KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:
REVISION OF THE EUROPEAN
CONSSENSUS ON DEVELOPMENT

August 2016
The European Consensus on Development is the overarching and most important development policy of the European Union. It was adopted by the European Council, European Commission, European Parliament and the EEAS and guides all the work of the EU as regards development cooperation. It reflects the EU’s values, principles, goals and commitments for development. It is currently being revised in order to reflect the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As part of this revision process, the European Commission launched an online consultation on the future direction of EU development policy and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Plan International submitted its views to the consultation via its EU Office. This document is a summary of our key recommendations.

• **DRAW UP AN OVERARCHING IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

If the EU is to implement the 2030 Agenda, it must draw up an overarching strategy covering all internal and external policies and all parts of the 2030 Agenda from the application of its principles — such as leave no one behind — through the means of implementation, to the monitoring of progress. Without a clear roadmap to guide all the DGs in how they are expected to implement the 2030 Agenda and to break down silos between them, the EU will not be successful in achieving the Goals internally or contributing to partner countries’ efforts to reach them. The strategy should also differentiate between the parts of the 2030 Agenda for which Member States are primarily responsible versus those for which an EU lead is necessary.

It will be crucial that the strategy respects and addresses the linkages and interdependencies between all three dimensions of sustainable development and also, therefore, between all the Goals of the 2030 Agenda. Lastly, there will be no sustainable development if international human rights, humanitarian and environmental laws and standards are not fully respected, protected and realised by all actors and the strategy must recognise this.

The EU must develop an overarching 2030 Agenda implementation strategy which respects the integrated and comprehensive nature of the 2030 Agenda and covers all aspects, principles and Goals of the Agenda. This should be developed following full consultation with all stakeholders on the design, implementation and monitoring.

• **MOVE FROM PCD TO PCSD**

Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) is not only a key enabler for achieving the Goals of the 2030 Agenda, it is also a vital instrument for accountability. However, it needs to be adapted to better incorporate and respect the three dimensions of sustainable development. Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) must be an assessment of the potential and actual impact of all EU policies on developing countries and particularly on poor and marginalised groups of people within those countries. PCSD is a critical tool for ensuring that the impacts of EU policies do not undermine the realisation of people’s human rights in any country or any country’s ability to achieve sustainable development, but on the contrary, preferably supports them. In a PCSD approach, all three dimensions of sustainable development must be equally valued and EU interests cannot be allowed to take precedence over negative impacts on poor and marginalised people. Clearly, if PCSD is to be of maximum value, the EC should adapt policies to mitigate potential negative impacts and put in place a redress mechanism to compensate countries or groups of people for unavoidable negative impacts.

Going forward, PCSD must be applied far more consistently than has been the case to date for PCD. The huge lack of political will to implement PC(S)D must be rectified when implementing the revised Consensus on Development. Sustainable development criteria will need to be applied and guidance provided to all relevant staff. In addition, in order to meet its gender equality objectives, the EU should incorporate gender transformative criteria as an integral part of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development.

If PCSD were implemented correctly, it would serve to break down many of the silos between sectors and between DGs.

**PCSD must be a key pillar of the new European Consensus on Development and must applied consistently by all DGs, not just in a small number of policy areas.**

• **ADDRESS GENDER INEQUALITY AND BE GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE**

If the 2030 Agenda is to achieve the aim of leaving no one behind, it is crucial to acknowledge and to address the full ramifications of gender inequality. Plan International would like to see a far greater emphasis on and commitment to creating gender transformative change for girls and women, through a systemic approach to policy, funding and other actions. To be gender transformative, policies and actions should go beyond improving the daily conditions of girls and women and should explicitly aim to transform unequal gender power relations. The EU should therefore focus on ensuring that girls are able to learn, lead, decide and thrive by crafting a development policy which creates an enabling environment for girls and women. In order to be gender transformative, the EU must carry out a power analysis during
the design stage of all policies and actions to identify systemic factors underpinning discrimination, so that the current power structures in society which favour boys and men over girls and women can be addressed. This information would be used to address the power others have ‘over’ girls and women. The EU must also focus on how to boost the power girls and women have ‘within’ themselves - both together and individually. In this way, girls and women would be viewed as agents of change rather than as beneficiaries. Tackling gender inequality requires engagement at the community level, working with and in support of local women’s groups and civil society, as well as working with boys and men to challenge discriminatory customs. It also requires advocacy at the government level to change discriminatory laws and practices, to put in place measures to raise awareness of the unacceptability of gender discrimination and to ensure that UN Conventions are implemented and monitored. Lastly, the EU should work with the private sector, both local and European, to ensure that no practices result in entrenching or deepening existing gender inequalities in the social, economic or environmental spheres.

The European Consensus on Development must aim to be gender transformative. Gender transformative criteria should be applied to impact assessments for all policies, agreements, financial instruments and all other processes, tools and mechanisms at the EU’s disposal. EU policies must be reviewed by gender equality experts who are able to provide a gender transformative focus.

- **PROTECT DEVELOPMENT AID FROM DILUTION AND DIVERSION**

Plan International is concerned by the increasingly common use of development aid for purposes which do not fulfil the prime objective of assisting poor people in developing countries to realise their human rights.

For example, the EU’s growing concerns over security and border control, linked to the current wave of migration to Europe, are resulting in considerable development aid money being diverted to EU Member States to deal with the influx of migrants. Furthermore, the new Partnerships Framework uses development aid as leverage with partner countries for cooperation on border control and acceptance of returned migrants. Such an approach compromises the principles of human rights, neutrality, independence and impartiality which should accompany development cooperation.

In a similar vein, the EU is keen to involve the private sector in sustainable development and to further develop tools such as public-private partnerships, leveraging private finance and blending instruments. If public development aid is to be given to the private sector, the EU must ensure that development outcomes remain the prime objective, there be true additionality, development effectiveness principles are fully respected and the opportunity cost of using public ODA money is taken into account.

The revised Consensus must protect development aid as a tool for fighting poverty and inequality in partner countries and ensure that all partnerships created to implement the 2030 Agenda are fully transparent and held to high accountability standards.

- **IMPROVE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF PRIVATE SECTOR**

There has been a growing trend towards partnering with the private sector to realise development objectives. While the private sector can be a force for good and can provide a significant source of revenue or be the source of many important innovations, the private sector’s motive is primarily profit-making, not ensuring human rights and sustainable development for all people within planetary boundaries. Furthermore, there is a huge lack of transparency surrounding relationships with the private sector and a considerable gap in effective mandatory corporate accountability mechanisms. It is crucial that the private sector complies with its obligations in all areas - fiscal, social, environmental, etc. The EU should therefore develop binding regulatory and accountability frameworks which guide its relationships with all private sector actors.

The EU should reflect carefully, on a case-by-case basis, on whether private sector investment is the right way forward in a given context and ensure full transparency about their dealings with the private sector. The EU must hold their partners accountable for their part in realising the 2030 Agenda against international standards and guidelines on human rights, decent work and environmental sustainability, at the very minimum. If the EU wishes to fulfil its commitments on gender equality, it should ensure that the private sector partners with which it engages have gender equality policies in place.

Any partnerships that the EU forms should be undertaken in a fully transparent manner, with clear terms of reference outlining the roles and responsibilities of all parties, which are available to the public. Any actor which is called upon to contribute to implementing the 2030 Agenda must be held fully accountable for its part.

- **FOCUS ON ROOT CAUSES, RESILIENCE AND LRRD**

As conflicts become more protracted and increasing numbers of people are at risk of natural disasters, the importance of supporting communities to increase their resilience and of better coordinating humanitarian and development action
is apparent. Plan International proposes that the EU focuses on the root causes of insecurity and conflict – such as a lack of economic opportunities, environmental degradation and climate change, lack of voice and agency – rather than on the symptoms, especially where use of development cooperation funding is concerned. Building the resilience of communities and developing the capacities of all individuals and communities to absorb, adapt and transform in the face of shocks and stresses is key. Integrating resilience considerations and risk management across all development and humanitarian programmes and policies is one way to achieve this. There is also a clear opportunity for the EU to build on its Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) approach as the broader humanitarian and development communities look at ways to work better together in the context of the 2030 Agenda and subsequent to the World Humanitarian Summit.

While continuing to recognise the different functions which they each perform, the EU should align its development and humanitarian policies further, in relevant contexts, through the use of common analysis and assessments, strategies and plans.

- **CREATE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT**

The vital role that civil society will play in contributing to achieving the 2030 Agenda is recognised in the text of the 2030 Agenda itself. If the Goals of the Agenda are to be realised, change must happen at a local level and will depend to a great extent on local action. Local voices calling for transformative change are therefore crucial. Despite notable achievements in civil society’s ability to engage in global processes, on the ground CSOs face many difficulties in participating in national and local decision-making processes, or in highlighting irregularities in such processes or decisions. The ‘shrinking space’ for critical voices – whether civil society actors, the general public or even well-known public figures – in many countries has meant that it is increasingly risky to speak out on human rights and environmental issues. This has considerably constrained the work of CSOs and will inevitably limit the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

The EU must therefore support local civil society in two main ways. Firstly, by speaking out about the need for all civil and political rights to be respected – including for information to be freely available to the public – and for the government and local authorities to consult with people on decisions which concern their lives. Secondly, the EU should increase its financial support to local civil society. Of particular note in this regard is the EIDHR as it does not require any partner government approval for its implementation. However, the amounts of money available to such instruments are tiny in comparison with the need. They therefore need to be prioritised and reinforced.

The EU must acknowledge the important role of civil society for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and should vigorously support an enabling environment for civil society, including for children’s, youth and women’s groups.

- **MONITOR AND EVALUATE PROGRESS**

The EU needs to monitor its internal and external implementation of the 2030 Agenda and ensure its policies, funding and actions are contributing towards achieving the 2030 Agenda and in no way undermining one part of the Agenda while progressing on another. In order to effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of policies and programmes on reaching sustainable development and ensuring that no one is being left behind, **disaggregated data collection is needed**. Data must be disaggregated by age, sex, location (rural vs. urban), (dis)ability and income decile at a minimum, with other criteria included where relevant and possible. Having reliable, complete and disaggregated data which reflects the different realities of members of society is vital to understanding the differential impacts of existing policies and programmes and to shaping future ones. The EU should feed the information from monitoring other action plans and policies, such as the Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy and the Gender Action Plan into its overall progress reports.

The EU must regularly monitor and evaluate its implementation of the 2030 Agenda and must be willing to present its progress at the High Level Political Forum in New York, not least owing to its shared competence with EU Member States in many areas of the 2030 Agenda.

We welcomed the opportunity to participate in the online consultation. However, it is vital that consultation be not merely a tick-box exercise but that the views and concerns expressed by civil society are reflected throughout the revised Consensus. A further public consultation should be held on a draft of the revised Consensus on Development, so that all stakeholders can reflect on an actual proposition about the future direction of development cooperation in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**Contact:**
Tanya Cox
Senior Policy & Advocacy Manager
Plan International EU Office
E: tanya.cox@plan-international.org