



**THE RIGHT TO  
INCLUSIVE,  
QUALITY  
EDUCATION**

**PLAN INTERNATIONAL POSITION PAPER**

**OCTOBER 2017**



# THE RIGHT TO INCLUSIVE, QUALITY EDUCATION: PLAN INTERNATIONAL'S POSITION STATEMENT

Plan International believes that every child and young person has the right to access and complete a quality, inclusive education that covers at least pre-primary, primary and secondary education, in formal or non-formal settings, at the appropriate age, in a safe and supportive learning environment.

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## OVERVIEW: ACCESS TO EDUCATION

- Plan International believes that education should be available and accessible to all children on the basis of equal opportunity and non-discrimination. Every child must be able to access and complete an inclusive, quality pre-primary, primary and secondary education in order to meet global commitments.

It is unacceptable that certain groups of children are prevented from being able to access, transition and complete a quality education due to their gender, nationality, ethnic or social origin, religion or political preference, age or disability. Such barriers are discriminatory and must be tackled through effective policies and adequate funding. Plan International will continue to work to ensure that girls' education is a priority issue globally, so that inequality in access to education is eradicated.

- If Agenda 2030 is not met for the most disadvantaged, the global community will have failed. Learning environments must be fit to accommodate all girls and boys regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional and linguistic abilities. To achieve this, all actors must prioritise supporting the most vulnerable and excluded children who are least likely to be able to access education: These are: girls, children with disabilities, from the poorest backgrounds, living in conflict or emergency situations and from the most vulnerable and excluded groups.

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## SOCIAL NORMS AND ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR GIRLS

- Plan International believes that education is the key to unlocking girls' potential, and one of the most effective interventions for achieving

development goals. Every girl has an equal right to access a quality education, in safe school environments that are free from gender bias, challenge discriminatory social norms and promote gender equality. We commit to prioritising the removal of gendered barriers to girls' access to education, such as poor sanitation and menstrual hygiene management facilities, early pregnancy and childcare, and child marriage.

- Girls are the under-valued majority, and can be a powerful force in their homes, communities and societies. It is crucial to challenge the gender inequality and social norms which prohibit girls from accessing and completing a quality education. Negative gender norms should never be justified on traditional, cultural or religious grounds.

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## ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

- Plan International believes that mainstream education systems can and should be adapted to meet the needs of all learners, and should offer learning opportunities for every child. Not to do so is to ignore the potential of all children. Children with disabilities have an equal right to access an inclusive, quality education, and a right to the support and adaptations necessary to facilitate their learning.
- Child-friendly, inclusive education from early years onwards brings better social, academic, health and economic outcomes for all learners, and at a lower cost than special/segregated education. As such, Plan International believes that inclusive education should be a global priority, without which development goals cannot be met.

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## ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN IN POVERTY

- Plan International believes that no child should be denied the right to access an inclusive, quality education due to poverty, and recognises that poverty exacerbates the likelihood of exclusion for girls or children with disabilities. All actors – governments, intergovernmental organisations and civil society – have a responsibility to support those most in need to access and complete an inclusive, quality education.
- Plan International believes that pre-primary, primary and secondary education should be free and cost-free. Targeted measures should be taken to ensure that children from the poorest backgrounds, and particularly girls, are supported to access their right to education.

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## ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

- Plan International believes that no child should be denied their right to an education due to conflict and disaster. This fundamental right must be protected before, during and after an emergency, including for displaced children, refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons, to ensure educational continuity.
- We believe that education in emergencies is crucial to maintaining a sense of normalcy in children's lives, to provide safe, supportive spaces for children, and for equipping children with the skills and knowledge they need to negotiate their present and future circumstances.
- We believe that education is a core humanitarian need. Education in emergencies interventions must be integrated into all stages of emergency planning and response: through contingency and disaster preparedness planning; early recovery immediately following an emergency; and long-term recovery.
- Interventions should ensure that children's immediate education needs are met, whilst also planning for longer-term provision, eventually

reinstating or strengthening national education services.

- Plan International recognises that education in emergency responses should target those disproportionately affected by emergencies, or at greater risk, in particular girls and children with disabilities.

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## ACCESS TO NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

- Plan International recognises that non-formal education is a key inclusive education intervention. Non-formal education programmes can help to ensure that out-of-school children are able to access an education, and in some cases can be prepared for re-entry into the formal education system.

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## OVERVIEW: QUALITY, EQUITY AND EQUALITY

- Plan International believes that a quality education is comprehensive, empowering, promotes respect for the dignity and value of all people, and provides a broad range of learning processes that include wider life skills and comprehensive sexuality education. Quality education should provide children and young people with the necessary skills and knowledge, attitudes and behaviours to lead positive and productive lives and to be responsible and active citizens.
- Plan International believes that quality education outcomes cannot be secondary to access to education. If children are unable to learn and develop whilst in school, then the education system has failed them.
- We believe that education can help to realise the potential in all children, tackling many of the inequalities and exclusionary practices societies perpetuate. We believe we have a collective responsibility to ensure education systems achieve this, through quality curricula, teaching pedagogies and learning environments.

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## QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND PRE-PRIMARY PROVISION

- Plan International believes that pre-primary education is a vital component of quality education, ensuring children's brain development, strengthening their ability to learn, develop psychological resilience and to adapt to change, and preparing children to enter primary school. This helps to mitigate disadvantages faced by children born into poor and non-literate environments.
- We believe that early childhood care and pre-primary education is of critical value for the socialisation of gender equality. It is during early childhood and during the very first years of school that discriminatory social norms are formed. Pre-primary education must be gender-sensitive and actively reject harmful gender stereotypes.
- Plan International believes that ensuring every child has access to at least one year of free, quality pre-primary education should be a priority for national governments.
- Plan International believes that early childhood care provision is a vital intervention to reduce the burden and gendered distribution of unpaid care work, and provides essential support for young mothers in taking up educational or economic opportunities.

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## QUALITY CURRICULA

- Plan International believes that education must promote a culture of peace, dignity, equality and sustainability, and enable learners to engage with and address the issues relevant to their lives. The school curriculum should actively combat discrimination or prejudice on the basis of sex, gender, caste, language, age, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity or culture.
- Plan International believes that all children, adolescents and young people – without discrimination – are entitled to comprehensive sexuality education to gain knowledge, explore values and attitudes, and develop the skills they need to make conscious, healthy and respectful choices about relationships and sexuality. Parents and educators should be

supported to embrace children's learning from early childhood to allow them to explore, clarify and form life-long healthy attitudes and practices, free from coercion, violence and discrimination.

- Comprehensive sexuality education should be accessible for all children, adolescents and young people, in both formal and non-formal educational settings. Co-curricular activities which complement the formal curriculum are also important as are parental and community involvement and links to gender-responsive, child- adolescent- and youth-friendly healthcare and other services. It should be provided in a way that is non-judgemental, non-discriminatory, scientifically accurate, accessible, inclusive, rights-based, gender-transformative and adapted to the evolving capacity of the child, adolescent or young person.
- Quality education provision in emergencies – both formal and non-formal – must adhere to the minimum standards developed by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies. It must: be delivered by trained professionals; promote gender equality and inclusion; recognise and respond to the diverse cultural/ethnic backgrounds of children; and include modules on human rights, conflict resolution, life skills, comprehensive sexuality education, and disaster risk reduction.
- We believe that a quality education should equip children with the skills and abilities to reach their full potential and maximise their chances of finding decent work. Education should be clearly linked to future opportunity, and should enable all learners to acquire the skills to succeed in employment or entrepreneurship.

- We believe that information technology must be built into education systems, to ensure that the digital revolution does not intensify inequalities and exclusion.

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## TEACHERS: NUMBERS, QUALIFICATIONS, SKILLS AND SUPPORT

- Teachers are the primary factor contributing to a quality, equitable and inclusive education. Teachers are an important, highly skilled

resource, and as such deserve respect and support. In order for teachers to be able to do their job, and to ensure their regular attendance, national governments should commit to fairly remunerating teachers for their work.

- Plan International believes that female teachers and managers at all levels of education are vital to facilitating the learning of all children, particularly girls, and to combatting negative stereotypes about gender roles. Female teachers should be encouraged into the profession, enabled to progress in their careers, and to take on leadership positions.
- Teaching pedagogies must ensure that all children are supported to achieve learning outcomes and progress in a wide range of subjects, irrespective of gender or disability.

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## OVERVIEW: ENABLING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

- Plan International believes that it is vital to education outcomes and for the wellbeing of children that schools are safe, inclusive spaces. Cultures of non-violence, respect and inclusion in schools are fundamental tenets of a quality education, and as such must be a global education priority.
- It is important that education systems link in with child protection and health systems, to ensure every child's wellbeing, and that no child falls through the gap.

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## GOVERNANCE AND PARTICIPATION

- Plan International believes that children and young people, as participants in their own education, will best understand the particular challenges they face in accessing a quality, safe education. As such, children's participation in decision-making should be welcomed. Girls' and boys' interests, concerns and opinions should be heard at all levels— from the governance and management systems at school, to national level policy development.
- All children and young people, irrespective of sex, age, disability or other exclusionary

categorisation, should be supported to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes. Targeted interventions should be put in place to ensure that girls and other children from marginalised and disenfranchised groups are enabled to participate on an equal basis with others, and that their value and sense of self-worth is reinforced.

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## SCHOOL RELATED GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

- Plan International asserts that every child has the right to learn in a safe and secure environment, free from the fear or threat of violence. This is an inseparable aspect of a quality education. Addressing attitudes and behaviours that support or legitimise violence at the national, local, school and community levels, is a key intervention to prevent and respond to school-related gender-based violence.
- We believe it is unacceptable that any child should be a victim of violence of any description either in school, or on the journey to and from school – including sexual violence or harassment, bullying and intimidation, and corporal punishment. We are committed to supporting children to recognise their own value, and the value of others, regardless of their gender. We believe this to be a fundamental learning outcome of an inclusive, quality education.
- Plan International believes that eliminating school-related gender-based violence should be a priority for all actors. School-related gender-based violence constitutes a serious rights violation, impacting on children's ability to enter, transition and complete school.

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## FINANCING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION: THE GLOBAL FUNDING GAP

- Plan International believes that no-one should be prevented from receiving a quality education due to a lack of resources. At least 12 years' free, quality, basic education, including at least 1 year pre-primary, should be available and accessible for all children.



- Plan International believes that education systems must be adequately and equitably financed – focusing on inclusive education and on gender equality in education systems. Funding should be prioritised for those who face the most barriers to accessing their right to education to ensure equitable learning outcomes and that no child is left behind.

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## DOMESTIC FINANCING FOR EDUCATION

- Plan International recognises that, as the primary duty bearers, national governments are responsible for ensuring the right of all children to access and complete a quality, inclusive education. Fundamental to realising this right is demonstrating the necessary political and financial will to guarantee the right to education for all - including those most likely to be excluded.

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## INTERNATIONAL FINANCING FOR EDUCATION

- Plan International believes that the international community has a duty to support national governments from low and middle income countries to ensure public education systems are fully financed, so that every child is able to realise their right to inclusive, quality education. If education goals are not reached, then it will be impossible to fully meet the challenge of Agenda 2030.
- Plan International urges donors from all sectors to increase financing for education both bilaterally and multilaterally in order to meet the global shortfall in education financing.

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## FINANCING EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

- Plan International believes that the right to education does not stop in emergencies, and that financing education provision is a crucial part of conflict and disaster prevention and response. National governments have a responsibility to finance the continued education of all children during or in the aftermath of disasters or conflict.

- Plan International believes that in the case of fragile or failing states, the international community should provide additional financial and technical support in order to ensure that this obligation is met for all children, everywhere. Plan International supports the Education Cannot Wait Fund as a mechanism to increase global funding for education in emergencies.

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## PRIVATE SECTOR FINANCING FOR EDUCATION

- Plan International believes that education provision is the responsibility of the State, and that the State is accountable for ensuring that the public education sector is fully financed.
- Plan International believes that private financing can play a greater role in supporting global education priorities, and should be welcomed where it seeks to complement, support and strengthen public education systems.
- Given the evidence showing that fee-charging schools exacerbate social and economic inequalities, Plan International does not support the provision of fee-charging private education, either by for-profit or not-for-profit agencies, where this allows the State to fail to meet its legal obligations to provide education for all. This is particularly the case where parents are left with no other options but to send their children to private schools or miss out on education. Plan International recognises that fee-charging education options can be a necessary transitional intervention on the road towards the provision of quality, free education for all children.

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## MONITORING PROGRESS ON GLOBAL EDUCATION GOALS

- Plan International believes that increased, responsible data collection and analysis is fundamental to informing and implementing effective policies that respond to the learning needs of all children. Current measurement leaves gaps in our understanding of education outcomes, and should be addressed by the international community.

- Plan International promotes cultures of learning and reflection through internal and external knowledge sharing to enhance evidence-based decision-making in Plan International, in national governments and among other education stakeholders. National governments and international bodies must disaggregate data by sex, age, wealth quintile, location and disability as a minimum.



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## INTRODUCTION

Plan International believes that every child and young person has the right to access and complete a quality, inclusive education that covers at least pre-primary, primary and secondary education, in formal or non-formal settings, at the appropriate age, in a safe and supportive learning environment.

This internal paper provides Plan International's position on the right to inclusive, quality education, as well as analysis of: the current global situation; the legal and political framework; specific issues in relation to education. This paper supports the new Global Strategy, in which education remains a priority, and our work in relation to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – in particular Goals 4 and 5. A number of high-level recommendations are included to guide advocacy, however, a more specific advocacy framework will be developed.

The analysis and positions are founded on human rights, global evidence and Plan International's programmatic work, as well as drawing on a global youth survey conducted by Plan International UK in 2015.

Offices will be expected to put the position into practice using their judgement and analysis of the key issues in their specific context.

Plan International's Global Strategy 2017-2022 renews and refocuses our commitment to quality education for all children, and particularly for girls and excluded groups. We have committed to contribute to ensuring that vulnerable and excluded children, and particularly girls, access and complete inclusive, quality education from pre-primary to secondary, supporting progress towards Targets 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, A & C of Goal 4 of Agenda 2030<sup>1</sup>. To achieve this, the Global Strategy sets out the following global priorities:

Influence national governments to:

- make education systems gender-responsive, inclusive and more relevant;
- increase their investments in education, particularly in education access and quality and/or other measures to support successful education transitions from early childhood into adulthood. Develop, test and scale up effective programme models for inclusive and gender-responsive education;
- facilitate, and where needed, provide access to safe, quality, inclusive education in fragile and

conflict affected states and emergency situations.

Plan International recognises that it is the responsibility of national governments, as the primary duty bearer accountable for their commitments and obligations under international human rights law and within Agenda 2030, to ensure every girl and boy is able to realise their right to education. Plan International also recognises the role of the international and national community – donors, civil society, UN agencies and the private sector – in supporting national governments to guarantee the right to education.

This paper deals with formal education structures, and therefore emphasises the responsibilities of governments to ensure the right to inclusive, quality education. Plan International also supports non-formal and informal education as part of a holistic approach to ensuring every child has the right to inclusive, quality education. However, whilst these forms of education delivery will be mentioned in this paper, they will not be discussed in detail. The paper discusses preparation for and routes into employment but does not cover youth economic empowerment in depth, nor does the paper deal with access to tertiary education.

The paper deals first with issues around access to education, analysing the barriers which children encounter in getting to school. The section is divided by broad sub-groups of children – girls, children with disabilities, the poorest children, and those living in emergency situations. The following section deals with issues around quality – the ability for children to be able to learn whilst in school. The section focuses on the early years, curricula, teachers and teaching pedagogies. The third section deals with issues around enabling learning environments, focusing on governance and participation, and school-related gender-based violence. Across these three sections there are some areas of overlap: these have been kept to a minimum.

The latter two sections deal with financing education (domestic, international, private and in emergencies), and monitoring progress on education, related in particular to Agenda 2030.

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## DEFINITIONS

**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:** a wide range of strategies, activities and processes that seek to make a reality of the universal right to quality education. Inclusive education acknowledges that learning begins at birth and continues throughout life, and includes learning in the home, the community, and in formal, informal and non-formal situations.

**GENDER-RESPONSIVE EDUCATION:** A gender-responsive approach to education creates opportunities for individuals to actively challenge gender norms, promotes involvement in decision-making for all children and particularly girls in schools, encourages equality of opportunity for children of different genders, and addresses power inequities between persons of different genders.

**EARLY-CHILDHOOD EDUCATION:** Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) refers to a wide range of programmes aimed at the physical, cognitive and social development of children before they enter primary school.

**PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION:** The initial stage of organised instruction, designed primarily to introduce very young children to a school-type environment, that is, to provide a bridge between home and a school-based atmosphere.

**PRIMARY EDUCATION:** Begins at ages five, six or seven and lasts for four to six years.

**LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION:** Lower secondary education generally continues the basic programmes of the primary level, although teaching is typically more subject-focused, often employing more specialised teachers who conduct classes in their field of specialisation.

**UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION:** The final stage of secondary education. Instruction is often more organised along subject-matter lines than at lower-secondary level, and teachers typically need to have a higher level, or more subject-specific, qualifications. The entrance age to this level is typically 15 or 16 years

**TERTIARY EDUCATION:** Education for people above school age, including college, university, and vocational courses.

**DECENT WORK:** Involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

**BULLYING:** Bullying is characterized by the repeated exposure of a person to physical and/or emotional aggression including teasing, name calling, mockery, threats, harassment, taunting, hazing, social exclusion or rumours

**INFORMAL EDUCATION:** Informal education has no formal curriculum and leads to no formal qualifications. The teacher is someone with more experience, such as a parent or a friend.

**NON-FORMAL EDUCATION:** Non-formal education is organised, and may or may not be guided by a formal curriculum. It is led by a qualified teacher or by a leader with more experience. Though it doesn't result in a formal qualification, non-formal education is highly enriching and builds an individual's skills and capacities.

**FORMAL EDUCATION:** Formal education is organized, guided by a formal curriculum, leads to a recognised qualification, and is delivered by qualified teaching staff. It is guided and recognized by government at some level.

**SCHOOL READINESS:** (1) Ready children, focusing on children's learning and development. (2) Ready schools, focusing on the school environment along with practices that foster and support a smooth transition for children into primary school and advance and promote the learning of all children. (3) Ready families, focusing on parental and caregiver attitudes and involvement in their children's early learning and development and transition to school.

**EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT (ECCD):** ECCD links the young child's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical processes with the care (by families, communities, and the nation) required to support their development. ECCD is interdisciplinary in its focus. It includes health, nutrition, education, social science, economics, child protection, and social welfare<sup>2</sup>.

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## **INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORKS AND INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS SUPPORTING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION**

Education is a fundamental human right and essential for the exercise of all other human rights. Education promotes individual freedom and empowerment and yields important development benefits. Quality education is also central for access to decent work, improved health and gender relations, and respect towards the environment. It should be realised for all people, without discrimination or exclusion, including during emergencies.

As a right, education is a universal entitlement, however, girls and boys face differing barriers to attaining the right to education, therefore human rights frameworks recognise the right to education collectively for all children, and separately for certain demographics. Every child has the right to access free, quality and safe pre-primary, primary and secondary education. Education does not only take place at school: formal and non-formal education are both effective strategies to develop children's full potential. Education opportunities must be accessible to all, be of good quality and be free from violence and gender bias.

The right to education is supported by a robust international framework of legally binding human rights instruments. In addition to the international legal frameworks, which lay the foundations and provide the accountability mechanism for States to guarantee the right of all children to education, States have also committed to a number of global education frameworks which further detail their collective and individual responsibilities to ensure the right to education.

### **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that all people at all levels have the right to free, compulsory and accessible elementary education.

### **The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is signed and ratified by every State Party to the UN except the United States of America. This makes it a powerful international legal tool for protecting

children's rights. It contains a number of articles relevant to education. Article 28.1 of the CRC recognises the right to education for all children, and outlines that States Parties have a responsibility to ensure compulsory, free primary education; available, accessible general and vocational secondary education; and accessible higher education for all children. However, while the CRC states that the right to learning and to education begins at birth, it doesn't explicitly refer to State obligations to ensuring access for all to safe, free, quality pre-primary education. This is outlined further in several General Comments – more information can be found in Annex 2.

### **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) obligates States to provide equal access to education for persons with disabilities, at all levels within both general and vocational education streams. It outlines that States are obligated to facilitate such access by providing persons with disabilities with alternative modes of communication, accommodating the disabled with adequate facilities, and training professionals on the education of people with disabilities. This is supported by Article 23.3 of the CRC, which places the responsibility of provision of free, quality, accessible education for children with disabilities on the State.

### **Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

Article 10 of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) outlines the responsibility of State Parties' to ensure gender equality within education, including equal access and exposure to opportunity at all levels and within all subject areas, and to also ensure that education curricula specifically tackle negative gender norms.

### **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

In 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with its Agenda 2030 – a robust and ambitious development agenda for the coming 15 years. Agenda 2030 recognises the importance of education both as a fundamental right for all people, and also as a crucial tool for the achievement of all development goals. Education is a target outcome in goals 3, 5, 8, 12, and 13, in

addition to forming Goal 4: “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.

Goal 4 of Agenda 2030 represents the greatest commitment on the part of States thus far to realising the right to education for all. It reflects a broad vision of education grounded in the human rights perspective, expanding the ambition of the international community to achieve 10 distinctive targets:

States had previously committed to providing free, compulsory primary education. Within Agenda 2030 this is expanded to include access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education (4.2) as well as primary and secondary education (Target 4.1) Vitality, States have also committed to achieving gender parity in education, and ensuring that education is accessible to all – even the most vulnerable (Target 4.5) – including by extending that commitment to include the provision of learning environments that are child, gender and disability sensitive (Target 4.a).

In addition to increased commitments to improving access to education, States have also made strong commitments to improving education quality. States have committed to ensuring that all children achieve literacy and numeracy (Target 4.6), to providing vocational and technical training (Target 4.4), to a broad set of curricular objectives towards promoting sustainable development (Target 4.7), and to increasing the supply of qualified teachers (Target 4.c) .

## GLOBAL STATISTICS

Despite the fact that education is recognised as a fundamental human right, and also a critical pathway to achieving all other rights, education has nevertheless not been achieved for all children.

2016 data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics shows that 263 million children (ages 6-17) are out of school globally<sup>3</sup>. This number includes 61 million children of primary school age (6 to 11 years), 60 million young adolescents of lower secondary school age (12 to 14 years), and 142 million youth of upper secondary school age (15 to 17 years) for the school year ending in 2014. More than half of all out of school children live in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia.

This means that today, 1 out of 11 primary school age children, 1 out of 6 lower secondary school age adolescents, and 1 out of 3 upper secondary school

age youth are not in school<sup>4</sup>. In low income countries only 14 percent of children will complete upper-secondary school.

Girls are more likely to be excluded from education. Of the 25 million children who will never start school, 15 million are girls. Almost 62 million of those children who are out of school live in conflict areas. Children with disabilities make up an estimated one-third of all out of school children<sup>5</sup>.

It is estimated that there are 65 million primary and lower secondary school aged children with a disability in developing countries, and that half of these children are out of school.<sup>6</sup> Girls, young women and persons with particular impairments, including intellectual disabilities, face the most severe educational inequities.<sup>7</sup> Plan International's own research shows that children with a disability are ten times more likely to be out of school than their peers, and that where they do attend school, they drop-out earlier than their peers, and they have poorer learning outcomes<sup>8</sup>.

The global data shows that significant progress has been made toward gender parity in education. Whilst in 2000, 54 percent of the 375 million out of school children were girls, by 2014 this had reduced to a 1 percent difference in the global rates. However additional data show that girls are still less likely than boys overall to access, transition and complete a quality education:

- 1 in 10 girls, compared to 1 in 12 boys were out of primary school in 2014
- Out of school girls are more likely never to go to school: 47 percent of the 32 million primary school age out-of-school girls are expected never to enter a classroom, compared with 35 percent of the 29 million out of school boys
- 54 percent of countries have not achieved gender parity at the lower secondary level, and 77 percent at the upper secondary level<sup>9</sup>

The global figures also mask inequalities within countries based on wealth disparity. Across every level of education, the poorest students have lower completion rates than the national average. In developing countries, only 47 percent of girls and 49 percent of boys from low income families complete primary education compared to the national average of 73 percent. decreasing to 18 percent for girls and 22 percent for boys at lower



secondary level, compared to 46 percent overall, and 4 percent for girls and 6 percent for boys at upper-secondary level, compared to 25 percent overall.

In spite of evidence showing its value, investment in early childhood education is lacking, and currently pre-primary education is compulsory in only 40 countries – in most of these only one year of pre-primary is mandated. Early and pre-primary enrolment in education is lower than any other educational level, increasing from 27 percent in 1990 to 54 percent in 2012, but remaining only 20 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa. In many countries less than 10 percent of girls and boys attend some form of early learning/education programme<sup>10</sup> with attendance rates for pre-primary education lowest in the poorest countries with the highest levels of child poverty<sup>11</sup>.

Worldwide, there are still more than 150 million children aged 3 to 5 who do not have access to pre-primary education, including more than 80 percent of children in low-income countries. In comparison, 87 percent of 3-5 year-olds do attend pre-primary education in developed countries. In some conflict-affected countries, as few as 5 percent of children have access to pre-primary education<sup>12</sup>.

There are 34 million out of school children and adolescents living in conflict-affected countries<sup>13</sup>. Of these, 17 million are refugees, internally displaced or part of another population of concern (for instance asylum seekers or stateless persons)<sup>14</sup>. Notably, girls in conflict-affected contexts are 2.5 times more likely to be out of school than girls in more peaceful settings.<sup>15</sup>

Even where children can access schools, in many regions of the world, learning outcomes are very poor. 38 percent of children leave primary school without learning how to read, write and do simple arithmetic<sup>16</sup>. For some 130 million children, this is after having attended four years of primary education. Adult literacy rates in developing countries average 82 percent. Of the 18 percent of illiterate adults, 63 percent are female<sup>17</sup>.

About 16 million girls aged 15 to 19 and some 1 million girls under 15 give birth every year—most in low- and middle-income countries. Yet very few children have access to comprehensive sexuality education, which could inform them about their bodies, healthy relationships, and practicing safe, consensual sex<sup>18</sup>.

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## OVERVIEW: ACCESS TO EDUCATION

“If the government could find a way to ‘persuade’ parents, guardians and community leaders to let their girls go to school and then trade / work after school hours, it would go a long way in boosting the rate of girls in schools.” Young woman, Nigeria

Goal 4, Target 1 of Agenda 2030 commits governments to ensuring that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. Fundamental to fulfilling this right is ensuring that education is available (free, and with adequate infrastructure and trained teachers able to support the delivery of education), and accessible (non-discriminatory and accessible to all, with positive steps taken to include the most marginalised).

While all children have an equal right to education, the conditions and resources for universal access may not be available. The barriers comprise a wide range of policies and regulations, attitudes and beliefs that prevent children, in different ways, from realising their right to education. For many children schools are not easily accessible, and in rural areas in particular the distances to travel to school may be prohibitively long. Overcrowding is another issue, with schools not having capacity to accommodate all the children who should be attending. For many children around the world education is unattainable because schools are not adequately designed to accommodate the diverse needs of students. For example, facilities may prohibit certain groups from attending (such as children with physical disabilities), or lead to early drop-out (shared latrines that become unsafe for girls or inadequate for ensuring personal hygiene).

Goal 4, target A of Agenda 2030 commits governments to build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all. The right of every child to education on the basis of equal opportunity is also established in article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Incheon Declaration commits governments to ensure the provision of 12 years of free, publicly funded, equitable quality primary and secondary education, of which at least 9 years are compulsory. This generally covers 4-6 years of primary education, and 3-5 years of lower-

secondary education. These provisions are in addition to 1 year of free pre-primary education.

Exclusion in education, as in other areas, is caused by inequality in the distribution of resources and power, by inequality in the social value assigned to different social groups, and by the social norms that perpetuate these differences. In addition to the various barriers that children face to accessing and realising their right to education, there are also multiple factors which will influence whether children are able to transition to higher levels and to complete their education. The causes of school dropout are intersecting and complex; often, it is not the result of a single event so much as a consequence of several processes or factors.<sup>19</sup> Factors associated with dropout include poverty, social norms surrounding education, violence, child marriage and early pregnancy, and the quality and accessibility of available schools.

Certain demographic groups are less likely than others to access an education: girls, children with disabilities, children from the poorest households, and those living in emergency contexts are all demographic groups that this paper focuses on. Non-discriminatory education policies can reduce the barriers that excluded groups face in attaining their right to an education. Where education is available and accessible to all, inequalities in access on the basis of gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnicity or religion will be reduced.

Plan International continues to focus on the rights of girls to be able to access education. Globally, girls remain more likely than boys to never attend school. With a strong supporting rights framework and a clear global mandate through Agenda 2030, it is unacceptable that girls remain less likely to be able to access an education. Nevertheless, it remains the case that this majority group faces significant barriers to accessing education in many places. This is frequently due to negative social norms that ascribe girls a lower status and value to boys. However, there are also structural barriers which can easily be removed if prioritised. Plan International will continue to work to ensure that girls' education is a priority issue globally, so that inequality in access to education is eradicated.

### Plan International's Position

- **Plan International believes that education should be available and accessible to all children on the basis of equal opportunity and non-discrimination. Every child must be able to access and complete an inclusive, quality pre-**

**primary, primary and secondary education in order to meet global commitments.**

- **It is unacceptable that certain groups of children are prevented from being able to access, transition and complete quality education due to their gender, nationality, ethnic or social origin, religion or political preference, age or disability. Such barriers are discriminatory and must be tackled through effective policies and adequate funding. Plan International will continue to work to ensure that girls' education is a priority issue globally, so that inequality in access to education is eradicated.**
- **If Agenda 2030 is not met for the most disadvantaged, then we believe that the global community will have failed. Learning environments must be fit to accommodate all girls and boys regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional and linguistic abilities. To achieve this, all actors must prioritise supporting the most vulnerable and excluded children who are least likely to be able to access education: girls, children with disabilities, from the poorest backgrounds, living in conflict or emergency situations and from the most vulnerable and excluded groups.**

### Plan International's Recommendations

- **National governments must strengthen, and enforce laws to ensure that at least 9 years of basic education is compulsory for all children – and that 12 years of free quality education is available and accessible.**
- **National governments should implement laws and policies to ensure that at least one year of free, quality pre-primary education is compulsory and available for all children, and, progressively, that all children are able to access free early childhood care education, focusing initially on children from vulnerable and excluded groups. Children with a disability should also be guaranteed access to inclusive pre-primary education and pre-primary teachers trained on inclusive pedagogy**
- **Governments should put in place proactive measures to identify the poorest, most vulnerable and excluded children and implement targeted policy measures to remove all barriers to education and reduce inequalities in access, transition and completion.**



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## SOCIAL NORMS AND ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR GIRLS

“Not enough has been done to counter the challenges of access to education for girls. This includes campaigns to end FGM and child marriage, and sexual harassment / abuse of girls in schools... If adequately addressed, it will ensure girls transition in education so that they don't drop out of school or miss out on quality education.”  
Young woman, Kenya

In many countries, poverty combines with geography and ethnicity to keep girls out of school, and the gender gap between girls and boys attending school from socially excluded groups is much larger than in the wider population.<sup>20</sup> Poor, rural girls and girls from indigenous populations are among those least likely to access education. Negative social norms and rigid gender roles which ascribe girls a different, often lower or more confined position in society can drive families to prioritise investment in boys' education over that of girls: parents have quoted high costs associated with schooling alongside poor quality of education, gender-based violence and the conclusion that a girl is perceived to be of a marriageable age as key reasons why they withdraw their daughters from school.<sup>21</sup> Other factors, including ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation intersect and compound, often resulting in further discrimination.

Some families and teachers do not see the value of educating girls, and as such girls are more likely to be out of school or receive less support whilst in school. However, girls born to educated parents are more likely to attend school for longer. In particular, a mother's education level often influences the length of schooling that a girl receives.<sup>22</sup> For example, in rural Pakistan, girls whose mothers have some sort of formal schooling are less likely to drop out from school.<sup>23</sup>

Child, early and forced marriage and early pregnancy both serve as significant barriers to girls' education and at the same time as key causes of dropout for girls.<sup>24</sup> Estimates show that if they were eliminated the gender gap in education would reduce by half.<sup>25</sup> Girls may also be faced with discriminatory policies which prevent them from continuing their education if they are married or become pregnant.

Child marriage is also clearly linked to wealth; 54 percent of girls of the poorest 20 percent of households are married before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.<sup>26</sup>

In the richest 20 percent of households, only 16 percent of girls are child brides. This corresponds with recent research that suggests that dropping out of school is less likely to be a direct consequence of child marriage than of poverty, the low status afforded to women, and social norms that lead parents to discount the value of investing in girls and their education.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, girls who are out of school are also more vulnerable to child, early and forced marriage. Girls with only primary education are twice as likely to be child brides compared to girls with secondary or higher education, whilst girls with no education are three times more likely to marry early compared to a girl with secondary or higher education.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to child marriage, poor quality of education, gender-based violence and girls not learning the skills needed for work were cited as key reasons why girls were withdrawn from school in a study conducted by Plan International Egypt.<sup>29</sup> Concerns about school safety, lack of separate sanitation facilities for girls, and the distances needed to travel to school are other factors which affect a girl's chances of completing her education. Parents want to optimize the future of their daughters and 'protect' them from early pregnancy outside of marriage – which in many societies causes shame for the family. When poverty is extreme child marriage also relieves a family of an extra mouth to feed.

Safety in schools is an important concern. Girls are more likely than boys to experience sexual violence in school, with estimates suggesting that 150 million girls and 73 million boys under 18 across the world have been subject to this type of violence in school. An unsafe environment can also interfere with girls' learning ability, thereby preventing them from transitioning to the next level. Girls and boys who experience school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) are less likely to do well in school<sup>30</sup>.

Girls also do an unequal share of household chores. Globally, girls aged 5–14 spend 550 million hours every day on household chores - 160 million more hours than boys their age spend.<sup>31</sup> This leaves them with less time to study or attend school. Physically demanding and time-consuming tasks, such as collection of water or firewood, are also primarily performed by girls and women, limiting the time they have left for educational opportunities and paid work.<sup>32,33</sup> One study found that girls' school enrolment rates increased by 10 percent in one country and by 12 percent in a

second when the time spent walking to a water source was reduced by only one hour.<sup>34</sup>

A lack of appropriate sanitation facilities can be a barrier to school attendance and to girls' education in particular. Girls who have reached puberty and female school staff who are menstruating need sanitation facilities which enable menstrual hygiene management (MHM). In a group of surveyed developing countries, less than half of primary schools have access to safe water and adequate sanitation.<sup>35</sup> Where toilets are provided in schools, many are not safe, do not have locks, and are not gender-segregated for privacy and protection. Without the privacy afforded by these facilities, students will often not use school bathrooms, resulting in absenteeism 10-20 percent of the time<sup>36</sup>. Toilets isolated from school or lacking basic provisions for privacy are also unsafe spaces for girls. Plan International's research shows that toilets are an area where girls are at increased risk of experiencing violence<sup>37</sup>.

Gender disparities in early childhood education are less obvious than at later stages – global statistics show that girls are as likely as boys to be enrolled in pre-primary education. However, the limited data availability suggests that in some countries there are gendered gaps in rural, low income populations, as well as son bias in terms of the type of early childhood education institution girls are sent to and the extent to which their regular attendance is supported<sup>38</sup>.

### Plan International's Position

- **Plan International believes that education is the key to unlocking girls' potential, and one of the**

**most effective interventions for achieving development goals. Every girl has an equal right to access a quality education, in safe school environments that are free from gender bias, challenge discriminatory social norms and promote gender equality. We commit to prioritising the removal of gendered barriers to girls' access to education, such as poor sanitation and menstrual hygiene management facilities, early pregnancy and childcare, and child marriage.**

- **Girls are the under-valued majority, and can be a powerful force in their homes, communities and societies. It is crucial to challenge the gender inequality and social norms which prohibit girls from accessing and completing a quality education. Negative gender norms should never be justified on traditional, cultural or religious grounds.**

### Plan International's Recommendations

- **Governments should ensure that from primary school up, separate latrines and sanitation facilities are provided for girls and boys. These are critical to enable girls' menstrual hygiene management and ensure their attendance. They should also have access to accurate information about menstruation and to clean sanitary equipment.**
- **Governments should take all necessary measures to support pregnant girls and married girls so that they are able to continue and complete their education. Governments should develop retention strategies and life skills programmes for married girls through targeted outreach and support programmes, initiating evening or part-time formal schooling and**

### CASE STUDY: spotlight on girls' access to education in ethnic and rural communities

In rural areas of Laos, families are often large and include many children. Parents are not always able to support all of their children's education, and therefore have to make a decision about which child they can afford to put through school. Often, it is girls who lose out.

"Parents are likely to support their son's schooling rather than their daughter's", said Ms. Kenexay, a teacher at one of the schools in the Bokeo Province. She says this is especially common in the ethnic communities. However, Plan International provides scholarships for primary school children to support ethnic girls' education to complete primary school.

"I was so happy to be selected for a scholarship which helped reduce my parents' expenditure and extend my school life", said Nali, who is 11 years old. She comes from a big family, and her older sister is already married, whilst her two brothers attend secondary school.

"From that scholarship, my mother bought me new books, pens, and a schoolbag. I've also got a school uniform, a sport uniform and shoes. I love them so much", says Nali.

vocational training opportunities, and following up with students who drop out of school. Governments should also end the discriminatory practices of mandatory pregnancy testing of girls, expelling pregnant girls from school, and excluding married students from school.

- **Governments should enact, enforce, reform, and uphold laws and policies to ensure that girls and women who have not received formal education or have left school because of marriage, pregnancy, childbearing and/or motherhood have equal access to free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education, including catch-up and literacy education and are able to remain in, return to school or relocate if they wish.**
- **Governments must address the gaps in provision of water, sanitation and hygiene in schools in order to enhance the accessibility and usability of WASH in school infrastructure in all country settings and help diminish inequities of access.**
- **Governments, UN agencies and NGOs should take targeted measures to ease the care burden primarily placed on girls and women, supporting interventions that reduce the number of household chores girls undertake, by working with girls, with parents, and through investment in infrastructure, technology and public services.**
- **Governments need to do more to keep girls in formal education and help out-of-school girls in emergency settings access education by removing structural, practical and financial barriers. Specific measures include making schools free and easily accessible, ensuring girls' safety on their way to and from school, and persuading parents of the importance of girls' education and offering incentives to keep girls in school.**
- **Governments, inter-governmental and civil society organisations should actively engage communities, families, girls and boys, young people, traditional and religious leaders, and teachers in girls' education. All actors should prioritise interventions which challenge the harmful gender stereotypes and norms that keep girls out of school by placing less value on their education**

## **ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

In many low and middle income countries, a significant percentage of children are growing up with physical/motor impairments, sensory impairments, or cognitive/intellectual impairments. Figures on children with disabilities are uncertain, but between 10 and 20 percent of children in some high income countries have learning or developmental difficulties. Since low and middle-income countries have higher rates of risk factors that affect young children's development than high income countries, the proportion of children with developmental difficulties is almost certainly higher in these countries.<sup>39</sup> There is also a clear link to poverty; children from poorer countries, and from the poorest income brackets within countries, are more likely to suffer developmental delays and disability, compared to their more privileged peers.<sup>40</sup> However, there is a serious lack of data on people with disabilities, which severely limits the ability of the international community to monitor their situation. For example, current data does not allow for in-depth understanding of the cross cutting disadvantages faced by girls and women with disabilities, and thus understand and respond to their educational progress and fulfil their rights.<sup>41</sup>

Inclusive education means that all students should be provided with meaningful learning opportunities within the regular school system. Ideally, it allows children with and without disabilities to attend the same classes at an appropriate level for their age, with additional, individually tailored support as and when needed.<sup>42</sup> An inclusive approach has been endorsed at international level, including at the 1994 World Conference on Special Needs Education<sup>43</sup> and through the Education for All initiative on the right to education for persons with disabilities<sup>44</sup>.

Children with disabilities are less likely to start school and to transition to higher grades. Household survey data from fourteen low- and middle-income countries show that children with disabilities aged between 6 and 17 are significantly less likely to be enrolled in school than their peers who do not have disabilities.<sup>45</sup> Various barriers prevent children with disabilities from realising their right to education. In many countries, stigma around disabilities – from the level of the family to society-wide – is a significant barrier. The whole family may face stigma, making the family reluctant to report that a child has a disability or to take the child out in public.<sup>46</sup> Disabled girls are also less

likely than disabled boys to be in school, facing double discrimination on account of their disability and because of gender stereotypes<sup>47</sup>.

Systemic and pedagogical barriers such as untrained teachers and inaccessible school infrastructure are also significant barriers to accessing education opportunity.<sup>48</sup> Teachers often lack the necessary training and support for teaching children with disabilities. A review of the situation of children with intellectual disabilities in 22 European countries highlighted the lack of training of teachers who work with children with disabilities as a major concern.<sup>49</sup> Most of the time, these students were taught by support staff rather than qualified teachers.<sup>50</sup>

Facilities and learning materials (for instance, providing texts in braille) are also rarely adapted to meet the needs of children with disabilities. School infrastructure also often presents a physical and mobility barrier to children with disabilities. Lack of ramps or lifts in school with multi-level infrastructure, heavy doors and lack of accessible toilets are all barriers to children with disabilities attending school.

Access to early learning is especially limited for children with a disability, with pre-school attendance rates particularly low<sup>51</sup>. At the same time, early childhood is the most important period for brain development, for early identification of children at risk of disability, and for early intervention to minimize the impact of any impairment. When children with a disability or developmental delay can access early childhood education that is responsive to their individual needs, they will in turn have a better chance of reaching their full capacity<sup>52</sup>.

Children with disabilities are often educated in segregated schools, rather than in mainstream schools<sup>53</sup>. Teachers across a number of countries have stated an unwillingness to support the inclusion of children with disabilities in their classes.<sup>54</sup>

For children with disabilities, the associated costs of schooling can be far greater because they have additional or differing needs. Where inclusive schools are not available, the costs for families of sending children with disabilities to separate, special schools can also be prohibitively high.

### Plan International's Position

- **Plan International believes that mainstream education systems can and should be adapted to**

**meet the needs of all learners, and should offer learning opportunities for every child. Not to do so is to ignore the potential of all children.**

**Children with disabilities have an equal right to access an inclusive, quality education, and a right to the support and adaptations necessary to facilitate their learning.**

- **Child-friendly, inclusive education from early years onwards brings better social, academic, health and economic outcomes for all learners, and at less cost than special/segregated education. As such, Plan International believes that inclusive education should be a global priority, without which development goals cannot be met.**

### Plan International's Recommendations

- **National governments should ensure that education infrastructure and transport is accessible to all children, as well as provide necessary aids, adaptations and individual support to enable all children with disabilities to attend regular school, taking into account the differing needs of children with disabilities. Plans must be put in place to ensure that school infrastructure – both new and existing – includes ramps and easy-open doors; safe, separate, lockable, and accessible toilets; and accessible handwashing facilities. Transport facilities should be safe and disability friendly.**
- **Girls and boys with disabilities should be included in early childhood care and development programmes to equip and facilitate their transition to primary school.**
- **Negative attitudes and stigma should be challenged at community level. Governments should support awareness campaigns at all levels, particularly with families, communities and in schools. These are vital to reducing stigma, and eliminating negative behaviours and discrimination against girls, boys and youth with disabilities.**
- **Plan International encourages the gradual and planned transformation of existing special education resources, both state-run and private resources, into valued resources that support the mainstream education system to enable the effective inclusion of children with disabilities in a coherent manner.**



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## ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR THE POOREST CHILDREN

Whilst there are numerous reasons why many children are denied their right to education, poverty is a clear underpinning and compounding factor. Across every disaggregated group, those from poorer households are less likely to access education than their richer peers. Poverty – both structural and individual – is one of the underpinning reasons why some children are not able to access their right to an education. Although international law obligates States to provide free, compulsory primary education for all children, and Agenda 2030 expands this to include pre-primary and secondary education as well, many children continue to face economic barriers to accessing the right to education. Conversely, education can be a powerful tool for breaking the cycle of poverty and giving children from poor backgrounds increased opportunities.

The impact of poverty on education begins early, because the poorest children in any country are the least likely to attend early childhood education programmes<sup>55</sup>. Across all regions except South Asia, there are significant disparities in enrolment in pre-primary education between the poorest and wealthiest households: in each region, children in the richest households are at least twice as likely – and in some regions three times as likely – to be enrolled in pre-primary school than children from the poorest households. In some countries there is a ten-fold difference in early childhood care and education attendance. Pre-primary programmes tend to be more heavily concentrated in urban areas. Rural areas often have a shortage of teachers due to challenges in recruiting and retaining personnel, particularly those who are qualified<sup>56</sup>.

Lack of development in the early years is a result of a combination of factors, such as household environment, poor quality care, mal or under-nutrition, exposure to toxic stress and lack of opportunities for play and learning. This has an adverse effect throughout life and thus negatively impacts educational attainment, and this is one factor in the cyclical nature of poverty, because increased educational attainment correlates with increased income later in life. Even before reaching age 5, children from poor households are more likely than their more affluent peers to present developmental delays in literacy and numeracy<sup>57</sup>. For instance, by the time they are at the pre-primary level, one third of children in low- and

middle-income countries have failed by pre-primary level to develop a core set of age-appropriate skills that allow them to maintain attention, understand and follow simple directions, communicate and get along with others, control aggression, and solve progressively complex problems.<sup>58</sup>

Early childhood care and education services help build skills at a time when children's brains are developing, with long-term benefits for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. In many parts of the world, however, there is a wide gap in enrolment between the richest and poorest. Part of the reason is that governments have yet to assume sufficient responsibility for pre-primary education: as of 2011, private providers were catering for 33% of all enrolled children. The cost of private provision of early childhood care and education is one of the factors that contribute to inequity in access at this level<sup>59</sup>.

Poverty is also clearly linked to under- and malnourishment. Lack of nutrition in early childhood often has implications throughout the lifecycle, as malnourished children are more likely to miss school, fall sick and struggle to concentrate. Because of this, malnourished children are also more likely to drop out of school.<sup>60</sup> School-feeding programmes are rare in developing regions and many children are unable to bring food from home. Across the world, 66 million primary school-age children are estimated to be going hungry to school.<sup>61</sup>

In rural areas, children have less access to pre-primary, primary, lower and upper secondary school. In developing countries, for every 100 children in urban areas who complete primary education, there are only 74 children in rural areas who do so. This decreases to 56 completing lower secondary level, and 39 completing upper secondary level<sup>62</sup>. This disparity is only partly due to insufficient availability, and increased distances to schools in rural areas. Lower population densities mean that schools are much more spread out than in urban areas to accommodate the same number of children. The challenge of getting to school therefore increases, with children having to walk increased distances to school, or take alternative forms of transportation. For some families, the increased cost of public transportation prevents them from being able to send their children to school.

For girls in particular, the barriers are greater due to increased concerns about their safety on the journey to school<sup>63</sup>. Addressing safety concerns

around girls' journeys to and from school is crucial to addressing school attendance and dropout rates at all levels. For children with disabilities, the increased costs of specialised transportation to school can be prohibitively high. In some societies, such as in Pakistan, separate schools are required for girls and boys. The cost of building, staffing and maintaining gender-segregated schools places additional strain on education budgets in places where the funding is already inadequate. It will often mean that girls are hindered from accessing education because of a shortage of schools for girls, which may be located far away from their homes.

School fees at all levels can be prohibitively expensive, meaning parents have to make difficult decisions about whether or not to send their children to school – or which children to send. Furthermore, tuition fees only constitute one part of the total out-of-pocket costs of education, which also include books, transportation, examination fees, uniforms as well as the lost earnings from child labour. These costs can constitute between 3 and 30 percent of household income per child.<sup>64</sup> Even where attending school is free, the hidden costs of education may outweigh the benefits for families of low or insecure income – particularly if the education on offer is of poor quality.<sup>65</sup> 'Opportunity costs' are a key driver of girls' being withdrawn or not enrolled in school.

When girls bear a disproportionate burden of household chores, child and family care, and home-based income generating activities, parents may perceive school as an unaffordable time commitment for their daughters. Again, evidence shows that when faced with this choice, parents will most frequently prioritise the education of their sons over daughters<sup>66</sup>. Economic downturns have been shown to have a disproportionate impact on primary school completion rates for girls, which are estimated to decline by 29 percent – compared to 22 percent for boys.<sup>67</sup>

An important share of primary school pupils who drop out are over-age by several years, either because they have entered school late or because they have had to repeat school grades.<sup>68</sup> In 20 of 23 countries with available data, children who dropped out of primary school were more likely to be significantly over-age for their level of education, often by three years or more.<sup>69</sup> At the same time, the opportunity cost of education increases with age as vulnerable, low-income families weigh the benefits of keeping older children in school against

the need for income. This often leads to children dropping out of school in order to work.<sup>70</sup>

Both Brazil and Jamaica are examples of countries where boys in low income urban settings often drop out to work in semi-skilled jobs that do not require completion of secondary education.<sup>71</sup> In Brazil, boys are even more likely than girls to drop out in upper secondary school. One of the reasons is that they do not view education as offering a guarantee of future employment.<sup>72</sup> In these contexts, attitudes can be underpinned by a lack of educated male role models.<sup>73</sup>

Removing the direct and indirect costs associated with education is the most effective way to reduce child labour. More flexible and responsive education systems and improved learning environments are needed to attract working children into the classroom and keep them there<sup>74</sup>, as well as suitable role models, both male and female, to tackle negative norms around masculinity and femininity.

Wealth is still a cause of discrimination in education provision. Where policies do not address income inequality, the poorest children are missing out on their right to education. Although children from the poorest households are now more likely to enrol in school, they are still more likely than children from the richest quintile to drop out.<sup>75</sup>

In some countries, such as Bangladesh and Pakistan, over 30 percent of primary school enrolment is in private schools. In Bangladesh at lower secondary level, 97.71 percent of children are enrolled in private education institutions<sup>76</sup>. Globally, governments have yet to assume sufficient responsibility for pre-primary education: as of 2011, private providers were catering for 33% of all enrolled children<sup>77</sup>. The cost of private provision of early childhood care and education is one of the factors that contribute to inequity in access at this level<sup>78</sup>. Some parents may choose to send their children to private schools because they are, or are perceived to be, of better quality. However, where private provision is so widespread as to leave parents with no alternative than to enrol their children in a private education institution, the responsibility and impetus of the State to provide free, quality education for all children is diminished.

Targeted interventions, such as conditional or unconditional cash transfers, can be an effective means to ensure all children are able to access their right to education. Furthermore, targeting spending can improve access to education for the

most excluded children. However, education budgets are often skewed towards privileged children and youth rather than the most vulnerable and excluded children and young people – including those living in poverty and remote locations. For example, in Malawi, where the level of public spending per primary school child is among the lowest in the world, 73 percent of spending on education benefit the 10 percent who are most educated.<sup>79</sup>

### Plan International's Position

- **Plan International believes that no child should be denied the right to access an inclusive, quality education due to poverty, and recognises that poverty exacerbates the likelihood of exclusion for girls or children with disabilities. All actors – governments, intergovernmental organisations and civil society – have a responsibility to support those most in need to access and complete an inclusive, quality education.**
- **Plan International believes that pre-primary, primary and secondary education should be fee- and cost-free. Targeted measures should be taken to ensure that children from the poorest backgrounds, and particularly girls, are supported to access their right to education.**

### Plan International's Recommendations

- **National governments should take proactive measures to identify and address the direct and indirect costs of education. Pre-primary, primary and secondary education must be free for all students.**
- **Governments must ensure that domestic resources for education prioritize ensuring access to quality education for the poorest and most excluded children. Targeting spending to the poorest quintile and those living in remote locations will help ensure equal access to education for all.**
- **Governments should invest in targeted measures, such as bursaries, scholarships or cash transfers, to ensure that the associated costs of education – including but not limited to school uniforms and materials and the journey to school – do not prevent any children, and particularly girls, from being able to attend formal or non-formal education.**
- **Governments must ensure availability of affordable, quality early childhood care, and at least one year of free pre-primary education for all children.**
- **Governments should work to urgently eliminate the worst forms of child labour, and implement legislation specifying a minimum age for work**

### CASE STUDY: *Apni Beti Apna Dhan* Conditional Cash Transfers in India

The government of Haryana developed a conditional cash transfer (CCT) programme for girls whereby their parents were given 500 rupees when the girl was born, and a savings bond of 2500 rupees was purchased in her name. This was redeemable at a maturity of 25,000 rupees, only after the girl turned 18 years old, and only on the condition that she remained in school and unmarried.

The scheme was successful at keeping girls in school. Beneficiaries of the programme remained in school for longer than non-beneficiaries. Moreover, a higher proportion of beneficiaries than non-beneficiaries also achieved higher educational attainment.

However, there were limitations. The programme did not affect the probability of being ever-married or the probability of marriage before the age of 18. Beneficiaries were more likely to get married exactly at age 18. This is likely because many beneficiary families saw the cash as a way to help defray the cost of a wedding or to contribute to a dowry payment.

Girls who participated in the programme were more likely to be enrolled in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, but the programme did not have an effect on girls staying in school beyond this level to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade or higher levels. The evaluation showed that as girls transitioned to secondary schools, which were further from their villages, requiring travel to attend them, there were additional financial and safety challenges for girls and their families. To protect girls from perceived sexual transgressions, parents often elected not to send their daughters to secondary school.

The study showed that CCTs can have some positive impact on education outcomes for girls, but that CCTs alone are not enough to keep girls in school. Where negative social norms such as child marriage are present, other, or additional solutions may be needed in order to tackle the root-causes of these issues.



(as per ILO standards outlined in Convention 138), and maximum number of daily hours for work, and focus efforts to progressively prevent underage children from working. Governments must offer protection and rehabilitation for children who are or have been engaged in child labour and ensure that they are able to enter or re-enter the formal education system.

## ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

The right to education is not suspended during emergencies. Education in emergencies (EiE) is a necessity, providing physical, psychosocial and cognitive protection which can be both life-sustaining and life-saving. It is increasingly recognised as a vital part of an emergency response. EiE ensures dignity and sustains life by offering structure, stability and hope for the future during a time of crisis, particularly for children and adolescents. Agenda 2030 applies to everyone, and education in emergencies is a key element in sustainable development and sustainable peace. It can ensure that the next generation is equipped with the skills and knowledge to be active citizens, find meaningful employment opportunities when they get older, and learn essential human rights based lessons on gender equality and non-discrimination.

In spite of this, education is often one of the first activities to be abandoned when disasters occur. In protracted conflicts, destruction of school infrastructure, the use of schools for military purposes, or the deliberate targeting of schools, has the potential to deny education for several years – damaging infrastructure, and making schools unsafe spaces. Natural hazards, too, such as earthquakes and flooding, can destroy or render schools unsafe, and present additional hazards on the journey to and from school. Poorly constructed school facilities lead to loss of life and lifelong injury and disability for millions of children and school staff around the world.<sup>80</sup> In the immediate aftermath of disasters, schools are also often used as shelters, rather than as learning centres. Localised hazards and daily risks are some of the main reasons children attend school, for example, issues related to road safety, water safety, and smaller-scale flooding. Other emerging issues are pollution and haze which cause health issues such as asthma.

Conversely schools can provide physical protection from hostile surroundings, whether in displacement camps or informal settlements in rural or urban areas, and from violations such as violence, child

labour, exploitation and recruitment into armed forces<sup>81</sup>. Protection is particularly critical for displaced girls and young women; emergencies can exacerbate gender inequalities and discrimination, and place girls at increased risk of gender-based and sexual violence and abuse<sup>82</sup>.

Conflicts have the potential to deny education for several years, leading to generations missing out on an education<sup>83</sup>. Conflicts and other crises also interrupt economic activity and can drive families, communities, and countries deeper into poverty. For every three years of violence, GDP growth drops at least 2.7 percent, limiting opportunities for social and economic development<sup>84</sup>.

Refugee children are five times more likely to be out of school than non-refugee children. Only 50 percent of refugee children have access to primary education, compared to a global average of over 90 percent<sup>85</sup>. At secondary level the gaps become larger, suggesting that secondary schooling is less available for refugee adolescents, or that there are high drop-out rates. Only 22 percent of refugee adolescents attend lower secondary school, compared to 84 percent of non-refugee adolescents<sup>86</sup>.

Providing refugee children with the opportunity to access and complete a quality education is especially urgent given that many may find themselves in a protracted state of displacement that may go on for years<sup>87</sup>. In 2011, before the crisis in Syria had led to a surge in the number of new refugees, half of all refugees had been in exile for over 22 years<sup>88</sup>. Only a small proportion of displaced persons achieve a durable solution, such as resettlement in a new country, each year<sup>89</sup>, meaning the overall number will continue to increase.

Displaced girls face significant challenges in accessing their right to education. Data for refugees shows that in 2011, there were nine girls for every ten boys enrolled in schools at primary levels in both camp and urban settings<sup>90</sup>, with the gender gap widening as children get older; in 2015, for every 10 refugee adolescent boys in secondary school, there were the equivalent of seven girls<sup>91</sup>. Girls and young women make up over 70 percent of the world's internally displaced people, and are also far more likely to be out of school than boys<sup>92</sup>. Child marriage and teenage pregnancy are significant barriers to refugee girls attending school.<sup>[xiii]</sup> The gender gap in access to education serves to compound the disadvantage of girls in

displacement settings, and can heighten existing gender inequalities.<sup>[xiv]</sup>

A recent report on out-of-school children also notes that the fear and insecurity associated with armed conflict reduces the demand for education.<sup>[xv]</sup> Fear may also aggravate gender inequalities, leading to restrictions of girls' movements in particular.<sup>[xvi]</sup>

Schools are often in the firing line during armed conflict, with teachers and pupils often seen as legitimate targets for violence, rape and other sexual violence, as well as forced recruitment. A study by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack documented thousands of assaults on students, teachers and institutions in 70 countries in a five-year period ending in 2013<sup>[xvii]</sup>. The incidents included bombings, kidnappings, illegal arrests, use of schools for military purposes, torture and killings of students and teachers<sup>[xviii]</sup>.

Governments of 64 countries have signed the Safe Schools Declaration, committing them to implement the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict<sup>[xix]</sup>. However, these guidelines need to be implemented at the national level. Living in a country with an ongoing armed conflict increases the likelihood of dropout for children in school.<sup>[xx]</sup> Furthermore, children who miss school as a result of armed violence tend not to return.<sup>[xxi]</sup>

Education is also essential in conflict prevention activities, through gender equality and human rights based curricula, as well as in building resilience for children and communities to better respond to shocks resulting from sudden onset disasters. Children, especially girls, do not always have access to life-saving skills that can protect them during a disaster. Cultural restrictions on young women's and girls' behaviour that affects what they are taught, for instance girls not learning or being taught to swim or climb trees, has been found to directly impact their likelihood of survival during a disaster. Resilience building activities provided through education can provide life-saving information to children prior to an emergency, which is particularly vital in contexts most at risk of facing sudden onset disasters in increasing frequency. Life-saving information, as well as details as to where to go in case of an emergency, can then be shared with families and communities, as children often bring this information home with them, building resilience for entire communities.

In addition to curricula based resilience building activities, the Comprehensive School Safety

Framework (CSSF), serves as a global framework that strives to reduce the impacts of disasters, primarily caused by natural hazards, on the education system, schools, staff and children. The CSSF was developed by a multi-stakeholder mechanism composed of UN agencies, international organisations, and global networks called the Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector (GADRRRES). The aim of the CSSF is to promote a culture of safety through building the capacity of stakeholders to conduct comprehensive risk assessments and design interventions to reduce the risks identified. It is based around three pillars which are designed to build the resilience of the education sector to shocks and stresses as well as the resilience of children. The first pillar concentrates on safe school facilities including structural and non-structural interventions, the second on school disaster management and the third on disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) in the curriculum. The CSSF is an effective tool in reducing some of the aforementioned impacts on education for example through developing plans to ensure educational continuity in emergencies, implementing inclusive disaster-resilient design and construction and practising disaster drills.

This resilience approach can support in bridging the gap between education initiatives and education in emergencies initiatives, leveraging the collective efforts of both development and humanitarian actors as it aims to reduce the impacts on education.

The Worldwide Initiative on Safe Schools (WISS) is a government-led global partnership that aims to promote the implementation of the CSSF globally through Safe School Leaders. Governments of 41 countries have currently signed up to the WISS committing to implement the CSSF and include it in education policies.

### Plan International's Position

- **Plan International believes that no child should be denied their right to education due to conflict and disaster. This fundamental right must be protected before, during and after an emergency, including for displaced children, refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons, to ensure educational continuity.**
- **We believe that education in emergencies is crucial to maintaining a sense of normalcy in children's lives, to provide safe, supportive spaces for children, and for equipping children**

- with the skills and knowledge they need to negotiate their present and future circumstances.
- We believe that education is a core humanitarian need. Education in emergencies interventions must be integrated into all stages of emergency planning and response: through contingency and disaster preparedness planning; early recovery immediately following an emergency; and long-term recovery.
  - Interventions should ensure that children's immediate education needs are met, whilst also planning for longer term provision, eventually reinstating or strengthening national education services.
  - Plan International recognises that education in emergency responses should target those disproportionately affected by emergencies, or at greater risk, in particular girls and children with disabilities.

### Plan International's Recommendations

- National education authorities should develop disaster risk reduction plans to safeguard children from the impacts of emergencies. Education in emergencies support should be available for all children from pre-primary to secondary levels. It should include early stimulation and learning through play for the youngest children, and primary and secondary

education, and a range of flexible, accelerated and non-formal education to reach out-of-school children. Girls and other excluded groups must be considered in programme design to ensure that their specific needs are met

- States should fulfil their commitment in the New York declaration on Refugees and Migrants to provide quality primary and secondary education in safe learning environments for all refugee children, and to do so within a few months of the initial displacement. All refugee and asylum seeking children should be integrated into national education systems
- States should sign on to the Safe Schools Declaration, and take steps to implement the guidelines and protect schools as safe spaces during conflict and disaster. Learning environments should be child-friendly, safe, inclusive and gender responsive, and non-violent, free from abuse and sexual violence.
- States should endorse the Comprehensive Safe Schools Framework and National and Local governments should implement the CSSF, incorporating a gender sensitive resilience approach into education sector policies, plans and budgets.

## CASE STUDY: Safe Schools

Most of the schools in Plan International Sudan's Guli Programme Unit are frequently affected by heavy rain and flash floods, often damaging school infrastructure which consequently affects children's access to quality education. The Elhusai are one particular community subjected to seasonal disasters, which Plan International supports through a safe schools project. Over the course of a year, 20 children from different grades permanently dropped out of school, thought to be linked to the continual erosion of school facilities and resources. A lack of safe latrines during normal time and in disasters, causes many children, especially girls, to leave school early and return home.

In addition to poor school construction, there is a lack of awareness amongst teachers, parents and children about disasters and risk reduction. The community don't understand how to adapt the school calendar to reduce lost school days as a result of seasonal floods.

Accordingly, Plan International Sudan facilitated a participatory comprehensive risk assessment to identify risks and was supported in finding solutions to reduce the risks. The project used the Comprehensive School Safety Framework (CSSF) to ensure all aspects of schools safety were considered including safe school learning facilities, school disaster management and risk and resilience education. The approach build a culture of safety and contributed to building the resilience of children. In particular, 8 classrooms and 2 teacher's offices were retrofitted with support from the government and 4 latrines were constructed (2 for boys and 2 for girls), ensuring safe school building for 325 pupils. Additionally, 18 members of the Parent and Teacher Association (PTA) were trained on how to prevent and reduce risks and find effective solutions. Importantly, school children received child-centered disaster risk reduction training including basic first aid, risk assessments, disaster drills and understanding of what causes disasters.

➤ **Barriers to accessing education in host countries for refugee children and adolescents as well as other non-citizens must be removed by governments, including by: creating inclusive and flexible registration and accreditation systems; ensuring that transport, fees and associated schooling costs do not serve as hindrances; and ensuring that language, academic and protection support is readily available to students and parents**

## ACCESS TO NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Non-formal education is a key inclusive education intervention. Non-formal education programmes can help to ensure that out-of-school children are able to access an education, and in some cases can be prepared for re-entry into the formal education system. This is a key intervention used by Plan International, working with education institutions, civil society and communities to support alternative non-formal education programmes for out of school children and youth, including re-entry into the formal system.

Non-formal education programmes do not necessarily follow the “ladder” system. They may have a differing duration and may or may not confer certification of the learning achieved. Non-formal education activities provide out-of-school children and youth access to structured learning, reinforce their self-esteem and help them find ways to contribute to their communities. In some cases, their activities may serve as a ‘bridge’ to help out-of-school children and youth improve their academic skills to the point where they can re-enter the formal school system<sup>93</sup>.

Alternative education can also support out-of-school adolescent mothers. For example, non-formal second-chance programmes in Angola and Malawi have created opportunities for adolescent mothers to attend classes by allowing them to bring their children with them<sup>94</sup>. In Jamaica, a government-funded programme provided continuing education to adolescent mothers who, until a change in legislation in 2013, were excluded from school when pregnant. The programme has been effective in reintegrating girls into formal education and reducing further pregnancies<sup>95</sup>.

Unfortunately, little systematic assessment of non-formal education alternatives for out-of-school adolescents and youth has been carried out, either on immediate outcomes or long-term impact. However, it is important that non-formal education is not used as a crutch for lack of investment into

formal education systems<sup>96</sup>. The 2015 Global Monitoring Report cautions that NGO service provision may absolve governments of their responsibility to provide education, especially in the non-formal sector. ActionAid found that, over many years, government investment in education appeared to decline in geographical areas where it ran non-formal education centres. Moreover, governments were reluctant to take on the cost of running these NGO centres partly due to their lack of compliance with government regulations<sup>97</sup>.

## Plan International’s Position

**Plan International recognises that non-formal education is a key inclusive education intervention. Non-formal education programmes can help to ensure that out-of-school children are able to access an education, and in some cases can be prepared for re-entry into the formal education system.**

## OVERVIEW: QUALITY, EQUITY AND EQUALITY

Every child has a right to an education that empowers them by developing life skills, learning, critical thinking, socio-emotional and other capacities, self-esteem and self-confidence free from gender bias. Quality education is an increased focus of Agenda 2030, in recognition that focusing on increasing access to education alone will not in itself improve learning outcomes.

The provision of a quality education – from pre-primary to secondary - demands attention to: the content of the curriculum (ensuring that it is comprehensive, relevant and inclusive); and the pedagogy employed (ensuring that this is age-appropriate (for instance play-based for younger children) and supports child-centred, rights-based learning, is gender-responsive, and includes effective assessment). A quality education complies with the aims and purposes of education as outlined in international human rights conventions<sup>98</sup>.

Despite this global understanding of what a quality education entails, and the increased priority given to this aim in Agenda 2030, quality education remains a distant dream for far too many children. According to UNESCO, an estimated 250 million children either don’t make it to grade 4 or reach grade 4 without basic skills in reading, writing and maths<sup>99</sup>. It is fundamentally pointless to work towards ensuring every child is able to go to school if schools are not spaces in which they are able to learn and develop. Globally, we must all do better to ensure that we are equipping young people to



face the problems of the future, giving them the building blocks to be able to steer their own learning, and teaching them the values on which they can make informed, thoughtful decisions.

Education is a powerful thing, and it is fundamentally political. What we teach young people has the power to shape their futures, their societies and economies, their world, values and politics. Education has the potential to be extremely damaging – there are many examples of the negative impact that education can have on shaping world events and national futures. Yet education also has the capability of driving positive change. Young people must be taught the skills and the values to respond to the world's gravest problems, working towards making the world a better place for all. It is for this reason that Plan International believes the curriculum should include teaching on human rights, sustainability and equality, and that every child should have access to comprehensive sexuality education.

Quality education also requires an equitable approach to learning. Equity in education is the means to achieving equality, providing the best opportunities for all students to achieve their full potential and addressing instances of disadvantage which restrict educational achievement. Equity measures are not fair per se but rather are implemented to ensure fairness and equality of outcome. They may involve special treatment or additional actions taken to support learners and reverse the historical and social disadvantages that may prevent learners from benefiting from education on equal grounds<sup>100</sup>. This approach ensures that disadvantaged groups such as girls or children with disabilities will receive additional support according to their needs, and will not continue to be hindered from achieving learning outcomes due to social disadvantages.

Education can have the power to challenge discriminatory social norms and gender inequality. Gender-sensitive curricula, along with gender-responsive classroom teaching and learning practices, can acknowledge and address issues of inclusion, promote gender equitable learning and help girls and boys challenge traditional gender stereotypes. In order for education systems to comprehensively address gender inequality, every aspect of education must be scrutinised to discover where the barriers might be to equal access, and positive learning outcomes.

## Gender Reviews of Education Sector Plans (GRESPs)

Evidence shows that gender reviews of education sector plans and budgets are an effective girls' education intervention. Such reviews enable governments to effectively mainstream gender equality throughout every element of education systems, leading to improvements to access, retention and completion of primary and secondary school education for girls. GRESPs involve a comprehensive gender analysis of every element of a country's approach to education – including enrolment targets, curriculum, teacher recruitment and many other elements. UNGEI and GPE have created a gender review tool to support governments to undertake gender reviews of their education sector plans. Plan International has made a formal commitment to the Global Partnership for Education to support GRESPs in 10 countries by 2018 and has supported the first regional training for this GRESP tool in Tanzania.

Plan International's research has found that assessment systems, curricula materials, pedagogy, teaching and learning processes such as classroom and school management, language of instruction (and the spoken language of teachers and students) as well as teachers' expectations of students can all have an impact on children's ability to learn. These must be addressed in order to achieve positive learning outcomes, and gender equality in learning outcomes<sup>101</sup>.

### Plan International's Position

- **Plan International believes that a quality education is comprehensive, empowering, promotes respect for the dignity and value of all people, and provides a broad range of learning processes that include wider life skills and comprehensive sexuality education. Quality education should provide children and young people with the necessary skills and knowledge, attitudes and behaviours to lead positive and productive lives and to be responsible and active citizens.**
- **Plan International believes that quality education outcomes cannot be secondary to access to education. If children are unable to learn and develop whilst in school, then the education system has failed them.**
- **We believe that education can help to realise the potential in all children, tackling many of the inequalities and exclusionary practices societies perpetuate. We believe we have a collective responsibility to ensure education systems**

achieve this, through quality curricula, teaching pedagogies and learning environments.

### Plan International's Recommendations

- **At all levels of education, national governments must take active steps to ensure that the content of education is relevant to children's lives, and equips them with the full range of knowledge, opportunities and life skills to cope in a rapidly changing world; that learning environments are safe, participatory and gender-sensitive; and that enough teachers are recruited and trained, in order to ensure that children are able to learn**
- **Governments should undertake a gender review of their education sector plans, budgets, curricula, enrolment targets and textbooks, along with teacher training and supervision, to ensure that the education system isn't structurally gender-discriminatory, schools are free of gender stereotypes and promote equality, non-discrimination and human rights, and foster intercultural education. Sufficient budget must be allocated to allow action on any recommendations. Gender reviews of education sector plans should be supported by donors and civil society**

## QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND PRE-PRIMARY PROVISION

Goal 4, Target 2 of Agenda 2030 commits governments to ensuring that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education. Early childhood interventions are crucial if education is to fulfil its role as a catalyst for equity, as they can help mitigate the disadvantages faced by children born into poor and non-literate environments<sup>102</sup>.

Research shows that early childhood care and development programmes combining care, nutrition, protection and stimulation can improve brain development and strengthen children's ability to learn, develop psychological resilience and adapt to change. Language skills can be improved through conversation, repeating and connecting words in meaningful contexts, and early exposure to literacy through reading and play. Gender-aware early learning and education opportunities can also promote gender-equal socialization – with long term, positive implications for girls' self-esteem, expectations and development<sup>103</sup>.

The provision of ECCD is also important for achieving Agenda 2030 target 5.4: recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate. Unpaid care work, predominantly undertaken by women, remains largely un-recognised and under-valued in our communities, our workplaces and our economies. Unpaid care work can encumber women's economic security, through limiting their workforce participation, limiting the accumulation of their retirement incomes and savings, and affecting productivity, economic growth and poverty reduction. Accessible, affordable, flexible, quality early childhood education and care services are vital to ensure that parents, and in the vast majority of cases mothers, are able to go back to work if they choose to do so following parental leave. This is a step towards addressing the unpaid care economy, where women are the vast majority of unpaid carers.

Where ECCD programmes are targeted at children of young mothers, two vulnerable groups can be supported together. Such programmes can combine care for children with non-formal education opportunities for young mothers to develop their own skills and to continue their learning.

Where pre-primary services exist, the poor quality of these is often a serious issue, and a particular concern given that poor quality early childhood care and education can actually cause harm. Pre-primary facilities are often overcrowded, poorly resourced, unfriendly, and even unhealthy and unsafe<sup>104</sup>. Curricula are often overly academic and inappropriate, rather than play-based. There is also frequently an absence of inclusive services that reach all children<sup>105</sup>, including through:

- Early identification, referral and inclusion of children with developmental delays or disabilities
- Early childhood care and education services sensitive to the child's language, culture and religion – including mother tongue education
- Mobile preschools and home visits for children living in rural and remote locations
- Child friendly spaces in emergency situations or in areas of protracted crises

- Insufficient supervision and regulation, particularly for institutions in rural and remote areas
- Pupil-teacher ratios (PTRs) as high as 30:1. Large PTRs can often be due to a shortage of personnel, particularly in rural areas

There is insufficient attention paid to supporting young children to transition successfully into primary school<sup>106</sup>. In many countries, the consequence of neither children nor schools being “ready” is that drop out and repetition rates in grade 1 are high: and higher than at any other time in primary school. Many of those who remain in school become established in persistent patterns of under-achievement and leave school unable to read fluently, calculate, or solve problems<sup>107</sup>.

Given a lack of coordinated planning across the primary and pre-primary levels, many educational systems focus on readying children rather than ensuring that schools provide and support a smooth transition between the two levels. Primary schools often fail to provide an environment which enables all children to learn effectively. A number of factors impact primary schools’ readiness for children from pre-primary stage, including:

- *Early primary grade teacher capacity:* early primary teachers tend to be viewed as less important than those teaching higher grades; many lack the training and access to materials to promote relevant play-based and child-centred educational approaches.
- *Language barriers:* failure to offer mother tongue education
- *Class size and overcrowding:* in some countries, meeting targets for free universal primary education has meant significant increase in classroom sizes, including in the early grades. Having large early grade classes interferes with the contact time teachers have with each child, the relationships they build with their students and their capacity to teach. Supporting the development of key skills that are critical for later learning and success is impossible with class sizes of 75–100+ children.

### Plan International’s Position

- **Plan international believes that pre-primary education is a vital component of quality education, ensuring children’s brain development, strengthening their ability to learn, develop psychological resilience and to adapt to**

**change, and readying children to enter primary school. This helps to mitigate disadvantages faced by children born into poor and non-literate environments.**

- **Plan International believes that ensuring every child has access to at least one year of free, quality pre-primary education should be a priority for national governments.**
  - **We believe that early childhood care and pre-primary education is of critical value for the socialisation of gender equality. It is during early childhood and in very first years of school that discriminatory social norms are formed. Pre-primary education must be gender-sensitive and actively reject harmful gender stereotypes.**
  - **Plan International believes that early childhood care provision is a vital intervention to reduce the burden and gendered distribution of unpaid care work, and provides essential support for young mothers in taking up educational or economic opportunities.**
- ### Plan International’s Recommendations
- **National governments should implement policies to ensure that early learning programmes are gender sensitive, and combine care, nutrition, protection and stimulation.**
  - **Governments should support Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) so that young girls and boys can begin to get crucial services when there is a critical window of brain development and so that children of young mothers have a safe and protective environment to learn through play while the mother can focus on her own education. Pairing support for adolescent girls and ECCD provides a solution for two vulnerable groups of girls.**
  - **Recognising the particular importance of the early years for gender socialization, governments must take adequate measures to ensure the provision of quality, gender-sensitive pre-primary education - including through reviews of curriculum and learning materials and teacher training.**
  - **National and local governments should increase investments in school readiness interventions that support children’s successful transition into primary school – and in particular adaptation of the pedagogical approach in early grades so that it is active and play-based rather than more structured or formal.**



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## QUALITY CURRICULA

### Inclusive and Gender Responsive Curricula

The classroom can and should be a space free from discriminatory social norms, in which all children are included, and enabled to learn together. For children with disabilities, the curriculum, and how it is delivered, needs to be adapted to enable them to achieve learning outcomes, for instance by making learning materials available in accessible formats, like large print or Braille. Children with developmental/ cognitive disabilities may also need curricular modifications when appropriate/ necessary, so that they can still learn with their peers but complete tasks that are modified to accommodate their disability. A good example of this is in adapting sports and physical education for children with disabilities:

#### Programme Approach: TREE Model for inclusive sports education

1. Teaching style: when explaining or coaching a sport, the teaching style may need to change in order to include children with disabilities. Using appropriate language, ensuring positioning for optimum hearing / visuals, or using a buddy system can all facilitate participation.
2. Rules: the rules of any given sport can be adapted to ensure children with disabilities can play. This may mean the ball is allowed to

bounce twice; or every player has to touch the ball before a team can score; or increasing or decreasing the number of players per team.

3. Environment: To include children with disabilities, the environment can be altered by reducing or increasing the size of the playing area; adjusting net heights and sizes; or playing on hard surfaces rather than grass or vice versa.
4. Equipment: Equipment can also be adapted. This may mean playing with fluorescent balls, using lighter bats or racquets, or using a ball with a bell inside.

For too many students, learning materials are not available in their mother tongue, contributing to lower achievement levels and undermining equity. The language children are taught in often reflects broader societal inequalities or asymmetries in power. In some contexts the language of instruction doesn't align with the community's, the teacher's or the students' maternal language. When the student's maternal language is misaligned, there are often inadequate means, and lack of a clear pedagogic strategy to integrate children linguistically into the learning environment. No reliable data are available for access to Mother Tongue Education at the pre-school level. However, in developing countries an estimated 221 million children enter first grade unable to understand the formal language of instruction. Children who

### CASE STUDY: Plan Project case study – children who learn in a language other than their mother tongue

Students in Chom Phou, a village in the Oudomxay Province of Laos, have grown up without early childhood development services and access to pre-primary education before they enrol in first grade. Day one of the school year is therefore likely to be the first time these native Khmu speakers have ever had to learn in Lao - the official language of instruction in the country.

The lack of language skills is a contributing factor to high rates of dropout and repetition in the early years of primary school in rural communities.

The Lao Educational Access, Research and Networking (LEARN) Project is helping new learners overcome these challenges through its Lao language transition course. Taught for the first four weeks of the school year in September, the course aims to build children's Lao language skills in a child-centred, interactive and gender-inclusive environment and lay the foundation for better learning in early primary school.

The teacher, who himself grew up in Chom Phou, knows first-hand how challenging it can be to learn in an unfamiliar language: "Last week, I had to explain in Khmu when children didn't grasp what I was saying in Lao. After two weeks of teaching the short course I can already see improvements in their Lao language skills."

A father to one of the young girls who is enrolled in the language transition course, says: "Parents around here don't have a high level of education. I went to junior secondary school but my wife only completed grade 2 of primary school. We want our daughter to be more educated than we are and to find a job in the government."

receive schooling in their mother tongue language in early grades have better learning outcomes overall and, in particular, significantly better literacy levels, but in spite of evidence of the value and benefits of early education in mother tongue, few countries invest in this<sup>108</sup>.

Mother tongue education is also vital for increasing parent participation in, and support for, their children's early education. Improved communication between parents and pre-primary teachers means that parents are better able to participate in school activities and decision-making and in their children's learning, including in the home.

Frequently, children do not have equal access to opportunities in school, meaning that certain students are disadvantaged. In many schools, girls do not have the same access to sports that boys do. In Saudi Arabian public schools, girls are not allowed to play sports at all, despite increased demand for this from girls themselves<sup>109</sup>. In other country contexts, girls have access to different sports – for instance in the UK the national curriculum does not outline which sports girls and boys should play, but girls have reported being discouraged from playing football by teachers because it is perceived to be a boys' sport<sup>110</sup>. More frequently in the UK, girls play sports that are not professionalised (for instance rounders) which may devalue the meaning of sport in girls' eyes. This may correlate to lower participation levels in sport for women than men in the UK<sup>111</sup>.

The limited official data available suggests that too little is being done within public pre-school programmes to challenge – rather than reinforce – the way children are taught unjust gendered norms and attitudes from the earliest age. This is of critical importance recognizing that children are “socialized into” and begin to learn and internalize gendered norms and expectations about their behaviours, potential and future role in early childhood<sup>112</sup>.

A review of education policy in 40 developing countries indicated that policies to integrate gender training into teacher education *at any level* remained scarce. Even in developing countries where such strategies exist (Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Zambia, Bangladesh, Kenya) inadequate resources, and poor implementation, supervision and evaluation have frequently limited their effectiveness. Likewise progress with developing and implementing gender sensitive curricula – even at the primary and secondary

levels – has been limited.<sup>113</sup> As a result, in many countries education reproduces gender inequalities through biased curriculum material and pedagogical practices, teacher attitudes and behaviours, discipline, and the threat or presence of violence.<sup>114,115,116</sup>

Where schools reinforce negative gender stereotypes, inequality and discrimination, girls are often discouraged from attending<sup>117</sup>. Education can have the power to challenge discriminatory social norms in societies where girls are not ascribed the same value as boys. The curriculum and learning materials – right from pre-primary - should combat gender stereotypes that ascribe nurturing, care roles for women, and science, technology, “provider/protector” roles for men. However, in some countries, curricula hinder gender-equitable learning, reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes by representing girls and women in lower status (for instance caregivers) or subservient roles and teaching girls attitudes and expectations for their behaviours and future role that are limiting. In the Punjab region of Pakistan, English textbooks were found to barely represent girls and women, and where they were represented this was in a discriminatory fashion<sup>118</sup>. Where girls and minority groups are included in learning materials in ways that challenge stereotyped expectations about behaviours and roles, learners are provided with an increased range of role models that inspire them to learn.

“Women's achievements should be showcased to both young women and young men. The curriculum should also focus on more women in history, literature, art and science. Far too many courses exist without a female name being mentioned.”  
Young woman, Australia

Gender-sensitive curricula, along with gender-responsive classroom teaching and learning practices, instead acknowledge and address issues of inclusion, promote gender equitable learning and help girls and boys challenge traditional gender stereotypes, and make freer decisions about what they want to do and who they want to be. In Mumbai, the Gender Equity Movement in Schools project developed an add-on curriculum including content on gender roles, violence, and sexual and reproductive health for standard 6 and 7 children. This led to improved problem-solving skills, increased self-confidence and gender awareness, and more positive attitudes amongst participants<sup>119</sup>.

## Importance of Comprehensive Sexuality Education

The provision of comprehensive sexuality education for both boys and girls is key to promoting an understanding and awareness of sexual and reproductive health and rights and to developing the skills, knowledge, autonomy, confidence and ability to make free and informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive lives, to enjoy fulfilling and healthy relationships and to protect themselves and their partners against ill-health, violence and unwanted pregnancy. Evidence demonstrates that CSE programmes, if delivered correctly, have a positive impact on behaviour, including increased self-efficacy related to condom use and refusing sex.<sup>120</sup>

Access to comprehensive sexuality education is grounded in human rights – intersecting with the rights to education, health, participation and protection.<sup>121</sup> CSE has the ability to not only empower children, adolescents and young people to make informed, autonomous decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive health and rights, and current and future relationships<sup>122</sup> but can also be part of a holistic approach to challenging gender inequalities and preventing and responding to gender-based violence.<sup>123</sup> As such, it is a powerful tool in the realisation of sexual and reproductive health and rights, and can trigger positive shifts in social norms which underpin violence against girls and women such as harmful notions of masculinity, gender roles and stereotypes both in school and the wider community.<sup>124</sup>

There is increased political commitment to the delivery of CSE across the world, with the African Union, East and Southern Africa, and Ministers for Health and Education from Latin America and the Caribbean all signing declarations of commitment to the implementation of CSE. However, CSE is absent from Agenda 2030, and there is strong resistance from some countries to including CSE as part of a national curriculum. At the national level implementation is slow, and few countries have a mandatory, comprehensive sexuality education curriculum in place<sup>125</sup>.

Access to CSE becomes even more important during emergency situations. It is essential that in the aftermath of a disaster, during a protracted crisis, and even during a conflict, education has child-friendly, gender sensitive mechanisms in place to prevent and respond to gender based violence. CSE can teach young people about their sexual health, and where to access sexual and

reproductive health and support services. More broadly, gender-sensitive schools and safe education spaces can offer increased protection from exploitation and harm in an emergency, especially for girls, who are often at greater risk of gender-based violence – including rape, sexual exploitation or abuse, prostitution and transactional sex, and trafficking<sup>126</sup>.

Where humanitarian programmes are delivering education for children affected by conflict, these must be gender-sensitive. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) has developed the Gender Marker, a tool that codes, on a 0-2 scale, whether or not a humanitarian project is designed well enough to ensure that women/girls and men/boys will benefit equally from it or that it will advance gender equality in another way.

## Relevant and Comprehensive

Quality curricula are essential to ensuring that whilst in school children are learning a comprehensive set of basic skills, competencies and knowledge that are relevant to their lives, and which allow them to actively participate in society, to become economically independent and to make decisions about their futures. National curricula provide a level of standardisation of education content, ensuring children are learning core skills and competencies, and providing a national comparator for educational attainment.

Whilst there is no model curriculum that is relevant in all contexts – in fact, adapting education curricula to the local context is important – it is important that learning is not limited to achieving literacy and numeracy, and that all children have equal opportunities to learn a broader range of life skills and knowledge. Goal 4, target 7 of Agenda 2030 commits governments to ensuring that “all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development”.

Education can reinforce or challenge negative stereotypes, equipping people with knowledge, skills and essential life skills. A quality curriculum should allow children to develop their psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills, so that they can build healthy relationships, empathize with others, make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate

effectively, and manage the demands and challenges of their lives in a healthy and productive manner<sup>127</sup>. A quality curriculum should also provide children with knowledge and skills which are relevant for their lives and equip them to navigate and positively influence their societies, cultures and economies. A quality curriculum can also equip children and young people to tackle the world's biggest challenges such as gender inequality, climate change, conflict and violence, and thus it is vital that sustainability, peace and non-violence are prioritised in all national curricula.

The consequences of curricula that do not seem relevant to children's lives can be far-reaching. Many children drop out of education in order to participate in the labour market – undertaking paid employment. This is due to both need, and due to a sense that education is not teaching them skills for better work. Many girls drop out of school due to early pregnancy or child marriage. This is because education is not teaching girls – and boys – that women can actively participate in the labour market, and have opportunities outside the home and unpaid household or care work. Education is frequently also not teaching girls and boys about their sexual and reproductive health and rights through comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). Education that does not equip young people to deal with the realities of their lives can lead to a lack of skills and confidence, limited access to decent work, and lack of or no access to leadership roles.

### **BOX: Education, jobs and gender**

A quality education should equip children with the skills and abilities to reach their full potential and maximise their chances of finding decent work. For girls in particular, education can open doors through increasing their mobility and confidence, and also improve health outcomes, especially relating to sexual and reproductive health and rights. This contributes to preventing the transmission of poverty from one generation to the next and to overall economic growth and prosperity.

However, girls and young women face numerous barriers to completing school and accessing relevant training, which prevents them from acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to transition into decent work or to start a business.

For example, the hidden burden of unpaid care and domestic work continues to disproportionately affect girls and women. More than two thirds of all child domestic workers are girls<sup>128</sup> and across the globe, women spend on average three times as much time as men undertaking unpaid care and domestic

work.<sup>129</sup> In some countries, women spend nearly ten times as many hours as men undertaking unpaid work.<sup>130</sup> Physically demanding and time-consuming tasks, such as collection of water or firewood, are also primarily performed by girls and women, limiting the time they have left for educational opportunities and paid work.<sup>131132</sup>

Structural barriers, including discriminatory legal frameworks, also continue to hinder girls and young from getting a job or starting an enterprise. In fact, 90 percent of countries examined by the World Bank have at least one law that restricts economic equality for girls and women,<sup>133</sup> who as a result may be unable to conduct official transactions, own, inherit, or use property, or get a job.<sup>134</sup> In 18 countries, women still require their husband's consent to work.<sup>135</sup> Restrictions to their mobility as a result of gendered cultural norms, safety or the lack of appropriate public transport, as well as gender stereotypes regarding appropriate and acceptable forms of work for girls and women, also act as significant barriers.

Education policies should also take into consideration the fact that self-employment may be the only option available for youth with or without an educational qualification. Attention should therefore be paid to promoting youth entrepreneurship as well as providing opportunities for continued education and training for workers; such opportunities are still limited in many countries<sup>136</sup>.

Where girls and women do work, their jobs are likely to be vulnerable, informal and unprotected. They may be underpaid, or not paid at all. The gender pay gap is estimated to take over a century to close at the current rate<sup>137</sup> and 43 percent of the youth labour force is either unemployed or working, yet living in poverty.<sup>138</sup>

A lack of safe and adequate employment opportunities for girls may influence parents' decision to arrange a marriage for their daughter rather than let her continue her education. In low-income countries, poor education systems, inadequate opportunities for decent employment and qualification mismatch reinforce each other.<sup>139</sup> This is illustrated by the fact that 42 percent of young women are not active in education, training or employment in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>140</sup>

Still, access to education does increase chances of employment and the potential for future earnings – for each year that a girl stays in school her future income increases by 10 to 20 percent.<sup>141</sup> This has a large-scale impact – if gender gaps in the labour



markets were completely closed, as much as US \$28 trillion, or 26 percent, could be added to global annual GDP by 2025.<sup>142</sup> This is equivalent to the combined economies of the US and China today.<sup>143</sup>

### Plan International's Recommendations

- **Governments should engage with private sector employers to improve national systems for workforce development, including through the development of appropriate curricula for training and skills certification, mentorship schemes, work placements and the creation of decent jobs<sup>144</sup> in a safe work environment where rights are protected.**
- **Governments must set specific targets on gender equality and empowerment of girls and women that includes access to education, vocational training and decent employment, acknowledgement of unpaid care work carried out by women and access and control of economic and productive resources (including property ownership and inheritance rights).**
- **Where necessary, legislation, policies and structures should be reformed to eliminate discrimination and harassment in the workplace, ensure equal pay for equal work and ensure that women can access financial services, including credit, loans and bank accounts, on equal terms.**
- **Governments should invest in policies and social protection systems to create an enabling environment for young women to enter and thrive in the formal labour market, such as parental leave, affordable and accessible child care, flexible work hours and social security.**
- **Girls and women must be able to acquire life and work skills as required for success and access to vocational and technical training schemes that are demand- and competency-based; are accountable to girls and women; and do not perpetuate gender-segregated occupational roles.**

*“Many friends of mine were captains of sport teams. My friends inspired me to be active and take leadership in activities. Thanks to them, I didn't fear to do so.” Girl, Japan*

Curricula must be broad-based, to give children and young people the best chance to make free, informed choices about what they want to study and to develop a full and varied range of knowledge and skills. Along with a core set of content that

should as a minimum include literacy and numeracy, citizenship, human rights education and CSE, students should have opportunity to study subjects that develop other skill sets. These should include creativity, cultural awareness, socio-emotional skills, problem-solving, spatial-awareness, social critical-thinking and political awareness.

Adapting curricula to local contexts can also contribute to young people's ability to negotiate their own cultures, societies and economies. Disaster risk reduction education can be critical to improve safety and resilience in the event of natural or man-made hazards. For example, children educated on what to do in the event of an earthquake are likely to make better choices about where to seek protection and what essential items to keep nearby, and will thus be more likely to survive in the event of an earthquake occurring.

Education can support resilience to future crises by educating children about disaster risk reduction and it can keep children safe by teaching them about preventable diseases, nutrition, hygiene and life-saving topics (such as mine awareness). It also provides a safe space to discuss peace, tolerance, conflict resolution, democracy, human rights and environmental conservation.

### Programme Example: Safe Schools

Plan International's comprehensive school safety approach ensures measures are in place to protect school infrastructure, students and education workers throughout the disaster cycle. It encourages schools to establish school disaster management committees that develop Education in Emergencies (EiE) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) plans, conduct regular evacuation drills and include DRR, climate change adaptation (CCA) and conflict issues into formal and non-formal curricula. These provisions raise children's awareness of emergencies and allow the school to prepare in case the school is closed or used as an evacuation centre to ensure educational continuity. It is vital that if the school is regularly used as an evacuation centre that plans are also in place to protect girls from violence by providing them with safe spaces and facilities. The EiE plans also include alternative methods of delivery during an emergency so that students are able to fulfil their right to continued education in spite of an emergency. Furthermore, safe schools projects also train teachers in psychosocial support, allowing them to support children both in emergency settings and in the aftermath of an emergency.

## Education and New Technologies

Curricula need to adapt to keep pace with a rapidly changing world, with new technologies, the challenges raised by climate change, and an increasingly digitalised global economy. As the report of the Education Financing Commission outlines, 'up to half of the world's jobs—around 2 billion—are at high risk of disappearing due to automation in the coming decades. In contrast to the impact of innovation in previous generations, new technologies risk not creating new jobs at anything like the scale they are eradicating them. Due to shifts between industries and the changing nature of work within industries, demand for high-level skills will grow, and many low- and medium-skilled jobs will become obsolete. Jobs open to those without high-level skills will often be insecure and poorly paid'<sup>145</sup>. Acquiring technical ICT skills and learning to use ICT responsibly is also vital in a knowledge based economy where in the medium to long term technology will become inherent to most professional activities.

Education is woefully behind the curve when it comes to keeping pace with new technologies, and equipping young people with the skills for a digitalised economy. Many schools around the world lack electricity. In Liberia, for example, only 6 percent of schools have electricity. Not only does this restrict learning opportunities to daylight hours, it also renders the use of computers/IT impossible.

If information technology is well-tailored to local contexts and integrated into the curriculum, it can provide additional, powerful resources for teacher development and student learning. While digital technology cannot replace well trained, qualified teachers, it can certainly extend and deepen students' learning, and change education practices in the classroom. To facilitate this, it is crucial to train teachers to be able to integrate ICT in their teaching.

ICT can also be useful to facilitate long distance training such as in Plan International's YES! Academy. The YES! Digital Ecosystem is an innovative tool designed to allow youth to follow courses online to develop their skills and their employability. It provides courses which have been developed by experts who understand the country, the market, the opportunities, what works and what doesn't, so young people can learn what, when, and where they want. Programmes such as this can do much to bridge the gaps in education systems, and facilitate lifelong learning for all.

## Plan International's Position

- Plan International believes that education must promote a culture of peace, dignity, equality and sustainability, and enable learners to engage with and address the issues relevant to their lives. The school curriculum should actively combat discrimination or prejudice on the basis of sex, gender, caste, language, age, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity or culture.
- Plan International believes that all children, adolescents and young people – without discrimination – are entitled to comprehensive sexuality education to gain knowledge, explore values and attitudes, and develop the skills they need to make conscious, healthy and respectful choices about relationships and sexuality. Parents and educators should be supported to embrace children's learning from early childhood to allow them to explore, clarify and form life-long healthy attitudes and practices, free from coercion, violence and discrimination.
- Comprehensive sexuality education should be accessible for all children, adolescents and young people, in both formal and non-formal educational settings. Co-curricular activities which complement the formal curriculum are also important as are parental and community involvement and links to gender-responsive, child- adolescent- and youth-friendly healthcare and other services. It should be provided in a way that is non-judgemental, non-discriminatory, scientifically accurate, accessible, inclusive, rights-based, gender-transformative and adapted to the evolving capacity of the child, adolescent or young person.
- Quality education provision in emergencies – both formal and non-formal – must adhere to the minimum standards developed by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies. It must: be delivered by trained professionals; promote gender equality and inclusion; recognise and respond to the diverse cultural/ethnic backgrounds of children; and include modules on human rights, conflict resolution, life skills, comprehensive sexuality education, and disaster risk reduction.
- We believe that a quality education should equip children with the skills and abilities to reach their full potential and maximise their chances of finding decent work. Education should be clearly linked to future opportunity, and should enable

all learners to acquire the skills to succeed in employment or entrepreneurship.

- We believe that information technology must be built into education systems, to ensure that the digital revolution does not intensify inequalities and exclusion.

### Plan International's Recommendations

- National governments must ensure that learning outcomes for girls and boys framed in the national curriculum include a broad and comprehensive range of learning competencies, are culturally sensitive, reflect local and national learning priorities, are designed and adapted in a way that does not disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, and include the skills that enable children to adapt to a rapidly changing world
- National governments should ensure that learning materials are non-discriminatory, gender sensitive, inclusive and representative of all children. Learning materials must be adapted to support the learning needs of all children – and specialised materials must be provided where necessary
- National governments should ensure that the curriculum incorporates education outcomes on human rights and active citizenship, gender equality, sustainability, disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and non-violence
- National governments should provide all children from ethno-linguistic minorities access to quality, culturally relevant mother tongue education - from early childhood care and education to the early grades of primary - recognising its vital importance to literacy outcomes and also to development of a child's cultural identity, sense of self and self-confidence
- Quality teaching and learning in an emergency context is paramount: learning should be participatory and classroom management should be child-friendly, gender-sensitive and non-violent. The curriculum, teaching methods and learning materials should not re-enforce gender stereotypes and should be relevant to the needs and aspirations of all girls
- National governments should connect every classroom to the Internet and work closely with donor governments and the private sector to overcome technical and infrastructure barriers to enabling broadband access. Resources and training should be available for teachers and

students to develop digital literacy skills and to ensure all technology is used effectively and equitably to aid learning and to bridge the gender digital divide<sup>146</sup>.

## TEACHERS: NUMBERS, QUALIFICATIONS, SKILLS AND SUPPORT

Goal 4, target C of Agenda 2030 commits governments to substantially increasing the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states. In almost half the countries in the world there is an acute shortage of qualified teachers<sup>147</sup>. As a result of the struggle to recruit more teachers, quality is being sacrificed, with some countries recruiting untrained or volunteer teachers. With Agenda 2030 committing governments to achieving universal secondary schooling and one year pre-primary by 2030 the strain is even greater.

Goal 4, target 6 of Agenda 2030 commits governments to ensuring that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy. This joins target 1 on relevant and effective learning outcomes, and target 2 on primary school readiness, to commit governments to delivering clear learning outcomes through education provision. For the millions of children who are able to attend school, they must be enabled to learn whilst there. Studies have shown that teachers are the most crucial factor for learning outcomes – for instance improving the quality of teaching has a greater impact on education outcomes than reducing class sizes<sup>148</sup>.

There are about 30 million primary school teachers and 32 million secondary school teachers working in classrooms around the world. To provide universal primary and secondary education by 2030, 68.8 million teachers will need to enter the workforce. Of these, 48.6 million will replace teachers leaving the workforce, while 20.1 million additional teachers are needed to expand access to school for growing school-age populations with no more than 40 students in a class at primary level, and no more than 25 students per class at secondary level<sup>149</sup>.

In countries with data on student-teacher ratios and teacher qualification, it is at pre-primary level – ironically, the stage with the most children and the greatest needs – that we see the largest classes



and the least qualified teachers, who are thus less well prepared to support child-centred learning and play-based pedagogy<sup>150</sup>. Levels of qualification, support, supervision and remuneration are worse than at any other stage of education, and low status and the perception that the role is one of care provision rather than education is compounded by gender norms<sup>151</sup>. The lower requirements in terms of qualifications, low pay and status, poor incentives, and limited career opportunities of early childhood workers undermine the possibility of recruiting and retaining high-calibre staff, which are essential to supporting children to develop to their full potential.<sup>152</sup>

Lack of value placed on teaching as a profession, in addition to low pay and high demands from the job, are all reasons why not enough people choose to enter the profession, and in some contexts high numbers of newly qualified teachers leave the profession. In Africa, attrition rates range from 3% in Mali, to 17% in Angola<sup>153</sup>. In the UK, 30% of teachers leave the profession within 5 years of qualifying<sup>154</sup>. Low pay and teacher shortage can lead to teachers working in more than one school, and shift teaching, whereby education is delivered in two or even three slots within a day. This leads to teachers working long hours in order to make a decent living, and having less or no time to dedicate to reviewing students' work or planning lessons. Double shifting has been introduced in developing country contexts such as Rwanda, and also in humanitarian contexts, such as in Jordan, in order to increase access to education for children in refugee camps<sup>155</sup>. In addition, teachers working under such conditions are much more likely to be absent from the classroom; to accept bribes from parents; and to be unprepared for classes.

In multilingual countries with many local languages, teachers themselves may not speak the local language which children learn at home, or they may not be fully proficient in the language of instruction. Teachers should be equipped for teaching across a multi-lingual curriculum, so as to ensure that children are not disadvantaged by being unable to learn in their mother tongue. In some cases, this will involve ensuring sufficient placements of teachers who speak local languages, through working with teacher organisations to develop appropriate recruitment and retention schemes. In other cases, it will involve better training, development and support.

## Ensuring teachers have the right skills and approaches for effective learning

The skills required to be an effective teacher are multiple and diverse: teachers need to be able to support the individual learning needs of all the children in their class; identify children at risk of delay or disability that need additional support. They must not only have knowledge of their subjects, but be able to help students to learn, build skills and understand the subject matter through age appropriate pedagogical approaches; they must also be able to teach a diverse range of students with different needs and from different backgrounds using culturally sensitive methods. Teachers also need the skills for large class management, recognition of unique needs of boys, girls and children with disabilities, and techniques for child-centred learning and positive discipline. These skills enable teachers to maximise learning opportunities for all students, no matter how disadvantaged their background<sup>156</sup>.

The 2013 Education For All Global Monitoring Report calls for teaching practices to be updated, moving away from traditional methods such as lecturing and rote-learning, to focus on building character and critical thinking and moving towards learner-centred pedagogies which emphasise awareness of each child's abilities and phase of development<sup>157</sup>. There is evidence that these new methodologies are more effective for teaching all children, and particularly girls and children from marginalised groups<sup>158</sup>.

For children with disabilities learning outcomes are lower due to a range of barriers to their learning such as lack of physically accessible education. In addition they are often not provided with the particular assistance they need to ensure the curriculum is accessible to them – such as interpretation, sign-language, or braille. Teachers are often not trained with the pedagogic skills to make even the slightest modifications to student needs. Hence the need for child-centred learning which implies the need to train teachers about different types of learning and the necessary accommodations to optimize student learning. For many disabled children worldwide, schooling rarely continues beyond primary level<sup>159</sup>: Teachers trained to be better able to support learners will lead to more children with disabilities achieving learning outcomes, completing primary education, and being able to transition to secondary level.

## Gender responsive teaching pedagogies

Female teachers are crucial in order to attract girls to school – countries with more female primary teachers are more likely to have higher enrolment rates for girls in secondary schools<sup>160</sup>. Studies show that women teachers can be role models for girls and can also make schools safer for them<sup>161</sup>. But, female teachers often avoid rural or disadvantaged areas for the same reasons that cause girls to be out of school: safety concerns, lack of electricity, good housing and healthcare<sup>162</sup>, which compounds the barriers that girls face in accessing a quality education in the most disadvantaged areas. A key reason for the shortage in female teachers in some areas of the world is gender disparity in schools: there are fewer female qualified candidates – and this is exacerbated as the grades increase and expectations regarding qualifications increase, leading to more female teachers at pre-primary level and far fewer at secondary level. Retaining more girls in education can help to change this trend over time. Other actions that can be taken to recruit female teachers in more rural or disadvantaged areas include providing safe housing, increased pay or subsidised transportation<sup>163</sup>. Incentive schemes may also work, such as ensuring that time spent teaching in rural or more disadvantaged areas contributes towards promotion.

“One of my teachers is a role model for me. She is a very dignified lady in her manners and understands us students, unlike the other teachers. She is not only a teacher with respect to her subject, she also tells us a great deal about life in general, and believes in us and motivates us.” Girl, Pakistan

Globally, the numbers show that there are high levels of female teaching staff, with 94 percent of pre-primary teachers being female, compared with 64 percent in primary, 56 percent in lower secondary and 50 percent in upper secondary. However, numbers are unevenly distributed and in some countries the number of female teachers is low for primary and secondary education. At the upper secondary level, the female share in teaching staff ranges from a high of 83 percent in Myanmar to a low of 4 percent in Liberia. The evidence shows that as well as the proportion of female teachers decreasing as education levels rise, this pattern continues into school management, where proportionately fewer women than men rise to school leadership positions, even in countries with high levels of gender equality, such as Finland<sup>164</sup>.

Lack of female teachers in leadership roles, or teaching at higher levels, or teaching science, technology, engineering and mathematics, can teach young people that men are more suited to occupying positions of power, or to engage in certain subjects, or that women are more suited to positions that involve care and nurturing<sup>165</sup>. Conversely, at the pre-primary level there is a need for more male teachers, so that children are exposed to a diversity of adults and can see that men are equally able to be nurturing and caring.

“I would be really inspired if there were women occupying good positions in my school, not just being secretaries and art teachers. Throughout my education, I have had to struggle and fight my way to where I am now, without role models to look up to – except my mother.” Young woman, Uganda

Recruiting more female teachers alone will not solve the problem: all teachers must be trained to use gender responsive pedagogy in the classroom. Gender responsive pedagogy refers to teaching and learning processes that pay attention to the specific learning needs of girls and boys, taking an all-encompassing gender approach in the processes of lesson planning, teaching, classroom management and performance evaluation. Gender responsive pedagogy is about responding to the needs of all students, and acknowledging that they come to the classroom already subject to social norms that ascribe different roles to girls and boys, and already socialised to behave in certain ways. Studies show, for example, that where girls are socialised into being submissive – not speaking up or questioning authority – the typical classroom arrangement of rows of desks facing the front of the room reinforces this gender dynamic. Girls are less likely to participate. This can be tackled through breaking the class up into smaller groups<sup>166</sup>.

### Plan International's Position

- **Teachers are the primary factor contributing to a quality, equitable and inclusive education. Teachers are an important, highly skilled resource, and as such deserve respect and support. In order for teachers to be able to do their job, and to ensure their regular attendance, national governments should commit to fairly remunerating teachers for their work.**
- **Plan International believes that female teachers and managers at all levels of education are vital to facilitating the learning of all children, and particularly girls, and to combatting negative stereotypes about gender roles. Female teachers should be encouraged into the profession,**

enabled to progress in their careers, and to take on leadership positions.

- Teaching pedagogies must ensure that all children are supported to achieve learning outcomes and progress in a wide range of subjects, irrespective of gender or disability.

### **Plan International's Recommendations**

- National governments should prioritise the recruitment, training and retention of a sufficient number of adequately qualified teachers and teaching assistants at all levels – including through the definition of competencies frameworks, strengthened pre- and in-service training and more adequate pay/work conditions.
- National governments should target recruitment where there are specific shortages: this may mean recruiting more female teachers, more teachers to early childhood education, and more teachers able to speak local languages. Or adopting policies to attract teachers to the areas where there is most need.
- National governments should develop policies to enable female teachers to progress in their careers, into senior positions, including management positions, leadership positions and decision-making roles within local and national government.
- Teachers working at all levels of education provision should be provided with comprehensive initial training – including in gender-sensitive, inclusive and learner-centred pedagogies – and subsequent opportunities for periodic professional development, collaborative learning and participating in communities of practices.
- Teachers must also be trained in some of the basic skills to identify students with a disability or at risk of developmental delay, and teaching assistants should be available to provide one-on-one support.
- Teachers must have good working conditions, be remunerated fairly, and have their own rights respected. They should be provided with the appropriate levels of administrative and managerial support.

## **OVERVIEW: ENABLING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**

In order to ensure an inclusive, quality education, learning environments must be safe and support

the learning of students. Goal 4, Target A of Agenda 2030 outlines the physical aspects of this: Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all. However, the associated indicator measures only physical infrastructure and facilities, leaving a significant gap in terms of measuring enabling cultures within education systems.

Quality learning environments are fundamental to ensuring the accessibility and quality of education systems. Learning environments must be child friendly, safe and healthy. The creation of flexible, effective, participatory and respectful learning environments that are responsive to the individual needs of all children is vital to ensuring that children are able to learn and develop whilst in school<sup>167</sup>.

The rights of children to protection, to live free from violence and fear, to bodily integrity and to inclusion in the decisions that affect their lives are all outlined in human rights frameworks. States have a responsibility, as part of delivering an inclusive, quality education for all children, to ensure that learning environments are safe spaces for children, and that violence and inequality are neither tolerated nor normalised within education systems.

However, for too many children this is not the case. Millions of children live in fear of encountering violence in or on the journey to and from school. Millions of children have no say in their own education, and are unable to actively participate in their own education. For millions of children, school is not an environment in which they can feel safe, happy and empowered. Yet for all children, school is (or should be) a place where they spend a significant portion of their childhood. It is the structured environment in which they learn to develop relationships, develop their minds, and to develop their self-reliance and independence. If this space is not one in which they can be safe and empowered, children will not develop these attributes, and they will have been failed.

Equally, children have a right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. It is of the utmost importance that children are able to exercise these rights in schools – and in fact education is the space in which children should be taught these rights and responsibilities. The consequences of not teaching young people that they have a voice, and a right, even a responsibility to use their voice in their own political, social and cultural spaces can be dire. In many countries we see the outcomes of

this in low voter turn-out for young people. More extreme consequences can be a generation that feels disenfranchised and disempowered, and feels only a sense of separation and antagonism towards the dominant societal spaces in which they find themselves – spaces that perhaps do not ‘represent’ them.

Teaching young people how to actively participate, how to consider, ask for what they want, listen to the views and opinions of others, to negotiate, to concede, to compromise or to argue their case is a vital skill-set that is applicable in every facet of people’s lives, not only politics. It is especially important for girls, who face greater exclusion and discrimination, and who need the skills to be able to negotiate for themselves whilst navigating a world in which they are often considered of less value than boys, and in which they rarely hold the power. Plan International recognises that these skills are vital for young people, and we prioritise children and young people’s participation in every area of our work, in particular for girls.

Part of ensuring safe, healthy, participatory learning environments for all children means ensuring that education systems work well with other systems. Governments are increasingly aware that cross-sectoral strategies are needed to ensure the wellbeing of all children, and that no child falls between the gaps in the system. It is important to note that strong ties between education, health and child protection systems are vital to ensuring the wellbeing of all children. Children who are the victims of violence or neglect in one area of their lives, are more likely to be victims in other areas too. This process of poly-victimisation is important to understand and to combat, to ensure that children from neglectful or abusive homes do not fall prey to neglect or abuse in the education system. Stronger links between child protection services and the education system mean that children can be identified early, can be monitored and can receive increased support as needed.

Equally important is to ensure strong links between education and health systems. Every year, children miss out on an average of 272 million school days globally due to diarrhoea alone. Healthier children are more able to learn, more likely to stay in school, and to stay alive. Strong links between education and health services mean that children are better able to access medical care when needed, more likely to get the vaccinations they need to stay healthy, and better able to access youth friendly health and sexual health services.

### Plan International’s Position

- **Plan International believes that it is vital to education outcomes and for the wellbeing of children that schools are safe, inclusive spaces. Cultures of non-violence, respect and inclusion in schools are fundamental tenets of a quality education, and as such must be a global education priority.**
- **It is important that education systems link in with child protection and health systems, to ensure every child’s wellbeing, and that no child falls through the gap.**

### Plan International’s Recommendations

- **Governments must ensure that education, health and child protection systems work together to ensure the wellbeing of all children, and to ensure that no child falls through the gaps**
- **Governments should take steps to ensure that cultures of non-violence and equality are promoted and lived within education systems**
- **Governments must take steps to ensure that children and young people are included in the decisions that affect their lives and education, through ensuring children are supported to participate in meaningful decision-making processes**

## GOVERNANCE AND PARTICIPATION

“My voice, and the voice of my fellow students, is not heeded by the school’s leaders. They think that what they are doing is completely right and there is no flaw in their methods, even though we believe there is.” Girl, Pakistan

A quality education is accountable to children through the participation of children, families and communities in school governance and decision-making. Participation is a basic human right and a fundamental principle of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is associated with other civil rights such as the freedom of expression, thought, association and access to information. Participatory decision-making and young people’s involvement in school governance mechanisms are also an important part of education for global citizenship, which forms part of target 7 of Goal 4 in Agenda 2030.

Participation in the governance of education institutions such as schools can help to improve relations between children, parents, community leaders and school staff and leadership. When



young people get their rightful say and when decision makers listen, Plan International's research shows that education systems and their governance improve<sup>168</sup>. Establishing spaces for children's active participation is also critical to their development. Participation in school governance systems is often one of the first opportunities for children to develop and exercise their leadership capacities and learn to engage and negotiate in intergenerational decision-making processes. Listening to young people's voices can improve the quality of education provision and policies. Increasing spaces for participation in decision-making as well as increasing accountability to students is key to ensuring that girls and boys are empowered through education.

Parent-Teacher Associations or School Management Committees (SMCs) can provide safe spaces in which parents, children and community members can discuss their own priority issues with the aim of enabling quality service provision. These committees can also ensure that children are being enrolled in and consistently attending school, tackling the social and economic barriers to education. For instance, a School Management Committee that is aware of the negative consequences – and the illegality and rights violation – of child marriage, can help to identify at-risk students and support them to continue their education using either informal or formal reporting mechanisms. Other community actions could include awareness-raising about laws on child marriage and ensuring that effective child protection reporting and referral systems exist in schools and communities and are connected to broader justice systems to support girls affected by child marriage.

Schools must ensure children and young people are able to participate in effective, participatory and inclusive school governance and decision-making processes and have the skills to do so. Promoting active citizenship and involving girls and boys in school governance can ensure girls have a voice and are able to influence their parents, teachers and wider community to respect their rights. School management committees with strong links to local government structures can create the means for young people to lobby and hold leaders to account on issues that matter to them about their education.

One mechanism for ensuring girls are enabled to gain the skills to participate in decision-making in a supportive environment is through girls clubs. Girls clubs provide safe spaces for girls to come together to discuss the issues that affect their lives. They

can enable girls to develop their skills and ideas, and to support each other in facing challenges in their schools, their homes and communities. Plan International supports girls clubs in many of the countries in which we work, and there are many examples of how these clubs empower girls to challenge inequality and to make decisions about their own lives. For example, over 50 inspiring girls make up the Uncut Girls' Club, which takes place in a Plan International-supported school in Bonazuria, Ethiopia, where members are educated on the consequences of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). From there, they spread the message to their families and community, empowering their peers while putting an end to this harmful practice. Girls themselves recruit others into the club. Many have successfully been able to negotiate with their families and communities to remain uncut, and say that their aim is to break this tradition<sup>169</sup>.

Quality secondary education should promote development of critical thinking skills which allow children to analyse and understand political arguments which are the building blocks to civic participation, democracy, and empowerment to change their societies and the social norms which affect their lives. Giving girls and boys a voice in decisions that affect their lives can help to improve the quality of education they receive. There are a range of accountability mechanisms that can be used in schools, such as score-carding to gather data and information on the school environment. Encouraging, listening to and acting on young people's views and feedback means governments, local authorities and teachers can be held accountable in their responsibility to provide well-resourced, safe and quality education. By taking part in decision-making in their school and local community, young people gain the skills and confidence they need to have a say in the decisions that affect their lives. It is critical to ensure the involvement of women and mothers as well as men and fathers, and the wider community in school governance. This is a key intervention which helps to ensure education is relevant and reflects opinions from a range of stakeholders.

It is particularly important to target interventions to ensure that girls' voices, and the voices of other excluded groups, are heard. Policy makers and education leaders do not always understand the barriers to education for girls. Girls have a right to be consulted about the decisions that affect their right to education. Exclusion is present at every social and structural level, and therefore these are the same voices that are under-represented in



political and financial decision-making from the national level to school leadership positions.

“Uganda is a patriarchal society... Sometimes even when you are listened to, no action is taken.” Young woman, Uganda

“It wasn’t effective at all... In my school specifically, our ‘Council’ was created to make an illusion of a better institution for the Education Superintendency of our city.” Female, 15-19, Brazil

### Plan International’s Position

- Plan International believes that children and young people, as participants in their own education, will best understand the particular challenges they face in accessing a quality, safe education. As such, children’s participation in decision-making should be welcomed. Girls’ and boys’ interests, concerns and opinions should be heard at all levels– from the governance and management systems at school, to national level policy development.
- All children and young people, irrespective of sex, age, disability or other exclusionary categorisation, should be supported to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes. Targeted interventions should be put in place to ensure that girls and other children from marginalised and disenfranchised groups are enabled to participate on an equal basis with others, and that their value and sense of self-worth is reinforced.

### Plan International’s Recommendations

- National governments should ensure that children are able to participate in the decision making that affects their education – both within school governance mechanisms and in local and national-level policy making. Children, and particularly girls, should be adequately supported to participate in an empowering and meaningful way, with their views given equal weighting and consideration to those of adults.
- Schools should ensure that all participatory structures are inclusive, and that boys, girls, children with disabilities and vulnerable or minority groups are supported to participate, are all represented, and their voices heard.
- Schools should set up School Management Committees as an effective means of involving students, parents and teachers in important decisions about young people’s education, and as a means of ensuring transparency and

accountability in education systems. Committees should include girls and boys, mothers and fathers, and female and male teachers.

- Children and young people should be given a legitimate space in any community and local level accountability programmes aimed at monitoring the quality and efficiency of services provided by education institutions with particular emphasis on establishing child-friendly feedback mechanisms that are gender sensitive and easily accessible.
- Schools should actively reach out to students to hear their views on decisions about their education, in order to involve young people in decisions that affect their lives, and improve their decision making and leadership skills.
- Local education authorities and teachers should be prepared and supported to facilitate the engagement of community leaders and of parents/caregivers (both mothers and fathers) in school governance and in their children’s education – as a key step to ensuring relevance, quality, increased parental understanding of the importance of education and their support for their children’s education and school readiness.

## SCHOOL-RELATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

“While I was in school, my voice was not heard when I reported to our teachers, so we usually ended up not reporting any case to anyone.” Young woman, Nigeria

Violence that occurs in and around schools is a serious barrier to realising the right to education. School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) refers to acts of sexual, physical or psychological violence inflicted on children in and around schools because of stereotypes and roles or norms attributed to or expected of them due to their sex or gendered identity. It also refers to the differences between girls’ and boys’ experience of and vulnerabilities to violence<sup>170</sup>. The failure to protect children from all forms of violence, including in their school lives, is a violation of their rights, compromising their development and well-being.

SRGBV often occurs in unsupervised and private spaces – such as in school toilets, dormitories, in classrooms outside teaching hours, in teachers’ residences or around school perimeters. However, where practices are normalised they can also take

place in plain sight of others – in the classroom or school corridors. SRGBV can be perpetrated by other students, or by teachers or other school staff, and can be in the form of: bullying, sexual harassment, transactional sex or sex for grades, non-consensual touching, sexual relationships between pupils and teachers, tolerance of male aggression; corporal and other degrading or violent forms of punishment.

SRGBV is not restricted by region or income. 70 percent of respondents in a UNICEF study in Botswana had experienced sexual harassment, and 20 percent had been asked for sex by a teacher. In an ActionAid study in Kenya, 5 percent of girls reported having been forced to have sex with a teacher<sup>171</sup>. Recent research by Plan International shows that 22 percent of women in the UK had experienced sexual touching, groping, flashing, sexual assault or rape in or around school when they were students<sup>172</sup>. Over a quarter of girls responding to Plan International’s Hear Our Voices study – which surveyed children and young people from 11 different countries also claimed they ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ felt safe on their way to school.<sup>173</sup>

Despite progress, there remains a lack of global data on violence that takes place in and around schools. This is because it is an under-funded and under-researched area, but also because school children do not always have access to safe, child-friendly reporting mechanisms, and do not always understand that cultures of violence are not acceptable, and therefore violence in schools often goes unreported. However, Plan International estimates that at least 246 million boys and girls suffer from school-related violence every year<sup>174</sup>.

One of the most pervasive forms of violence in schools is bullying. Surveys show that between one-fifth (China) and two-thirds (Zambia) of children reported being victims of verbal or physical bullying<sup>175</sup>. Up to 60 percent of adolescents in Ghana aged between 13 and 15 reported being victims of physical attacks in the last 12 months, according to UNICEF data on child protection.<sup>176</sup> Data from Global School-based Student Health Surveys shows that worldwide, more than one in three students between the ages of 13 and 15 reported being the victim of bullying in the last year.<sup>177</sup> Children with disabilities are more likely to

## **CASE STUDY: student participation in school governance**

The Model School programme was initiated by Plan International India to address the key issues of disadvantaged children’s lack of access to quality education. One of the objectives of the programme was to enhance children’s participation in school governance.

Plan International India recognised that there were no systems or structures in place to involve children in the school activities or in the School Management Committee. The Committees were not functioning well and there was no opportunity for children to assess the school activities and its facilities.

To address this, a democratic space for children to form their own governance structure, “Bal Panchayat” (Children’s Parliament), was created in all the target schools.

Issues raised by the children’s forums included access to safe drinking water; separate toilets for girls; WASH issues; and hygienic practices of cooking school meals. Children also have an opportunity to raise concerns through a suggestion box.

The issues raised were responded to by the School Management Committees, the Government Department for Education as well as local governance mechanisms.

The programme has improved the level of influence children have over issues which affect their education. Children also have a better understanding of democratic processes through their involvement in the activities of the Children’s Parliament and its election process. When children were asked to evaluate the system, 95 percent expressed that the school management provided good support to the Children’s forum.

Furthermore, the programme has increased awareness among parents about issues such as the importance of education, child protection and related laws. However, there is still some work to be done – for example, children’s forums have not been able to really question or monitor aspects of school education such as teachers’ availability, instructional time and corporal punishment.

be victims of discrimination and bullying from their peers,<sup>178</sup> as are LGBTIQ children.<sup>179</sup>

The 2006 UN study on violence against children underlines that almost all bullying is sexual or gender-based in nature, aimed at putting pressure on children to conform to cultural values and social attitudes, especially those that define perceived masculine or feminine roles<sup>180</sup>.

Although the prevalence of bullying has been shown to be similar for girls and boys, the experience of bullying is different for girls and boys. Whilst boys are more likely to engage in physical bullying, girls will more often engage in verbal forms of harassment of their peers.<sup>181</sup> Research also suggests that around half of all children involved in bullying are both victims and perpetrators – they are both bullied and bullies.<sup>182</sup> Relational violence, which specifically targets a girl's critical social relationships, can increase her risk of long-term socio-psychological distress<sup>183</sup>. It is often overlooked by educators and policy-makers as a mere expression of 'girls being girls', despite these long-term consequences. Physical violence, used more often by boys, can cause physical and long-term psychological harm.

Teachers themselves may engage in psychological bullying when they speak in a derogatory way to students based on the student's sex, race or class. Girls and boys may be made to feel worthless, unteachable or stupid if they are viewed as behaving in a manner inconsistent with their assigned role in society<sup>184</sup>.

Millions of children live in fear of being physically abused under the guise of discipline; in some countries more than 80 percent of students suffer corporal punishment at school<sup>185</sup>. Corporal punishment is a direct violation of children's human rights, and as with other forms of violence and abuse, cruel, degrading or violent punishment used in schools is a result of negative cultural and social norms, and is rooted in the power given to authority. Cruel, degrading or violent punishment is also linked to discrimination, being disproportionately inflicted on students with disabilities or from minority backgrounds<sup>186</sup>. Corporal punishment has been shown to be the least effective form of discipline at school, and it perpetuates a school climate that is volatile and creates resentment<sup>187</sup>.

Corporal punishment is not gender neutral, but is tied to the gender-based values of masculinity and is experienced differently by girls and boys<sup>188</sup>.

Although both girls and boys are victims of corporal punishment, the types of punishment and resulting impacts vary according to sex. For instance, boys are more likely to be physically assaulted, whereas girls are more likely to be publicly humiliated or otherwise ostracized<sup>189</sup>.

SRGBV is a result of entrenched negative social and cultural norms and power imbalances, legitimising violent behaviours and reinforcing gender identities that subordinate girls, and ostracising boys that do not conform to masculine 'ideals'. SRGBV is correlated with lower academic achievement and economic security, as well as greater long-term health risks<sup>190</sup>. Furthermore, children who are bullied will often show a marked decline in achievement and a reluctance to participate in school activities.<sup>191</sup> It also perpetuates cycles of violence across generations. Where schools do not challenge negative gender norms, they may reinforce damaging attitudes and beliefs – thus schools have an increased responsibility to challenge gender inequality and gender based violence in all its manifestations.

In most societies, unequal power relations between adults and children and the gender stereotypes and roles attributed to girls and boys leave schoolgirls especially vulnerable to sexual harassment, rape, coercion, exploitation and discrimination from teachers, staff and peers. Boys and girls who do not conform to dominant notions of heterosexual masculinity or femininity are also vulnerable to sexual violence and bullying.

### Plan International's Position

- **Plan International asserts that every child has the right to learn in a safe and secure environment, free from the fear or threat of violence. This is an inseparable aspect of a quality education. Addressing attitudes and behaviours that support or legitimise violence at the national, local, school and community levels, is a key intervention to prevent and respond to school-related gender-based violence.**
- **We believe it is unacceptable that any child should be a victim of violence of any description either in school, or on the journey to and from school – including sexual violence or harassment, bullying and intimidation, and corporal punishment. We are committed to supporting children to recognise their own value, and the value of others, regardless of their gender. We believe this to be a fundamental learning outcome of an inclusive, quality education.**

- **Plan International believes that eliminating school-related gender-based violence should be a priority for all actors. School-related gender-based violence constitutes a serious rights violation, impacting on children’s ability to enter, transition and complete school.**

### **Plan International’s Recommendations**

- **National governments must adopt and implement comprehensive, and multi-sectoral national action plans, integrated into their education sector plans, to prevent and respond to all forms of violence in and around schools, including SRGBV. Plans should be gender-responsive, support the most vulnerable populations (including children with disabilities), take into account the diversity of experiences and needs of marginalised girls and boys, and look specifically at the school context. Law enforcement, the judiciary, child protection authorities, the transportation sector and civil society organisations must be partners in addressing the vulnerability of children en-route to and from school grounds.**
- **National governments must review and strengthen laws and policies to protect children from violence, ensure accountability, and treat all children equally. This includes strengthening laws for prohibition of corporal punishment in schools and homes.**
- **National governments, and civil society organisations should also address attitudes and behaviours of both adults and students in school, and of families and communities, to reinforce the recognition that some common behaviours, such as bullying, sexual harassment and corporal punishment, are actually forms of violence.**
- **Girls and boys must be recognised as key participants in developing solutions to address violence, bullying and SRGBV.**
- **Parents, schools, local government and national governments must ensure children understand their rights, and are able to access reporting and response mechanisms. These must be safe, child-friendly, clear, proportionate and consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and must be effectively implemented.**
- **Teachers and school administrators must be well-trained, equipped and supported to understand, prevent and respond to gender-**

**based violence in and around schools. This includes ensuring that teachers are trained on positive discipline methods, and are able to challenge negative gender norms.**

- **Schools should establish and clearly advertised codes-of-conduct to tackle all forms of SRGBV – including bullying and corporal punishment – so that all students and staff understand their rights and responsibilities, and how to report SRGBV. Mechanisms must be put in place to hold teachers, school staff and students who violate those Codes of Conduct to account.**

## **FINANCING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION: THE GLOBAL FUNDING GAP**

In order to realise every child’s right to education, education systems need to be fully funded, requiring a significant increase in current investment levels globally. It is the role of the State, as the primary duty bearer, to realise this right for all persons living within its borders. Obligations of the State under international law include the development of budgeted implementation plans for education policy. The case for investing in education is also clear. The estimated national economic gain from achieving universal primary education exceeds the estimated increase in public spending required to achieve it<sup>192</sup>. UNESCO estimates that each additional year of schooling can increase an individual’s earnings by 10 percent<sup>193</sup>. Girls who complete a primary education are likely to increase their earnings by 5 to 15 percent over their lifetimes, for boys this figure is between 4 and 8 percent<sup>194</sup>.

The education goals in Agenda 2030 represent a more ambitious and comprehensive global education agenda than ever. The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity (EFC) estimates that in order to achieve education goals by 2030 global spending on education needs to increase steadily from \$1.2 trillion per year to \$3 trillion, prioritizing countries where there is the greatest need and demonstrated commitment to reform, with extra support to fragile states<sup>195</sup>. UNICEF estimates that providing universal pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education in low-income and lower-middle-income countries by 2030 will cost US\$340 billion a year<sup>196</sup>. Secondary education increases the global education financing needs enormously. The per-pupil costs of secondary schooling are far higher than those for primary school, and in many low-



income countries, only a minority of poor children even enter secondary education<sup>197</sup>.

To fill the financing gap, the EFC calls for an increase in overall overseas development assistance (ODA) and increasing the share devoted to education from 10 to 15 percent. It also recommends tapping into innovative financing mechanisms, such as education bonds, innovative post-secondary student financing mechanisms, disaster insurance for education, impact investing, and solidarity levies<sup>198</sup>. As well as spending more, finances for education need to be spent better. UNICEF research on low-income countries overall shows that children from the richest 10 percent of the population receive around 46 percent of the benefits from public spending on education<sup>199</sup>. Children entering the education system carrying disadvantages associated with poverty, gender, disability or ethnicity, need more resources to achieve opportunities equivalent to those enjoyed by more privileged children.

The EFC forwards the idea of progressive universalism – expanding provision of quality education for everyone while prioritising the needs of the poor and disadvantaged. This means funding must be spent on those with the least access to quality education – prioritising this approach over approaches that may be more cost-effective – which is an important approach to uphold the tenet of ‘leave no-one behind’.

### Plan International’s Position

- **Plan International believes that no-one should be prevented from receiving a quality education due to a lack of resources. At least 12 years’ free, quality, basic education, including at least 1 year pre-primary, should be available and accessible for all children.**
- **Plan International believes that education systems must be adequately and equitably financed – focusing on inclusive education and on gender equality in education systems. Funding should be prioritised for those who face the most barriers to accessing their right to education to ensure equitable learning outcomes and that no child is left behind.**

## DOMESTIC FINANCING FOR EDUCATION

“I think the government should do more on accountability, to ensure that funds set aside for education are used for the intended purpose.”  
Young woman, Kenya

National education budgets should respond to all of the objectives and obligations set out in international human rights frameworks: that education is available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable. In addition to providing free and compulsory primary education for all children, governments are obliged by commitments they have already made, as outlined in international human rights standards, to progressively introduce free and equal access to secondary and higher education<sup>200</sup>. In signing Agenda 2030, States have committed to achieving a broader set of education objectives by 2030, including the provision of one-year free pre-primary, and secondary education.

The international benchmark for education spending, as outlined in the Incheon Declaration, is 4-6 percent of GDP, or 15-20 percent of the budget<sup>201</sup>. Many governments around the world have increased education spending. Average spending on education in low-income countries increased from 3.2 percent of GDP in 1999 to 4 percent in 2012<sup>202</sup>. According to the Global Partnership for Education, among the countries that devoted more than 20 percent of government expenditure to education, Benin allocated the largest share in 2012 (26.1 percent) and also raised the proportion of resources for the sector the most between 2008 and 2012 (7.0 percentage points). Niger also demonstrated strong commitment to education, as education’s share of public resources increased by more than 5 percentage points. In contrast, a handful of countries, including The Gambia and Guinea, cut the proportion of resources for the sector by almost 5 percentage points. However, with more ambitious education targets and a growing population, spending increases must happen at much higher rates<sup>203</sup>.

In spite of the commitment to provide 1-year free pre-primary education, there remains a consistent lack of government funding for the expansion and enrichment of early childhood and pre-primary education services. In most low and middle income countries, public investment in early childhood care and pre-primary education continues to be very low compared to the international benchmarks of 1 percent of GDP and 10 percent of public education funding<sup>204</sup>. While comparable data are not readily available, many governments spend only between 0.1 and 0.2 percent of GNP on preschool education (compared to a public/private expenditure on pre-school of 0.49% GNP in OECD countries). Of the 27 Sub-Saharan African countries for which data are available, the median public expenditure on

pre-primary education was just 0.01 percent of GNP in 2012<sup>205</sup>.

Even if governments meet minimum benchmarks on domestic expenditure for education, there will still be an annual education financing gap of US\$39 billion in low-income and lower-middle-income countries. In the case of low-income countries, the gap is equivalent to 42 percent of the financing needed to meet the 2030 education goals<sup>206</sup>. Increases in primary school enrolment, combined with rapid population growth, have placed additional pressure on education budgets. However, a high proportion of the costs of domestic financing could be covered through economic growth and increased revenue collection by strengthening the domestic tax base. Levels of tax collection in developing countries remain much lower than in rich countries, despite international tax collection benchmarks of 20 percent of GDP.<sup>207</sup> Furthermore, it is estimated that developing countries lose \$200 billion every year as a result of corporate tax avoidance<sup>208</sup>, which means that crucial public services such as education are deprived of necessary funding. In addition, illicit financial flows have exceeded the combined capital of ODA and foreign direct investment for seven out of the ten latest years with available data. During this ten-year period, from 2004 to 2013, developing countries lost US\$7.8 trillion.<sup>209</sup>

Education sector plans must target spending on increasing the quality of education – by investing in teachers and learning materials for example. Governments need to target policy measures to remove all barriers to education and reduce inequalities in access, transition and completion of a quality education. Targeting more resources to ensure that children in rural areas are provided with transport to attend school, or that children from poor families are supported through school feeding programmes, cash transfers (conditional or unconditional) or scholarships to pay for additional school costs such as books and uniforms can directly impact school attendance and completion rates<sup>210</sup>.

Policies and initiatives to address gender equality in education are unlikely to be prioritised without an appropriate budget to support them, making gender-reviews of education sector plans, and gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), are an important practice to strengthen gender-responsive education systems. GRB integrates a gender perspective into all steps of the budget process — planning, drafting, implementing and evaluating - to

raise awareness of gender issues and the impacts of budgets and policies; to make governments accountable for their budgetary and policy commitments to gender equality; and to change and refine government budgets and policies to promote gender equality<sup>211</sup>.

### Plan International's Position

- **Plan International recognises that, as the primary duty bearers, national governments are responsible for ensuring the right of all children to access and complete a quality, inclusive education. Fundamental to realising this right is demonstrating the necessary political and financial will to guarantee the right to education for all - including those most likely to be excluded.**

### Plan International's Recommendations

- **Plan International supports the 4 S' approach to domestic financing developed by the Global Campaign for Education, which focuses on the share, size, sensitivity and scrutiny of the education budget.**
- **In order to achieve universal and equal access to a quality education, governments must increase the share of budget going to education, increasing investment in all aspects of education. In line with widely accepted international benchmarks, a minimum of 20 percent of national budgets, or 6 percent of GDP, should be allocated to education. At least 50 percent of education budgets should be spent on pre-primary, primary and secondary education.**
- **National governments also need to take measures to increase the overall size of their budgets. National governments should strengthen the domestic tax base, increasing revenue collection to 20 percent of GDP. This should include progressively reforming tax systems to ensure that they are fair, closing tax loopholes and incentives, and taking action on tax evasion.**
- **In order to deliver a quality education for all children, governments need to increase the sensitivity of education budgets. The ways in which education budget is spent should be consistent with international standards and targeted to ensure that a quality education is available to all children, including those from poor and marginalised socio-economic groups.**
- **Governments should support the concept of progressive universalism – targeting finances to**

those most likely to be out-of-school, or to be receiving inadequate, poor quality education first.

- **Governments should complete gender-reviews of education sector plans, and finance the outcomes through gender-responsive budgeting, in order to remove barriers to girls' education.**
- **Governments should redouble their efforts to provide adequate resources and financing to protect the rights of children with disabilities in line with the commitment set out in Goal 4, Target 5 of Agenda 2030, and in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).**
- **National governments also need to increase citizen scrutiny of the education budget, including by children and young people, to ensure transparency and accountability. Tackling corruption and stopping illicit financial flows are pressing issues for many governments in developing countries.**

## INTERNATIONAL FINANCING FOR EDUCATION

To support domestic financing for education, there is a vital role for the international community to play in financing the right to education. The EFC projects that international financing for education needs to increase from US\$16 billion per year to US\$44 billion per year in order to meet global education goals. That target has already been missed in the first years of Agenda 2030, and current funding trends are not positive. Between 2010 and 2013, development assistance for basic education fell 11 percent<sup>212</sup>. Several major bilateral donors have also cut aid to education<sup>213</sup>. Education's share of ODA fell from 13 percent to 10 percent between 2002 and 2015, and amongst multilateral donors it fell from 10 percent to 7 percent in the past decade<sup>214</sup>.

Trends in how international education financing is spent are also worrying. Only 24 percent of education ODA in 2014 went to low-income countries, with less than 70 percent of education aid actually reaching recipient countries, due to a large share of aid funding scholarships in donor countries<sup>215</sup>. The majority of education aid is also spent on primary education, with pre-primary and secondary education receiving little support. As a share of total disbursements to basic education, aid to early education actually fell from just 3 percent in

2002-04 to 2 percent in 2010-12. Bilateral aid is also poorly coordinated: more than half of the 41 countries in highest need of support, as a result of their high numbers of out-of-school children, have to coordinate with more than 15 donors.

The EFC outlines a Global Compact for Financing Education, comprising three key areas. Firstly, domestic resources for education must increase (as outlined in the previous section). Secondly, donor financing for education must increase, rising from US\$16 billion per year in 2016 to US\$89 billion in 2030. Thirdly, the World Bank, regional development banks and donors should establish an International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd). Mobilising US\$10 billion or more annually in new and additional resources by 2020, and upwards of US\$20 billion by 2030.

In order to meet international education goals, bilateral donors must meet commitments to spend 0.7 percent of their Gross National Income to ODA<sup>216</sup>. Of this amount, and in order to match the funding targets set for recipient countries, donors should allocate at least 15 percent of their development budget to basic education.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the European Union institutions, the World Bank and UNICEF have together accounted for almost a quarter of aid to education in the past decade. However, multilateral aid to basic education is in decline, reducing from 62 to 51 percent between 2000 and 2011<sup>217</sup>. The World Bank is separate to this trend, having increased its contribution over the past decade. However, the proportion of this going to lower-income countries has decreased sharply<sup>218</sup>.

The Global Partnership for Education has allocated nearly US\$3.8 billion to 59 countries in support of education since 2002, and was the fifth largest donor to basic education in 2011<sup>219</sup>. GPE has estimated that it had a US\$585 million funding gap at the end of 2014. The total unmet financial need for the next replenishment campaign, taking into account the existing gap and estimated donor and domestic financing, is around US\$4 billion over 4 years, or US\$1 billion per year. Funding through the GPE ensures coordinated, strategic support to nationally led education plans, targeting the most marginalised children in low-income countries. It also ensures that funding aligns with national education sector plans and with other donor contributions in a coordinated, effective and transparent way.

The GPE's second strategic objective commits them to ensuring gender equality in education in GPE funded countries. Plan International has been working in partnership with GPE and UNGEI on completing gender reviews of education sector plans (GRESPs). Within these assessment is made of the policy and legislative environment, strategies to achieve gender parity in access and completion, as well as strategies for progressing towards gender equality in the education experience, opportunities and learning outcomes. A GRESP has been completed in Laos, and training has been delivered in Tanzania. GRESPs have proved to be an effective, relatively low-cost and sustainable girls' education intervention.

**should work to ensure that the GPE strengthens their monitoring of gender equality standards and civil society participation.**

## FINANCING EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

There is a global shortfall of around US\$8.5 billion a year in the funding needed to educate the estimated 75 million children affected by crises<sup>220</sup>. While the need for funding for education in emergencies has increased by 21 percent since 2010, international financing for it has decreased by 41 percent in the same timeframe<sup>221</sup>. Education accounts for a small share of requests for humanitarian aid – and only a small fraction of those requests are funded. Education in Emergencies provides essential building blocks for future economic stability. Yet in 2015, only 1.4 percent of humanitarian aid went to education<sup>222</sup>.

These figures suggest that donors and humanitarian actors do not prioritise education in humanitarian contexts. This despite the fact that education in emergencies minimises the risk of long-term impacts on the development and wellbeing of the child. This situation is also out of step with the aspirations of parents and children affected by crises, for whom school can restore some security and normalcy and provide hope for a better future<sup>223</sup>.

The evidence shows that the effects of disasters and conflict are for the most part long term, and it is estimated that the average length of displacement for refugees is approaching 20 years<sup>224</sup>. This necessitates a holistic approach to funding education in emergencies that bridges the traditional divide between development expertise and humanitarian response.

The Education Cannot Wait Fund (ECW) was set up in 2015 to reach all crisis-affected children and youth with safe, free and quality education by 2030 through joining up governments, humanitarian actors and development efforts to deliver a more collaborative and rapid response. ECW aims to mobilize resources from both public and private sector partners to reach US\$3.85 billion by 2020. To-date an initial commitment of US \$113.4 million has been secured from Dubai Cares, the European Commission, and the governments of Canada, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. The Global Business Coalition for Education has also announced the mobilization of US\$100 million in financial and relevant in-kind contributions for Education Cannot Wait.

### Plan International's Position

- **Plan International believes that the international community has a duty to support national governments from low and middle income countries to ensure public education systems are fully financed, so that every child is able to realise their right to inclusive, quality education. If education goals are not reached, then it will be impossible to fully meet the challenge of Agenda 2030.**
- **Plan International urges donors from all sectors to increase financing for education both bilaterally and multilaterally in order to meet the global shortfall in education financing.**

### Plan International's Recommendations

- **The global compact for financing education outlined by the Education Commission should be adopted by an initial set of pioneer countries, and supported by multilateral development banks. If successful, the compact should be integrated into existing structures to strengthen global education financing.**
- **Bilateral donors should meet commitments to spend 0.7 percent of their Gross National Income to Official Development Assistance. Of this 15 percent should be allocated to education. Bilateral and multilateral donors should also commit to sending a greater share of ODA to low-income countries; increase the share of education spending going to pre-primary, primary and secondary education; and better coordinate with other donors in order to reduce the burden of reporting for recipient countries.**
- **To meet funding targets, improve coordination and reduce fragmentation, donor countries should channel more contributions through the GPE, as a way of aligning aid efforts. Donors**



It is important that ECW is complementary to existing financing structures such as GPE, in order to ensure that education is fully funded in all contexts – that funding is not diverted from development to humanitarian budgets or vice versa. ECW stresses that “GPE and ECW grants differ in both length and scope. For example, most GPE budget support is for a period of 5 years, whereas ECW grants are shorter and intended to address an immediate gap/need. ECW recipients therefore need to include transition plans for more sustained provision of education. Wherever possible this provision should come from the government, through domestic financing or support from organisations like GPE.”

### Plan International’s Position

- **Plan International believes that the right to education does not stop in emergencies, and that financing education provision is a crucial part of conflict and disaster prevention and response. National governments have a responsibility to finance the continued education of all children during or in the aftermath of disasters or conflict.**
- **Plan International believes that in the case of fragile or failing states, the international community should provide additional financial and technical support in order to ensure that this obligation is met for all children, everywhere. Plan International supports the Education Cannot Wait Fund as a mechanism to increase global funding for education in emergencies.**

### Plan International’s Recommendations

- **Humanitarian donors should prioritize funding for education in emergencies, alongside food, water, shelter and health. Donors should commit to fully funding the Education Cannot Wait Fund, ensuring that this is complementary to development funding for education and does not divert funding committed elsewhere.**
- **In recognition that States affected by conflict, fragility or disasters are less able to meet the costs of education, donors should commit to providing additional funding for education in emergencies.**
- **Donor governments, philanthropists and the private sector should commit to fully financing the Education Cannot Wait Fund. Funds committed to ECW should be additional to funding already committed to other education financing mechanisms, and minimum benchmarks set out for these.**

- **Donor governments should also support refugee hosting countries to strengthen education systems to accommodate refugees.**
- **Donors and governments must ensure that humanitarian funding for education includes specific resources for formal and non-formal education programmes for girls of all ages wherever there is evidence of gendered gaps in access (from pre-primary, primary, secondary and flexible accelerated programmes). These programmes should score at least a 2a or 2b on the IASC gender marker**

## PRIVATE SECTOR FINANCING FOR EDUCATION

States are the guarantors of education under international human rights standards, and are accountable for ensuring the right to inclusive, quality education for all children. But while increases in domestic financing are imperative, the private sector could play a much more prominent role in supporting public education systems, contributing to collective efforts to achieving the right to inclusive, quality education for all children. Given the shortfall in global education financing, the private sector is an important partner in reaching Agenda 2030.

The State responsibility to ensure a quality education for all children extends to non-State-run schools operating within a given State – private, religious or NGO schools. Religious and community schools play an important role in education systems. In Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Pakistan, Islamic schools (madrasas) have long played an important role in providing primary and secondary education to underprivileged groups. Community schools, too, have often been found to be more relevant to local needs, adaptable, cost-effective and student-centric than government schools<sup>225</sup>. It is the role of the State to regulate these schools, and hold them to National standards. However, findings from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan show that madrasas do not receive policy guidelines for curricular content or modernisation<sup>226</sup>.

UNESCO estimates that key foundations and corporations based in DAC-member countries spend around US\$683 million a year on activities specifically related to education in developing countries. Of this, only US\$135 million is spent on basic education<sup>227</sup>. Private investment also tends to support non-State provision of services and

education delivery. According to the latest available data,<sup>228</sup> private schools accounted for around 15 percent of primary school enrolment in Plan International's programme countries for which statistics are available. The percentage of private enrolment at lower-secondary level in Plan International's programme countries with data is 21 percent, rising to 26 percent at upper secondary level.

Private foundations and corporations can engage in education in many different ways and with very different motivations, ranging from altruistic philanthropy to self-interested investment. In order to ensure that private investment is contributing to globally identified priority education investments, the private sector should channel its funding through existing global funding mechanisms, such as the Global Partnership for Education, which has a responsibility to ensure transparency and accountability in its investments.

## Privatisation of Education

Private education provision can be either for-profit (with financial returns going to shareholders or owners) or not-for-profit (where economic surpluses are re-invested). It is also important to make a distinction between free private education provision – for instance some religious or NGO schools – and fee-charging private education provision. Whilst private actors have the liberty to establish and direct educational institutions under international human rights law, in many countries the provision of for-profit education is against the law. This is the case in the UK, for example, however DFID supports for-profit education provision through its overseas development assistance – a practice for which it has drawn criticism from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Whether for-profit or not-for-profit, all private education provision must conform to minimum standards laid down by the State<sup>229</sup>.

The rise of private, fee-charging schools can lead to greater segmentation and fragmentation in the education sector as more children from higher socio-economic groups migrate to the private sector, leaving the poorest and most disadvantaged behind. Research supported by the Privatisation in Education Research Initiative shows that the opportunity costs associated with private education often contributes to the exclusion of the very poorest children, either as a result of the direct cost of fees or the indirect costs associated with private education. Research in South Asia shows that girls are often excluded from private schools due to

gender bias: where parents cannot afford to send all of their children to fee-charging schools, girls are more often selected to remain at home than boys<sup>230</sup>. This is increasingly problematic where there is no access to public schooling. However, where the State is unable to provide education, for example in circumstances where informal settlements have built-up on contested land, even low-fee education is better than none. This circumstance should not, however, be sustained.

Private schools can entrench economic divisions and increase and replicate social inequalities, by undermining the quality of education in neighbouring state-run schools. Those children more likely to go to fee-charging schools are more likely to come from (relatively) wealthier families, and are likely to have fewer early developmental inhibitors (for example, they may be better nourished, and have literate parents meaning they will have been exposed to reading at an early age). This means that private schools attract students who are more likely to succeed. Schools with a certain percentage of good students will respond to those students with accelerated curricula, attract good teachers, maintain a certain reputation, and so on. This leaves neighbouring state schools with the poorest and most disadvantaged students, meaning resources will come to be focused primarily on underachieving students. This results in a higher cost-per-pupil financing model, driving away better students and teachers<sup>231</sup>.

The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Right to Education Project and the Open Society Foundation's Education Support Programme are leading work to write and agree to the Human Rights Guiding Principles on State obligations regarding private schools<sup>232</sup>. Once finalised, these will clarify States obligations regarding private education providers, and ensure alignment of all actors on acceptable private provision of education.

### Plan International's Position

- **Plan International believes that education provision is the responsibility of the State, and that the State is accountable for ensuring that the public education sector is fully financed.**
- **Plan International believes that private financing can play a greater role in supporting global education priorities, and should be welcomed where it seeks to complement, support and strengthen public education systems.**
- **Given the evidence showing that fee-charging schools exacerbate social and economic**

inequalities, Plan International does not support the provision of fee-charging private education, either by for-profit or not-for-profit agencies, where this allows the State to fail to meet its legal obligations to provide education for all. This is particularly the case where parents are left with no other options but to send their children to private schools or miss out on education. Plan International recognises that fee-charging education options can be a necessary transitional intervention on the road towards the provision of quality, free education for all children.

### Plan International's Recommendations

- Private actors should be encouraged to channel funding through multilateral channels such as GPE to ensure alignment of international education spending. Given that corporate actors are not accountable to beneficiaries, funding from the private sector must align with national education sector plans and national and international standards and education priorities rather than corporate interests.
- Donor governments should prioritise supporting public education systems in developing countries. Donor governments should channel funding through recipient governments or through non fee-charging education providers.
- National governments must ensure that private providers meet minimum standards, as laid down by the State, and that educational freedoms do not lead to extreme disparities of educational opportunity for some groups in society (Article 13, [ICESCR](#); paragraph 30, [CESCR General Comment 13](#)).
- All governments should support the creation of the Human Rights Guiding Principles on State obligations regarding private schools, and sign on to these once finalised, to ensure that there is a clear set of minimum standards, defined and adhered to globally, on the privatisation of education.

## MONITORING PROGRESS ON GLOBAL EDUCATION GOALS

Access to information is crucial if we are to have a collective understanding of how we are progressing in the goal to realise the right of all children to education. Current data collection methods are inadequate, and there are huge gaps in the evidence on education globally.

It is important to involve young people in data collection:

“...because young people know the challenges that they face in society.” Young woman, Tanzania

“... because young people are the ones on the ground. They know exactly what is happening. It helps to come out with the real information and not estimations, since things are changing every day.” Young man, Zambia

### Data collection within the SDGs

The 10 education targets within Goal 4 of Agenda 2030 have an attached set of 43 indicators through which success is to be measured. The methodology for measuring many of the indicators is still being formulated a year into Agenda 2030. In addition, measuring and monitoring progress towards the Global Goals will require a major, coordinated effort in the coming years – an effort that is estimated to cost about US\$1 billion a year<sup>233</sup>. There is also concern that many of the indicators developed only partly cover the concepts in each target. This means that additional indicators may need to be developed and measured.

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) is responsible for the collection, analysis and dissemination of data needed to monitor progress on Goal 4. The UIS is working with countries and partners to develop standards and methodologies to produce cross-nationally comparable education data with a specific focus on learning and equity. However, this work is ongoing. Increased data collection at the national level will be crucial to global efforts, and Offices for National Statistics will require increased funding and support in order to deliver more and better data. This data will be crucial for the measurement of progress and the development of effective policies which lead to stronger development outcomes for all.

In addition, official indicators can be made far stronger if they are complemented by perceptions-based data, qualitative data and citizen-generated data, as well as data from reliable non-governmental institutions and organizations. All these types of data can be used to stimulate public debate, draw attention to otherwise under-reported issues and provide a fuller picture of reality. Asking people for their perceptions about their own well-being can also lead to more public accountability.

### Spotlight: Equal Measures

As a contribution to global monitoring and accountability, Plan International is leading Equal

Measures, a coalition of partners to measure progress for girls and women over the next 15 years. The goal of this partnership is to produce an independent tracking method, or ‘tracker’, designed to provide access to good quality data where this does not exist, complementing existing data and also demonstrating the value of qualitative data and its importance in capturing multiple aspects of progress. The partnership aims to become an important source of information for advocates, activists, governments, civil society partners and others working to achieve gender equality. The ultimate aim is to fuel a movement to push governments to meet their commitments.

## What to Measure

The indicators for measuring progress on Goal 4 are not diverse enough for a truly accurate picture of global education progress. For example, although there is an indicator to measure the number of years of free education, the associated costs of education – paying for materials, uniforms, journey etc. – will not be measured. Measurement in other cases is complex, sensitive and resource intensive – such as measuring quality of teaching. Methods such as classroom observation are also difficult to corroborate across schools let alone between nations and regions.

For learning outcomes, with no globally agreed curriculum, measurements beyond literacy and numeracy are also complex and incomparable. Whilst national assessments are an important way to measure progress, it is equally important to take into account the stress that this puts on children, and the fact that for many students formal assessments are not an environment in which they show their best capabilities. Within the early childhood education sector there are concerns that the push for school readiness and early grade reading and numeracy assessment is already leading to “schoolification” of pre-schools.

In the drive to measure learning outcomes, the concern is that there will be increased pressure on States to show progress through standardised tests (such as PISA), focusing on a narrow range of learning metrics such as literacy and numeracy. This is echoed in Agenda 2030, where literacy and numeracy are the indicators by which to measure learning progress across States in global measures. Whilst these are both important measures of progress, they should not be the only measure of learning outcomes. Outcomes should include knowledge, skills and attitudes, be linked to national goals for education and positive

participation in society. Measuring literacy and numeracy alone will not present a picture of progress across a broad curriculum.

Disaggregating data is an important way to uncover differences and inequalities between groups. Disaggregating the number of children enrolled in, attending and completing different levels of schooling by age and sex, reveals the disparities between girls and boys at different stages of their lives. Disaggregation must also go beyond age and sex to capture data by other characteristics – such as ethnicity, religion, disability, location, marital status and wealth. National Education Management Information Systems should continue to be supported to strengthen the scope and quality of data collection and disaggregation, while also exploring alternative mechanisms to collect data on out of school children and other vulnerable groups.

Without disaggregated data, none of the measurements for progress on Goal 4 will enable us to understand whether the ultimate goal – to leave no one behind – is being met. It will render it impossible to measure progress on equity. Due to the complexity of measuring equity, the Inter-Agency Group on Education Inequality Indicators has been established, to allow for consistent analysis of survey data. Gender parity is currently measured across a number of indicators, which means we have a good sense, at the global level, of gender inequality in education in terms of enrolment. Our understanding is limited for learning outcomes, and to improve this more comprehensive data on gender aspects of curricula, textbooks, assessments and teacher education will all be necessary.

For other vulnerable groups there are further complications. Currently, there is no internationally comparable measure of disability, and therefore global data on disabled children’s ability to realise their right to education is limited. This is being addressed in a current project by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics and UNICEF<sup>234</sup>. Groups such as internally displaced people, refugees or illegal immigrants may not be registered to attend school and will therefore be invisible. Monitoring of those groups whose mother-tongue is not the language of instruction, or who are from minority religious or ethnic backgrounds is also under-resourced and therefore extremely limited.

## Plan International’s Position

- Plan International believes that increased, responsible data collection and analysis is



fundamental to informing and implementing effective policies that respond to the learning needs of all children. Current measurement leaves gaps in our understanding of education outcomes, and should be addressed by the international community.

- Plan International promotes cultures of learning and reflection through internal and external knowledge sharing to enhance evidence-based decision-making in Plan International, in national governments and among other education stakeholders. National governments and international bodies must disaggregate data by sex, age, wealth quintile, location and disability as a minimum.

### **Plan International's Recommendations**

- Children and young people should be involved in monitoring and implementation processes, by national governments, implementing partners, and the GPE. This should include in relation to education sector planning and budget setting and monitoring. This is crucial to ensuring children's right to participate in decision-making processes, and to strengthening education sector plans.
- It is important that girls, boys and youth with disabilities and their representative organisations are included – their meaningful participation in data collection, programme design, school management, evaluation and monitoring is essential to quality inclusive education.
- National governments should apply a social accountability approach to education data collection by supporting local communities, including children and youth, to contribute towards filling data gaps by engaging them in collecting, understanding and using qualitative and quantitative education data.
- National governments should work with teachers, through teachers' unions and other means, and with children and young people, to develop systems of assessment that do not put undue burden and stress onto children and teachers, but which give meaningful evidence on progress and the effectiveness of teaching approaches and curricula.
- National governments should increase funding to Offices for National Statistics and other relevant actors for data collection. Increased data will allow governments to implement more

effective policies, and lead to more efficient financing for education.

- National governments should at a minimum collect sex disaggregated data across all 43 indicators for Goal 4 of Agenda 2030. Data should be made publically available so that all actors at the local, national, regional and international levels can make informed funding and programming decisions.

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## ANNEX 1: PLAN INTERNATIONAL GLOBAL INFLUENCING ENGAGEMENT

Plan International actively engages in global education initiatives such as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the UN Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI), the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), the Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN) and the Education Cannot Wait Fund (ECW), as part of our overall commitment to achieving the right to inclusive, quality education for all children. In particular, Plan International has been a key actor in ensuring that gender equality and inclusion in education has remained a global development priority, actively contributing to consultations for the development of Agenda 2030, and in the development of the Incheon Declaration and accompanying Framework For Action (FFA). Plan International has used evidence from programmes to inform the global discussion on education and ensuring that the most excluded children are not left behind.

### The Global Partnership for Education

The GPE is a multilateral mechanism which brings together southern governments, bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, teachers unions, civil society, private sector and foundations, to realize Goal 4 of Agenda 2030. Through GPE, more than 30 bi-lateral, multi-lateral, CSO, foundation and private sector agencies and 65 recipient countries work in partnership to further nationally developed and owned Education Sector Plans. The GPE strategy (2016-2020) focuses on achieving the following three strategic objectives:

- 1) Increased Equity, Gender Equality and Inclusion for All
- 2) Quality Teaching and Learning
- 3) Efficient and Effective Educational Systems

Plan International recognizes the importance of engaging with the GPE at global, National Office and Country Office levels. Plan International strives to link country level work and experiences in education (focusing particularly on GPE's objective around gender equality) with global GPE advocacy and policy work. This approach, by which Plan International links evidence from programmes and experiences engaging in country level processes, to influence global decisions taken by the GPE Secretariat, GPE Board, and bi-lateral donors (i.e.

funding contributions to GPE), has made significant impact since 2011 and has raised Plan's profile globally with GPE stakeholders (GPE Secretariat staff, donors, CSO partners and members of the GPE board). Official public pledges by Plan International to the GPE board at the high-profile GPE Replenishment events in November 2011 and June 2014 solidified Plan International's commitment to education and the GPE mechanism. The pledge in 2014 committed Plan to support 10 gender reviews of Education Sector Plans (ESPs) by 2018.

Plan International has National Offices in 18 out of the 20 donor countries represented in the GPE. More importantly, it has Country Offices in 35 of the 65 recipient countries represented in the GPE. This means its sphere of influence in terms of shaping the global education agenda is three-fold:

At a Country Office level, Plan International can be (and is in many countries) a leading CSO voice in the Local Education Group (LEG). The LEG, which includes the local Ministry of Education, donors, multilateral agencies and CSOs in-country, is responsible for developing, reviewing and monitoring a country's national education sector plan. Plan International should be the go-to agency providing expert advice and suggesting effective national strategies to further girls' education and gender equality. This is directly linked to Plan International's commitment to undertake a gender review of government Education Sector Plans and support action to address the identified gaps. In most countries, the Ministry of Education would welcome this kind of leadership from Plan International, not only because Plan International brings practical evidence from its programmes to inform national strategies for education, but also because funding from GPE is dependent on national education sector plans that include holistic strategies to promote gender equality and inclusion.

At a National Office level, Plan International is working through national education coalitions linked with the GCE to advocate donor governments to make further funding commitments to GPE and prioritize education in general. In Canada, for example, Plan International has been the co-chair of the Canadian International Education Policy Working Group and is advocating for the Government of Canada to increase its funding commitments to GPE replenishment. Plan Germany, Plan UK, and Plan Belgium have also been successful in linking their national education coalition work to GPE. NOs have significant

influence on how their governments contribute to and engage with the GPE and the way their governments prioritize gender equality and education in general, through work with national education coalitions.

At a Global level, Plan International has been feeding into and influencing GPE processes since 2011. The mechanism by which Plan International does this is through its participation in the Northern civil society constituency of the GPE board. Yona Nestel, Plan International Canada's Senior Education Advisor, has been representing Plan International on the GPE Civil Society Constituency since 2011. Plan International has also been involved in developing GPE's first ever Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan.

Plan International is on the global advisory group that oversees the Civil Society Education Fund – a US\$23 million fund made available by the GPE to support local civil society engagement in education sector policy, planning, budgeting and monitoring.

### **UNICEF/UNGEI**

Launched in 2000, the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) is the EFA Flagship - and UNICEF's primary channel - for girls' education initiatives. UNGEI is a partnership of organisations committed to improving the quality and availability of girls' education and to narrowing the gender gap in primary and secondary education. It provides advocacy and technical support for gender parity and equality in designing, financing and implementing national education plans. They are a key partner for all goals.

Plan International is an active member of the UNGEI and has worked closely with it and the GPE to undertake Gender Reviews of National Education Sector Plans and to support the roll out of the UNGEI/UNICEF/GPE Guidance for developing Gender Responsive Education Sector Plans. Plan International also holds a seat on UNGEI's Global Advisory Committee (GAC), which shares in the planning, decision-making, guidance and accountability of UNGEI.

### **UNESCO**

UNESCO plays a pivotal role in Education For All (EFA) co-ordination and has undergone an important process of reform which has strengthened the global lobby on and delivery of EFA. UNESCO's annual EFA Global Monitoring Report remains the most important source of data and analysis tracking world progress on education. Plan International is in the process of gaining

consultative status with UNESCO, and actively participates in the bi-annual collaborative consultation of NGOs.

### **The Global Campaign for Education (GCE)**

GCE is a civil society movement working to end the global education crisis and ensure that States act now to deliver the right of everyone to a free, quality public education. Plan International has a representative on the GCE's board – and works in particular to ensure young people's voices are represented in the GCE.

Plan International is also represented by CEO Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen as the alternate civil society representative on the High Level Steering Group of the Education Cannot Wait Fund. Simon Bishop, from Plan International UK, represents Plan International on the Senior Officials Group. Plan International also participates in Task Team 2 of the Fund, which deals with Operational Guidelines and Results for ECW. The Plan International representative is Colin Rogers, with Catherine Ball from Plan International UK and Nadine Grant from Plan International Canada also participating.

Plan International is also a partner on the Global ECD action network that will be working to drive comprehensive ECD policy, programming and investment – including increased access to early learning/pre-primary education.

### **Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG)**

Plan International is a contributing member of the AEWG, an inter-agency working group made up of education partners working in Accelerated Education. It is currently led by UNHCR with current representation from UNICEF, USAID, NRC, Plan International, IRC, Save the Children International, ECCN and War Child Holland. Its main objectives are the design, development and testing of Accelerated Education Principles to build standards, guidance and lessons learned on the delivery of accelerated education programming.

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## **ANNEX 2: THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS SUPPORTING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION**

Education is a fundamental human right and essential for the exercise of all other human rights. Education promotes individual freedom and empowerment and yields important development

benefits, quality education is also central for access to decent work, improved gender relations, respect towards the environment, health. It should be realised for all people, without discrimination or exclusion, including during emergencies. As a right, education is a universal entitlement, however, girls and boys face differing barriers to attaining the right to education, therefore human rights frameworks recognise the right to education collectively for all children, and separately for certain demographics. Every child has the right to access free, quality and safe pre-primary, primary and secondary education. Education does not only take place at school: formal and non-formal education are both effective strategies to develop children's full potential. Education opportunities must be accessible to all, be of good quality<sup>1</sup> and be free from violence and gender bias<sup>235</sup>.

The right to education is supported by a robust international framework of legally binding human rights instruments. In addition to the international legal frameworks, which lay the foundations and provide the accountability mechanism for States to guarantee the right of all children to education, States have also committed to a number of global education frameworks which further detail their collective and individual responsibilities to ensure the right to education.

### **The Universal Declaration of human rights**

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that all people at all levels have the right to free, compulsory and accessible elementary education<sup>236</sup>.

### **The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**

The CRC is signed and ratified by every State Party to the UN except the United States of America. This makes it a powerful international legal tool for protecting children's rights. It contains a number of articles relevant to education. Article 28.1 of the CRC recognises the right to education for all children, and outlines that States Parties have a responsibility to ensure compulsory, free primary education; available, accessible general and vocational secondary education; and accessible higher education for all children<sup>237</sup>. However, while the CRC states that right to learning and to education begins at birth, it doesn't explicitly refer to State obligations to ensuring access for all to safe, free, quality pre-primary education. General

Comment 7 on early childhood provides recommendations on early childhood / pre-primary education, that are absent in the CRC.

### **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**

Article 23.3 of the CRC places the responsibility of provision of free, quality, accessible education for children with disabilities on the State. Article 24 of the CRPD obligates States to provide equal access to education for persons with disabilities, at all levels within both general and vocational education streams. It outlines that States are obligated to facilitate such access by providing persons with disabilities with alternative modes of communication, accommodating the disabled with adequate facilities, and training professionals on the education of people with disabilities.<sup>238</sup>.

### **Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**

Article 10 of the CEDAW outlines the responsibility of State Parties' to ensure gender equality within education, including equal access and exposure to opportunity at all levels and within all subject areas, and to also ensure that education curricula specifically tackle negative gender norms<sup>239</sup>.

### **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)**

Article 13 of the ICESCR reiterates the right to education for all children, and further outlines that States Parties have a responsibility to develop school infrastructure, and to improve conditions required for effective teaching<sup>240</sup>.

### **The Refugee Convention**

Article 22 of the 1951 Refugee Convention outlines the rights of displaced children to education, stating that: "States shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education. States shall accord to refugees treatment as favourable as possible, and, in any event, not less favourable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances, with respect to education other than elementary education and, in particular, as regards access to studies, the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas and degrees, the remission of fees and charges and the award of scholarships."<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See section on Quality, Equity and Equality for Plan International's definition of quality education.



## **The Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers (CRMW)**

For children of migrants, Article 30 of the CRMW obligates State Parties to ensure that children of migrant workers receive equal treatment as those of nationals such as the right of access to education and regardless of the situation of their parent(s).

## **The UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education**

The UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education outlines that States must ensure that all people are equally able to access a quality education, regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition or birth, and to formulate policies that will promote equality of opportunity within education<sup>242</sup>.

## **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

In 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with its Agenda 2030 – a robust and ambitious development agenda for the coming 15 years. Agenda 2030 recognises the importance of education both as a fundamental right for all people, and also as a crucial tool for the achievement of all development goals. Education is referenced within several of the 17 goals in addition to forming Goal 4: “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.

Goal 4 of Agenda 2030 represents the greatest commitment on the part of States thus far to realising the right to education for all. It reflects a broad vision of education grounded in the human rights perspective, expanding the ambition of the international community to achieve 10 distinctive targets:

States had previously committed to providing free, compulsory primary education. Within Agenda 2030 this is expanded to include access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education (4.2) as well as primary and secondary education (Target 4.1). Vitality, States have also committed to achieving gender parity in education, and ensuring that education is accessible to all – even the most vulnerable (Target 4.5) – including by extending that commitment to include the provision of learning environments that are child, gender and disability sensitive (Target 4.a).

In addition to increased commitments to improving access to education, States have also made strong commitments to improving education quality. States have committed to ensuring that all children achieve literacy and numeracy (Target 4.6), to providing vocational and technical training (Target 4.4), to a broad set of curricular objectives towards promoting sustainable development (Target 4.7), and to increasing the supply of qualified teachers (Target 4.c).

However, Agenda 2030 will not be achieved unless greater efforts are directed to taking further effective measures and actions, in conformity with international law, to remove obstacles and constraints, strengthen support and meet the special needs of people living in areas affected by complex humanitarian emergencies and in areas affected by terrorism.

## **The Incheon Declaration for Education 2030**

In May 2015 UNESCO held the World Education Forum in Incheon, Republic of Korea. The resulting Incheon Declaration for Education 2030, and the accompanying Framework for Action (FFA), was adopted by representatives from 160 countries. The FFA expands on the narrative of Goal 4’s targets, whilst also establishing strategies to aid implementation. In addition, FFA emphasises three fundamental principles: that education is a fundamental human right and an enabling right; that education is a public good; and that gender equality is inextricably linked to the right to education for all<sup>243</sup>.

## **The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction**

There are strong references to comprehensive school safety throughout the Sendai Framework for DRR. One of the seven global targets makes direct reference to educational facilities (Target 4: ‘Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and educational facilities, including through developing their resilience by 2030’). Several of the actions under Priority 1 relate to the role of education in promoting understanding of disaster risk (paras 24g, 24l and 24m), as well as the importance of understanding the impact of disasters on education (para 24d). The importance of disaster resilient design and construction of critical facilities, including schools, is specified under Priority 3 (para 30c), while preparedness in educational facilities is touched upon under Priority 4 (para 33c).

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Based on UNESCO's 2011 Global Education Digest report, 1.23 billion children are in primary or secondary school on any given day, and Plan estimates that 20percent of the global student population is 246 million children. Therefore, Plan estimates that at least 246 million boys and girls suffer from SRGBV every year. Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2011). *Global Education Digest 2011: Comparing Education Statistics Across the World*. Montreal, UNESCO Institute of Statistics.

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