



Until we are all equal

**Girls Education &  
Empowerment Fund**  
**Impact report 2023**

Acknowledgement of Country

Plan International Australia acknowledge and pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Elders past and present of this nation. We recognise sovereignty was never ceded and that this land always was and always will be First Nations land. We recognise their ongoing connection to land, waters and community, and we commit to ongoing learning, deep and active listening, and taking action in solidarity.



We need GEEFund now, more than ever

The world is now in the grip of what some are calling a ‘perma-crisis’, and the context in which humanitarian actors like Plan International operate is becoming more complex and dangerous – particularly for girls. Girls and women account for 70% of the world’s hungry, and 50% of all refugees fleeing conflict, disaster, and instability. By 2024, an additional 12.5 million girls each year may not be able to complete their schooling due to factors relating to climate change.

The answers to these problems are not easy. We know they require a combination of innovation, tried-and-true interventions and sustained investment over time. None of these matters will be resolved in an election cycle, or in one year alone, which is why we need investment into GEEFund now more than ever. The evidence is clear. When we invest in girls and give them the education and support that they need to be able to earn their own living and decide when, and if, they marry and have children, it not only changes the life of an individual – it transforms entire communities, countries and the world.

For this reason, I want to say thank you for the support you provide to GEEFund. Because of your generous multi-year investment, we can provide certainty to our partners, ensuring they can continue investing in the long-term interventions that work.

Conflict, COVID-19, climate change and natural disasters all deeply and unfairly impact children, and disproportionately setback girls’ equality. But we also know it is progress on equality for girls, and investment into the next generation, that will lead to more peace and stability in the world.

So, thank you. Thank you for believing in progress, and for believing in equality.

Giving voice to girls everywhere, in all their diversity, will strengthen the world for us all.

**Susanne Legena**  
CEO, Plan International Australia



Turning hope into reality with GEEFund

It has been a privilege to serve on the board of Plan International Australia over the past 9 years and to witness first-hand the dedication and expertise of our staff, and the diversity of the work we do to support children – especially girls – around the world. The last few years have painted a very sobering picture for children and girls. COVID-19, increasing conflict around the world, a devastating hunger crisis and the looming impacts of climate change all pose a significant threat to children, and to our efforts towards achieving girls’ equality. It is for this reason we need initiatives like GEEFund now, more than ever.

GEEFund provides the ideal opportunity to join a community of dedicated donors and to leverage investment into girls through our institutional partners, particularly into girls’ education, but also into other initiatives that support girl’s empowerment. Because GEEFund is a multi-year giving initiative, the impact we can create together will be deeper and longer lasting, which is critical when we talk about educating and empowering girls and young people.

Thank you to those who have chosen to support the future of girls around the world through GEEFund – it is a generous and hopeful action that will lead to a better future for all.

My sincere hope for all girls is that they feel confident and entitled to have a voice in their community, and to stand for what is right for themselves and for others. I have no doubt that empowered and educated girls will build stronger and more sustainable communities for everyone.

Thank you for helping turn this hope into a reality.

**Sally Treeby**  
Board Chair, Plan International Australia



# Your generosity at a glance

55 committed donors	\$2,529,080 pledged for the next 5 years
\$4,047,000 unlocked	194,687 girls and families impacted

9x  
leverage  
rate!

## How your impact is amplified

The Girls Education & Empowerment Fund is a multi-year giving initiative that aims to super-charge your support to tackle the barriers that stop girls from receiving an education.

It works by pooling your contributions with other donors to leverage it for more funding from Plan International's institutional partners - effectively multiplying your impact by turning \$1 into \$2 (or more).



Your Multi-Year Pledge

x

  
  
World Food Programme  


=

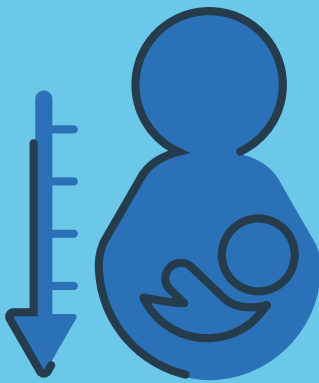
**Your investment multiplied x2 or more!**

You're breaking down barriers to free girls from:

- Poverty
- Violence
- Child marriage

So that she can pursue her dreams, and live as an equal.

# You're breaking down barriers to girls' education



**BARRIER 1**  
Stunting & Poor Childhood Development



**BARRIER 2**  
Poor Access to Clean Water & Sanitation



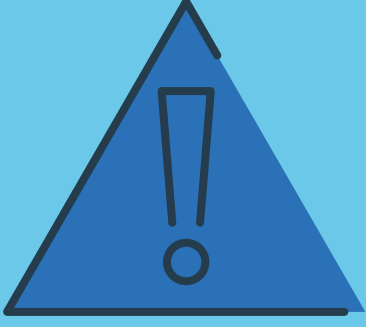
**BARRIER 3**  
Gender-based Violence & Child Marriage



**BARRIER 4**  
Lack of Sexual & Reproductive Health Rights



**BARRIER 5**  
Poverty & Economic Hardship



**BARRIER 6**  
Crises & Emergencies



# How you drive lasting change

## The people fighting for change

Plan’s approach to investing in girls is not a quick fix. It needs many people—including you—to work together to change the attitudes and systems that keep girls in poverty. This has a ripple effect that flows out from individual girls to improve not only their own lives, but also those of their families and communities.

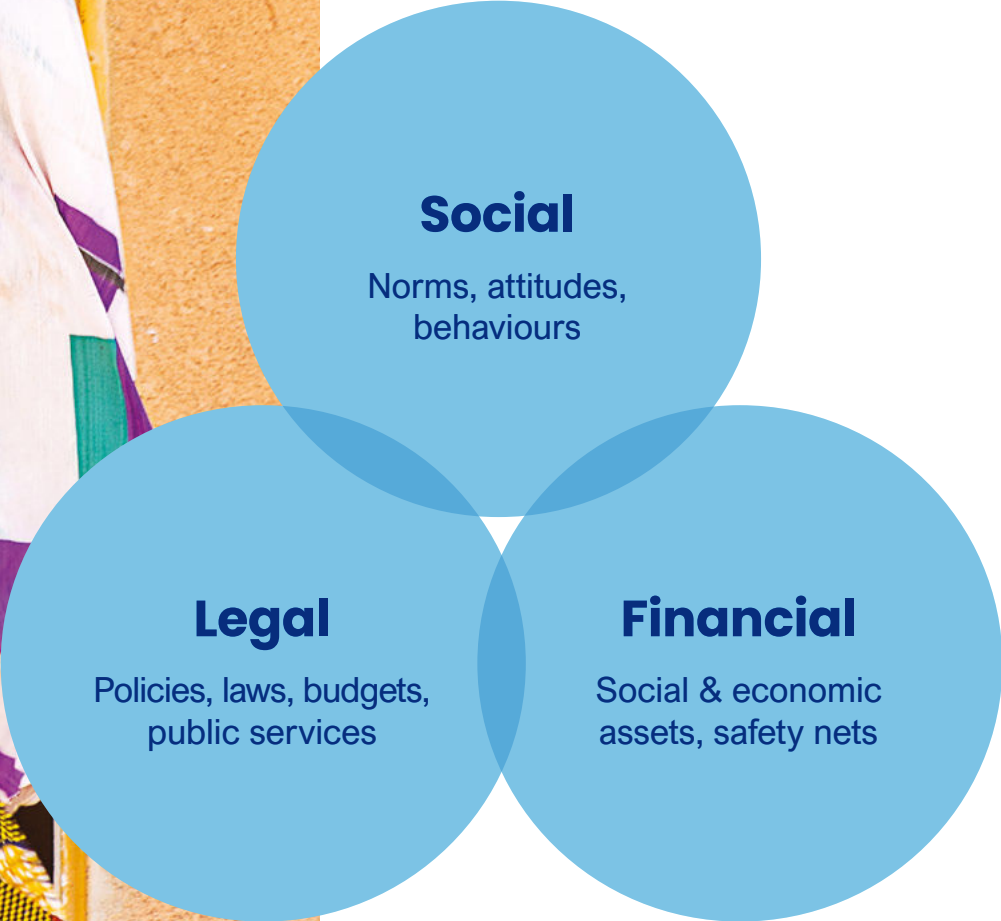


\*Pictured: Dr Sharmila Achar, a GEEFund pledger, and her daughter.

13-year-old Ramatou went to school for the first time last year thanks to Plan International’s accelerated learning programme in Niger.



## What we address to ensure lasting change





# The pathway of a girl's life

See the difference you make when you remove the roadblocks in a girl's path to power, freedom and equality.

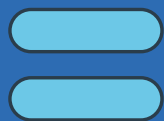
## The clear path with education and investment into girls. The girl gets:



an equal and fair start in life



to go to school and gets a quality education



equal opportunities as she grows up



to live free from violence



the period products she needs and the stigma is gone



to learn how to fight for the right to make decisions about her body



family and community support to say no to child marriage



to make decisions about sex and family planning



equal pay and is financially independent



equal rights and treatment during crises and emergencies



equal power and becomes an active citizen



The girl is now a powerful woman who can shape her life and the world around her

## Roadblocks if no intervention or investment into girls. The girl experiences:



parents prioritising boys



poverty, which means she misses out on school



the burden of chores falling on her



physical and sexual violence both at home and at school



exclusion once her period starts



female genital mutilation



early marriage



unwanted early pregnancy



a lack of job opportunities & discrimination in her career



increased vulnerability during crises and emergencies



exclusion and devaluing of her voice in important decisions



The girl remains in poverty with few opportunities

Together we're overcoming

# Stunting and poor childhood development in Cambodia

PROBLEM

Although Cambodia's economy has grown over the last two decades, poverty persists especially in rural and remote regions. As a result, many Cambodian children lack quality education and are failing to reach the expected learning milestones for their age. The lag starts early – the youngest students begin school with few or no early childhood learning experiences, whether gained from a preschool or their families at home. Once in school, overcrowded classrooms and ineffective teaching styles lead to students struggling to make progress. By Year 3, nearly 25% of children still cannot write a single word in a dictation test. More than half drop out entirely before they reach secondary school, missing out on the better job opportunities that come from a quality education.

SOLUTION

People

With your generosity, Plan worked with school teachers and students to introduce School Learning Gardens, which were fully integrated into the Cambodian school curriculum to make the knowledge students were learning in other core subjects more engaging and relevant. The Gardens project complements an existing School Feeding Project which provides nutritious meals to students at primary schools across Siem Reap to reduce stunting.

**Growing their own healthy foods.** Many children who come to school are often malnourished as their families can be living on as little as one meal a day. The School Learning Gardens gave students the chance to learn about and grow their own healthy foods, improving their nutrition. Schools also provided meals, so students had the energy to focus and learn, preventing dropout.

**Making core subjects relevant to real life.** Through the school learning gardens students could learn about plant growth and ecosystems in science and apply sums, measurement and geometry in maths. This practical application of knowledge in a real-world situation helps to improve school results for children and keeps them engaged in learning.

SOLUTION

Attitudes & Systems

Not only are the School Learning Gardens integrated into the school curriculum, they also provided the chance for teachers to learn from one another and challenge gender stereotypes.

**Building teachers' expertise.** Teachers received ongoing training on how to use the School Learning Gardens concept in the classroom, especially for Grades 4, 5 and 6. Topics included how to maintain gardens, cook healthy foods, ways to connect classroom learning to the garden and kitchen, and how to promote gender equality through these activities.

**Breaking down gender norms.** Teachers are now using practical and culturally appropriate ways to challenge the gender stereotypes that can lead to harmful outcomes for girls. For example, students go through exercises to question the idea that girls should only be restricted to certain roles and jobs in the garden and kitchen – they come away understanding that both boys and girls can do all tasks.

**Changing parents' attitudes to education.** Tours of the School Learning Gardens help to highlight the importance of education for parents so they're more likely to keep their children, especially girls, in school.

45

schools set up School Learning Gardens

5,352

children took part in garden and kitchen learning

48,704

students from 269 schools received school meals



Focus groups show 93% of students are more interested in learning and enjoy school more thanks to the School Learning Gardens.



247 teachers are better equipped to integrate gender equality into lessons after learning how to better identify and challenge the root causes of negative gender stereotypes.



## Bringing learning to life

Sakana, 12, is in Grade 6 in Siem Riep. She explains how the School Learning Gardens have improved her learning in Khmer, maths and science.

"In the garden, I composed the poem, learning the Khmer grammar and phrasing. I am able to understand and use the measurement tools (meter, millimetre) and scale. It's easier to understand lessons because I can see and do the geometry shapes and things in the garden and kitchen."

"Recently, I learned about a science subject on making a natural insecticide for destroying insects. Then, my classmates and I collected the ingredients and made it for using in my school gardening."

Sakana also learned about healthy eating and cooking. "I grow papaya, morning glory, string bean, eggplant, spinach, chilli, herbs, and gourds... We bring the vegetables and ingredients from our garden to cook foods in the kitchen and enjoy tasting and eating healthy food that we cooked."

*"I learned the theory in the classroom and then the practice skill in the garden and kitchen."*

– Sakana

Can girls do the roles given to boys?

Primary teacher Reoum is asking these questions in her class, using the School Learning Gardens to instil the principles of gender equality. [Click here to see Reoum in action.](#)



Together we're bringing

# Clean water and sanitation to the Solomon Islands

PROBLEM

The Solomon Islands is made up of many small communities living in very remote areas. Travel between villages is difficult and costly, which makes it hard to build national infrastructure for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Only 35-45% of remote communities have clean drinking water, meaning many women and girls must travel great distances to collect water. Menstruation is still taboo, with 63% of schools lacking toilets where girls can change pads or tampons. This means girls are more likely to miss school than boys. 58% of the rural population still practices open defecation, significantly increasing the risk of disease. Climate change only intensifies these challenges with the risk of water contamination and disease during disasters – the Solomon Islands is ranked the 17th most climate-vulnerable country in the world with frequent droughts, flooding, landslides and cyclones.

SOLUTION

People

This year, your kind support helped Plan to partner with rural communities to roll out Water Safety Planning. This is a globally recognised approach to WASH that starts with inclusive assessments. Women and girls previously excluded are now given a voice, and anyone from marginalised groups also gets their say. This ensures any WASH solutions meets the needs of all, not just a few.

**Helping communities to solve their own water challenges.** One success story features an assessment that uncovered uneven water distribution in a community. Families at the end of the water pipeline were missing out on running water because the supply was used up before it could reach them. Communities remedied this with the simple, no-cost action of rationing. They turned off valves on parts of the water system at certain times, providing a daily window for all families to collect water.

**Improving community health and hygiene.** Communities collaborated with each other and came up with various actions to stop water contamination and disease. They fenced off freshwater springs to stop open defecation near drinking water. They also built simple example toilets in the most at-risk communities so families can learn how to build their own. Finally, they began regularly cleaning communal tap stands to help stop the spread of disease.

SOLUTION

Attitudes & Systems

Inclusive assessments aren't just for families. Healthcare services and schools also made their own assessments and action plans, taking into account local needs and climate risks such as landslides, flooding, drought and rising sea levels.

**Strengthening community healthcare services.** Maintaining hygiene is vital but remains a significant challenge for many healthcare providers given staff are overloaded. A massive 88% of healthcare services still don't have a functioning water supply. This has dire consequences for girls and young women in need of sexual, reproductive and maternal health services, especially during disasters. Plan worked with healthcare providers to install water tanks and toilets at the busiest clinics in the most climate-vulnerable communities.

**Overcoming menstruation taboos in schools.** Breaking down stigma and taboo around menstruation is vital for girls' hygiene. Schools are making available menstrual products and spare uniforms for girls who need them. Where schools have communal or no-door latrines, girls often miss class when menstruating. To resolve this problem, more girls-only toilets have been built. Schools are also forming WASH clubs to teach good hygiene and overcome the stigma of menstruation, and children are sharing what they learn at school with their families at home.

55,236

people impacted

4,381

children in a WASH Club

6

new villages certified open defecation free



100% of 19 new school partners have better water supplies and taps for handwashing. Thank you for bringing good hygiene to the next generation.



Household sanitation improved by 10% with 362 families building toilets in their own homes. Thank you for stopping the spread of disease.



## Schools are girl-friendly places now

Stephanie is head teacher at a primary school in the remote western area of Guadalcanal Province. Before this project, the only water source came from the national water authority.

"The problem was pressure. It was very low," she explains. "By the time it reached us, sometimes there was no water, so we had to send the children home."

Your generosity through GEEFund helped to construct a borehole at the school, provide water tanks and even repair the faulty pipeline. With these actions, the school even had enough water to install showers for menstruating girls to use.

Paired with awareness raising, girls are no longer missing school because of their periods. Stephanie also says the boys have stopped bullying girls and have begun to respect them more. Your support has made a wonderful difference for the whole school community.

"The children's hygiene is noticeably better," she says. "They look clean, neat and smart. Attendance to school and classes increases every day. Water encourages children to come to school."



“The attendance of children and teachers has improved a lot. I would say it's 100% better because we do not have any issues with water anymore.”

– Stephanie



Together we're overcoming

# Gender-based violence and child marriage in Somalia

PROBLEM

Somalia is now suffering its worst drought in 40 years, brought on by six seasons of low rainfall. Numbers of internally displaced people have skyrocketed as families must leave their homes in search of food and water. At the same time, conflict continues to rage. This creates conditions where sexual and gender-based violence toward women and girls is rapidly rising. Somalia already has the highest rate of female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C) in the world, with 98% of girls having been cut - most between age 5 and 9. On top of suffering the health impacts of FGM/C and early pregnancy, now drought, hunger and displacement have led to more girls being forced into early marriages – already 36% of girls are married before 18 and 17% before girls turn 16 – and other abuses.

SOLUTION

People

With your kind support, Plan is working with families across six displacement camps in Somaliland, an autonomous region of Somalia, on interventions to keep children and girls safe.

**Running Champions of Change workshops.** Both girls and boys learned how to stand up for their rights by taking part in training on child protection, focusing on issues of forced early marriage and female genital mutilation and cutting. They also learned ways to challenge the negative gender norms and attitudes that lead to these practices, as well as life and leadership skills to improve self-esteem, confidence and decision-making.

**Creating safe spaces for girls.** Survivors of sexual and gendered violence can get vital – and sometimes life-saving – support. Safe houses provide protection from violence and exploitation, psychologists conduct counselling for trauma, and legal help means abused girls can be supported through the process of pursuing justice.

SOLUTION

Attitudes & Systems

Plan is working with key people who have influence within communities to challenge and change deeply held customs, beliefs and laws that allow female genital mutilation and cutting and forced child marriage to continue.

**Changing laws that allow female genital mutilation.** With GEEFund support, Plan worked with media, advocacy and child protection agencies to pass laws protecting children from abuse and neglect. As a result, the Child Rights Protection Act (CPA) was passed in October 2022. Together, we're now working on further legislation to ban the practice of female genital mutilation and cutting.

**Challenging community beliefs.** Government officials, religious leaders, teachers, the media and other community members of influence took part in workshops about the importance of protecting girls from female genital mutilation and early marriage. They learned about the short-term dangers of FGM/C such as severe pain, bleeding, infection and the risk of girls dropping out of school, as well as long-term health issues such as sexual health problems and future complications in childbirth.

6,558

project participants

4,020

people learned about the risks of child exploitation and practices like FGM/C

492

at-risk children helped through child protection interventions



**Child Rights Protection Act (CPA) passed in October 2022** and anti-FGM/C legislation in the pipeline to keep girls safe from abuse and exploitation. Thank you for helping to provide legal protection for girls against gendered violence.



**12 new social workers trained to support child protection case management.** Thank you for giving girls options to prevent, or escape from, forced child marriage and other abusive situations.



## Stopping abusive customs

Hani\*, 17, like so many others in her refugee community, underwent female genital mutilation when she was just 8 years old.

Nearly 10 years later, she can still vividly recall that awful day.

“There were other older girls that had to undergo [FGM/C] the same day as me,” she says. “When I heard them screaming and crying, I was terrified and ran away. My mother was there. I escaped three times and was caught, and in the end, I was cut.”

FGM/C is a violation of fundamental human rights, yet the practice persists because of the strong belief it will ensure a girl's future marriage or bring family honour. Your support of GEEFund is helping to increase understanding of FGM/C across communities like Hani's.

“[FGM/C] is a bad thing, and it needs to be stopped,” she says, explaining she will never allow her daughters to be cut. Until then,

she is proud to have stopped her younger sisters from suffering the same fate after learning more about the dangers of FGM/C through Plan's workshops.

“I begged my mother and told her I can't forget the pain,” she explains. “I felt so much pain and I couldn't sit up, I had to lie down for ten days.”

“*First, she refused to listen but then she accepted it. My sisters didn't have to undergo [FGM/C].*”

– Hani\*

\*Name has been changed for safeguarding purposes



Together we're overcoming

# Lack of sexual and reproductive health rights in Uganda

PROBLEM

In Uganda, awareness of sexual reproductive health rights is very low. As a result the nation has one of the youngest populations in the world, with 44% of its citizens under 14 years of age. Families living in poverty already struggle to feed their children, let alone meet other needs, including education. Uganda also hosts more than 1.5 million refugees – more than any other African nation – who live in settlements alongside other poor communities, stretching already limited resources. In this environment, girls are at risk of early marriage and motherhood with 30% of girls giving birth before 18. They miss out on education and better job prospects that could help them overcome poverty. These girls are also at high risk of dangerous pregnancies, violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation at the hands of their parents, husbands or families-in-law. Single mothers and sexual violence survivors continue to face stigma and discrimination.

SOLUTION

People

Plan's staff in Uganda are working in the Adjumani refugee settlement to help local and refugee adolescent girls in crisis. With programs designed by and for girls, the following activities are run for girls aged 10-19 and young mums between 14 and 24.

**Community outreaches to improve girls' health.** Quarterly community health outreaches provide young girls and boys with sex education, advice and screening. This included information on HIV/AIDS, other sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy testing, condom distribution, cervical cancer screening, and human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccinations for girls between 10 and 13.

**Youth savings groups to financially empower girls.** Early pregnancy results in girls dropping out of school. But youth savings groups can provide teenage girls and young mums the chance to create decent livelihoods. Members contribute savings to the group then each young woman can take small low-interest loans to start or grow their business. They pay interest which helps to build group savings and fund more loans in the future. Members also learn valuable skills for running their own business.

SOLUTION

Attitudes & Systems

The goal is for girls to live in safe and supportive communities where they enjoy equal rights and opportunities. These activities challenge cultural norms and practices that lead to early marriage, unplanned pregnancy and violence against women.

**Strengthening systems to protect girls.** Workers trained adolescent girls and young mums on how to recognise and report child protection issues such as child marriage, sexual exploitation and gender-based violence. Reporting channels such as suggestion boxes, toll free lines, and involving child protection committees and cultural/religious leaders were set up and promoted to other girls.

**Parenting Under Pressure to support families.** These targeted sessions educated young couples and their parents on the rights of women and girls, as well as sexual and reproductive health issues. Follow up visits with participants indicate that many young mums have improved relationships with their partners because of the sessions.

3,216

project participants

475

young females received business training

\$17,436 (AUD)

combined savings from 49 youth savings groups



70% of participants (up from 15%) passed a positive-parenting skills test. Thank you for helping parents create safe homes and nurture their daughters.



121 girls visiting safe spaces every week. You've helped identify 47 gender-based violence and child protection issues through these visits. All girls received counselling, care items such as clothes, and were referred to medical and justice services.

Youth savings group with their account books. Below: Lucy selling grains at the local market.



## Keeping her dream alive

Lucy is a young mum living in a refugee camp after fleeing South Sudan in 2016.

Her ambition was to become a doctor to support her community after seeing how young girls and pregnant mums needed stronger medical support. But giving birth to her first child at age 12 threatened that dream.

Now she hopes that dream can be fulfilled through her young daughter, and the youth savings group is helping to make that happen. Lucy borrowed funds to start a grain-selling business in the local market. Her profits go towards supporting her child and family.

"I am very happy now as you can see because I am able to provide for my child and my siblings... What is in my mind right now is all about my child. I need to work hard and take care of her. I want her to become a doctor. With that I shall have achieved my dream."

Youth savings groups cover more than financial and business skills to help lift young people like Lucy out of poverty. Jalar, 23, is the chairperson of his youth savings group, with 19 women and 11 men.



Talking about relationships and sex is often considered taboo in Uganda. This leaves young girls at risk of teenage pregnancy and the dangerous complications that result, unsafe abortions and sexually transmitted infections and diseases. That's why Jalar's group began using their meetings to learn about those issues that unfairly affect the young girls in their community.

"We go through peer education sessions where we discuss issues such as how to avoid teenage pregnancy, our bodily changes, family planning," he says. "We also talk about issues of gender-based violence, its effects and how to stop it and to avoid things like drug abuse, alcohol, early marriages."



Together we're overcoming

# Poverty and economic hardship in Vietnam

PROBLEM

When families struggle with poverty in Vietnam, it's girls who bear the brunt of the consequences, especially those from ethnic minorities. In the Ha Giang, Quang Tru and Kon Tum provinces, ethnic minorities make up a big proportion of the local populations. Boys are favoured over girls for education so it's girls who are most likely to miss out on finishing school. Instead, they must stay home to collect water, do housework, and care for other children or extended family. Many girls also get married and have children early, ending any hope of continuing their education. Even if they stay at school, girls in these provinces face gender stereotypes for jobs and lack of relevant careers advice and information - only 39% of girls knew what steps to take to get a job. This makes it hard for girls to pursue better paid and fulfilling careers—which are also their pathway out of poverty and hardship.

SOLUTION

People

To be effective, any program that aims to reduce poverty has to involve all the people who influence the path a girl takes in life. Hence the Girls Ready for the Future program runs the following activities targeted at girls aged 11-15 and 16-24 to give them more choices over their future.

**Careers guidance and support to overcome poverty.** In line with changes to the national education curriculum, all girls and boys from grades 6-9 receive careers guidance and information about possible future jobs and what skills are required. Children also assess their own aptitude and skills for their career of interest while teachers receive training on how to run career education activities for their students so they can better support and prepare girls for their chosen careers. Special workshops also link young people into government employment programs that will give them valuable work experience.

**Financial and business skills for future livelihoods.** Girls and boys receive training in financial literacy, learning how to save and the basics of running a business. Also, youth groups receive seed grants to encourage young people to start small businesses and earn their own income.

SOLUTION

Attitudes & Systems

To change attitudes that stop girls from finishing school, the Girls Ready for the Future program also ran the following.

**Giving girls a voice.** School-based youth clubs trained girls about child rights, covering issues that hold them back such as gender-based violence, early marriage and poor sexual health education. Girls also received training and opportunities for community leadership positions. Here they help teach other children in their communities about these issues, combating traditional gender stereotypes about a girl's role and encouraging full participation in community decision-making and life.

**Changing parents' attitudes.** Mums and dads attend workshops to understand the importance of educating girls, including the long-term financial benefits of girls finishing school and the dangers of child marriage to a girl's health and life prospects. Together with encouragement from local teachers, parents are more likely to allow their daughters to finish school.

11,371

project participants

42

seed grants provided to enterprising youth

160

schools promoted the importance of girls' education and careers



75% of girls (up from 46% last year) received jobs, careers and labour market advice through school. You've helped give the guidance they need to choose careers best suited to them and their passions.



87% of students (up from 70% last year) now oppose girls getting married before the age of 18. You've helped change the attitudes that pressure girls into dropping out of school.



## From dropout risk to agent of change

Thanks to your generosity, today you can find 14-year-old Nguyen in the classroom, pursuing her dream to become a teacher. This ambitious young girl is a bright and diligent student. She's also involved in girls' club activities such as teaching others about the risks of child abuse.

But this might not have been the case without the support of GEEFund. At 14, Nguyen was at risk of dropping out of school because her parents struggled to feed the whole family of 5 children, especially because her father was sick and unable to work. She was also at risk of being married off too young to relieve the financial burden on her family, which is common practice in the rural area Nguyen lives in, one of the poorest in her province.

Instead, Nguyen has other plans—because she took part in the Girls Ready for the Future project. Here she learned about the importance of finishing school, her future job options and the benefits of having a career.

“When participating in career education activities, we learned

the necessary requirements of the job we like... My dream is to become a teacher. And then after that I want to go back and continue the work my teachers are doing to help people here find ways out of poverty.”

Nguyen's aspirations are all about empowering others as she has been empowered. Your impact grows with each girl you help like Nguyen.

“My dream is to become a teacher. And... to help people here find ways out of poverty.”

— Nguyen



Together we're saving lives during

# The hunger crisis emergency in South Sudan

PROBLEM

South Sudan is the world's youngest country. For half of its 12 years as a nation, the country has seen ongoing civil war. At the north border, thousands of refugees fleeing conflict have entered South Sudan, adding extra pressure to the already devastated economy. Climate related challenges – floods in some parts and extreme drought in others – have wreaked havoc on food production. When 80% of the people live on less than \$1 a day, these overlapping crises have resulted in catastrophic hunger and it's those already most marginalised who pay the price. Women, especially pregnant or lactating mums, and adolescent girls, are most at risk of starvation, acute malnutrition and other health complications. Girls also face the danger of gender-based violence and the risk of early marriage, which is so common that a girl in South Sudan is more likely to be married before her 18th birthday than finish high school.

SOLUTION

People

Thank you for supporting three food-based programs across the most affected counties in Lakes State, South Sudan. Your kindness is ending hunger and saving lives.

Supporting general food distribution for families.

When families living in poverty experience hunger, it's not only their lives but also their livelihoods at risk. An emergency food package and cash vouchers help a family survive without selling off the livestock or assets that give them a living.

**Nourishing those most at risk.** In a hunger crisis, pregnant women, lactating mums, and children under five are most likely to die from starvation and other health complications brought about by acute malnutrition. High energy and nutrition foods delivered as part of a Blanket Supplementary Feeding Programme helps to prevent malnutrition in these vulnerable groups - thank you for saving lives.

**Feed hungry girls and boys.** School meals help reduce hunger, enables students to focus on their studies, and allows families to stretch their own rations further. Plan International is also helping to establish school gardens that grow melon, kale and okra. The extra fresh fruit and vegetables in daily school meals boosts nutrition, with schools planning to expand production to include vegetables like cabbage in the near future.

SOLUTION

Attitudes & Systems

Plan worked with communities to introduce measures to protect women and girls across each of the three food-based programs, helping to shift harmful attitudes and behaviours that put them at risk.

**Parenting under Pressure to protect girls.** This flagship program is being rolled out for the first time in South Sudan for parents and caregivers of girls and boys under 10 who are navigating crises. It equips them to adopt nonviolent parenting strategies and make safe choices for their children, especially girls who are most at risk of hunger and early marriage in disaster zones.

**Gaining community-led support.** Your kindness supports community-based child protection networks and child rights clubs in schools to educate girls, boys and parents on issues of child safety. They learn about child rights, harmful cultural practices and forced early marriage and take this knowledge back to their families. Other awareness raising activities include vital health and WASH education to stop the outbreak of disease in already weakened populations.

69,602

people reached with life-saving assistance

38,898

children received school meals and food for their families

29,079

people received food and cash voucher assistance



A 10% rise in the number of schools with school gardens. Thank you for helping to provide nutritious vegetables to use in school meals.



1,966 children under 5 facing acute malnutrition reached through Blanket Supplementary Feeding Programmes – potentially saving their lives.



Mary, 33, prepares a meal for her family

## The first full meal in months

South Sudan is in the midst of a severe hunger crisis which is affecting almost two-thirds of the population. Drought, conflict and disrupted livelihoods are driving the crisis, the worst the country has ever experienced since it was founded 12 years ago. 33-year-old Mary Awutcok explains that she and her children regularly go without food.

“At times, we can go up to for two days without eating and if there is some food it will only be given to the children.”

Mary's family is one of many who have lost their crops because the rainy season stopped before it started. The first rainfall happened in May, but it only lasted for a day before it completely stopped for the next two months.

Without any food from her farm to rely upon for the coming months, Mary has begun to sell tea so she can make a little money to buy food for her family.

Keeping her children fed through the dry spell is not easy. Mary uses any money she can earn from her business to buy food, but most days there is not enough to go around – and it is usually the girls who suffer the most as Mary explains.

“Girls eating less than boys, is just something that happens.”

Plan International is scaling up our response to the hunger crisis

in Cueibet, which is one of the counties in Lakes State with the highest number of food insecure people. Working alongside the World Food Programme, we are distributing food rations to families in crisis, including Mary who was able to feed her children their first full meal in months.

“Today I received four items. The first one is cereal, the second is pulses, followed by salt and oil. These items I've received will help me save the little money I get from my business.”

With your support, more families like Mary's will receive critical food assistance to help them through this crisis.

“I'm so happy for this food assistance from Plan International because I feel that someone has my back while I'm in this difficult situation.”

– Mary



# Future goals – will you join us?

When you invest in the Girls Education & Empowerment Fund, together we break down the barriers that stop girls from reaching their full potential. We are aiming to double the impact of this life-changing fund, by supporting over a quarter of a million girls to become powerful women that change the world.

## With your help, we want to:

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| 1.  | 2.   | 3.   |
| Expand our reach and invite more Australians to join us in this movement. | Continue leveraging your contributions for greater impact each year. | Deepen our impact in communities to create lasting change. |

Thank you for transforming the lives of girls for generations to come.

Because a better now for her, means a better future for everyone.

Girls at their primary school built by Plan International in Cambodia.



To make a further contribution to the Girls Education & Empowerment Fund, [click here](#).





Until we are all equal

**plan.org.au** 13 75 26

Plan International Australia  
18/60 City Road, Southbank VIC 3006  
GPO Box 2818, Melbourne VIC 3001  
Tel: 13 75 26 Fax: +61 (3) 9670 1130  
Email: [info@plan.org.au](mailto:info@plan.org.au)

ABN 49 004 875 807

 /planaustralia

 @PlanAustralia

 @plan\_australia

