



Bringing hearts and minds
together for children

WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

Plan International's position and commitments

The first World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) is being held against a backdrop of unprecedented humanitarian needs and challenges. More than 125 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. Violent conflicts, forced displacement and an upsurge in climate-related disasters are fuelling these needs. Children typically comprise half or more of the population in emergencies, and are disproportionately affected by their impacts, particularly the most vulnerable children. Adolescent girls in particular, whose needs are often neglected, face specific risks.

The WHS is a historic opportunity to bring together stakeholders from across the humanitarian system and to mobilise commitments to make humanitarian action more effective, accountable and transparent. Coming on the heels of the commitments made under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the WHS must build on this momentum. We call on all stakeholders, including world leaders, to rally behind the spirit of the Summit and commit to bold and concrete actions.

The Agenda for Humanity, tabled by the UN Secretary General in advance of the Summit, sets out a bold vision for change grounded in humanity as a common value. Plan International warmly welcomes this ambitious agenda. As an independent child rights and humanitarian organisation committed to children living a life free of poverty, violence and injustice, we particularly endorse the emphasis on leaving no one behind. Plan International works to address the rights and needs of girls and boys in the countries where we operate regardless of the context or circumstances, so we welcome the proposals to build stronger connections between humanitarian and development work.

This briefing outlines Plan International's response to and recommendations based on the Core Responsibilities in the Agenda for Humanity and sets out our own commitments in support of the Agenda.

AGENDA FOR HUMANITY: RESPONSE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Core responsibility 1: Political leadership to end conflicts

Plan International strongly supports the Secretary General's call for decisive political action to prevent and end conflicts. Girls and boys suffer disproportionately from conflict, often with long-term consequences for their survival and development. The call for robust engagement of people and civil society in conflict prevention and resolution to mobilise constituencies of peace and non-violence is particularly welcome. The emphasis on the role of women's groups in conflict prevention and resolution is particularly important.

We also welcome the specific call for young people, as our future leaders, to play a critical role in conflict prevention and resolution by shifting mindsets and attitudes and by engaging in national parliaments and political processes. However, our experience demonstrates that specific measures must be taken to ensure that participation of girls, boys and youth in political and parliamentary processes is meaningful and gender sensitive.

Core Responsibility 2: Uphold the norms that safeguard humanity

The Secretary General's urgent call for unequivocal respect for International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law is a timely reaffirmation of the obligations of both State and non-State parties to conflict. It is essential that we end impunity by holding perpetrators of violations against girls and boys to account.

We strongly support the emphasis on ending sexual and gender based violence and the call for States to adopt legislation and strengthen national justice systems to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence. We also particularly welcome the specific call to protect schools from military use during armed conflict, echoing the commitments made under the Safe Schools Declaration.ⁱ

Plan International recommends:

- States and other parties should commit to applying the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use During Armed Conflict.¹

Core Responsibility 3: Leave no one behind

As an organisation focused on the needs and rights of girls, boys and youth from the most vulnerable groups and communities, Plan International is very pleased to see that the Secretary General has accorded a high priority to reaching the most vulnerable, echoing the 2030 Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The importance of education and child protection in emergencies

The Secretary General is right to highlight that children and youth bear a disproportionate share of the impact of conflicts and displacement, not least because they typically comprise at least half of the affected population.ⁱⁱ Yet it is also important to highlight that both education and child protection in emergencies – sectors which specifically address their needs, remain two of the most underfunded sectors.

We welcome the specific recommendations to ensure that children's right to education continues to be upheld during crises. The benefits of quality education in emergencies highlighted in the report are particularly important for girls, who are at greater risk of early and forced marriage and who are often the first to be taken out of school by their families in times of crises.ⁱⁱⁱ We join the Secretary General in calling for an increase in domestic and international funding for safe and quality education in emergencies.

The report notes that children face a range of protection risks during conflicts, disasters and displacement. However, it falls short of making specific recommendations to address these risks. Child protection is a lifesaving intervention and must be recognised as such by all humanitarian actors. It is also important to stress that all children have the right to access protection and education, no matter which country they are in, whether displaced or not. All countries which have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child are obliged to do everything they can to uphold these rights, even in times of crisis.

Plan International recommends:

- All education in emergencies interventions must be safe and gender sensitive, with mechanisms in place to prevent and respond to gender based violence.
- Education must be systematically included, prioritised and funded as part of emergency response activities, including in the first phase of a response and with flexible multi-year funds for protracted crises. It must also include specific resources for formal and non-formal education programmes for girls of all ages (from pre-primary, primary, secondary and flexible accelerated programmes).
- Donors should commit to ensure new and additional funding is provided to fully fund the Education Cannot Wait – A fund for education in emergencies being launched at the WHS. We also call for investments in building the resilience and preparedness of schools and education systems by investing in comprehensive school safety.
- Child protection must be recognised as a lifesaving intervention, mainstreamed across all sectors and adequately funded, particularly during the first phase of an emergency response.
- All humanitarian actors should commit to implementing the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action.

Children and youth as agents of change

Plan International is particularly pleased to see the Secretary General's acknowledgement of the role of adolescents and youth as agents of positive change, echoing the commitments made under the 2030 Agenda. We know that girls and boys of all ages want to have and must be given the opportunity to express their views and opinions freely, influence decisions affecting their lives and participate in all aspects of preparedness, response, recovery and the rebuilding of their communities and societies.^{iv}

Focus on the needs and rights of girls

The specific focus given to both empowering and protecting women and girls is very welcome. Adolescent girls in particular face double discrimination and specific risks as a result of both their gender and their age. Many risks facing girls and young women tend to multiply in emergency contexts, including gender-based and sexual violence, child, early and forced marriage, trafficking, sexually transmitted infections (including HIV), unintended and unwanted pregnancy, maternal morbidity and death.^v

The Secretary General is right to highlight the issue of gender-based violence as a fundamental human rights violation and the need to shift public discourse and attitudes to condemning such violence while providing comprehensive support for survivors.

We welcome the call to provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services as a matter of priority. We also highlight the importance of comprehensively addressing the needs of women and adolescent girls in other areas of humanitarian response, including in the provision of sanitary facilities, distribution of entitlements and provision of livelihood opportunities. Women, men, girls and boys are impacted in different ways in emergency situations, and interventions that fail to account of these differences can perpetuate inequalities.

Plan International recommends:

- Efforts to address gender-based violence must engage men and boys in changing harmful gender norms which perpetuate gender-based violence and provide targeted interventions for higher risk groups such as young adolescents, pregnant adolescent girls and marginalised adolescents.
- A gender assessment should be conducted at the onset of all emergencies to ensure that the needs of women, men, girls and boys are addressed and gender inequalities are not perpetuated.

An inclusive approach to humanitarian action

While the measures highlighted in the report to address specific issues faced by particular vulnerable groups are welcome, we feel that the Secretary General could have gone further in recommending a more comprehensive approach to inclusive humanitarian action. Plan International is calling on humanitarian actors to commit to specific actions, as set out in the [Charter for Inclusion](#). These commitments are intended to make the humanitarian system better equipped to provide assistance and protection that is accessible and appropriate for all vulnerable groups.

Plan International recommends:

- Data must be collected and disaggregated to show the nature and extent of the needs of different groups and the design of humanitarian action must be based on this evidence so as to meet these needs. At a minimum, data should be aggregated by age, sex and ability.
- Delivery mechanisms must make assistance accessible to those who need it, whatever their ability.
- The knowledge and skills of humanitarian actors must be developed and maintained so they are able to understand different needs and deliver appropriate and accessible assistance for all.
- Humanitarian actors must systematically engage with those affected to deliver meaningful participation and consultation to ensure their views are reflected in all aspects of the response from assessment, design, delivery and monitoring and evaluation.
- Funding that is commensurate with the scale of needs must be made available and allocated impartially according to need, recognising the respective needs of different groups.

Core Responsibility 4: Change People's Lives – from delivering aid to ending need

As an organisation with a full spectrum mandate, Plan International works to address the rights and needs of girls and boys in the countries where we operate regardless of the context or circumstances. We therefore welcome the report's proposal for a new paradigm to build stronger connections between humanitarian and development approaches when circumstances allow, but without losing the importance of truly independent humanitarian response when needed.

Child-centred resilience building

We are pleased to see that the Secretary General reinforces the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction by stressing the importance of locally led, participatory approaches to resilience building. These efforts must be inclusive of all vulnerable groups. Plan International's experience, for

example, has demonstrated that girls and boys and youth can effectively and innovatively contribute to community resilience^{vi} and conflict prevention and resolution. The Sendai Framework recognises that children and youth are key stakeholders and agents of change, and should be given the space and modalities to contribute to disaster risk reduction.

Community engagement and accountability

We support the call for feedback tools to be made available to improve accountability to affected populations. To be effective, it is important that dedicated resources are allocated to community engagement and institutional processes are put in place to receive, analyse, and act upon feedback.^{vii} We emphasise that these measures must be inclusive – for example, girls and young women must be actively enabled to meaningfully participate and have their voices heard, through gender sensitive accountability mechanisms.

Plan International recommends:

- Humanitarian organisations and coordinating bodies need to ensure consistent leadership and resourcing for community engagement in all responses.
- All humanitarian actors, including donors, should put in place mechanisms to ensure that accountability to children is at the heart of strategies for strengthening engagement with crisis-affected populations. These mechanisms must be inclusive and gender sensitive.

Connecting humanitarian and development work

In contexts other than those afflicted by armed conflict, we very much support the emphasis on bridging the divide between humanitarian action and longer-term development work. Plan International's focus on girls and boys highlights the need to take a long-term perspective, especially in situations of protracted crises, and during the post-disaster recovery phase. It is imperative that action must not only meet girls' and boys' short term needs, but contribute to, and not undermine, their longer term development and wellbeing and, where possible, contribute to transforming gender relations.

The Secretary General's proposal that humanitarian and development actors should work together to develop and implement collective outcomes is a welcome attempt to bridge fragmented planning and financing mechanisms and to build on the momentum and commitments made in Agenda 2030, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and Paris Agreement.

The recommendation that international humanitarian actors should respect and strengthen local leadership in crises is an important one. However, it must be recognised that the relationship between humanitarian agencies and local leadership, particularly governments, differs depending on the context. It is important to make a clear distinction between 'natural disaster' situations and conflict affected contexts.

Core Responsibility 5: Invest in Humanity

Plan International supports the Secretary General's call for greater investment in local actors. We know that young people play crucial roles in building resilience, peacebuilding and responding to emergencies and strongly call for more direct and predictable funding for youth groups, which represent the views of both young women and men.

We also strongly support the call for greater investment in risk reduction and resilience building, in line with commitments under the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement. There is an urgent need to scale up support for vulnerable countries and we call on governments to strengthen their existing commitments. The Secretary General's call for a significant proportion of climate finance to

be used for risk reduction and to support people displaced by the impacts of climate change is an important reminder that some impacts of climate change cannot be adapted to and 'loss and damage' from climate change will inflict an increasingly severe human and financial burden on the most vulnerable countries.

The Grand Bargain

The 'Grand Bargain on Efficiency' is a welcome effort to drive the changes in humanitarian financing required to operationalise the recommendations described in the Secretary General's report. However, it is important to stress that efficiency savings, while welcome, will not bring a large enough dividend to significantly address the current funding shortfall, which is essential to address the Core Responsibilities set out by the Secretary General. Such savings have to be seen as complementary to the other areas addressed in the High Level Report on 'shrinking the needs' and mobilizing additional resources. It should also be ensured that efforts to reduce overheads do not erode commitments to staff security and do not counteract the calls for 'Leaving no one behind' in humanitarian action.

Plan International recommends:

- NGOs, CSOs, and other first responders must be considered as vital actors in humanitarian response and be included accordingly in the implementation of the Grand Bargain; they should have access to as direct funding as possible, and benefit from harmonization and simplification of donor requirements, as well as multi-year, more flexible funding.
- The implementation of the Grand Bargain should respect the Principles of Partnership (Equality, Transparency, Results-Oriented Approach, Responsibility and Complementarity), which provide a framework for humanitarian actors to engage in more equal, constructive and transparent partnerships.¹
- The Grand Bargain should drive greater transparency of UN-managed pooled funds and opportunities for implementers to feed back on the efficiency of the sub-granting process, while promoting a wider diversity of funding channels.

PLAN INTERNATIONAL'S COMMITMENTS FOR THE WHS

Implementing quality humanitarian programmes

- In order to consistently implement quality humanitarian programmes, we will adopt, use and monitor the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), and implement the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and INEE Minimum Standards for Education.

Meeting child protection needs in emergencies

- Wherever there are unmet child protection needs during emergencies in countries in which we have programmes, we will contribute to meeting those needs throughout all phases of an emergency response. This includes a particular focus on addressing the protection needs of girls.

Continued focus on education in emergencies

- We will contribute to ensuring that girls and boys are able to access safe, quality and inclusive education during emergencies in countries in which we have programmes, through both our safe schools and education in emergencies programmes.

Leading education and child protection in emergency responses

- We will take on leadership roles in country and regional level education and child protection clusters, and use these roles to strengthen cross-sectoral coordination on child protection and education and advocate for an increased focus on the needs of girls.

Increased focus on addressing the needs of girls

- We will increase our focus on addressing the needs and rights of girls across the humanitarian - development continuum. From the outset of crises we will consult, engage with and analyse the specific needs of girls and ensure that all our humanitarian programmes include specific outcomes which benefit girls.

Gender sensitive humanitarian programming

- We will ensure that all Plan International's humanitarian programmes are at least 2a or 2b on the IASC gender marker and strive to go beyond 2b and become gender transformative where appropriate.

Tracking progress for girls and women in all contexts

- We will convene, lead, and coordinate, along with a global group of strategic partners, a global independent SDG progress tracker for girls and women. The initiative will highlight where data gaps currently exist and advocate for enhanced tracking and reporting, including in conflict affected and fragile states, as well as countries affected by other disasters. It will capture data from strategically chosen official SDG indicators addressing key issues for girls and women, including sexual and reproductive health. It will also track qualitative perception based indicators that highlight the progress being made across the lifecycle of girls and women.

Building our capability on adolescent sexual and reproductive health

- We will build on our existing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in development experience to progressively build our capability to contribute to the delivery of the Minimum Initial Service Package for reproductive health in emergencies, with a focus on adolescent sexual and reproductive health.

Reaching the most vulnerable through inclusive programming

- We will ensure that all our programmes address the diverse needs of the most vulnerable girls and boys (including but not limited to displaced children, separated children, adolescent girls and boys, children with disabilities and children from minority groups) by committing to the *Charter for Inclusion*.

Building the capacities of young people

- We commit to implementing the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action. In particular, we will recognize and build upon the capacities and voice of young people as agents of change and key stakeholders in preparedness, response, recovery and resilience building. Where possible, our programmes will meet the needs of and priorities expressed by young people.

Listening to feedback from affected communities

- We will allocate dedicated resources to community engagement, provide information to and systematically collect feedback from affected people on the quality of our work, disaggregated by age and sex, and put in place institutional processes to receive, analyse, and act upon feedback.

Bridging our development and humanitarian work through resilience building

- We will continue to progressively align the objectives of our development and humanitarian work. This includes a commitment to integrate community resilience building into our longer-term development work and also reducing risk and vulnerability and building resilience as part of our humanitarian response programmes.

Increased focus on working in conflict

- We will increase our capacity on and resources allocated to working in unstable, fragile and conflict affected settings

i Safe Schools Declaration

http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/safe_schools_declaration-final.pdf

ii Putting Children at the Heart of the World Humanitarian Summit

[file:///C:/Users/awright1/Downloads/putting-children-at-the-heart_full_text_final%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/awright1/Downloads/putting-children-at-the-heart_full_text_final%20(1).pdf)

iii Plan International, 2013, In Double Jeopardy: Adolescent Girls and Disasters [https://plan-](https://plan-international.org/state-worlds-girls-2013-adolescent-girls-and-disasters)

[international.org/state-worlds-girls-2013-adolescent-girls-and-disasters](https://plan-international.org/state-worlds-girls-2013-adolescent-girls-and-disasters)

iv Putting Children at the Heart of the World Humanitarian Summit

[file:///C:/Users/awright1/Downloads/putting-children-at-the-heart_full_text_final%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/awright1/Downloads/putting-children-at-the-heart_full_text_final%20(1).pdf)

v UNFPA, 2015, State of the world population 2015. Shelter from the Storm

https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/sowp/downloads/State_of_World_Population_2015_EN.pdf

vi Plan International, 2015, Child Centred Community Resilience: case studies from the Philippines and Vietnam. <https://plan-international.org/child-centred-climate-resilience>

vii World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat, 2015, Restoring Humanity: Global voices calling for action,

<https://consultations.worldhumanitarian summit.org/bitcache/32aeda5fe90ceba891060ad51d0bd823da273cf9?vid=555986&disposition=inline&op=view>