In Double Jeopardy: Adolescent Girls and Disasters

FOREWORD

Kristalina Georgieva
European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response

In many parts of the world being born a girl is a sentence, even in this day and age. It automatically reduces one's chances to live a decent life and increases the risks of poverty, discrimination, violence and denial of education. Conflicts and natural disasters make this terrible situation even worse.

The report you are about to read highlights this two-edged danger that disasters cast upon adolescent girls. On the following pages, you will see hard and heart-breaking evidence for this: women and children are 14 times more likely than men to die in a disaster; more than a quarter of girls experience sexual abuse and violence. In addition to threatening girls’ lives and health, disasters disproportionately damage their wellbeing. In emergencies, girls are often the first to drop out of school with their future often entirely sacrificed.

I have seen this with my own eyes in the crisis zones of Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Travelling to Lebanon and Jordan recently, I met Syrian girls struggling to cope with their new refugee reality and eke a living for their suffering families. One of them, 13-year-old Aisha, was not going to school because she had to do menial labour to support her handicapped mother and younger sister. With a heavy heart I wondered whether Aisha and the countless others like her would find their way back to the classroom and to the chance to build a better future.

Emergencies also make adolescent girls disproportionately exposed to life-shattering child marriage and sexual violence which profoundly undermine their chances to lead a healthy and productive life. I will never forget the girls in the Panzi Hospital in Eastern Congo, where victims of sexual violence are treated, sometimes repeatedly. These children were not there to visit older relatives – they were victims themselves.

Yet, the news is not all grim. In the face of the unspeakable horrors to which they have been subjected, women of all ages are often capable of extraordinary resilience. The young Syrian refugees exemplified what it means to make the best out of a desperate situation. The girls in the Panzi Hospital showed me their fierce will to recover and move on. Their courage is a lesson in human dignity.

Girls are future mothers, role models and educators, and therefore a key force of good for their families, communities and countries. To succeed, they need us, humanitarian donors and relief workers, to be their allies. As this report indicates, we can do much more: Plan International’s research finds that too many humanitarian workers do not yet address key risks that can threaten girls, including gender-based violence, and do not collect sex and age-disaggregated data. The humanitarian community must do better to protect adolescent girls and help them in their specific needs. We need to ensure that emergencies do not permanently deprive them of education and of a chance to have a future better than their past.

This is why the European Commission is working on adapting its humanitarian aid to the specific needs of adolescent girls. We just made a big step in this direction with a policy paper on gender in humanitarian aid. Behind its bureaucratic name there is a practical promise: the promise to mainstream girls’ particular needs and vulnerabilities in every humanitarian project we fund.
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“Disasters don’t discriminate, but people do... disasters reinforce, perpetuate and increase gender inequality, making bad situations worse for women.” ¹

“I think the worst challenges were that we were not able to speak. The community would not recognize that we had something important to say because we were young and female.”

Xiomara, 19, El Salvador²

Disasters are not experienced in a vacuum. What happens to an adolescent girl in such times is directly related to attitudes to women and girls in the wider community and the political, economic, social and cultural context. It is also affected by the family she comes from, as well as her status, age, ability, material wellbeing and a range of other factors linked to the country she lives in and the social groups to which she belongs. So a 17-year-old girl in a slum in Dhaka will experience a flood or an earthquake differently from a 12-year-old in a village in El Salvador or even a 14-year-old in Australia. But what they do have in common is that all too often, as far as humanitarian response is concerned, out of sight really does mean out of mind.

Disasters and crises have a negative effect on everyone involved. People die and are injured, lose their families and their livelihoods. But if you are female, and particularly if you are an adolescent, disasters and crises may put you at greater risk than if you are male; especially in those societies where girls are already less privileged than their brothers. The reason can be summed up in one simple word: power.

It is the relative powerlessness of women and children in many societies that makes them more vulnerable during disasters. Although there is often little distinction made between women and girls or between boys and girls, in general, women and children are 14 times more likely than men to die in a disaster.³ In 2010, a study in Pakistan found that 85 per cent of those displaced by floods were women and children⁴ and during the Asian tsunami in 2004, up to 45,000 more women than men died.⁵

The London School of Economics (LSE) research in 141 countries found that boys generally received preferential treatment over girls in rescue efforts.⁶ It quotes a story of a father “who, when unable to hold on to both his son and his daughter from being swept away by a tidal surge in the 1991 cyclone in Bangladesh – released his daughter, because ‘[this] son has to carry on the family line’.”

² Interview with Jean Casey, Project Coordinator: ‘Because I am a Girl’ Report, Plan International El Salvador. 2012 ³ Peterson, Kristina. ‘From the Field: Gender Issues in Disaster Response and Recovery.’ Natural Hazards Observer, Special Issue on Women and Disasters 21, No. 5 (1997) http://www.colorado.edu/hazards/o/archives/1997/may97/may97a.html#From ⁴ Action Aid Pakistan. ‘Rebuilding Lives Post 2010 Floods.’ Action Aid Pakistan, 2011. ⁵ Telford, John, John Cosgrove, and Rachel Houghton. ‘Joint evaluation of the international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami: Synthesis Report.’ London: Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC), 2006. Note from Report: This estimate is based on the differential mortality rates 38 shown in Figure 2.3 applied to the total numbers of dead and missing for each area, with the mortality rate for the nearest area being applied to areas for which no mortality data were available, and population distribution being estimated where area specific mortality was not available. Strictly speaking, not all were adult women as slightly higher female mortality rates were also seen in the under 15s in some places. ⁶ Neumayer Eric and Thomas Plumper. ‘The Gendered Nature of Natural Disasters: the impact of catastrophic events on the gender gap in life expectancy, 1981-2002.’ London School of Economics and Political Science, 2007, http://www2.lse.ac.uk/geographyAndEnvironment/whosWho/profiles/neumayer/pdf/Article%20in%20Annals%20(natural%20disasters).pdf (last accessed 10 May 2013).
For many adolescent girls a major disaster simply adds to the individual risks they have to face in everyday life. This is especially true if they come from poor families, though violence and discrimination can affect girls regardless of their background. Worldwide, more than a quarter of girls experience sexual abuse and violence; 66 million are still not in school; and in the developing world, one in every three is married before her 18th birthday.7,8,9

“During and immediately after a disaster, we are forced to engage in daily wage labour to earn some income. We have to face the lascivious looks of the landowners and other men who employ us in on- and off-farm labour work. The way they treat us is also a form of sexual abuse.”

Girls from Babiya Village, Nepal10

So why is it important to re-examine how the humanitarian community addresses the needs of adolescent girls in disasters?

First, because the number of disasters is increasing – there were 90 a year in the 1970s and almost 450 a year in the last decade.11,12

Second, we know that disasters overwhelmingly affect the countries and the people that can least afford to deal with them – nine out of ten disasters and 95 per cent of deaths caused by disasters take place in the developing world.13,14 For the children and young people involved, the negative effects of disasters can last for the rest of their lives, as the United Nations Human Development Report notes: “Malnutrition is not an affliction that is shaken off when the rains return or the flood waters recede. It creates cycles of disadvantage that children will carry with them throughout their lives.”15

Third, what is happening to adolescent girls in disasters is both predictable and preventable, and is a violation of their rights in law. Guidelines may exist, but they are not being followed. “Gender equality is not a luxury or a privilege,” says a 2012 interagency paper on gender and security. It is grounded in international legal frameworks that include: international human rights law, women’s human rights and children’s rights.16

Fourth, in practice, the humanitarian and development communities often work in separate silos. This has a negative effect on groups such as adolescent girls that may be invisible in both contexts. In 2015 both the Millennium Development Goals are set to be reformulated. In the run up to this, there is a growing global discussion about challenging “business as usual” by restructuring development and what is known as disaster risk management (DRM).

Now is the time to focus on adolescent girls and redress a major gap in humanitarian and development programming.

A question of survival: health and wellbeing in disasters

“This has been very hard for my family and myself. We lost loved ones, our hearts ache, we have difficulty trying to find food and a place to live… My mother tells us that we have to believe in tomorrow, believe in a future. I do, but sometimes it’s hard when everything feels like it is falling apart.”

Sheila, 16, Rizal province, the Philippines, after Typhoon Ondoy 17

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Adolescent girls face specific health problems during a disaster or emergency, and yet these are often ignored by those in charge of humanitarian assistance. Access to food and water, the priorities of humanitarian assistance, are key to girls’ survival, but so too is access to information about health, including sexual and reproductive health; provision of appropriate health services and supplies targeted at girls, as well as the means to access those services; privacy and safe spaces; and a sense that their specific health needs are recognised and acted upon by those in power.

“There is an overwhelming tendency to report numbers in bulk – latrines built, tons of food distributed, school rehabilitated – without knowing who used those latrines, who ate the food and who went to school.”

Valerie Amos, United Nations Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) points to three sub-groups of adolescents that are particularly at risk in disasters and emergencies. Two out of the three categories are girls:

- Very young adolescents (10-14 years), especially girls, are at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse because of their dependence, lack of power, and their lack of participation in decision-making processes.
- Pregnant adolescent girls, particularly those under 16, are at increased risk of obstructed labour, a life-threatening obstetric emergency that can develop when the immature pelvis is too small to allow the passage of a baby through the birth canal. Emergency obstetric care services are often unavailable in crisis settings, increasing the risk of morbidity and mortality among adolescent mothers and their babies.
- Marginalised adolescents, including those who are HIV-positive, those with disabilities, non-heterosexual adolescents, indigenous groups and migrants, may face difficulties accessing services because of stigma, prejudice, culture, language and physical or mental limitations. They are also at risk of increased poverty and sexual exploitation and abuse because of their lack of power and participation.

In a disaster, the disruption of families and of health services may leave adolescents without access to the information and services they need about sexual and reproductive health. For girls and young women, this is precisely the time when their situation and their age and sex puts them most at risk of unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, sexually transmitted infections and HIV.

‘It’s not easy when you are hungry’ – adolescent girls and sexual exploitation and abuse

“The world has done a poor job of recognising gender-based violence and/or exploitation in camps. It still occurs and even if there are mechanisms to report these abuses, many times beneficiaries aren’t aware of their rights or there isn’t a proper process set up for follow-up.”

Jeni Klugman, Director of Gender and Development, World Bank

When disaster drives poor adolescent girls and their families further into poverty, often their only option is to sell the only asset they have left – their bodies. A study by Human Rights Watch in Haiti’s camps after the earthquake found a number of women and girls who were selling sex because they had no alternative to feed themselves and their children.
“You have to eat,” said Gheslaine, who lives in a camp in Croix-de-Bouquets, in Haiti. “People will try to survive the way they can. Women have relationships with men so they can feed their children. That happens a lot. My daughter is 12 and does not have friends in the camps, because it happens that even girls are pressured to have sex for things. I don’t work. I don’t have parents to help. So, for around a dollar, you have sex just for that. Unfortunately, women sometimes get pregnant, but if we had access to planning, we’d protect ourselves... It’s not good to do prostitution, but what can you do?”

Primary research for this report on the longer-term effects of Typhoon Ondoy in 2009 in the Philippines found adolescent girls struggling with similar problems. Anna, 13, said: “It’s hard, others have nothing to eat, and they embrace being involved in bad acts just to have something to eat, you don’t know what to do or who to talk to when that happens.”

In many societies sexual abuse and violence is a taboo subject. Rape brings shame on the girl, and even in richer countries, judges and the judicial system may blame the victim rather than the rapist.

In Tamil Nadu, India, after the tsunami, many young women like this one did not dare report what had happened to her for fear of being socially outcast: “I am 17 years old. In the relief camp when I was sleeping in the night I was raped. I did not know what had happened to me. I do not know the face of the man. I had heavy bleeding. I did not share this with anyone. Now I see some disturbances in my body and when my mother took me to hospital I was told I am pregnant.”

In Haiti, Human Rights Watch found that many women and girls did not ask for help following a rape after the earthquake because they were ashamed to report what had happened. Mary, 15, waited eight days before telling an adolescent cousin about being raped, and then only told her because she knew the cousin had been through the same experience: “Before I talked to her about my rape, I was really shy but I told myself that she was raped so I can talk to her about my situation.”

Disasters may also lead to an increase in child marriage. Research in Somaliland, Bangladesh and Niger found that child marriage is often perceived by families as a protective measure and used as a community response to crisis.

“Lots of girls here suffer. At the age of 13, they are married and taken out of school. They are made pregnant because the family have no money so they sell the girls for food and they have no money for dowries. Girls at 13 get fistula and often die.”

Zabium and Idie, 15, from Niger

Despite the fact that international conventions, signed by many countries, proclaim that child marriage is a violation of human rights, it is still widespread. One report found that out of 16 countries, 11 recorded more than half the young women as being married before they were 18. And some girls are married even younger than this – a 2012 report estimated that 1.5 million girls under the age of 15 are married each year.
‘Send your girls to school’ – the importance of education

“My message to the women in Congo, in the Sahel, everywhere is: send your girls to school. This is the best you can do for their future.”

Kristalina Georgieva, European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response

“A generation without education is doomed. We need to be heard and to participate, we need a future. We have a right to education and we want to go to school.”

Betty, 17, displaced young woman, northern Uganda

Much has been made of the empowering nature of education for girls. It gives them the ability to become active citizens and the possibility of more choice in their lives. It means that as adults they are more likely to earn a living that can help lift their families out of poverty. It also makes it more likely that their children will survive childhood and be better educated themselves. It is the reason why 15-year-old schoolgirl Malala Yousufzai, from Pakistan, was prepared to risk her life so that girls could be educated.

Thankfully, in many countries, increasing numbers of girls are now going to school. However, during an emergency, education is often disrupted, sometimes permanently. And yet it is at such times that education is particularly important. “Education brings stability, normality and routine into a child’s life, which is absolutely essential, especially when they are displaced,” said Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) notes three ways in which education can benefit adolescent girls in disasters:

1. It can provide physical protection. When a girl is in a safe learning environment, she is less likely to be sexually or economically exploited or exposed to other risks, such as child marriage.
2. It can offer a psychosocial safe space that helps girls make sense of what is happening around them. It can provide a sense of routine and longer-term benefits for the promotion of the right and responsibilities of children.
3. It can be the vehicle for the communication of life-saving messages: schools may act as hubs for communicating messages on hand-washing, reducing the risk of disease, how to avoid HIV infection and how to access healthcare and food in an emergency.

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A study in West and Central Africa on the impact of war, HIV and other high-risk situations found that in answer to the question, “What makes you happy?” the most commonly-cited answer from all the children was “participation in school”. This was the case for both girls and boys, with girls in fact arguing the case more strongly than the boys. The authors said: “It appears that the simple fact of being registered for school, having one’s fees paid, receiving text books and doing well in exams, is a source of wellbeing for children.”

HAYMANOT’S STORY

Haymanot lives in rural Ethiopia. Her story illustrates the cumulative effects of drought that can cause girls to drop out of school.

In 2008, Haymanot was 12 and living with her aunt. She went to school in a nearby town. But then her mother became ill, and she went home to look after her and her younger brother and sister. Because her mother could no longer work, the family income dropped and they had very little to eat. Initially Haymanot went to school in the afternoons and worked in the mornings. But then her sister became ill as well. At the same time there was a drought in the area and crops failed. Her mother explains: “There was drought all over the community. God didn’t give us rain and there was no grass, no crops from the land. We were short of food.”

As a result, Haymanot had to drop out of school and go to work in a stone-crushing factory. She said it was her own decision but that: “I feel very bad because I am not going to school and my mother is sick.” Her mother also recognised that it was not good for Haymanot to drop out of school: “By stopping her from [going to] school, I know that I am disrupting her future opportunities.”

Then Haymanot herself got malaria, and became ill with diarrhoea, vomiting and fever, exacerbated by her workload at home and at the factory. Life was very difficult, and eventually Haymanot and her mother decided that although she was only 15, getting married would provide security and protection as the family were in such a difficult situation. Her husband, chosen by her family, is a government employee. She has been able to stop work in the factory.

Haymanot’s life is a hard one. But her story also illustrates her resourcefulness. Her hard work and robust approach also enhanced her reputation in their community. Her mother said: “Some people who saw her always working admired her and say: ‘How did she manage to work and withstand such hardship at this age?’”

Today, Haymanot says that her life has improved, and she hopes to delay having children and go back to school next year – if her husband will allow it.

Part of the solution: adolescent girls’ participation

There are many examples of adolescent girls who have shown courage, wisdom and initiative in the face of disaster, supporting their families, and even saving lives. These stories are unusual not because they are rare occurrences, but because they are rarely told either by the humanitarian community or by the media. This silence is directly related to wider gender discrimination – for example, it often helps to have women around if adolescent girls are to be encouraged to speak up, but in disaster work, there are few women in positions of any authority.

If adults do not listen to children, girls and boys of all ages, during disasters, then mistakes may be made. To give one example: “In relief and reconstruction efforts after the 2001 earthquake in Gujarat, India, that killed over 11,000 people, a number of the structures to improve children’s lives were found to be dangerous because they had not been properly considered from a child-centred perspective. The project put glass panes in windows that could be easily removed and broken by curious children, they built playgrounds that were dangerous, installed toilets with flushers that children couldn’t reach, and that required water children’s families didn’t have.”36 Similarly, camp organisers issued water containers that, with a capacity of 20 or even 50 litres, were too heavy for girls to carry when full. Nobody had thought to check with the girls themselves, although collecting water is a task that usually falls to the girls in a family.37

In our online survey, respondents from the different clusters said that ‘meaningful consultation with adolescent girls’ was low, at its highest in the water and sanitation cluster (47 per cent) and at its lowest in the protection cluster (26.8 per cent).38 And yet 83 per cent of respondents identified this as an important priority in humanitarian planning and programming.

When girls fully participate, as Francisco Soto, disaster risk management adviser, explains, things begin to change: “This [Disaster Risk Reduction] training, which started out as a workshop when they [the young people] were 12, opened up a pathway to a longer-term positive community development change. Now young people, and particularly young girls, are understood as capable leaders of their community. The young women participate just as much as the young men. In fact, often the young women participate more; they are first to raise their hands, they speak out more. They have courage. This is an indicator that young women are moving forward and they know they have the same rights as the guys.”39

“For me, in my personal life, the training has helped me in various ways. It has helped my self-esteem, it has helped me not to feel less than other people because I am a young mother... and I know about my rights, how to defend my rights and how to prevent them from being abused.”

Maria Elena, 18, El Salvador

Simply surviving an earthquake, flood, or drought is not the sole aim of humanitarian work. It must also be a priority for the humanitarian and development communities to ensure that those who survive, particularly the most vulnerable, have the support they need to come to terms with their loss and trauma, and have the resources they need to rebuild their lives as well as to prepare for future crises.

As far as adolescent girls are concerned, this is not happening. Evidence from primary research demonstrates that the humanitarian and development communities are failing to address the needs of adolescent girls. They are failing to ensure they have the knowledge, skills and resources to be able to survive the impact of a potential flood, drought, or earthquake. They are failing to provide for their needs when they are exposed to greater risks in the aftermath of a disaster. Girls who are healthy and educated can go on to be leaders for response and recovery within their communities. But girls who are forced to leave school early, who become ill, who cannot get access to contraception when they need it, who fall pregnant too young, or are forced to sell their bodies to survive, face potentially disastrous consequences that will affect them not just in the disaster period, but for the rest of their lives.

Recommendations

In the sections below we make recommendations to the EU institutions, focusing primarily on the Directorate General responsible for Humanitarian Aid and Civil protection (DG ECHO). We also make recommendations to the Directorate General responsible for Development and Cooperation (DG DevCo) and the European External Action Service insofar as they play a role in preparing countries for dealing with the effects of conflict or natural hazards, or taking up the baton when the immediate emergency response phases out.

These recommendations cover the EU’s work at international, national and local levels and aim to help transform the experience of adolescent girls in disasters.

The recommendations below cover three areas of work:

• **Evidence:** Understanding the needs and rights of adolescent girls in disasters to improve humanitarian responses.

• **Resources:** Increasing and enhancing capacity at all levels and providing targeted services for adolescent girls.

• **Prevention, Participation and Integration:** Improving preparedness for and response to disasters by consulting with girls of all ages, with a particular focus on adolescent girls, in order to avoid the challenges and risks girls face and to build girls’ resilience.

Plan EU urges DG ECHO to:

• Include different age categories in the Gender and Age Marker. At a minimum, this should reflect the Sphere Standards: 0-5 years, 6-12 years and 13-17 years.

• Clarify how gender and age information provided by partners will be used to improve future programming.

• Ensure that the varying needs of girls across the three age categories are reflected in responses across the 11 cluster sectors, with a special focus on health (including sexual and reproductive health and rights), education, protection and water and sanitation.

• Request that, where possible, partners disaggregate data according to other discriminatory factors such as disability or minority status.

• Include in the upcoming Gender Implementation Framework:
  - A clear, well-resourced plan to increase the capacity of all technical assistants and staff in headquarters on gender and age (and the gender/age intersects);
  - A commitment to increase the financial resources dedicated to improving the gender expertise of all implementing partners and the staff involved in disaster preparedness and emergency response;
  - A plan to work with partners to increase the number of women in humanitarian response staff;
  - An accountability mechanism which goes beyond monitoring and reporting;
  - A knowledge management system to share good practice, lessons learned and the knowledge gained from better and greater data disaggregation.

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41 “Partners” refers to those organisations holding a Framework Partnership Agreement with DG ECHO and UN bodies and agencies that are signatories to the Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement. 42 As referred to in the Commission Staff Working Document, Gender in Humanitarian Aid: Different Needs, Adapted Assistance, 22.07.13
• Ensure that partners consult meaningfully with girls of all ages, with a particular focus on adolescents, both on their needs and their potential involvement in order to improve disaster preparedness and the humanitarian response. Such consultations should occur at all stages, from planning through to implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
  - Capacity-building in child-friendly techniques should be envisaged in ECHO funding to ensure that all agencies are able to conduct meaningful consultations;
  - The inclusion of girls in emergency preparedness planning should be promoted.
• Go beyond “minimum protection strategies”\(^{43}\) and ensure that protection work covers prevention, care and rehabilitation and is aligned with and strengthens the national protection system, focusing especially on the needs of adolescent girls.
• Increase funding for protection from the first phase with a particular focus on gender-based violence against adolescent girls.
• Increase funding for safe spaces and education from the first phase of response through an enhanced contribution to Consolidated Appeals launched by the United Nations and by increasing funding for education in emergencies from two per cent to four per cent of the overall budget.
• Develop a clear policy on inclusion of education in emergencies, ensuring a clear link between relief, rehabilitation and development and the work of DG DevCo.
  - Education programmes should be aligned with national curricula as far as possible and desirable, with a particular focus on life skills and awareness-raising in disaster preparedness and response.

Plan EU urges DG DevCo to:
• Improve effectiveness of aid by including DG ECHO in all discussions relating to horizontal issues such as resilience, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and linking relief, rehabilitation and development.
• Allocate increased funding for DRR and resilience within the development cooperation budget, so that this does not come primarily from funding for humanitarian response.
• Improve links with DG ECHO regarding projects funded by the Disaster Preparedness ECHO programme (DIPECHO), in order to make these initiatives more comprehensive.
• Ensure girls of all ages are prioritised in the programming and funding of the EU’s programme ‘Supporting the Horn of Africa’s Resilience’ (SHARE) and the EU-led ‘Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative’ (AGIR).
• Ensure the needs of girls of all ages are fully reflected in the EU position on the post-Hyogo Framework for Action, which is to be released in early 2014.
• Ensure programming on violence against women and girls funded by DevCo in at-risk countries also addresses climate change, natural hazards and conflict risks, for example by ensuring that protection and referral services remain operational in emergency situations.

Plan EU urges the European External Action Service to:
• Sign up to humanitarian aid principles: the European External Action Service should sign up to the Consensus on Humanitarian Aid since it deals in fragile states and crisis situation.
• Ensure that humanitarian aid is not used as a crisis management tool: humanitarian aid is not intended to solve political crises and should never be subordinated to political objectives.
Key Action Points

1 Consult adolescent girls in all stages of disaster preparedness and response.

2 Train and mobilise women to work in emergency response teams.

3 Provide targeted services for adolescent girls in the core areas of education, protection and sexual and reproductive health.

4 Include funding for protection against gender-based violence in the first phase of emergency response.

5 Collect sex and age disaggregated data, to show the needs of adolescent girls and inform programme planning.

“The humanitarian community must do better to protect adolescent girls and help them in their specific needs. We need to ensure that emergencies do not permanently deprive them of education and of a chance to have a future better than their past.”

Kristalina Georgieva, European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response

“I want someone who I can go to if there are problems. We should be able to tell our government that we need help, that we need shelter, food, jobs, school, places to wash privately. I want a way that I can be heard.”

Sheila, 16, Philippines

‘Because I am a Girl’ is an annual report published by Plan which assesses the current state of the world’s girls. While women and children are recognised in policy and planning, girls’ needs and rights are often ignored. The reports provide evidence, including the voices of girls themselves, as to why they need to be treated differently from boys and adult women. They also use information from primary research, in particular a small study set up in 2006 following 142 girls from nine countries. Past reports have covered education, conflict, economic empowerment, cities and technology, and how boys and young men can support gender equality. Plan is an international development agency and has been working with children and their communities in 50 countries worldwide for over 75 years.

Take action at: plan-international.org/girls