

## YOUR ANNUAL UPDATE FROM RWANDA

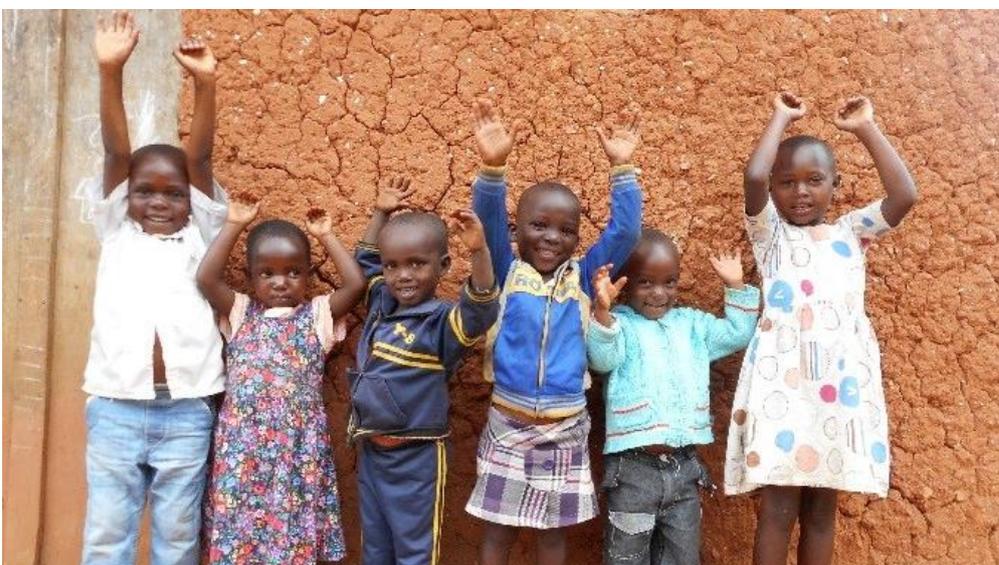
Despite the various laws and policies aimed at ending all forms of violence, children in Rwanda, especially girls, continue to experience sexual and gender-based violence. Moreover, the culture of silence, fear of persecution, social stigmatisation, makes it difficult to report such cases, especially when the perpetrator is a family member. Harmful gender norms in the community inhibit girls from accessing an early foundation in learning. Consequently, due to limited opportunities, they become vulnerable to early marriages.

Children not having full access to their rights remains a challenge in Rwanda. There are only a few channels which can ensure the children's engagement with decision-makers. There is a lack of awareness on the importance of early childhood development and many schools lack adequate learning environments for children. As families are in poverty, there are also cases of child labour.

**We would like to share some exciting progress achieved in Rwanda, thanks for your help!**

Last year, with your sponsorship, Plan International managed to put in place a functioning birth registration system. This means that children are able to receive their birth certificates which will be useful in planning programmes to improve child rights in Rwanda.

These are incredible achievements taking shape across Rwanda. We couldn't be more grateful to you for making them happen. Read on to find out how your kindness has already touched and transformed the lives of children, like your sponsored child, across this region.



*"I'm grateful and happy to be in Plan International projects, through community meetings and home visits we have learned to express ourselves in our family settings. I'm so happy to have a sponsor. Thank you!" Elizabeth, 8, sponsored child*

## OUR IMPACT

**1,000** CHILDREN BETWEEN THE AGES OF 0-5 NOW HAVE BIRTH CERTIFICATES IN NYARUGURU

**540** CHILDREN ARE PROTECTED FROM VIOLENCE DUE TO OUR INTERVENTIONS IN NYARUGURU

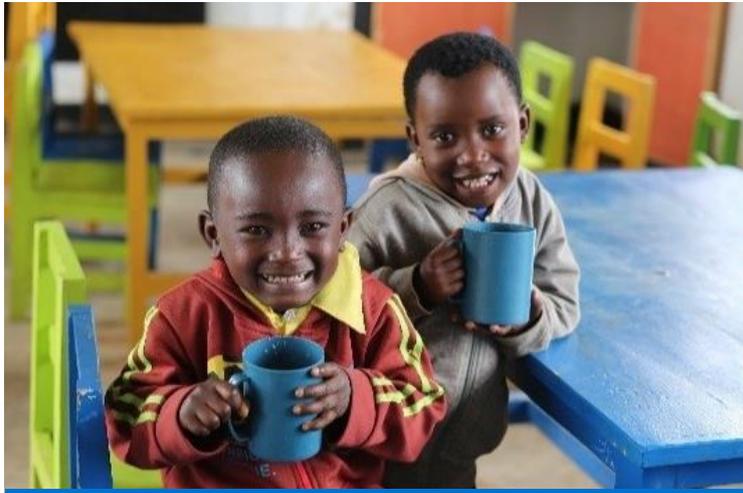
WE PROVIDED **8,000** CHILDREN WITH SCHOOL MATERIALS IN GATSIBO WE PAID SCHOOL FEES FOR **178** CHILDREN IN GATSIBO

**3,000** GIRLS AND BOYS WERE TRAINED ON GENDER EQUALITY AND PASSING THEIR KNOWLEDGE ON TO THEIR PEERS IN BUGESERA

**100** TEEN MOTHERS LEARNED SKILLS TO CARE FOR THEIR BABY AND THEMSELVES IN BUGESERA

# EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE

Poverty brings challenges to early childhood development. Low-income parents are less likely to provide care and nutrition that is essential for children's healthy growth. The lack of basic nutritional meals often leads to stunted growth among children under 5 years old.



**WE SET UP TWO EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTRES WHERE CHILDREN RECEIVE NUTRITIONAL MEALS TO ENSURE HEALTHY GROWTH**

To address this, we have constructed two early childhood development centres equipped with gardens as well as pig and poultry farm to improve household income and nutrition. We also provided flour and milk to give children the nutrition they needed in early childhood development.

By training caregivers and parents, engaging single mothers and adolescents, we equipped them with the necessary skills and knowledge to ensure holistic growth and development of their children.

The centres are run by community members. Parents can also contribute by providing a balanced diet to their children. Caregivers at the centres are responsible for giving the necessary guidance and support to children.

Additionally, we have set up clubs for fathers that promote male engagement and participation in early childhood development centres. This will go a long way in breaking gender stereotypes, where the responsibility of childcare is left to women.

# RIGHT TO PROTECTION AND PARTICIPATION

Despite the existence of a robust policy and legislative framework on gender-based violence and violence against children, children in Rwanda continue to be both the victims and witnesses of violence. This situation is worsened by ignorance and household poverty which is greater in the rural areas. Adding to their vulnerability is poor access to birth registration. The most affected children are from poorer households, refugee camps and returnee communities. Negative perceptions also hinder children from expressing themselves.

We have conducted a comprehensive nation-wide assessment to reform the birth registration system. We trained registration officers on birth registration systems and procedures. And the birth registration rate has increased in Nyaruguru. There is coordination at various levels whereby all new-borns are registered first at the Health Centre, then the data is submitted to the district hospital for entering into an online system. Children now have birth certificates and the government can adequately plan for the needs of children in the area.

*"We use dramas to showcase some of the issues affecting children especially those that are disabled and historically marginalised."*

**Chantal, 15, participant in child protection project**



**SAVINGS CLUBS HELP STUDENTS RECOGNISE THEIR RIGHTS AND PLAN FOR THE FUTURE**

# SUPPORTING GIRLS EDUCATION

In Gatsibo, girls do not have equal chances to receive education because of gender stereotypes. As parents often have to work, young children below the age of 6 are at risk of being neglected and cannot reach their full potential in development. Unsafe school environments lead to girls performing poorly and dropping out of school.



**PARENTS LEARN ABOUT EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND OPPORTUNITIES**

To protect and empower girls from a very young age onwards, we supported their parents by teaching them about early childhood development. In centres built especially for this purpose, mothers and fathers learn how to share the care-work responsibilities for their children. They also learn about cooking nutritious food and positive parenting. We further trained 1,225 young girls to know about sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence.

“I was going to drop out of school because my parents could not support me in further studies. Plan International paid the school fees for me and now I have successfully completed Form 3 in secondary school.”

**Claudine, 16, a sponsorship child**

## IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF SCHOOLS

There are many issues in Rwanda affecting early childhood development and inclusive and quality education, especially for girls. Bugesera is no exception. Overcrowded classrooms, unsafe school environment, poor quality of education and teenage pregnancy are just a few issues families and their children are facing. Some pupils from vulnerable families are staying at home because they cannot even pay for lunch at school.

To prevent children from dropping out of school, we provided regular school meals to 115 children and distributed scholastic materials to 4,708 most vulnerable children that are at risk. We built hygiene facilities like toilets, hand washing and water tanks and made playing materials to 5 early education centres available. We also informed 100 students on sexual and reproductive health and rights so that they are able to spread the knowledge to their peers, parents, teachers and community members in the area.

“I’m grateful that Plan International built a primary school for us. We can now pursue knowledge and skills. And I thank all my teachers for their encouragement and willingness to help our studies in their spare time so my performance at school could be improved.”

**Aline, 11, sponsored child from Bugesera**



**WE BUILT A PRIMARY SCHOOL, PROVIDING MORE CHILDREN ACCESS TO EDUCATION**

# YOUR SUPPORT IS CHANGING LIVES

With your ongoing support, Plan International will continue to ensure that children's rights are respected, and they are able to thrive.

In the coming year, we will continue to work with the children, families and partners across Rwanda:  
Nyaruguru

- Supporting girls' education by constructing safe, inclusive and friendly classrooms.
- Supporting village savings and loan groups by providing social support. Ensuring the financial independence of teenage mothers and young girls at risk of early pregnancy.
- Partnering with civil society, including the media to spread awareness on child rights and protection issues. Our goal is to engage children and youth in advocating for their rights to ensure their safety.

Gatsibo

- Optimising early childhood education centres where positive parenting is taught. Children that live in communities nearby the centres enjoy protection and are safe from abuse.
- Empowering girls by teaching them about sexual abuse and reproductive health.
- Focusing on the most vulnerable families and provide them with skills and knowledge that increase their income.

Bugesera

- Continuing our work with children who drop out of school by providing them with school materials, school fee subsidies and free meals at school which help them stay at school.
- Spreading awareness about the importance of gender equality and sexual reproductive health and rights education to teenagers, to keep on reducing teenage pregnancies and empowering girls and young women to assume their right to education and to generate their own an income as adults.

These are just some of the many ways your kindness will continue to touch the life of your sponsored child and other children. We wouldn't be able to do this without supporters like you!



**MESSAGE FROM JACQUES BAKUNDUKIZE**  
Program Area Manager,  
Nyaruguru

"It is with sincere gratitude that we are extending greetings to the sponsors. With your support, improvements in the lives of children and families have been made through the projects that were implemented."



**MESSAGE FROM ALICE RUGERINDINDA**  
Programme Area Manager,  
Gatsibo and Bugesera

"On behalf of everyone in Gatsibo and Bugesera, I would like to sincerely thank you for being a sponsor for the community. Thanks for your support as it enabled Plan International to reach the most vulnerable children especially girls who were hopeless. They are now smiling with hope for the future."

