

Item 3 – General statement – 14 June 2022

Excellences, Colleagues, and Friends,

It is an honour to address you today. Plan International is an 85-year old organisation striving for a just world that advances children’s rights and equality for girls. We are present in over 75 countries and operate both in development and humanitarian settings. We’ve held consultative status with ECOSOC since 1981 and we work hand in hand with UNICEF across the globe.

We would like to thank UNICEF for excellent collaboration and congratulate you on all the work achieved in 2021. At Plan International, we are pleased to see UNICEF:

- Stepping up its work on gender equality
- Increasing its work on adolescents
- Recognising that most emergencies disproportionately impact girls and women
- Seeking to work more with child-led, girl-led and local actors

Let me share some examples of the successful collaboration between Plan International and UNICEF during 2021:

1. A technical note was developed on **Girls associated with armed forces and armed groups (GAAFAG)**.

Girls have unique experiences in armed conflict, as they play different roles and face different risks within armed groups than boys. Key recommendations include:

- a. The need to implement multi-level programming (involving children, families, communities and government stakeholders) to **prevent** GAAFAC
- b. The need to **improve response services** by designing programmes based on gender analysis, promoting the participation of girls, taking a multi-level approach and strengthening case management
- c. A successful GAAFAC **reintegration** should offer safety and care, social integration, physical and mental health and financial self-sufficiency, as well as specific provisions for girls with special protection needs

A toolkit was also developed for humanitarian practitioners and is currently being rolled out in Colombia, Nigeria and Mozambique. In addition, a CAAFAG task force and CAAFAG community of practice was set up at the global level.

2. We carried out an evidence review with several UNICEF Child Protection and Food Security actors as key informants. The evidence review highlighted specific risks for adolescent girls including increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence, child marriage, intimate partner violence, unintended pregnancy and mental health concerns.

In 2022, this project will provide technical support and guidance aiming to strengthen collaboration between practitioners and reduce risks for children and adolescent girls. The three pilot countries are South Sudan, Central African Republic and Nigeria.

3. We were a key civil society organization partner during the first **Global Forum for Children and Youth (CY21)** in December of 2021.
4. We contributed actively to the development of the **UNICEF Gender Action Plan**
5. **Adolescent girls are a priority for Plan International:** A toolkit to support girls' empowerment in crisis settings was developed, currently used for adolescent girl-led programme consultations and programme design. It promotes greater participation, multi-sectoral programming, and multi-level engagement of girls and their social environment.

Going forward we encourage UNICEF to:

- **Systematically refer to collaboration with civil society** in its documents and reports for the UNICEF Executive Board. We are witnessing a global pushback on human rights. We see repressive laws and restrictions affecting all, including young women and child rights defenders. As civic space shrinks, so, too, do human rights.
- Make more **explicit references to human rights** and in particular to the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** in programmes, advocacy and communication.
- **Mainstream gender equality** throughout all your work.
- **Increase the humanitarian funding for child protection.** Child protection funding globally has increased over the past few years, but the gap between Child Protection funding needs and available funding is widening. Child Protection funding was only 0.8% of the total funds received for humanitarian response plans in 2020.
- **Promote the rights and protection of adolescent girls in developing and crisis settings.** With higher humanitarian needs in 2022 than ever before, the centrality of protection is more crucial than ever. Plan International urges UNICEF and member states to invest in the protection of all children, and in particular adolescent girls who are disproportionately affected by crisis.

We are looking forward to continuing the collaboration with UNICEF and together driving transformative and sustainable changes for children and particularly girls.

Thank you,