



Until we are all equal



# Plan for Girls in Cameroon

Our number 1 priority is to remove the barriers girls face in getting an education.

Boosting gender equality is helping girls stay in school.



## Project Facts

**WHAT:** The Plan for Girls project in Cameroon aims to support girls and young women ages 10–24 and ensure their well-being.

**HOW:** The project seeks to:

- Provide scholarships so girls can return to school.
- Raise awareness about gender-based violence and ways to reduce it.
- Offer vocational training so that young women can earn a living and reduce financial barriers.
- Increase girls' knowledge about their sexual and reproductive health.

**WHERE:** We work in two communes in Cameroon: Ngong and Lagdo.

**WHEN:** We have completed Year 5 of this eight-year project (2018–2025).

**WHO:** Our funding partner in this \$19 million project is Global Affairs Canada. Implementing partners include the Association of Women Bearers of Hope (FEPES) and the Union of Sustainable Development Support Organizations (UNOADD).

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A group of girls show their menstrual cycle bracelets.

“Harmful cultural norms and practices are gradually giving way to fairer access to opportunities for girls. We have village authorities and traditional leaders who are strong allies for the project.”

– Edith Tambe,  
program manager for  
the Plan for Girls  
project in Cameroon

## The Situation

Poverty, gender inequality and harmful practices hinder girls' progress in Cameroon.

Located in Central Africa, Cameroon is a diverse country with a rich cultural history. Its 25 million people speak 250 Indigenous languages, including Kamtok, as well as English and French. Cameroonians are largely Christian, but Islam and traditional faiths are also practised. While its landscapes are beautiful – tropical rainforests, deserts, savannahs and sandy beaches – the country faces immense challenges such as poverty and regional conflict.

Agriculture, including the farming of crops such as cotton, bananas, coffee and rubber, is the main economic driver. However, the country is largely undeveloped, with few industries, exports or employment opportunities, and a gendered division of labour still exists. Girls and women also experience high rates of gender-based violence.

In the North Region of Cameroon, where the Plan for Girls project is active, up to two-thirds of girls age 18 and under are married, despite the legal age for marriage being 18. This increases their chances of early childbirth, which is the number-one cause of death for girls ages 15–19 around the world. Since birth certificates are uncommon in many communities, it can be challenging to prove that age restrictions are being violated.

Once girls give birth, the majority drop out of school to become caregivers. They means they don't have the opportunity

to gain vocational or entrepreneurial skills so they can become financially independent.

### THE POWER OF PEER INFLUENCE

The Plan for Girls project has found that Champions of Change clubs have helped raise awareness about girls' rights and positively change behaviours. Participants have reported that girls and boys in their communities now share household chores such as cooking, collecting water and gathering firewood.

“We talked to girls and boys about what they learned from various educational talks and clubs,” says Edith Tambe, program manager for the Plan for Girls project in Cameroon. “Some of the boys said they didn't consider the girls before. But now they understand the role they need to play to help their sisters and friends thrive equally.” To build on this success, the Plan for Girls team launched 60 Champions of Change clubs in 30 communities over the past year. In addition, we helped launch 30 financial co-operatives in schools.

### THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

As we complete Year 5 of this eight-year project, we are grateful for your support. Thank you for trusting us in our work to help collaboratively transform the circumstances for girls and young women in Cameroon.

With the help of your generous contributions, thousands more girls have the chance to attend school, stay healthy and become financially independent. We are also working with thousands of parents, boys and community leaders to foster gender equality at home and in the community. We have trained hundreds of influential community members, including child-protection aides, school staff, social-service providers and municipal authorities, to support the well-being and safety of girls.

### KEY CHALLENGES IN CAMEROON

➤ In the North Region, **one-quarter** of women were married **before the age of 15** and **two-thirds before they were 18**.

➤ In 2016, **only 43%** of secondary-school-age girls were enrolled in school.

➤ Cameroon ranks **151 out of 189 countries** on the Human Development Index, which measures life expectancy, access to education and standard of living.

➤ **41.3%** of girls and young women between ages 15–24 believe that domestic violence is justified.

**Thank you for your continued support.**





A young woman participates in a Plan for Girls workshop.

# The Rundown

The Plan for Girls project in Cameroon has already reached 49,904 people, including 28,245 girls and young women between the ages of 10 and 24.

## PROMOTING THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

While early marriage and unplanned pregnancies play a big role in girls' dropping out of school, there are other factors at play, including financial barriers and the decision of some parents to have their daughters stay home to help with housework and child care. In some cases, the girls themselves refuse to attend.

To encourage higher school-attendance rates, Plan International worked with 172 members of 30 parent and teacher associations. They discussed issues around girls' education, the importance of securing birth certificates and options for female students to study science and technology.

Following these sessions, positive changes were seen, including an increase in the number of girls enrolled in school in communities that previously did not favour education for girls.

## IMPROVING HEALTH SERVICES FOR GIRLS

Supporting the sexual and reproductive health of girls and young women is crucial to their overall well-being. Access to

contraceptives reduces the chances of early and unwanted pregnancies, which means girls are more likely to complete their education and become financially independent.

With those goals in mind, the Plan for Girls project worked with Cameroon's Ministry of Health and representatives from 22 health care facilities in Lagdo and Ngong to provide sexually-transmitted-infection (STI) kits, contraceptives and gender-based-violence kits. Plan International also purchased medical equipment, such as fetal monitors, birthing beds and blood-pressure machines. To ensure these changes are sustainable, staff were trained on how to use the equipment and how to budget for the restocking of medical supplies.

## ENCOURAGING YOUTH COMMUNITY LEADERS

To transform attitudes and behaviours around gender equality in Cameroon, girls and boys must feel confident enough to speak up and be able to do so in a safe environment. To promote leadership among adolescents, Plan International staff and community officials have organized a number of annual three-day leadership camps in the project's selected municipalities.

At the camps, girls and boys learn about menstruation, school violence and how boys can act as allies to promote gender equality. In addition, participants are asked to share their experiences and insights with decision-making project leaders.



Medical equipment is delivered to a community in Cameroon.



## Plan for Girls gains in Cameroon since 2022:

- **1,724** boys and girls have been trained in sexual and reproductive health, gender equality, protection and how to participate in public life.
- **228** women have learned environmentally friendly farming techniques and been provided with seeds, fertilizers and sprayers.
- **57** service providers from the government have received training on gender-based violence, gender equality and child protection.
- **589** peer-to-peer education sessions have been held to discuss menstrual hygiene, the consequences of child marriage and children's right to an education.
- **201** girls have been supported in pursuing vocational and technical education and training opportunities through school scholarships.
- **200** school kits have been distributed to girls and boys; they include items such as waterproof backpacks, academic materials and calculators.
- **511** girls have been trained in entrepreneurship and financial literacy.
- **2** women-empowerment centers have been constructed. These multifunctional spaces serve as vocational training centres as well as safe spaces for girls and women fleeing gender-based violence.
- **12** health providers have been trained on sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- **8** latrine blocks have been completed in primary and secondary schools to improve hygiene, sanitation and access to clean water.





“We are powerful and capable,” says Solantine, who is a member of the steering committee for the Plan for Girls project. The 16-year-old student is an advocate for gender equality and girls’ rights in her community.

“Solantine is outstanding and a role model in her community. She rose above her personal barriers to succeed.”

– Edith Tambe, program manager for the Plan for Girls project in Cameroon

based violence among girls and educates members of her community on girls’ rights. In addition, she has been advocating for the building of a well in her community. Her strong leadership has even landed her a spot on the Plan for Girls project’s Lagdo steering council.

“As an advocate for youth, I have seen and felt obstacles that prevent girls from being leaders, having a voice and expressing themselves,” says Solantine. “But I know we are stronger than these obstacles. We are powerful and capable.”

## A STORY OF CHANGE A Champion for Herself and All Girls

Solantine struggled to believe in herself, but now she has the confidence to lead.

Solantine always did well in her literature class, but she wasn’t comfortable doing math and didn’t perform well in the subject. In her mind, math was for boys.

However, after she started attending Champions of Change club meetings, she changed her mind. The club helped her discover that she could succeed in any subject she put her mind to. Today, she’s achieving some of the highest marks in her class in math and science.

Solantine also began to advocate for gender equality outside of school. “I learned to do what a man can do, and I also ask from men the same that I am asked,” she explains.

And she didn’t stop there. Solantine was so inspired by what she learned through the Plan for Girls project that she formed her own youth group. “I learned that leadership is not a person but a group of people,” she says. “I learned how to create my group; its name is Rights and Values.”

Through her group, she raises awareness about gender-



Community participants in the Plan for Girls project

## Looking Ahead

Every girl has the right to get an education and to lead a safe, healthy life. The Plan for Girls project in Cameroon will continue to use a multi-faceted approach in reducing barriers for girls and young women to continue their education. Plan International will also continue to support their access to sexual and reproductive health knowledge and services, open opportunities for them to become financially independent and help them positively shift community attitudes toward gender roles.

## Thank you!

Plan International is committed to supporting girls and young women in overcoming barriers to education and achieving their potential while staying healthy and safe. We are grateful to our community of donors for allowing us to continue crucial programming in Cameroon that will help change lives for generations to come. None of this work would be possible without your support.

**Thank you again for your commitment to girls and young women and their rights. With your partnership, girls across Cameroon are gaining chances to stay healthy and safe, become educated and financially independent and work toward the futures they hope to make possible.**





Until we are all equal



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**HUMANITARIAN COALITION**

**We're in this together.**  
**Thank you for teaming up with us alongside girls and women in Cameroon.**

For more information,  
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## 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.