

YOUR ANNUAL UPDATE FROM BENIN

We wanted to share some exciting progress made possible in Benin—thanks to support from you!

People in Benin are severely impacted by climate crisis. River overflows and drought challenge communities where most people depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Poverty leads a high rate of early pregnancy and marriage. Apart from that, poverty limits the accessibility to clean water and healthy food, leading malnutrition problem. In addition, life is especially challenging for girls and young women, as 27% of women experienced physical violence.

Throughout fiscal year 2020, with the help of your sponsorship, we were able to help young people reach their full potential as competent, skilled and employable independent individuals. In addition, we were able to significantly improve the health of children through organising nutrition screening.

We are grateful to you for making these changes possible. We know you will enjoy reading on to see how your generosity is changing the lives of children, like your sponsored child, across this region.



OUR IMPACT

230 HYGIENE GROUPS
TRAINED TO USE 3,638 HAND-
WASHING FACILITIES
IN BOHICON

500 PEER EDUCATORS
TRAINED AS MENTORS FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE IN ADJOHOUN

1,200 YOUNG PEOPLE IN
BOHICON ORGANISED INTO 48
SAVINGS AND CREDIT GROUPS

92 ADJOHOUN'S YOUTH
GROUPS ADVOCATED FOR
QUALITY SEXUAL HEALTH
SERVICES

PLAN INTERNATIONAL COVID-19 RESPONSE



COVID-19 is having devastating impacts all over the world. It is not only a health emergency, it is an education and protection emergency. Since girls are often worse affected during a crisis, Plan International is putting them at the heart of our response and long-term outlook. We have scaled up healthcare systems, food security, access to clean water, handwashing and awareness campaigns, and keep education in children's lives via radio broadcasts.

IMPROVING EDUCATION

Poverty affects the ability of children, especially girls, access quality education. Many families are unable to afford school supplies, resulting in high dropout rates.



62,901 SCHOOL KITS WERE DISTRIBUTED TO LOCAL CHILDREN, ENABLING THEM TO ATTEND SCHOOL

In Adjohoun, children cannot attend school without supplies. Our 'School Shops Project' empowers the community and enables families to provide children with consistent access to school.

This programme makes supplies available to 371 schools, enabling 28,313 girls and 34,588 boys to attend school. Fees and supplies for Plan International sponsored children are paid to school shops.

A community of local authorities, parents and the school act as the project managers. The school shops become independent after five years and are then able to cover all store operation costs.

PROTECTION AGAINST COVID-19

COVID-19 is a devastating pandemic, especially for vulnerable communities with limited access to clean water. To help educate the community, we provided vital information and resources to teachers and local leaders. We equipped schools with 3,638 hand-washing facilities, and face masks were distributed to girls and boys.

Education is vital to managing disease, so 104 community volunteers were trained on measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. As the pandemic can disproportionately affect women, volunteers learned about preventing sexual harassment and sexual exploitation in times of emergency. Regular updates kept families aware of measures to prevent the spread of the virus.

"Plan International Benin has provided my school with hand-washing facilities and posters showing us how to wash our hands properly and how to be safe. We've also received face masks. I thank Plan International for making our school safe."

Hyacinthe, 14-years-old, sponsored child



CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND PROTECTION

Children in Bohicon, especially girls, face many obstacles to achieving their full potential. Poverty, poor nutrition, limited education and early pregnancy are just some of the challenges.



YOUNG LEADERS DEVELOP ACTION PLANS TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND PROTECTION

We worked with youth from the area and community leaders to promote safe, inclusive and quality education for all vulnerable and excluded children, especially girls. Our programme provided quality school, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for young people.

Youth received training on children's rights and abuses, with girls and boys improving their knowledge of gender-based violence as well as sexual and reproductive health.

Economic empowerment, especially for girls, is vital to the community's future. By providing scholarships, 451 out-of-school children, 76% of whom are girls, got the opportunity to attend vocational training. These youth gained employment skills that will enable them to better achieve their personal and professional goals and make a lasting difference in their community.

EMPOWERING GIRLS TO DECIDE

In Bohicon, young people marry early and many girls become pregnant as teenagers. Around 50% of girls have their first sexual intercourse before the age of 18, and 42% of young women aged 20-24 have given birth before reaching age 20.

As young people have little knowledge of sexual and reproductive health, we organised discussions to break the taboo of talking about this topic.

We supported young people learning from each other and encouraged parents to talk more about sexual health with their children. Young leaders received our support to initiate discussions in their communities.

We also supported media clubs where girls created radio programmes to make their communities aware of the importance of sexual and reproductive health.

"I mobilise my peers for community discussion about sexual and reproductive health, which was regarded as a taboo topic before. Today, they successfully defend themselves against sexual aggression. We don't notice cases of early pregnancy in my village. I'm proud of the work I do to support girls in my community."

Georgette, 17, a young leader



YOUR SUPPORT IS CHANGING LIVES

With your support, we will continue to protect children's rights so they are able to thrive.

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

-  Helping youth associations and peer educators continuing to advocate for quality sexual and reproductive health resources for young people. Accessibility to family planning products will also be improved.
-  Continuing to support sponsored children with school kits and helping the community manage and sustain school shops. We will also help constructing accessible classrooms for children with disabilities.
-  Providing vocational training and support for small business start-ups for youth, especially young women. On the other hand, we will support sponsored children at the end of their apprenticeship to transition into the workplace.
-  Organising activities to empower girls through Plan International's 'Girls Get Equal' campaign. Besides, we will support the communities with equipment for four women's football clubs.

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 PAULINE M. N. SETONDJI
Programme Area Manager, Adjohoun

"Our educational projects have improved learning conditions for children living in Adjohoun, especially girls. With your support, we have also helped out-of-school children learn a trade. We thank you for being a sponsor."



MESSAGE FROM ROGER BAKARY
Programme Area Manager, Bohicon

"With your great support and contribution, we are creating a favourable environment to align our activities with child rights, especially the girls' rights, so that they will really learn, lead, decide and thrive. Thank you for your generous contributions."

