



Keeping the promise:  
**WACAH's**  
**HeartBeat**

Plan International West and Central Africa Hub • Issue 1, Nov. 2023

**“** Through my voice, Guinean girls demand the commitment of Guinean decision-makers, of which you are part, to end gender-based violence, [...] which traumatize us, prevent us from going to school. **”** Mariame, Guinea

## “All Girls, Standing Strong, Creating Global Change!”

Our organization adopted this new strategy one year ago, and I am proud to recognise that our work has never been livelier.

It is incredibly remarkable to witness youth across West and Central Africa, raise their voice, telling us that they are there, ready and capable of bringing the change we all want to see.

Through this first edition of our WACA's Heartbeat, I invite you to acknowledge young girls' and boys' dynamism as they frame the debate in high level decision spaces on issues that concern them, whilst mobilizing themselves to answer to crises that affect their communities.

Particularly, it is inspiring how the youth come out transformed and empowered from our collaboration with them amidst enormously challenging contexts. This highlights that we are on the right track as a youth centered organization, and emphasizes the need to push forward in advancing children's rights and equality for girls.

I'm sure you will enjoy reading it, so we will appreciate hearing your thoughts and feedback.

With Thanks,



**Bell'Aube Houinato,**  
Regional Director (Interim), Plan International WACA



Girl speaks at training session to mark Girls in ICT day, Ghana. © Plan International.

# Contents

**Guinean girls bravely takeover the National Transition Council in Guinea .....3**

**Youth are building a new generation of youth leaders in Guinea .....7**

**Rahinatu's two days journey as the Chief Strategy and Engagement Officer of Plan International .....4**

**Parents determined to ensure the sustainability of school canteen for their children's education .....8**

**Young boys and girls celebrate five years of Girls Get Equal campaign across WACA.....5**

**Youth leaders, inspiring participants at the United Nations General Assembly .....9**

**Youth organisations at the centre of the humanitarian response to the Central Sahel crisis .....6**

**African Climate Week: youth voice their opinions on climate change issues .....10**



Mariama and Dr. Dansa Kourouma during the girls' takeover of National Transition Council of Guinea. © Plan International

## Girls bravely takeover the National Transition Council in Guinea

In the presence of the President of the National Transition Council himself, several National Transition Advisers, members of government, representatives of the United Nations system, national and international organizations, civil society, as well as youth structures, a group of young girls took over the plenary of the National Transition Council, within the commemoration of the International Day of the girl 2023. They used this opportunity to address decision makers.

Mariame who took the role of the President of the National Transition Council delivered a powerful message:

**“Through my voice, Guinean girls demand the commitment of Guinean decision-makers, of which you are part, to end gender-based violence, including rape, early marriage, excision, among others, which traumatize us, prevent us from going to school, and limit our education, our opportunities to contribute fully to the development of our beautiful country.”**

Responding to Mariama, Dr. Dansa Kourouma the President of the National Transition Council promised that his institution would do everything to create a protective environment favoring the full development of girls.

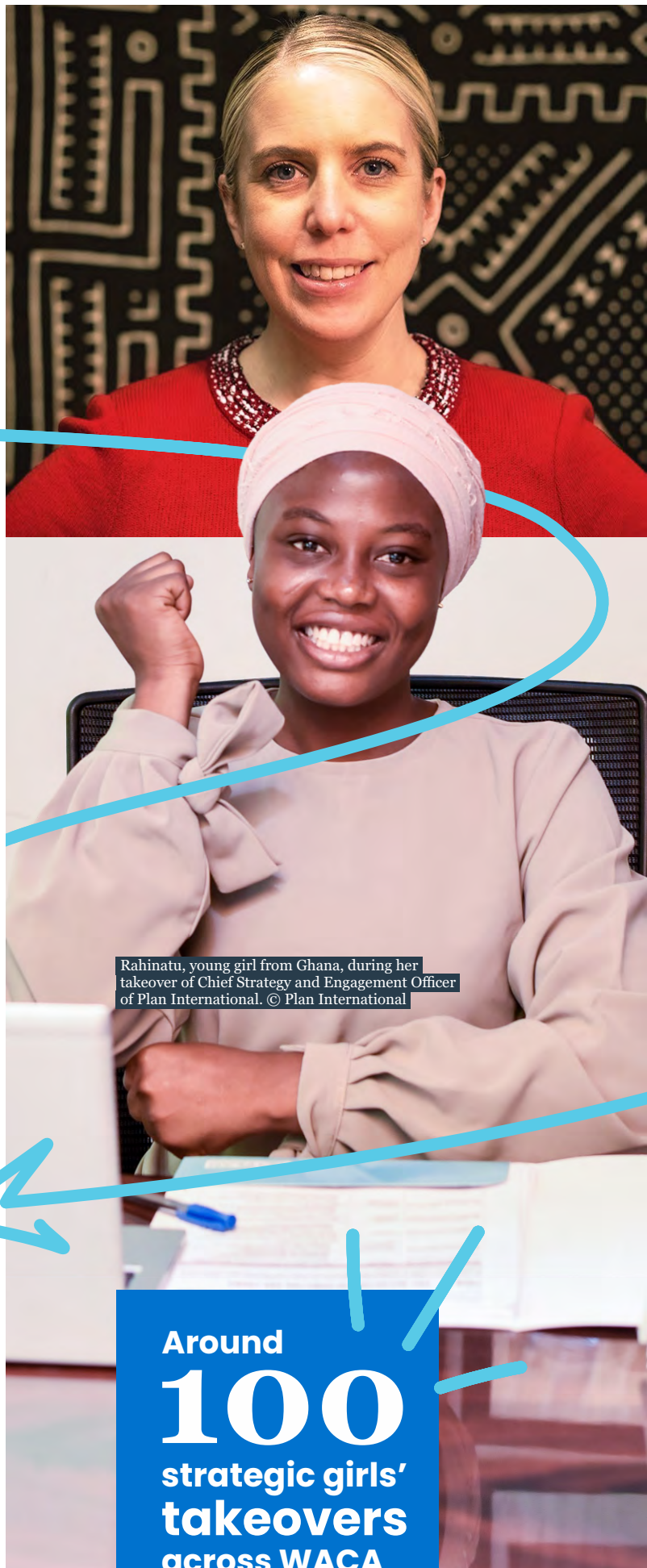
**“We need to eliminate all barriers, stereotypes and discrimination that impede the development of our girls. We need to create a family environment conducive to educating young girls in order to ensure their full development.”**

# Rahinatu's two days journey as the Chief Strategy and Engagement Officer of Plan International

As Each year, girls' takeovers continue to transform and empower young girls, for the first time this year, the Global Management team opens its door to these takeovers. Following a very popular call to action, Rahinatu was selected to takeover for 02 days as the Chief Strategy and Engagement Officer (CSEO) of Plan International.

**“My takeover commenced with a virtual meeting with Kathleen Sherwin, the current CSEO of Plan International. As the takeover unfolded, I joined an impactful online event organised by the Delegation of the European Union, the Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the United Nations, and UNICEF. The event delved into the opportunities and risks of emerging digital technologies concerning children’s rights. On the second day, I joined the Global Brands Team of Plan International. We discussed the upcoming brand launch. I asked some questions for clarity and also gave a few suggestions.**

**In reflection on the takeover event, I would like to recommend the possibility of extending the duration of this impactful initiative to at least a week. While the two-day takeover was a transformative experience, a week-long commitment would provide more time for the participants to immerse themselves in the responsibilities, gain a deeper understanding of the organization, and make a more significant impact. As I return to my regular role, I carry with me the valuable lessons and experiences from these two extraordinary days. The journey continues, and the mission remains clear: to stand strong, speak out, and work relentlessly for a world where all girls have the opportunity to thrive.”** Rahinatu.



Rahinatu, young girl from Ghana, during her takeover of Chief Strategy and Engagement Officer of Plan International. © Plan International

Around  
**100**  
strategic girls'  
takeovers  
across WACA

Girls in Guinea Bissau take part in event to mark the International Day of the Girl. © Plan International



## Young boys and girls celebrate five years of Girls Get Equal campaign across WACA

While the world was commemorating the 11th edition of International Day of the Girl (IDG), youth from West and Central Africa seized this opportunity to celebrate their [achievements within the five years of the Girls Get Equal campaign](#). To this effect, more than 300 youth came to share their experience of the campaign.

Barry from Guinea and member of the Global Young Influencers Group shares his advocacy on the GGE campaign.

**“I did an advocacy at the National Assembly for the inclusion of girls' equality in the forthcoming new Guinean constitution. I was then invited by the women members of the National Assembly to talk in depth about the GGE campaign and, above all, the political participation of girls in decision-making bodies in Guinea. The result of this advocacy was the creation of a platform called LGP (The Guinean woman in politics), which will promote girls and women inclusion in politics. This movement brings together all the country's women leaders from civil society, including the 1st Vice-President of the National Assembly, journalists, women politicians, students and entrepreneurs.”**



Rihanata, 25, trains displaced women in soap making skills. © Plan International

## Youth organisations at the centre of the humanitarian response to the Central Sahel crisis

In the Centre-North of Burkina Faso, Rihanata, 25 years old, internally displaced woman, and mother of 2, started a soap production business and with support from Plan International, has trained over 200 girls and women so they can rebuild their lives. Forced to flee her village in 2018, the entrepreneur and president of a youth organisation now stands up for the most vulnerable.

**46** youth's initiatives have been financed by the Youth and Adolescent Girls in Crisis project in Central Sahel.

**"I feel sad when I see the situation of some people. Women and girls suffer the consequences of insecurity more than men. In times of peace, some families live thanks to the efforts of women, and with the crisis this is even more the case. One-off assistance has no long-term effect. The soap production training is my way of helping women and girls. If we receive further support, we will continue to help them."** says Rihanata

Through our regional project Youth and Adolescent Girls in Crisis we support youth, especially girls and women to increase their economic and social assets, improve social cohesion, adapt to climate change and promote gender equality. We believe that local organisations, including youth associations, need direct, flexible and increased funding, and that they have a central role to play in crisis response decision making.



## Youth are building a new generation of youth leaders in Guinea

In Guinea, the youth organization Club Raby et les Enfants, a grantee of Plan International [Youth Challenge Fund](#), has decided to build a new generation of young leaders in its community. With the fund received from the YCF, the organisation has trained 25 teenagers aged between 13-18 for over 06 months, on their rights and coached them in developing new skills and self-confidence to lead change in their communities.

**“I used to panic so quickly, sometimes in class the teacher would ask a question I knew, but for my part I didn't even dare raise my hand to try and answer. Even when I was with friends, I was trembling and lacked confidence.”** shares Djenab, a participant to the program.



After the 06 months training, Djenad says:

**“I now know my rights and duties, and I'm helping to raise awareness on the need for children, especially girls, to go to school”.**

**“Thanks to this project, the Raby club and the other children, I'm no longer the person I was before, I've conquered my fears and my worries about speaking in public, among many other things.”** concludes Djenab.

**65** youth organisations have been funded under the YCF2

Assiatou, 9, shares bowl of rice with other children at school. © Plan International



## Parents determined to ensure the sustainability of school canteen for their children's education

Mali is currently experiencing a severe hunger crisis driven by years of conflict, climatic hazards and high food prices. To keep children in school, Plan International is working in Gao region to provide nutritious school meals to children, to the satisfaction of the students and their parents.

9 years old Aissatou, is now happy to go to school: **“Before, my father gave me money for food, and when he didn't have any, I couldn't eat. Now I like going to school because there is food there. My parents are happy to know that we have something to eat at school.”**



**“This initiative is highly appreciated by all the parents whose children go to this school. Families here struggle to provide two meals a day. The canteen has really helped us and had a positive impact on the children, including my daughter who studies there because I now know that my child has something to eat at school.”** says Aissatou's Father.

**“We have created vegetable gardens and chicken coops that will help feed the students in the future. At the end of each harvest, the student's parents give a quantity of cereal grains to the school which can be used by the canteen to feed the students.”** explains Abdoulaye, school canteen coordinator.

The communities are organising themselves to ensure the sustainability of the school canteen, even after the project has ended.

**4,005**  
students

supported by the  
School Canteen  
Project in 5 schools.





## Youth leaders, inspiring participants at the United Nations General Assembly

On September 2023, world leaders gathered for the United Nations General Assembly to engage in the annual high-level General Debate under the theme, “Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity: Accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals towards peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all.” This provided an opportunity for youth to join in the discussion as key partners.

As a youth centered organization, Plan International ceased this high-level event to profile youth's voices as key partners in the achievement of 2030 Global Development Agenda.

Among the youth that had the opportunity to connect at the UNGA78, Zipporah, a passionate youth activist and a proud member of the She Leads Network, was selected by her peers from Sierra Leone to highlight youth's position.

**“My journey at the UNGA78 was incredibly amazing. I felt honored to share my experience working for girls and young women. Also, to share such a prestigious platform with young people makes it rare and outstanding for me. Participating to this event has created a great impact in my life, I have been able to establish a strong network that forested through my physical attendance which has cultivated and deep-rooted foundation for future collaboration and exchange across the continent.”**



Zipporah attended the panel on “The Path Forward” where she emphasized on the following demand:

**“Young people must be meaningfully engaged at all level including in governance. Both formal and informal youth-led organizations should be supported with flexible funding to encourage youth innovation.”**



Pascaline, youth delegate from Cameroon at the African Climate Week in Nairobi.  
© Plan International

## African Climate Week: youth voice their opinions on climate change issues

From the 4th to 6th September 2023 the Government of Kenya hosted the African Climate Week during which, leaders were called upon to make ambitious pledges and commitments towards the adoption of a “Pledging and Commitment Framework.”

Coming from the West and Central Africa region, youth especially girls took part to this high engagement space in order to make their voice heard as solutions are being co-created to respond to the climate crisis that particularly affects their wellbeing. Also, they seized this opportunity to share their experiences, so as to foster their active engagement in responding to climate change at community level.

Pascaline, 21 years old girl from Cameroon and member of the Women's Office association took part in the discussions at the summit.

“During the panel discussions with youth, we exchanged on innovative ideas and best practices that could help improve reforestation and environmental conservation efforts. Each panelist brought a unique perspective, whether working with local communities, government organisations or NGOs.

The summit helped to stimulate positive change and encourage collective action on climate change. As a result, the Women's Office association has decided to set up a project to build the capacity of other associations so that they can better contribute to reduce climate change. And I am in charge of raising awareness in associations, about the actions that are having a negative impact on the climate and how to remedy them, but also talking about it to those close to me, so that they can talk about it to those close to them too. Because the aim is to educate people to create a green and united world.”



Salimata, 12, says she likes school and is doing well there. © Plan International

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## About Plan International

Founded in 1937, Plan International is a humanitarian child centered development organization without religious and political affiliation that advances children's rights and equality for girls. It strives for a just world, working together with children, young people, supporters and partners. Plan supports the safe and successful progression of children from birth to adulthood.

 [plan-international.org](http://plan-international.org)

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