

Country Newsletter

A NEWSLETTER FROM PLAN INTERNATIONAL KENYA | DECEMBER 2024

International Day of the Girl 2024

Page 3

Highlights from Takeovers

Page 6

Pictorial

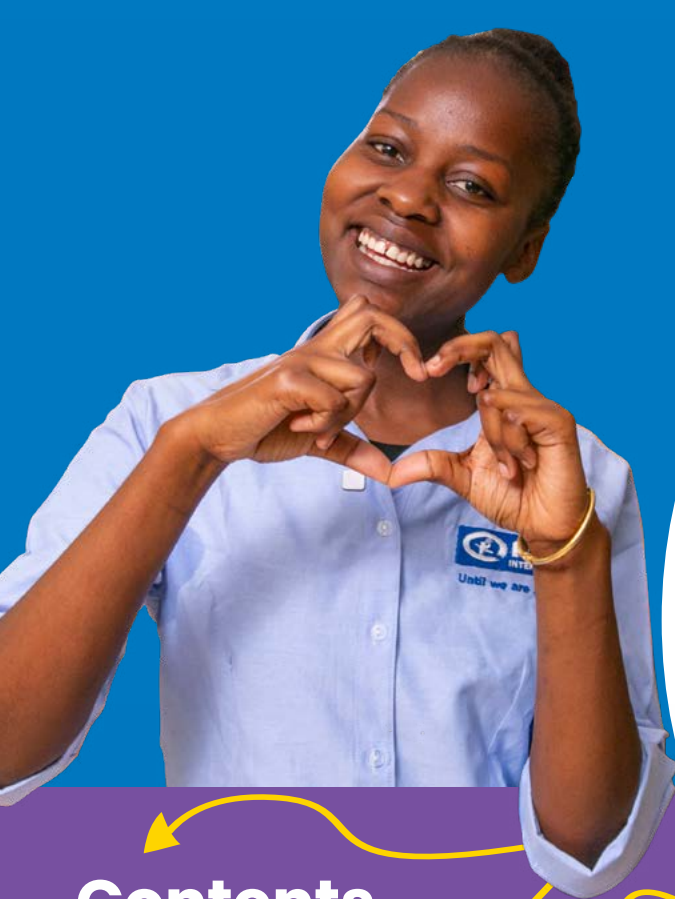
Page 18 - 19



#GirlsLeadership

#GirlsInCrisis

#UniteForPeace



Contents

- 3** Plan International Day of the Girl Campaign
- 4** Foreword by Country Director
- 5** Girls in Crisis: Amplifying Girls' Voices
- 6–10** Embassy/Institutional Take Overs
- 11–17** Staff Takeovers
- 18–19** Pictorial



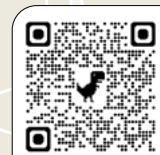
COVER PHOTO:
Mercy Wairimu, 22, took over the office of George Otim, Country Director of Plan International Kenya.
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Our Reach

Plan International Kenya works in 13 counties:



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International Day of the Girl 2024

Empowering girls, amplifying their voices for a more inclusive world

The International Day of the Girl (IDG) is commemorated worldwide on October 11th. Every year, Plan International gets a unique opportunity globally to come together behind a single action to promote girls' visibility, drive new opportunities for action and investment in girls from across the world to step into the shoes of leaders in the political, social and economic spheres in a mass 'takeover'.

For this year's International Day of the Girl, Plan International Kenya took part in a vibrant campaign under the theme #GirlsLeadership for its Girl takeovers where girls and young women were supported to take on a leadership role in a political, economic, or social space around the global campaign theme Girls' Leadership for the day. These engagements acted as influencing and advocacy drivers where girls were able to present and talk passionately about their communities, their backgrounds and some of the challenges that they do face as well as speak for their peers.

“A number of girls “took over” offices of Ambassadors in Embassies as well as leadership positions in organisations and the private sector. Moreover, other girls had the opportunity to “take over” offices of staff within Plan International Kenya.”

In a bid to empower the voices of girls even further, Plan International Kenya hosted a town hall media engagement platform to amplify the voices of girls. With an underlying theme dubbed #GirlsInCrisis, the townhall engagement in partnership with Citizen

TV Kenya presented an instrumental platform for girls alongside male champions to air their voices and define their journey in crisis as well as engage the government on what could be done better.

Together with our partners, we ensured girls are more visible than ever before and inspired others to join our global movement to ensure that girls everywhere learn, lead, decide and thrive.



Foreword by Country Director



Dear valued supporters, partners, donors and friends of Plan International Kenya.

This year's International Day of the Girl campaign was an advocacy driver for girls' rights and girls enjoying equality. Over 100 girl advocates and male champions across Plan International Kenya's programmes got an opportunity to occupy leadership spaces where they are rarely seen or heard to share their lived experiences and give suggestions as the voices of change both for themselves and the communities they represent.

This meaningful youth engagement acted as an influencing and mentorship platform to empower and mentor these young people into professional development opportunities be it in the social, economic or political spaces.

In our work with young people, we have continued to build their agency by amplifying their voices and creating a platform for them to highlight the positive changes that they are creating in their communities. Recognizing their pivotal role in shaping a sustainable world, we strive to ensure that the youth remain integral to our programming work.

It is therefore an honour for Plan International Kenya to have partnered with you through this year's International Day of the Girl Campaign. The takeover and media engagement events could not have been possible without the immense support and commitments from you - our valued partners. Our heartfelt appreciation goes to you for allowing our young people to be mentored into your respective leadership spaces.

Our long-term vision is a powerful call to action for diversity and inclusion, driven by the belief that girls deserve to be equally seen, heard, and empowered to make vital decisions that shape their lives.

“ Across the globe, girls face persistent challenges. They are undervalued, undermined and underrepresented, confined by outdated norms that derail them from recognizing their potential. This reality demands urgent change, as every girl holds the promise of a brighter future when given the opportunity to thrive. ”

We therefore are immensely grateful for supporting this meaningful and inspiring girl-led takeovers as it aligns with our Country Strategic Goal in **Ending Teenage Pregnancy and all forms of violence** focusing on programmes within our key thematic areas namely on **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Prevention and response to all forms of Gender-Based violence and discrimination against girls and young women, Protecting Girls and Young Women in Crisis and Community-led Climate Change Adaptation** and **Youth-led and Innovative Partnerships' Solutions on Job Creation**, which remains at the heart of our work.

Thank you for being a part of the Plan International Kenya family. Together, we are shaping a world where every girl's rights are realized, and their dreams are nurtured.

Together, we won't stop until girls get equal.

Thank You! Asante sana!

George Otim

Country Director, Plan International, Kenya

Plan International's Global Theme for International Day of the Girl: Girls in Conflict/ Girls in Crisis



On October 7th, 2024 Plan International Kenya facilitated an insightful town hall engagement, hosted by Citizen Television, bringing together girl advocates from diverse backgrounds and a Government official to discuss pressing issues faced by adolescent girls within their communities.

On the panel was Precious, a 13-year-old advocate with the She Leads Programme, Lauren Makena, from Plan International Kenya's Tharaka Programme Unit, and Leticia Achungo, a Gender and Development Professional at Plan International Kenya. Also present was Dr. Josephine Bonyo, the Secretary Gender at the State Department of Gender and Affirmative Action, who represented Anne Wang'ombe, Principal Secretary for the Ministry of Gender, Culture, The Arts and Heritage.

The conversation centered around the #GirlsInCrisis aimed to amplify these young girl advocates' voices by providing a platform for them to share their unique experiences and challenges, covering topics such as on Female Genital Mutilation and Menstrual Hygiene to the effects of floods on girls living in urban informal settlements. Male champions in the audience also contributed, sharing their efforts in rallying behind girls and supporting them in addressing the challenges they face. The discussion underscored the importance of amplifying girls' voices and engaging with different duty bearers for a better world for girls.

The discussion also delved into a broader multi-sectoral approach, examining how institutional, policy, and socio-economic factors can drive meaningful change. It emphasized the need to strengthen community resilience, with a particular focus on empowering girls to overcome barriers and achieve their life goals.

Plan International Kenya's Director of Programme Implementation and Operations, Harriet Osimbo, highlighted the interventions implemented by young people with a focus on youth-led advocacy initiatives and how they have helped to bridge gaps in community safety, economic empowerment, behaviour change and climate change mitigation.

This engagement was more than a conversation—it was a powerful step toward fostering transformative change, empowering girls as agents of their own futures, and inspiring collective action to create a more inclusive and equitable world for all.

Girls in crisis

Watch more on the link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0GISAw7L5kk>

Highlights from Takeovers

Embassy of Ireland Takeover

On 1st October, Sheryl 15, and her Deputy Ambassador, Patience 14, occupied spaces where they are rarely seen to speak for girls in their communities. Sheryl and Patience took over the office of Evelyn Maris, Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Ireland. The two young Ambassadors for the day also contributed to writing her speech address that she presented during the Regional Women Peace and Security forum dubbed "Fostering peace and inclusivity in East and Southern Africa: Effective Strategies for Advancing the women, peace and security Agenda."

They were also able to meet with the Senior Management Team and learn about their work portfolios as well as learn about the Embassy's initiatives and programmes around the empowerment of girls. They stepped into the leaders' roles for the day to call for equal power and representation.



"I've learnt that you should be proud of who you are. When an opportunity comes, it's you to decide to take it or let it go."

Sheryl, 16, a girl advocate from Plan International Kenya - Homabay County, who became the Ambassador for Ireland.

"The opportunity for the girl advocates to be mentored at Embassy of Ireland is a game changer. We have a female ambassador, a female deputy ambassador, female second secretaries and deputy heads of corporation. I really hope that this inspires them to say that yes we can do it and it does not matter what this space is but girls and women do belong in it."

Evelyn Maris, Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Ireland.

Watch more on the link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FXm_ND47W4E

British High Commission Takeover

During this year's girl's takeover, Monica, 22, a peer educator from the Young Health Programme took over the office of Eduarda Gray, the Deputy Director of Development for the British High Commission.

In her role as Deputy Director, she had an invaluable experience visiting the Kianda Level 4 Hospital in Kibera where she got to interact with the staff at the facility and the DESIP Project that is funded by the UK Aid. The Project focuses on delivering sustainable and equitable increase in family planning in low contraceptive prevalence rate counties in Kenya.

Under the DESIP project, Monica joined an interactive and insightful session with young mothers on Reproductive Health where she was able to share her skills as both a peer educator and as the Deputy Director for the day and learn from the girls as well and the health facilitator on the different types of contraceptives that young women could get access to.

Monica and Eduarda were also hosted by Pamoja Radio Station in Kibera and had an engaging discussion with the Radio show hosts on issues around girls and on gender inequality. They were also joined by Plan International's Senior Business Coordinator, Faith Mbatia discussing further on the commemoration of International Day of the Girl.

The takeover engagement culminated with the Deputy Director for the day Monica alongside Eduarda Gray visiting the Kibera Art Centre where they got to interact with children and see how art is used as a source of therapy against Gender based violence and Female Genital Mutilation.



Watch more on the link:

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7250455228607610880>

Truvalu Takeover

“ This takeover experience provided me with an opportunity to look at my social venture from an Investors perspective. As someone who would like to scale up their impact and work, it was insightful to be more than just a social entrepreneur for the day but also be the Managing Director for Truvalu Kenya. ”

*Janet,
Girl Advocate, She Leads Programme*

In a bid to empower the next seed generation of social entrepreneurs, Janet, a girl advocate under the She Leads Programme and CEO of Queening Afrika- a social enterprise that uses braid waste to craft beautiful handbags had the opportunity of stepping into the role of the Managing Director for Truvalu Kenya Peter Owaga.

In her role, she was able to go through different pitches from different firms and understand an Investors' financial risk analysis when it comes to investing. As a CEO herself, she was able to provide insightful conversations on business models that could further impact the community and as well the investors.

In an exciting venture in her role, Janet got the opportunity to have a virtual call with the girls who were taking over the Truvalu offices, in Netherlands. The experience was one for the books as Janet had a cross-learning session with her peers for the day sharing about her background, her community and her experience during the takeover.

It was a splendid exchange network forum for Janet, the girls and Owaga, one that creatively infused the power of mentorship, coaching, exchange of ideas and critical analysis as well as a paradigm shift on their business mindset.

Watch
more on
the link:

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7251660674903199745>



Staff: Plan International's Head of Internal Audit Takeover

Arina Phelister, a Peer Educator under the Young Health Programme took over the office of Emmah Mathu, Plan International's Head of Internal Audit.

This takeover was distinct and unique as Arina got the chance to take over the office of her Mentor under the Enable Her Mentorship programme which is a mentorship, coaching and skills training programme under the Young Health Programme that focuses on empowering young girls alongside male champions on getting ready for the workplace.

“ At the start of the Enable Her Mentorship programme this year, I was shy and reserved. But interacting with Emma for the last 5 months have made me more assertive and confident. I have been able to align my career goals and understand that I can diversify my undergraduate degree and maximize on various job opportunities within my scope of study. ”

*Arina Phelister,
Peer Educator under the Young Health Programme*

Emmah Mathu as a mentor remarked, “I have learnt so much from being Arina's mentor and I believe it is up to leaders like me to be intentional about creating time and making room for such initiatives. When, I look back at the time when I was younger, I wish I had someone who could guide me through my career choices but having had the experience, I have been better placed to advise Arina and give her an early kickstart in her career.”

Her takeover experience involved her first physical visit to her mentor's office, an office tour and an analysis of an internal audit report. Arina, is one of the many girls that Plan International Kenya works with through the Young Health Programme in partnership with Astrazeneca.

Watch
more on
the link:

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7251660674903199745>



AstraZeneca Takeover

In a successful Girls Take Over by (Plan International) and Girls Belong Here campaign by (AstraZeneca), seven girls took on high-level leadership roles at AstraZeneca, including the positions of Country President and African Cluster Director. These young leaders participated in high-level meetings and interviews, gaining valuable insights which made a powerful impact through the Young Health Programme Kenya.

“ I saw a younger version of myself in Marceline – full of energy and asking tough, relevant questions. I am committed to mentoring more girls like her. ”

AstraZeneca staff

This year, the programme evolved beyond a single-day takeover event, transforming from a six-month mentorship that equipped these girls with leadership skills and confidence. Having gone through the programme, the girls are now committed to mentoring others and leading youth-led initiatives in their communities.

AstraZeneca has reaffirmed its commitment to this initiative, with staff ready to mentor the next cohort and help more girls realize their potential.



Swedish Embassy Takeover

“Today, I've learnt the qualities of a good leader from Ambassador Joachim. When I go back home, I will tell my friends in school the good things that I have seen today. I am so happy,” says Hawo, a girl advocate from Plan International-Tana River.

Hawo experienced a day in the life of Swedish Ambassador to Somalia Joachim Waern. ‘Ambassador’ Hawo was accompanied by her ‘Deputy’ Anastacia, a girl advocate from Plan International-Kilifi.

From their diverse backgrounds, the two girls shared about challenges such as climate change and harmful cultural practices during a staff meeting where they interacted with the staff at the Embassy from various portfolios.

In his remarks, Ambassador Joachim commended the girl advocates for being bold to voice their issues.

“ This is a great opportunity to understand young people's lives, dreams and hope for their future.”

*Joachim Waern
Swedish Ambassador to Somalia*





Danish Embassy Takeover

Zuena, 14, is a girl advocate from Plan International - Kwale County who is passionate about championing for the rights of children in her community. Currently, she serves as the President of Kwale County Children Assembly in Kinango sub county stepped into the role of Ambassador Stephan Schonemann for the day.

Accompanying her was her "Deputy Ambassador" Rael Priscilla, who is a Gender-Based Violence (GBV) champion from the Safe and Inclusive Cities Project in Kibera-Nairobi. The two confidently 'took over' Ambassador's Stephan's calendar of activities as they were ushered into the Embassy in an official Embassy vehicle.

The young Ambassador duo had an online meeting with Jacqueline Bryld where they discussed their priorities and their advocacy work for survivors of Gender-Based Violence and climate action. They also called an all-staff meeting where they asked the teams about their priorities for women and girls.

“I will become a surgeon. And also the President of Kenya.”

Ambassador Zuena, 14

Accompanied by Ambassador Stephan was the Head of Cooperation Henrik Larsen and other staff from the Embassy of Denmark. The Ambassador of the day Zuena and her deputy Priscilla took a guided tour of the Gender Violence Recovery Centre and learned about the important work that the Embassy does to support gender-based violence survivors.

At the end of the day, the young women handed back the responsibilities to Ambassador Schönemann and left the staff at the embassy feeling inspired and grateful.

"This has been one of the best days in my life. I was in charge. I spoke on behalf of my peers in my community and my country," said an elated Zuena.

“Zuena has really impressed me today. She's a confident young girl who should claim her space by taking a step forward and believe that she has something to tell.”

Ambassador Stephan

Watch
more on
the link:

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7251660674903199745>

World Food Programme Takeover

At the World Food Programme (WFP) offices, three dynamic young leaders — Hadija (13), Zeitun (15), and Subira (16) — stepped into the shoes of top executives for the day!

Hadija, took over as the Head of Security, Zeitun, led as the Head of Programmes and Subira, stepped into the role of Head of Supply Chain.

During their takeover, these phenomenal girls got a front-row seat to leadership in action. From participating in internal and external security meetings, strategizing with country teams on Women's Empowerment initiatives, to diving deep into the critical workings of the supply chain, the girls experienced it all! In addition, they shared updates at a Senior Leadership Team meeting, showcasing their newfound confidence and insights.

“I feel empowered. This was such a lovely experience, and I have learned that both boys and girls have equal opportunities.”

Zeitun, 15

This takeover was not just a day in the office; it was a powerful reminder of what happens when we create spaces for young girls to lead, learn, and break barriers.



Unicef Takeover

“It is a special day for me as I experience how it is like to be the Country Representative of Unicef Kenya an organisation that protects the rights of every child and girl. When I met with Shaheen, she encouraged me to achieve my dreams of becoming a lawyer.”

Jacinta, 14

At just 14 years old, Jacinta stepped into the role of UNICEF Representative Kenya for a day, embodying the hopes and dreams of countless young girls across her community, Machakos County and the country at large.

She got the opportunity to meet with Shaheen Nilofer, the Unicef Country Representative highlighting the importance of empowering girls to step into such key leadership roles.

With poise and determination, she met with the Unicef Kenya staff and addressed pressing issues affecting children, sharing her vision for a brighter future.

“It has been a pleasure to have this

opportunity of promoting young girls for them to be in leadership positions. 10-15 years down the line, this platform is an inspiration that they should draw from a very young age and that is what Jacinta represents. She wants to become a lawyer which is also an equal leadership position and she yearns for fighting for the cause of the girl child in this country,” remarked Shaheen Nilofer, the Unicef Country Representative.

Her day in leadership reminded everyone that age has no barrier to making an impact and that empowering young people, especially girls, is key to driving sustainable change.



“Girls Takeover has a very special meaning for us as it is not just about Jacinta coming and occupying the chair of the Representative of the Kenyan Country Office, but it brings in a huge sense of responsibility and accountability to roll out the vision for the girls in Kenya.”

*Shaheen Nilofer,
Unicef Country Representative*

Staff: Director of Programme Implementation and Operations' Takeover

As a young girl, this takeover means to me that a girl child is given a chance to come step into a leader's role and gain the experience to know how their work entails,” says Linet, 21.

Linet, a budding CEO at Becci Foundation and a girl advocate with the She Leads Project in Mathare under Plan International Kenya, took over the office of Harriet Osimbo, the Director of Programme Implementation and Operations.

Immersing herself in the role, she moderated a reflection meeting with key strategic staff, where she contributed to Plan International Kenya's Northern Strategy. Linet shared thoughtful considerations addressing the needs of supporting girls and young women in Northern Kenya.

“I strongly believe that girls need to be at the centre of what we do while we prepare them for the future, and the future is now. International Day of the Girl (IDG) is one such significant period where we bring girls from different spaces to be mentored,” remarked Harriet.

Inspired by Harriet, Linet remarks, “I love the way she works and her leadership skills, and I would like to be like her.”

The takeover experience reaffirmed and sharpened Linet's leadership skills igniting her determination to pave the way for other girls through her foundation to step into leadership roles where every girl's voice is heard and valued.





Staff: Country Director's Takeover

Mercy Wairimu, 22, took over the office of George Otim, Country Director of Plan International Kenya. In her role as the Country Director for the day, Mercy steered a meeting with George and Joyce Gitau, the Urban Programmes Manager on Plan International Kenya's urban programming work.

Channelling her background experience as a leader and member of the She Leads UN Youth Cohort, she was able to bring forth and articulate key issues that affect her community in Mathare that also interface with Plan International Kenya's urban programming work. As the Country Director for the day, she deliberated with her team on infusing an integrated approach

towards the urban programmes as well as highlighting its strengths and weaknesses.

Her key takeaway from the takeover experience was that leaders need a team to work with as they connect with the programmes at the grassroots level and offer their expertise and wealth of experience that further inform key management decisions.

Mercy hopes to be an impactful leader that advocates and tackles the root causes of some of the issues in her community such as sexual gender-based violence, alcohol and substance abuse and trauma in children.

She is a girl advocate by choice but a human rights defender by passion. She carries along other titles and is keen on upscaling her advocacy work.

“ I have learnt from George that as a Country Director, it takes a lot of composure and a sense of calmness to be a leader and make decisions. ”

Mercy Wairimu, 22

“ It is important we put more young girls in leadership spaces so that they can learn, lead, thrive and decide. I believe Mercy is ambitious and she is up to the task. I have also learnt a lot from her today. ”

*George Otim,
Country Director
Plan International Kenya*



Kisumu Programme Unit Takeover

Plan International Kisumu programme unit, in collaboration with the County Government of Kisumu, proudly embraced the Girl's Takeover initiative, with the aim of inspiring, empowering, and supporting young girls in leadership.

During the 2024, International Day of the Girl celebration, 14-year-old Loice Anyango Okoth, a sponsored student in Form One at St. Barnabas High School, stepped into the role of the County Commissioner for the day, taking over the office of Mr. Benson D. Leparmorijo. Loice, along with other girls' and boys' rights champions—including participants from the *She Leads* project and sponsorship program alumni—engaged in meaningful discussions with the Commissioner.

Mr. Leparmorijo shared his personal journey to becoming a County Commissioner, offering wisdom and encouragement that deeply resonated with the girls. Loice, eager to learn more, asked how the Commissioner's office addresses critical issues affecting girls in the county, such as child abuse, early marriages, insecurity, and the lack of access to education due to financial challenges.

In response, the Commissioner highlighted the proactive steps taken by his office to tackle these challenges and ensure the protection and welfare of girls.

As part of her leadership role for the day, Loice also raised concerns about the challenges faced by women in leadership. These included lack of respect, harassment, unconscious biases, gender inequality, and low confidence in women's abilities. She emphasized the need for strategies and support systems to empower girls and women, combat gender-based violence and child abuse, and create opportunities for networking. Loice underscored the importance of self-confidence, urging women to believe in their capabilities.

“As we celebrate the Day of The Girl Child we should consider how to address the issues that affect and hinder girls from achieving their dreams and becoming important people in the society. We should ensure that all girls go to school and advocate towards ending teenage pregnancies. Girls like me should be given a platform to air their views and amplify their voices, and also engage boys in the fight to end violence against women and girls. I'm grateful to the County Commission and Plan International for giving me this opportunity to become the County Commissioner of the day.”

Loice Anyango Okoth, 14

“As the county government, we always look forward to collaborate with partners like Plan International in ensuring that both girls and boys are given equal opportunities to occupy such spaces to shape their future. Such platforms leave a lasting and positive impact in their lives. Congratulations to Loice for her confidence and zeal in taking my leadership role today.”

*Mr. Benson D. Leparmorijo,
County Commissioner*



Homabay Programme Unit

Child Protection Launch in Homabay

Homabay County IDG celebrations were conducted at Omiro dispensary in Kakelo Kokwanyo; Kasipul Kabondo on 11th October under the theme; Girls' vision for the Future. The events held in conjunction with the County Government included a medical outreach program that provided essential health services to over 1,000 community members including girls, focusing on medical screening, general check-up's, reproductive health education and information and access to contraceptives. This initiative aimed to enhance access to medical services, promote health awareness and empower young women with knowledge about their bodies and health, thus addressing the high rates of teenage pregnancies.

During the event, the Homabay Child Welfare and Protection Policy was launched marking a significant milestone, aimed at providing a comprehensive framework for safeguarding the rights of children, particularly girls. This policy seeks to address issues such as gender-based violence, child labour, and discrimination, ensuring that girls have a safe environment to grow and thrive.

The activities conducted during this day highlighted the pressing need for continued advocacy and support to ensure that all girls can realize their full potential and contribute positively to society. It also emphasised on the need for meaningful male engagement and involvement in addressing issues affecting them in ending the triple threat. The performances and skits also showcased during the educational entertainment sessions served as a platform for young girls to express challenges affecting them as they envision their future through Education, access to medical care, a community free from SGBV, teenage pregnancy and new HIV infections.

The guest speakers for the day remarked that the launch of the Child Welfare and Protection Policy was a pivotal moment in the celebration, aimed at reinforcing the commitment to safeguarding the rights and welfare of children, particularly girls.

The County Executive Commissioner (CECM) for Gender Hon. Sarah Malit, took a moment to recognize and honour, the invaluable contributions of stakeholders who played a pivotal role in its development.

"This is a great milestone for us as Homabay County and more

so to the children of Homabay County. It has been a long journey of over 8 years since the conceptualization of this policy. All of us have a responsibility to ensure its full implementation," she said. Hon. Sarah emphasized that there is now a need to embark on the implementation of the framework through collaborations and not to let the policy gather dust.

The child guest for the day Favour Yehudah also shared some of the challenges that girls in Homabay County go through and requested for commitment of the leaders from Homabay to commit to ending the triple threat that has crippled the progress of children in Homabay County.

“As children of Homabay County, we request the commitment of our leaders and stakeholders in ensuring we are safe and protected from harm. This will help us progress in all spheres including education, health and well-being.”

Favour Yehudah



Certificates of appreciation were awarded to representatives from various organizations, including non-governmental organizations, community leaders, and child rights advocates, acknowledging their dedication, support and hard work in formulating a comprehensive framework aimed at safeguarding the rights and welfare of children. This gesture not only celebrated their commitment but also reinforced the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing child protection issues.

This year's International Day of the Girl in Homa Bay was not only a celebration but also a call to action for all stakeholders to prioritize the empowerment of girls and young women and to involve men and boys in more programs that address issues affecting them.



IDG Child guest Favour giving her speech



Homabay County Commissioner Takeover

Homabay On 25th September 2024, Valarie, a form four student walked confidently in her new Office as the County Commissioner of Homa Bay County. She was warmly received by the then County Commissioner Moses Lilan. On arrival, Valarie was taken through her roles at the County Commission which mainly involved: Security Oversight, Coordination of National Government development projects, Representation of the President in key forums, public engagements and community service among others.

In the presence of the county security committee, Moses Lilan handed over the Office to the incoming County Commissioner Valarie Akinyi. This was thrilling event for both Moses and Valarie.

“This is my second great opportunity for me to mentor a girl through Plan International Girls’ Takeover initiative which challenges us as leaders to develop key strategies on girls’ empowerment and mentor them towards their desired career path, let us organize more of these engagements to reach many girls.”

*Moses Lilan,
County Commissioner*

On the other hand, Valarie was happy to take over her new office. She highlighted her key aspirations including security for girls walking long distances to school, swift access to justice for girls in need of care and protection, lobby the government for construction of classrooms in both secondary and comprehensive schools for effective class ratio. While affirming her commitment to quality education, Valarie challenged the government that 100% transition is not enough, the government should develop and implement corresponding policies to ensure school retention.

“I thank the government for ensuring 100% transition for all children, but most of them drop out of school later for lack of school fees. As the county commissioner for the day, request is for the government to pay school fees for all children especially girls from underprivileged backgrounds.”

Valarie, Form 4 Student

In the presence of the County Security council, Valarie, challenged that no child should be left behind from accessing education and underlining social norms must be addressed to provide equal opportunity for both girls and boys. The office of the county commission should also seek to promote menstrual hygiene management through sufficient supply of sanitary towels and provision of safe spaces (like restrooms) for girls. Speaking at the same event, the County Director of Education, confirmed that the Ministry of Education is putting up all the necessary measures to ensure access to quality education.

Valarie ended the day by appreciating everyone for the great opportunity.

“It is my first time to step in the office of the County Commissioner. I feel inspired, motivated and challenged. This takeover has redefined my thinking, I’ll also share the same with my fellow students and girls from my community.”

Valarie, Form 4 Student

“The entry minimum requirement for this role is, a Bachelor Degree in social sciences after which you’ll apply for the position of Assistant County Commissioner, then you’ll grow ranks to County Commissioner, it takes about 21 years for one to become a county Commissioner,” Moses Lilan Explained.

The session ended with everyone joining hands and calling everyone to #UniteForPeace.



National Celebrations: International Day of the Girl in Kajiado County



Plan International Kenya proudly joined in the National Commemoration of the International Day of the Girl Child in Kajiado County led by the Anti-FGM Board-Kenya. This year's theme, 'Girls' Vision for a Future Free from FGM,' resonated throughout the day, reinforcing the crucial message of safeguarding girls' rights and ensuring a future free from harm.

Event Highlights

A vibrant procession from Mile 46 Market to the Deputy County Commissioner's grounds, where boys and girls from local schools actively raised awareness on girls' rights and the fight against harmful cultural practices like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).



Inspiring performances from children in the Maasai community, including songs, poems, and skits, advocating for girls' rights and addressing key challenges like FGM, child marriage, teenage pregnancies, and access to education were also conducted.



Women leaders, including the Principal Secretary for Parliamentary Affairs Aurelia Rono, Principal Secretary for Gender and Affirmative Action Ms. Anne Wangombe, and Anti-FGM Board Chairperson, Ipato Surum, took to the stage to encourage girls in the Maasai community, demonstrating that they, too, can rise to leadership positions. In addition, the impactful message from Bernadette Loloju, CEO of the Anti-FGM Board, reminded the Maasai community that with education, girls can achieve greatness, becoming CEOs and leaders rather than victims of harmful traditions.



The day culminated in the planting of trees to symbolize growth and hope for a brighter, safer future for all girls. Additionally, girls from primary and secondary schools received sanitary towels, ensuring they have the resources they need to thrive. Anti-FGM champions were also recognized and awarded for their outstanding work in the fight against FGM.

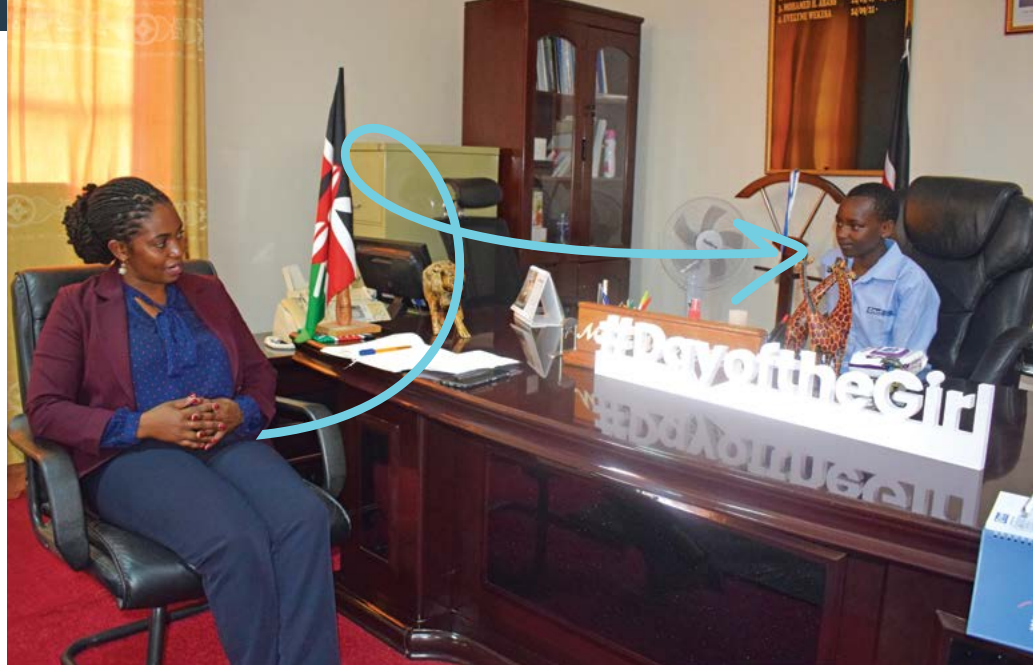
Together, with key stakeholders and partners, we are building a future where every girl's potential is realized, and her rights are fully protected from harmful traditional practices.

Machakos Programme Unit Takeover

An inspiring initiative aimed at empowering the next generation of leaders, four girl advocates and one male champion had the opportunity to step into influential leadership roles within Machakos County. These young leaders, who are sponsored children by Plan International Kenya, took up key positions for a day to address pressing community challenges while gaining firsthand experience in governance and advocacy.

Pauline, a confident and determined girl advocate, assumed the role of Deputy County Commissioner in Kisukioni. Accompanied by her deputy, another girl advocate, Pauline embarked on a mission to address security concerns in Matungulu Subcounty, an area plagued by cases of rape and defilement. Armed with insights from her community, she convened a meeting with area chiefs and the Assistant County Commissioner to deliberate on strategies for enhancing the safety of women and girls. The discussion culminated in a collective agreement to mobilize community barazas, where Community Resource Persons would educate residents on reporting pathways for gender-based violence (GBV).

Pauline also met with the Kisukioni Officer Commanding Station (OCS) to review measures ensuring the safety of school-going children, girls, and women. Her dedication and leadership were evident as she addressed the Deputy County



Commissioner and other stakeholders, delivering a passionate speech that called for unwavering commitment to addressing GBV and ensuring the security of vulnerable groups within the community.

In Machakos town, Bernadette stepped into the shoes of the Chief Officer for Gender. Her poise and professionalism left a lasting impression on the department staff, with Jane, the Chief Officer's secretary, remarking,

"I actually thought this is the true Chief Officer from the way she engaged us." Joined by her deputy, another girl advocate, and a male champion, Bernadette led a staff meeting to review the department's weekly plans. She also conducted one-on-one discussions with field staff, keenly exploring their efforts to raise awareness about GBV prevention.

Taking her role seriously, Bernadette delivered a compelling speech to the Chief Officer of Gender highlighting critical issues such as teenage pregnancies and period poverty, urging stakeholders to prioritize these challenges in their agenda. Her speech was a testament to her deep understanding of the struggles faced by girls in the community and her determination to create change.

These experiences not only empowered the young advocates but also served as a powerful reminder of the potential of youth leadership in driving social change. Through their actions, Pauline, Bernadette, and their peers exemplified the essence of true leadership—compassion, courage, and commitment to making a difference.



Kilifi Programme Unit Takeover

Four girl advocates from Plan International -Kilifi had the opportunity to be mentored into leadership and decision-making spaces as they stepped into the roles of the Kilifi County Chief Officer for Special Programs and Disaster Management a position held by Irene Opicho and that of the County Director -State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, Georgina Dulu.

The young confident girls namely Joyce, Anastacia, Rebecca and Bahati raised concerns about the issues affecting girls and young women in Kilifi such as high prevalence of gender-based violence, teenage pregnancies, and child marriages. In their quest, they sought to understand what actions the government has taken to address such issues.

The County officials outlined measures to safeguard the well-being of girls through provision of sanitary pads in all primary schools to end period poverty, awareness creation sessions, and development of policies and laws that protect children's rights. In addition, they will walk the journey of mentorship with the girl advocates.

In the words of Annastacia, "The experience was great. I have learnt what it would take to hold such positions someday. I will teach my peers about their rights and laws.". Rebecca added that she would work hard to become a lawyer to advocate for the rights of children in her community.

Tana River County IDG Celebrations



On Friday 11th October 2024, Tana River County joined the rest of the world in Celebrating the International Day of the Girl (IDG) at Rafiki Primary School in Hola town. The event organized in collaboration with the Tana River County government, Plan International Tana River office, International AID Services, Groots Kenya among others was marked with pomp and colour as various actors spoke in one voice to protect the girl child.

Through drama and songs, local men groups, youth and children urged the government to stop Female Genital Mutilation saying that it is an outdated practice that has no place in the modern

world besides being prohibited in law. They urged parents and other community members to prioritize girl's education as it is the only good thing to do.

Fatuma Guhat of Rafiki Primary School urged the government to implement strictly all laws related to keeping children safe.

Speaking while representing the Tana River County Executive Committee member for Education, Gender, Youth and Social Services, Mr. Abbas Kunyo, - Miss Millicent Ondiek challenged the people of Tana River to discard outdated practices like FGM and child marriage. She gave the commitment of both the national and county government in combating these vices.

Kwale Programme Unit Takeover

This year's International Day of the Girl (IDG) was nothing short of inspirational in Kwale! Young girls took charge and stepped into key leadership roles, including that of the County Executive Committee Member (CECM) for Education-Kwale County, Chief Officer of Health-Kwale County, and that of the Senior Project Manager of Plan International Kenya's COSME project. These symbolic takeovers were designed to ignite their dreams and show them that no barrier was too high!



She shared her personal journey as one of eight girls, raised by a father who, against societal pressure, ensured all his daughters received an education. He believed education was the greatest inheritance he could give to his children. Madam Mwakaole urged the girls to dream big, work hard, and always remain disciplined.

Dr. Kitsao Mjimba, the Chief Officer of Health, also shared his remarkable story. As a former Plan International sponsored child from a large farming family, he overcame severe hardships, including childhood malnutrition. Despite walking to school barefoot,

he did not let that stop him from becoming a doctor. Today, he is committed to ensuring every girl in Kwale has access to sanitary pads, so no girl has to miss school because of it.

Beryl Oduor, Senior Project Manager of the COSME project, reassured the girls that the future is bright! Through 4K clubs, marine conservation, and forest regeneration programs, girls will not only be empowered economically but will also become leaders in safeguarding the environment.

These incredible stories of resilience, determination, and hope left the girls inspired to pursue their dreams, no matter the obstacles ahead!



TAKEOVER PICTORIAL





Kajiado



Kilifi



Kwale



Kisumu



Truvalu



Machakos



Tana River



Head of Internal Audit
Plan International Kenya



Homabay



Until we are all equal

About Plan International

Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children's rights and equality for girls. We believe in the power and potential of every child but know this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion, and discrimination. And it is girls who are most affected.

Working together with children, young people, supporters, and partners, we strive for a just world, tackling the root causes of the challenges girls and vulnerable children face. We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood and we enable children to prepare for and respond to crises and adversity. We drive changes in practice and policy at local, national, and global levels using our reach, experience and knowledge. For over 85 years, we have rallied other determined optimists to transform the lives of all children in more than 80 countries.

We won't stop until we are all equal.

Plan International

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