

# Keeping Adolescent Girls In School



2021 - 2026



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Until  
we are  
all  
equal

# Word from the Country Director



Support to households played a key role. Through 280 Savings for Education groups, 7,686 parents and caregivers strengthened their ability to support schooling costs, enabling 6,948 girls to remain in school.

At school level, the proportion of safe and inclusive learning environments rose from 37 per cent to 67 per cent, while girls' life skills and confidence improved from 53 per cent to 79 per cent. This progress contributes to Tanzania's goals for inclusive education and human capital development.

I extend sincere appreciation to the Global Affairs Canada, for its partnership and steadfast support. I also recognise the leadership of national, regional and district education authorities, and the dedication of our implementing partners, Women Promotion Centre and Rafiki Social Development Organisation, whose collaboration strengthened implementation at community level.

As the project concludes, sustaining these gains will require continued investment in inclusive systems and empowered girls across Tanzania.

**Jane Sembuche**  
Country Director,  
Plan International Tanzania

Over the past five years, the Keeping Adolescent Girls in School project has worked in close collaboration with government authorities, schools, families and communities to strengthen the conditions that enable adolescent girls to remain in school and complete lower secondary education. The project confronted structural, economic and social barriers that shape girls' educational journeys, ensuring that support was present at school, at home and within the wider community.

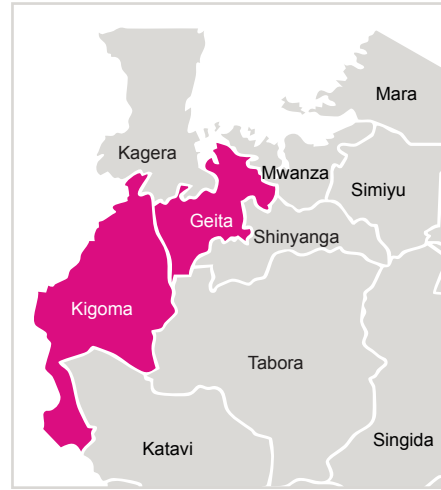
The results presented in this booklet reflect measurable progress and the lived experiences of girls whose confidence, voice and opportunities have expanded. Dropout declined from 6.4 per cent to 4.9 per cent, with girls' dropout at lower secondary reducing from 7.0 per cent to 4.4 per cent.

Enrolment also increased at both primary and secondary levels, with girls recording the largest gains. These shifts reflect growing confidence among families and communities in the value of girls' education.

# Project summary

Keeping Adolescent Girls in School (KAGIS) is a five-year, gender-transformative education project implemented by Plan International in Geita and Kigoma regions from May 2021 to March 2026, with funding from Global Affairs Canada and Canadian Individual donors.

The project was designed to address the root causes that prevent adolescent girls from enrolling in, staying in, and completing quality education including harmful gender norms, poverty, early marriage and pregnancy, inadequate school infrastructure, limited access to sexual and reproductive health information, and weak local education systems.



KAGIS adopted a three-pronged approach that simultaneously tackled:

Supporting girls and their communities by building girls' confidence and knowledge and encouraging families and communities to value and support girls' education.



01

Improving schools and health services by making learning environments safer, more inclusive, and more supportive of girls' needs, and by linking schools with adolescent-friendly health services.



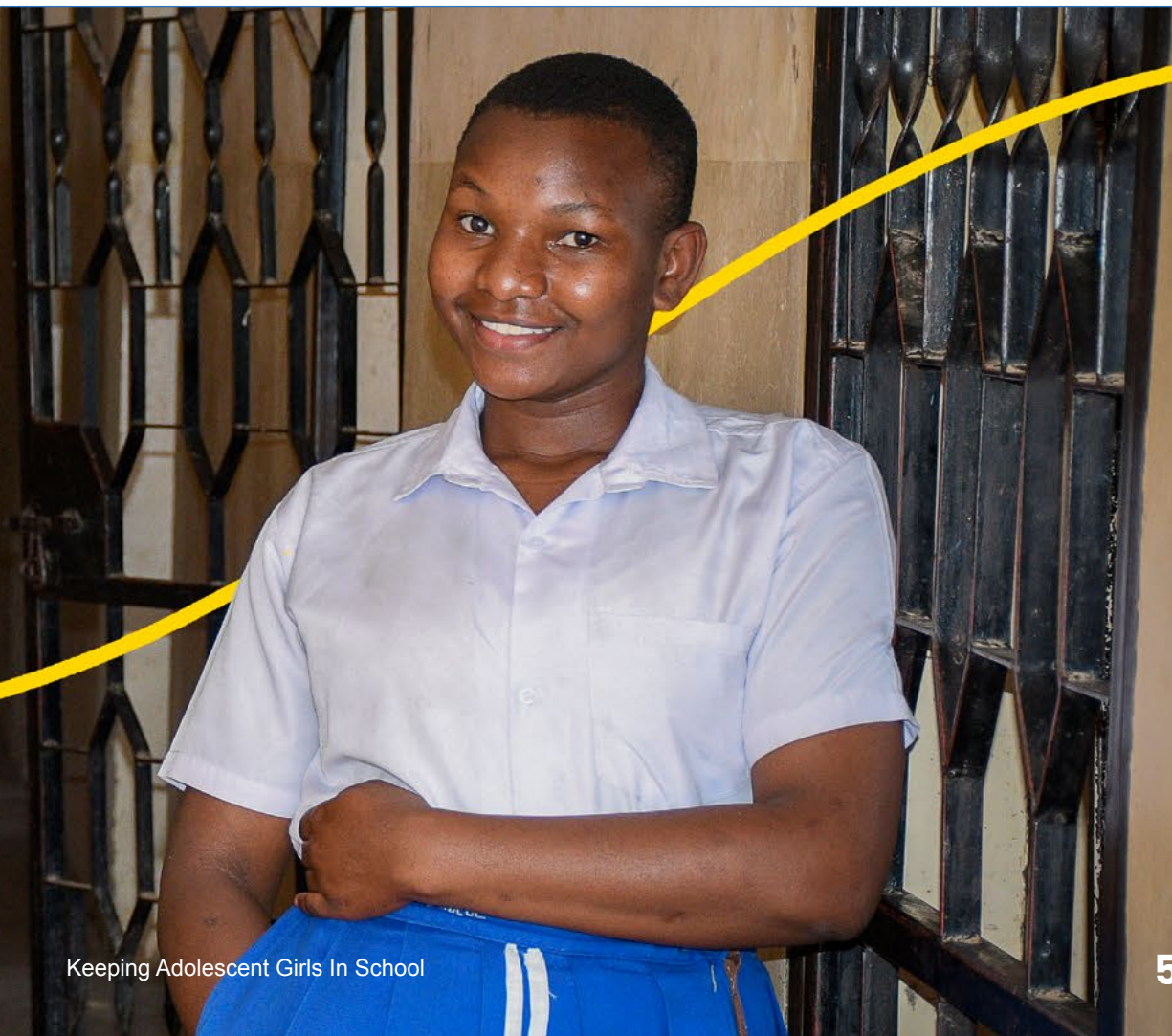
02

Strengthening systems and accountability by supporting education authorities and communities to plan better, use data, and work together to keep girls in school.



03

Adolescent girls now enjoy studying in schools with inclusive facilities. ©Plan International Tanzania.



# Project reach at a glance

**123,489 direct project participants**



**60,641**

Primary & secondary school girls



**56,883**

Primary & secondary school boys



**3,024**

Out-of-school adolescent girls



**2,941**

Out-of-school adolescent boys



**118 villages**

Reached to support communities



**90 schools**

73 primary, 17 secondary



**18 facilities**

Linked to adolescent-friendly services

# Project key interventions

## Empowering Adolescent Girls and Boys

KAGIS strengthened adolescents' knowledge, life skills, and confidence related to SRHR, gender equality, and prevention of gender-based violence.

- 5,634 adolescent girls reached through Champions of Change (CoC) clubs
  - \* 2,610 in school girls
  - \* 3,024 out-of-school girls, including girls with disabilities.
- 2,520 in-school boys engaged in life skills and gender equality sessions.
- 2,941 out-of-school boys reached through Champions of Change (CoC).
- 234 community facilitators trained to deliver adolescent life skills and SRHR education.
- 206 girl-led initiatives implemented, including 8 radio programmes.



Some of KAGIS direct project participants in Geita. ©Plan International Tanzania.

## Strengthening Family and Community Support

The project worked with families, community leaders, and protection structures to create an enabling environment for girls' education.

- 1,888 community change makers trained, including parents, influential leaders, and peer educators.
- 416 peer support clubs established for in-school and out-of-school adolescents.
- 118 youth centres established and equipped in project communities.
- 2,510 members of Women and Children Protection Committees trained on GBV, CEFM, and protection.
- 504 community sensitisation meetings conducted on girls' education, SRHR, and harmful practices.



Bodaboda rider in Geita supporting primary student with school items. ©Plan International Tanzania.

## Reducing Financial Barriers to Education

Targeted financial and material support helped vulnerable adolescents enrol, stay in school, or return to learning.

- 3,108 in-school girls received direct education support.
- 1,108 received school vouchers.
- 2,000 received bicycles to improve school access.
- 642 out-of-school adolescents supported to access non-formal education (COBET), including girls with disabilities.
- 280 Savings for Education groups (VSLAs) established, with 7,686 parents and caregivers as members.



## Strengthening Adolescent-Friendly Health and SRHR Services

The project improved access to SRHR information and services for adolescents through schools and communities.

- 651 teachers trained to deliver the life skills and comprehensive sexuality education curriculum.
- 104 health workers trained on adolescent-friendly and gender-responsive SRHR services.
- 9 Menstrual Hygiene Health (MHH) labs established.
- 3,938 adolescent girls received sanitary pads.
- 36 community-based distributors trained to provide family planning and menstrual hygiene commodities.



## Improving School Quality and Learning Environments

KAGIS strengthened schools to deliver safe, inclusive, and gender-responsive education.

- 607 teachers trained on gender-responsive pedagogy and positive discipline.
- 292 academic clubs established in primary schools to support learning retention.
- 27 gender-responsive latrine blocks (24 constructed or 3 rehabilitated).
- 5 school water supply systems constructed or rehabilitated.
- 43,800 textbooks and 25,000 puberty education books distributed.
- 17 School Gender Desks established in secondary schools.



## Supporting Systems, Governance and Sustainability

KAGIS strengthened education, health, and protection systems to sustain impact beyond the project lifecycle.

- 81 district and ward officials trained on gender-responsive and data-driven planning and budgeting.
- 38 Government School Quality Assurers trained (15 female, 23 male) on the School Quality Assurance Handbook, field work, and report writing.
- 90 schools supported to develop gender-responsive School Improvement Plans.
- 2,601 school and community stakeholders trained on gender-responsive school action planning.
- 1,168 youth council members trained to collect and present youth-led data for school decision-making.
- Supported development of the National Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) guideline.



# Project impact

The Keeping Adolescent Girls in School (KAGIS) project worked with girls, families, schools, and communities to remove the barriers that keep girls out of school. By the end of the project, clear changes were visible in how girls learn, how families support education, and how schools create safe and inclusive environments.

1

## Girls gained knowledge and confidence

Levels of awareness of sexual and reproductive health, gender equality, and life skills.



Girls with adequate family and community support for their education increased.



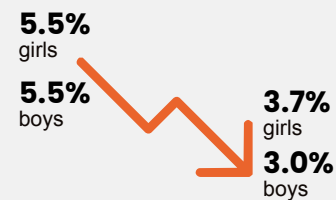
Girls whose parents viewed them as equal to boys increased.



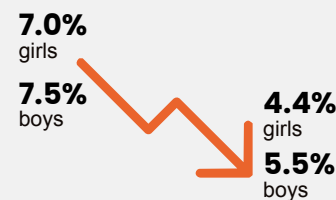
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## More girls stayed in school

At primary school, dropout declined.



At lower secondary level, dropout declined too.



## School dropouts decreased

The project recorded 1.5% decline in school drop outs, from a baseline of 6.4% in 2020 to 5.4% in 2023, and further to 4.9% in 2024. Primary schools overall showed a decrease from 5.5% to 5.0% in 2022, with this trend of 5.0% continuing in 2023 and a significant

decline to 4% has been recorded in 2024. Kigoma saw a larger reduction compared to Geita. In lower secondary schools, dropouts decreased from 7.3% in 2020 to 5.6% in 2024, with Geita seeing a larger reduction compared to Kigoma.

## School enrolment increased

Primary enrolment increased from 93,145 (2020) to 94,798 learners, while secondary enrolment rose from 13,412 to 14,996. Girls recorded higher gains than boys, reflecting improved access and gender inclusion across participating schools. *Source: (Best Data, 2025).*



Girls project participants in Geita now ride their bicycles to and from school. ©Plan International Tanzania.

3

## Schools became safer and more inclusive

The proportion of schools meeting safety and inclusiveness standards increased.



By the end of the project, 90 schools were putting gender-responsive School Action Plans into practice.



4

## Capacity strengthened for lasting change

The proportion of teachers demonstrating gender-responsive teaching practices increased from 81% to 91%.



# Stories of significant change

## A second chance to dream

At just 12 years old, Grace became the head of her household. Two years ago, her father passed away unexpectedly. Shortly after, her mother developed amnesia and no longer recognised her own children.

“One morning, Mama looked at us like strangers. We thought she was joking. But after two days, she still didn’t know who we were. I cried so much, Grace recalls.

With no income and no adult to care for them, Grace and her younger sister, Oliver (10), were left to manage on their own. Grace went from house to house looking for small jobs such as cleaning and washing clothes, earning little but enough for a single meal.

“We were paid about TZS 2,000 (CAD 1.05) for house chores, and we used the money to buy food, she says.

Despite the hardship, Grace remained committed to her education. She passed her Primary School Leaving Examination with an A grade. However, joining secondary school was not possible at the time, as meeting basic needs came first.

“Sometimes we worked just so we could be given food instead of money. But I couldn’t stop going to school. I knew education was important, she says.



Grace (12) with Mama Ashura. ©Plan International Tanzania.

Grace’s situation came to the attention of Mama Ashura, a member of the Mvivu Halengi Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA). The group was established through the Keeping Adolescent Girls in School (KAGIS) project, which supports families and communities to prioritise girls’ education. As part of the project, VSLA members received training on positive parenting, safeguarding, and the importance of keeping girls in school.

“I was shocked, A girl that young, looking for work instead of being in school? I told her, ‘I will not let a child work for me’ Mama Ashura recalls.

Mama Ashura welcomed the girls, provided them with food, and listened to their story. The following day, she mobilised fellow VSLA members. Together, they visited Grace’s home, supported her mother to access medical care, and worked with local government authorities to secure school placement for both girls. With support from school leadership, Grace and Oliver were exempted from school contributions.

The VSLA also purchased school uniforms, notebooks, pens, and other essential supplies.

“It felt like a dream. Going to secondary school was no longer even on my list. But now, we have everything. They told me I’ll never have to work again, Grace says.

Grace is now a Form One student, and Oliver is in Standard Four. Grace hopes to become a doctor.



Grace at the Middle with VSLA members (Mama Ashura left and two other group leaders). ©Plan International Tanzania.

“I’ve seen how quickly sickness can tear a family apart. That’s why I love Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. One day, I want to help save lives, she says.

Grace’s experience reflects a broader shift within the community. The Mvivu Halengi VSLA has used TZS 2,589,000 (CAD 1,850) to support 133 children (92 girls and 41 boys) with school uniforms and supplies. Inspired by this approach, six new VSLA groups have since been established in the community.

“We couldn’t accommodate everyone. So, we told them: don’t wait, start your own group, says Mama Ashura.

Through KAGIS, communities are strengthening their ability to support vulnerable families and ensure that girls remain in school.

Grace’s story is one of thousands made possible by collective action. Across Geita and Kigoma, VSLA groups formed through KAGIS have supported a total of 8,363 children with school materials and essential supplies, including 6,948 girls from low-income households, helping them to enrol, remain, and succeed in school since its inception.

## Where girls belong: In school – Rosemary’s story

Until the age of 13, Rosemary had never attended school. She could not read or write and had never sat in a classroom.

“I couldn’t read or write. Sometimes when I went to fetch water, I would hear children from the neighbourhood singing school songs. When we passed posters on the road, they would read them out loud. I felt so left out, not being able to read a single word or sing along, she says.

Rosemary grew up in a remote village in northwestern Tanzania in a polygamous family where education, especially for girls, was not prioritised. She is one of 37 children fathered by the same man with six different partners. Her mother, Olivera, has six children (4 girls and 2 boys) none of whom attended school due to extreme poverty.

“Most days, we worked on the farm or helped with small businesses to feed the family. There was no talk of school, Rosemary explains.

Her situation became more difficult when her father left the household.

“He left when I was seven or eight. He moves between his families. I haven’t seen him since, she says.

Unable to support the household alone, Olivera sent Rosemary to live with her paternal grandmother, who held strong cultural beliefs against educating girls. After Rosemary’s older sister became pregnant before marriage, her grandmother arranged early marriages for other daughters.



Rosemary (13), now belongs in class.  
©Plan International Tanzania.

“To avoid what she called ‘shame,’ my grandmother married off my sisters when they were just 16, Rosemary recalls.

For years, Rosemary remained at home, helping with household work while watching her peers attend school. She struggled even to write her own name.

Rosemary’s experience reflects a broader challenge in Tanzania. National data show that an estimated 3.2 million children aged 7–17 are out of school, and about 1.2 million have never attended school, with girls from rural and low-income communities disproportionately affected (UNICEF Tanzania – Education).

Later, after returning to live with her mother in another village, Olivera attended a community awareness meeting organised through the Keeping Adolescent Girls in School (KAGIS) project. The discussions focused on girls’ rights, the importance of education, and pathways for children who had missed formal schooling.

“I had already given up. I didn’t know a child who had never gone to school could still be enrolled at that age. I thought Rosemary would stay home like her sisters. But that day, I realised it wasn’t too late, Olivera says.



Rosemary (13), with her newly found classmates. ©Plan International Tanzania.

With support from local leaders and programme staff, Rosemary enrolled in the Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania (COBET) programme, a government initiative supported by KAGIS to help out-of-school children gain basic education and transition into formal schooling.

“Sitting in a classroom for the first time made me so happy. I finally had a uniform, notebooks, and a place where I belonged, Rosemary says.

Through COBET, Rosemary developed foundational literacy and numeracy skills in a supportive learning environment.

“She stood out from the beginning, she was eager to learn and very focused, says her COBET teacher Mr. Mwambeche.

After completing the programme, Rosemary transitioned into a government primary school, where she continues her studies. KAGIS supported her transition with school materials, while her mother joined a Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA), strengthening her ability to support Rosemary’s education.

Today, Rosemary hopes to become a teacher.

“I want to teach young children. When you teach them early, they have a better chance to succeed. I want to be someone who gives them hope, she says.

For girls like Rosemary, access to flexible education pathways and community support means opportunities that were once out of reach can now be realised.

## Now I walk into school with my head held high – Doro's story

Doro is 14 years old and attends secondary school in one of the project's location. For a long time, being in school meant feeling uncomfortable and unsure.

“ I didn't have a proper uniform or shoes. Sometimes I missed classes because I didn't have a pen or blank paper to write on. I felt shy to ask others for help all the time, so I just kept quiet, she says.

Doro's family experienced ongoing financial hardship. Although she was enrolled in school, she often arrived without the basic materials needed to participate fully in class. Sitting among her peers, she struggled to focus when she lacked notebooks, pens, or appropriate clothing.

“ I used to think more about what I didn't have than what the teacher was saying. It made learning difficult, she explains.

Over time, this affected her attendance and confidence.

“ Sometimes I thought about stopping school. I wanted to learn, but it was hard to feel comfortable, Doro says.

Through the Keeping Adolescent Girls in School (KAGIS) project, Doro was identified by community members and local leaders as a student facing barriers to continuing her education. Her situation was reviewed and validated at village level as part of a community-based process to reach girls most in need of support.

Doro received a school support voucher that could be redeemed through approved local vendors. The voucher covered essential items, including a school uniform, shoes, exercise books, pens, and sanitary pads. She was accompanied by a caregiver during the process.



“ When I received my uniform and shoes, I felt confident. I walked into school without feeling shy, Doro says.

With regular access to learning materials, Doro began attending classes more consistently and participating more actively.

“ Now I sit in class and write like everyone else. I can follow the lesson, and I don't worry about being noticed, she explains.

Doro says her performance in school has improved, and she feels more comfortable engaging with her teachers and classmates.

“ My grades are getting better. I feel proud of myself, and I'm happy to be in school, she says.

Today, Doro continues her studies with confidence, supported by access to the basic resources that allow her to participate fully in learning.

“ I didn't need anything special. I just needed what every student needs to learn, she says.



Doro (14) holding her voucher cards. ©Plan International Tanzania.

## If I can change, so can you – Traifon's story

Traifon is 19 years old and grew up in a household where roles were clearly defined.

“ **My father always told me, ‘You are the head of the family. I was told my job was to lead. Housework was for girls,** he says.

His younger sister, Ester, was responsible for most of the household chores. Traifon went to school, while Ester cleaned, cooked, fetched water, and prepared the house before leaving for class.

“ **She was almost always late. At the time, I didn't think about it much. That's how things were,** Traifon recalls.

Traifon later joined a local boys' discussion group linked to the Keeping Adolescent Girls in School (KAGIS) project. The group is part of the Champions of Change approach, which creates separate safe spaces for boys and girls to reflect on gender roles, relationships, and shared responsibilities at home and in their communities.

At first, Traifon felt unsure about staying.

“ **The discussions were very different from what I grew up believing. I wasn't sure if they were meant for me,** he says.



Traifon (19), shows men and boys that if he can change, so can they. ©Plan International Tanzania.

Ester (14), now has more time for her education. ©Plan International Tanzania.

He decided to continue attending. Listening to other boys talk about their families prompted him to reflect on his own home.

“ **When I started paying attention, I saw how tired my sister was. I realised she was carrying a lot,** Traifon explains.

The change began with small actions at home.

“ **I started helping with dishes and cleaning. At first, it felt strange. But then it felt normal,** he says.

Ester noticed the difference.

“ **I used to feel like I was on my own. Now, my brother helps me. We talk more. I don't feel so tired all the time,** she says.

Over time, Traifon continued to share responsibilities at home. He also began talking with other boys in his community.

“ **When we meet at the football field or just sit together, I tell them what I've learned, that helping at home doesn't take anything away from you. If I can change, so can you. Helping your sister doesn't make you less of a man,** he says.

At home, the shift has been noticed.

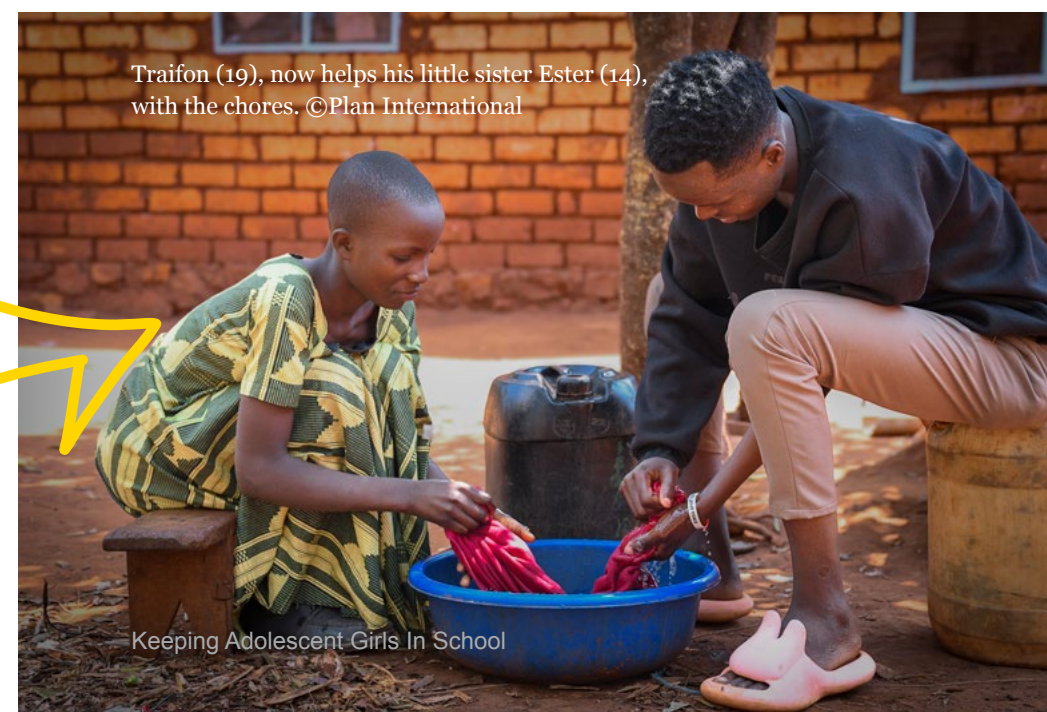
“ **My father sees me helping now. He doesn't stop me,** Traifon says.

For Ester, the impact is clear.

“ **My brother feels like my friend now. Things at home are different. We help each other,** she says.

Traifon says he still has more to learn, but he is certain about one thing.

“ **Respect starts at home. That's where change begins,** he says.



Traifon (19), now helps his little sister Ester (14), with the chores. ©Plan International

## Where Learning Feels Safe: *In Their Own Words*

Teacher Mektilda Tatu Lutambi, Assistant Head Teacher at a KAGIS supported school.

“ Most mornings used to start with children carrying water in old plastic bottles. If they forgot, some went back home. Others arrived late. The toilets were few and crowded, and by break time the smell alone could make you avoid them.

Since the new toilet blocks and water point were completed, daily life at school feels different. Children no longer bring water from home. Attendance is steadier, lessons begin on time, and the school day runs more smoothly.

The facilities have improved school life, but sustaining them matters just as much. As school staff, we have put simple routines in place such as cleaning, checking taps and fixing small issues early. Looking after these toilets is now part of our everyday responsibility.

Leminatha (15), Student at a KAGIS - supported school.

“ Before, the toilets smelled very bad and some were blocked. We didn't have a changing room. When girls were on their period, we didn't know where to go. Some hid in empty classrooms or stayed home because they were scared someone would see them. We also didn't have water, so we had to ask people in nearby houses, and sometimes they refused.

Now there is water at school and the toilets are clean. The private room helps us when we are on our period, and we don't feel embarrassed anymore. We can wash, change and return to class quickly.

We stay in school the whole day now. It is easier to focus on our lessons because we are not worried.





## Scan QR Code to read the full Endline Evaluation Report



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