



SPRING | 2022



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IMPACT

GIRLS IMAGINE A NEW — AND BETTER — *normal.*

COVID-19 has intensified the stark inequalities that already existed for girls and young people across the world. But it's also forced us to reevaluate the status quo. We can't go back to the way things were before. Creating a new and better normal won't be easy, but it is necessary. And it's also an exciting opportunity to create lasting change! We asked girls around the world what that new normal should look like. Here's the future they imagine, in their own words.



Stecia, 16 | UGANDA

"I imagine a world where all children can access quality education, a world where girls can be free online, a world where women and girls' rights can be protected and not violated."



Binita, 19 | NEPAL

"The world I imagine after COVID-19 is that people and adolescent girls need to be treated equally. There would be no discrimination. A woman should be treated as equally as men."



Evelin, 17 | BOLIVIA

"The changes I want to see in this world are gender equality, for women and men, and equal opportunities."



USAID AWARDS PLAN GRANT TO REDUCE CHILD MARRIAGE IN NIGER

Plan International USA received an award of \$2.53 million from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to help end child marriage in Niger. The project, titled Prevention of Child Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) Activity in Niger: **GirlEngage** Niger, began on Jan. 1, 2022 and will last for two years.

The project focuses on systemic issues, specifically access to quality education, knowledge of sexual and reproductive health, economic barriers and the

lack of or weak enforcement of laws that protect girls. Plan's **GirlEngage** approach will ensure that girls themselves are the drivers of the change they need in their lives.

"A unique aspect of this project is that it allows girls to be active participants, gain confidence and have their voices heard through various activities and the creation of girl-led committees," Plan International Niger Head of Program Implementation Ismael Amadou Boubacar said.



Teaming up to tackle period stigma in Vietnam

Dinh is a 13-year-old student who lives in a rural community in central Vietnam. She is one of 600 peer educators in Plan International Vietnam's menstrual health program.

Before joining the program, Dinh was embarrassed to talk about her period. She's not alone — 58% of students surveyed in Vietnam said they lack confidence when discussing menstruation with others. And it's no surprise why. Almost all students surveyed were taught that periods are “dirty” or “unclean.”

In partnership with the [Kimberly-Clark Foundation](#) and the Kotex® brand's

[She Can Initiative](#), Plan is working to ensure period stigma doesn't hold girls like Dinh back. Together, we've launched menstrual health programs in eight countries, including Vietnam, that help girls acquire the confidence, knowledge, skills and materials they need to overcome the persistent barriers facing their access to health and education.

“This program has helped me to better understand gender, the role of gender equity and gender equality,” Dinh said. “I also clearly understand the importance of menstrual health for female reproductive health.”



The young leader championing climate action

We celebrate Earth Day on April 22, but young activists like Pamela, 17, are helping to make the world greener all year round.

Pamela is currently organizing a mural project in her village in Ecuador. Drawn by children and young people in the community, the murals will promote environmental awareness.

Through her participation in Plan's leadership program at school, Pamela gained confidence. Now, she isn't

afraid to take charge and make her voice heard. She hopes to study law one day, and wants to continue developing projects that promote sustainable environmental practices.

“I feel very capable of demonstrating my potential and making big changes in my community,” Pamela says. “If we love ourselves, we realize that we are worth a lot. This means that our efforts will lead us to achieve our goals.”



Meet former sponsored child

Thoko

As the oldest of five children in a family struggling to make ends meet, the odds were stacked against Thoko.

Malawi has one of the highest child marriage rates in the world, with nearly 1 out of every 2 girls marrying before they turn 18. Like so many girls, Thoko could have been forced to sacrifice her future. But, fortunately, she didn't have to.

Thoko's parents enrolled her in Plan's sponsorship program — and that decision changed everything. As a sponsored child, she received school supplies, which reduced the financial burden of school on her family's budget. Her parents also participated in a training program that helped them set up a small business.



In 2015, Thoko joined Plan's child rights club at school. She became a peer educator, attending girls' empowerment workshops at the district, national and international levels.

Thoko's hard work, paired with the support of her sponsor, proved to be a powerful combination — she graduated with her Malawi School Certificate of Education and began working for the Ministry of Health. Now 21, Thoko is a role model for girls in her community. She visits youth clubs and schools, teaching students about their rights and addressing cultural barriers that encourage gender-based violence.

“As a health worker, I can reach out to people in my community, including adolescents and young mothers on topics such as sexual reproductive health,” Thoko says. “I think I have inspired a lot of girls to work hard in school.”

Thoko is grateful for the opportunity to give back.

“I love that Plan International did not just help me as a child, but followed up with me until I was financially independent as an adult. It has really helped me, and now I am helping others in my community too.”



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