



IMPACT  
REPORT  
2023

# Gifts of Hope

Last year, more than 18,000 people across the country gifted one or more of our 53 Gifts of Hope. Read on for six stories of change and program highlights.



**Amina**, 11, from Mozambique, with a school kit provided by Plan International



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**Ky** and **Sek**, both 11, return from collecting water from a river in northeast Cambodia.

## Stories of Change

Amalia planted a community garden in Bolivia. Ishatu didn't have to go to school hungry in Sierra Leone. Barry and Bonnie Bridges gave gifts that mattered – and so did you.

Since 2007, our popular Gifts of Hope have touched millions of people's lives in the more than 80 countries where Plan International Canada works. In this impact report, which covers the past two years of Gifts of Hope, we'll share some of the transformative changes your generosity helped support.

You probably have your favourites, or maybe you're excited to discover some of our new gifts this year, like Grow Green Businesses, Digital Literacy for Girls and Support for Youth Climate Champions. For the third year in a row, School Meals remained one of our most popular gifts. The other two top picks were Food Baskets and Train a Female Health Worker. Collectively, more than \$12 million was raised.

"We know it was a difficult year for many people, what with lingering issues related to COVID-19 and ongoing economic challenges," says Emma Patterson, director



**Olivia**, 24, plants seedlings on her farm in northern Ghana thanks to funding and skills from gifts like Grow Green Businesses.

of Gifts of Hope at Plan International Canada. "Yet you and many others were able to share what you could. Please know that every gift, big or small, contributed to significant change, and for that we thank you."

We'll share six stories that reflect the changes you've helped support. But first, Patterson describes some of the top-performing gifts that supported programs in our five areas of expertise: education, health, protection from violence, youth leadership and economic power, and humanitarian response and resilience.

### NEW GIFTS

Grow Green Businesses is one of this year's new Gifts of Hope. Learn more about it by scanning the QR code or clicking below.



# Gifted Moments



Emma Patterson, director of Gifts of Hope, shares some Gifts of Hope highlights from the last two years.



**Juweriya**, 12, cherishes her studies in Somalia, despite the daily challenges of drought.

A dedicated student hits the books in Honduras.



## Education

The \$295 Send a Girl to School gift raised **\$623,263**.

"The desire to study is there – but not the means," notes Patterson. "That's why this gift is so meaningful. It provides girls in low-income countries with the support they need to continue their schooling. This gives them choices about a future that doesn't just include marriage and motherhood. And they're not the only ones who benefit. When girls are educated, it helps their parents, brothers, sisters, communities – everyone. All they need is the chance to study."

### The Impact:

The Send a Girl to School gift helped 39,250 out-of-school girls enrol in accelerated or primary learning programs.

A nurse prepares an immunization shot at a village health centre.



## Health

The \$50 COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout gift raised **\$934,912** in 2021.

"When crisis struck, our community stepped up," says Patterson. "The year it was launched, the COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout became the best-selling Gift of Hope since the program started 16 years ago." It helped ensure the safe delivery of vaccines, health worker training and vital information to communities in Senegal, Benin and Zimbabwe.

### The Impact:

The COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout gift helped reach 277,300 people with vaccine information and services and helped provide 4,640 health workers with training on the vaccine and how to administer it.



## MORE HEALTH GIFTS

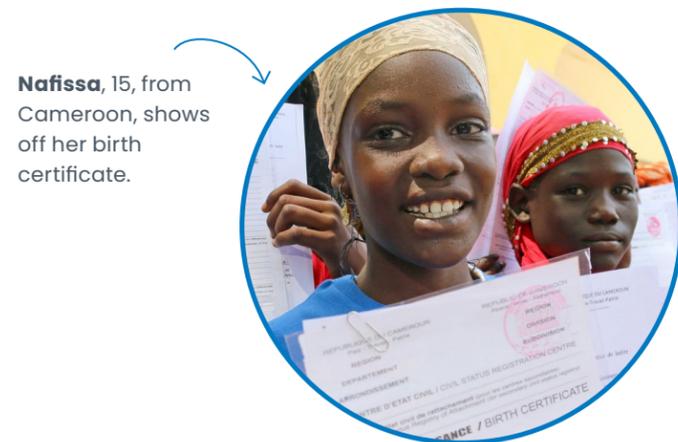
Click below or scan the QR code to learn more about our \$10 Mosquito Net gift.



“

I'm very happy to have my birth certificate. Now I can easily go to school without being ashamed.”

—Nafissa, 15



**Nafissa**, 15, from Cameroon, shows off her birth certificate.

### Protection from Violence

The \$27 Birth Certificate gift raised **\$113,338**.

A birth certificate is an open door, a bridge and a shield. It provides access to essential human rights and bestows an identity, the ability to vote and a say in shaping the world. “For girls in particular, it offers special protection against the perils of early marriage, child trafficking and forced or exploitative labour,” notes Patterson. Every year, 51 million babies are not registered at birth. Child by child, girl by girl, this gift is changing that.

#### The Impact:

Through the Birth Certificate gift, 4,000 children have been supported in gaining access to birth certificates.

**Nya**, 12, lives in a refugee camp in Ethiopia. She's discovering her voice while singing in a safe play space at the camp.



### Youth Leadership

The \$100 Girl Power gift raised **\$773,454**.

“It's hard to be an activist when you're routinely silenced and denied your basic rights,” says Patterson. “The Girl Power gift is one of our most popular choices when it comes to making sure girls have the support they need to thrive. It provides them with nourishment, education and protection so they can shape their future and change the world.”

#### The Impact:

The Girl Power gift reached 284,990 girls with activities to boost their confidence, improve their access to education and connect them with vital health services.

A mother feeds her child a nutritious meal in Northern Vietnam.



### Humanitarian Response & Resilience

The \$50 Food Basket gift raised **\$925,056**.

The number of people facing acute food insecurity soared from 135 million in 2019 to 345 million in 2022, and nearly 45 million children under five are suffering from acute malnutrition. “Food baskets – filled with staples like beans, cooking oil, sugar and fortified cereals – are critical to saving lives and restoring children's health,” says Patterson.

#### The Impact:

The Food Basket gift reached 551,630 people with 24,170 metric tons of nutritious food.

A young girl holds a baby goat in Bangladesh.



### Economic Power

The \$80 Goat gift raised **\$620,103**.

“The Goat gift might just be the most unique one we have in our Gifts of Hope catalogue,” says Patterson. “It's certainly one of the most life-changing gifts. Goat milk provides important protein for growing children, especially girls. Plus, the sale of goat offspring means an income to pay for essentials – like an education – that open up opportunities for girls.”

#### The Impact:

With the help of the Goat Gift of Hope, 300 goats have been distributed, and 3,350 people have been trained in financial literacy, employability and entrepreneurship.



#### HOW A GOAT CAN HELP GIRLS ACCESS THEIR POWER

Scan the QR code or click here to watch the video.





# Six stories of change.

Students eat their meal of maize and beans at a primary school in Kenya. A daily hot lunch at school boosts learning by allowing children to focus on their studies and not their hungry stomachs. Read more about Plan International's school feeding programs on page 12.

# Six excellent reasons to support Gifts of Hope.

**REASON 1**  
Girls stay in school 10

**REASON 2**  
People can  
grow food for  
their families 11

**REASON 3**  
Students don't  
have to learn on  
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**REASON 4**  
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**REASON 1**

Girls stay in school

# A Clean Break

Girls need access to latrines. Period.

Do you know the connection between having access to a washroom and being able to go to school? It can be a deal breaker. Here's why.

When girls have their period and don't have a washroom to go to for changing their pads, they stay home. For many, this means they fall behind in their studies and then eventually drop out. Proceeds from the Water and Sanitation for Communities Gift of Hope go to building or refurbishing washrooms so girls can stay in school.

And it's making a huge difference, says Gregory Okonofua, a project coordinator at Plan International Nigeria. "A lack of proper water sources and washrooms is one of the greatest barriers to girls' education," explains Okonofua, who oversees the Education in



A girl washes her hands at a refurbished water tap in Cameroon.

Crisis project in Yobe State and also supports the team in Borno State. "We've provided [schools with] gender-segregated latrines that are accessible for students with disabilities and solar-powered boreholes so there's water running at all times. This ensures that girls have access to safe washroom facilities within their schools."

**REASON 2**

People can grow food for their families

# Amalia's Community Garden

Meet Amalia. When her entire community in Batallas, Bolivia, was struggling to access nutritious food, she formed a mothers' greenhouse group with help from the Plant a Community Garden Gift of Hope.

The rewards have been bountiful. "We grow vegetables such as carrots, spinach and pumpkins," Amalia says. "We make quinoa bread, vegetable bread and pastries, and we sell our products to different companies." Women like Amalia have established 15 greenhouse groups in Bolivia and received training and support from community partners and Plan International.



Amalia works in a community greenhouse in Bolivia.

**UNBOX HOPE**

You and other supporters **raised \$508,272 with this \$1,000 gift**, and it helped **56,700 people** access running water, improved washrooms and more.

**UNBOX HOPE**

This **\$100 Community Garden gift raised \$343,198**, and **1,210 garden projects** like Amalia's were supported.

**SEE MORE**

Scan the code or click this box to watch this video and learn how your gift nourished Amalia's community in more ways than one!



**UNBOX HOPE**

The **\$2,500 Help End Global Hunger Gift of Hope** raised **\$361,173** and fed more than **26,000 girls** in Sierra Leone through school feeding programs. It also reached people in eight countries with services like food distribution, cash vouchers and community gardens.

**THE SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAM**

Scan the QR code or click this box to see how a school feeding program has improved learning in Sierra Leone.

**REASON 3**

Students don't have to learn on an empty stomach.

## Food for Thought

School meals are keeping bellies full, women employed and girls in school.

"I now eat every lunchtime at school," says 10-year-old Ishatu. "It helps me focus in class."

Providing locally sourced healthy meals to students at school ensures that they get at least one nutritious meal a day. And in the midst of a devastating global hunger crisis, one meal can make a life-or-death difference.

Beyond reducing hunger, school meals promote school attendance – especially for girls. "When food is in short supply, girls are expected to eat last and least, and they are the first to be pulled from school to help out at home," explains Tanjina Mirza, chief programs officer at Plan International Canada. School meals not only ensure that girls have food but they also encourage families to keep girls in the classroom.



ABOVE: Ishatu enjoys a nutritious school meal with her classmates. LEFT: Ishatu (second from right) with her mother and sisters

In fact, according to the 2022 *State of School Feeding Worldwide* report, "when done right, school feeding programs improve the health and education of children; make communities more resilient; promote gender equality; and support national economies and social stability."

School meals also provide employment – especially in women-dominated industries like cooking, catering and small-scale farming. It's estimated that 1,377 jobs are created for every 100,000 children fed through school feeding programs.

**REASON 4**

Girls can safely join – and even earn a living in – the online world

## Bridging the Digital Divide

Harassment, misinformation and a complete lack of access to information: These are just a few of the obstacles that girls are up against in the online world.

About one third of the world's population has never used the internet. Especially in low-income countries, 90% of adolescent girls and young women ages 15 to 24 don't use the internet, compared with 78% of adolescent boys and young men. Over half of the 14,000 girls surveyed in a 2020 Plan International report on online safety said they had been harassed or abused online. Online access can unlock doors to education and employment and connect girls with vital information about sometimes-taboo topics, like their rights, sexuality and health. In other words, it's essential. And the Digital Safe Spaces for Girls Gift of Hope is making it possible. With support from this gift, we've kick-started projects



Genesis, 12, uses a computer to do her homework.

in Colombia, Ecuador, Nigeria, Peru and Tanzania that will ensure that girls and young women have access to safe, supportive online communities, digital literacy training to help them protect themselves against harassment and misinformation, and skill-building activities to boost their employability.

**UNBOX HOPE**

The Digital Safe Spaces for Girls gift raised \$5,500 last year.



**REASON 5**

Marginalized people can feel safe and access the services they need

## What Makes a Space Safe?

Advocacy, awareness, accessible services, a lack of judgment, and a place to go.

“It’s a snowball effect,” says Denise Sam. “If someone needs help, they find out from a friend or family member, and when they’re taken care of, they continue with advocacy.” Sam is speaking about the word-of-mouth nature of three community centres opened in Guinea as part of the End TB and HIV project. As a program manager for the Global Fund portfolio at Plan International Canada, she has witnessed the necessity – and the success – of the community centres. “They’re a refuge,” she says.

The community centres are primarily a place for marginalized individuals – including members of the LGBTQ+ community, sex workers and people living with

HIV – to access health services and information, share resources and connect.

They are a type of space that is often otherwise out of reach for marginalized individuals. “Sex workers and men having sex with men [MSM] face stigma, abuse, violence and exclusion,” explains Célia Bossard, a gender equality advisor at Plan International Canada. “Some have to hide their identity or sexual orientation when they go to a health care provider, so they might avoid services if they think they’ll have a bad experience.” But the LGBTQ+ Safe Spaces Gift of Hope is helping people from marginalized groups reclaim their identity, rights and place.

Activities supported by the gift work at three levels to create change, says Bossard. “At the individual level, alongside our partners in Guinea, we work toward strengthening the informed decision-making capacity of sex workers and MSM through life skills and knowledge inputs on their health and rights. At the community level, we work with the general public to change discriminatory mindsets with discussions and training.” (One of the programs she highlights is providing training for journalists to ensure that the framing, tone and word choices of their work don’t perpetuate stereotypes.) And at the institutional level, health workers receive training to help them provide the same quality of care to all – no matter their sexual orientation, gender or health status.

“Thanks to these community centres, sex workers and MSM can go without fear to have confidential services without discrimination,” continues Bossard. “This, and knowing they have the support of their peers, is really making a difference for them.”

**UNBOX HOPE**

The **\$50 LGBTQ+ Safe Spaces gift raised \$40,625 and helped 13,360 people who identify as LGBTQ+** to access places of refuge and connection, as well as services like health referrals and psychosocial support.

**REASON 6**

You can give gifts that matter – gifts that help change lives

## In Their Words

Long-time supporters Barry and Bonnie Bridges on what Gifts of Hope mean to them.

Since the mid-1970s, Barry and Bonnie Bridges have been part of the Plan International Canada community of determined optimists. That’s when the Saskatchewan-based couple sponsored their first child. Throughout the past half-century, they’ve continued to support sponsored children, and that’s not all – they’re regular shoppers of Gifts of Hope.

Actually, they’re more like super-shoppers: Last year, they placed so many orders at once that it (briefly) crashed our processing system!

For Barry, supporting Gifts of Hope makes him feel like he’s making “a difference for a whole community.” For



**Bonnie and Barry Bridges** are long-time child sponsors and givers of Gifts of Hope.

Bonnie, it’s important to know that their support “will make an immediate difference.” What they also like is the ability to select gifts that support projects that are meaningful to them personally. Since they live in a small farming town, it’s no surprise that their favourites are Plant a Community Garden, Clean Water and Sanitation for Communities and Help End Global Hunger.

“These gifts really do bring hope,” says Barry. “People don’t choose to be born into famine or war.”

**UNBOX HOPE**

Last year, more than **18,000 people across the country** joined Barry and Bonnie in gifting one or more of our **53 Gifts of Hope**. A special thank you to all of you!

**Your generosity is a gift to all of the children – especially girls – who can now stay safe, healthy and educated.**



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## About Plan International Canada

Plan International Canada strives for a just world that advances children's rights and equality for girls. We stand with children, especially girls, wherever they are oppressed, exploited, left behind or not equally valued. Plan International and Plan International Canada have no political or religious affiliations; however, we do believe in the power of global citizenship. We are a member of a global organization that partners with youth, families, communities, local organizations, supporters, celebrated ambassadors and governments. We collaborate with women-led groups and youth councils in shaping our programs. We work to ensure that children, especially girls, are safe, healthy, educated and empowered.