



HIV PREVENTION

IN EL SALVADOR +
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN CANADA

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Mobile education units offer HIV testing and distribute tools for risk-reduction, such as HIV prevention kits



Youth activist, Jennifer Wani, advocates for equality in Canada



CARE CIRCLE

The HIV prevention project brings positive change to people struggling to realize their most basic rights. And in fighting the global epidemic, this project will protect future generations from this devastating illness.

THANKS TO YOUR SUPPORT, anyone at a higher risk of acquiring HIV has access to safe and confidential testing, diagnosis, counselling and follow-up treatment. “The program is for transgender women, men who have sex with men and sex workers,” explains Erika Silva, health advisor with Plan International Canada. “We are also starting to work with adolescents, especially in these populations.”

Four strategies to reduce the incidence and prevalence of HIV in at-risk populations:

- 1.** Operate mobile education units that can offer HIV testing and distribute risk-reduction tools like HIV prevention kits
- 2.** Enhance the care for people living with HIV through home visits or by accompanying them to the hospital for treatment
- 3.** Launch and distribute a mobile app that connects at-risk populations to HIV health specialists and clinical labs
- 4.** Coordinate advocacy efforts with local organizations to influence policy on gender identity and equality



THANK YOU for helping reduce the incidence and prevalence of HIV in at-risk populations.

HIV transmission awareness exercise during peer training





THE SCENE

El Salvador might be the smallest country in Central America, but the strength and resilience of its communities make it mighty.

RANGES OF VOLCANOES RUN THROUGH the centre of El Salvador, mingling with forested highlands, and along the coast, the Pacific Ocean grazes sandy shores. The warm, tropical climate faces heavy rains – *temporales* – from May to October, sometimes causing damage and destruction reflective of the country’s history. El Salvador began to recover from years of civil war and economic turmoil after its 1992 peace accords, only to face the devastating Hurricane Mitch in 1998 and a major earthquake in 2001. However, as the country rebuilds, its communities are rallying behind their most marginalized members to protect them from a deadly illness.

→ El Salvador has a high rate of HIV among high-risk populations, including sex workers, men who have sex with men and transgender women.

→ There are an estimated 25,000 people living with HIV.

→ In 2020, there were 6,300 children orphaned due to AIDS.

A PERFECT MATCH HIV app offers key information to at-risk populations.

- Real-time HIV-related health information is just a click away with the Match With Your Health app.
- It was launched in 2017, and to date there have been more than 6,000 downloads.
- It’s used mainly by men who have sex with men, and to date 387 users have been referred for HIV testing and treatment.
- The app was promoted on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter; these efforts boosted visibility beyond the app itself.
- The program team also organized events and campaigns to raise awareness about HIV services and reduce stigma and discrimination.



“THEY MAY BE BORN A MAN, BUT IF THEY ARE DRESSED AS A WOMAN WHEN THEY GO TO A HEALTH FACILITY, THEY ARE REJECTED.”

— ERIKA SILVA, health advisor, Plan International Canada

NAMING RIGHTS

New gender identity law will empower transgender people.

IN 2016, A TRANSGENDER ACTIVIST launched a lawsuit challenging the Name Law, which prohibits people from changing their name or gender on their identity document.

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

“This law is key because without it, an individual may not be able to access education, health care and employment,” explains Erika Silva, health advisor at Plan International Canada. “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 an important step in addressing the prejudice, discrimination and violence that many transgender people face every day.

VANGUARD SERVICES

Health care workers can offer HIV testing and distribute tools for risk reduction, such as HIV prevention kits, in a private setting.



A nurse in the mobile unit that offers timely HIV information and testing

IT DOESN'T MATTER WHERE YOU LIVE. Making the decision to be tested for HIV is layered with all kinds of emotions. Add to that a fear of discrimination or violence and that emotional decision to take the test becomes even more complicated.

That's why providing access to mobile units that offer confidential, timely testing and support has been so critical for the populations especially at risk in El Salvador, explains testing strategy supervisor José Manuel Portillo Romero. "We offer pre- and post-HIV testing counselling, and to reduce risk, we dispense condoms and lubricants," he says. "The environment in the van is safe and free of stigma, so we've seen a greater interest in voluntary testing."

The mobile units are part of an overall goal to:

- Ensure that prevention remains the main focus
- Digitize information systems
- Improve the ability to provide accessible services
- Use digital media to share information
- Create and develop self-sustaining services
- Include adolescents in programs and services
- Reduce the stigma around and discrimination against people living with HIV
- Offer diagnostic tests for other sexually transmitted infections
- Reduce poverty, illiteracy and other economic, political and social factors that increase vulnerability to HIV infection

THE RUNDOWN

Here's a snapshot of what we accomplished this year, thanks to your generosity!

25,600+
HIV PREVENTION KITS
were distributed to
high risk populations.



"I am proud of Plan International's commitment to **equity and equality**, truth and inclusion. We have encouraged new ways of thinking by **removing taboos around sexuality** and how we are different. Normal does not exist; we are all dynamic. **Real barriers have been broken.**"

— MAIA SOFIA, senior project coordinator


15,000 PEOPLE
were given
health care
referrals.

6,000+



downloads of the mobile app, **Match With Your Health**. Plus, **387 users** were referred for HIV testing and treatment.

12,500+ PEOPLE received an HIV test.

POSITIVELY LIFE CHANGING

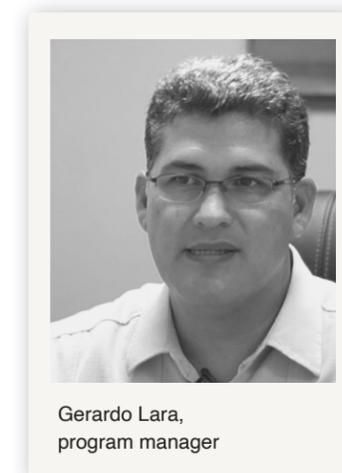
The entrepreneurial training program is encouraging people living with HIV to take their medication. It is achieving that and so much more.

THE PEOPLE WHO ENROL in Plan International's entrepreneurial training program in El Salvador are living with HIV, but that's not the only bond the participants share. Each of them is driven to either launch or grow their businesses. It's a drive that keeps them looking to the future.

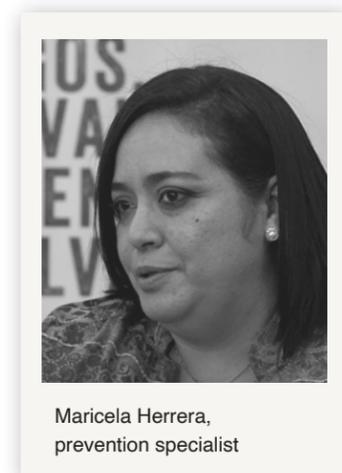
"It's really given them all an incentive to live," explains Gerardo Lara, program manager for the Global Fund-supported program. "They feel useful because they are able to make an income for themselves and the people living with them. This, in turn, improves their defences; they eat better, but in addition to that, they're making a statement that they are human beings."

For Kiara, it's given her an identity in the eyes of others. "I used to be known only as the trans girl from Villa Lourdes; now I'm Kiara," she smiles. "I've been accepted." Kiara's business is designing and creating custom clothes for her clients. Since participating in the entrepreneurial training program, Kiara says she's been more inspired and productive than ever.

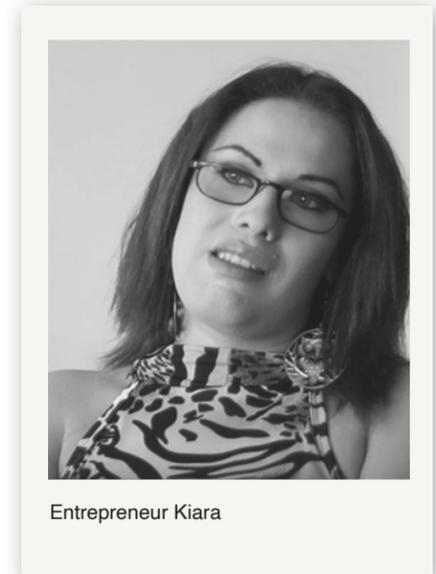
Moisés has been earning his living designing clothes for the past 17 years. He says the program opened his "entrepreneurial spirit," inspiring him to visualize new approaches to how he manages his business. "The program awakens our interest and changes us," he adds.



Gerardo Lara,
program manager



Maricela Herrera,
prevention specialist



Entrepreneur Kiara

That's precisely what Maricela Herrera hopes will happen. Herrera, a prevention specialist with Plan International, says it can be a life-changing experience going through the program. Initially, the goal was to offer the training to people living with HIV so they would continue to take their medication and attend follow-up appointments.

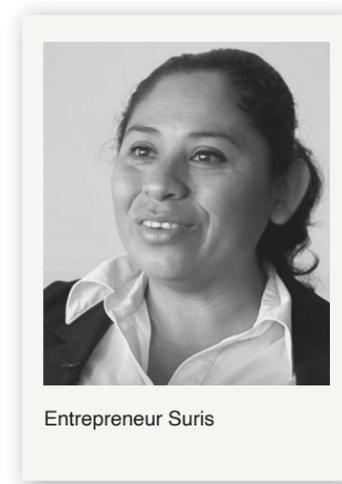
But the real power came from them learning to develop their business plans, pitching their ideas to a panel and then potentially receiving seed money to buy essential equipment or materials to make it happen. (Plan International stays in touch with the participants for the next year to ensure that the funded projects become sustainable.)

"The most important thing is that when people develop their business ideas, they forget they have a diagnosis," explains Maricela, adding that if they believed their diagnosis was a limitation, they would fail. "All people can develop business ideas, regardless of their serologic status."

For Suris, the program has inspired her to expand her personal care product business to include shampoos. "I didn't know how to grow my business, but the program gave me ideas; it also lets me be my own boss because having a boss can be complicated," she smiles. The single mother of three now feels that, like her fellow classmates, she is productive and contributing to society.



Entrepreneur Moisés



Entrepreneur Suris



what's your **WHY?**

I WANTED to TAKE ACTION for

MENSTRUAL EQUITY

500 M WOMEN/ GIRLS DON'T have ACCESS to MENSTRAL PRODUCTS

SOME ARE LOCKED UP in A ROOM!

BLOOD is SEEN as "TABOO" in MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD

NOW, OUR PACKAGES LAST 3 YEARS!

I GOT DENGUE FEVER at boarding school...

WE DON'T KNOW WHAT'S in STORE FOR US...

WHAT LEGACY DO I WANT to leave behind?

WHAT IMPACT DO I WANT to have?!

I learned that SO MANY WOMEN & GIRLS DON'T HAVE ACCESS to MENSTRAL PRODUCTS

SHARE YOUR STORIES with OTHERS

COLLABORATE

For The Menstruator

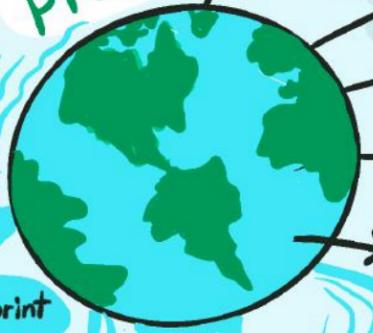
- COST EFFECTIVE
- BIODEGRADABLE
- EMBARRASSMENT FREE

YOUNG PEOPLE CAN CHANGE the WORLD!

FTM (for the Menstruator) started in 2017!



MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS & CLIMATE CHANGE



CLIMATE CHANGE

- can affect diet
- loss of bio-diversity
- waste-management perspective
- 200,000 metric tons of waste from menstrual products & packaging

5.3kg CO2 carbon footprint

500-800 years for plastic & non-compostable products to decompose!

"Embarrassment-FREE"



EQUITABLE

RECYCLABLE

Available and AFFORDABLE

find your PURPOSE

DO YOUR RESEARCH



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

OH CANADA

Youth gathered to meet change makers and learn how to use advocacy to make the world a better place.

THANKS TO YOUR SUPPORT, Canada's youth have been busy leading conversations about everything from inclusive education for refugees and displaced youth to ensuring that menstruation is no longer a barrier to girls' education and freedom. Here's a look at what the country's young global citizens have been up to in the past year alone:

1. Youth Summits

These virtual events focused on climate change, inequality and how youth can change our planet's future.

2. Learning Summit

Youth learned how to help support refugees and displaced children to continue to access quality education.

3. Solutions Lab

The lab explored how poetry could be used as a tool to advocate for access to education during emergencies.

4. Storytellers Symposium

Change makers and youth leaders from around the world met to discuss menstrual equality.



THANKS to your generosity, we were able to celebrate and help inspire Canada's globally engaged youth.

THE RUNDOWN

Here's what Canadian globally minded youth were learning and doing thanks to your support.



17,933
YOUTUBE VIEWS

(and counting) of our Storytellers Symposium in March, which tackled the issue of menstrual health around the world. It was the first youth programming event to go global, with participants from Uganda, Kenya, Peru, Canada, Italy, the United Arab Emirates and the United States.

5,486 YOUTH



The direct reach of all our youth-engagement programs this year, including Champions of Change clubs, Speakers Bureau, Girls Belong Here, Youth Council and special events.

94%

The percentage of participants in our Solutions Lab poetry workshop who feel more confident about using poetry as a tool for change and say they're better equipped to advocate for the rights of children and equality for girls as a result.

75 NEW MEMBERS

who joined our Champions of Change clubs across Canada to build their leadership and advocacy skills.



20 YOUTH COMMITTED TO TAKING IMMEDIATE ACTION

following our Youth Summit in June – some participants have already created period kits for their local women's shelters.

THRIVE

by Taegan

I enjoy being alive

Day to day operations

But what I need is to thrive

But sadly there are not enough options

Thriving

Surviving

It's not the same

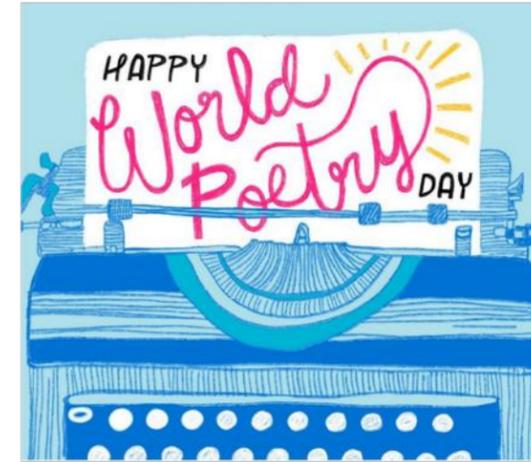
Looking at the woman I could have become

Potential lost

Consequences of inaction

A lifetime of achievement

Gone because I am just a fraction



USING THEIR WORDS

Canadian students wax poetic to change the world.

IN A 2021 ARTICLE FOR *TIME* MAGAZINE, 24-year-old poet and activist Amanda Gorman told her interviewer (Michelle Obama) that “poetry and language are often at the heartbeat of movements for change.” This after the national youth poet laureate delivered her powerful poem “The Hill We Climb” at President Joe Biden’s inauguration (arguably outshining Lady Gaga and Jennifer Lopez with her grace, poise and purpose). Such is the power of poetry. And so it was at the recent Champion of Change Club’s second-ever Solutions Lab, which harnessed that same power in a poetry-for-advocacy workshop.

WHAT WAS IT

A program that engaged globally aware youth by teaching them how to become stronger advocates through poetic storytelling. The workshop began by exploring the education crisis facing young Rohingya refugees, especially girls, and then taught youth how to use lyrical language as a tool to raise awareness and inspire action.

WHEN IT HAPPENED

World Poetry Day on March 21, 2022

WHO PARTICIPATED

Six teams of students from schools across Canada, as well as thousands of youths who engaged via social media (80,875 on Facebook alone).

HOW IT WENT

The workshop participants were asked to vote on the poems that were shared in the following four categories: Most Impactful, Best Presented, Most Inclusive Language and Best Captured the Issue. The winning poems were featured on Plan International Canada’s Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, and the feedback from participants was uniformly positive: “I enjoyed working on the challenge and participating in the overall event for the second year!” says 18-year-old Rashmia, complete with a happy-face emoji. “Looking forward to next year’s Solutions Lab.”

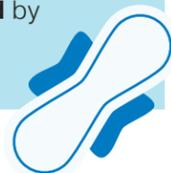
← Opposite page: The winning poem from Taegan in the “Best Presented” category.

TIME TO TALK

The Storytellers Symposium is on a mission to make menstruation a non-issue for girls around the globe.

PERIOD PIECE

Research from Always and Plan International Canada reveals that 83% of young people in Canada say they have **tried to hide the fact that they are on their period** and 58% of young women say they have **felt ashamed or embarrassed** by their periods.



THERE'S APPROXIMATELY 800 MILLION people in the world who are menstruating at this very minute – but no one is talking about it. And not talking about menstruation means that it will continue to be seen as dirty, shameful and scary instead of natural, healthy and important.

Youth leaders at Plan International Canada are determined to make talking about periods a positive, commonplace conversation, which is why the seventh annual Storytellers Symposium in May (the first-ever global youth event!) was all about menstruation.

More than 500 million girls, women and non-binary people don't have access to menstrual products or private places to wash and change during their periods. Every month, girls around the world miss school. Some are banished to separate rooms, and many aren't allowed to eat with their families. All because they happen to be menstruating.

That needs to change, say the young menstrual-equity advocates whose passion made this year's Storytellers Symposium particularly inspiring. Using thoughtful panel discussions and storytelling through art and music, they tackled issues from period shaming and the perpetuation of dangerous menstruation myths to the immediate challenges faced by refugees and displaced women and girls whose periods don't pause in times of crisis. "Menstrual health is a human right," says youth ambassador Ila Dru, a speaker at the symposium who highlighted the issues facing girls and women in war zones and refugee camps. "Women...should not feel it's a curse to be a woman due to their periods."

Youth around the world are advocating for equal access to period products, through partnerships with local suppliers and creating reusable menstrual pads



WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE TO YOUNG PEOPLE?

"IT'S IMPORTANT THAT WE DISRUPT THE NARRATIVE 'OH, YOU'RE TOO YOUNG. YOU'LL LEARN WHEN YOU GET OLDER.' IT ALL COMES DOWN TO A HUMAN VOICE, AND YOU HAVE ONE. YOU HAVE A VOICE YOU CAN USE."



THE MAKING OF A GLOBAL CITIZEN

Youth activist Jennifer Wani shares what it takes to make a difference

JENNIFER WANI BECAME AN ACTIVIST in elementary school. Wani is a second-generation South-Sudanese Canadian. Her family came to Canada in 2000 – Wani was born a year later in Calgary and grew up mostly in Regina.

When she was in school, Wani participated in sports and music but says she also found purpose in community activism and held fundraisers with her friends. In high school, she co-founded South Sudanese Youth of Canada, a non-profit youth-led organization. She also became involved with Plan International Canada's Champions of Change and Youth for Gender Equality.

Now, the 21-year-old is studying international development at the University of Ottawa and is co-founder of Black in Sask, an organization devoted to supporting Saskatchewan's Black community.

Q. What sparked your passion for global equity?

A. Every day I'm reminded that I'm here by chance. If someone in my life had made a different choice, everything I know, wouldn't exist. I found myself in an education system that gave me the skills to do what I'm doing today – and every child deserves that opportunity.

Q. How did you become a global citizen?

A. I was so used to community members living in solidarity with one another and helping one another, and I found purpose in the idea that human beings need other human beings. I wanted to help plant the seed of community that I found in other areas of my life and bring it to the areas that I felt were lacking, especially for young people.

Q. What's your message to young women and girls?

A. When it comes to gender inequality, it's hard to find a solution. But I'm learning that a lot of the time we find it within our own experiences and those of the women who've gone before us. We need to start by asking women about their stories, like our mothers, immigrant women and Indigenous women, because the women who carry our communities today operate in silence.

Q. Is there one woman who helped you find the answers you were looking for?

A. Can I only pick one?! There are so many women in my life that I don't share blood relations with, but I call them my "aunties" because they've taken on that role of raising me and my community. But if I had to pick one, it's my mom. She taught me the power of family. She taught me that I'm capable. She taught me about strength. She taught me about forgiveness.

FAR FROM HOME

The 2022 Youth Summit takes a hard look at our global refugee crisis.

DISPLACEMENT IS AT A RECORD HIGH

More than 100 million people are currently on the move due to war, extreme weather or lack of food – and this was the issue the 2022 Youth Summit tackled when it convened in June. Speakers included Dr. Siyabulela Mandela, regional project manager for East and Southern Africa at Journalists for Human Rights and grandson of Nelson Mandela; Aya Bahkir, a young activist who was forced to flee Syria during the war and Arielle Kayabaga, member of parliament for London West in Ontario and chair of the Liberal Black Caucus, who came to Canada two decades ago with her family during the civil war in Burundi.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY

“One way or another, we are probably all refugees in our history. We have a collective responsibility to define what our purpose is as this generation. We have a collective responsibility to come together as young people to redefine how we want our present and our future to look. If we refuse to be part of the decision-making, if we refuse to take the opportunity to have a voice, we will be questioned years from now by the generations yet to come, ‘What did we do about the refugee crisis?’” – Dr. Siyabulela Mandela

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A REFUGEE

“‘Where do you come from?’ is the question I dreaded most for a very long time. How do you define your sense of belonging when you’re a reflection of...all the destruction and death you have witnessed, every book you have read, every song you’ve ever danced along to, every place you have been and everyone you loved whom you had to leave behind while seeking a safer future? There’s really no easy answer for that.” – Aya Bahkir

TIME TO TAKE ACTION

“Now, more than ever, the alarms need to be sounding everywhere. This is urgent, and we need to keep this as one of our country’s core values. Supporting refugees is some of the most important work that we do as a country.” – Arielle Kayabaga

THANK YOU for your commitment to young Canadians. They now have the opportunity to share their voices, passion and activism.



“ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, WE ARE PROBABLY ALL REFUGEES IN OUR HISTORY. WE HAVE A COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY TO DEFINE WHAT OUR PURPOSE IS AS THIS GENERATION.”

– DR. SIYABULELA MANDELA



THANK YOU!

Your support has been instrumental in breaking down barriers to HIV prevention, testing and treatment in El Salvador and in inspiring the next generation of global citizens in Canada. All of us at Plan International Canada want to thank you for your incredible generosity.



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Learn more and get involved at plancanada.ca



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