PLAN INTERNATIONAL EU OFFICE ANNUAL REVIEW 2014-15
This review sets out Plan International EU Office’s progress towards Plan International’s vision and mission between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2015. This period is referred to throughout the report as 2014-15. Published 2015. Text and photographs © Plan International, unless otherwise stated.

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Plan International EU Office’s overall goal is to ensure that the promotion, protection and realisation of children’s rights are a priority in the EU’s external action. In 2014-15, despite a changing institutional context, we made strong progress towards this goal.

The year saw a number of developments in Brussels, including European Parliament elections as well as the appointment of new leaders in the main EU institutions. Whilst adapting to these changes, we have also seen new trends which directly impact our work. We were particularly pleased to hear the newly appointed Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, confirm that gender equality would be one of his top priorities during his time in office and that youth are also very important to him, and we hope to see his words translated into actions in the near future. On the other hand, a much more worrying trend has been confirmed under President Juncker – namely, the focus on economic growth at all costs, as outlined in his 10-point plan. At the time of writing, it is unclear what negative repercussions this will have for human rights.

This year, we continued to push the girls’ rights agenda across our policy and advocacy work at the EU, in particular through the organisation of the annual European Week of Action for Girls. The week of action – held under the patronage of the European Parliament and supported by UN agencies – succeeded in raising our profile as a key advocate for girls’ rights and gender equality. Alongside this, as part of our efforts to communicate the impact of our programmes, we continued working with Plan International’s Country Offices and the European Commission (EC) to promote and share case studies of our EC-funded projects.

Towards the end of 2014, work began on the revision of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, which will run from 2015 to 2019. The Action Plan sets out a comprehensive range of actions on a plethora of human rights issues, which are to be implemented by the EU Institutions, EU Member States and EU Delegations in-country. Supported by our European National Offices, we worked hard to influence the development of this key document insofar as children’s rights are concerned. The Action Plan was adopted in July 2015 and we welcome the move towards a systems-based approach to child protection, as well as the focus on children’s economic rights, two of Plan International’s priority areas. Their inclusion was an important achievement for our team.

Our work on disaster preparedness and response has grown considerably over the past year and has been boosted by the ECHO Partnership Manager’s appointment in our office. 2014 saw the outbreak of the devastating Ebola virus in West Africa, while earthquakes hit Nepal in 2015. We have worked to raise awareness of our humanitarian interventions with the EU institutions, and called for the rights and well-being of children, especially child protection and education, to be put at the heart of humanitarian interventions.

We also continued to develop our strong partnership with the EC as a donor. In 2014-15, we were implementing 75 projects funded by the EC in 42 countries across Africa, Asia and the Americas, benefiting over 15 million people.

Finally, we continued to engage with the EU to ensure it maintained an ambitious and rights-based approach in the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals negotiations, notably through our leading role as co-chair of the CONCORD-Beyond 2015 European Task Force. Following the official adoption of the outcome document, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” in September, attention will turn to developing national and regional plans to implement the Agenda, and to holding EU Member States and EU institutions to account for their commitments. Our office will maintain pressure on the EU to ensure that children’s rights remain central to the EU’s actions, and that adequate financial and non-financial means of implementation are dedicated to meeting the Goals and targets.

The coming year will be an exciting time for the EU’s external action and development cooperation as work begins in earnest on implementing the recently adopted Human Rights Action Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals, and we look forward to making further progress towards our overall goal.

Alexandra Makaroff
Head of Plan International EU Office

Ossi Heinanen
National Director of Plan Finland and Chair of Plan Europe Board
Plan International has been working with and on behalf of children for almost 80 years. Today, we work in 51 low and middle income countries across Africa, Asia and the Americas to promote, protect and fulfil children’s rights. We operate at local, national and global levels to challenge the deep rooted causes and effects of inequality and social injustice which drive child poverty and rights’ violations.

We recognise that discrimination against girls and women is one of the main underlying causes of their rights’ violations and, consequently, of child poverty. While girls and boys have the same entitlements to human rights, they have different and unequal challenges in accessing them. By investing in girls and young women, and improving access to their rights, we can make a significant impact on ending poverty, not only for the girls themselves but also for their families, communities and countries.

The benefits of a good start in life are far-reaching – not just for individuals, but for future generations. Our programmes are therefore designed to support and empower as many children as possible, particularly the most marginalised, to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to claim their rights and realise their full potential. By doing so, children are better placed to play an active role in the development of their communities and countries, and to build the world they want to live in.

How we work
We take a rights-based approach and work closely with children and their families in the communities in which they live. Our child-centred community development approach, based on our core values of inclusion, non-discrimination and participation, enables young people to realise their potential and take control of their future.

Our eight programme areas

- **Child participation:** Every child has the right to be heard. We therefore work to ensure children are empowered and able to play an active role in their own development, as well as their communities’ and countries’.

- **Child protection:** Protecting children from harm is critical to promote their survival, development and active participation in society. We therefore work to ensure that adequate systems are in place, at local, regional and national levels, to protect children from all forms of abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation in every setting.

- **Economic security:** Our economic empowerment approach is informed by the knowledge that when families have the skills they need to increase their income and are able to access financial services, millions of children can realise their potential.

- **Education:** We work at local, national and international levels to promote every child’s right to receive a quality, safe and inclusive education, which provides them with the knowledge and skills they need to unlock their full potential.

- **Emergencies:** Whether running disaster preparedness and risk reduction projects, providing immediate disaster relief or implementing longer-term recovery projects, we work to ensure children’s rights are protected before, during and after a disaster strikes.

- **Health:** From supporting immunisation programmes to training volunteers on strategies to combat malaria, Plan International’s health programmes help to save thousands of children’s lives every year.

- **Sexual and reproductive health:** Through awareness-raising and direct response programmes, Plan International helps to empower children and young people to take control of their bodies, which means they can decide if and when they have children of their own.

- **Water and sanitation:** We work with communities to improve access to a safe, consistent supply of drinking water and to raise awareness of the importance of good sanitation.

In 2014-15, Plan International worked with:

- **51** programme countries
- **586,676** communities
- **164.9** million people
- **81.5** million children
Working to influence policies and funding and create lasting change for children

Plan International’s goal is to promote, protect and realise children’s rights, focusing particularly on the poorest and most marginalised. The European Union (EU) is one of the world’s largest and most influential development and humanitarian actors, and influencing its policies, practice and funding has the potential to positively affect the lives of hundreds of millions of children in developing countries.

As such, we work with the EU institutions to ensure that the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, with a focus on gender equality, is a priority for the EU’s external action in policy and practice.

Plan International EU Office priorities

In pursuit of our goal, we focused on the following priorities in 2014-15:

- Child protection
- Girls’ rights and gender equality
- Youth economic empowerment
- Sustainable Development Goals
- Humanitarian aid

How we work

Plan International EU Office represents Plan International to the EU institutions, and acts as a coordination hub on EU issues for Plan International’s European and Country Offices. Our work to influence EU policies and programmes takes an integrated approach to advocacy, communications and funding. From conducting face-to-face meetings to developing policy recommendations and organising campaign-actions, we work to raise Plan International’s position as an expert and respected voice on children’s rights and EU development and humanitarian policy.

The European Commission (EC) is one of Plan International’s primary institutional donors, and our office is the Global Account Manager for both International Cooperation and Development and Humanitarian Aid and Civil protection Directorates General.

As such, our funding team coordinates the work of our National and Country Offices to ensure that high quality project proposals which deliver maximum impact are submitted to the EC. We are able to strengthen our voice in support of children’s rights and ensure coordinated action at EU level by working in partnership with other organisations and alliances – both within Plan International and externally.

We therefore engage in strategic partnerships and networks at Brussels level, such as CONCORD, Voice and the Beyond-2015 European Task Force, which we co-chair.

We also support Plan International National and Country Offices to engage with their national governments and EU Delegations respectively on EU-related issues.

STRONGER TOGETHER

We are active members of the following coalitions and networks, often occupying leadership positions:

- CONCORD - the European Confederation of Relief and Development NGOs
- Beyond-2015 European Task Force
- Human Rights and Democracy Network
- VOICE - Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies
- Child Rights Action Group

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Plan International EU Office receives funding from Plan International’s European Offices and our International Headquarters, in proportion to their annual income. In 2014-15, this amounted to €602,605.
OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Our partnership with the European Commission

The European Commission (EC) is one of Plan International’s primary institutional donors, providing funding for both development and humanitarian projects.

In 2014-15, Plan International was implementing 75 projects funded by the EC in 42 countries across Africa, Asia and the Americas, benefiting over 15 million people.

Of these, 25 were newly awarded in 2014-15 – 15 Development and 10 Humanitarian – amounting to over €22m. In terms of sectors, the majority of projects focused on our core areas of child protection, gender equality, and youth economic empowerment, which accounted for 32 of the development projects running during the year.

**Increasing our impact**

In order to increase our effectiveness and extend our reach, we work with partners at all levels, from grassroots organisations to international consortia. In 2014-15, we led a consortia of Plan International, Save the Children and World Vision in the responses to both the Ebola outbreak and the Nepal earthquake. Working in consortia allows us to harness the particular skills, expertise and local knowledge of each organisation, resulting in more comprehensive projects which reach a greater number of children and communities.

We continued to strengthen the expertise of Plan International staff globally on the proper management of EC-funded projects, running donor compliance workshops for field staff in the regions. By doing so, we aim to improve the impact and sustainability of our projects, in line with the EC’s focus on securing maximum value for money.

**Defending EU aid**

Following our work to ensure children’s rights were well represented in the EU’s Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2014-2020, we continued to press the EU to respect its financial commitments to the world’s children. In view of the EU’s major liquidity crisis in 2015, with snowballing debts transferred from 2014 and EU Member States calling for budget cuts, we engaged in intensive advocacy at Brussels and capital levels, in cooperation with our European National Offices, to protect the EU aid budget.

In an open letter to EU leaders, signed by the CEOs and National Directors of all Plan International European Offices, we called for EU Member States – collectively and individually – to demonstrate the global leadership they so often profess and to defend EU aid. We also worked through networks such as CONCORD and Voice to strengthen our impact on this important issue.

Following this crucial advocacy, a last minute agreement was struck, safeguarding the development and humanitarian budgets from the severe cuts originally proposed. With the mid-term review of the MFF coming up in 2017, we will continue to raise our voice in support of a strong EU aid budget and press for the systemic changes necessary to avoid a future liquidity crisis.

**GLOBAL ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT**

Plan International EU Office acts as the organisation’s Global Account Manager for the European Commission’s International Cooperation and Development and Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Directorates General. In this capacity, we ensure greater coordination and collaboration between Plan International’s European and Country Offices when responding to calls for proposals, increasing efficiency and strengthening the quality of proposals submitted. We also facilitate internal learning and information-sharing, ensuring continual improvements are made in the management of our EC-funded projects.

By acting as the Global Account Manager, we work to influence the EC’s funding strategies and decisions in line with Plan International’s global priorities. By doing so, we ultimately aim to secure more funding for quality projects as the EC’s partner of choice, increasing our impact and allowing us to reach more children with our interventions.
Our partnership with the European Commission

Plan International’s EC-funded projects

Number of EC projects Plan International is implementing
75

Total value
€60.95 million

Number of EC projects awarded in 2014-15
25

Total value of projects awarded in 2014-15
€22.18 million

Sectors funded

- Emergency response
- Child Protection
- WASH
- Gender
- Economic empowerment
- Other
Programme Countries

National Organisations
Australia  Belgium  Brazil  Canada  Colombia  Denmark  Finland  France  Germany  Hong Kong  India  Ireland  Italy  Japan  Korea  Netherlands  Norway  Spain  Sweden  Switzerland  United Kingdom  United States

Advocacy Offices
Addis Ababa  Brussels  Geneva  New York

Regional Offices
Bangkok  Dakar  Nairobi  Panama
Realising the EU's commitment to promote, protect and fulfil children’s rights in external action

Over 25 years ago, world leaders made a promise to children: to ensure their right to survive, develop, be protected and participate in decisions which affect them. This promise is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which every Member State has endorsed. But despite considerable progress, today this promise remains unfulfilled for millions of children who continue to suffer from poverty, discrimination and abuse. Many are unable to access education or child-friendly justice, and are prevented from participating in decision-making processes. In 2014-15, we witnessed the continued violation of children’s rights, in both peacetime and conflict situations.

The EU’s commitment to protecting and promoting children’s rights is enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty, and Plan International EU Office works to ensure that the EU realises this commitment in its external action.

Child Protection

This year, we have focused considerably on the importance of ensuring strong child protection systems, which are key to preventing and responding to all forms of violence against children. Every year millions of children experience violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect – often from people they know and trust – which threaten their survival, development and participation in society. Protecting children from harm is central to everything Plan International does, and we have worked hard to translate this into commitment and action at EU level.

The systems approach to child protection – the measures, structures and actors required to prevent and respond to all forms of violence – is frequently misunderstood and generally underfunded. A systems approach recognises the inter-connectedness of the response needed to protect children from harm and addresses the complex causes and consequences of violence. It seeks to contribute to comprehensive, lasting change, led by governments that fulfil their primary responsibilities as duty-bearers for all children.
Our activities
This year we engaged with and influenced the EU institutions through a wide range of advocacy activities and processes to ensure that protecting and promoting children’s rights remains at the heart of the EU’s work.

In 2014, work began on the revision of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy which will run from 2015 to 2019. The Action Plan sets out a comprehensive range of actions on a plethora of human rights issues, which are to be implemented by the EU Institutions, the Member States and EU Delegations in-country. Supported by our European National Offices, we worked hard to influence the development of this key document insofar as children’s rights are concerned. The Action Plan was adopted in July 2015 and we welcome the move towards a systems-based approach to child protection, as well as the focus on children’s economic rights, two of our priority areas. Their inclusion was an important achievement for our team.

Following calls by the Children’s Rights Action Group, of which our office is a member, the European Parliament took an important step towards improving the protection of children’s rights by forming a Children’s Rights Intergroup. With focal points in all of the Parliament’s Committees, the Intergroup aims to mainstream the rights of the child across all its work. We will continue to work with these MEP champions to make this happen.

We have continued our work to increase awareness and understanding of children’s rights in EU external action among EU staff and officials, in order to improve the EU’s work in this field. As such, we have provided training on children’s rights, including dedicated sessions on gender and child protection, for human rights staff from across the institutions, including EU Delegations and the European Parliament. During these training sessions, we were able to share advice and experience on how to better address children’s rights in EU policies and programming.

Our calls to the EU
- The EU must prioritise the protection and promotion of children’s rights in its external action, as outlined in the Human Rights Action Plan, both through its funding and in dialogues with partner countries;
- It is essential that the EU takes a systems approach to child protection across all contexts, including during conflict and disasters, in order to most effectively prevent and respond to all forms of violence against children;
- The EU must use its influence to call on governments to prioritise child protection systems alongside issue specific interventions to ensure that child protection systems are invest ed in, and the capacity of child protection actors is strengthened;
- The EU must ensure that it provides training and capacity-building in child protection to staff at all levels of EU institutions to ensure they are able to promote this approach;
- All actions identified in the Human Rights Action Plan must be supported with adequate funding – and all Human Rights Country Strategies must translate the Action Plan into practice, with particular attention being paid to the specific local context.

What’s next?
Following the adoption of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, we will turn our attention to ensuring its effective implementation, through dedicated implementation plans. As part of our ongoing advocacy we will continue to be a leading voice holding the EU to account for its commitments. With the Council of the EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child in external policy due to be renewed, we will work to ensure Plan International’s priorities are reflected in the updated guidelines.

CASE STUDY
Combating silent violence in Northern Uganda
Despite a well-established legal, policy, strategic, protective and administrative framework, children in Uganda still suffer from widespread violence and abuse. In post-conflict Northern Uganda, in particular, the issue of “silent violence” occurring in families, remains rife. In response to the problem, Plan International Uganda is implementing a three-year project targeting silent violence against younger children (0-8 years old), whose vulnerability to violence and abuse has been largely unmet by most child protection programmes and government interventions in the region.

Funded by the European Commission, the project focuses on early childhood care and development (ECCD) and community-based protection mechanisms. With the baseline survey revealing that parents and peers were the main perpetrators of violence, the project set out to mobilise parents as a positive force for children’s well-being, linking them with the local child protection authorities and public service providers – as well as with political decision-makers and the broader public.

In collaboration with local partners, Plan International Uganda has set up 50 ECCD centres and formed 50 parenting groups which educate parents about the importance of positive parenting, encouraging them to take care of their children in a loving, caring and protective family environments free of violence. One mother to benefit from the classes is Jacinta, who admits that her children used to fear the sound of her voice. “I used to treat my children with a lot of harshness,” she says. Today, however, her attitude has changed. “There are a lot of changes in my life and that of my family as a result of my involvement in the project,” she says. “I now speak with politeness and a soft tone. My attitude to play time for children has completely changed – I no longer cane, I give my children time to play, play along with them and even help in repairing their skipping ropes when they break.”
**Girl Power:**
**From the Shadows to Centre Stage**

**Challenging social norms and attitudes to achieve transformative change for girls and their communities**

Globally, one in five girls are denied an education by the daily realities of poverty, violence and discrimination. Every day, girls are taken out of school, married far too young, and subjected to violence. These are violations of their rights, and a huge waste of potential with serious global consequences.

Yet we know that investing in girls has the potential to transform the lives of entire communities and countries. As part of Plan International’s Because I am a Girl campaign, we have therefore continued to advocate for greater attention to be paid to the specific rights and needs of girls in EU external action, both in development and humanitarian interventions.

Girls’ rights and gender equality is a cross-cutting theme within our work on children’s rights, youth economic empowerment, child protection, humanitarian aid and the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

**Our activities**

The EU has the tools at its disposal to make a positive difference in girls’ lives, including the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment 2010-2015 (GAP I), and a dedicated budget line in the Development Cooperation Instrument. In addition, since his appointment in November 2014, International Cooperation and Development Commissioner Neven Mimica has been a vocal supporter of girls’ rights, providing much needed leadership at the highest level.

However, there is considerable room for improvement, with the evaluation of the GAP I calling for greater human and financial resources and a higher level commitment if the EU is to meet its ambitions on gender equality. We have therefore been actively engaged in the renewal of the GAP (GAP II), as this provides the basis for implementing the EU’s commitments to promoting, protecting and fulfilling girls’ rights in its development cooperation for the coming five years. In collaboration with Plan International’s European National Offices, we submitted comprehensive recommendations on the GAP II, calling for concerted action on tackling harmful social norms and attitudes, which are at the root of all discrimination and violence against women and girls.

We also continued to push the girls’ rights agenda through the organisation of the annual European Week of Action for Girls, under the patronage of the European Parliament and in partnership with the United Nations Brussels. During the Week, we called for the EU to ensure girls are visible in policies and programmes, supporting them to move from the shadows to centre stage (see box). We will continue this work in the 2015 edition, which puts the spotlight on girls and the Sustainable Development Goals.

**Our calls to the EU**

- In line with the evaluation of the GAP I, the EU must provide adequate resources to fund gender equality and ensure leadership from the highest levels across the institutions;
- The EU institutions must ensure girls are included in all work on gender and that all data is disaggregated by sex and age to reflect the specific needs of girls;
- Challenging discriminatory social norms must be at the heart of the EU’s approach to gender equality, as this is vital to ensuring transformative change for girls and their communities;
- All development cooperation and humanitarian programmes must take a rights-based approach to gender equality, focusing on the poorest and most marginalised girls and women;
- The EU must do more to mainstream gender across all funding and external assistance and address the weaknesses and challenges identified in the evaluation of the GAP I.

**What’s next?**

Following the adoption of the GAP II, we will turn our attention to ensuring its effective implementation. As part of our ongoing advocacy we will continue to be a leading voice calling for the EU to fulfil its commitments on gender equality and include girls’ rights and voices in all its work, and to ensure that the commitments in the GAP II are fully resourced and financed. We will continue to use evidence from Plan International’s work to promote girls’ rights and gender equality in the EU institutions. We will profile girls’ issues through our leading role in the European Week of Action for Girls, and gender equality will remain a central and cross-cutting issue in our advocacy for our work on child protection and youth economic empowerment, both in humanitarian and development contexts.
CASE STUDY
Tackling child marriage in Dosso, Niger

Early marriage can have catastrophic consequences on a girl’s life, depriving her of a proper education and life opportunities, and jeopardising her health. Niger has the highest rate of child marriage in the world: a staggering 75% of girls in the country are married before they reach the age of 18. In Dosso region, the age of girls being forced to marry can be as low as nine years old. Fadi, 15, was almost one of them, after her father arranged for her to be married to a stranger without her knowledge. However, thanks to Plan International’s activities in the village, when 12-year-old Baki heard about the marriage organised for Fadi, he immediately informed the principal of his school. In turn, he decided to speak with Fadi’s school principal. Together, the principals went to speak with Fadi’s father in order to convince him to give up on the wedding. Happily for Fadi, her father agreed and she was saved from a life she had not chosen and was not ready for.

Plan International’s research in this area has shown that the persistence of the practice of early and forced marriage is based on customary practices of exploitation of girls and a vision inherently unequal and therefore discriminatory of women and girls in Niger. Over the past three years, the project – funded by the European Commission – has galvanised the entire community, conducting trainings and awareness raising sessions about the importance of ending child marriage. With improved knowledge and enhanced confidence, girls and boys such as Baki and Fadi have been empowered to stand up for their rights and speak out against the practice.

OUR WORK IN ACTION
The European Week of Action for Girls 2014

Plan International’s global Because I am a Girl campaign aims to support millions of girls to get the education, skills and support they need to transform their lives and the world around them. We bring the campaign to the EU through our European Week of Action for Girls. In 2014, this was organised with the support of a wide coalition of child and youth focused civil society organisations. The Week of Action focused on the impact of harmful social norms and discrimination on girls and what the EU needs to do to address these. Social norms and deeply rooted cultural beliefs often hamper girls’ ability to realise their rights and their access to education, health care, jobs and skills training. Working to bring about transformative change at the socio-cultural level, where gender inequality is at its most potent, is crucial to addressing discrimination and achieving girls’ and women’s human rights. During the Week, we organised a breakfast roundtable at the French Permanent Representation to the EU to discuss the issue of youth unemployment and consider strategies for youth economic empowerment in developing countries. Our flagship publication, the Girls’ Rights Gazette, counted articles from high level EU and UN figures, and reached a global audience of 4.5 million through our Twitter #GenderJam.
Unlocking potential, progressing together

Supporting young people to develop the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the world of work

More than 2.9 billion people - nearly half the world’s population - are under the age of 25. Plan International believes it is crucial that these young people have the knowledge and skills to succeed in life if we are to break the cycle of poverty.

Ensuring all young people, including the most marginalised and disadvantaged, can unlock their potential through access to decent work will drive progress towards sustainable, inclusive development.

Yet today, some 500 million young people in the developing world are un- or under-employed. The situation is particularly difficult for women and girls, who face even greater challenges in securing productive and fulfilling employment than their male counterparts.

Plan International is committed to tackling this global problem, with over 40 of our Country Offices implementing youth economic empowerment projects, 11 of which are funded by the European Commission.
Our activities
We have strived to ensure that this issue features on the EU agenda, including through our participation in Solutions for Youth Employment – a global coalition, of which Plan International is a founding partner, which aims to provide leadership and catalytic action to support 150 million youth in developing countries to access employment.

We organised a roundtable focusing on the importance of interventions and programmes reaching girls and young women, as part of our European Week of Action for Girls 2014. The event launched the idea to create a multi-stakeholder platform to address youth unemployment, and we will continue to work with all partners – institutional, private sector and civil society – to take this forward.

As an organisation, Plan International is committed to listening to the communities we work with, reflecting on and learning from their local knowledge, wisdom and ideas. We need to know and understand what works and what does not, and how we can best work with partners such as the EU to scale-up initiatives that perform well.

As such, a delegation from Plan International EU Office conducted a field visit to learn more about our work in Indonesia, which brings together private sector, institutional donors and community-based organisations. Plan International Indonesia is a champion of our approach to youth economic empowerment, and their work – as witnessed first-hand during the field visit – informs and strengthens our advocacy towards the EU.

Our calls to the EU
• Bearing in mind the scale and urgency of the problem, the EU should develop a policy on youth economic empowerment to support partner countries. This would provide the means for EU action to be targeted at ensuring young people have the opportunities to learn the skills and get the qualifications they need to succeed in the world of work;
• The EU should focus on promoting women’s and girls’ rights and gender equality, with specific interventions to increase their access to the labour market, to microfinance and to the economic assets and resources necessary to be active in the labour market, in line with commitments outlined in the EU Action Plan on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality;
• The EU should promote cooperation and alignment among EU Member States to ensure sharing of best practices and scaling up of initiatives which work;
• The EU should work with partner governments, through funding and dialogue, to create opportunities and provide young people with the skills needed to secure decent work.

What’s next?
Through our communications and advocacy work, we will share evidence and best practice from our programmes and research with the EU institutions, reinforcing our expertise in promoting economic security for children and youth. Working with civil society, the private sector and policymakers, we aim to build a strong case for, and influence the development of, a comprehensive EU policy on Youth Economic Empowerment in External Action.

Highlight
Under the theme, A world at work: Unlocking potential, progressing together, we engaged in the European Year for Development 2015. Through a month-long series of articles, case studies and photo essays, we demonstrated the catalytic effect that empowering young people economically has on the realisation of their rights and, consequently, on poverty reduction worldwide.

CASE STUDY
Economic opportunities for all in Mozambique
Young people face barriers to gaining employment throughout the world. In Mozambique, with more than 50% of the population living on less than $1 per day and some 27% of people of working age unemployed, the situation for young people is particularly challenging.

In Jangamo and Homoine districts in particular, the limited private sector gives young people little opportunity to develop the skills they need for the job market, with vocational trainings typically either non-existent or of poor quality. Alberto, a 22 year-old with a passion for tailoring knows it only too well - he struggled for years to find a job and become independent, searching for employment in other cities away from his family and friends.

Recognising the challenges that Alberto and his peers were facing, and in line with the Mozambican Government’s efforts to increase youth employability, Plan International took steps towards bridging the gap between market demand and qualified labour supply in Jangamo and Homoine. Through a four-year project funded by the European Commission, Plan International, in collaboration with local partners, are working to increase young people’s employability by providing them with the skills and vocational training they need for the labour market. With 2000 young people and 150 businesses directly targeted by the project, it is estimated that a total of 200,000 people will benefit from the improved socioeconomic situation in the area.

Results have already shown considerable achievements for many young people, such as Alberto, who joined the tailoring group. Today, Alberto – together with other graduates – owns his own tailoring cooperative and has become completely independent. “The fact that I’m now self-employed has made me independent, I don’t need financial support from my parents anymore," he says. Not only can he now support himself financially, he is also able to help those around him. “I now can contribute money for food purchases and I help with the purchase of school material for my brothers, which has meant a lot for my family,” he adds.
LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND POST-2015

Working to ensure the Sustainable Development Goals enable all children to reach their full potential

2015 is a milestone year, with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September. These Goals will guide the international community’s work for the next 15 years, and must galvanise global efforts to ensure children everywhere can reach their full potential.

Considerable progress has been made in the past 15 years in reducing extreme poverty, improving child well-being and promoting gender equality, but significant gaps remain and the poorest and most marginalised have often missed out. The SDGs must ensure that no one is left behind.

Children and youth are positive and active agents of change for sustainable development within their families, communities and countries, and their voices and views must shape the implementation, monitoring and accountability of the SDG framework. As such, we have supported Plan International’s calls to ensure the active participation of young people is sought, particularly of those most likely to be excluded.

Our activities
Following over two years of intense negotiations and consultations, we continued to engage with the EU on the post-2015 process, notably through our leading role as co-chair of the CONCORD-Beyond 2015 European Task Force. In this capacity, we have undertaken several speaking engagements where we have emphasised the need for an integrated and holistic framework based on the three dimensions of sustainable development: social, economic and environmental.

Together with our partners, we have developed recommendations and policy briefings advocating for an EU position that is rights-based, puts people and planet first, and challenges current economic paradigms. This has been backed up with face-to-face meetings with key officials across the institutions, in particular EU Member State Permanent Representations, the European Commission and the European External Action Service.

We have brought Plan International’s key messages on youth participation in governance and accountability to the EU stage, sharing our recommendations on how to achieve this with those engaged in the post-2015 discussions. We were pleased to see that in the negotiations on the SDGs, the EU has been a vocal supporter of the need to ensure strong governance and accountability mechanisms, which include greater participation.

Our calls to the EU
• Given the universality of the post-2015 framework, the EU and EU Member States must commit to work on all Goal areas and must not cherry-pick between Goals or targets when it comes to implementation;
• EU action to implement the SDGs must focus on reaching the most marginalised populations, including children and youth, in line with the commitment to leave no one behind;
• Ensure that the targets and indicators included in the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment 2016-2020 reflect those in the SDGs;
• The EU should put in place robust, independent accountability mechanisms at local, national and regional levels, with local level mechanisms of particular importance for individuals to be able to feed in to the process. These monitoring, review and accountability processes must ensure young people are able to play a central role in holding governments to account for their commitments.
**What’s next?**

Following adoption of the SDG agenda, “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, in September, attention turns to the implementation of the framework, by the EU, partner governments and NGOs alike. We will maintain pressure on the EU to ensure adequate financial and non-financial means of implementation are dedicated to meeting the Goals, including by supporting countries to put in place the systems and capacity required for domestic resource mobilisation, including tax collection, and continuing to lead on and encourage member states to meet the 0.7% target for aid. Policy coherence for sustainable development is critical to the success of the SDGs, so we will urge the EU institutions to put in place the necessary mechanisms to ensure that all policies and programmes support the objectives of the post-2015 framework.

**Highlight**

In our leading position in the CONCORD-Beyond 2015 European Task Force, Plan International EU Office has been invited to speak on a number of high-level panels, often as the only civil society representative. We have used this privileged position to reinforce our calls to the EU institutions and EU Member States.

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**CASE STUDY**

**Early childhood care and development in Cambodia**

In Ratanakiri, Cambodia, young children are now busy learning new words, playing with puzzles and letting their imagination flow in the province’s early childhood care and development centres, established by Plan International Cambodia with the support of local communities. Studies have shown that pre-schools are critical components of early stimulation - their presence fosters the creative, intellectual and social development of young minds, and has both immediate and long-term impacts on health and productivity. However approximately 84% of Cambodian children under the age of six do not have access to early education. In Ratanakiri, it can be as high as 91%.

In 2013, in response to the extremely low rates of enrolment in early education in the region, Plan International, with financial support from the European Commission, started work to promote early childhood care and development. To date, the project has established one state pre-school, 13 community pre-schools and two mobile pre-schools, while 324 core parent groups have been formed. Pakalan is one of the communes to have benefited from the project. Three years ago, the commune did not have a pre-school - young children would either stay at home or go to the forests and rice fields with their parents. But now that the newly constructed pre-schools are in place, more and more children are attending: around 60% of children are able to stay in the village and learn to read and write while enjoying the safe environment provided by the centres.

The project represents the next generation of programming, as it is the communities themselves, and not Plan International Cambodia, who manage the pre-schools. The communities also share responsibility for the establishment of the pre-schools, for example through the provision of land and labour for their construction, while the commune council manages their budget to cover the pre-school teachers’ monthly wage. It is through the engagement and ownership of the communities that the project is poised to make a lasting change to the lives of Ratanakiri’s children - and their communities.

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Credit: Plan International / Jenny Matthews
Disasters can demolish years of development work overnight. People are killed and injured, lose their families and their livelihoods, and the economic productivity of the entire country can be all but wiped out. With the frequency and ferocity of natural and man-made crises increasing year on year, we continued to scale up our emergency response interventions, building our reputation as a significant humanitarian actor.

We focus on the needs and rights of children, who are among the hardest hit in any disaster. Our efforts strike a balance between meeting the urgent physical needs of children and communities, such as food, water and shelter, and meeting children’s psychological and emotional needs.

In addition, children not only experience new child protection threats, such as sexual violence, trafficking and child labour, but existing child protection problems will also be exacerbated in an emergency or chronic crisis. Building on our long-standing experience in child protection in development, we work in partnership with children, their families, and local authorities to strengthen child protection systems and community-based mechanisms. Mainstreaming gender equality from the beginning of the programme cycle is a key element of our approach to ensure that protection issues of girls’ and boys’ are equitably balanced.

Our activities

In 2014-15 Plan International carried out 53 disaster response programmes across Africa, Asia and the Americas. We also continued to support preparedness and mitigation initiatives at local, national and regional level.

The focus of much of Plan International’s emergency response work in 2014-15 has been the unprecedented Ebola outbreak, which was declared an organisation-wide priority. The crisis has had a devastating impact on children and their families and Plan International has worked closely with families and communities across the three worst-affected countries to minimise the immediate threat and lessen the impact of the crisis in the longer term. Plan International’s response focused on areas where there was unmet need, including promoting behaviour change through education and awareness-raising activities. We brought this work to Brussels with an event ahead of the High Level International Conference on Ebola convened in March (see highlight).

We have worked to raise awareness of our humanitarian interventions with the EU institutions, particularly those funded by the European Commission. Our #HaiyanChat with DG ECHO marked the one year anniversary of Typhoon Haiyan, and covered progress, challenges and lessons learned in the immediate and longer-term recovery efforts, and considered how the people of the Philippines could be supported to build back better, stronger, together. Bearing in mind the particular vulnerabilities of children in emergencies, we used this opportunity to call for aid that is both gender and age sensitive.
As Plan International continues to increase its profile as a humanitarian actor, we will work to embed measures to improve the scale and quality of disaster preparedness, risk reduction and emergency response programmes. We will continue to advocate for EU aid which puts the rights and well-being of children at the centre, with a focus on child protection and education, including early childhood care and development. Following our 2013 State of the World’s Girls report, we will emphasise the importance of including adolescent girls in all disaster risk management programmes. As part of our ongoing efforts to reduce the likelihood and impact of disasters on children and their families, we will continue to increase the scope, depth and quality of Plan International’s Safe Schools Global Programme and integrate resilience into our programmes, sharing our acquired knowledge and expertise with EU policymakers.

**Highlight:**

**Breaking the Spell: The role of secret societies in Sierra Leone’s fight against Ebola**

Plan International partnered with the Office of the First Lady of Sierra Leone on the Ebola Resistant Behaviour Change Initiative, which engaged Paramount Chiefs, Secret Society members and traditional and religious leaders, encouraging them to champion behaviour change in their communities. Secret societies wield tremendous power and influence and as the custodians of traditions and customs, they played a major role in the Ebola outbreak – both in fuelling the spread of the disease through traditional practices such as burial rituals, and in helping curb transmission through awareness-raising and behaviour change.

We organised a high-level breakfast meeting with Dr Abu Bakar Fofahah, Sierra Leone’s Minister of Health and Sanitation, Plan International CEO Nigel Chapman, and Klaus Rudischhauser, Deputy Director General of DG DevCo. Participants at the event discussed the importance of engaging with non-formal structures and institutions, such as secret societies, which was considered to be game-changing in the fight against Ebola. “Our ability, or otherwise, to engage the communities we work with – from school children to societies elders – to change harmful attitudes and behaviours, is critical to the success or failure of our efforts to tackle an emergency like this. Working with institutional actors alone is not enough,” said Mr Chapman.

By engaging traditional leaders in the response, we also called for the Ebola crisis to serve as a platform to achieve sustainable, long-term changes in other areas, such as female genital mutilation and child early and forced marriage. “Let’s make sure we leverage these leaders’ power to help drive their communities towards sustainable, long-term development. We should build on this reinforced dialogue with them and capitalise on the successes achieved to date,” Mr Chapman added.

**Did you know?**

Plan International holds six Framework Partnership Agreements with DG ECHO. The following Plan International Offices now hold FPAs, and can apply for ECHO funding: Germany, Finland, Ireland, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. An application from Plan International Netherlands is pending.

**Children of Peace**

In line with our focus on education in emergencies, Plan International is implementing two projects under the EU’s flagship Children of Peace initiative. In Myanmar, thousands of children have been displaced by ongoing conflict, limiting their access to education, psycho-social support and protection. We have been working to provide quality education and life skills training for over 11,500 children and young people, targeting different age groups with activities that respond to their different needs in a participatory and responsive way. The project has enabled children to attend lessons delivered by trained teachers in fully furnished classrooms. Good hygiene is also promoted and handwashing stations have been established, helping to reduce the incidence of preventable illnesses such as diarrhoea.

The project also aims to strengthen child protection mechanisms within the community, as well as within schools, and supports capacity-building of teachers and camp management committees in the areas of child rights and child protection.

In Uganda, we are responding to the influx of refugees fleeing civil war in South Sudan by working to ensure equal access to quality education in a safe and secure environment for boys and girls affected by the conflict. This project consolidates and builds synergies with other existing interventions that Plan International is implementing in the area, including early childhood care and development and child protection.