



Until we are all equal

IMPACT  
REPORT  
2023

# Unrestricted Giving

At a time when crises are ever-present across the world, flexible unrestricted funds help us drive meaningful change wherever and whenever it's needed most.



Plan International staff in Vietnam deliver warm clothes, school bags, blankets and other essentials after a major storm caused flooding and landslides.

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**Bhumika** (7) is “a very happy girl,” according to her family in Nepal. Plan International is working with communities in Nepal to end early marriage so girls like her get the happy childhood they deserve.

## The First Word

The word *permacrisis* reflects the sense that, globally, we have been facing one emergency after another without a moment’s pause. Unrestricted funds give Plan International the flexibility to respond – and keep responding.

In 2022, the Collins Dictionary named *permacrisis* the word of the year. While, unfortunately, the word still feels relevant today, as determined optimists, we’re not defeated by this reality. We know it takes grit and resilience to keep working toward a better world. And we’re grateful to have generous, committed people like you working with us.

By supporting Plan International with an unrestricted gift, you give us the agility to respond to the changing world around us. Our All Girls Standing Strong strategy is shaped by the current global context; it demands adaptability, and unrestricted funds are crucial to making that possible.

The flexibility you provide through your unrestricted gift enables us to pivot so that we can address urgent humanitarian needs as they arise – like setting up relief

services for Ukrainian refugees and delivering food support in response to the wide-reaching hunger crisis in countries such as Burkina Faso, Kenya and South Sudan.

Your trust in us also supports our work to influence policies that can protect the rights of children, especially girls. With the help of unrestricted funds, we ensure that the needs of adolescent girls are represented in programs that prevent tuberculosis, HIV and malaria. We invite girls to represent their own experiences at global conferences like COP and Women Deliver. We advocate for the global importance of school meals programs, and we speak out on the threats to girls’ education in emergencies.

Thank you for being a vital partner in delivering life-changing impact. In this report, you’ll meet some of the girls who have seen, and shaped, the incredible changes our programs make possible with the help of supporters like you: Adaya\* stopped her own early marriage in Bangladesh (page 8); Ruth launched an e-commerce business in Malawi (page 10); Isha returned to school in Sierra Leone, where having a daily school meal means she can focus on her studies (page 13); and Guinea, El Salvador and Benin now have welcoming community centres that are safe spaces for anyone who is marginalized (page 14). Keep reading to hear these stories.



Young activists in Peru en route to a National Youth meeting to discuss how to make online spaces safe for girls

### READ MORE

Read more about our new All Girls Standing Strong strategy.



# Why Make an Unrestricted Gift?

Unrestricted funds are key to enabling the work we do.

## What are the key goals for Plan International Canada's unrestricted funds?

1. Direct funds where the need is greatest.
2. Provide flexibility so we can adapt and respond to changing needs in the world.
3. Support strategic, long-term planning for greater impact.



In Ecuador, dads are joining community groups advocating for the rights of children, especially girls.

## Why are unrestricted funds so important?

### Timeliness

Unrestricted funds enable us to quickly respond and adapt to a rapidly changing world, as well as help us plan for the future.

### Flexibility

With unrestricted giving, we can continually build and adjust our work in each of our five core areas of expertise, so we can ensure that our programs continue to meet the needs of girls, youth and communities.

Our five core areas of expertise are:

- Education
- Health
- Protection from violence
- Youth leadership and economic justice
- Humanitarian response and resilience

### Pivot capacity

Unrestricted funds allow us to make the pivots that are required to increase our humanitarian work, like we've been able to do in Ukraine and Poland and with other large-scale crises. They also allow us to make important organizational adjustments, such as hiring the right partners to deliver real, impactful change.

### Strategic future-proofing and partnerships

Creating long-term change requires long-term planning. Unrestricted funds helped make it possible for Plan International Canada to develop and implement five-year strategic plans that reflect our current moment and where we need to go. In 2022, we completed our 20 Million Reasons five-year strategy, which reached 31 million children and inspired 10.7 million actions by Canadians – and raised \$1.23 billion. Our new All Girls Standing Strong strategy (2023–2027) aims to beat the clock in closing the global gender gap. By 2027, this

strategy will improve the lives of 30 million children, including 15 million girls. Unrestricted funds also give us the opportunity to engage in important influencing work and build essential partnerships with supporters, businesses, governments and more so that we can further amplify our work through funding matches and other innovations.

## What are unrestricted funds used for?

Unrestricted funds are flexible; they allow us to direct support wherever and whenever it is needed most. This means we can act quickly to:

- **Respond when humanitarian crises occur:** This past year alone, that included responding to a global hunger crisis, the war in Ukraine and multiple ongoing refugee crises in countries including Rwanda and Bangladesh.
- **Address funding gaps:** Budgets can change as funding opportunities or community needs shift. Unrestricted funds enable us to move money around to ensure we always fulfil our commitments to the communities we serve.
- **Influence laws, policy and other funding that affect girls and youth:** Whether we're taking part in policy discussions and amplifying voices at global conferences or working with governments at the community, district and national levels, Plan International advocates to make sure that girls' rights and voices are represented in the decisions that will affect their lives.

## WANT TO GIVE AN UNRESTRICTED GIFT?

Donate at  
[plancanada.ca/donate](https://plancanada.ca/donate)



## The Rundown

Last year, Plan International Canada raised more than \$6.3 million in unrestricted donations.

These funds make it possible for our teams to provide urgent assistance in emergencies – like the conflict in Ukraine and the hunger crisis – while also ensuring the stability of our ongoing projects. By giving us the flexibility to send funds where they were needed most, your support in 2022 contributed to incredible accomplishments.

### BY THE NUMBERS

Here's what Plan International Canada's supporters helped make possible last year.



## 1.3 million children, adolescents and adults

received health care and education

## 382,996 children and adults

received food support

## 15,393 children and adults

took part in economic empowerment initiatives



## 11.9 million people,

including 6.2 million children, received life-saving services from our programs through The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

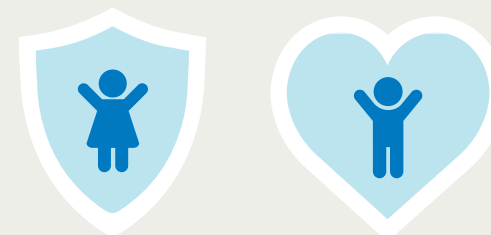
## 496,967 children,

including 252,611 girls, accessed education



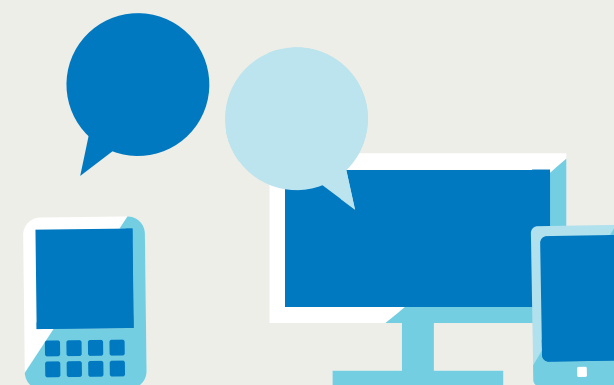
## 129,661 children

stayed safe from harm, like abuse and exploitation



## 12,547 youths

in Canada participated in youth-engagement initiatives



## 430,007 people

received support through disaster-relief work



Girls in Tanzania celebrate being able to get to school safely now that a Plan International-funded dormitory lets them stay nearby.

## SPOTLIGHT: STORIES OF CHANGE

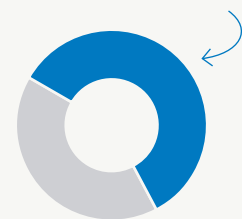
# How One Girl Stopped Her Own Marriage

## WHY SUPPORT UNRESTRICTED FUNDS?

Unrestricted funds help ensure that gender equality and girls' rights are at the heart of all of our programs.

## FACT

Bangladesh has the world's **fourth-highest rate of child, early and forced marriage, at 59%**.



*\*Name has been changed to protect her identity.*

Twelve million girls under the age of 18 get married every year. Discover why Adaya\* didn't.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, 16-year-old Adaya's father lost his job in their small community in Bangladesh. The ripple effect on the family threw Adaya's life path off course. "I had to stop my studies due to extreme poverty," she says.

During that time, Adaya learned that her family had plans that could end her studies forever. "The middle of last year, my family had decided to give me in marriage and hid it from me," she recalls. Unfortunately, in many parts of the world, child, early and forced marriage is a common coping mechanism for families living amid crisis. By entering their young children into marriage, they may hope to secure their child's future, free up more food and funds for the family or simply uphold long-standing traditions and avoid stigma in their community.

But forcing young girls to marry takes them from their families, cuts their education short and increases their risk of experiencing violence or adolescent pregnancy with potentially fatal complications.

Around the same time that Adaya learned of her marriage, she also learned about Plan International's Combatting Early Marriage in Bangladesh (CEMB) project. The project strives to help teen girls like Adaya protect themselves from this type of gender-based violence, and it gave Adaya the information and support she needed to challenge her family's plans for her.

"I told my mother that I was still a child, according to my age," she says. "I also informed the CEMB project staff, and they came to my house and talked to her."

The Child Marriage Prevention Committee, which the CEMB project helped form, aided Adaya in explaining to her mother the damaging effects that forced marriage could have on her life. Adaya's mother changed her mind and cancelled the marriage.



Adaya and her peers learn karate to boost their self-confidence.

Adaya describes her involvement in the CEMB project as the "story of [her] comeback." After her marriage was cancelled, she was able to return to school. Through the project, she learned some additional skills that further equipped her to protect herself from violence. "I always wanted to learn self-defence techniques," she says. "After learning karate through this project, I am more confident than ever."

Adaya is putting that new-found confidence to work as an advocate for other girls in her community. Based on her own experience, she was able to help a friend

who was being forced into marriage. "We warned [her guardians] that we would inform the local law-enforcement authorities, and so they cancelled the marriage. My friend was saved," she says.

Adaya is also helping lobby officials to oppose early marriage, pushing for change at every level.

## READ MORE

Meet two more girls who, like Adaya, put a stop to their own marriages.



## SPOTLIGHT: STORIES OF CHANGE

# Bridging the Digital Divide

## WHY SUPPORT UNRESTRICTED FUNDS?

They support our advocacy efforts, helping us influence laws and policies like those that help girls access technology and that promote their safety online.

## FACT

About **one third of the world's population** has never used the internet, and 96% of that one third live in low-income countries.



Source: United Nations International Telecommunication Union

Access to digital tools is a right, not a privilege. Ruth is one of 80 young people in Malawi who are proving the power of technology in helping girls set themselves up for success.

Ruth's first business was selling *zigege* (deep-fried chips), a popular street food in Malawi. Her chips were delicious, but she had only a handful of customers each day. Wanting to expand her earning potential, Ruth enrolled in a training program to take her business in another direction. She wanted to sell clothing, but she wasn't sure how to attract customers.

Ruth and the other participants in a Plan International-supported program for adolescent girls and young women in Malawi brainstormed together and came up with a great solution. "We learned how to use WhatsApp for Business [on our smartphones]," explains Ruth. "We also created a page on Facebook so our customers who live far away [will be] aware of the products we're selling."



**Ruth** (far right) talks about her challenges and experiences with **Njobo** (far left) in Malawi.



**Sharon Njobo**, a Plan International Canada program manager, visits projects in Zimbabwe, where she grew up.

Online access can unlock doors to education and employment and provide girls with vital information about sometimes-taboo topics, like their rights, sexuality and health. **With the right technology, girls around the world are putting their future in their own hands.**



**Dorcas**, 20, took part in a Plan International awareness campaign and now hosts her own online show where she discusses sexual and reproductive health and rights for young people in Togo.



**Brendy**, 12, participates in Plan International sponsorship programs in Peru. Here, she studies from home using a smartphone.

**Fifteen-year-old Tho** in Northern Vietnam says, "Even with [their] risks, smartphones are a crucial part of how we girls learn about the outside world."



"Before, I wasn't known by a lot of people," says Ruth. The skills she learned with the support of Plan International helped her expand her business to reach customers outside of her own community.

Ruth's success is an example of the powerful impact that technology can have to expand opportunities for young people but also of the importance of support and skill building for making the most of those opportunities. "Our program [which started in 2017] challenges the assumption that the minute someone has a cellphone, they are no longer in need of support," explains Sharon Njobo, a Plan International Canada program manager for projects in partnership with The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The small-business training program that Ruth took part in is helping more than 80 women ages 16 to 24 become financially secure, self-reliant and healthy. Many participants use the proceeds from their businesses to invest in themselves and their health. "They can now pay tuition or [have the financial freedom to] escape forced marriages," says Njobo. "Some returned to school, where they also learned about HIV/AIDS, how it's transmitted and how to prevent infection."

Ruth has already doubled her initial capital with her retail business, and today she's using the profits to buy rice wholesale and then sell it to grocery shops. "I didn't want my money to be idle," she says. She hopes to save enough money to one day train to become a nurse.

## SEE MORE

Watch an interview with Ruth about her thriving clothing business.



## SPOTLIGHT: STORIES OF CHANGE

# More Than a Meal

## WHY SUPPORT UNRESTRICTED FUNDS?

With unrestricted funds, we can respond quickly when emergencies arise and keep responding to crises even after they fall out of public attention.

## FACTS

- **828 million people** are experiencing hunger.
- **70% of people** impacted by the hunger crisis globally are living in areas affected by conflict.
- **418 million children** worldwide are currently benefiting from school meals programs.

When families face poverty and hunger, girls are often pulled from school to help at home. School meals programs are a proven solution to ensure that children are nourished, healthy and encouraged to learn.

The leaders of 76 countries are all saying the same thing: School meals are worth investing in.

When COVID-19 shut down schools everywhere, the world recognized the costs to the health, safety and well-being of 168 million children.

Not only did young people worldwide experience an “unprecedented learning crisis,” according to the World Food Programme, but without school, they also lost access to one of the best systems for protecting their mental health and safety.

And COVID-19 isn’t the only crisis that has taken children out of school. Kaingu Kuzungu, a teacher in Kilifi, Kenya, had fewer than half of his students showing up each day after the region was hit by a drought.



A school meals program brings students back to school in Kilifi, Kenya.

A hot meal of maize porridge helps fuel students in Zambia.

But when Plan International launched a meals program at his school, attendance rebounded. “Classes are full to the brim,” says Kuzungu. “Even children who are not school age yet are coming with their older siblings so they can access food.”

## PLAN INTERNATIONAL CANADA CURRENTLY SUPPORTS SCHOOL MEALS PROGRAMS IN:

- Sierra Leone
- Burkina Faso
- Cambodia
- Central African Republic
- South Sudan
- Haiti

Students in Port Loko, Sierra Leone, enjoy a nourishing school meal.



**Last year, Plan International Canada provided school meals for more than 26,000 girls in Sierra Leone and 22,500 children across four counties in Kenya.**

These children include 10-year-old Ishatu (her friends call her Isha), who lives in the Port Loko district of Sierra Leone. Though Isha loves school and is a quick learner, her mother struggles to pay school fees for her and her sisters. Without enough money for lunch, Isha fought to concentrate on an empty stomach.

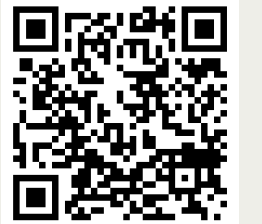
When Plan International and the government of Sierra Leone introduced a meals program at her school, Isha was finally able to get the most out of her lessons. “I now eat every lunchtime at school,” she says. “It helps me focus in class.”

These interventions are especially important for girls, says Dr. Tanjina Mirza, chief programs officer at



## SEE MORE

Watch a video featuring Isha.



Plan International Canada: “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.” School meals not only ensure that girls have food but also encourage families to keep them in the classroom.

**Between May and July 2023, Plan International Canada raised \$750,000 to support school meals programs in Sierra Leone.**

With the help of activities funded by unrestricted funds, Plan International Canada was able to secure an additional match commitment from a private Canadian donor. Paired with the commitment from the government of Sierra Leone, the \$750,000 was matched 35 times – for a total impact of \$26,250,000! This means 300,000+ children in Sierra Leone will receive healthy school meals, allowing them to focus on their studies and not on whether they’ll have lunch that day.

## SPOTLIGHT

# What Makes a Space Safe?

“

Thanks to these community centres, people can go without fear to have confidential services without discrimination.”

– **Célia Bossard**,  
gender equality  
advisor at Plan  
International Canada

## WHY SUPPORT UNRESTRICTED FUNDS?

They give us the flexibility to respond to the changing needs of communities.

### Advocacy, awareness, accessible services 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 to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria portfolio at Plan International Canada, she has witnessed the success – and the necessity – of the community centres. “They’re a refuge,” she says.

The community centres are primarily a place for marginalized individuals – including members of the LGBTQ2SIA+ community, sex workers and people living with HIV – to access health services and information, share resources and connect.

It’s the type of space that is often otherwise out of reach for its members. “These populations 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 community centres are helping people from marginalized groups reclaim their identity, rights and environment.

Activities supported by the End TB and HIV project are working at three levels to create change, explains Bossard. “At the individual level, alongside our local partners, we make sure people from marginalized populations have a better knowledge about their health, their rights and life skills. At the community level, we work with the general public to change discriminatory mindsets with discussions and training.” One of the programs Bossard highlights is training for journalists to ensure that the framing, tone and word choices of their work don’t perpetuate stereotypes. Finally, at the institutional level, training for health workers helps them provide the same quality of care to everyone, no matter their sexual orientation, gender or health status.

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



**Da** (6) (left) and her friend joined a summer preschool program in Laos to help them learn the basics before entering primary school.

Adolescent mother **Miriam** (18) has joined Plan International’s Leaders for Change program to promote gender equality in her community in Piauí, Brazil.

**Thank you  
for your  
support of  
unrestricted  
funds.**

In this new perma-reality of global change and challenge, we may not be able to count on stable or consistent circumstances, but with support from determined optimists like you, we can count on our ability to adapt and, together, continue supporting the rights of children, especially girls.

**Thank you for your generosity, grit and commitment to keep advocating for a more just world, where we are all equal. ■**





Until we are all equal

**For more information,  
please contact:**  
Lindsay Glassco  
President and Chief Executive  
Officer | Présidente et  
chef de la direction  
Plan International Canada  
437-828-8729  
[LGlassco@plancanada.ca](mailto:LGlassco@plancanada.ca)

Plan International Canada  
245 Eglinton Ave East, Suite 300  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4P 0B3  
416-920-1654 | 1-800-387-1418



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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.