

world family

The magazine for Plan UK supporters Spring 2013

the Plan:

giving children the
care they need to reach
their full potential



Plan

Plus news from Colombia, East Timor, Tanzania, El Salvador and much, much more...

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

Photos: Alison Baskerville, Glenn Daniels, Victoria Dawe, Tom Gilks, ORMUSA, Hayelegebreal Seyoum, Roger Trivino

Cover: Plan is helping this young mother in Thailand to get an education

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

Letter from Tanya

Dear Supporter,

I'm delighted to introduce myself as Plan's new Chief Executive and to welcome you to this, the first World Family of 2013.

I hope you enjoy the magazine, which includes a fascinating update on how Plan is helping children affected by the food crisis in West Africa, plus news of our innovative work to promote girls' rights in El Salvador and an in-depth look at some of our work in Colombia – including news of Miriam Stoppard's visit to her sponsored child there.

What I love about Plan is the way it sees the child as a whole person with a complex life. So I was interested to see how Miriam Stoppard calls Plan's approach in Colombia "wrap-around care". The article gives you a good idea of that all-encompassing approach in urban Colombia – ranging from nutrition for toddlers to business training for young adults.

"What I love about Plan is the way it sees the child as a whole person with a complex life"

It's hard to over-emphasise the importance of wrap-around care. When asked, I expect most sponsors would say that the health and education of their sponsored child was the most important thing to them. Of course, that's understandable, but Plan's other work is equally vital.

After all, you can't meaningfully improve education without taking a stand on early marriage, because in many countries girls will drop out



of school to marry a man they hardly know. Similarly, you can't improve healthcare without improving water supply, because although a health centre can give treatment, if there's no clean water, children will simply fall ill again. So Plan provides all-round support which doesn't stop at the age of 18.

There's lots in the magazine about the vital role played by sponsors like you in providing that wrap-around care. There are interviews with two sponsored children in Tanzania, a piece about the life of a sponsorship field worker in Ethiopia and an interview with a sponsor and speaker who gives talks about Plan's work in London schools.

Before coming to Plan I was involved for many years in the work to create family or family-like alternatives for children living in the terrible orphanages of Romania, Bulgaria and many parts of the former Soviet Union. Working in that environment showed me how important families are – and also how children's lives can be transformed by the interest and support of other adults, such as sponsors and Plan supporters.

So I'd like to thank you for supporting Plan – and of course for your generosity in funding our work.

Tanya Barron

Tanya Barron
Chief Executive
Plan UK

the Plan:

to work with the world's poorest children so they can move themselves from a life of poverty to a future with opportunity

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News update



Raising awareness of International Day of the Girl on London's South Bank

Raising our voices for girls

Following extensive campaigning by Plan, the very first International Day of the Girl took place on 11 October last year. It was an amazing opportunity to celebrate the power and potential of girls everywhere

Celebrations in the UK kicked off with the first ever speed mentoring session between schoolgirls and prominent women from business, sport and the arts – all taking place aboard the EDF Energy London Eye. In the evening we were joined by 200 people, including politicians, business leaders and the media to learn about Plan's Girls Report.

Throughout the day, we heard from three young girls from Pakistan and Malawi, who talked about their lives and the problems girls face in their countries.

International Day of the Girl was marked around the globe. Half a million

people signed our Raise Your Hand petition, calling on the UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon to make girls' education a priority.

Former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who is now United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education, has backed Plan's Because I am a Girl campaign. He joins a host of famous supporters, including actor Kevin Whately, writer Monica Ali and Dr Miriam Stoppard.

It's not too late to get involved. If you believe in the power and potential of girls, Raise Your Hand for girls' education at www.becauseiamagirl.org.uk



A race for children's rights

Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa recently hosted Plan's fourth annual Children's Race

The event was attended by nearly 4,000 children, as well as parents, visitors and the media.

Olympic gold-winning Ethiopian runner Haile Gebrselassie and former British Olympian and sports commentator Brendan Foster were there.

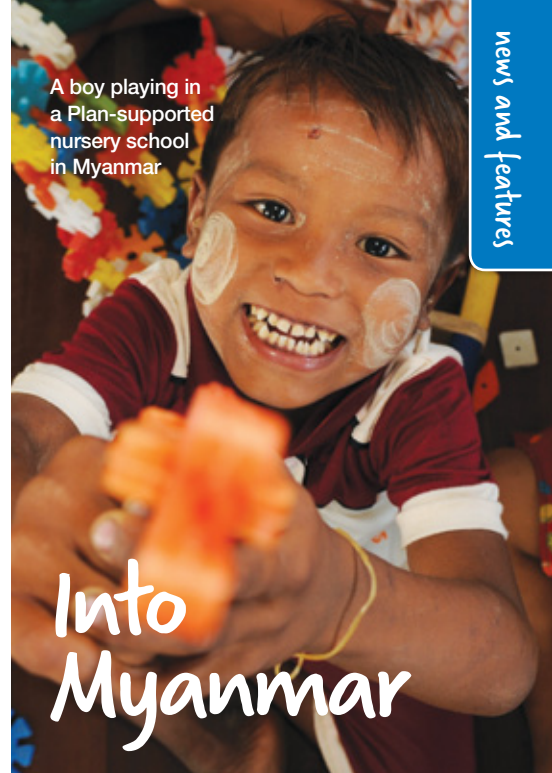
"The atmosphere was fantastic," said Foster. "The enthusiasm of the children and the inclusiveness of the

event were wonderful to see."

The Children's Race was more than just a fun day out. It was organised by Plan to raise awareness of girls' rights and build support for our Because I am a Girl campaign.

Plan reached over 8 million people with a text message announcing the race, calling for an end to child marriage and urging more support for girls' education.

A boy playing in a Plan-supported nursery school in Myanmar



Into Myanmar

After a successful relief effort in the wake of Cyclone Nargis, Plan will now be working in Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) until at least 2015

Cyclone Nargis devastated Myanmar's southern coast in 2008, killing about 140,000 people. After teaming up with local partner organisations, Plan's relief work soon became a long-term recovery programme, reaching almost 200,000 people.

Our programme has included everything from building new schools to helping children and their families get better prepared for future disasters.

We will continue to focus on lessening the risks posed by disasters, along with improving standards of education and care for children under five.

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!

Please check the address

A quick reminder: it's more than two years now since Plan's London office moved to Islington, and Royal Mail are no longer forwarding on post from our old Camden address.

Please send all correspondence to: **Plan UK, Finsgate, 5-7 Cranwood Street, London EC1V 9LH.**

Niger: stories behind the statistics

The recent conflict in Mali coincides with a food crisis that has enveloped over 6 million people in West Africa. It's easy to feel helpless when confronted by numbers like these, but there is a human story behind every statistic. Plan International Press Officer Terry Ally reports from Niger

When we stepped out of the airport and drove through the capital Niamey in the searing summer heat my photographer asked me "where is the crisis?" There was no obvious evidence.

Yet as we criss-crossed the country by car, the impact of this slow disaster became clear. In the children's hospitals there were scores of severely malnourished children and mothers. Thousands had been treated with Plan's support.

The worst of the crisis is now over, but the conflict in Mali has added to the

pressure, driving more than 400,000 people from their homes. About 60,000 of them are in refugee camps in the Tillaberi region in Niger.

Horror stories

At the Tabareybarey refugee camp run by Plan, I heard horror stories of what they had escaped – pillage and plunder of their livestock, food, homes, clothes – women who had been raped and assaulted. Other women were taken from their homes never to be seen again. Loved ones were missing and presumed dead; yet without bodies it

was hard for refugees to come to terms with what had happened.

Alhassane Kourey lost contact with his two sons aged 14 and 16. The younger one was shot in the leg as they became separated in the chaos that ensued when insurgents rampaged through their village. He has heard that his sons are alive and is gathering a search party to return to Mali to find them.

"If I could get a message to them, I'd tell them that I'd like them to come here and stay with me so we can be together," he told me. When I checked



With Plan's support, nutritious meals are prepared by local mothers for children educated in the makeshift classrooms in the background

for him a week after he told me this, he was nowhere to be found in the camp. I assume the search mission is underway.

Surprised by joy

Tabareybarey is not just a place for despair. Far from it. In class time, the unmistakable happy voices of children float across the arid desert air from a group of buildings made of straw.

These makeshift structures were schools set up by Plan. When I entered one, the children's attention turned from the teacher to me. They all stood and in their native language, Tamasheq, greeted me with "Good morning, sir."

Lena Thiam, Plan's Education in Emergencies Specialist in Niger, explained that the majority of children in this and other Malian refugee camps have never before been to school. In Class 1 were all the students who were learning for the first time. Older children who have seriously fallen behind will benefit from summer catch-up classes funded by Plan.



One nomad, Hamadou Dangui, whose 12 children are all newcomers to education, told me that he was extremely happy for them to be in class. Here in Niger, the dangers of children dropping out of education could not be more serious.

"In an emergency sparked by conflict, education is a child protection mechanism," explains Lena Thiam. "It protects them from violence and being recruited by armed groups."

Above: Summer catch-up classes supported by Plan. Many of these children are in school for the very first time



After the crisis

Niger has suffered one of its worst crises in decades, but what happens next? Rhéal Drisdelle, Plan's Country Director in Niger, explains

The food insecurity crisis is effectively over in Niger. With the help of supporters, Plan was able to provide support to 80,000 people in the affected communities.

Now Plan is refocusing on its core work. We are drawing up plans for rebuilding the livelihoods of those communities that were hardest hit by the food crisis, families that lost everything or had to get into debt to survive. And we are continuing our work to improve education, particularly girls' education.

We are also heavily involved in the managing of the Tabareybarey refugee camp, providing food and water for around 10,000 people. We're working in two other refugee camps, concentrating on providing education and child protection.



With Plan's support, these teenagers have started their own jewellery business



A path of light

In Colombia, Plan is working to change a culture that holds children back – and ensuring girls and boys thrive at every stage in their lives – from when they are toddlers to their teenage years

Cartagena, on Colombia's Caribbean coast, is a major port, a tourist destination and a world heritage site. But behind the grand colonial frontages of the city centre, there's a darker side. Colombia has a long history of internal conflict, a flourishing drug trade and a culture of youth gangs and machismo. Levels of domestic violence and teenage pregnancy are high.

Pozon is an impoverished, ramshackle slum district on the edges of Cartagena. Levels of poverty here are particularly high, and many of the families here have been forced to flee the guerrilla fighting between right-wing groups and Marxist paramilitaries that has dogged Colombia for decades.

Starting afresh

But it's also here that Plan is trying to create a new culture in Colombia – a culture of peace, respect and equality. To do it, we're working with youngsters at every stage of their lives, starting with the very youngest.

"The children are improving in health, and getting nutritious food and learning. They are getting an education they wouldn't have had"

Camino de Luz, meaning 'Path of Light' is one Plan project among many in Pozon. It revolves around a centre for young children opened in 2009. The centre boasts six classrooms where 160 boys and girls under five go with their mothers. Plus there's a community kitchen that provides nutritious meals to 65 undernourished children aged between six months and five years. It also monitors the wellbeing of 15 pregnant teenage girls.

"The workshops and the training are really great," says one young mother. "The children are improving in health, and getting nutritious food and learning. They are getting an education they wouldn't have had."

A book in a bag

In Pozon, both children and their parents often struggle with reading. Standards in schools tend to be low, many children drop out and often their parents have had an equally rudimentary education. At Camino de Luz, we've introduced a workshop encouraging parents to read every night with their children.

Thanks to Plan, there's a well-stocked library, and we've introduced the concept of the "moving bag". The idea is simple: parents take home a book in a bag, read it to their children and then bring it back in the next day, when another parent gets to use the bag. This develops good trusting relations between the parents, helps mums and dads spend quality time with their children, and of course boosts literacy.

Continue →



A Plan-supported kitchen in Pozon

Many of the families in Pozon were forced from their homes after guerrilla groups destroyed their villages. As part of the moving bag project, Plan commissioned a children's book about displaced communities from a child's perspective. The book helps them to express and discuss their feelings about what has happened to them, and hopefully, begin to come to terms with it.

Learn without fear

When the children at Camino de Luz get a bit older, Plan will be helping them develop and grow. In the schools of Cartagena, we're campaigning against violence at all levels. Our Learn Without Fear campaign is promoting positive, caring discipline over corporal punishment, and raising awareness of the problem of bullying among children.

It's a big step, especially for teachers, many of whom are used to enforcing discipline with the cane. But Plan is supporting teachers to make the transition through group discussions, practical suggestions and training on modern, child-centred teaching methods.

As children enter their teenage years, the problems they face seem to multiply in complexity, especially against the backdrop of the poverty of Pozon.



"The girls often have no access to contraception or sex education and so they get pregnant. They end up staying at home with their mothers, bringing up the children"

"Children go to school but the level of education is very poor. It doesn't equip them to get a job and they hang around on the street. They drop out of school aged 14 or 15," says 17-year-old Ernestina. "The boys drive motorcycle taxis and the girls get pregnant and don't really see a future or ask themselves the question of what they could do."

Eighteen-year-old Martin agrees: "There are lots of problems with alcohol in my community, especially among the boys. They hang out in the street, get drug problems and get into fights. These

boys haven't had opportunities. Their fathers drink up all the money, so they don't have the resources to study. The girls often have no access to contraception or sex education and so they get pregnant. They end up staying at home with their mothers, bringing up the children."

Plan focuses on the girls, holding sessions in the afternoons and at weekends aimed at preventing teenage pregnancy, prostitution, rape and domestic violence. It's a serious subject for discussion, but the girls feel comfortable talking and sharing experiences with each other, and many invite their friends to come along.

We hope the experience will give them the confidence to be safer and more assertive in their everyday lives, growing up to become informed women who will be able to improve their futures – and the future of their communities.

Crafting a living

It's also important for teenagers to find a source of income, so they aren't drawn into gangs or drugs. Craft lessons aren't just a way for young people to develop fulfilling skills – they can be a springboard to the creation of fully-fledged small businesses.

With Plan's support, one group of teenagers has set up their own jewellery business. The group of four work together as a collective, getting training on how to make jewellery and how to promote their business. Each one of them has a defined role in the process so they can work more quickly.



Plan promotes reading – for children and their parents

Their ambition is to become the best jewellery makers in Cartagena and be recognised internationally.

One of them is 19-year-old Camilla, who was unemployed and spent her days looking after her nieces and nephews. "I got to know about the Plan programme for technical education and got involved in jewellery training. This has given me the

opportunity to earn a bit of money and help my family."

Long-term commitment

Deeply entrenched social problems cannot be changed overnight, but Plan is in Colombia for the long haul. Because child sponsorship can last for up to 18 years, we stay in communities like Pozon long

enough to see real results develop – and to give local young people the confidence to continue the work for themselves.

"I think I can help young people who haven't had opportunities," says Martin, 18, who heard about Plan's work through a friend. "I would like to become a community leader and change things in my community."

Wrap-around care for children

In October, writer and health expert Dr Miriam Stoppard visited her sponsored child Mariana, as well as other Plan projects in Colombia

"With Plan you not only change the life of a needy child but also her family and her community," says Miriam. "Your sponsorship goes towards clean water, schools, school meals, books, health education and clinics. It's

wrap-around care and I like that. But mainly it's about transforming children's lives. Breaking the poverty cycle. Opening up their options, widening their horizons and giving them a chance for a better life."

You can read more about Miriam's visit to Colombia - and watch a short film at www.plan-uk.org/miriam-stoppard



Miriam at a Plan-supported school in Colombia

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To find out more contact
Jennifer Gwynn on
0300 777 9777 or email
jennifer.gwynn@plan-uk.org



Registered charity no. 276035



Hatching a better future in East Timor

The nation of East Timor has been independent for just a decade, yet years of fighting and displacement has deepened poverty and left a dearth of opportunities for young people

Plan is opening up opportunities for these young people to make a decent living. In the districts of Lautem and Aileu, our Youth Livelihoods Programme has helped to equip 200 young people with vocational skills to start their own businesses. Some specialised in carpentry, others in rattan furniture-making. Tailoring and coconut oil production have been popular, as has chicken-keeping.

We try to make sure the young people who take part create businesses that will succeed in the long term. We provide mentoring and regular visits, but our ultimate goal is to empower young people so they no longer need Plan's support. Some are now working together and regularly selling their products – others have set up very successful businesses on their own.

These projects will not only provide economic opportunities – we hope that by increasing economic security they'll also help ensure there isn't a return to bloodshed. And because the young people involved will be the fathers and mothers of the future, helping them to earn money will help them provide for the next generation of children.





Power through play

Girls in El Salvador face a host of problems, from teenage pregnancy to domestic violence. But Plan is supporting a fresh approach that allows girls to discuss taboo subjects in a new way, protect themselves from abuse and prepare for a better future. Rachel Belward reports

El Salvador has one of the highest rates of adolescent pregnancy in the Central American region. Access to reliable information about sexual and reproductive health is very limited. What's more, domestic violence and rape are serious problems.

These issues hold El Salvador back from social progress and economic growth, because girls' potential is so badly neglected. Yet discussing the underlying problems is often considered taboo in El Salvador's conservative society. So Plan needs to find new ways to protect girls and make them more aware. And that's where ludotecas come in.

Ludotecas are games libraries Plan has helped to set up in schools, made up of toys, films and puppets. They enable children to explore serious issues in a simple and non-threatening way. And they are proving extremely popular with both students and teachers.

"It makes it easier because when you do it playing, it's less shocking. We can ease into the topic"

"It has been very useful from the very beginning," says Astrid, 15, one of the students in charge of a ludoteca in Cabanas, northern El Salvador. Her

ludoteca is managed by a committee of between 10 and 15 young people, most of whom are girls. Taking on responsibility for the ludoteca allows girls like Astrid to assume a leadership role: something that would traditionally be left to the boys.

Training the trainers

Ludoteca committee members don't just need to find out how to look after the toys and games. They have been given awareness-raising training by Plan on sexual and reproductive health, violence and self-esteem, and this training helps them to achieve the ludotecas' more serious purpose: enlightening and empowering girls.



Top: spreading the message against sexual abuse and for health; above: a school puppet show; below: young puppeteers

Committee members like Astrid share their knowledge with other students through structured games sessions, puppet shows and craft competitions. The subjects of the puppet shows can range from domestic violence to cutting down of forests and pollution of local rivers.

The lighthearted approach makes it easier to talk about serious topics, and practical advice can be offered on issues like safe sex and how to get help if girls are experiencing abuse.

Astrid explains: "It makes it easier because when you do it playing, it's less shocking. We can ease into the topic."

The focus may be on empowering girls, but boys are also very welcome to use the games libraries. "It's very good because it allows us to explore activities that we may not have tried before, like drawing or painting," says committee member Carlos.

A lesson for teachers

The ludotecas also aim to influence teaching. Sitting in a classroom and



learning by rote is still a very common occurrence in El Salvador. The ludotecas aim to put the fun back into learning. Some schools run sessions during gym classes, while others leave the ludotecas open after classes finish, so students can use them at the end of the school day.

Gangs are a serious problem in El Salvador, and the ludotecas reduce the risk of children coming into contact with gang culture. "It helps keep the older children entertained in a healthy

way and stay away from activities that might be dangerous or inappropriate," says Astrid.

Although the ludotecas are primarily aimed at girls, the focus on fun and laughter seems to have brought all the students together – male and female, younger and older. The teenagers supervise the younger ones as they paint, colour and play with the toys. And the younger ones are storing up happy memories they will want to pass on in turn.

Young lives in Tanzania

One of the most rewarding things about sponsorship is the insight it can give into the lives of children in countries far away. Plan trustee Leon Ward recently met two sponsored girls in Tanzania, to find out about the hopes and challenges of their lives



Rose (left) and Leon, centre

Rose is 14 years old and lives in a small rural community in eastern Tanzania with her parents and nine siblings. "I am in Year 8 of secondary school," she says. "My favourite subjects at school are Swahili and English. My ambition is to be a midwife."

However, unlike many children her age, Rose has responsibilities beyond her schoolwork. "I wake up at 5am to start helping my mum with work at home," she says, "mainly digging, which I actually really dislike."

"I start school at 7am. I have both male and female teachers, though I prefer females."

Getting to school

Rose's school is just a short walk from her house. This is really important in Tanzania, where long walks to school (and the danger of being attacked on the way) can be a major factor in causing girls to drop out of education.

Yet problems at school remain: "Sometimes my teachers don't show up to the lessons and so students waste their time by showing up. I also worry that fees will stop me going to secondary school – that would stop my ambition of becoming a midwife."

"Water and sanitation is a big problem in my community," she adds. "Most households have very little access to it."

Those that have water piped to their homes often have fluctuating supplies and can sometimes be without fresh water for three days."

The need for safe water

Hamisa is another Plan sponsored child. She lives about five minutes' drive from Rose. She is a year younger than Rose and lives with her 60-year-old grandmother. We meet Hamisa outside her house, built out of a mixture of mud and clay. She has no bed and sleeps on a mat. The house itself has no electricity, water, gas or even a front door.

Despite this obvious poverty, Hamisa has ambitions of her own. "I want a career in biology and medicine," she says, "but I'm worried my disability may hold me back."

Hamisa's left hand is paralysed. Yet like Rose, Hamisa has to help with chores before school: picking crops and washing cutlery and clothes.

Local improvements

Hamisa is keen to express her thanks for Plan's support – in particular, for building and furnishing classrooms and toilets in her local school. She agrees that more needs to be done to supply clean water in Mlandizi.

"Water and sanitation is the biggest issue for my community. Water is delivered

by a single tap for over 250 people and is very infrequent, sometimes not being delivered for over a week."

So far, Plan has supported the drilling of a water borehole at one primary school in the community. Rainwater harvesting (where rainwater is collected from the roof, stored in butts and used for washing) has been introduced in other primary schools too.

It's a slow process, and Plan has limited resources to respond to the massive needs of a country as poor as Tanzania. So we harness the enthusiasm and ambition of children like Rose and Hamisa to create long-term improvements for the future.

A word for sponsors

Sponsorship is a vital part of fostering those hopes for the future. "I'm pleased my sponsor is watching me grow up, and I'm delighted he is happy with my progress," says Hamisa.

She enjoys the lighter side of sponsorship, too: "I would like to thank my sponsor for the recent postcard and stickers, which I used to decorate the wall by the side of my mat, so I can see them every time I wake up. From exchanging letters, I've found that we both enjoy hide and seek!"

Rose agrees: "I love receiving letters from my sponsor, and I'd like to get more."



Hamisa (in the black T-shirt)
with friends outside her house

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child – or ask a friend to!

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Registered charity no. 276035

Connecting the world by letter



The process which gets your letter from the UK to a remote community in the developing world is surprisingly intricate. Plan's Dan Maguire - who manages all the mail from sponsors at Plan's London office - explains

A letter will come to our office in London, be opened, read and logged by our team of around 10 volunteers. We love receiving letters, but unfortunately there can be problems which mean we can't forward a piece of correspondence on.

It's really important that a sponsor doesn't include their address. The letter could fall into the wrong hands on its way to the sponsored child's family, and by including their address, a sponsor could then be subject to unwelcome correspondence. Where possible in cases like these, we cut out the address and remind the sponsor to omit their address in future. Otherwise we have to return it to the sponsor.

Sponsors also need to remember to include their sponsorship number on their letter; otherwise we may not know who

to send the letter on to. If the name is J. Smith, it's very difficult to track down!

Cultural considerations

There are also child protection and cultural issues we have to be aware of. It could be that someone sends an entirely innocent picture of themselves on the beach in swimwear, for example, which looks fine in the UK but might seem inappropriate to a family in a very conservative community.

We receive an average of 3,000 letters a month, although there are peaks and troughs throughout the year. On the last Day of the African Child, which falls on June 16, we got 9,000 letters and cards. The run-up to Christmas is another spike, and keeps our team of dedicated volunteers very busy.

At Plan's London office the letters and cards are sorted and sent out in

a batch every fortnight. Once they've arrived in-country, there's a second sorting process. Plan letters are received by the country office, usually in the capital city, but then have to be distributed to Plan's local offices, which are often in the remotest locations.

Village by village

Each and every letter is recorded at the local office. If necessary, it will be translated into the local language. The letters will then be sorted out village by village and delivered on to Plan field workers who are responsible for the villages. This part of the process can take time. In many developing countries, the road networks are very poor, and letters have to be transported through the bush by motorbike, on foot or even by canoe!

Very often, the field workers who distribute the letters are volunteers, people



Dan sorting letters at Plan's London office



On the road: delivering letters in El Salvador



A Plan field worker shows a letter to a sponsored child



who earn their living through farming and help Plan in their spare time.

The field workers will read the letter aloud if the child or family have difficulty reading, and everyone will gather round to hear the news. The sponsored child will want to write a letter in reply, but if the child is too young, or finds writing difficult, the field worker might offer some help to make sure the sponsor gets a full reply.

Letter-writing is such a great way to keep in touch with the progress a sponsored child is making. It's also a way to get an insight into a culture and way of life radically different from your own. And letters from sponsors are often treated as treasured gifts – sometimes they are kept forever.

Perhaps if you have time, you'll write a letter to your sponsored child today?

Writing back: many sponsored children love keeping in touch with their sponsors

Letter writing dos and don'ts

Do

- Remember to include your sponsor number and sponsored child's number
- Chat about your hobbies or sports you enjoy
- Tell them about your family
- Encourage them with their schooling or ambitions
- Ask questions!

Don't

- Give your address
- Include political or religious views
- Mention your pets – keeping a cat or dog seems natural in the UK but can appear very strange in many countries!



the Plan

watch a short film about how sponsors' letters find their way to children in Ethiopia at www.plan-uk.org/worldfamilyvideos

Postbox

Postbox is an online, easy-to-use mail service that enables you to write and send photos to your sponsored child. Go to www.plan-uk.org/postbox

Plan provides children in the poorest countries with things we take for granted – like safe running water

Speaking up for development

A growing band of dedicated speakers raise awareness of Plan's work in the UK. Helen Hudson is one, giving short but inspiring talks about Plan in local schools

Helen has been a child sponsor for 20 years, but it wasn't until she started volunteering for another charity that she came across Plan's work in the field.

"I was a health worker in a community in Kenya badly hit by HIV and AIDS," she says. "Families and children were dying in front of our eyes. I talked with Plan and they took me out to see their projects. They told me what had and hadn't worked. We saved so much time.

"I learned that if you give a family money, the father takes it and spends

it on whatever he wants – often drinking. If you support the women, they are much more likely to spend the money on feeding and educating their children. We helped the women set up businesses, rent fields and grow extra crops to feed their children.

Sponsoring change

Helen has also seen Plan's work first-hand when she visited her sponsored child in Vietnam. "What impressed me was how the whole village turned out to see me," she recalls. "They said to Chat, my sponsored child: thank her for the hospital,

thank her for the school, thank her for the water. The whole village was grateful.

"At one point during the visit his mother burst into tears. She said she could not understand how people like me worried and cared about people like her and her family – people you've never met. 'You write, you give money,' she said. 'Sometimes we hear that the Western World is bad and greedy, but people like you have made such a difference.'

"Chat's older sister had just given birth in their new maternity unit. It was just a room with bare concrete walls and two examination couches, but they told me it had made such a difference because even if the mother-to-be comes in a couple of hours before the birth, she can be helped.

"It encourages mothers-to-be to have antenatal care, and they will be more prepared if something goes wrong. And mums are much more likely to bring their babies back for their injections."

Work on the ground

After seeing so much of Plan's work in action, Helen decided in her retirement to become a Plan speaker, raising awareness of the importance of Plan's work in this country.

"For a lot of children in the countries where Plan works, it's not a case of waking up and wondering what to have for breakfast – it's a case of waking up and wondering if there'll be any breakfast at all"

"A lot of people are quite distrustful about what happens to money you give to charity. Particularly overseas aid. A lot of people now say they will only support charities in the UK. But in Vietnam and Kenya, I've actually seen what charities do.

"We in the UK think of poverty, but it's relative poverty. For a lot of children in the countries where Plan works, it's not a case of waking up and wondering what to have for breakfast – it's a case of waking up and wondering if there'll be any breakfast at all.

"I have four grandchildren, and another grandmother I know who's also a Plan sponsor said to me: 'I feel so guilty about the amount my grandchildren get at Christmas and birthdays. I can't give those children anything like what my grandchildren get, but I can give them something.'"

What really inspires Helen is the generosity and commitment of young people she meets as a speaker in schools.

"At a school in St Albans, the girls put on a fashion show in aid of Plan. What I liked was children here helping children overseas. We always hear about the horrible things children do – the knife culture among teenagers.

"Yet I go to these schools and they are doing amazing things to raise money for other children. It's good for them to learn that not everyone is as fortunate as themselves. I tell them: the future is not for old people like me – it's theirs."



Helen with photos of her current sponsored child



the Plan: become a speaker

If you have some time to spare, and would like to give short talks about Plan's work at schools, churches or other community groups in your local area, please contact Jennifer Gwynn on 0300 777 9777 or email planspeakers@plan-uk.org

Please also contact Jennifer if you would like a speaker to come to give a talk at your group.

Noticeboard

Tell us your story

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. Many have their own children who 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 contact World Family's Editor Giles Morris on giles.morris@plan-uk.org or call 0300 777 9777.



Celebrate with Plan

Whether you're planning a wedding or civil partnership, a birthday or anniversary, you can support our work by asking for donations to Plan instead of gifts

Sally Maier-Yip (pictured above) recently celebrated her 30th birthday and instead of asking for birthday presents, she requested that her friends and family made donations to help sponsor a child.

"I wanted to do something different and meaningful," explains Sally. "It was really easy to set up a page through Just Giving. Once the site was up, I sent an email out to friends, ex-colleagues and loved ones around the world and posted a short message on Facebook asking them to donate

money to this website if they intended to buy me something for my birthday."

Sally got a great response from her page and raised an amazing £225 with donations from friends all over the world.

So why not make a real difference to some of the world's poorest children by asking for donations to Plan? It's quick and simple: you can either set up a JustGiving page at www.justgiving.com or collect donations from well-wishers at your party.

If you'd like some donation envelopes or any other information, please get in touch on 0300 777 9777 or fundraising@plan-uk.org



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 need do nothing. You'll continue to receive your copy twice a year. 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.

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



Seeing lives change

“Sponsorship is the backbone of Plan,” says Worku Nigussa, a sponsorship co-ordinator in Ethiopia.

“Whatever projects we have done to change the lives of poor children and families are because of sponsorship”



Worku's role is to co-ordinate communications between sponsors and children for Plan's programme unit in Oromia, central Ethiopia. With 8,400 Plan sponsored children in the area, it's a task that keeps him very busy.

“I monitor and supervise the distribution of letters,” explains the 32-year-old, “visit sponsored children and organise sponsors' visits. I also take part in meetings with community leaders and representatives and visit projects.”

“What I really like about the job is seeing the lives of children and families changing. For example, a common problem here is communities with no supply of safe water. The children drink contaminated water, and they frequently get diarrhoea. Nothing makes me happier than seeing children and families drinking clean water provided by Plan and growing up healthy.”

The scale of the need

However, in a country with the development challenges of Ethiopia, it's not always easy. There's a limit to what Plan can do to address poverty in what is still one of the poorest countries in the world. Our work in Ethiopia focuses on improving the chances of girls and boys surviving and thriving in their very early childhood, improving standards of education and protecting children from violence and abuse.

“One of the hardest things about the job is that there are a lot of development needs which Plan can't address all at once,” says Worku. “Sometimes the local communities challenge us about these unmet needs. We have to discuss our priorities and address things gradually.”

It may be a long-term process, but it's one that yields visible results. “I like to be able to see the change for myself

and to pass that change on to sponsors in countries like the UK,” says Worku. Happily, in his job he does so on a daily basis through reports and letters.

“If you continue supporting us, we will work with renewed energy. We love to see a better life for children in our region”

“I want to thank all sponsors and supporters from the UK,” Worku adds. “They are supporting us to change the lives of children and families. My message is this: if you continue supporting us, we will work with renewed energy. We love to see a better life for children in our region.”

Take a challenge for Plan

Make 2013 the year you take on an exciting challenge for Plan – and create a real difference in the lives of some of the world's poorest children

To find out about more about any of the challenges below please visit www.plan-uk.org/challenge



Thames Path Challenge

14 to 15 September 2013

50km or 100km, run or walk – you make the choices as you enjoy the Thames Path National Trail – a superb backdrop for this exceptional challenge.



Royal Parks Half Marathon

6 October 2013

This is one of the most popular half marathons in the country, taking in iconic London sights from Buckingham Palace to the Royal Albert Hall. Register today!



Cycle India 2014

8 to 17 February 2014

Want to see India at its most exotic? The dramatic desert landscape, ancient temples and sweeping green valleys of this route will leave you in awe.

