

Kenza, smiling, and standing in a classroom.

THE BECAUSE I AM A GIRL PROJECT

**EMPOWERING GIRLS TO RISE UP IN OVER
17 COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE**



Sweeti is a student from Jhalakathi district, and an active member of the Combatting Early Marriage in Bangladesh program, which you support through the **Because I am a Girl** project.

YOUR GENEROSITY HELPED IMPROVE THE LIVES OF 5.1 MILLION GIRLS, INCLUDING:

- ➔ **8,000 out-of-school girls** who were protected from child marriage in Bangladesh
- ➔ **33,500+ girls** who are learning in safer schools in Burkina Faso
- ➔ **158,000 young entrepreneurs** and peacemakers who were trained in Colombia

CONTENTS

The First Word 4

The Scene 6

The Rundown 8

Bangladesh

 Report Card 10

 Spotlight 11

Burkina Faso

 Report Card 12

 Spotlight 13

Colombia

 Report Card 14

 Spotlight 15

The Last Word 16

LIFTOFF

Girls are often undervalued, undermined and underestimated. Today, in many parts of the world, gender inequality is increasing because of COVID-19, armed conflict, climate change and poverty. You are empowering girls to rise above these challenges.

BY SUPPORTING THE BECAUSE I AM A GIRL PROJECT, you are creating lasting change and enabling millions of girls and women like Adaya, Fidinyama, and Ingrid – whom you'll meet later – to live the lives they choose. Thanks in part to you, Adaya has stopped child marriages, Fidinyama has returned to school and Ingrid has launched her own business.

The Because I am a Girl project has three key goals:

- End gender inequality
- Promote girls' rights
- Lift millions of girls out of poverty through education



THANK YOU for believing in the power of girls to change their lives and achieve their dreams!



Children learning at a speed school in Burkina Faso

Mother and daughter cooking side by side with pots on the ground in Bangladesh.



THE SCENE

Each of the 17+ countries where the **Because I am a Girl** project works has unique cultures and customs. But they have something in common: Girls born in these countries face massive barriers when it comes to leading a life of their choosing.

- Child marriage robs girls of their futures. Bangladesh has one of the world's highest rates of child marriage: 52% of girls will be married by their 18th birthday.
- Decades of armed conflict in Colombia have prevented generations of women from safely earning enough to support their families.
- Girls' education is threatened for many reasons. Extremist groups shut down thousands of schools in Burkina Faso, depriving 340,000 children of their education.
- Girls' fundamental human rights are often ignored. More than half of all women in Bolivia experience domestic abuse.

HUNGER IS HURTING GIRLS

One in nine people will go hungry tonight, and because girls often aren't equally valued, they suffer the most.

For families to cope, girls are sometimes sold into child marriage, pulled from school to help at home or worse. Girls and women account for 60% of people worldwide who don't have enough food.

“The conflict in Ukraine will trigger even higher food prices, meaning it can only worsen the hunger crisis in countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.” – Sven Coppens, Plan International director in coastal West Africa.

The **Because I am a Girl** project works in the region and other hunger hotspots to help girls secure food and protect them from being forced to sacrifice their future.



Two transgender women holding new business certificates in El Salvador.

NAMING RIGHTS

Equality for girls means equality for all

IN 2016, a transgender activist in El Salvador launched a lawsuit challenging the Name Law, which doesn't permit people to change their name or gender on their identity documents.

This past February, the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice in El Salvador ruled that the law was unconstitutional and discriminatory. The new Gender Identity Law hasn't been enacted yet, but Plan International and other groups continue to support activists in lobbying for this change.

“We support the empowerment of this population so they can start fighting for their rights. They may be born a man, but if they are dressed as a woman when they go to a health facility, they are rejected.”

This law is essential in addressing the prejudice, discrimination and violence many transgender people face daily.

“This law is key because without it, an individual may not be able to access education, health care and employment.”

– ERIKA SILVA, HEALTH ADVISOR, PLAN INTERNATIONAL CANADA

THE RUNDOWN

Your support helps women and girls overcome challenges like poverty, climate change and inequality. Here are some outstanding achievements that you made possible:

54,600
GIRLS AND WOMEN

participated in microfinancing and savings groups in Colombia, which helps them financially support their families.



23,498

BOLIVIAN GIRLS, BOYS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

learned to support gender equality and women's and girls' rights through workshops and training sessions, which ultimately help prevent domestic abuse.



9,600
GIRLS

in Ethiopia learned through peer-led community conversations how to protect themselves from child marriage and gender-based violence and how important it is to have equality in the home.

1,395
GIRLS

in Burkina Faso were enrolled in accelerated-learning centres, where they can catch up on the classes they missed when their schools were threatened and closed by extremist groups.



1,000
PARENTS

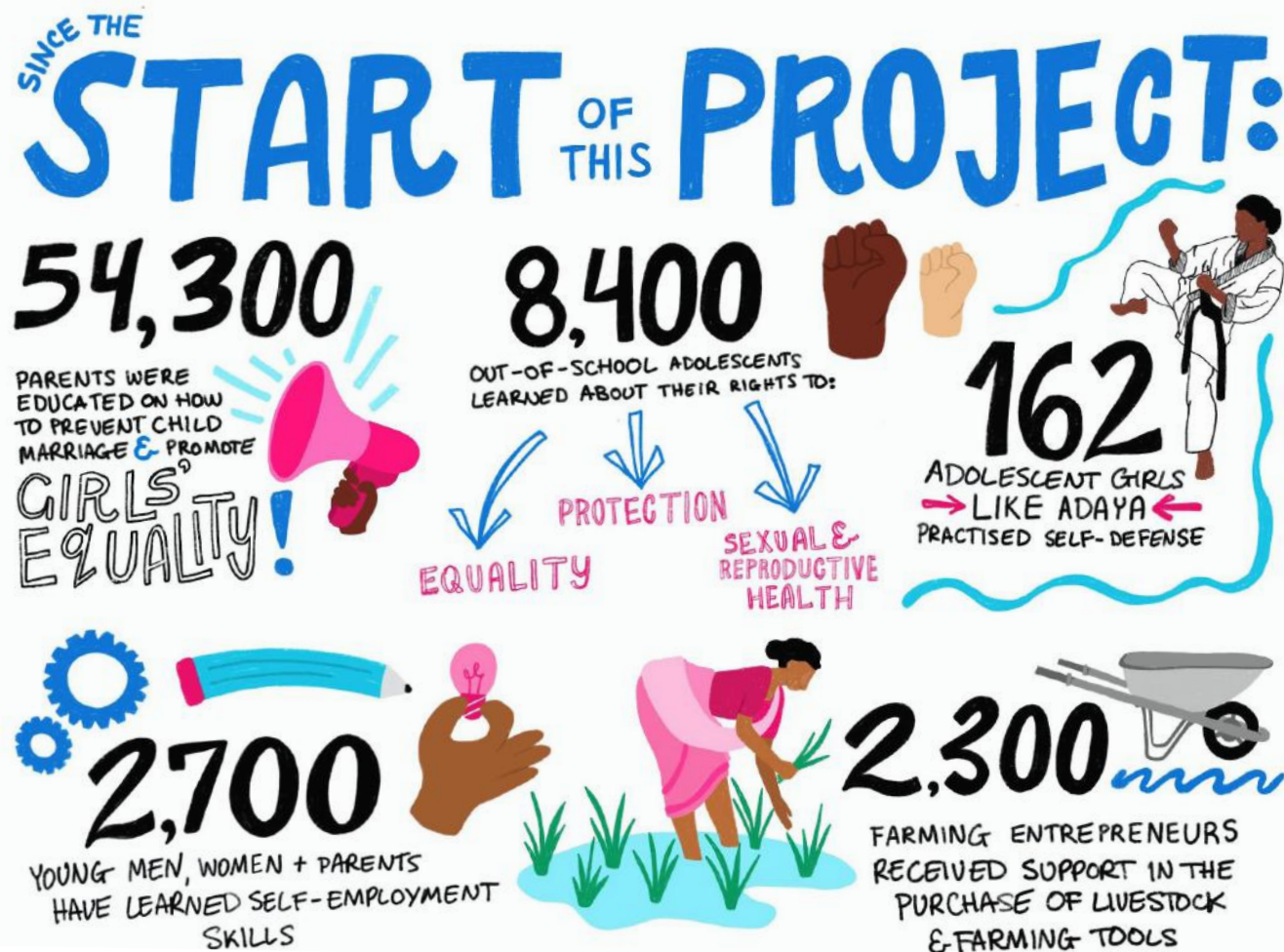
were trained to become champions of gender equality and oppose child marriage in their communities in Bangladesh.

KARATE KID

Adaya dealt a TKO to her forced child marriage

IN PROGRESS

COMBAT Early Child Marriage IN BANGLADESH



ADAYA* PROBABLY KNOWS HOW TO DO SITAUKE, USHIRO-GERI AND HIZA UKE, but knowing these karate moves isn't the only reason this 16-year-old Bangladeshi girl stands out. She has also become an advocate for stopping child marriage.

Adaya's father lost his job two years ago due to the COVID-19 pandemic. "I had to stop my studies due to extreme poverty," she says. During this time, she learned about the Combatting Early Marriage in Bangladesh (CEMB) program, which you help fund. She also learned that her own forced child marriage was looming.

"The middle of last year, my mother, grandmother and uncle decided to give me in marriage and hid it from me," she recalls. Thankfully, the training and support she received from the program helped her deal the knockout blow to her impending marriage.

"I talked to my mother and told her I was still a child according to my age. I informed the CEMB staff, and they came to my house and talked to my mother." Adaya's mother changed her mind with some persuasion from the Child Marriage Prevention Committee.

Later, Adaya was able to help a friend who was facing a similar situation. "We threatened [her guardians] to inform the local law-enforcement authority, and they finally withdrew their decision. My friend was saved from becoming a victim of forced child marriage."

* name changed to protect identity

Adaya describes her involvement in the CEMB project as the "story of [her] comeback." Today she's back in school, making her own decisions and confidently lobbying officials to oppose child marriage.

The bonus? "For a long time, I wished to learn self-defence techniques," she says. "Learning karate in this project, I became more confident than ever before." Take that!



Girls take part in self-defence class in Bhola district

Safer Schools

IN PROGRESS → IN BURKINA FASO

SINCE THE **START** OF THIS **PROJECT**

You have helped...

ESTABLISH
192
ACCELERATED-LEARNING CENTRES



SUPPLY
7,700 STUDENTS WITH SCHOOL ESSENTIALS



87%

OF COMMUNITY LEADERS ARE PREPARED TO PROMOTE GIRLS' EDUCATION

85%

OF ACCELERATED-LEARNING PROGRAM STUDENTS SUCCESSFULLY TRANSFERRED TO SCHOOL

distribute



SOAP HAND WASHING STATIONS

270

SCHOOLS & LEARNING CENTRES

SUPPORT SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS THAT HAVE SERVED

26,000

girls



FROM SETBACKS TO BACKPACKS

Fidinyama's five-year journey back to school

FIDINYAMA HAD TO LEAVE SCHOOL

in 2017, when she was only nine, to help her mother care for her younger sister at home in Burkina Faso. Sadly, after she re-enrolled the following year, her school was one of thousands forced to shut down due to the threat of violent terrorists who don't believe girls should be educated. While out of school, Fidinyama frequently received marriage proposals. For her safety, her mother sent her to live with her uncle, where she has helped with the housework and apprenticed as a tailor ever since.

She always wanted to return to school, but it felt further away as time passed. Imagine overcoming child labour, child marriage and terrorism only to run into one more hurdle: reintegrating into the formal school system after five years away from it.



Students in a classroom in Burkina Faso

"I can already read and write some letters and some words."

– FIDINYAMA

Earlier this year, her aunt told her about a new accelerated-learning centre in her town. These centres – which you help make possible – grant children, especially girls and those living with disabilities, who are least likely to be in school, a second chance at an education. Fidinyama, now 14, jumped at the opportunity to enroll. The two-year program for out-of-school children and adolescents will help prepare her to reintegrate into the formal school system.

With the support of her aunt and donors like you, Fidinyama can put the past five years behind her and look to the future.

COMPLETED

LEADING FOR PEACE IN COLOMBIA

Thanks to your support, the Leading for Peace in Colombia project crossed the finish line! You helped:

- Establish **404 savings groups** in three municipalities (Buenaventura, Quibdó and Tumaco); these groups educated more than **6,350 people** on saving practices and women's financial empowerment.
- More than **3,500 young people** participate in training to strengthen their social skills, change gender norms and stereotypes and get involved in local markets.

BEFORE

42% of youth participants surveyed agreed with the statement "Women are better suited for domestic chores than men."

AFTER

22% think women are better suited for domestic chores, a drop of 20 percentage points, which suggests a strong shift toward gender equality.

BEFORE

47% of youth surveyed did not know how to develop a business plan.

AFTER

85% learned how to develop a business plan, which helped them make their entrepreneurial dreams a reality.

HOW WE MADE IT HAPPEN:

- Youth affected by armed conflict, especially women, received training in two areas:
 - Entrepreneurship – to help develop market-driven and gender-sensitive business plans
 - Life skills that challenge gender norms – to promote equal participation, equal relationships, equality in decision-making in public and private spaces and the identification and prevention of gender-based violence
- We also helped young entrepreneurs access funding opportunities.

“PLAN INTERNATIONAL CANADA WAS THE FIRST TO BELIEVE IN ME.”

Ingrid, a biologist turned fashion designer, pays it forward.

INGRID, a mom and self-described dreamer, is one of many Colombians enduring the effects of internal armed conflict and violence. Under these circumstances, many children miss months or years of school and adults lose their livelihoods. But with your support through the Leading for Peace project, Ingrid is making a difference.

Inspired by her love for animals, Ingrid studied biology but had difficulty finding work after graduation. She has also suffered from bullying. "I have been dismissed and humiliated," she says. But she was determined to overcome these obstacles. "One day, I said to myself, 'It's time to be independent and self-sufficient.'"

Ingrid turned to fashion. After taking entrepreneurial training made possible by your support in partnership with Global Affairs Canada, she launched her clothing label, Afroestilo.

Ingrid's designs are unique, and they're inspired by her love for animals and Afro-Colombian heritage. Now, she supports other young women whose lives have been affected by the conflict, particularly single mothers and people with diverse abilities.

At the heart of Ingrid's brand is the belief that every young woman should take charge of her own life.

“We have to resist, persist and never give up!”

– INGRID



THE LAST WORD

THANK YOU!

We are incredibly grateful for your generosity. Your support helps empower girls like Adaya, Fidinyama and Ingrid to take charge of their future. On behalf of the millions of girls the **Because I am a Girl** project has reached, **thank you!**



Ety is ready to read in a new learning centre in her community in Bangladesh.



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Learn more and get involved at plancanada.ca



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