A group of children attending a Plan International event in Thailand.
2017 marks 80 years since British journalist and broadcaster John Langdon-Davies founded Foster Parents Scheme for Children in Spain. In those early days, the organisation focused on supporting children who had been orphaned during the Spanish Civil War, asking British people to donate one shilling a day to provide a child with food, shelter and a point of contact through letter writing. This was the organisation which would ultimately evolve into Plan International.

The nature of work that Plan International UK does has, of course, changed over time – we have adapted to meet the demands of an ever-changing world, but one thing has always remained constant: our commitment to putting the needs and rights of children at the heart of all that we do. In all that we do, we listen to what children and young people tell us about how we can best work with them so that they can realise their rights.

With that in mind, when it came to refreshing our strategy our conversation returned again and again not only to the interventions that we should make, but also to the people who we should be working with and for.

People lead complex lives – no matter who they are or where in the world they live.

For a girl to achieve a quality education, she also needs access to clean water. A young woman will be more able to get a decent job if she has not been forced to become a child mother. It’s impossible to separate these needs.

Globally, the Plan International family wants children, particularly girls, to be educated and have the skills for work and life; to take action on the issues that matter to them; to have control over their lives and bodies; and to grow up cared for and free from fear of violence. We focus in particular on girls because their rights are less realised in most societies, and because when you get it right for girls you get it right for whole communities.

This strategy outlines the specific areas where we, as Plan International UK, will focus over the coming years to contribute to this global ambition and to our overarching purpose of achieving a just world and equality for girls.

It’s a bold ambition and there is much work to do. We will work alongside girls, boys, young people and their communities, and in partnership with others who share our ambitions, to create significant, meaningful and much-needed change.

Tanya Barron OBE
Plan International UK Chief Executive

Lady Amanda Ellingworth
Plan International UK Chair
This strategy spells out clear priorities for Plan International UK to guide where we focus our efforts in order to achieve the greatest impact. It reflects changes in the world at large, in the international development sector and in the UK that will shape how we can have the most impact on children’s lives – especially girls.

It also reflects our place within the Plan International family. Our colleagues in Plan International Country Offices have built deep, strong, long-lasting relationships in more than 50 countries worldwide, which enable us to work with children and young people in some of the world’s poorest communities. Our roots are in child sponsorship, and the benefits which this brings to sponsored children and their communities have led to our strong practices of child centred community development. Connecting our supporters with the communities where we work remains as important today as it has always been.

This strategy also recognises that today we receive income from a wide variety of sources and support children in many ways, in addition to our traditional sponsorship model.

**A changing world**

Today’s generation of young people is the largest in history – over half the world’s population is currently under 30, and in the world’s 48 poorest countries more than half the population are aged 19 or under.
Being poor and young makes you more likely to be denied your rights, and particularly so if you are female. Over 30% of girls in developing countries are married before they are 18 and complications in pregnancy and childbirth are a leading cause of death for girls and young women aged 19 or under.

Humanitarian crises, both man made and from natural hazards, are creating ever more needs and eroding capacities to cope. Factors such as state fragility, internal and external armed conflicts, large scale natural disasters and the impact of climate change are exacerbating the challenges faced by already vulnerable communities. It is children and the poor who are often most badly affected by these crises.

More positive changes are also occurring. Extreme poverty has halved in the last 25 years, for example, and the number of children dying before they are 5 years old has fallen from 35,000 to 16,000 per day. While there is clearly still much work to do, significant progress has been made. Technological breakthroughs, growing investment remittances and other non-aid financial flows are also helping alleviate poverty

A changing sector
The world came together to agree the Global Goals which promise to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all by 2030. Every government around the world has signed up to deliver them, to make meaningful change happen for all. The Global Goals apply universally, not just to the poorest countries – they’re as relevant to the UK as they are to developing countries.

The UK government has stated it will continue to commit 0.7% of gross national income to international development: a very positive commitment. International development now benefits from a much broader range of types of organisations than ever before; it’s no longer the sole preserve of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs). The focus is on results achieved, not on who achieves them. In a crowded space, there are more opportunities for partnerships to accelerate change, and greater scrutiny of development funds and ways of working.

In the UK, public trust and confidence in charities has been damaged by media coverage of poor practices in some parts of the sector. Changing fundraising regulations impact the way that we connect with both existing and new supporters.

But some things have not changed enough.
Persistent stereotypes, structures and social norms mean that there are a number of groups who remain discriminated against, whether for gender, age, race, disability or sexual orientation. These groups are marginalised and excluded. Ensuring that people in these groups are not left behind will always be a priority of our work.
**PURPOSE**

We strive for a just world that advances children’s rights and equality for girls.

We engage people and partners to:

- Empower children, young people and communities to make vital changes that tackle the root causes of discrimination against girls, exclusion and vulnerability
- Drive change in practice and policy at local, national and global levels through our reach, experience and knowledge of the realities children face
- Work with children and communities to prepare for and respond to crises and to overcome adversity
- Support the safe and successful progression of children from birth to adulthood

Everything that we do contributes to all of the Global Goals, especially those which advance the rights of children and girls, and in particular those who are hardest to reach.

A group of sponsored children from Bomi county, Liberia.
OUR 5 STRATEGIC GOALS

Taking into account the context in which we’re working as well as the things that we are good at and known for, we have identified five strategic goals. We believe that striving to achieve these five goals will enable us to achieve the greatest impact for children.

1. Equality for girls
2. Young people empowered into successful adulthood
3. Resilience in fragile communities
4. Diverse and effective partnerships
5. Organisational excellence
Strategic Goal
Equality for Girls

Working with and for adolescent girls

We know that no-one bears the brunt of poverty and inequality more than adolescent girls and that empowered girls can drive development – so investing in them is one of the best interventions we can make to end poverty for all.

We’ll do more work like…

• Campaigning with and for girls through our Because I am a Girl campaign, in order to see changes in global legislation which enable girls to realise their rights.

• Programming focused on adolescent girls, focusing in areas like education; child marriage; sexual and reproductive health and rights; and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

• Working with men and boys on the barriers to girls’ rights.

• Growing fundraising for work which supports girls.

• Examining the reality of girls’ lives through publications such as our Real Choices, Real Lives cohort study and The State of Girls’ Rights in the UK.

Bernadette and Margaret are members of a girls empowerment group in Zambia.
Young people in the UK and globally are critical thinkers, change-makers, innovators and leaders. Working with them as they make the transition into adulthood brings benefits to whole communities – they can be a huge force for social, economic and political good.

We’ll do more work like…

- Empowering young people to be advocates at local, national and global levels, ensuring their voices are heard.
- Supporting young people to develop the knowledge and skills they need to enter the world of work and achieve economic empowerment.
- Campaigning for and with young people through participatory projects.
- Engaging young people in global child rights issues with a focus on girls’ rights, through our Youth Advisory Panel and Youth Action Groups.

A trainee mechanic working at a vocational training centre in Rwanda.
Disasters, emergencies and other humanitarian crises could reverse years of poverty-alleviation progress. Existing vulnerabilities such as age, gender and disability are exacerbated in these settings, and the specific needs of these groups are often overlooked.

We'll do more work like…

- Building resilience to enable communities to withstand shocks and stresses.

- Responding to humanitarian emergencies, meeting communities’ immediate survival needs including water, food, shelter and healthcare.

- Supporting girls and boys to overcome trauma and protecting children from abuse and exploitation through psychosocial support, child-friendly spaces and the provision of education in emergencies.

- Designing programmes which recognise the specific needs of marginalised groups such as adolescents and disabled people.
Working with others to achieve the greatest impact for children and young people

Diverse perspectives lead to great ideas, so we’ll work with a wide range of groups and organisations in many different ways. Collaboration and cooperation will enable us to move faster and achieve more.
STRATEGIC GOAL
ORGANISATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Working together to make continuous improvements

We’re a talented, dedicated and hardworking team of staff, volunteers and youth advisors. We’re committed to working in the most effective and impactful way. It’s a fundamental responsibility we have to the communities we work with and those who support our work.

We’ll prioritise...

Transparency, accountability and effectiveness

- We’ll publish information about the work that we do, the money we spend, and what we’re achieving.
- We’ll be accountable to the communities we work with and to our donors.
- We’ll work hard, manage our time and resources responsibly, and do more with every pound we raise.

Quality, data and evidence

- We’ll design quality programmes which put children and young people at their heart, and are underpinned by our cornerstones of governance, resilience, gender and inclusion, and environmental sustainability.
- We’ll gather quality data to give us the information we need to understand the challenges that children and young people face and the progress that is being made.
- We’ll make evidence based, data-driven decisions.

Innovation, learning and adapting

- We’ll analyse the impact of our programmes and apply lessons learned.
- We’ll innovate and modernise existing products and processes, listening to the communities we work with and our supporters to understand what’s most needed.
- We’ll develop ourselves so that we’re always improving our skills and knowledge.
We’ll hold ourselves to account and will expect our partners to do the same. We’ll measure our impact, delivering quality programmes that make the greatest possible contribution to the realisation of the rights of girls, boys and young people.

We’re proud to be part of the Plan International family and of the contribution that our work makes to the global impact achieved. By delivering what we set out in this strategy, by the end of 2020 we will have worked with the rest of the Plan International family to change the lives of 276 million people in more than 50,000 communities.

This will include:

- Taking action with and for 100 million girls to enable them to lead healthy, fulfilling lives where their rights are respected.
- Providing training to community members so that they’re equipped to promote and uphold children’s rights – more than 640,000 people trained in gender equality and more than 880,000 trained in child protection.
- Training over 1 million young people in livelihood skills including agriculture, entrepreneurship and vocational training.
- Providing sexuality education or awareness training for more than 4 million children and young people and 450,000 parents, teachers and community representatives.
- Working with 2.3 million people whose lives have been impacted by disasters or emergencies.
- Training 7.5 million people in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) practices and supporting 4.1 million households to construct or rehabilitate latrines.
- Working in partnership with 17,500 local, national and international civil society organisations, 1,800 local and central government institutions and more than 250 corporate and private partners.

Our work will not be done until every child lives in a just world where their rights are respected, and every girl and young woman can access the same opportunities as boys and young men. We’ll work with and for children and young people project by project, campaign by campaign – until every barrier has been taken down.
Girls take part in a march for women’s rights in Aileu district, Timor Leste.

Photo: Plan International