

world family

The magazine for Plan UK supporters Autumn 2012

the Plan:
to keep girls in
school and out of
forced marriage



Plus news from Bangladesh, Ghana, Niger, Vietnam, Zimbabwe 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: Rob Few, Jane Hahn, Suzanne Lee
Diego Medina, AFM Shamsuzzaman
Daniel Silva, Shepherd Tozvireva

Cover: A girl at a Plan-supported school in Dosso, Niger

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

Message from Marie

I often emphasise the fact that Plan's work is long term. It has to be to really change societies where resources are scarce and deeply-entrenched traditions hold sway

Now that I'm retiring after twelve years as Chief Executive of Plan UK, I can reflect on the enormous amount of progress I've seen children and communities make in that time.

When I started this job in 2000, I visited poor rural communities in Kenya. It was impossible not to feel the shadow of HIV and AIDS hanging heavy over those vulnerable families.

The longer I have worked for Plan, the more I have seen how the problems faced by poor communities are intertwined – as are the solutions. And often, it's teenage girls who hold the answer

At the time, the pandemic threatened to decimate the whole of sub-Saharan Africa. But slowly, patiently, and in partnership with local people, Plan was putting into place measures to halt the spread of the virus: HIV and AIDS awareness sessions in the communities, sex education for youngsters, help for children orphaned by the disease, counselling for people with HIV as well as help for them to find ways to make a living.

Of course, HIV and AIDS is still a major problem in Africa, but the pandemic is now more containable than many thought possible.

The longer I have worked for Plan, the more I have seen how the problems faced by poor communities are intertwined – as are the solutions. And often, it's teenage girls who hold the answer.

You might not see an obvious link between sex education and environmental problems like drought and farmland turning to desert. But



enabling teenage girls to choose when and whether to have children not only halts the spread of HIV; it leads to smaller, more manageable families which place less of a strain on the land.

Education for teenage girls clearly leads to a higher standard of living for the girls in later life, but it also benefits their children. An educated mother knows how to improve the nutrition of her children, and how important it is to get her baby vaccinated. So education for girls reduces child mortality, and enables the next generation to lead healthier, happier lives.

The central role of girls in ending poverty inspired us to launch Plan's Because I am a Girl campaign in 2007. The campaign aims to help girls stay in schools and reach their full potential. You can find out more at www.becauseiamagirl.org

The campaign still has years to run and there remains a huge amount to do. But with continued backing from loyal supporters like you, I have no doubt that in retirement I will see Plan go from strength to strength.

Thank you for the part you play.

Marie Staunton

Marie Staunton
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



International Day of the Girl

The girl in this picture lives in the remote Dosso region of south-west Niger. But she's well aware of International Day of the Girl

The United Nations officially declared 11 October as International Day of the Girl last year, following extensive campaigning by Plan. The day will act as a focus for awareness raising and campaigning to improve the lives of girls worldwide.

"Girls are the future of the world and we definitely need a day dedicated to their issues," says Liberian activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Leymah Gbowee, a longstanding supporter of our campaign.

Go to www.becauseiamagirl.org for ways you can get involved.

Celebrating 75 years of Plan

A massive international children's party took place on 20 March to mark Plan's 75th anniversary

Over 75,000 people attended. There were video links across the world, and fun ranging from girls' football in Bangladesh to song and dance in Brazil.



Children in Peru enjoy Plan's anniversary celebrations



Go to plan-international.org/75/party.php to see more



Girls making media

The road to the Volta region from Ghana's capital Accra is lined with tilapia fish farms and beautiful cotton trees in bloom

But daily realities for children here are not so picturesque. Teenage girls make the long daily walk to collect water; boys no older than six sell mushrooms by the roadside.

Sitting under the shade of the biggest tree in the school grounds, members of the Plan-supported Akasanoma (which means "Talking Bird") media club discuss their work to improve life for Ghanaian children.

Child activists

Akasanoma is one of seven Girls Making Media projects supported by Plan in different parts of the country. Supported by an economics teacher and a language teacher and mentored by professional Ghanaian journalists, the students are acquiring journalistic skills to highlight the issues children face.

"I can now write a report, write an article, use a camera," says Akasanoma member Claudette. "When I was not part of the club, I couldn't interview anyone."

Forced to work

Akasanoma members are mostly aged between 15 and 19, and their current focus is on child labour. The price of cocoa in the region is low, so children are being used to transport cocoa into neighbouring Togo where it can be sold for more money.

Girls from poor families are commonly sent to work as maids. "In this town, we have realised that many girls drop out of school, often for financial reasons," says member Elizabeth.

The group has achievable goals for future action. "As a club we have an action plan to bring at least five girls back to school," adds Elizabeth, "by holding one-to-one discussions with the parents and by organising a girls' football match to highlight the problem."



This 14-year-old girl has been helped thanks to Forgotten Children supporters

Dhaka Dreams

Thanks to all our supporters who gave to our Forgotten Children appeal last Christmas. Their generosity helped a Plan-supported project in Dhaka, Bangladesh, which provides a safe haven for vulnerable youngsters who live and work on the streets

who ended up on the streets of Dhaka and are now being helped by Plan.

If you'd like to make a donation to Plan's work with Forgotten Children, call 0800 526 848, go to www.plan-uk.org/forgottenchildren or send a cheque marked "Forgotten Children" to FREEPOST PLAN.

We've already been able to help over 6,000 children transform their lives by providing basic education, health and hygiene facilities – plus information on issues such as sexual abuse, child labour and trafficking.

Now a special video, Dhaka Dreams, tells the story of four children



Watch Dhaka Dreams at www.plan-uk.org/worldfamilyvideos

Please check the address

A quick reminder: it's more than two years now since Plan UK's London office moved from Camden to Islington.

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

From April 2013, post sent to our old Underhill Street address will no longer be forwarded on to us.

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!

A lost childhood



Bangladesh has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world. One girl in five becomes a wife before her 15th birthday – a cruel tradition that wrecks lives. The BBC's Angus Crawford investigates

“Here girls are a burden, they don't earn income in this culture,” says Myrna Evora, Plan's country director in Bangladesh. And they are totally dependent on their families to pay a dowry to their future husband to secure a marriage.

“Dowry for a very poor family is the work of a lifetime,” explains Myrna. “They'd rather start early because the dowry is not too high. The girl is more saleable.”

Myrna has met many of these child brides. “They say to me, ‘I lost my childhood.’”

A hateful illness

In a quiet voice Poppy says: “It's a very hateful illness, I can't stand the smell”.

She's suffering from fistulas, serious internal injuries which have left her incontinent. It's caused by giving birth too young and not getting proper medical attention.

Poppy is about 12 and was forced to marry a man who was more than ten years older than her. She got pregnant, but lost her child.

“It died in my tummy and they had to cut it out”. She walked into the clinic alone. Her husband abandoned her because of the illness.

Plan is keeping girls in school – and out of forced and early marriage



Oli, 12, who campaigns against child marriage

I ask her if she'll ever marry again, and she shakes her head. "I say to other girls my age: 'You should not get married. If you do, this is the condition you will be in.'"

Child campaigners

Poppy is not the only one speaking out against child marriage. Twelve-year-old Oli is a Plan sponsored child and a campaigner who goes around the slum where he lives in Dhaka standing up to his elders and telling them why they shouldn't marry off their daughters so young.

Oli approached Plan, telling them he wanted to set up a group led by children to try and stop the practice. He goes door to door with a group of friends persuading, scolding and hectoring parents.

At one house, he demands to know why there's no birth certificate for a man's daughter. There and then, they register her birth and warn the father that they'll

be watching him. "I think we do a better job than the adults... the adults think we're so young and yet we know so much... we're more enthusiastic than the older people."

Since they started work, it's estimated by local community workers that the number of child marriages in that area has dropped by as much as 50 percent.

"I'm getting her married because I love her"

Jemi is 13 and likes playing hopscotch. When we meet her she's due to get married in six days. Her mother has chosen the day and picked the groom.

When we ask if she's looking forward to her wedding she looks down at the floor and says: "Not very much, no." She's small and very shy. She has

stickers of butterflies on the back of her hands. Her mother tells us she has to get her married now because she won't have to pay a dowry. If she waits, it will cost her money they don't have.

When officials from the local government and a Plan partner organisation arrive to stop the wedding, she argues with them. She tells them the family can't afford to send her to school any more. If she remains unmarried, people will say bad things about her. "I'm getting her married because I love her."

But the officials threaten to prosecute her if she goes ahead, and she starts to cry. Then, in front of her neighbours, she announces that the wedding is cancelled, adding: "I didn't realise it was wrong."

As for Jemi, she smiles and confides "I think it is really good what has happened".

Angus Crawford's Crossing Continents was broadcast on Radio 4 in April. You can listen to the full programme at

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01ghc47

A longer version of this article appeared on the BBC website. Additional reporting by Giles Morris.

Creating alternatives

As well as supporting anti-early marriage children's groups, Plan works to improve standards of education, so more girls (as well as boys) stay in school. And we are working to improve incomes of the poorest families, so they can afford to send their daughters to school and pay for a dowry for older girls.



A schoolgirl in Akateng, Ghana

Behind the school gates

Getting more girls into education has always been a key aim for Plan. But what happens once they're in school? What challenges do they face and how can we prevent them dropping out – especially during the teenage years?

“During adolescence, the world expands for boys but contracts for girls,” says the renowned Nigerian economist Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. “Boys gain autonomy, mobility, job prospects. Girls are systematically deprived these opportunities. They have restricted mobility and are susceptible to forced marriage and early pregnancy.”

Enormous and well-documented challenges confront both girls and boys who want to continue with schooling. Paying fees, passing examinations, being fluent in an additional language and travelling to schools far from home are just some of the problems.

“I did well in school but I had to leave because of one of my teachers. He asked me to marry him and I refused his proposal. As he didn't appreciate this, he told me off all the time in front of my classmates which I couldn't stand”

Yet girls face extra challenges. Not only is there the menace of early and forced marriage (discussed on page 7 to 8), but girls have to deal with discrimination and harassment within the classroom, as this year's Because I am a Girl report makes clear.

“The teacher wanted to marry me”

The report includes a story of sexual harassment suffered by Mareme, a 17-year-old girl in Senegal.

“I did well in school but I had to leave because of one of my teachers,” says Mareme. “He asked me to marry him and I refused his proposal. As he didn't appreciate this, he told me off all the time in front of my classmates, which I couldn't stand.”

The stigma was too much for Mareme and she stopped attending school. Unfortunately, her family then decided that this meant she should marry.

“At that time I was going out with a guy from the village, but when I left school, my father gave me in marriage to my cousin – who I didn't like – without warning. I decided to run away but

I didn't have any money. My boyfriend advised me to stay as they would blame him if I went.

Domestic violence

“I decided to stay and follow this advice, but I knew I wouldn't last long in the marriage. After getting married I argued with my husband every day as I refused to sleep with him and he hit me. All the neighbours know he's always hitting me.

“The day before yesterday the neighbours told my mother and she came to get me straight away. Since then I've been staying with my parents. I want to get divorced and marry my boyfriend, as it's him who I love. This would never have happened if it wasn't for my teacher.”

Attitudes in the classroom

Mareme's story is a dramatic example of how harassment in school can spiral out of control and wreck a young life. But girls are influenced by a host of more subtle factors.

“Are girls taught that they are not as clever as boys?” asks Because I am a Girl report editor Sharon Goulds. “Are they taught that girls don't do maths and science? Do they learn that women should be subservient to men because all the pictures in the textbooks depict them in this way?

“Or are they learning how to make decisions and choices and to understand the world, so that when they leave school they will have the power to lead lives they value?”

The numbers game

These are questions Plan workers have to ask themselves more and more when trying to improve education for girls, because subtle and ingrained attitudes can be as important as infrastructure and equipment. Plan can count the number of desks, textbooks and toilets. We can check the balance of male and female students, teachers and officials. We can note the differences in male and female students' examination scores.

This kind of tally can be extremely useful, but it gives us only an initial idea of what girls' experiences are in education and how they might need to be improved. So Plan is doing

Continue →

more to capture girls' personal experiences and feelings about school, using anonymous suggestion boxes, for example, which can be used in confidence.

Self-assurance and space

"I think boys are confident enough and they can ask questions in the class," says a girl from Pakistan. "This gives teachers the idea that they are understanding the topic and boys are intelligent. We girls also want to ask questions, but we are shy and cannot ask questions. Thus, we become only listeners in class."

One study found definite differences in how male and female students occupy space. Girls were found huddled together both inside and outside the classroom, while boys occupied space more comfortably by spreading around.

Research in Botswana and Ghana found that boys dominated both the physical classroom space and the verbal space. Boys would shout answers, jeer and "shush" when girls attempted to participate actively, and ridicule girls if they answered wrongly. And teachers in general did little to step in and challenge their behaviour.

Plan is working to change classroom behaviour by training teachers, encouraging girls to speak up with confidence and fostering a culture of respect and understanding between boys and girls.

You can read more about what Plan is doing and our recommendations in the 2012 **Because I am a Girl** report at www.plan-uk.org/becauseiamagirl-research

Men and boys

It's seldom commented on, but male family members can have a very positive influence in encouraging girls to continue their education

"My brother encourages me to study better. He is the one who convinced my parents to send me to college," says Harika, who lives in rural Andhra Pradesh, India.

Last year's **Because I am a Girl** report found that fathers with secondary education are more likely to encourage their daughters to pursue an education. And men with higher levels of education are less likely to be violent in relationships with women or think that it's acceptable to be violent.

the Plan:

check how many of the most popular children's books you read growing up and help get girls into school

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Registered charity no. 276035





Plan Postbox

Writing to your sponsored child is a great way to strengthen the bond, and now there's an exciting new way to do it

Postbox is an online, easy-to-use mail service that allows you to:

- write postcards and letters to your sponsored child
- upload a photo or choose one from Plan's gallery
- choose from a variety of colourful borders

Just go to www.plan-uk.org/postbox and follow the simple step-by-step instructions.

Here's what sponsors are saying about Postbox:

"My four-year-old loved being able to write his message on the computer and attach a photo. So easy and great to be able to put coloured borders on the pictures too"

"This is a very good idea – no excuse for not putting pen to paper now"

"As a full-time working mummy I never seem to have time to write a letter, dig out a photo etc. But I did it in 10 minutes using the new online postbox. So pleased to have finally been able to write to our sponsored child after far too long"

Why not try Postbox today? The child you sponsor would love to hear from you! Go to

www.plan-uk.org/postbox

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Crisis in Niger

Women and girls go out early to fetch wood, which they sell at the market to buy food

"For the last month we've started cutting down wood because there's no other way to feed ourselves," says one mother.

A bowlful fetches about £1, but prices are going down because so many families are doing the same thing to survive.

Drought is now a severe problem in the whole of West Africa, with food shortages threatening more than six million people in Niger alone. Soaring grain prices, irregular rainfall and locust attacks have added to the problem.

Plan has been working in many of the affected areas for several years, trying to help poor families grow more and better crops and raise their incomes. But this crisis is extreme, and immediate help is needed.

The situation has been worsened by tens of thousands of Malian refugees who have entered Niger fleeing political instability in their own country. Almost 200,000 refugees have now sought shelter over the borders, causing extra pressure on hard-pressed families.

Plan is distributing free food to targeted groups in villages and schools, filling up 25 cereal banks and offering nutritional advice to communities. We are also providing food support, cereal grains, vegetables, mosquito nets and blankets to villagers and refugees.

However, we need your help to reach out to more affected children and families.

the Plan:

help to feed children and support communities ravaged by the food crisis in West Africa

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Registered charity no. 276035

Giving girls a chance in Vietnam

“My day starts at 4.30 am. I husk corn and cook maize for the whole family. I usually have a breakfast of maize at six and walk to school. It takes me one hour to walk there”

These are the words of Linh, an eleven-year-old girl, describing her typical day. Linh lives in Ha Giang, a region of northern Vietnam that is poor, mountainous and remote. In fact, it's not unusual for a whole family there to live on as little as 43p a day.

Enthusiasm for school

Hearteningly, Linh is keen on getting an education. “At school, I like music best and my favourite game is skipping,” she says. “I love embroidering when I have free time. I wish I could finish year 12 and become a teacher. My teacher knows many interesting things.

“In a week, there are two days I need to stay at school for the afternoon class,” she goes on. “During those days, I have lunch with my schoolmates, which makes me very happy. I can have steamed rice for lunch, supported by the government.

“On days when I don't have afternoon class, I walk home and collect firewood on the way back. After a quick lunch, I tend the cow.”

Chores at home

Her evening routine is the same whether Linh goes to school or not: “When the sun goes down, I return home, helping my sister-in-law to prepare dinner” (Linh's father died when she was a baby and her mother remarried, so she lives with an elder brother and his family). “We usually have dinner together at 7pm. At 8pm I do my homework. In my village, there's no electricity, so I use a torch to study. I go to sleep at 9pm.”

This exhausting daily schedule is typical for girls like Linh, who is doubly disadvantaged even by the standards of the region. For one thing, she's from the H'Mong ethnic group: one of more than 20 ethnic minorities in Ha Giang in total. H'Mong have their own language, customs and traditions. Teachers, doctors, government workers and others in authority tend to speak only Vietnamese, creating a real language barrier.

Problems for girls

What's more, because she's a girl, Linh has a lower social status than boys. Linh is very well aware that girls' lives are more circumscribed than boys.



“Girls have to wake up early to do the cooking, and girls have to work harder to help the family,” she says. “If the family doesn't have money, only boys can go to school. Girls have to stay at home and work. Boys are preferred by parents over girls.”

And Linh doesn't see marriage as a way out. “I don't want to get married,” she says. “Married women in my village have very hard lives.”

What Plan is doing

Plan has just started a new four-year Girls Fund programme to improve life for girls in Ha Giang. We're improving education by building or upgrading schools in the poorest areas and helping communities to understand the value of nursery schooling.

We're making sure schools cater for children from ethnic minorities. We're helping ethnic minority children to learn Vietnamese, and setting up reading and play groups for children aged four to 11.

Plus we're training local village health workers on ways to boost mother-and-child health, improving nutrition and hygiene, and raising awareness of the risks of early marriage so fewer girls get married too young.





Clockwise from the left:
A mother and child from
Linh's province; Linh (far
left) skipping at school;
ethnic minority girls from
Ha Giang, Vietnam

the Plan:

make a donation to the
Girls Fund and help girls
like Linh build a better life

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Registered charity no. 276035

The strength to succeed

Few countries have had fortunes as mixed as Zimbabwe over recent years. Political instability, hyperinflation and the HIV pandemic have shaken a once-prosperous nation. But Zimbabwe is full of hope, and inspiring stories of individual achievement – especially among young people who have been sponsored through Plan



Nothing is impossible

“Every time I see a Plan logo, I cannot help but smile. The logo reminds me of 1990 when I was photographed for the first time,” says lawyer and ex-sponsored child Yeukai Mugumba from the city of Kwekwe in central Zimbabwe.

“I remember holding my mother’s hand and smiling as the photographer clicked the camera,” Yeukai continues. “I treasure that day for it changed my life. I am now a qualified lawyer and am thankful for opportunities facilitated by Plan.

“The first letter that I received in my life was from my sponsor. I remember showing all my friends what a letter looks like! We all marvelled and looked forward to more letters. The letters inspired me to work hard, and I improved my grammar through the letters I wrote to my sponsor. I enjoyed sharing events that impressed me in my community.”

Sponsor’s influence

“In many ways, the letters shaped and influenced the profession I was to pursue in later years. As my English grammar improved, so did my performance in school.

The first letter that I received in my life was from my sponsor. I remember showing all my friends what a letter looks like! We all marvelled and looked forward to more letters

“Plan supported me from Year 11 up. As a sponsored child I had the opportunity to discuss at length with Plan’s community development facilitators. I learnt a lot and understood more about child abuse, child protection and participation – this knowledge I was to use in later years.

“I graduated from Fort Hare University’s Law School in 2009 and I am currently working as a Public Prosecutor in the Ministry of Justice Legal and Parliamentary Affairs. My passion is to help the less privileged who seek justice through the

courts. The cases that are close to my heart include those of child abuse and women’s rights violations.

“Where I come from, I am a role model among girls and all children as I am the first lawyer to have made it. As a girl child I believe I have paved the way for others to follow. Nothing is impossible.”



Young lawyer
Yeukai Mugumba



Writing to the boy or girl you sponsor could inspire them to greater achievement in later life

Providing an alternative

Kwekwe is a centre for the gold mining industry, with miners arriving from across Zimbabwe in the hope of relatively high wages. Unfortunately, the money earned by men far from their families has turned Kwekwe into a centre for prostitution.

Teenage girls are particularly vulnerable to the sex industry. High incidences of teenage pregnancy and HIV and AIDS are accompanying dangers.

Fortunately, Yeukai is not the only one fighting for children's rights in Kwekwe. Nineteen-year-old Charles is also playing his part. Charles is an ex-sponsored child who knows the gold mining business well. Born into a poor family, his father worked as a miner, and earned scarcely enough to support a family of seven.

Heading a family

With help from Plan, Charles was able to get an education. And soon after completing secondary school in 2010, he secured a job in a gold mine. From his wages he saved enough to buy a gold detector, and now runs his own business helping miners detect where to prospect for gold deposits.

The investment has proved worthwhile and Charles has progressed well. He has also bought himself a mini-van that he uses for his business.

The former sponsored child has braved all the challenges of his upbringing to look after his younger brothers and sisters, paying their school fees and their daily upkeep.



Charles in front of his mini-van

Doing a little more

If you're already a sponsor but would like to make a bigger difference, there's a huge range of ways to help – from running a marathon to leaving a gift in your will. You could even help out next time you're shopping!

The agony and the ecstasy

Graeme Potts has no fewer than nine gruelling fundraising runs in his diary this year, from a 12-hour race around the Humber Bridge to a ten-mile slog in full army gear, including backpack. World Family asked him why he does it

“I like the challenge of it,” says Graeme, 28. “The sense of completing these events is quite overwhelming.”

As well as running, Graeme is a keen trekker. He recalls a trek he undertook to the base camp of Mount Everest (pictured below).

“The sensation of finally getting there was really overwhelming,” he says, “but the process was absolute hell. I had altitude

sickness, aching muscles; I couldn't eat, couldn't sleep, but the people were really good fun to be with.”

Every one of Graeme's runs this year will help to fundraise for Plan. Graeme chose to support Plan because he appreciates the link with his sponsored child. “With Plan, you get to see how the sponsored child is doing.

Every one of Graeme's runs this year will help to fundraise for Plan

“I like the fact you can communicate. I know my sponsored child is enjoying school, doing music and getting the vaccinations he needs. Obviously things

could be better for him but he's doing alright.”

Last year, becoming a father inspired Graeme to focus on fundraising for Plan's work to improve the lives of girls. “My daughter's got the world at her feet,” he says. “She can do whatever she wants, be whoever she wants. There are so many girls who don't have that opportunity. That can't be right.

“It's such an important issue, to give girls a way out of poverty by giving them an education.”

If you're interested in running, trekking or doing other challenges for Plan, please contact Kevin Machin at kevin.machin@plan-uk.org



Planting the seed

Perhaps the biggest long-term impact you could make is leaving a legacy to Plan's future work. Kashmir Kaur from Leeds is one long-term supporter who has chosen to do just that

“I wanted to improve conditions for a community, and particularly for the children,” says Kashmir of her sponsorship. “I’ve travelled in South America. That’s one of the reasons I chose to sponsor a child in Ecuador. I had firsthand experience of seeing the kind of communities who need Plan’s help.

“What I like about sponsorship is the fact that you’re contacting someone and getting feedback from the community. Currently I’m sponsoring a little boy. I usually get letters in Spanish from an older member of his family with a translation.”

How did the idea of a legacy come about? “My family was talking about drawing up wills,” Kashmir



Boys in Ecuador

explains. “I was thinking it would be nice to help children in some way. Because I work in education – I teach at the University of Leeds – I thought, why not leave a legacy for a school, giving more opportunities for children to make more of a contribution to society and their communities.”

She describes the legacy as “leaving something behind that

hopefully will contribute and help a community to grow. It’s like planting a sapling and watching it mature into a tree.”

If you’d like to discuss leaving a legacy, please contact our Legacy Advisor Gideon King in complete confidence on 020 3217 0213 or gideon.king@plan-uk.org

Shopping with a difference

Choose One when you’re shopping for everyday basics like eggs, porridge, mineral water and toilet paper, and 100 percent of the profit will go to life-changing projects in developing countries, many of which are managed by Plan

The idea for One came to founder Duncan Goose after he took a break from a career in advertising to go travelling. “I was fortunate to spend a couple of years riding round the world on a motorcycle,” says Duncan.

“The world is an amazing place, full of warmth and generosity and humanity, but riddled with huge issues. We called it One because our intention at first was to change one person’s life, one family’s life and one community’s life. We’ve changed two million lives so far.”

Customer pressure

If you’re searching the supermarket shelves for One products and can’t find them, Duncan suggests you speak to the manager. “Consumer power is so important to us. We’d

love people to say to the supermarket manager or customer services, why don’t you stock the One brand?”

You can also like One on Facebook at www.onedifference.org/facebook



An amazing privilege and an emotional day

A visit to your sponsored child can add a whole new dimension – as long-term sponsors Peter and Judith Bates of Cheltenham found on a special day in Sri Lanka

“We started the day at the Plan office in Anuradhapura, northern Sri Lanka where we were made very welcome. The office staff showed us their new computer system, and explained how they handle the correspondence from over 9,000 sponsors. We’ll definitely think about them the next time we write!

We were shown Sanduni’s file and were disappointed to find that the letter and photos we had sent some weeks earlier to introduce ourselves had not yet arrived. Lesson number one: allowing for translation, letters can take up to three months to reach a sponsored child!

Time to celebrate

Then it was into a waiting Plan vehicle and off to meet Sanduni. It was only a couple of days before Buddhist New Year, a major public holiday and celebration, so the streets were thronged with people out shopping at market stalls for food and new clothes. We admitted to each other we were a bit apprehensive about the visit, as we didn’t know what to expect.

We drove out of the busy town, bumped down a dirt road, came to a halt, and suddenly we were surrounded by a host of excited, smiling and laughing children. Any worries we may have had immediately disappeared.

We quickly recognised 10-year-old Sanduni from the photo we’d been sent, and initial shyness quickly evaporated.

Guests of honour

The next surprise came when we learnt that this was a very special day for Sanduni’s family. Today they were moving into their new house, and we were to be guests of honour at their housewarming. Having previously shared a simple house with their extended family, they had just built themselves a two-room brick house next door. The new house would eventually have electricity and running water.

Once we had arrived, the whole family gathered for a traditional ceremony where a dish of milk is boiled on

a hearth in the centre of the floor of the new house. The milk has to boil over and run down the side of the pan, to symbolise the overflowing of happiness in the house. There was big cheer from us all when the milk did eventually boil over.

We handed over the presents we had brought with us: a photo album with pictures of our family and home, a tablecloth which my own 95-year-old mother had decorated with English farming scenes, and some toys, pens and paper for the children.

Planting a tree

A feast had been prepared to mark the occasion, including traditional cakes and sweets. Then, we were invited to help plant two coconut trees in the garden of the new house to commemorate our visit. We were happy to oblige, and fortunately everyone lent a hand.

All too soon it was time to leave. This was the point at which the family presented us with a pair of decorative vases – an incredibly touching gesture as they had already showed us amazing hospitality. We wished each other Happy New Year, and pulled away still surrounded by a sea of smiling faces and waving hands. It was a very emotional moment.

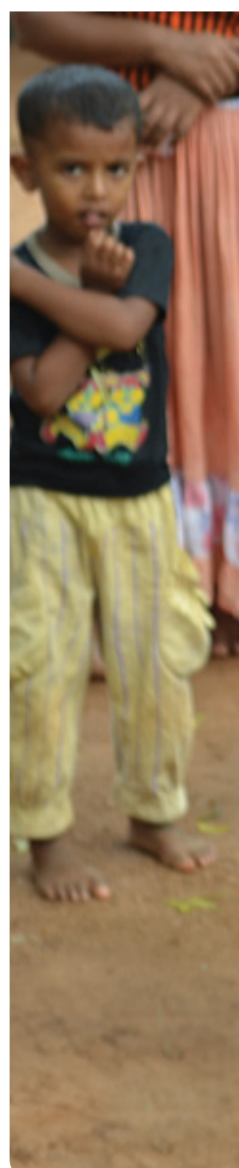
Seeing progress firsthand

Plan staff took us to see the local primary school where Plan is refurbishing a row of classrooms. This will mean that each year group has their own room. We also visited a nursery school facility established with Plan’s support. Both were fairly basic by western standards, but it was interesting to talk to Plan staff and learn that as much emphasis is put on raising the quality of the teaching as on the physical facilities.

Meeting Sanduni was an amazing privilege, which will bring a whole new dimension to our correspondence for the remainder of our sponsorship. We appreciate that not everyone will be able to visit their sponsored child, but our advice is that if you have the opportunity, just go for it – you won’t regret it!

Personal connections – community impact

All sponsor visits are funded by the sponsor. Sponsors’ contributions go to help fund community-led projects in the countries where their sponsored children live, rather than to individual children.





Clockwise from the top: Peter, Judith and Sanduni (on Judith's right) plant a coconut tree; playing tennis in the new backyard; saying goodbye



Tell us your story

People sponsor a child with Plan for a wide range of reasons – and many have fascinating stories to tell. If you'd like to share why you sponsor, and are happy to be featured in the media, please email yourstory@plan-uk.org including your sponsor number.



the Plan:

visit your sponsored child

Where
ACROSS THE WORLD

Where
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Impact
To see for yourself the difference Plan is making

To find out more contact Jeni Gwynn on 0300 777 9777 or email planukvisits@plan-uk.org

Registered charity no. 276035



Noticeboard

Challenge yourself!



Take a challenge, raise money and make a real difference – with a trek to support Plan:

- **Sisters to the Summit (March 2013)**
Join a group of like-minded women for the first all-women trek to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro.
- **Everest Base Camp (March, September and November 2013)**
Hike to base camp and enjoy awe-inspiring views.
- **Kilimanjaro Summit Climb (June, August and October 2013)**
After a tough climb, enjoy the snow-capped scenery.

Visit www.plan-uk.org/challenge or email kevin.machin@plan-uk.org to find out more. Or choose your own adventure and raise money for Plan at www.charitychallenge.com or www.classictours.co.uk

Girls schools for Plan



Our exciting partnership with the Girls' Schools Association continues as more schools sign up to join Plan's Because I am a Girl campaign

Earlier this year, girls from three schools in St Albans, Herts, came together to arrange a fashion show showcasing ethical clothes, and raised over £4,000!

"The idea of girls helping girls seemed to really appeal," says organiser Lauren Eaves, 16. "It was amazing to see how much people gave of their time, money and effort."

If you are a pupil, teacher or parent and would like to get your school involved please email schools@plan-uk.org or call 0300 777 9777.

Moved to share

We're tremendously grateful to the hardworking Plan supporters who do so much to raise awareness of our work



A touching story of what can be done comes from Plan speaker, sponsor and fundraiser Nigel Wells, (pictured left) who completed this year's London Marathon in support of Plan.

"I have a small display of photographs from a Plan project in Bangladesh which I use for fundraising," says Nigel. "I put it up in the village hall last Sunday after the morning service.



Ashleigh with Nigel's fundraising display

"An eight-year-old girl called Ashleigh came and looked at the photographs. After I told her the story about the plight of the children in the pictures, she said she would like to make a donation. She went to talk to her mother and I thought she was asking for money. Not so. Her mother came and spoke to me to say that her daughter wanted to make a donation from her own pocket money.

"Is there a message here for older people?"

If you'd like to be a Plan speaker, or would like a speaker to address your church, school or community group, please contact Jeni Gwynn on **0300 777 9777** or planspeakers@plan-uk.org

For more information about fundraising for Plan, contact Kevin Machin on kevin.machin@plan-uk.org

Keeping track of progress

Accountant Christy Okrah has only been working at Plan's Ghana office for a month, but as a former sponsored child she has been familiar with Plan for much longer



Christy

Sponsored from the age of 13 by a family from Finland, Christy, now 23, was able to attend secondary school thanks to a Plan scholarship, and finally went on to university to take a Business Management Studies degree with Accounting.

"Without Plan, I don't know where I would have ended up," she says.

Staying on at school

Christy was brought up by her mother, who was a trader selling cooking utensils. "I didn't know if I'd be able to finish secondary school. My mother was not earning much so there wasn't enough money," she explains.

But Christy's prospects changed when she received a Plan scholarship. "I feel I'm blessed, that I'm a special person," she says, smiling broadly.

After graduating from university, Christy did a year's national service (compulsory in Ghana) but also managed to volunteer in her free time

with Rural Ambitions Ghana, a Plan partner which, among other things, uses football as a way of helping equip girls with leadership skills.

Mother-and-child health

In her new role with Plan, Christy is focusing on the WATCH (Women And Their Children's Health) project in the Volta and Eastern regions of Ghana. WATCH aims to cut maternal mortality and deaths of children under five.

"My role as the grant accountant for this project is to ensure that expenditures are in line with requirements from the funder and Plan Ghana," says Christy.

"I prepare quarterly financial reports, track local partners' expenses and also provide the needed support to them by way of training on the financial reporting procedures among other things."

Her work is vital to making sure money is spent effectively and accountably. But it's also something she finds personally fulfilling. "I'm very grateful to Plan for the opportunity to

realise my full potential," Christy says. "Now I really want to give something back to the community."

the Plan:

sponsor a child in Ghana.
Even if you're a sponsor
already, you can always
sponsor another child –
or ask a friend to!

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CHILD SPONSORSHIP

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Go to www.plan-uk.org/sponsor-a-child or call
0300 777 9777

Registered charity no. 276035



Christy will monitor spending on a project to improve mother-and-child health

Remember your first
period? Leaving school?
Getting married?
Having your first child?
Aneni does. She's twelve.



Photo: Mark Read

For some girls, starting their periods is the first step towards forced marriage.

It means that they'll soon be taken out of school, isolated from their friends and forced into marriage with older men. Many will endure abuse. And every year, thousands will die in labour because their young bodies just aren't ready for childbirth.

But you can help end early and forced marriage. Sign our petition to the UK government at **www.plan-uk.org/vow** today – to help us fight forced marriage and keep girls in school.

Millions of girls don't have a voice. You do.
Sign the petition now at **www.plan-uk.org/vow**