Introduction

 Millions of women and girls face obstacles and stereotypes just because they are female, which impacts the opportunities they have and the kind of lives they live. This is true not only in the developing countries where Plan works, but also right here at home. This toolkit will introduce you to the complex topic of gender equality. Inside, you’ll find resources and information to help you:

• Learn about the challenges girls face in developing countries.
• Understand how plan addresses these challenges.
• Raise awareness about the importance of gender equality.
• Take action to support Plan’s Because I am a Girl programs around the world.

So what are you waiting for? Dive into the issue and understand why gender equality is an essential focus of Plan’s work around the world.
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Founded in 1937, Plan International is one of the world’s oldest and largest international development agencies, working in partnership with millions of people around the world to end global poverty. Not for profit, independent, and inclusive of all faiths and cultures, Plan has only one agenda: to improve the lives of children. **Because I am a Girl** is Plan’s global initiative to end gender inequality, promote girls’ rights, and lift millions of girls - and everyone around them - out of poverty.
Have you ever noticed that certain characteristics and traits are associated with men and others are associated with women? Do you think that all of these are part of our biological makeup, or do you think our environment (such as friends, family, and the media) teaches some of them to us? Have you ever been treated well, or treated unfairly, just because you are either a girl or a boy? Why do these differences exist based on our gender?

As women and girls, men and boys, there are in fact differences that we are born with and those that we learn from our environment:

**Sex:** the biological differences between men and women that we are born with. For example men have testes and women have ovaries.

**Gender:** the values and expectations that society associates with a person’s biological sex, which can vary based on a person’s racial, cultural, socio-economic, and geographic situation. For example, in North America we tend to think that females like pink and males like blue.

**Gender socialization:** the process of reinforcing gendered behaviors, values, and expectations. An example of gender socialization is when parents buy dolls for their daughters and trucks for their sons to play with.

So what is gender inequality? It’s the different and unfair treatment of men and women based on their gender.

To overcome gender inequality, should we always treat everyone exactly the same? Are there times when it’s appropriate to treat men and women differently? To answer this, it’s important to understand the concepts of equality and equity.

**Equality:** providing the same opportunities to men and women. One example of equality is paying men and women the same wage for the same work.

**Equity:** recognizing that men and women may have different needs and face different challenges. Equity means men and women can be treated differently in order to overcome unfair barriers or obstacles. One example is reserving a certain number of leadership positions in an organization for women, because women may face barriers to advancing in the workplace based on their gender.
Gender inequality exists globally; it just takes on a different shape and form depending on a society’s political, social, economic, and cultural context. In fact, women are still not treated or represented equally in any society around the world.

**Gender-based inequalities exist in all aspects of life:**

**Home:** although more women are working now than ever before, they are still widely considered responsible for unpaid work in the home. This affects women’s access to education, career progression, and income equality. For instance in countries like Canada, women have to juggle their paid work and home responsibilities to a greater extent than men.

**Work:** around the world, women make less money than men, and sometimes for the exact same job! The gender pay gap is the difference between the amount earned by a male and female. Globally, women make 84.4% of what men make. In Canada, women make 72% of what men make. That means that in Canada for every $1.00 earned by a male worker, a female worker earns 72 cents.

**Health:** in many cultures, men and boys eat before women and girls. Therefore if the family does not have enough to eat, the females of the family may go hungry. This is known as food discrimination, and is partly why girls are three times more likely to be malnourished than boys.

**Politics:** expectations about girls’ roles and their value (such as the belief that their time is best spent in the household) can affect their access to leadership roles. However, social expectations of boys (such as the idea that men should aspire to have successful careers) are more likely to make them self-confident and to encourage them to be leaders. The vast majority of government officials, heads of state, and legislators in the world are men. In fact, only 21.8% of the world’s national parliaments are women.

**Marriage:** the number of girls in the developing world who marry before the age of 15 is 1 in 7. That means that one girl under the age of 15 is married every two seconds.

**School:** 65 million girls are not in primary or secondary school globally. And for those that do start school, many are unlikely to continue their studies once they hit their teens. Girls can be subjected to violence in school, taken out of school and forced into work, or married off far too young where they risk isolation and abuse.

Discuss...

These are just a few examples of the gender-based inequalities that exist all around the world. Have you ever experienced a gender gap in some way? If so, in what areas of your life?
Girls are in a unique situation; they face double discrimination because of their gender and age.

Girls’ opportunities and access to rights are determined by cultural standards of acceptable behaviour that society deems important. For example, most traditional gender roles place girls at home, raising children, cooking food, and taking care of the household, while men work outside the home. For a girl, decisions about her role in the household, her education, or her husband are often determined by men or adults, without her consent or consultation. Yet research shows that when a girl gets a quality education, she is empowered to make decisions over her own life and unleash her potential.

Challenges to girls’ education

Have you ever imagined what life would be like if you never went to school? What if your parents had also never gone to school? What opportunities and choices would be available to you? Education is fundamental to achieving gender equality. Yet many barriers stand in the way of girls receiving the quality education they deserve. Most of these obstacles are unimaginable to people here in Canada but, to girls living in the developing world, they’re a daily reality.

Did you know?

October 11th is International Day of the Girl!

Plan Canada led the charge to get an International Day of the Girl. After extensive campaigning by supporters and allies of Plan’s Because I am a Girl initiative, the United Nations declared October 11th as the official International Day of the Girl. Thousands of Canadians contributed by signing a petition calling for this day.
Lack of Money
Many parents lack the necessary fees for tuition, books, supplies, uniforms, and food, and therefore cannot afford to send their daughters to school. When a girl’s family is poor, her parents also have to make difficult decisions about how they will spend their money so they can survive. Because girls are seen as an asset in the home, it is common for parents to invest in the education of their son so he can get a good job and ultimately support his own family.

Pregnancy
A lack of comprehensive health education; limited or no access to contraception; a societal taboo against discussing reproductive health; and child marriage can all contribute to early pregnancy among girls and young women. If a girl is pregnant or has a young child, she will not be able to regularly attend school or focus on her studies.

Distance
In rural areas, schools are often few and far between, requiring girls to take long and often dangerous walks to school.

School facilities
Often schools are not properly maintained and therefore do not offer safe and healthy learning environments for students. Classrooms can be hot, crowded, and lacking in materials such as desks, chalkboards, and books.

Responsibilities at home
In rural communities, girls often have many duties at home that take away from their time in the classroom. Some of these chores may include caring for younger siblings, housekeeping, and fetching water.

Sanitation facilities
In addition to classrooms, students need safe and sanitary bathrooms, including separate spaces for boys and girls. Children and youth also need access to clean drinking water throughout the school day, which schools often cannot provide.

Value of girls’ education
In some societies, little value is placed on girls’ education. In these communities, girls struggle against social and familial pressures in order to attend school.

Quality of teachers
In some instances, teachers are underpaid, inadequately trained, or not fully invested in providing quality education for their students—especially girls. Violence against girls in school can also cause them to drop out.

Child marriage
In some parts of the world, girls are forced to marry at very young ages, often to save the family money. Some families receive a dowry when they marry off their daughter and this extra money helps raise their standard of living. However, a young wife must take care of her new husband and household, which interferes with her going to school.

Child labor
Millions of children around the world are forced to work in order to help contribute to their family’s income. Children are sometimes also trafficked illegally within their country or internationally. While working, children and youth often miss days of school, or withdraw from school all together.
Working together

Studies show that investing in girls – and ensuring they have enough to eat, an education and a safe environment – is the key to transforming lives, lifting families, communities, and entire nations out of poverty. When you educate and invest in a girl she will:

- Be six times less likely to be married as a child
- Have fewer yet healthier children
- Increase her contributions to household income by 18%
- Increase her income by 15 to 25% for every extra year she stays in school
- Help increase her country’s GDP - if 10% more girls attend school, a country’s GDP increases by an average of 3%.
Plan understands that with education, skills and the right support, girls can make choices over their own future and play a huge role in transforming the world around them. That’s why we’re working with girls, communities, traditional leaders, governments, and global institutions and partners to address the barriers that prevent girls from completing their education.

Plan’s girl projects help provide clean water, food security, health care, education and access to microfinance – access to small loans to support income-generating activities, like farming, raising animals, or running small businesses – training and assistance. Specifically, the projects include:

- **Girls’ scholarships** to provide girls with a quality education so they can gain the skills, knowledge and independence to take care of themselves and their families, and actively participate in their community.

- **School construction** to build dorms at secondary schools so that girls can have a safe home close to school, with access to nutritious food, clean water and health care.

- **Nutrition** to give children a nutritious meal every day at school and provide take-home rations for girls to improve health and increase enrollment and attendance rates.

- **Training opportunities** to create job prospects for young women through education and vocational training.

- **Constructing health facilities and training health workers** to provide better access to pre- and post-natal care for women.

- **Business skills education** to empower single mothers so they can earn more income to improve the lives of their children.

- **Birth certificate registrations** to register girls so they have a birth certificate that protects them against child trafficking, exploitation and abuse, and secures their social, educational and political rights.

Supporting girls’ education is one of the single best investments we can make to help end the cycle of poverty. Not only will it save lives and transform futures, it is also the right thing to do. Gender equality is good for everyone.

How is Plan helping?

- **Video: The plight and power of girls**
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-ZZeE7C7uM
For a long time in life, I had wanted to be a leader in my school. One morning, the PAGES education point person came to the school and discussed at length with the head teacher, and [then they] announced that there was going to be an election for president of our school…That day, I thanked God and accepted that my own turn to lead the school has come.

We were supported by the PAGES project to do campaign papers…The day came for the manifesto reading. After my manifesto, I came to realize that I was favoured by my classmates and other school mates. That gave me the confidence to speak loud and campaign my colleagues to vote me in. The day of voting came. It was a totally new day in my life…I scored 195, beating my nearest opponent by a margin of 121 to second position.

I felt fulfilled…the PAGES project made me realize my dream. A dream to lead my colleagues and the opportunity to take part in the decisions that affect [us]. I must be very grateful to Plan for supporting me to that height. I defeated boys in the elections and proved to them that what boys can do, girls can do better.”
Activity 1: Power walk

Objective: Students learn about advantages and disadvantages to being born and raised in different parts of the world, and explore the links between a person’s gender, power, social position, and their access to their human rights.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>35 minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages</td>
<td>13 and up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Open space, role cards (one for each student)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prep</td>
<td>Print and cut out the role cards. If you want to, create your own—for example, you could add role cards to match the city or community in which you live.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part A
Assign roles, step forward!

Give one role card to each student. Tell them not to show it to anyone else.

Give them a minute to think silently about their new identity.

Ask the group to line up in one single-file line against a wall. Make sure there is plenty of open space.

Tell the students that you will read a list of statements. The students will have to make assumptions about their new identity and should take one step forward for each statement they think is true for them. If a statement doesn’t apply to them, they should stay put.

Read the statements on the following page out loud, one at a time. Give students time to think about the statement before deciding whether or not to take a step forward.

After reading all the statements, invite everyone to take note of their final positions. Students will notice that they are standing at different points and some may never have left the line.

Part B
Discussion

- Ask people at the front, back and middle who they are and how they got to the place in the line.
- How did it feel to be moving forward and leaving others behind? How did it feel to be getting further behind?
- What are the differences between those closer to the front and those closer to the back?
- How easy or hard was it to take on the identity of the person on your card?
- If two people had the same card, did they end up at the same spot? Why or why not?
- Ask everyone who was an adult to imagine themselves a child and vice versa. How would their position in the line change?
- Ask everyone to change the gender of their character. How would their position in the line change?
- How do you think this game represents advantages and disadvantages of people living in Canada and people living in developing countries, particularly girls and women?
Situations:

1. I have never encountered a serious financial crisis.
2. I can go to the doctor when I am sick.
3. I have the confidence to make my own decisions about my money.
4. I have personal documentation, such as a birth certificate.
5. I have an adult role model.
6. I have received all of my immunizations.
7. I am never hungry after a meal.
8. I can walk to the nearest hospital or clinic.
9. I believe boys and girls have the same opportunities in my community.
10. I have housing with running water and electricity.
11. I have a television and telephone line.
12. I believe that my language, religion, and culture are respected in the society where I live.
13. I believe that people listen to my opinion on social and political issues.
14. I am not afraid of being stopped by the police.
15. I have never felt discriminated against because of my age.
16. I have never felt discriminated against because of my gender.
17. I know how and when to wash my hands properly.
18. I will attend college.
19. I believe I can study and follow the career path of my choice.
20. I am not afraid of being harassed or attacked on the streets.
21. I can vote in national and local elections.
22. I am not afraid for the future of my children.
23. I can buy new clothes at least once every three months.
24. I can marry the person of my choice.
25. I can use and benefit from the Internet.
### Role cards

Photocopy this page and cut up the role cards to hand out to participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You are a 14-year-old girl in New Brunswick. Your parents are married and have jobs, and you are in an after-school program.</td>
<td>You are a 5-year-old boy born to the President of Tanzania. Your parents are very wealthy and you live in the city.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are a 5-year-old boy in a city in Mozambique. Your dad has a job and your mom sells vegetables at the market. Your siblings attend boarding school.</td>
<td>You are a 15-year-old girl in Vancouver. You have lots of friends, you can buy new clothes every three months, and you are thinking about where you want to go to college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are a 5-year-old girl in rural Tanzania. Your father died when you were 3, and you do not attend school because you have to watch your younger siblings while your mom works.</td>
<td>You are a 10-year-old girl in Haiti. Your house has no running water, but your school does. You are the youngest of seven children. Your family is considered poor, but you have enough food to eat and can pay school fees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are a 10-year-old boy in Rwanda. You attend primary school. You are the youngest of three children and your parents have passed away from HIV/AIDS. Your 15-year-old brother works so the family can have an income.</td>
<td>You are a 15-year-old girl in Vietnam. You will be married next year to a man your parents will choose. You have completed primary school but did not continue to secondary school because you have to help your parents grow rice. Your two brothers are in secondary school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are an 11-year-old girl in El Salvador. You walk two hours to fetch water for your family instead of going to school. You are often harassed by men in your community.</td>
<td>You are a 12-year-old girl in Burkina Faso. You are married and pregnant. You never went to school, and you had no say over when or whom you married.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are a 17-year-old girl in Egypt. You are married to a man with HIV, and your newborn child also has HIV.</td>
<td>You are the 5-year-old son of Steve Nash. You live in Los Angeles, California and your family is very wealthy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are a 14-year-old girl in Guatemala. You have the measles. You have never been severely ill before. You are in secondary school.</td>
<td>You are an 8-year-old girl in Kenya. Your younger siblings died before reaching age 5. You go to school, and your family has enough money to eat three meals a day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are the teenage daughter of the prime minister of Canada. You go to a private school and have access to your own car.</td>
<td>You are a 4-year-old girl living in India without a toilet or clean drinking water. None of your siblings go to school, and your younger brother is always sick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are a 10-year old boy born in Indonesia, but your family immigrated to New York City when you were a baby. You go to public school and your family is considered middle-class.</td>
<td>You are a 10-year old girl born in Thailand, but your family immigrated to New York City when you were a baby. You go to public school and work at the family business after school and on weekends.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity 2: Test your knowledge

What do you know about the girl issue?

Divide into teams. Each team will work together to come up with a single answer for each question. Give teams about 30 seconds to answer each question. Ask one person from each team to bring you their answer sheets at the conclusion of each round to tally the points. Identify someone as the quizmaster who can use the answer sheet to check each team's answers and promote discussion. Each correct answer is worth one point. The team with the most points at the end wins!

1. When a baby girl is registered with a birth certificate, what difference does this make for her life?
   a. She will be protected from child labour
   b. She will have access to essential health care
   c. She will be able to avoid child marriage
   d. All of the above

2. For each year a girl in the developing world stays in school, how much will her lifetime income rise by?
   a. 15 to 25%
   b. 2 to 5%
   c. 1 to 10%
   d. 8 to 9%

3. In the developing world, what do most girls in between the ages of 15 and 19 die from?
   a. Malnutrition
   b. Pregnancy and childbirth
   c. HIV and AIDS
   d. Contaminated water

4. How many times as likely are girls to be malnourished than boys?
   a. No times as likely
   b. Twice as likely
   c. Three times as likely
   d. Four times as likely

5. Approximately how many school-aged girls are not in school globally?
   a. 25 million
   b. 39 million
   c. 50 million
   d. 65 million

6. Of the 1.4 billion people around the world living on $1.25 a day or less, how many are female?
   a. 10%
   b. 25%
   c. 70%
   d. 90%

7. What are the barriers to girls attending school?
   a. Poverty and household duties
   b. Lack of toilet facilities
   c. Distance to school and safety
   d. All of the above

8. What is the percentage of women in national parliaments around the world?
   a. 13.2%
   b. 21.8%
   c. 38.1%
   d. 45.9%
Toolkit references:

- Plan USA’s Because I am a Girl Campaign Youth Toolkit. Accessible from: http://www.planusa.org/content2722642
- www.plan-uk.org/early-and-forced-marriage

**Answers**

1. D 5. D
2. A 6. C
3. B 7. D
4. C 8. B
Get involved!

How to get involved with Plan in 3 easy steps:

1. Go to our website planyouth.ca

2. Pick a cause you’re most passionate about and learn about it. Plan’s website has information on the 12 issues our work addresses: Poverty, Education, Water and Sanitation, Gender Equality, Health, Food Security, Emergencies, Malaria, Child Protection, HIV and AIDS, Climate Change, War and Conflict.

3. Take action by:
   - Posting content - like blogs, video, and photos - on topics that matter to you.
   - Launching a campaign, leadership club, fundraiser, or event through our Plan 4 Change program.
   - Joining the Because I am a Girl Speakers Bureau or starting a Because I am a Girl club.

You can choose one or more activities based on your interests and free time. If you have your own ideas for how you’d like to support Plan Canada we are all ears. Just let us know your idea and we can provide guidance and resources. You can contact us at youth@plancanada.ca.

Participate in international days of action!

Here’s a heads-up on important international days on which to take action. Mark your calendar and check in with Plan to see what we’re doing.

March 8
International Women’s Day

October 11
International Day of the Girl Child

October 15
International Day of Rural Women

November 25
International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

To learn more about Plan, visit plancanada.ca

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