

## BECAUSE I AM A GIRL



PERPETUAL IMPACT  
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A little girl enjoys spending time at a Plan International temporary learning centre in a remote village in Dolakha, Nepal. Plan International established many temporary learning centres in Nepal following the devastating 2015 earthquake to ensure children could return to learning as quickly as possible, without having to wait for their schools to be rebuilt. Image supplied by Plan International.

**Investing in equality for girls can improve individual and family health, break the poverty cycle for whole communities and ultimately increases national GDP. That adds up to a substantial social return for philanthropists.**

Being born a girl remains a significant disadvantage in many parts of the world. Research shows 70 per cent of the world's out of school youths are girls.<sup>1</sup> Progress is being made but the stark reality is that millions of girls still have little opportunity to escape the poverty cycle. Yet an investment in the equality of girls cascades beyond the individual to the family, community and the economy.



A young woman gives an impassioned speech against child marriage at a Because I am a Girl event to celebrate International Day of the Girl in Chipinge, Zimbabwe. Image supplied by Plan International.

### **A social return that snowballs**

Susanne Legena, Deputy CEO at children's development organisation, Plan International Australia, says, "For philanthropists considering a cause, investing in the future of girls generates significant social return. Everyone in the girl's family - and the broader community - stands to benefit."

The supporting research is compelling:

- When women and girls earn an income they reinvest 90 per cent of it in their families through increased spending on food and education. <sup>2</sup>
- A 10 per cent increase in the percentage of girls going to school leads to a 3 per cent rise in national GDP. <sup>3</sup>
- A girl in the developing world who receives seven or more years of education marries four years later and has two fewer children. <sup>4</sup>



Len, 19, presents a meal she has made at a five star hotel in Cambodia where she works as a full time chef after completing a Plan International youth vocational training programme aimed at young people from the most marginalised communities. Image supplied by Plan International.

### **Because I am a Girl campaign**

“We should be proud of the gains women and girls have made towards equality over the past 20 years. There are now more girls attending primary school than at any other stage of human history. But significant equality gaps remain in the areas of health, education and employment.

“Plan International wants to see a world that values girls, promotes their rights and ends injustice. Because I am a Girl is a global campaign to transform power relations so that girls everywhere learn, lead, decide and thrive,” says Susanne.

Plan International reports that since the campaign launched in 2012, it has helped transform the lives of almost five million girls through more than 500 projects worldwide.



Eight year old Eudel loves going to school in rural Zimbabwe. Eudel is one of more than 40,000 children in Zimbabwe sponsored by Plan International supporters. Image supplied by Plan International.

“We work alongside girls and boys, with communities, governments, civil society and the private sector to deliver programs that get to the heart of systemic gender injustice. We aim to help girls build the confidence, legal foundations and political and economic power to create the future they deserve.

“All Plan International programs are designed to have a positive outcome for all children, and particularly girls. Whether it is improved access to sanitation, job training programs or assistance during an emergency, we strive to ensure girls are always part of the solution,” says Susanne.

### **What to look for in a program**

“The verdict is in, we already know how powerful an investment in women and girls can be. The challenge for philanthropists is in identifying programs and organisations that place women and girls at the core of what they do,” says Caitriona Fay, Perpetual’s National Manager of Philanthropy and Non-Profit Services.

Susanne agrees and emphasises the importance of due diligence when choosing gender equality programs in developing countries.

Here are three tips:

1. The most effective programs seek input from girls throughout the design and implementation phases. Look for organisations that involve girls in program design.
2. Organisations should demonstrate a proven track record targeting the key pillars of health, education and employment. Look for sexual health programs, quality primary education preparing girls for secondary school, internships and other employment programs.
3. Find organisations that campaign about the systemic causes of inequality and poverty. Economic growth alone won’t end gender inequality without simultaneous efforts to change social norms and beliefs, improve access to economic opportunities, reform legal frameworks and increase education.

<sup>1,4</sup> [Clinton Global Initiative](#)

<sup>2</sup> [UNFPA](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Council on Foreign Relations](#)

