

About Plan International UK

Plan International UK is a global children's charity with a particular focus on the rights and needs of adolescent girls. We work to give every child the same chance in life and provide their basic needs including healthcare, education, clean water and work to protect them from risks such as sexual exploitation, slavery and forced marriage. Last year we reached over 8 million people in 75 countries.

Report briefing: Left Out, Left Behind - adolescent girls' secondary education in crises

Our new report shines a light on the harsh realities for the 13 million girls who are unable to attend school as a direct result of conflict, natural disasters and climate crises.

In 2015, when world leaders launched the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), they committed to ensuring that all children and young people can access education. The world is falling short of that goal, and girls in crises are the furthest behind. At current rates of progress, by the 2030 SDG deadline, 1 in 5 in crisis-affected countries will still not be able to read a simple sentence.

When conflict or disaster strikes, everyone caught up has their lives torn apart. But adolescent girls' age and gender means they are particularly adversely affected. They are at high risk of sexual and physical violence at school, face a burden of household chores and are often not able to continue with their education if they are married or pregnant. All these risks increase during times of crisis and conflict.

Plan International UK is calling on world leaders and the UK Government to show bold political leadership and commit resources to secondary education for adolescent girls in emergencies so that no girl is left out or left behind.

Key findings

- Plan International UK's research shows that today, **13 million girls** are forced out of their classrooms as a direct result of conflict, disaster and long-term displacement.
- Since April 2018 girls caught up in humanitarian crises have collectively missed out on **2.8 billion days of school**.
- At current rates of progress, adolescent girls in crisis-affected countries will not all be completing secondary school until 2179, **almost 150 years past the SDGs' 2030 deadline**.
- The Sahel Region in Africa (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) is the worst region on earth to be an adolescent girl seeking 12 years of quality education. A girl in Niger is **20 times more likely** to be a teenage mother than she is to complete secondary school.
- Adolescent girls repeatedly identify that access to education is a major protective mechanism in their lives. It is an entry point for critical child protection interventions, physical and mental health support and, in some cases, can reduce girls' vulnerabilities to exploitation and trafficking.
- Education in emergencies is a lifesaving intervention that also underpins global prosperity now and for generations to come. If every girl worldwide received 12 years of free, safe, quality education, lifetime earnings for women could increase by **\$15 trillion to \$30 trillion globally**.¹

¹ World Bank. (2018). Missed Opportunities: The High Cost of Not Educating Girls

Delivering on the SDG commitment for adolescent girls in crises

The findings of our report clearly show that further action, and bold political leadership, is required by both the UK Government and the global leaders to ensure that girls in crises are no longer left out and left behind. To achieve this **Plan International UK proposes a five-part plan** and calls on the international community to listen to adolescent girls at all stages of programme, policy and political decision making.

1 Bold political leadership



The pledge to Leave No Girl Behind cannot be delivered without bold political leadership at the international level and in countries affected by humanitarian crises.

2 Fairer financing



National governments should adopt the principle of 'progressive universalism' in their budgetary allocations.

3 Gender-responsive national and global systems



National education systems to be gender-responsive and address the complex and distinct challenges faced by different genders.

4 Targeted interventions to Leave No Girl Behind in crises



Address the barriers to education faced by adolescent girls in humanitarian crises.

5 Listen to and involve adolescent girls



Provide safe spaces for adolescent girls to participate in decisions about their education, to exercise their agency, and make their voices heard.

Recommendations to the UK Government:

To deliver on commitments made in the SDGs, and ensure that no girl is left behind, Plan International UK recommends that the UK Government should:

- Increase its support to the Education Cannot Wait fund to £75 million over three years and support the fund to gradually increase the amount it allocates to secondary education.
- Demonstrate bold political leadership by making girls' education in crises a core pillar of its Leave No Girl Behind campaign.
- Continue to be a leader on education in emergencies at Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Rwanda 2020; working with other Commonwealth countries to secure commitments which improve education for adolescent girls and boys affected by crises, as part of wider efforts to address issues related to gender inequality in emergencies.
- Ensure that the cross-government effort between DFID, the FCO and the MoD to implement the Safe Schools Declaration guidelines recognises the unique protection challenges faced by adolescent girls and take coordinated steps to address this.