



Until we are all equal

Girl leaders in Cameroon develop action plans to raise awareness of their rights.



In Benin, P4G participants marched on Day of the African Child.



# Seven Years of Change & a New Beginning

As the Plan for Girls project concludes in Benin and Cameroon, girls who have built confidence, leadership skills, and strong support networks are already shaping what comes next.





#### TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2 | The Facts
- 3 | Project Overview
- 4 | By the Numbers
- 6 | Stories of Change

A youth leader addresses the crowd at a community event in Cameroon. P4G's leadership training for girls emphasized public speaking as an essential advocacy skill.

Youth leaders in Benin and Cameroon didn't just speak up – they got results. They persuaded local governments to act on more than **100 real changes** that matter to adolescent girls, like building school bathrooms in Benin so girls don't skip class during their periods. In Cameroon, it meant bringing electricity to communities so girls can study after dark. And in both countries, creating safe spaces where girls can meet, learn, and feel supported.

## THE FACTS

**WHO:** The \$19 million Plan for Girls (P4G) project was funded by Global Affairs Canada and individual Canadian donors. We also worked with local partners – UNOADD and FEPEs in Cameroon and RACINES and DEDRAS in Benin – to ensure that positive changes endure long after the project ends.

**WHAT:** P4G supported girls' rights and well-being by focusing on four key areas: education, protection, economic empowerment, and sexual & reproductive health & rights. What set this project apart was its girl-led approach: Girls didn't just take part; they played an active role in designing the project to make sure it truly reflected their needs and priorities.

**WHERE:** In 120 villages in Benin and Cameroon (60 villages per country). In Benin, we focused on four communes\* in the central Collines department: Bantè, Dassa-Zoumé, Savalou, and Glazoué. In Cameroon, the project was based in two northern communes, Lagdo and Ngong, within the Bénoué department.

**WHEN:** October 2018–September 2025

**WHY:** The project targeted regions where adolescent girls face deep-rooted challenges such as poverty, limited opportunities, and harmful gender norms. To respond, we focused on three goals:

**1 | Supporting girls in making informed choices** about their rights and futures, and working with the people who shape their lives – parents, families, their male peers, teachers, health workers, and community and religious leaders – to encourage lasting change.

**2 | Improving delivery of services that meet the unique needs of young women**, ensuring they can access health care, education, protection services, and job opportunities.

**3 | Enhancing governments' ability to listen, act, and protect girls' rights.**

\*In Benin and Cameroon, a commune is a local government area, like a town or district, responsible for managing public services such as schools and health care.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

# Born to Lead

Confident girls spark transformation – in their lives, communities, and beyond.

In September 2025, we marked the close of the Plan for Girls (P4G) project, a seven-year initiative that reached 120 communities across Benin and Cameroon. From the beginning, girls and young women weren't just participants; they were leaders and decision makers, shaping the project to reflect what girls experience day to day.

One of these young leaders is Hélène, a member of P4G's Girls Advisory Committee in Benin. Born with a physical disability that makes walking and standing for long periods difficult, Hélène often felt uncertain about her future and isolated from others. She was surprised when her community elected her to help guide the project – she was one of the few girls in the village to have completed junior high, and her peers wanted her to help make their voices heard.

For Hélène, this was a daunting task. Before P4G, she rarely spoke up, let alone among strangers. But her first P4G meetings filled her with a sense of responsibility toward other girls. "As committee members, it was our job to defend our rights," she says.

Hélène is one of 75 Girls Advisory Committee members across four communes in Benin. Through P4G, they developed leadership skills and worked alongside boys, parents, and local leaders to ensure that girls' needs and priorities were reflected in community development plans and budgets.

"The experience helped me let go of the judgments I used to have about myself," Hélène says. "I learned that

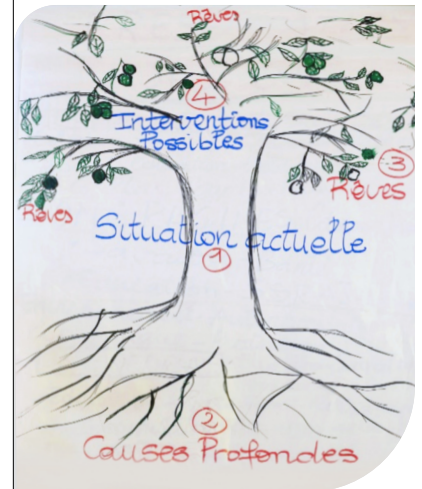


women can work, fight, and achieve anything men can."

Over the course of the project, youth participants like Hélène led more than 90 activities in Benin and Cameroon, rallying their communities around the issues they cared about most, including better health care for teens, safer spaces for girls, and putting an end to child marriage.

"The ripple effect of P4G is powerful," says Edith Tambe, P4G project manager in Cameroon. "Many of these girls are now forming their own groups to share what they've learned and advocate for the well-being of girls and children."

P4G stands out not only for its outcomes but for its approach: investing in girls' leadership as a foundation for lasting change. As we look back on the project, from pilot to completion, we see girls who believe in themselves, communities reimagining what's possible, and a growing network of young leaders already planning their next steps.



A problem tree (above) created by girls in Benin to explore the root causes of the challenges they face and to express their priorities for the future.

Hélène (left) addresses local leaders and her peers from the Girls Advisory Committee at a P4G project planning meeting.

## Thank you for your support

We are deeply grateful for your support of the Plan for Girls project in Benin and Cameroon. Thank you for your continued commitment to the education, health, safety, and well-being of girls and young women. Together, we're helping them gain the tools and opportunities they need to turn their plans into reality.



“  
I’ve been  
involved with  
P4G for five  
years. The  
project inspires  
positive  
thinking. As a  
girl, you grow  
up feeling  
valued. You  
won’t go down  
the wrong  
path; you’ll  
grow up well.”

—Sylvie, 18, project  
participant in  
Cameroon

## BY THE NUMBERS

# What Your Support Made Possible

**O**ver seven years, P4G helped create meaningful change in the lives of girls and young women in Benin and Cameroon. These results show how attitudes, opportunities, and access to essential services improved over the course of the project. In many cases, progress went even further than we’d hoped, proving what’s possible when girls lead and communities rally behind them.

### DECLINE IN EARLY

**MARRIAGE:** The percentage of young women (aged 18–22) who were married before 18 dropped significantly, from **15% to 4% in Benin [TARGET 10%]** and from **24% to 8% in Cameroon [TARGET 20%]**. In contrast, early marriage increased in similar communities outside the project.

### SHIFTS IN HOW GIRLS SEE THEMSELVES:

In Benin, the percentage of girls who believed in more equal roles and responsibilities for women and men more than doubled, from **20% to 54% [TARGET 34%]**. In Cameroon it jumped from **13% to 27% [TARGET 27%]**. In similar communities where the project didn’t run, those numbers barely moved.

### IMPROVED ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES:

Girls’ and young women’s access to sexual and reproductive health services more than tripled, rising from **9% to 30% in Benin [TARGET 27%]** and from **6% to 31% in Cameroon [TARGET 28%]**. Similar communities that did not participate in the project saw little change.

Young people gained hands-on experience with mechanics through P4G’s vocational skills training programs.





## BY THE NUMBERS (CONT.)



In Benin, graduates celebrate the completion of their training in crafting fashion accessories from *pagne*, a brightly patterned local fabric.

### PARENTS SEE THEIR DAUGHTERS' FUTURES DIFFERENTLY:

In project communities, parents became more open to girls having the same opportunities as boys, whether that meant staying in school, speaking up, or making their own choices. In Benin, the percentage of mothers with more supportive views jumped from **19% to 49% [TARGET 35%]** and fathers from **16% to 41% [TARGET 35%]**. In Cameroon, mothers went from **16% to 24% [TARGET 35%]** and fathers from **16% to 19% [TARGET 35%]**.

### GREATER ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION:

More young women (aged 20–24) began earning an income outside the home, increasing from **16% to 27% in Benin [TARGET 20%]** and from **19% to 28% in Cameroon [TARGET 25%]**. Similar communities saw small gains or declines.

### STRONGER LIFE SKILLS:

Girls started speaking up, setting goals, and leading with confidence. In Benin, the percentage of girls with these skills rose from **10% to 30% [TARGET 25%]**, more than twice the increase seen in other communities. In Cameroon, it grew from **26% to 37% [TARGET 40%]**, while similar communities saw a drop of nearly 10%.



In northern Cameroon, members of a Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Committee take part in a training session. Made up of traditional leaders, these committees were set up in all 60 project villages to raise awareness and support survivors.



## A STORY OF CHANGE

# Room to Grow

Safe spaces open doors for girls across rural Benin.

**T**he Plan for Girls project didn't begin with ready-made solutions. When it launched in 2018, the first step was simply to listen. Through conversations with more than 860 girls and young women across Benin, the team heard honest perspectives on daily life, opportunities, and challenges. One message stood out clearly: Girls needed safe, welcoming spaces where they could come together, share experiences, and support one another.

Jacqueline, a 25-year-old youth leader from Bantè, helped make that vision real. She worked closely with the P4G team and community members to choose a location for a safe space in her village. With support from the project, a room in the public meeting house was transformed: newly cemented, painted, and furnished with benches and chairs. Before this, girls had no choice but to meet outdoors, often under trees, with little privacy or comfort.

"What is a safe space?" Jacqueline reflects. "It's a place where we can truly be ourselves. If we want to say something private, we go inside and talk. No one disturbs us."

Today, girls across 57 villages have spaces of their own – to meet, learn, and feel heard. Trusted adult mentors guide conversations about health, education, and equality for girls and teach practical skills like sewing and soap-making. They also help girls access support services when needed. Mentors encourage open conversations between girls and their families, creating space to talk, listen, and slowly shift ways of thinking.

"We've noticed that parent-child dialogue has improved a lot," says Jacqueline. "We've also raised awareness of early pregnancies, and we've started to see a small reduction."

P4G also constructed four municipal-level safe spaces where girls can access a wider range of services and leadership opportunities. In Bantè, the centre includes a meeting hall, a private room for confidential conversations, a computer room that doubles as a library, and green outdoor spaces.

Jacqueline remembers leading a group of younger girls from her village to visit the new building. The head of the centre welcomed them warmly and, with just a few words, made clear why the space mattered. "She told us never to feel ashamed," Jacqueline recalls. "If we ever faced problems or needed help, we could come to her."

“

The community is happy too. Before, when we invited them to events, it was under the mango trees and some people had to stand. Now they can sit comfortably in the hall.”

—Jacqueline, 25, youth leader

**Jacqueline leads an awareness session for youth in her village.**







It's up to us  
to advocate so  
decision makers  
can take action.  
We're going  
to work to meet  
our needs."

—Aïssatou, 22,  
youth leader



Another youth  
leader facilitates a  
YCSC workshop in  
Cameroon.

## A STORY OF CHANGE

# Real Talk, Real Action

A new initiative gives young people  
a direct line to decision makers.

**A**ïssatou stood at the front of a classroom, marker in hand, facing village leaders seated on school benches. There were traditional chiefs, the health-centre manager, even the deputy mayor. At 22, Aïssatou was a seasoned youth leader, but this assignment was nerve-wracking.

"I worried about making spelling mistakes in front of all those authority figures," she recalls. Still, she knew why she was there. "I wanted to fight for my community and contribute my ideas."

This was the first day of the Young Citizen Score Card (YCSC) initiative, part of the P4G project. The approach was piloted in 12 villages across Cameroon, where young people worked with their communities to assess public services like schools and health centres, identify gaps, and share their findings with local leaders. Unlike traditional scorecards led by outside experts, the YCSC trained youth to lead these conversations and help their communities come up with action plans.

Over four days, Aïssatou and two other youth leaders led discussions that brought hidden problems in their community to light – such as overcrowded classrooms, not having ambulances, and the fact that many children didn't have birth certificates.

In Cameroon, students need a birth certificate to take their final primary school exams and move on to secondary school. According to the World Bank, as of 2024, 1.67 million children (about 29% of all

students) didn't have one, putting their education at risk. "They have to stop their studies when they find out that they don't have a birth certificate or that the one they have is fake," says Aïssatou.

Many families miss the 90-day window after a child's birth when certificates are free, because they're unaware of the deadline or live too far from registration offices. After that, the process becomes complicated and expensive: It can cost about C\$83 – a high price when the monthly minimum wage is about C\$100.

Aïssatou knows the struggle first-hand. She got her own birth certificate after multiple trips to the hospital, town hall, and courthouse in Garoua, nearly 90 kilometres away. She had to stand before a judge to plead her case.

The YCSC action plan for this issue focused on educating parents and advocating for registration services closer to villages. Aïssatou started holding awareness sessions at schools, prenatal clinics, and health centres. She also helped families navigate the registration process and secure their documentation.

In 2024, her efforts took her to Yaoundé, the capital city, where she spoke to senators at an event organized by Plan Cameroon. She successfully called for funding to provide 12,050 birth certificates for children who had been forced to leave school. "Before, I never thought I could speak to an authority figure," she says. "But now I know I'm capable."

## IMPACT STAT

Aïssatou is one of 322 young people (177 girls and 145 boys) in Cameroon who gained the skills and confidence to lead the Young Citizen Score Card process in their communities. Their energy and commitment helped the project **surpass its original goal of training 260 youth leaders across 12 pilot villages.**





Girl leaders involved in the P4G project continue to champion their rights.

## Thank you for being part of the journey.

**Whether you've supported P4G from the beginning or joined along the way, your partnership made a lasting difference. Together, we've helped girls in Benin and Cameroon build leadership skills, raise their voices, and shape the future they deserve. We're deeply grateful for your generosity and commitment to this important work.**



### About Plan International Canada

Plan International Canada is a member of a global organization dedicated to advancing children's rights and equality for girls. Plan International has been building powerful partnerships with and for children for over 85 years and is now active in more than 80 countries. We stand with children, especially girls, wherever they are oppressed, exploited, left behind, or not equally valued. We're determined optimists, and we will continue to persevere until we are all equal.

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