



Plan

Girls first



## Investing in girls: a good business!

Network meeting, 26 November 2015, The Good Hotel, Amsterdam





## Investing in girls: a good business!

Monique van 't Hek, Director of Plan Nederland, welcomes everyone and stresses the great need for investing in girls: Some 48 percent of women worldwide are not part of the labour market, which greatly impedes their chances for the future. Plan's objective is to help 100,000 youths, primarily young women, obtain a decent job or offer them the tools to become an independent entrepreneur.

### Business and personal support

Business and personal issues are frequently closely intertwined in the projects that Plan implements, some together with Accenture. Hans Boxem of Accenture says that he regularly visits Delhi, India for his job. He always stops by the office of his company-sponsored Saksham project, which helps underprivileged Indian youths earn an honest living. He even coaches an Indian girl, Anjali, with whom he stays in contact via the app and Facebook. "She wasn't going to school, but thanks to Saksham she was able to get vocational training, find a job in a shopping mall and build her self-confidence. Bumps in the road remain: Sometimes she cannot work because she has to watch her sister's child."

Boxem has taken Anjali occasionally with him to the Accenture office in Delhi in the past. In the mean time, there are two youths working at the office who participated in the Saksham project. The part after the project is the most exciting, Boxem admits,

**'Thanks to Saksham parents are less likely to marry off their daughters, because they see that they are not a burden but an opportunity.'**

Monique van 't Hek

responding to audience questions. Experience has shown that an average of 70% of youths remain working after completing the training and the youths are followed-up for six months and maintain contact with each other, among other things through alumni groups. The training also addresses soft skills such as applying for jobs, working in a team and topics like women's rights and equal pay. The participants receive lessons in financial literacy, computer skills and English.

However, not every participant who drops out is 'lost', emphasises Monique van 't Hek. "Some of the young people who stop

with Saksham prematurely do it because they go study, and we encourage this, of course. Another effect of Saksham is that parents are less likely to marry off their daughters, because they see that they are not a burden but an opportunity.”

## From transaction to transformation

**Nathalie Quéré, director corporate branding and digital at AkzoNobel**

Nathalie Quéré of AkzoNobel, a corporate partner of Plan Nederland, says that sustainability is in the company’s DNA. Diversity is a core value, internally as well. This resulted in the founding, together with Plan, of the Education Fund. The Fund has helped thousands of youths in the meantime, in China, India and Bolivia, among other places.

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**‘Our door is always open for cooperation!’**

Nathalie Quéré

AkzoNobel is also involved in Goals for a better life, an employment project for disadvantaged youths in the Brazilian city of Natal. This was set up together with Plan, Amsterdam ArenA and Randstad around World Cup soccer in 2014. To date, the project has helped 146 youths, the majority of them girls, find a job. Initially, they were trained as stewards for the World Cup. Later they were given jobs as receptionist in hotels. Quéré calls this a *once in a lifetime experience*. In India, AkzoNobel is involved with Plan’s international campaign Because I’m a girl, which is attempting to improve the rights of girls.

Quéré stresses that you cannot do these types of things alone. You need partners, both businesses as well as NGOs. AkzoNobel has undergone a shift in this area, associated with a stronger focus on society: The emphasis has shifted from transaction (giving money) to transformation (helping shape change). “The door is always open if there are questions about cooperating with Plan!”, she says, encouraging possible future partners.



## A different view of poverty

**Lisen Wirén, country sustainability manager ikea netherlands**

Keynote speaker Lisen Wirén speaks of her experiences in Dhavri near Mumbai, India, which is the biggest slum in Southeast Asia with its one million residents. “I thought: The people who live there are poor so they are helpless. But it seems that the area is full of creativity and innovation. The residents live on a garbage dump and recycle cans and make products from leather, among other things. There are about 20,000 small businesses there! In fact, unemployment doesn’t exist. It’s a circular economy, full of entrepreneurship. When I saw this, I changed my view of poverty.”

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**‘You can never guarantee zero percent child labour.’**

Lisen Wirén

IKEA’s dream is to improve everyday life. And they are doing this under the motto People and Planet Positive. There are three spearheads: sustainable living (to this end, IKEA has switched entirely to LED lighting), sustainable energy policy and design (in 2020 the conglomerate expects to be energy neutral in its operations) and human rights. On behalf of the latter, IKEA has implemented a worldwide code of conduct. Regular audits are held to guarantee compliance with this code. If violations are noted, the first step is to talk. “Closing factories is a rare thing for us: we work with suppliers for an average of 11 years. Our reasoning is not the less you pay the better this is for our profits, but vice versa: The more you invest, the less failure there is and the better the quality.”

The IKEA Foundation supports charitable causes. For example,











one euro of every stuffed animal sold or book goes to Save the Children and UNICEF within the framework of the Good Cause Campaign. With the help of the IWitness Experience, IKEA employees can take a peak at the projects the company supports.

IKEA was in the news in the 1990s because it discovered that some of its suppliers were using child labour. Asked whether this problem has been resolved, Wirén says: “You can never guarantee this. You are always left with questions. When is it child labour? When a child comes home from school and helps the parents pack some products at home? But we do have things under control among the major suppliers.”

Asked whether it's possible to have transparency about human rights

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**'The more you invest in suppliers, the less failure and the better the quality.'**

Lisen Wirén

violations, she says: “Often we deal with structural abuses, which we cannot resolve on our own. We handle those together with partners. We are getting increasingly transparent, among other things thanks to publishing an annual sustainability report.”



## Creating a triple-win situation

**Panel discussion with Hansje van der Zwaan-Plagman (ASN Bank), Maria Besteman (Basic Water Needs), Cees Zeevenhooven (Team Relocations) and Elise Allart (TUI Benelux), under the direction of Michiel van der Borght (Plan Nederland).**

The company where Maria works, Basic Water Needs, sells water filters. This company hires local women for sales jobs through Plan. The women are specially trained for this. “Working with women is ‘simply good business.’”

International moving company Team Relocations is currently investigating the possibilities of hiring young women via a partner in Delhi who have been trained by Plan within the scope of the Saksham project. Zeevenhooven is talking about a triple-win situation: Young people are trained, they get jobs and our company gets well-educated and motivated employees.

Together with Plan, ASN Bank is trying to tackle child labour in Nepal with a very community-oriented approach. Young people learn about their rights and chances for the future and are motivated to go (back) to school or to obtain vocational training.

Between 2000 and 2014, TUI worked together with Plan on A collective NO to sex tourism in Brasil, a campaign to discourage sex tourism, which was aimed at both the supply and demand sides. There will likely be a follow-up campaign in the Dominican Republic. Winning over a partner is not always successful: for example, a hotel chain did not want to participate in the new campaign. TUI itself doesn't always advertise these activities. Allart: “We don't feature this in our inflight magazines, for example; it's too sensitive a topic for that.”

Asked about success factors, Allart says that these are dynamic processes, where you have to grab the opportunities that present themselves. She also advises involving the board room within your own organisation. Zeevenhooven says that getting your own personnel to become enthusiastic is also an important factor.

The panel members invite the businesses and NGO's to work together and join the Business network because such campaigns and projects cannot be implemented by one party alone.

## 'Transparency is nonsense'

**Fons Trompenaars, KPMG Trompenaars Hampden-Turner.**

Keynote speaker Fons Trompenaars kicks things off by saying that globalisation and the Anglo-Saxon view of management can be fatal for diversity. The world is increasingly blending, he says, but the management literature has remained unilaterally American. He decries the prevailing influence of MBAs. MBA stands for *mediocre but arrogant*, he states.

Trompenaars attacks several holy grails with sardonic pleasure. He finds the idea of transparency nonsense. “Should I say that someone is ugly?”

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**'Globalisation and the Anglo-Saxon view of management are fatal for diversity.'**

Fons Trompenaars



Transparency is a response to the fact that we conceal things, but it's not the right response. I say: Be transparent about what you're concealing." Diversity is important for innovation, says Trompenaars. Innovation thrives in an environment of inclusion and leadership. The art of innovation is combining different values. Apple did this well by fusing aesthetics and functionality. Managing these types of different values is difficult, but those who do it well are golden. Being able to resolve dilemmas appears to have a direct correlation to business performance. Women have more of a talent for this than men, but they primarily apply this skill outside the workplace.

**'Transparency is a response to the fact that we conceal things, but it's not the right response.'**

Fons Trompenaars

Trompenaars wipes the floor with management modes and thinking in models. "Models are bankrupt!" After efficiency thinking, Trompenaars turned to shareholder value and then to ethics. "But isn't it nonsense to say that you are ethical?" You can also put up a sign that says 'We don't kill people here'. But won't that only make visitors nervous?"

Trompenaars gets the audience to think by asking them what they would do if they were to witness a friend causing an accident due to a traffic violation. He says that how people would react in this situation differs greatly per culture. The majority of Dutch people say that the friend has to tell the truth, whereas Moroccans don't. Such issues are simple within individual cultures, but not between different cultures. Here too the art is how to deal with antitheses. He defines integrity in this context as *wholeness through the integration of opposites*.

## Youth Economic Empowerment

Youth unemployment is growing at an exponential rate in developing countries. According to estimates, a staggering 95 million young people will be unemployed by 2016. Consequently, Plan has developed a strategy to tackle unemployment affecting disadvantaged youth.

Plan trains and guides these individuals, especially young women, for a job with a local employer or self-employment. The selected young participants receive a three-month market based vocational training for a job in Marketing, Sales, Customer Relations, Hospitality and Retail. The training features a combination of technical and soft skills, teaching the participants how to present themselves, go through the application process, and work in a team. They also learn computer skills, financial literacy and basic English. And topics like women's rights and equal pay are part of the soft skill training. The participants also follow an internship with local companies, after which they are guided to a permanent job. The local business community is directly involved in the programme to ensure that training properly suits local market needs. This combination is what makes these programmes successful.





## Business network Plan Nederland

The network's main goal is to create jobs for young women in developing countries in cooperation with the Dutch business sector and with support from the Dutch government: 100,000 young women working by 2020! The network was also established in order to share knowledge and best practices, combine strengths, and create awareness about the economic disadvantage faced by women in developing countries and the possibilities for improving their position and local economies.

## Added value

Separate from the sharing of knowledge and combining strengths in terms of economic security, the business network offers added value through networking opportunities. Plan Nederland has access to a global network of 72 Plan offices and 51 developing countries, local and international networks, NGOs and governments. Plan is also a member of UN Global Compact and is a partner in S4YE (Solutions for Youth Employment), a worldwide network involving the World Bank, Accenture and international NGOs.

## Partnership

Businesses and interested organisations can join the network. An individual partnership with Plan Nederland is also an option. Plan currently has 12 corporate partners, and is striving to achieve 30 partnerships with international companies by 2020. Plan enjoys building lasting relationships with its partners. For example, Plan Nederland has maintained a partnership with AkzoNobel for over 20 years.

**For more information or a personal conversation, please contact Davina Feeléus, Corporate Partnerships Officer, via +31 (0) 20 549 55 32 or sent an e-mail to [davina.feeleus@plannederland.nl](mailto:davina.feeleus@plannederland.nl)**