marriage for girls as young as eight.

According to official figures, girls make up only 30 percent of pupils in secondary schools as most are married off in their early teens.

"Often an older wealthy man approaches the family and can provide them with a cash dowry or 250 cattle," explains Gillian. "Why would they educate their daughter when they can get a cash dowry? They see girls as a commodity, as a possession to trade.

"I wanted to take my daughters because they live a very privileged life. They go to great schools and do lots of after-school activities such as athletics and horse-riding.

I wanted them to see what girls their age all over the world have to deal with and that everybody isn't as privileged as they are."

When Gillian told the girls they would be visiting South Sudan, their reactions were very different. "Dara kept saying, 'why are you taking us to a war zone? We are going to get shot.' After I explained to her it was no longer a war zone and that they would learn a lot she finally agreed. Tiwa on the other hand was very positive."

Contrasting lives

On their first day the trio visited Juba technical secondary school and college, which is attended by both boys and girls. "It is more progressive," says Gillian. "The girls were forging ahead in traditionally male subjects such as mechanics. We met two girls who were studying it and they said male students were always telling them how silly they looked in overalls."

An encounter with a girl named Gloria, who is 19, made a big impact on Tiwa. "Gloria had given birth to her first child at 14 and was forced to drop out of school. After having her second child she went back to school through Plan. Seeing her having to think about her husband, two children and in-laws who didn't like her is so difficult to comprehend.

"When I looked at Gloria and then looked at my daughter I wanted to cry. I could never imagine my daughter being able to cope with that. I still have to get on at her to tidy her room. Tiwa was telling Gloria how amazing she was because in the UK all she had to cope with was going to school. Here Gloria was bringing up children as well."

Campaigning against forced marriage

The trio also took an internal flight south east to Yei. "That was much more rural," says Gillian. "We went to a school to watch a play about underage forced

marriage. The children had split off into groups and some played adults who were selling their daughters for cattle.

"In a different scene another girl played the part of a teenager preparing to go to university only to find out she had been sold to a man. It had us laughing and crying and hammered home the message."

Gillian's daughters were especially affected by a radio interview on a local Plan-supported station called Spirit FM, which was speaking to parents and children. Gillian says: "They were saying that it is upsetting to know that there are some children in the UK who don't want to go to school and don't understand what a privilege it is. In South Sudan you get girls fighting to go to school."

Gillian believes the trip has changed her girls. "They have both matured and now realise how fortunate they are and have returned home wanting to make a difference."

However, Gillian admits that some things will never change. "I'm still shouting at them to tidy their room," she laughs.

This article originally appeared in the Daily Express. Interview by Sophie Donnelly.

Interested in visiting Plan's work?

If you're a sponsor, you could get to see some of the work your support has helped make possible – and meet your sponsored child too.

To find out more about visiting, please contact Jennifer Gwynn on planukvisits@plan-uk.org or call 0300 777 9779.



Gillian (centre) with Tiwa (left) and Dara (right), posing with schoolgirls from Yei County



Tiwa makes friends



Hammering the message home

Better hygiene — better health

In rural Indonesia, Plan has helped to give a community a new perspective on what they had thought of as a harmless habit: going to the toilet in the open air. Children were central to our efforts to change minds

Fajar is 12 years old and lives in the village of Adu in Dompu, central Indonesia. He has always enjoyed the activities Plan organised in his village, such as singing, arts, writing and photography. However, it was a Plan-supported sanitation project that really caught his imagination.

The project used a method called Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), which was developed in India to stamp out defecation in the open and get villagers to build their own toilets out of locally sourced, sustainable materials.

Diseases related to drinking dirty water, such as diarrhoea, can kill young children in communities where healthcare is minimal and basic medicines beyond the budget of the poorest families

Using fields, rivers or forests to go to the loo may seem a trivial issue, but it causes major health problems in countries like Indonesia. Diseases related to drinking dirty water, such as diarrhoea, can kill young children in communities where healthcare is minimal and basic medicines beyond the budget of the poorest families.

Shock tactics

CLTS is an effective solution because rather than relying on the construction of costly toilet blocks, it works by changing villagers' minds – and their habits.

It all starts with a community meeting. The CLTS facilitators use a deliberately blunt approach to try and get communities to change their personal habits. In Adu,

they began by dipping a hair in faeces and then dipping it in a glass of water. They asked the villagers if they would drink the resulting water.

The villagers, of course, responded with a horrified “no”. But then the facilitators asked them to consider what happens with flies. If the hair was like the legs of a fly and the fly was landing on human faeces, they argued, what would be the result when the fly then made contact with food or drinking water?

Taking action

Shock tactics like these are designed to get a reaction, and Fajar was quickly inspired to do something. Together with his friends, he set up the Adu Village Faeces Police. Working together with adults, they began going out on patrols of Adu village, and confronted children and adults who continued with open defecation.

They developed a map of common locations for open defecation and shouted and blew whistles when they found anyone using a field, farm or the river as a toilet!

That wasn't their only strategy. They also paid visits to people who continued to go to the toilet in the open and explained to them the importance of using a toilet instead. They even made their own short film “Caught by the Faeces Police” to promote their campaign.

Things start to change

Slowly but surely, the efforts of Fajar and other children like him began to pay dividends.

The villagers of Adu began building their own toilets, using cheap, locally

available materials like scrap metal, jerry-cans and bamboo. This is important, because if people build their own latrines, they will also know how to repair them when something goes wrong.

A degree of friendly competition between neighbours ensured more and more toilets were built. After a certain point, the people of Adu were able to declare officially that their village was open-defecation free.

The Faeces Police have now put themselves out of a job, but Fajar and his children's group are justifiably proud of the role they've played in making poor sanitation and the related health problems a thing of the past.

To find out more about Plan's water sanitation work, go to www.plan-uk.org/water



Children's groups are making a difference in Indonesia



Plan encourages families to build toilets using cheap, locally-made components

Sanitation solutions

Community-Led Total Sanitation is the brainchild of Indian development expert Dr Kamal Kar. It fits perfectly with Plan's approach of motivating local people to make improvements in their own lives. Two thirds of people in rural areas of Indonesia lack decent sanitation facilities, and CLTS is a big part of Plan's programme there. To date, 233 Plan-backed villages in Indonesia have declared themselves free of open defecation.

Sponsorship stories

Sponsoring a child is the foundation of everything that Plan does – and behind every decision to sponsor there’s a personal story. Here three people from around the UK discuss what prompted them to sponsor a child

Inspired by a child

“It was Christmas time and my ten-year-old daughter was getting upset by the images of violence in the TV news

She had said to me: ‘Mum I don’t know why people have to have guns and do bad things. I wish I could make it all stop. I feel like I don’t deserve what I have when others don’t have things.’

At the time this was both upsetting for me to see my daughter this way, but also heartening to see the extent to which she was thinking of others.

Because many years ago I had sponsored a child I was able to think quickly and say to my daughter: ‘I understand how you are feeling. I don’t like guns and war either, but unfortunately we can’t change the whole world. However, we could sponsor a child in

another country who doesn’t have much and help make a difference to their life.’

My daughter took the idea on board, offering to contribute some of her pocket money each month and joined me at the computer to talk about where she would like to sponsor a child. We chose Africa and have been sponsoring Mbula in Kenya for the past three years.

Our correspondence has been with Mbula and each of her parents through letters and drawings.

My daughter and I also try and share the communication in return. I am so pleased that we went on to sponsor a child and will always remember how and why it came about. For me, that makes the partnership very special.”

– Sharon Ashton, Ipswich, Suffolk.

Making a difference

“When you hear stories of people’s lives in other parts of the world it can make you feel very spoilt, selfish, lucky and that you really don’t have any reason to complain about anything

I have been sponsoring a child with Plan for just over ten years. I decided to start sponsoring as I wanted to help someone in another part of the world who really needed help and I knew I wouldn’t miss the money going out of my account each month.

It’s so rewarding to feel you’re making a real difference in someone’s life. I have decided to sponsor another child as I enjoy writing letters and love receiving news from other parts of the world.”

– Michelle Merrett, Fareham, Hants.

Out of tragedy

“Thirteen years ago we lost our only son Chris to Sudden Adult Death Syndrome. He was 24 years old and embarking on a new career

Within a few months of Chris’s death an advert for Plan UK dropped out of our daily newspaper, and I knew at once that I wanted to sponsor a child living in another part of the world. I have sponsored a child in the Philippines ever since.

Shortly afterwards my husband Jeff said he would also like to become a sponsor. Between us we feel very privileged that we now sponsor three children in three different countries. We are extremely pleased to know that not only are we helping children themselves but we are helping their wider community.”

– Beryl Peill, Stafford.

The Plan: tell us why you sponsor

People sponsor for all kinds of reasons

Sometimes it’s because they have a connection with the country in which their sponsored child lives. For others, it’s because they were sponsored themselves as children, or because their children want to find out more about girls and boys in different parts of the world.

We’d love to know why you sponsor, so please let us know – email worldfamily@plan-uk.org or call 0300 777 9777.



A good start

Kesi (pictured left) is taking part in a game at a Plan-supported nursery school in Kalyoubya, just north of Cairo

The school caters for 80 children, providing a safe place where they can learn English, Arabic and maths, as well as play and develop.

The first eight years of a child's life are crucial. It's the time when playing, stimulation, nutrition and learning have the biggest impact. But many Egyptian families, particularly those living in poverty, are not aware of the importance of these early years.

In the recent unrest that has gripped Egypt, the needs of the very youngest like Kesi are even more easily overlooked.

Plan is working with mothers and other caregivers to make sure they give their children the best possible care. And we're planning to open more community-run nursery schools like this one, giving more children the right start in life.

At the heart of disasters



A girl salvages schoolbooks damaged by flooding in Mozambique

When natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods and droughts hit poor communities in the developing world, the needs of girls are often last on the agenda. But as Plan's new Because I am a Girl report shows, girls need not be passive victims. Harnessing their talents can help communities overcome disasters and be stronger for the future

When an earthquake destroys a city, a tsunami floods a coastline, or drought causes severe food insecurity, we often see a woman with a baby in her arms, weeping as she views the destruction of her home. Men are usually shown actively rescuing people, handing out food, or clearing up. Adolescent girls tend to be simply invisible.

In countries where women and girls are already second-class citizens, the added burden of a disaster may put their safety – and even their lives – at risk. This is particularly true for adolescent girls, who are vulnerable both because they are female and because they are young.

The long-term effect

Research suggests that girls are more deeply affected by the trauma of a disaster than boys. And they find it harder to be positive about the future.

"Thunderstorms really scare me. I am so frightened that I can't sleep at night," says Arati, a 12-year-old girl from Nepal. "The area of our land is reduced every year because of landslides triggered by heavy rain. I also fear that the fierce gales before the rain will blow away the roof of our house like it did when I was six years old."

Such anxieties can lead to behaviour which damages girls' health, such as drug abuse and

high-risk sex. And in societies with precious little safety net, the wrong choices can mar the lives of girls for years to come.

"People will try to survive any way they can. Women have relationships with men so they can feed their children"

In the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, many girls and young women had no choice but to turn to prostitution. "People will try to survive any way they can," says Gheslaine, who lives in a camp in Croix-de-Bouquets, Haiti.

"Women have relationships with men so they can feed their children. That happens a lot... For 60 US cents or \$1.25, you have sex just for that. Unfortunately, women sometimes get pregnant, but if we had access to planning, we'd protect ourselves.... It's not good to make prostitution, but what can you do?"

There were similar findings in Zimbabwe, which suffers recurrent food crises: "Once they drop out from school, adolescent boys and girls tend to influence each other into activities such as prostitution, drug abuse and alcoholism," reported a focus group discussion in Malipati, Zimbabwe.

"Their health is endangered by drug abuse and prostitution that risks them contracting sexually transmitted infections like HIV and AIDS."

Continue →

Too young to be a mother

Reem is a 15-year-old displaced Syrian, holding her underweight, two-month-old baby

Her husband was killed in cross-fire when Reem was seven months pregnant. She went into premature labour, without her mother, mother-in-law or any female relative at her side.

She is now living in a camp with her uncle and some cousins. Reem senses her baby is sick and remembers her mother's advice: "breast-milk is the best food and medicine for your baby."

But Reem does not know how to breastfeed. Also, no one told her that she will be bleeding after she gave birth and she has no more clean underwear or sanitary napkins. She thinks it is because of her bleeding that she cannot breastfeed and she fears that she and her baby will die.

Young women like Reem have to negotiate the adult role of becoming a mother at a time when they are still children, and very vulnerable.

The need for sanitation

The health of adolescent girls is compromised in other more subtle ways. What might appear trivial to adult decision-makers can have a serious impact on the safety and wellbeing of girls.

Time and again in disasters, girls and women raise the issue of public washrooms and toilets as an issue both of cleanliness and safety. All too often, these seem to be situated in remote parts of camps, shared by both sexes and badly lit. Girls are concerned about privacy, but also feel unsafe every time they need to wash or go to the toilet.

"During the monsoon, we are forced to wait in the rain to use the toilet as it is difficult to relieve ourselves outside because most of the land flooded," says Sunita, 15, from Nepal. "I have to relieve myself in a public place; I worry that one of my classmates might see me."

Lilani, age 15 from the Philippines, agrees: "It would be helpful to have safe and clean places to wash and go to the



Practising first aid at a mock earthquake drill in Bangladesh

toilet. We need to feel like we have privacy. We need to feel clean."

Girls take a lead

Across the world, it seems, teenage girls are routinely overlooked or exploited in disaster situations. But it doesn't have to be like this. Plan has found that girls can have a massively positive impact in the wake of disasters, and can demand the protection they deserve.

Following the devastation of Cyclone Sidr in 2007, Plan worked in south-west

Bangladesh to support communities in rebuilding their lives, making sure they had the information and protection they needed if there was another disaster.

With the help of our sponsors and other supporters, we were able to help girls in particular to participate and voice their concerns – on education, health and how to protect the community in times of disaster.

At first, it was not easy to get girls involved: "Parents did not allow their girls to attend [school], but a year on,



Girls in Bangladesh are taking a lead on preparing their communities for when disaster strike

girls are taking a leading role," says Shanawaz Whara, of Plan Bangladesh. Plan worked not only with the girls themselves, but with their parents and local communities. They encouraged those in authority to listen to girls and boys and provide them with the opportunity to take part in planning and in decision-making.

Early warning systems

The girls and boys shared their new skills and knowledge on early warning and household preparedness with others. They carried out household visits and community meetings which led to some real changes in attitude. "After Cyclone Sidr there was still trauma amongst the adolescents. Now, through these activities, we feel more confident to deal with cyclones in the future," says Shalia, a girl in secondary school.

It's not just in Bangladesh that supporters' donations are making a difference and Plan is empowering teenage girls to change things.

Chimarra, 19, from El Salvador, has been educating her community about disaster risk reduction since the age of 12: "I think one of the worst challenges that we had was that we weren't able to speak. The community wouldn't recognise that we had something important to say because we were young and female."

"Now we feel more confident to deal with cyclones in the future"

"For me, in my personal life, the training has helped me in various ways," says fellow El Salvadorian Maria Elena, 18. "It has helped my self-esteem, it has helped me not to feel less than other people because I am a young mother. And I know about my rights, how to defend my rights and how to prevent them from being abused."

Because I am a girl

Plan's latest Because I am a Girl report looks at what happens to adolescent girls in disasters, and why.

Using original research, reviews of secondary material, and the voices of girls themselves, we show how adolescent girls' rights are being ignored before, during and after disasters, both in the urgency of a disaster response, and in humanitarian and development work.

We argue that listening to what adolescent girls have to say, addressing their needs, and strengthening their resilience is a key missing piece of humanitarian work – and that without it, the whole community suffers.

You can read the report in full online at www.plan-uk.org/becauseiamagirl-research



Schoolchildren in Zambia wave hello

The changes sponsorship brings

Sponsorship doesn't just benefit an individual child – it galvanises the whole community into making long-term improvements. World Family reports from rural Zambia

In the remote village of Malombe, in the heart of Zambia, a Plan-supported compound contains a school and clinic. Both have been paid for with sponsorship funds, and both are making a life-changing difference to Malombe's children.

But every bit as important are the group of dedicated community volunteers who give up their time to take part in Plan-backed activities. They gather regularly at the compound to compare notes and discuss progress.

Many have been volunteers for years and are incredibly dedicated. These enthusiastic villagers deliver and collect sponsorship mail, complete questionnaires and take photos of the sponsored children.

Of course, sponsorship goes hand-in-hand with community improvements, and the volunteers also run community meetings, where they discuss ways to improve the lives of children.

Keeping track

All of the volunteers have jobs outside their work with Plan. Most of them work as farmers. Their biggest challenge is that families in the area move around – often to find work or graze their animals. It can be difficult for Plan to break the news to the sponsor that their sponsored child has moved away.

Another big problem for volunteers is that it's very difficult to get around and do their work during the rainy season, when roads are often impassable because of mud.

The volunteers agree that sponsored children are getting better and better at writing themselves. The more they do it, the more they get used to it. The volunteers also encourage their family and friends to get involved. Children are also learning to take pictures for sponsor updates with cameras provided by Plan.

Livestock is a lifeline

Sponsorship helps to fund tangible improvements in families' lives. A great example is Plan's work to help families keep goats. The chance to keep small livestock can make an enormous difference for poor families in Zambia, providing a source of extra income or food.

Marianna, a widow with three children, got involved with Plan after her youngest

daughter became a sponsored child. In 2009, Marianna received three goats from Plan – plus training on how to look after them.

The goats reproduced, and Marianna passed on three kids to another widow in a neighbouring village who also received training and support. Marianna then sold three of her goats and used the money to replace the roof of her cottage. "This project has given me something to smile about because I have benefited a lot," she says. "I am very appreciative of it."

Plan volunteer Lombe visits Marianna frequently, as part of his work to monitor around 40 households with goats. "I have seen big difference because families have more food security, income and they can support themselves," he says.

Men and pregnancy

Changing attitudes is just as important as distributing livestock or managing



Marianna



Marianna's goat house

sponsorship. And the women and men at the Mushwi Rural Health Centre have been doing just that since they came together in 2010.

Their main job has been to help pregnant women get more antenatal care, and encourage the involvement of fathers. The group is trying to break down the tradition of leaving the woman to herself when she is pregnant.

They explain how in the past, when a woman was pregnant, the man wouldn't even come to the clinic with her. Now, women are getting the men to come too from the very first appointment. Men are slowly appreciating their role and know that they need to accompany their partners.

Plan's work in Chibombo is a great example of the kind of improvements sponsors are supporting throughout Africa – changing the future for a new generation of Zambia's boys and girls.



Plan is helping to make childbirth safer

Stories from Ghana

Two very different Plan supporters visited Ghana recently. Both were impressed by the energy and excitement of children's changing lives



Ghanaian girls are benefiting from better standards of education with Plan's support



Kate (centre) enjoys time with school girls in the village of Hohoe, Ghana

Building a school

UK supporter Peter Williams made a significant donation to Plan to build a new nursery school in the village of Enyan Maim, an hour's drive from the capital, Accra.

On his visit with Plan in February, Peter was warmly welcomed by the community: "The overall impression was of children everywhere," he says. "So many children that you could hardly see the school!"

"The children all seemed so proud of their new school and facilities, especially the playground packed with colourful merry-go-rounds, swings and slides"

"The nursery school itself is a functional building," he goes on. "Although it is pretty basic, inside there were lots of little desks and decorations around the walls. The children all seemed so proud of their new school and facilities, especially the playground packed with colourful merry-go-rounds, swings and slides. It was a real privilege to witness this!"

Over 200 children will directly benefit from this new school building and its facilities. Peter's support also enabled the community to demonstrate to the government the need and demand for more educational facilities, and the government has responded by building a new primary school too.

A lasting impact

Peter is clear on the importance of education in lifting communities out of poverty. "Everything starts with education if you want to have a long-term impact," he says. "In terms of making a lasting difference, it's as good as anything."

He decided to support a school with Plan having seen our work with his previous employer. Another factor is Plan's approach of involving the whole community, including children, parents, teachers and local officials.

"The community built the school in Enyan Maim and Plan got local buy-in and an undertaking from the local government to provide teachers,"



Peter Williams opens the new school at Enyan Maim

says Peter. "If you're building a school, it's vital to know it's going to be run and looked after properly."

If you would like to support your own project, please contact Francesca de-Vlugt on 020 3217 0230 or francesca.de-vlugt@plan-uk.org

Just imagine!

In February, singer-songwriter Kate Nash travelled to Plan-supported communities in Ghana to help raise awareness of our Because I am a Girl campaign. The teenagers taking part in Plan's Girls Making Media programme made a massive impression on her.

"I loved seeing how ambitious they were, and how smart, and how much they wanted to better their world and communities," she says.

"Girls Making Media aims to educate people about women's rights, which is really incredible. It's education on issues like bullying, hygiene, sexual assault, a lot of things that girls come across that they wouldn't normally be educated about in Africa.

"They can do interviews on radio; they're using computers; they're using dance and drama to explore it and interviewing people. It was so cool. They were amazing."

Upbeat and vibrant and fun

Kate loved the liveliness and optimism of the girls she met: "I have a video of the

girls dancing with me. It was just the energy of the people and how upbeat and vibrant and fun and friendly they are.

"It was just the energy of the people and how upbeat and vibrant and fun and friendly they are"

"It's quite a grounding experience," she continues, "because you realise where you can really get happiness from life."

At the same time, she was impressed by the ambition of the girls she met: "They were



like, 'I want to be a journalist, I want to be a sociologist, I want to go to university!'

"They were wanting to take control of their lives. If everyone had that attitude all over the world, then imagine!"

The difference your support is making

In Ghana, Plan is concentrating on better health services, improved livelihoods, boosting educational standards, and of course getting children's voices heard.

In 2012 alone we treated tens of thousands of children for waterborne diseases and worms. We enabled 2,000 girls and boys to form children's clubs, and provided free school lunches to 1,000 children to encourage them to stay in school.

Children press for change

In remote parts of Guatemala, basics like healthcare, education and clean water can't be taken for granted. But thanks to the support of Plan sponsors and other donors, children are becoming vocal in demanding improvements

El Caulote is a remote community with scarce resources in southern Guatemala. The region is known as the "Corredor Seco" (Dry Corridor) and is noted for its dramatic landscapes, but many villages have no electrical power, insufficient water sources and limited education.

With backing from Plan sponsors, we're working in the Corredor Seco to improve care for young children, to help them prepare for drought and boost education. But we also need to get communities themselves to press for change, so improvements can be sustained and standards can be lifted in the longer term.

One key way of doing this is to support children's groups who speak out on ways to improve life in their communities. Known as Cocoditos, Plan-supported children's groups in Guatemala promote human and child rights, and take part in community decision-making.

Taking it to the top

The children of the El Caulote Cocodito are concerned because there is no secondary school in their village and no school within reasonable travelling distance. So they've written to the ministry of education's local authority, asking them to open a secondary school, to provide teachers, books, and, if necessary, to build of a new classroom.

The group submitted a written petition, asking to have a secondary school in the community of El Caulote. The petition reads as follows:

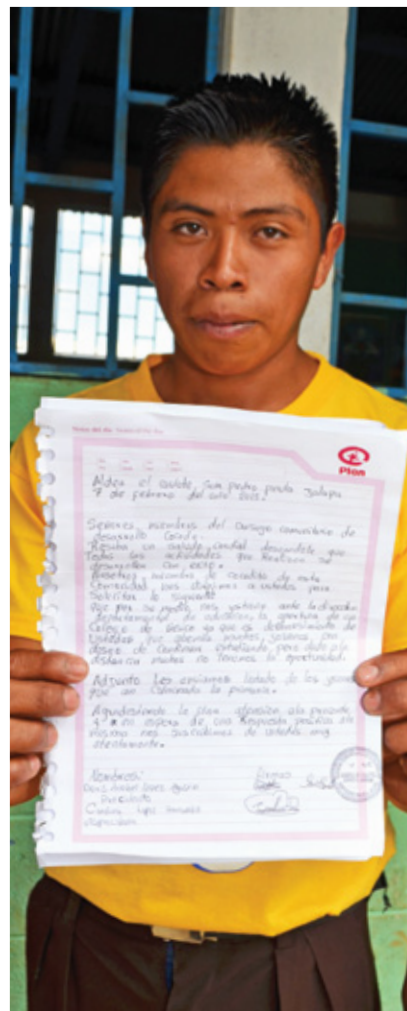
Please receive our warm greetings. We hope all your activities are going well.

We, as members of the Cocodito of this community are asking you for the opening of a secondary level school. As you know, there are several young boys and girls who wish to continue their studies, but due to the long distance to the nearest secondary level school they are not able to do so. Attached you will find the list of youngsters who have already finished primary school.

Appreciating your attention to our request and waiting for a positive answer.

At present, the ministry authorities are analysing the situation. They tell us it is possible they will be able to open a secondary school in early 2014. To begin with, this school will function in the same building as El Caulote's current primary school, with secondary classes held during the afternoon.

Nothing has been confirmed as yet, but Plan and the Cocodito are following up with the local education authorities.



The group's petition



Children and communities are changing and growing with Plan's support

Twenty-five years of progress

After a quarter of a century of working for Plan in Colombia, Programme Unit Manager Shirley Navarro is still inspired when she sees communities change and grow



Shirley Navarro

Plan involves the whole community in improving children's lives. The work we do in the community of Bayunca, about 20 miles from Cartagena city, is a really great example. Plan has been working there since 1999, and the local people were strongly involved in our work there from the beginning.

The first problem they identified was violence. Colombia suffers from very high levels of gang and drug-related violence. Plan set up the Path of Peace project, involving youth in ensuring peace in their communities.

A culture of peace

The project challenged the culture of violence with training in better relationships, support to prevent domestic violence and abuse, and even included planting flowers and vegetables to develop a healthy respect for the environment.

We noticed the teachers' attitudes to the children really changed. And the classrooms were definitely improved with new equipment provided by Plan.

We have been in Bayunca for 13 years now. One of the nice things is seeing the community change and grow. Some of the young people that were trained then are now involved in social and political decision-making. They are now confident to engage with local government and get what they need for the community.

"I had a great early childhood and felt very loved and protected by my family. I wanted the same for other children"

This leadership is really important for us, especially for women, as we're talking about a community that is really traditional and would see the role of decision-making to be with the man.

My first job was working as a volunteer in the city of Barranquilla, northern Colombia, collecting information about sponsored children, getting to know and understand the needs of the families who lived there.

I then worked as an assistant on a housing project in Barranquilla, which involved a lot of construction and improvement. In 1999 the office moved to Cartagena because our research showed that the area had more pressing needs.

In my work for Plan I'm motivated by my own childhood and family. I had a great early childhood and felt very loved and protected by my family. I wanted the same for other children.

I love the fact that there are always new challenges working for Plan. It never gets boring, it is often challenging, but it's important for me to work in a dynamic and active environment – I find that very rewarding. ”



Members of the Cocodito



It's always been about the children

And with your help, it always will be

Esme Odgers, pictured above in 1938, is one of Plan's original founders. She was one of the first people to come to the aid of children, like we still do today. During the Spanish Civil War she braved chaos and death to help move 200 orphaned children out of Catalonia to the safety of the Pyrenees. And she pioneered the idea of letters between children and their sponsors, using a battered typewriter to help the children write to their sponsors in England – and seeing their delight when letters came back in return.

Like Esme, you have seen how sponsorship changes children's lives. And you've shared in the delight of helping children, families and entire communities move themselves from a life of poverty to a future with opportunity.

When you make your will, remember Plan

Including a gift to Plan in your will adds something very special to your sponsorship and the support you're giving children now: a promise that more children will have a chance in the future. If you wish, you can dedicate your gift to help children in any country where Plan works or to a particular issue you feel passionate about, for example girls' education.

To find out more, just go to
www.plan-uk.org/legacy or
call our legacy advisor on
0300 777 9777 today.

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