



**High-Level Panel Event**  
**Addressing the Rights and Needs of Adolescent Girls in Crisis:**  
**Bridging the Policy and Programming Gap**

**Date/Time:** September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018, 3-5pm

**Location:** UNHQ Conference Room 4

**Co-Sponsors:** Governments of Denmark and the Philippines; OCHA; UNICEF; Others (TBC)

**Background/Context:**

Risks and human rights violations adolescent girls face outside of emergencies multiply and are exacerbated in humanitarian contexts, including access to education, gender-based and sexual violence, child, early and forced marriage, trafficking, and unpaid forced labour including domestic labour and care work.<sup>1</sup> Children with disabilities – especially girls – as well as unaccompanied and separated adolescent girls are also particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Adolescent girls can become systematic targets for sexual violence in conflict situations, and sexual violence can become a weapon to terrorize and break apart families and communities and, in some instances, to change the ethnic make-up of future generations.<sup>2</sup>

Mobility constraints, security concerns, and entrenched gender norms also greatly impact adolescent girls' access to education in emergency contexts; creating additional protection concerns, contributing to spikes in negative coping mechanisms like survival sex and child, early and forced marriage, and affecting girls' long-term development outcomes. Menstrual hygiene needs create urgent affronts to dignity and health and safety risks when girls and young women are unable to move safely on their own to wash clothing or access essential sanitary supplies.

Already vulnerable to human rights abuses predicated on gender-based norms and stereotypes, including discriminatory legal provisions, lack of available sexual and reproductive health services, obstacles to their equal access to safe and quality education, and gender-based violence, adolescent girls face exacerbated vulnerabilities in humanitarian contexts.

The meaningful consultation of adolescent girls in crisis contexts is essential to better understand their own priorities for humanitarian response programming, as well as to get a broader view of their experiences and needs. Listening to girls helps us to understand their experiences of living through crises, and to better recognise and appreciate their agency – this in turn can help to provide potential entry points for working with and supporting adolescent girls. It will further contribute to programming that is more effectively tailored to address the expressed needs and priorities of adolescent girls and enable humanitarian actors to better understand intersecting drivers of humanitarian need and rights violations. This can then provide a more integrated and holistic humanitarian response. To this end, Plan International has researched adolescent girls' experiences in several different crisis contexts, focusing on the areas of insecurity for adolescent girls as well as the positive ways in which they respond to their circumstances.

Plan International has recently published three reports which looked at adolescent girls' experiences in the Lake Chad Basin region, the South Sudan crisis, and the Rohingya crisis in Cox's Bazar. The reports emphasize the experiences, voices and opportunities of adolescent girls in crisis contexts, and were designed to understand how the humanitarian sector can better listen to, learn from, and partner with adolescent girls who face interconnected insecurities in protracted emergencies. This research sought to amplify the voices of adolescent girls, to better

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<sup>1</sup> UNFPA, State of the world population 2015. Shelter from the Storm; Plan International, State of the World's Girls Report: Double Jeopardy, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> DFID Briefing Paper, October 2013. Violence Against Women and Girls in Humanitarian Emergencies: CHASE Briefing Paper.



understand the coping mechanisms they employ while experiencing crisis and to present the findings on the issues that are of significance to them.

**Concept:** This high-level panel discussion will highlight key concerns for adolescent girls in the contexts of Lake Chad Basin, Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, and the South Sudan crisis, and humanitarian contexts more broadly. The discussion will explore the impact of conflict and insecurity on their daily lives and in the long term. Speakers will address how adolescent girls in several different crises understand and respond to their own unique situations and how the humanitarian sector can better respond to their needs and priorities. Programmatic examples and policy recommendations for more holistic integrated humanitarian responses will be considered. We want to better understand the needs, where current gaps lie, and discuss concrete solutions at both policy and programmatic level.

**Objectives: As a result of this forum, it is hoped that attendees will:**

- 1) Have a better understanding of gender and age-related vulnerabilities and the specific needs of adolescent girls in crisis contexts, particularly in Lake Chad Basin, Cox's Bazar, and the South Sudan crisis.
- 2) Have a better understanding of key recommendations that should be considered in humanitarian responses, and significant gaps in policy frameworks and their implementation that must be addressed.
- 3) Advocate for the inclusion of adolescent girls' voices in decision-making and in planning humanitarian programmes that support them.

**Preliminary Run of Show:**

Opening Remarks- **H.E. Teodoro Locsin Jr**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Philippines to the UN

Moderator- **Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen**, CEO, Plan International

Panel-

- **Ms. Ursula Mueller**, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator
- **Ms. Maihan Wali**, Youth Representative
- **Mr. Fabian Boekler**, Lake Chad Unit Coordinator, Plan International
- **Mr. Omar Abdi**, Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF

Closing Remarks

- **Ms. Ulla Toernaes**, Minister for Development Cooperation, Government of Denmark (TBC); and,
- **Plan International Youth Representative**