



IMPACT REPORT
Stories of Change
Fall 2022



THE GREATEST NEEDS

One year of life-saving interventions in
Cameroon, Ecuador and Zimbabwe

PLAN/2022/0001

So far, you've generously helped reach more than **170,500 PEOPLE** including

→ **22,500 IN CAMEROON**

→ **131,900 IN ECUADOR**

→ **16,100 IN ZIMBABWE**



ABOVE: Landscape of Garoua, Cameroon.
COVER: Katy, 9, and her family live in the secluded highlands of Ecuador. They received food kits to help them through the pandemic.

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A girl attends a guidance and counselling session in Zimbabwe.

RS18205

Your greatest gift

Thank you for responding to children's greatest needs.

Four projects, three countries, one important mission. Your generosity helped us do incredible work this past year protecting children's rights in Cameroon, Ecuador and Zimbabwe.

In this report, stories from children like Jessica and others who are seeing change up-close will illustrate what your contribution helped accomplish. Whether pairing survivors with social workers, renovating clean-water systems in schools or helping families get healthy meals, you made a difference where it was needed most. Read on to see how.

CAMEROON

You helped save lives and protect the well-being and dignity of youth and women who have been displaced by conflict.

ECUADOR

You helped displaced and refugee people access healthy food throughout the year. In another part of Ecuador, you fixed long-neglected water sources and latrines to help children stay healthy in class.

ZIMBABWE

You helped make sure families had enough to eat by setting up backyard gardens, providing nutrition training and distributing cash to help pay for food staples.

 **Thank you for believing in children's potential, and helping them overcome crises around the world.**

Around the world in two pages

A snapshot of the latest and greatest needs in Cameroon, Ecuador and Zimbabwe.

IN CAMEROON, PEOPLE FACE UNCERTAINTY EVERY DAY.

Cameroon is one of Africa's oldest countries and, because of its central location, it has a little bit of everything the continent has to offer: waterfalls, deserts and savannahs and 250-plus languages spoken by the many cultures who call it home. It's also in the thick of a five-year conflict that has affected over 700,000 people – and displaced many families. Every day is uncertain as armed groups attack even the most fundamental services like schools and health centres. Beyond these threats, COVID-19 shutdowns and military roadblocks, people are also grappling with:

- ➔ A deadly cholera outbreak that has infected more than 4,000 people and killed more than 75 in the country's southwest region.
- ➔ Increased violence and, therefore, extended community lockdowns, up from one day a week to three.



EXODUS TO ECUADOR: A REFUGEE CRISIS IS UNFOLDING.

Ecuador – named for its position along the equator – sits next to the Pacific Ocean and includes the flora- and fauna-rich Galapagos Islands. The country is now home to more than 513,000 Venezuelan refugees who migrated due to Venezuela's political and financial crisis. Another 252,000 Venezuelans are on the move, trekking through Amazonian jungles, the rugged Andes and much more to get to Ecuador. The number of Venezuelan children enrolled in Ecuadorian schools has increased fourfold over the past few years. Here are the latest statistics:

- ➔ An estimated 873,000 Ecuadorians and Venezuelans living in Ecuador need humanitarian assistance in 2022, including 225,000 members of communities that host many refugees.
- ➔ 73% of families who are migrants have trouble accessing food.



IN ZIMBABWE, SO MUCH DEPENDS ON THE WEATHER.

Despite a diverse landscape of dramatic mountain ridges, stunning waterfalls and lush river valleys where elephants and zebras roam, Zimbabwe has a serious fertility problem. Most rain in this landlocked country occurs in heavy showers only a few months of the year; this leads to rapid runoff and soil erosion, making it hard for farmers to cultivate crops. Climate change has only exacerbated the problem. Years of poor rainfall and erratic weather patterns – plus a recession that began before the pandemic – have led to economic hardship and food shortages for people in rural communities and urban centres alike.

- ➔ Hunger in Zimbabwe's urban areas is increasing; in 2021, 2.4 million people struggled to meet their basic food needs.
- ➔ Nearly 83% of urban households can't afford the everyday staples they need to feed their families, including maize flour, salt and cooking oil.
- ➔ Not only do girls eat last and least when food is scarce but the ongoing stress of the hunger crisis and COVID-19 is leading to an increase in domestic violence.



The rundown



Aminatou, 16, was protected from child marriage by her mother, with help from Plan International Cameroon.

In the following pages, you'll see a rundown of each project's most noteworthy achievements addressing the urgent needs of children and families. We hope you take pride in what you have helped make possible in such a short time.



4,375 CHILDREN

played in, and received emotional and social support at, child-safe spaces to help them recover from trauma.

446 GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN

who have survived sexual violence took part in support groups.

545 CHILDREN AND WOMEN



affected by violence received emergency support or medical or legal referrals from social workers and other trained caseworkers.

THE REPORT CARD

BEFORE	NOW	HOW IS IT THAT MORE CHILDREN ARE TURNING TOWARD SUPPORT AND AWAY FROM VIOLENCE?
On average, only 32% of girls and boys affected by conflict could, and would, safely seek help from their parents or peers.	51% OF GIRLS, BOYS AND WOMEN WOULD SEEK HELP.	→ One-on-one support from social workers, as well as support groups and child-safe spaces, helped reunite separated families, connected children to foster homes, provided medical aid to survivors and even helped children associated with armed groups reintegrate into safe society.
42% of girls and boys hoped to end gender-based violence and stop stigmatizing survivors.	79% AIM TO STOP THE VIOLENCE AND STIGMA.	→ We worked directly with children and teens to help them build their skills, confidence and knowledge on how to prevent and respond to violence. We also helped set up community-based child-protection committees to identify and reduce risks. We raised awareness about the importance of child protection and ending gender-based violence, reaching more than 44,000 community members.

THE RUNDOWN

EDUCATION CANNOT WAIT (ECW)-FUNDED ECUADOR FOOD AND HEALTH PROJECT

141 GIRLS AND WOMEN

received menstrual health supplies, in conjunction with the food project, to improve girls' overall well-being.



9,200 PEOPLE

learned about nutrition, especially during pregnancy and while breastfeeding.

58,293 PEOPLE

secured nutritious food across seven provinces, surpassing our goal by **150%**.



“

Rechargeable coupons help families to have autonomy to choose their own foods.”

—Joel Vera, food assistance project manager with Plan International Ecuador



HERE'S HOW WE ACHIEVED THESE NUMBERS:

- We provided rechargeable grocery vouchers to families who are displaced, refugees or migrants. We particularly supported pregnant women, mothers and babies under two, who are most in need.
- We visited families at home, communicated through WhatsApp and hosted cooking demonstrations to provide families with nutrition information, like what to buy for a balanced diet and healthy recipe options.
- Migrant families also learned about entrepreneurship and their reproductive rights, including menstrual health, to better prepare and protect them in their new communities.

SPOTLIGHT: ECUADOR



Jessica, 17, takes part in a menstrual health workshop

JESSICA'S JOURNEY

Debunk menstruation myths and promote equality and you changes lives.

“I miss my country, family and friends very much,” says Jessica, 17. She and her mother left Venezuela for Ecuador four years ago. Jessica was 13 years old when she made the approximately 28-day journey. She now lives in Ecuador, where she recently attended a menstrual health workshop, which took place in conjunction with the food project you supported.

Whether families have been on the move for less than a month or more than a year, acquiring food is their primary concern. Hygiene items, like pads and soap, are also high on their list.

Few [Venezuelan families in Ecuador] have access to jobs and social benefits says Joel Vera, a food assistance project manager with Plan International Ecuador. **“Families want to live with dignity, to eat with dignity.”**

Girls like Jessica also want to squash menstruation myths that force girls to skip playing sports or avoid certain foods, during their period.

“We must overcome taboos,” says Jessica. “Menstruation does not mean we have to prepare for marriage. We want to be girls, to play and not be affected by these myths.”

At menstrual health workshops these taboos are debunked and girls also learn how to promote equality and protection from violence in their communities. “[We] got closer to one another, lost [our] shyness and were able to work as a team. [We] felt free,” she says.

Despite the hardship she's faced, Jessica cares deeply about helping those around her, a quality her mother instilled in her. “My mother shows that strength of character [is possible] without losing sensitivity of heart.”

THE RUNDOWN

ECUADOR WATER AND EDUCATION PROJECT

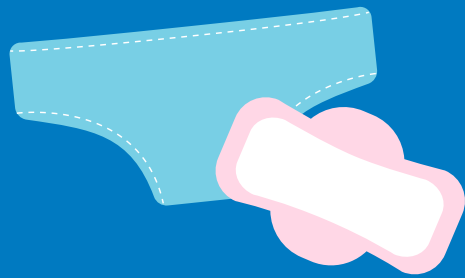


11,900 STUDENTS

students are now using safe water sources and latrines at school.

91%

of students, teachers and other staff and community members are satisfied with the services we provided.



1,300 ADOLESCENTS

received menstrual health supplies like pads, underwear and wipes.

YOUR SUPPORT ENCOURAGED THIS CHANGE. HERE'S HOW:

- We fixed the hygiene and sanitation infrastructure in 10 learning facilities with improvements like new toilets and sinks and even ramps for inclusive access.
- More than 420 teachers learned how to teach their students about COVID-19 and the importance of hygiene and hand washing. They also learned about menstrual health to bust myths and encourage equality.
- Staff at each school learned about water treatment and storage and plumbing skills and received tools to maintain their infrastructure for years to come.



Hygiene pamphlets

SPOTLIGHT ON EDUCATION AND SANITATION IN ECUADOR



RELIEVING THE EXTRA STRAIN ON DRAINS

How your help addressed the pressure on public school pipes caused by COVID-19 and conflict.

“At noon, the water supply would run out,” says Josue Bassantes, an architect, describing one of the schools in Ecuador that he worked on through the ECW-funded project. “It was hard for the students to finish the school day under those conditions.”

There was no more budget for public school maintenance. “An inspector told me that one of the bathrooms we fixed hadn’t worked for 15 years,” says Pablo Daza, a civil engineer who also worked on the project with Josue.

“The government allocates funds on an annual basis for public school maintenance,” says Pablo. “Since 2015, when oil prices fell, the budget has been much more limited. It’s not enough for all schools.”

For over seven years, not enough funds flowed into public schools. Now, to make matters worse, many more students have poured into public schools because of COVID-19 and the Venezuelan migrant crisis.

“Before the pandemic, there was higher purchasing power,” says Pablo. “Parents could afford private schooling. But many began to have economic problems due to the pandemic, so they transferred their children to public schools. Now the public system is overwhelmed, which has increased the burden on the sanitation system.”

But thanks to people like you, with help from Josue and Pablo, 10 schools finally got the fixes they so

desperately needed – and nearly 12,000 children could once again learn in a clean environment.

Josue returned to the school whose water supply he replaced. “The students were very happy,” he says. **“They could use the bathroom normally and continue learning.”**

And it’s not just the plumbing that changed; plumbers changed too, thanks to staff training sessions and new tools. “Janitors told us, ‘This is the first time someone has given us specialized training,’” says Pablo.

“Strong women participated in the training. They broke the myth that plumbing is only for men. They realized they could do it themselves.”

1,821 HOUSEHOLDS

received a cash transfer to help pay for basic food staples such as cereals, pulses and cooking oil.

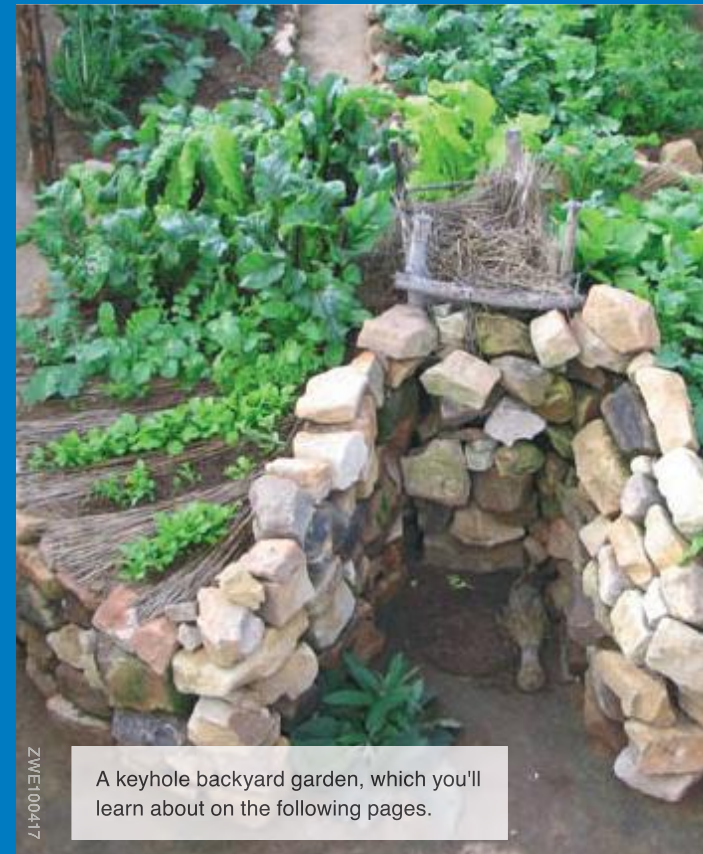


8 HOTSPOTS

were identified, based on everything from housing quality to age to income level, to ensure that the project targeted areas of greatest need.

176 BACKYARD GARDENS

were constructed so families could grow vegetables to eat and sell, including spinach, beetroot and onions.



HERE'S HOW WE GOT THERE:

- We distributed monthly cash vouchers to men and women to help pay for food and ensure that women were equally involved in deciding how the vouchers were spent.
- With the help of the Ministry of Health and Child Care, we raised awareness about what foods to buy with the cash transfers based on cost and nutritional value.
- We strengthened child protection systems by promoting gender equality and enhancing referral networks and support services.
- By building backyard gardens and innovative water-saving techniques such as hydroponics, we helped give families a means for producing vegetables year-round in small urban spaces.

A keyhole backyard garden, which you'll learn about on the following pages.



“

I deeply want to express my appreciation to all the people involved in running this program, for it has indeed saved the lives of my family. Life had become unbearable, seeing my grandchildren going to sleep on an empty stomach. For the first time after several years of suffering, we now have three meals a day.”

– Chipso, who received a cash transfer



A woman shows off her thriving keyhole garden.

KEYHOLE GARDENS RISE UP

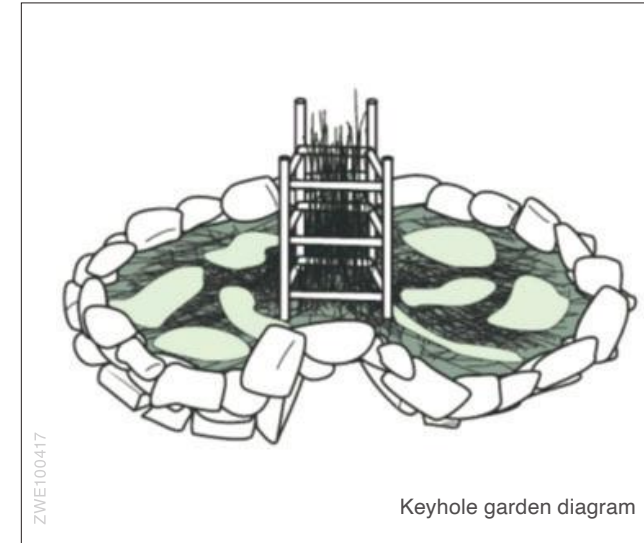
How innovative urban gardening is helping combat food shortages in Zimbabwean cities.



Image of small keyhole garden on rocks.

After years of alternating drought and floods in Zimbabwe, rural farmers struggled to produce enough food to feed their families, let alone grow enough to sell to those living in urban centres. Faced with food shortages, rising unemployment and a high cost of living, city-dwelling families were hungry.

No matter where you live, city gardening is a challenge. But in urban communities in Zimbabwe, access to both space and water is especially limited, so Plan International helped introduce keyhole gardens, along with conventional and hydroponic gardens, to households in crisis.



“

We are very grateful for the nutrition knowledge that we received, and we would never have guessed that wastewater can be used in such a productive manner.”

– Betty, a gardener in the program.

“The keyhole model overcomes the challenge of how to grow nutritious food using only a very small piece of land,” says Wilbert Chirima, program manager at Plan International Zimbabwe. “It saves a lot on water and is also a labour-saving technology, which means even elderly people can participate in maintaining the gardens.”

A keyhole garden is a small, round raised bed with a “keyhole” containing a compost pile at its centre and a notch cut out at the front for gardeners to access the pile. The garden is built with drainage and soil layers to retain moisture and nutrients, making it more productive than conventional gardens. Best of all, it’s a low-cost design in which stones or bricks form the walls of the garden while broken clay pots, stones or iron scraps (such as pop cans) are used for the

drainage layer. Household wastewater from washing dishes and laundry is run through the compost layer to provide moisture.

“The keyhole model was so successful that it spread throughout the region and even into rural areas,” says Chirima. There were five keyhole gardens across six wards in December 2020; by November 2021, there were 81. Families could now grow carrots, spinach, onions, Swiss chard, turnips, radishes and beetroot.

“I have constructed a keyhole garden of my own and planted a variety of vegetables; I am now drying some in preparation for the hot season when vegetables will be scarce and expensive,” says Betty, a gardener in the program.

Thank you!

You, alongside dedicated staff like Josue and Pablo and courageous youth like Jessica, took part in crucial work this past year. Lately, it seems like not a week has gone by without the mention of another crisis. Yet you were there for thousands of children when they needed it most. “A word of encouragement at the right time can brighten anyone’s life,” says Jessica from Ecuador and we couldn’t agree more.



Elvis and Esteban, both 10, live in the highlands of Ecuador.

“

A word of encouragement at the right time can brighten anyone’s life.”

– Jessica from Ecuador

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Children who have been displaced in Cameroon enjoying themselves at Plan International-run activities.



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