



MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

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PLAN INTERNATIONAL CAMEROON

EDITO



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This February, as we celebrate International Youth Day in Cameroon, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the remarkable young girls and boys who dedicate their time, energy, and passion to supporting Plan International's mission. Mariama, Vanessa, Michel, Adamou are among others... their contributions are immeasurable.

Today, we are proud to spotlight our young leaders participants to our programme who have made great strides, to leverage the enormous opportunities of the digital space in developing innovative solutions in the domains of education and health. They dedicate countless hours to raising awareness on critical issues like education, health, and gender equality. Their voices online and within their communities resonate, challenging harmful traditions and advocating for positive change. These young heroes inspire me every day. Their courage, resilience, and unwavering spirit fuel our collective journey towards a brighter future for all children in Cameroon. In this edition you will read some of their stories.

This February, and every day, let us stand proudly with the youths of Cameroon!

I saw them standing at the forefront of social movements, demanding their rightful place at decision-making tables and shaping futures that reflect their aspirations. A group of them, swore in as young parliamentarians and senators for Cameroon.

They can achieve great exploits if given the necessary support and opportunities even in challenging contexts where issues of gender-based violence, female genital mutilation, social and climate crises are still a cause for concern. Let us not only celebrate their achievements but also provide platforms for them to share their stories, perspectives, and solutions; invest in their potential; empower them with resources...

As we continue our journey of change as determined optimists, we remain convinced that by building strong synergy around our actions we will be able to scale up our impact until we are all equal. Together, let us create an environment where every young person in Cameroon can unlock their full potential and contribute meaningfully to building a more just and equitable world.

Have a good read!

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR TECHNOVATION CHAMPIONS

Youth and Innovation: Vanessa, Michel, and Adamou at PROMOTE 2024

Under the bright lights of Yaoundé, Cameroon, **PROMOTE 2024** buzzes with energy. From **17 to 25 February 2024**, Plan International showcased the potential of its young Tech Champions at the Digital Pavilion, supported by MINPOSTEL and Brain-Booster, an incubator for young people in Cameroon. Three of our young programme participants were selected to present their innovative projects in the fields of Education Tech and Health Tech.

Amidst the diverse booths showcasing the nation's economic potential, a group of young champions stand out – Vanessa, Michel, and Adamou. Representing Plan International, these IT whizzes are not just participants; they are solution makers. Their innovative solutions echoing at the heart of the event.

Vanessa: Vanessa has dedicated herself to advocating for youth sexual and reproductive health rights. Leveraging her passion and skills, she and her team aim to ensure that essential information reaches every girl, regardless of their internet access, through their Wellbeing app.

Young girls need access to the right information about their sexuality to make informed choices. Addressing this issue was a priority for me and my team, reflected in our app "Wellbeing." Participating as the only young girl in the startup pitch provided significant momentum in my efforts to enhance girls' digital skills for life.

The encouragement from the expert jury reaffirmed that I am heading in the right direction.

Vanessa

Michel: Michel and his team members unveiled their pharmaceutical services app, destined to help women and mothers far in the villages to receive their medication directly from pharmacy without necessarily traveling from one side to another. This showcased the power of young minds to address real-world problems.

"I found it incredibly rewarding to participate in the Pitch Contest, as it provided me with valuable learning experiences. Additionally, engaging with other exhibitors reinforced my belief that there are still investors interested in digital ventures, including my own project. Moreover, I gained insights into further developing my project, which I am confident will come to fruition with time and dedication in the coming years."

Michel

Adamou: With an anger to be acknowledged through his IT mindset, presented his digital platform. Connecting waste collectors with individuals and businesses, it tackles Cameroon's growing waste crisis while promoting green practices. His platform empowers communities to take charge of their environment, demonstrating the potential of youth to drive sustainable change.

"Participating in PROMOTE was a pivotal experience for me, as it allowed me to immerse myself in the diverse activities within the digital realm. I had the privilege of showcasing my project on digital technology's impact on healthcare. Overall, it was an immensely enriching experience, and I extend my sincere appreciation to the organizers for orchestrating such a fantastic event."

Adamou

Vanessa, Michel, and Adamou are not just representing Plan International; they are representing the future of Cameroon. Their innovative spirit, fueled by the platform provided by **PROMOTE 2024**, offers a glimpse into a nation where young minds lead the way towards a more sustainable, equitable, and prosperous future. A future where innovation knows no age, where we are all equal.

This is their story, and it's just the beginning.



© Plan International/ Photographer Vanessa, at Promote 2024.



© Plan International/ Photographer Michel, at Promote 2024.



© Plan International/ Photographer Adamou, at Promote 2024.

OUR STORY OF **IMPACT**

Fatima's grand mother breaking the silence of FGM in Mora

It is a deeply entrenched practice that affects the lives of countless women and girls in Cameroon. Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting, commonly known as FGM/C, leaves scars both physical and emotional. Let's join Fatima's Grandmother as she shed light on this silent struggle and the courageous voices working to end it.

Fatima's grandmother, wrinkled and wise - was once the village's revered midwife. Today she can speak openly and without fear of reprisal: **"I wielded my blade - a relic handed down through the centuries - as if it had been created for my use."**

When their day came, the girls would gather together, their hearts pounding, and this always happened as the sun sank below the horizon. It was as if the moon became a silent witness to the atrocities that would spit blood and screams on the cradle of their ancestors, the sacred ground. **"It is what it is, it's our way. This is a mark of womanhood and our religion allow it,"** the elders would say.

And so, Fatma's turn arrived. Like others, she laid on the rough mat, her legs trembling. The blade glinted in the firelight, and the air smelled of incense and fear. Her mother wept silently, torn between tradition and love. Fatima clenched her fists, her teeth biting back screams. But Fatima was different. She had heard whispers beyond the village—of **some people who**

dared to challenge the silence. Women who spoke of health, dignity, and empowerment. They gathered not far from the river where they go to wash clothes. They start talking... "No more," they declared. **"Our daughters deserve better."**

Fatima found herself at a crossroads. The old ways tugged at her like roots seeking water. But the women at the river' words echoed louder—the promise of a different path, where scars need not define her. One big challenge: at 18 years old, **Fatima doesn't know how to read. She has never been at school.**

Change begins with dialogue. A few months later, community leaders, activists, and healthcare workers come together to talk about the dangers of FGM/C. We witness their tireless efforts to shift mindsets, emphasizing health, dignity, and empowerment.

Cameroon vowed to intensify the fight against FGM. Laws tightened, and communities shifted. The medicalization waned, replaced by healing hands—not blades. Fatima's grandmother, once a midwife, now taught hygiene and hope.

Plan International Cameroon will continue to support the government of Cameroon by amplifying the voices of Fatima's grandmother, Fatima and other members of the community.



© Plan International/ Photographer Zarah Djida, Media Corner 2024.

THE YOUTH DAY CELEBRATION ACROSS THE COUNTRY



Plan International strongly believes that without young people, there is no hope for a society of justice and peace, and therefore no future for a country, hence, each year, the organization stands at the side of the government to co-organise the Youth Parliament with the Ministry of Civic Education (MINJEC) and the National Assembly, and a host of other activities including march past, sporting initiatives, exhibitions, trainings etc.

Bertoua

In Bertoua, 300 sponsored children and Plan International alumni took part in the Youth Day celebrations in 10 sponsorship communities: Mandjou, Gadji, Batouri, Dimako, Belabo, Doumé, Doumaintang, Nguemendouka, Mboma and Bonis.

Clad in royal Plan International blue t-shirts, they marched with strength and pride as agents of change, brandishing messages advocating for the rights of young people in commemoration of the 58th Youth Day.

Country Office & Biteng

The 7th Edition of the Youth Parliament brought together 280 youth deputies and youth senators from the 10 regions

of Cameroon to reinforce their capacities in Civic engagement and moral rearmament as they embrace their duties to participate to the development of their communities during their one-year mandate.

Fully represented at the youth village, Plan International, alongside other exhibitors from the 5th to the 10th of February, showcased its various initiatives to promote the rights of children, young people, and young girls in Cameroon. The commitment to supporting youths was once again reiterated at the plenary session of the 2024 Youth Parliament held on 09 February at the National Assembly.

Maroua

In Minawao, the work of our colleagues on the ground added an incredible colour to the Youth Day celebration. For a moment, the condition of refugees takes a back seat to the celebration of hope and determination.

In prelude to this celebration in Maroua, our programme participants and other valiant young people from the Far North region joined the Regional Governor to say NO! to all forms of violence through a sports march.

In the Logone and Birni divisions, youths, pupils from several primary and secondary schools, as well as the authorities, all gathered around a table to discuss on the youth day celebration's theme: **"Youth, Import-substitution and Economic patriotism for Cameroon's Development"**.

Plan/ UNHCR Social Project

World Youth Camp: Inspiring determination and optimism in the hearts of Cameroon's young people.

Yaoundé, Cameroon's capital city brought together some 5000 young people from all over the world for the very first edition of The World Youth Camp, a bold initiative by the National Youth Council of Cameroon in collaboration with the Korean NGO Youth Fellowship. This great convening designed to carry dreams, ideas and enthusiasm saw the participation of 20 young people from the Plan International /HCR Project.

The young people immersed themselves in training sessions, conferences and academies to change their mentality, to become actors of a rights-based society, actors for change. The 2024 World Youth Camp focused on igniting a mind shift, entrepreneurship, fostering resilience, innovation and teamwork in an attractive and fun environment for young people.

In the wake of this memorable World Camp, Aurore, Mariama and Olivier, three of the 20 young participants in the Plan/UNHCR project, still see it as "a call to action, to solidarity and to a vision shared by all young people throughout the world.



ECHOS FROM OFFICES

OPENING CONVERSATION ON FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION



Around 200 million women and girls around the globe are already living with the traumatising consequences of Female Genital Mutilation.

Once upon a time, in the heart of Cameroon, where the sun painted the savannah gold and the air carried whispers of ancient traditions, there lived a young girl named Amina. Her eyes held both curiosity and fear—a reflection of the dual existence she navigated.

Amina belonged to the Arabe-Choa tribe, nestled in the Far North. Here, the winds whispered secrets of generations past, and the earth bore witness to rituals etched into the very fabric of life. Among these rituals was the practice of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C).

Every survivor of FGM/C carries within her a powerful voice, a call to action, and every choice she makes to regain control of her life contributes to the global movement to end this harmful practice.

FGM is practiced in specific regions of Cameroon, like the Far North and South West, and is spreading to urban areas like Yaoundé, Douala, Garoua, and Bafoussam due to migration. The 2011 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) reported a national prevalence of FGM at 1.4% and up to 20% in focus areas.

As we were celebrating the International Day of zero tolerance to FGM, Plan International organized a Media Corner and opened conversation on FGM in Mora.

In the East region, at the regional Delegation of the Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family, thirty young people were made aware of the consequences of female genital mutilation and strategies for combating the practice. On the eve of the official celebrations, 02 survivors of this practice spoke about their own experiences to raise awareness among the participants.

Humanitarian action in Cameroon: an EU delegation and humanitarian actors visited Minawao

Since December 2023, between 700 and 1,000 refugees have arrived at the Minawao transit camp. Today, the identification period, which used to last a maximum of 48 hours, takes weeks or a longer period of time. The camp is a temporary home for the majority of children, women and girls fleeing the horrors of war in their country. Most of them come from neighbouring Nigeria and sometimes speak only Hausa, English, Foulfulde and Mafa. Still others speak none of these languages.

To assess the humanitarian situation in the region and get a closer look at the reality of refugees in the Far

North, H.E. Jean-Marc Châtaigner, Ambassador, Head of Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, visited the Far North accompanied by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other key humanitarian actors.

Plan International, which plays an important role in the fields of education, health and nutrition, was also present. The stopover in the transit camp revealed realities that merit urgent action...



© Plan International/ Photographer - Delegation from the European Union and humanitarian actors in Minawao on February 6, 2024

PARTNERSHIP TO SCALE UP ADVOCACY FOR HEALTH FINANCING.



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The Parliamentary Caucus for Health Financing in Cameroon led by Hon. Njume Peter met with Plan International's Chief of Party for the Global Fund project, Dr. Kwake Simon

The Parliamentary Caucus for Health Financing in Cameroon led by Hon. Njume Peter met in Yaoundé on February 6th with Plan International's Chief of Party for the Global Fund project, Dr. Kwake Simon, and team to discuss common priorities and opportunities to further advance the health agenda in Cameroon.

Amongst other things, both teams visited

progress made and challenges to the implementation of the malaria response at community level in view of scaling up greater results-oriented policy for the good of vulnerable populations.

In the days ahead, the Caucus will establish a plan of action on how to support Plan International Cameroon to further its initiatives in the country and vice versa.

DISCOVERY CLASSES TO INSPIRE GIRLS IN SCIENCES.

To mark the International Day of Girls in Sciences, Plan International Cameroon organized discovery classes with 33 girls from sponsorship communities in the North and Adamaoua regions. Chosen on the basis of their outstanding performances in their various classes, they were immersed in a 2-day guided tour to strategic public and private facilities.

Offering students a practical learning experience to support their choice of field of study gives them greater motivation to work harder, particularly for girls in the sciences who do not always have role models close at hand. The discovery classes enabled the girls to see some of the opportunities available to them in their future careers.

Elodie, a student in Loversixth in Pitoa testifies, "After all these visits, I have learnt that girls must persevere and fight

to live in a misogynist society. We need to work hard to make our dreams come true. Whatever job I might do, I'd like it to have something to do with maths and computing, which for me are the basics. A girl should be able to choose the field she wants".

For some, the choice was not an easy one. Sabine, a Loversixth Science student in Barndake, is an example: "Initially, I wanted to become a Divisional Officer, so I planned to study Arts. The awareness campaigns run by Plan International Cameroon when I was in Form Four and the encouragement of my mathematics teacher led me to opt for the science series. My mother strongly supports me, but my father continues to criticise my choice" which according to him is not reasonable for a young girl.



STRENGTHENING SAFE SCHOOLS IN CAMEROON.

When schools are safe, children can thrive, and teachers can fulfill their roles effectively. However, in Cameroon, there have been numerous attacks on schools, particularly in conflict-affected regions. To address this, a 3-day workshop was recently held to train Defense and Security forces on implementing the Safe Schools Declaration. This initiative aims to protect education during armed conflicts by discouraging the military use of schools and reducing the risk of attacks. By embracing these principles, Cameroon is taking significant steps to create a safer educational environment. Following the workshop, a joint task force will develop tailored plans for safe school activities, ensuring effective implementation across different regions.



MEDIASCAPES : #FUTUREGIRLS'WANT

In the lead-up to the International women's day 2024 celebration, we launched the #FutureGirls'Want campaign inviting girls and young women to share their vision of an ideal future where they can fully thrive.



Upcoming events

→ Scan culture :

- Pilot phase of the organizational culture assessment process, February 26th to March 1st.
- International Women's Day 2024 Celebration, 8th of March

Thanks to Our Partners and Funders



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About Plan international

Founded in 1937, Plan International is an independent global organization defending the rights of the child, committed to supporting vulnerable and marginalized children and their communities to lift themselves out of poverty. By actively connecting committed people with strong ideas, we work together to bring about positive, profound and lasting changes in the lives of children and young people.

For over 80 years, we have supported girls and boys and their communities in more than 70 countries around the world to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to assert their rights, lift themselves out of poverty and live fulfilled and positive life.

We strive for lasting and large scale impact to ensure children, young people and their communities have access to protection, quality, inclusive education, health information and services and decent work and entrepreneurship opportunities.