

Responding in Ukraine

Combatting Female Genital
Mutilation in Guinea

Imagining a better world

UBUNTU

The magazine of Plan International Australia

Issue 07 — Autumn 2022



The charity for
girls' equality

From the CEO

“Hope just means another world might be possible, not promised, not guaranteed. Hope calls for action; action is impossible without hope.”

- Rebecca Solnit



I often come back to this quote, and it felt like the right way to set the tone and welcome you to the 7th edition of Ubuntu.

Our shared vision for another world – a more sustainable, just and equal world – is what brought you here to this very moment, holding this magazine, and it is what brought me to writing this. But we know that this hopeful vision alone will not take us from where we are to where we want to be. Just as Rebecca Solnit posits, that requires action.

And Plan International Australia knows action. For more than 80 years, we’ve been tackling the root causes of poverty, supporting communities through crisis, campaigning for gender equality, and helping governments to do what’s right for children and particularly for girls.

For us, this kind of action is possible because of the generosity and passion of our community, and the skills, knowledge and dedication of our team here in Australia and around the world. And together, hope and action not only make our work possible, but propel us towards the world we’re dreaming of.

Girls are dreaming of that better world too, and on page nine, you’ll get a glimpse of the changes girls are hoping for, in different corners of the globe.

You’ll meet 22-year-old Mariame on page four, whose lived experience is helping her to combat female genital mutilation (FGM) in her community in Guinea.

And on page seven, you’ll learn more about our humanitarian response in Ukraine and how we’re working alongside local partners and other Australian-based charities to support those directly affected by the conflict.

With your generosity, and support received from the Australian Government, we’ve already

managed to raise more than five million dollars to fund our response in Ukraine and we’ll continue scaling up our relief efforts to support children and their families.

Simply hearing about what is happening in Ukraine can be distressing for children, so on page six we’re sharing an excerpt from the online guide we developed with child psychologist Karen Young, to help you navigate conversations with children.

Ensuring girls have the same opportunities as boys, in every sphere of society and in every part of the world is central to our work at Plan International Australia. That’s why we’ve been amplifying girls’ calls for a safer, more inclusive Parliament – turn to page 13 to see how young people brought their literal chairs to the table in the lead up to the federal election.

And finally, on page 18 we’ve put together a little self-care grid for activists to help you build resilience and keep the momentum going when it comes to the causes you care about. Whether you consider yourself an activist or not, your time, energy and support is what keeps Plan International Australia’s work, and our vision for a more just and equal world alive, so I urge you to prioritise filling your own cup too.

I am beyond grateful for this community, and the way our supporters continue to meet us at that all important intersection of hope and action. There are many places we can find hope when the world feels overwhelming, and my hope is that taking a moment to read about the incredible work your support makes possible is one of them.

Until next time,

Susanne Legena
CEO, Plan International Australia

Contents

News 03	Combatting FGM in Guinea 04
Responding in Ukraine 05	How to talk to kids about Ukraine 08



The Hidden Crises **07**



Imagining a better world **09**



Rising Tides **10**

Education in Cox's Bazar **11**



Represent Us! **13**



Beyond sponsorship **15**



Stand Up against street harassment **17**

“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation.”

Audre Lorde

Self care for activists **18**

Find out more:

CHILD PROTECTION plan.org.au/privacy-policy/safeguarding-children-and-young-people-policy
FEEDBACK plan.org.au/privacy-policy/feedback-and-complaints

News



“I am proud to join Plan International Australia on their mission to realise equality for girls both here at home and all over the world.”

WELCOMING JAMILA RIZVI

We're thrilled to welcome best-selling author, commentator and gender equality activist Jamila Rizvi as an ambassador for girls' rights. A proud intersectional feminist, Jamila is well known for her advocacy on feminism, cultural diversity and disability inclusion, and previously worked in politics, advising on issues including media, women, child care and employment.

Jamila is excited to join forces with Plan International Australia, and gender equality is something that is close to her heart.



THE RIPPLE PROJECT
A BETTER WORLD WITH AUSTRALIAN AID

A BETTER WORLD WITH AUSTRALIAN AID

We're proud to be partnering with The Ripple Project – a community of Australians who are passionate about creating a more peaceful, just and equitable world for everyone.

Through our work, we've seen the incredible ripple effects of Australian aid. It creates long-term, sustainable and enduring impact, and supports girls and their communities to change their lives.

That's why we're calling on political leaders to increase Australia's international development and humanitarian assistance, and we need your help:



Show your support by signing the open letter. Scan here:

YOUR SUPPORT IS HELPING US TO RESPOND TO EMERGENCIES AND UPHOLD THE RIGHTS OF GIRLS AROUND THE GLOBE

- Following the devastation caused by Typhoon Rai in the Philippines last December, Plan International Australia supporters mobilised and enabled us to respond with relief supplies in hard-hit communities, reaching 12,936 families in total.
- With your generous support during the festive season – and \$45,000 in matched funding from our generous Equality Leaders – we raised \$249,000 to help fight the barriers to girls education, from child marriage to gender inequality, poverty and displacement.
- And finally an incredible 1764 of you donated \$310,000 to our recent hunger appeal, which, when matched 15 times by the World Food Programme, generated an astounding \$4.65 million in funding for the food crisis response in South Sudan and Ethiopia.

Thank you for your generosity!



Combatting Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Guinea

Mariame was 15 years old when she was subjected to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), and she still lives with the consequences today at 22. "FGM has left me almost disabled. I am a victim of this practice. I still experience pain and continue to endure it to this day."

Guinea, where Mariame is from, has the second highest rate of FGM in the world after Somalia, with around 96 percent of women and adolescent girls being cut, despite laws banning this harmful and sometimes fatal practice.

FGM is often seen as a gateway to marriage and a way of preserving a girl's purity, and it continues in Guinea due to extreme social pressure and parents fears of being excluded from the community or worried that their daughters will never be married if they haven't undergone the procedure.

But because of FGM, girls can face short-term complications, such as severe pain, excessive bleeding, infections, and difficulty in urinating, as well as longer-term consequences for both their mental and sexual and reproductive health.

Together with local partners in Guinea, Plan International has implemented a community-wide project to raise awareness around the dangers of FGM and provide support to women and girls who have suffered complications as a result of being cut. In addition to this, the project also includes training sessions on gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights, and Mariame has become a leading figure in the awareness raising sessions.

"My testimony has helped stop several cases," she shares. "In the past, the girls didn't know the consequences of being cut,

they thought that if they don't do it, they would be stigmatised."

"Initially in this village, it was not allowed to promote the abandonment of FGM," Mariame explains, "But given what I have experienced, when I learned of the arrival of Plan International to fight against this practice, I was the first to welcome them and to encourage parents to attend the awareness raising sessions. Because the consequences are enormous, the only child I had was by caesarean section, as I couldn't give birth on my own."

Since the initial implementation, the project has been extended to 80 new districts in different regions of Guinea, and in one region alone, almost 1000 girls have been prevented from undergoing FGM.

In Mariame's community, people are now aware of the true consequences of FGM and no one is excluded for not being cut – in fact, the number of girls who have not been cut is now higher than the number of girls who have undergone FGM.

"Today in our village, I can assure you that the practice of female genital mutilation is a bad memory, because even my own parents who encouraged the practice regret it today," says Mariame. "We all agree that we can educate our daughters without cutting them."

Learn more about the impacts of FGM and how you can help end this harmful practice:



Mariame, 22, is campaigning against FGM in her community.

Responding in Ukraine

EMERGENCY
ACTION
ALLIANCE

Since February 24th, almost six million people have fled across Ukraine's borders, seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. The humanitarian crisis is escalating by the hour, with the ongoing conflict seeing countless lives, homes and childhoods uprooted, and in some cases, lost forever. As of April 29, the United Nations reported 2,345 deaths – 177 of those were children.

Conflict has existed for as long as humans have – in fact Plan International was founded in the midst of conflict, to protect and support children orphaned during the Spanish Civil War. We've witnessed the impact of conflict, crisis and displacement on countless children in our 85 year history, and we know that just like those we've met in war zones, disaster zones and refugee camps, the children of Ukraine will bear these wounds – both visible and invisible – long after the conflict with Russia ends.

With our extensive humanitarian experience and expertise, Plan International is currently working with other organisations and local partners to deliver a coordinated response to the situation in Ukraine, as well as in Poland, Romania, Moldova, Hungary and Slovakia, where refugees are being hosted. Our response includes relief assistance, child protection, mental health and psychosocial support, cash and vouchers, education, and advocacy programs, all of which are being delivered with a gender lens for greater inclusivity, and to ensure the specific needs of girls are met.

Alongside Plan International Netherlands, Plan International Australia is also supporting the response efforts of International Medical Corps (IMC), with whom we have an existing and longstanding partnership. IMC have remained in Ukraine since the conflict began, to coordinate mobile medical and mental health-psychosocial support services (MHPSS) in Lviv, Kyiv, Mariupol,

Odesa, and Chernivtsi, with the possibility of extending services to other locations depending on access and ongoing needs. With foundations as a child rights organisation, Plan International Australia brings a vital child protection framework to the partnership, to further strengthen child protection within IMC's response.

We have also joined forces with 15 Australian-based member charities who, as part of the inaugural Emergency Action Alliance, are combining their expertise to turn the care and passion of our supporters into a targeted response to international emergencies.

As the conflict continues to escalate, your donation can ensure we reach as many people as possible.

YOUR DONATION COULD HELP:

- scale up urgent relief operations to support Ukrainians in neighbouring countries
- provide safety and shelter to children and their families
- support the children of Ukraine with psychological and social support
- protect women and children from abuse and exploitation
- establish informal education and learning opportunities for children
- provide children with safe spaces to play and learn.

DONATE NOW:



After leaving their lives and belongings behind in Western Ukraine, 11-year-old Katya (centre) and her friends received Plan International-supplied backpacks, to help them settle into their new school in Moldova.



Emily, aged 3, takes part in an activity session run by a mobile support unit of psychologists, educators and social workers, through Plan International's partnership with the National Centre for Preventing Child Abuse (CNPAC) in Moldova.

How to talk to kids about what is happening in Ukraine

For the past two years, kids have been learning to live in unprecedented times throughout the pandemic. Now, faced with news of escalating conflict in Ukraine, they are seeing the world change once again before their eyes.

Talking to kids about what is happening around the globe will help them better understand the situation and process their feelings, and it can also help you to find small but meaningful ways to make an impact together. Produced in partnership with child psychologist Karen Young, this helpful guide is designed to equip you with six steps and strategies to help navigate conversations with children during these difficult times.

1. BEFORE YOU SPEAK, WATCH AND LISTEN AND LET THEM SHOW YOU WHAT THEY NEED

When feelings or worries become too big for words, children might speak through behaviour. All behaviour is communication so rather than talking things out, children might 'behave' it out.

Try 'You seem to have something on your mind. Would you like to talk about it?' or, 'I notice it's taking you longer to fall asleep than usual. I wonder if something is worrying you?'

2. FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN, LIMIT THEIR EXPOSURE TO THE NEWS

When there is increased exposure to the news, children might be more likely to experience the things they hear as being closer, more dangerous, or more likely to directly impact them and the people they care about. Young children are less able to put things in context, so it's best to shield them from things as much as you can. Answer their questions, but only

with as much detail as needed to help them feel safe and reassured.

3. FOR OLDER CHILDREN, ASK THEM WHAT THEY KNOW AND BE GUIDED BY THIS

Ask them what they know and what they're thinking and open the way for them to say anything they want to. This might sound like, 'There's a lot in the news lately about what's happening in Ukraine. What have you heard? Is there anything you'd like to ask me? You can ask me anything at all, whenever you want to.' Some children might not want to talk, and that's okay. Let them know you're there if they need.

4. YOU WON'T ALWAYS HAVE THE ANSWERS, AND YOU DON'T NEED TO

If they ask questions that you don't know the answers to, it's always okay to say that you don't know. Depending on the situation, offer to find out and circle back, or explore the possibilities with them by asking them what they think the answer might be.

5. LET THEM KNOW THEY, AND THE WORLD'S PEOPLE, ARE HELD BY MANY

Let children feel the strength and safety of being part of something bigger – our common humanity. Whenever there is trauma in the world, there are also remarkable demonstrations of solidarity and kindness, and love and support for strangers by strangers. Let them hear these stories. Tell them about the strangers who are opening their homes so people who have to leave theirs can have somewhere safe to stay. Show them how countries are coming together to help with humanitarian aid such as food, medical help, ways to get people to safety. Talk to them about how world leaders are working together to help the world feel safe again.

6. LET THEM KNOW THAT WHATEVER THEY ARE FEELING IS OKAY

Let them know that when big things happen, we can feel all kinds of things that don't make sense. Whatever they are feeling, whether it's something big or nothing at all, there are no wrong ways to feel. Whatever they're feeling, let them feel in you that you get it. Try, 'I can see you're feeling scared. That's completely understandable. It's a frightening thing to happen.' Sometimes it might involve just being with them while they talk, and being a strong steady presence while they think and feel around the issue for themselves.

To read the full guide, scan here:



The Hidden Crises

There's no doubt that the Ukraine crisis is a huge and likely seminal event in our world, but it is unfortunately not the only global crisis we are currently trying to address. While the news cycle is focused elsewhere, the devastating food crisis in the Horn of Africa and the looming disaster in Afghanistan are continuing to escalate.

Plan International is working to keep these hidden crises on the radar, and ensure equitable support is provided through our programs and our appeals.

HORN OF AFRICA - ETHIOPIA AND SOUTH SUDAN

"This drought and the resulting consequences come as many families and communities struggle to recover from the impact of previous crises, whether the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing conflict or desert locusts. These are all creating huge humanitarian needs in a region which has been suffering from shock after shock, for multiple years."

- Stephen Omollo, Plan International Global CEO



Right now over 811 million people globally are facing ongoing hunger, with 45 million people on the edge of famine. Communities across the Horn of Africa are facing one of the most severe droughts in more than 30 years and in countries like South Sudan and Ethiopia, families are at risk of starvation due to conflict, extreme weather events and COVID-19.

With loss of life on a devastating scale now a real risk, families are resorting to desperate measures to survive, with children and girls hardest hit.

In some communities, child marriage is on the rise as more families have resorted to marrying their daughters to obtain dowry payments and relieve pressure on household resources.

In other communities where families have to travel long distances for work or to obtain food, parents have stopped sending girls to school, so they can help with household responsibilities, whether taking care of the family or sending them instead to either look for food, water or work. This, in turn, has placed girls and young women at greater risk of sexual violence, exploitation, and abuse.

Adolescent girls, along with children under the age of five, are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition, which has significant impacts on brain development, and undermines educational attainment, health, and ability to earn a living. Malnutrition also poses particular threats to adolescent girls and women who are pregnant and breastfeeding. These girls and women are at an increased risk of miscarriage and maternal mortality and face risks of stillbirth, new-born deaths, low birth weight and stunting for their children, leading to an intergenerational cycle of malnutrition.

Plan International is urgently scaling up operations in the Horn of Africa, where we have been working with local communities to deliver food; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programs; treatment for malnutrition; education programmes and child protection services to bring an end to domestic violence and early and forced marriage.

AFGHANISTAN

"We cannot let another generation lose their right to learn and the opportunity to develop the skills they need to fulfil their potential and to contribute to society."

- Susanne Legena, Plan International Australia CEO

Caught in the crossfires of decades of conflict, the people of Afghanistan have dealt with instability and insecurity for a large portion of their lives. The Taliban's takeover of the country in 2021 has further deepened existing systemic issues and inequalities, giving way to an escalating human rights and humanitarian crisis.

700,000 people have been forced to leave their homes, in addition to the 5.5 million people that have been displaced over recent years. Food insecurity is at an all time high, with more than a million children now at risk of starvation and nearly ten million girls and boys currently depending on humanitarian assistance.

Hard-won advances in girls' and women's rights and freedoms have been rolled back, with the



Taliban limiting employment opportunities for women, ordering them to cover their faces, restricting the right to peaceful assembly and denying girls a secondary school education by enforcing policies that bar them from studying alongside boys and men.

For girls who have experienced a lifetime of conflict and upheaval, school provides a protective space and a sense of normality. Education provides a passport for a positive future, and taking it away shatters the hopes and aspirations of an entire generation of girls.

Though Plan International doesn't currently run programs in Afghanistan, as the charity for girls' equality, we know how vital education is. We're calling on Afghan authorities to fulfil their obligation under the UN's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and ensure that all girls have access to education.

GIRLS EDUCATION & EMPOWERMENT FUND

Amplify your impact and break the barriers to girls' education

We know emergencies exacerbate the inequalities girls face. Girls and women are fed least and last. Girls are more likely to experience gender-based violence, child marriage and early pregnancy. And once their education is disrupted, it's likely they will never return to school.

To stop the setback, we must ensure girls have access to education even during times of crises. Investing in education is life-changing for girls, but the ripple effect it has on entire communities and countries has the potential to truly transform our world.

By addressing the barriers to girls' education, our new multi-year initiative, the Girls Education & Empowerment Fund has the power to support an entire generation of girls to finish school and choose their own futures.

Long-term change requires a long-term plan, so we're asking supporters to commit to a five year pledge of a meaningful amount to the Fund.

How do we amplify your impact? Your contributions are pooled with other donors' and used to leverage further funding from our institutional



partners, like the World Food Programme and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. By unlocking these multi-year grants, you are effectively multiplying your impact by 2x (or more).

Get involved today by contacting Steffi Chang on 0455 932 846 or steffi.chang@plan.org.au.

Imagining a better world

We asked teenage girls around the world – from Vietnam to Uganda, and many countries in-between – to take a globe in their hands and imagine a new and better world, post pandemic.

A world where girls are always equal to boys; where every child gets to go to school; where we care for our earth properly, where vaccines are available for everyone, and where violence, conflict and abuse are notions of the past.

Because a better, kinder and more peaceful world starts with a vision.

So, what did the girls imagine? The general consensus is that COVID-19 is our greatest chance to build a better world, and that humanity is united, perhaps for the first time, by a collective ambition to change things. In some ways, the girls we spoke to felt that there has never been a more hopeful time.



“ I imagine a very nice world with no disease and no conflict. Everyone will get an education and gender equality. Everyone will get employed and stand on their own two feet. The women, like men, will get employment all over the world. Women will achieve their rights and welfare, and get to make choices. Even countries will have good relations, and will help each other. It will be a beautiful world.”

- BANDANA, 17, NEPAL



“I imagine a world where all children can access quality education, a world where girls can be free online, a world where women and girls’ rights can be protected and not violated.”

- STECIA, 16, UGANDA



“ I dream of a world where everyone treats others well. I imagine a world where girls are able to control their own future, where all of my family members get vaccinated and stay healthy, where climate change ends and the earth becomes more eco-friendly.”

- HUYEN, 14, VIETNAM

Rising Tides

Supporting youth leadership in climate action

The unravelling climate crisis is the most pressing injustice of our time as it exacerbates existing inequalities in society, and disproportionately affects girls and young women.

Despite their lack of responsibility for this crisis, and their lack of representation in formal political processes, young people in all their diversity are at the forefront of climate action.

From Fiji to Zimbabwe, youth-led and youth-supported groups are boldly advocating for renewable energy, reforestation, ecosystem protection, better waste management, resilient infrastructure and social systems that are more responsive to the needs of everyone.

A recent Plan International research report into climate resilience and youth movements around the globe shows that for young people, the climate crisis is not just about the climate. It encompasses a broader vision of healing our relationship with nature and tackling unjust societal structures.

“ If you are saying young people are the leaders of the future you are not taking into account the capacity that young people have to be part of the solutions today.”

- Project Survival Pacific (PSP) Fiji



RISING TIDES: MAPPING YOUTH MOVEMENTS FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Between May and June of 2021, eleven young researchers from Myanmar, Laos, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Uganda, Mozambique and Zimbabwe conducted a joint desk review of climate change policy to identify youth-led or youth-oriented organisations, groups, and movements for climate change adaptation.

THE FINDINGS

The research found:

- Children and young people are not sufficiently referenced as stakeholders or relevant groups in the policy process. Neither are other crucial groups such as Indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, or marginalised communities. And
- When they are referenced, children, young people and women are depicted as vulnerable recipients, rather than powerful and indispensable partners in climate policy processes

At Plan International, through our extensive work with communities affected by the climate crisis, we know that youth leadership and the engagement of girls and young women in all of their diversities is essential if we are to achieve sustainable climate action and resilience.

Bold declarations or commitments to implement strategies on climate change and improving the rights of women, children, and young people are not enough. Greater investments, sustained political commitments, and the active empowerment of diverse groups are needed to meet these promises

The report also sets out a number of recommendations (which you can read in the full version) around how NGOs can better support and include young people and the valuable contributions they make, in the movement for climate resilience.

To read the full report, scan here:



Education in Cox's Bazar

Together with a consortium of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local partners, we have been working to improve access to education for children and adolescent girls and boys in Rohingya camps and host communities in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.



Home based one-to-one session for Shishu Bikash Kendra learners.



Volunteer working with children in the Shishu Bikash Kendra.

Prior to the pandemic, access to education was already limited in Cox's Bazar, especially for those living in Rohingya refugee camps. But with daily COVID-19 infection rates reaching as high as 1 in 5 people, the government was forced to impose a series of prolonged lockdowns in 2020 and 2021, which included the extended closure of schools.

The original intention of Plan International's Education in Emergencies and Child Protection in Emergencies program was to work in six Rohingya camps and three host communities to support community-based learning centres, known locally as Shishu Bikash Kendra.

However following the enforcement of COVID-19 restrictions and the government's re-prioritisation of education as less urgent, approval was only granted for three camps and three host communities. Although this meant the number of learning centres was reduced, Plan International was given permission to increase the number of enrolments at each centre, as well as the number of centres in host communities. As a result, Plan International has been supporting 69 of these centres in Teknaf and Bahachhara Union.

Community-based learning centres provide a secure and COVID-safe learning environment for children, adolescents and youth, with activities for early childhood education and adolescent life skills. Livelihood education and short-term income generating opportunities are also offered for older participants,

HUJAIMA'S STORY

Hujaima has been attending one of the Plan International supported Early Childhood Development learning centres in Teknaf Sadar Union.

At first, Hujaima's father, a teacher, was reluctant to send his daughter to the centre, but after attending a series of parenting awareness sessions and meetings facilitated by Plan International Bangladesh, he came to see the value of learning and play in development.



“I can realise better that my daughter is developing more than the other children of her age. She is communicative, and disciplined.”

“I can realise better that my daughter is developing more than the other children of her age. She is communicative, and disciplined,” he explains. “She can sing different songs and rhymes which other children of her age may not know.”

And in his role as president of the committee, he is spreading the word so that other children in the community can also benefit from the learning centres, “I am also motivating and encouraging other parents and community members to send their children.”

Together with local partners, Plan International Bangladesh has established 110 community-based learning centres, like the one Hujaima attends, in host communities and camps since early 2021. Overall, 2764 children have been enrolled, and 344 children have graduated and since been enrolled in mainstream schooling.

In fact, he was so inspired by the interactive curriculum and the progress he saw in Hujaima, that he decided to take on the role of voluntary president of the learning centre's management committee.

along with positive parenting sessions for parents.

In setting up each learning centre, we engaged community members, including teachers and community leaders, and they continue to play a major role in the centre's day to day operations. This serves to build

the capacity of local partners and community members, so that partner organisations in camps and host communities can eventually deliver the program without Plan International.

In light of the pandemic reaching the Rohingya camps,

awareness raising around COVID-19 was woven into the program, with over 800 community sessions held, alongside the distribution of personal protective equipment like face masks and hand sanitizer.

Represent Us!

Parliament should be a space young people can aspire to be part of, and a place that brings pride to all Australians. But right now, our nation's Parliament does not represent the diversity of communities across Australia and 72% of young Australian women do not feel politics is an equal or inclusive space for them.

These are the findings of *Represent Us*, Plan International Australia's recently launched research report. Conducted by YouGov, the survey questioned more than 1,000 young women on their views, values and aspirations when it comes to Australian politics.

THE REPORT FOUND:

- More than 90% of young women believe Parliament should reflect the diversity of Australia.
- 60% of young women said they would be more likely to pursue a career in politics if it was more diverse and 82% said there should be diversity targets to ensure that women and people across all ethnicities are being represented.

- Almost half of those surveyed would not want to pursue a career in politics because they think they would be discriminated against for being female.

Following the past year's spate of reports of sexual misconduct, alleged rape, and women being victim-blamed, talked over and side-lined in our national parliament, girls and young women are being sent a clear message – that they will not be safe in parliament and that little is being done about it.

This is a systemic issue, and regardless of party or preference, many women and gender-diverse people are being forced to abandon their leadership aspirations because of it.

Ensuring girls have the same opportunities as boys, in every sphere of society and in every part of the world is central to the work of Plan International Australia, and advocating for these rights is how we can achieve long-term systemic change.

For the past couple of months, we've been asking supporters to stand with young people, and amplify their recommendations. More than 400 people have joined them, emailing decision makers, urging them to set targets to ensure our Parliament reflects the diversity of the country we live in and to adopt the full, transformative suite of recommendations outlined in the *Set the Standard* report.

Young women and gender diverse people should grow up believing anything is possible – that they have opportunities in their lives to shape the world they live in. Over the coming months our Youth Activists will be meeting with decision-makers to further discuss their recommendations for a safer and more inclusive Parliament, where everyone has a seat at the table.

BRINGING OUR SEATS TO THE TABLE

Young people deserve a place in our nation's Parliament, and on May 9 in Melbourne's Treasury Gardens, they brought their literal seats to the literal table.

On 15 chairs representing the 151 seats in the House of Representatives, our 2022 Youth Activists painted images, symbols and words about what better representation in Parliament would mean for our communities. They were joined by local artists and our ambassadors Jamila Rizvi and Yasmin Poole, as they called on leaders across the political spectrum to transform Parliament into an inclusive and safe arena for all.



REPRESENT US!



Beyond sponsorship

In February the Plan International Australia community came together online to celebrate inspirational women from around the globe. During an interactive event, special guests Tort, Faith and Lorraine shared their stories in conversation with our ambassador Jan Fran.

Faith, from Kenya, and Tort, from Cambodia, were both sponsored through Plan International as children – they shared highlights from their careers and their hopes for their communities, as well as their experiences overcoming obstacles as children.

Australian supporters were represented on the panel by long time sponsor Lorraine, who shared how she's helping future generations go to school by including a gift to Plan International Australia's work in her Will. Catch up on some highlights from the event below, and stay tuned for more online events in the future!

FAITH

Based in Kenya, Faith now works as a Plan International Program Officer, and mentors girls to speak up about issues that affect them through her mentoring program 'Gal Advocates'.



"I remember my school was the first point of entry for Plan International and the officer who was in charge of our programme in terms of sponsorship was called Agnes. And Agnes was very passionate about girls so she gave me that hope and I was inspired by her, like, wow, I can do something. I can become like her. I can work with the communities and make changes in my community.

I remember one particular time there was a high delegation that was coming to our primary school. And so I was right there as a sponsored child, and I was given this opportunity to welcome the visitors and also give them a brief about our school and give them a brief about our programmes, all the programmes that Plan was bringing in our school.

And to me, that was a major thing because there were government officers, ministers from the Kenyan government. And for me, a ten-year-old girl to be given that chance, a ten-year-old girl sometimes who things were really tough for her. But Plan created this kind of space to speak about us, to speak about both positive and other challenging things that we were going through. That was the moment up to this day, I have never forgotten."



Faith (right) and her daughters.



LORRAINE

Lorraine is a lawyer living in Sydney, Australia. She is a Plan International Australia supporter, child sponsor and passionate advocate for our Gifts in Wills program.

"What makes me so passionate about Plan's work is they support not just girls but entire communities to lift themselves and provide further education to make the most of their lives. That is what inspires me the most."

...I have the opportunity to contribute and so I will. I have to say, having now heard both Faith and Tort, I have been so inspired by their stories, I might have to update my Will again to be more generous to Plan. It really has been moving listening to them, it has been wonderful."



TORT

Tort is a primary school teacher in Cambodia and is studying to become a high school teacher.

"Growing up with one hand, I was very upset. At school I experienced discrimination and my classmates harassed me.

I have a key message that I would like all the disabled children in the world to keep in their minds.

We cannot change the past but we can change the future to be a better one. If we believe in ourselves, we can do it."

If you couldn't make the event, you can email emily.dudgeon@plan.org.au to receive a copy of the recording.

Plan International Australia

What did you think?



Lucinda

True inspiration <3



Taffy

Thanks for sharing your amazing story Faith



Viswanath

Very inspirational Tort



Robert

Love your presentation Tort. Good luck from Australia



Emilie

I already have a number of Advocacy Groups in my will and I will add Plan International to the list! Thank you all for making this zoom session possible and keeping us in the conversation of creating a better world for all

"I cannot describe the inspiring impact Faith, Tort, Lorraine and Jan had on me with their strong message that women can control their narrative and make a difference. Jan summed up nicely what International Women's Day and the work of Plan has meant for me as a supporter for 30 years – that there is nothing boys can do that girls cannot.

It is no accident that many women who do control their narrative have had supporting men in their lives, be they fathers, brothers, husbands. The problems facing our planet demands that our women are equal partners and that our sons are comfortable with this. Faith's wonderful work speaks to this.

- Dr Christine P. Papas



Stand up against street harassment, with L’Oreal Paris



assistance. And when there are people around, they may not know what to do. Street harassment is far from new, however, and it is something Plan International has been tackling for many years both in Australia and across the globe. Now, our incredible Youth Activists (pictured) are delivering a unique and powerful interactive training as part of the global Stand Up Against Street Harassment campaign, powered by L’Oreal Paris.

Research by L’Oreal Paris shows that 80% of women have experienced sexual harassment in public spaces, but the majority of witnesses to this violence feel there is a lack of training on how to intervene. The Stand Up training aims to tackle myths about street harassment and sexual assault, and provide participants with tools to recognize harassment and to safely step in when they see it occurring.

Our Youth Activists have already helped cities become safer through their advocacy, and this year, together with L’Oreal Paris, they are set to create an even safer future for young women and gender diverse people – a future where they can walk freely without fear.

Our goal is to grow a community of up-standers, educating and empowering people everywhere to take a stand against harassment.

Stay tuned for an exciting announcement soon about Stand Up training sessions for the general public. In the meantime, if you’re interested in this free 1-hour, virtual training session being delivered in your workplace, please contact us at partnerships@plan.org.au

In 2022, L’Oreal Paris and Plan International Australia are proudly partnering to roll out the Stand Up Against Street Harassment bystander training program in Australia.

Currently, one in five young women in Australia feel less safe at night, compared to before the pandemic. But together with L’Oreal Paris, our Youth Activists are taking a stand – and helping others to do the same.

A recent survey of young Australian women conducted by Plan International Australia revealed that 42% of respondents aged 18-24 feel unsafe walking at night because of the risk of sexual harassment, and the numbers are significantly higher for young women with a disability. For this cohort, more than a quarter said they feel less safe now than before COVID-19 changed our world.

Many young women also shared that the effects of the pandemic have significantly impacted their

mental health. To add to this, Australia is one of the lowest-ranked countries in the Asia-Pacific region when it comes to women’s perceptions of safety.

The study comes as we gradually emerge from the pandemic. Lockdowns are being lifted and we are spending more time outside, but young women and gender diverse people are finding that streets are emptier, train stations quieter, and parks less populated than they used to be. Some say that the street harassment they experience has become more aggressive, with perpetrators emboldened by the lack of interference from onlookers.

All of this means that if something goes wrong, there are fewer witnesses to intervene or provide

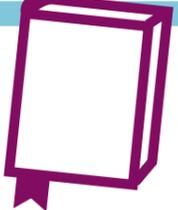
Self-care for activists

Whether it’s girls’ rights or climate action, mental health or First Nations justice, standing up for causes that are close to your heart is important work that takes time and energy. Activism can be complex, personal and all-consuming, and the need for balance is vital when it comes to combating burnout. By prioritising filling your own cup, you can maintain and build resilience as an activist, which is just as vital as advocacy and campaigning when it comes to keeping a movement alive.

We’ve put together a Self Care for Activists grid, for the moments in between. Sure, these simple suggestions won’t fix everything, but they might help you to reflect, find joy and prioritise yourself during the fight for change.

“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation.”

– Audre Lorde, African American poet and civil rights activist who first coined 'self-care'!

 BAKE SOMETHING AND SHARE IT WITH A FRIEND	 WALK OR BIKE SOMEWHERE YOU’D USUALLY DRIVE	 TAKE A WEEKEND OFF SOCIAL MEDIA	 WATCH A FUNNY OR FEEL GOOD MOVIE
 PLANT SOMETHING IN SOIL	 KEEP A GRATITUDE JOURNAL	 MEDITATE	 PRIORITISE SLEEP
 TAKE A BREAK FROM THE NEWS	 CELEBRATE THE SMALL WINS	 READ A BOOK ABOUT SOMEONE INSPIRING	 SUPPORT A LOCAL BUSINESS
 ESCAPE FOR A LITTLE WHILE THROUGH FICTION	 REACH OUT FOR SUPPORT IF YOU NEED IT	 GO FOR A HIKE IN NATURE	 CATCH UP WITH A FRIEND

Pass it on

In the spirit of Ubuntu, we ask that you keep the ripples of change alive by passing this magazine on once you've enjoyed it.

Whether you leave it in your local café or staff room or give it to a friend, this small act of sharing will help spread awareness of Plan International Australia and the incredible work your support makes possible.

The power to inspire others is in your hands.

Ubuntu Issue 07, Autumn 2022.

Ubuntu is the magazine of Plan International Australia.

Plan International Australia | Address: 18/60 City Road, Southbank, Melbourne VIC 3006
Phone: 13 75 26 | Fax: 03 9670 1130 | Email: info@plan.org.au | Web: www.plan.org.au | ABN 49 004 875 807

To support Plan International visit www.plan.org.au.

Donations to Plan International of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of Plan International Australia. ©2022. All material in Ubuntu is under copyright; however, articles and photographs may be reproduced with permission from Plan International Australia. Plan International Australia is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct and is a trusted recipient of funding from the Australian Government.



The charity for
girls' equality