

# Foster Parents Plan turns 50

Foster Parents Plan of Canada, an international human development agency, is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

Founded in 1937, Foster Parents Plan, or PLAN as it is often called, was established in an effort to ease the tremendous suffering resulting from the Spanish Civil War.

John Langdon-Davies, a writer drawing attention to the plight of refugees, conceived the idea of establishing a lasting personal relationship between an orphaned or refugeeed Spanish child and a foreign sponsor. Together with the help of Eric Muggeridge, Nick Carter, Esme Odgers and Mildred Rackley, he started Foster Parents Plan.

Originally a Foster Parent was to guarantee a shilling a day for a year to cover



limiting its projects to only those involving children. By the end of 1940, PLAN was operating 'two children's colonies, a nurses' rest home, a home for the aged, an overnight station for relief workers, a day nursery school, and a child therapy clinic.

day care centres, business ventures such as credit unions, and a broad range of family and community income-producing projects.

Work in Africa was started by PLAN in 1974. From experience gained in Africa, it was found that PLAN's traditional method of aid — direct financial assistance to individual families — was not always the most effective way to use PLAN's limited funds.

Instead PLAN's funds were more beneficial when used for such community projects as wells, schools, health and agriculture. This way the Foster Children and the whole community benefitted directly from such necessities as uncontaminated water and mass inoculations.

In 1981, PLAN experienced an explosion of growth. Field programs were established in Egypt, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the Philippines (Cebu and Iloilo), Ecuador, and Sudan. In addition to the sponsorship recruitment offices that had been operating in Canada and the United States for years, donor offices were opened in the United Kingdom, Belgium and Japan.

The task of PLAN continues to be that of implementing programs of child, family and community development which are in harmony with the existing patterns of belief and behaviour of the countries where PLAN operates. This is maintained by the direct participation of the villagers themselves who work with PLAN through village committees to select, plan, implement and manage group and community projects to meet their common needs.

## 300,000 children

Today PLAN operates in Bolivia, Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta), Columbia, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Nepal, the Philippines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Thailand and Zimbabwe. The number of Foster Children sponsored has grown from 300 in Spain in 1973, to almost 300,000 throughout the world.



Photo by: A Inkpen

the cost of one child in a refugee colony. The child was told who was providing the money and was encouraged to write to the Foster Parent.

In this way, to quote a 1937 English circular, "Children who have lost all personal ties are encouraged to feel the existence of a personal friend rather than a vague dispenser of charity. This is the essence of the Foster Parents' Scheme" ... and in a somewhat adapted form, the essence of PLAN throughout its history.

In 1940, PLAN arrived in England with 80 foreign refugee children to set up the first English children's colony, a large old estate called Woodberry Down.

At this time there was such a diversity of need in Britain, that PLAN was not

PLAN remained in England in a gradually changing capacity until 1957 when the office was closed. The money saved by the closing of the office was used to establish programs in the Far East.

Over the years, PLAN evolved from a child relief and welfare agency offering direct cash and material aid to the neediest of children, to a multi-dimensional human development agency involving not only needy children, but their families and communities in the development process.

In various parts of the world, PLAN began complementing its educational programs, medical care, cash assistance, and child sponsorship with recreational facilities, night schools, mobile clinics,

