



LIVING UP TO OUR COMMITMENT

**GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAMMING
AND INFLUENCING DURING COVID-19**

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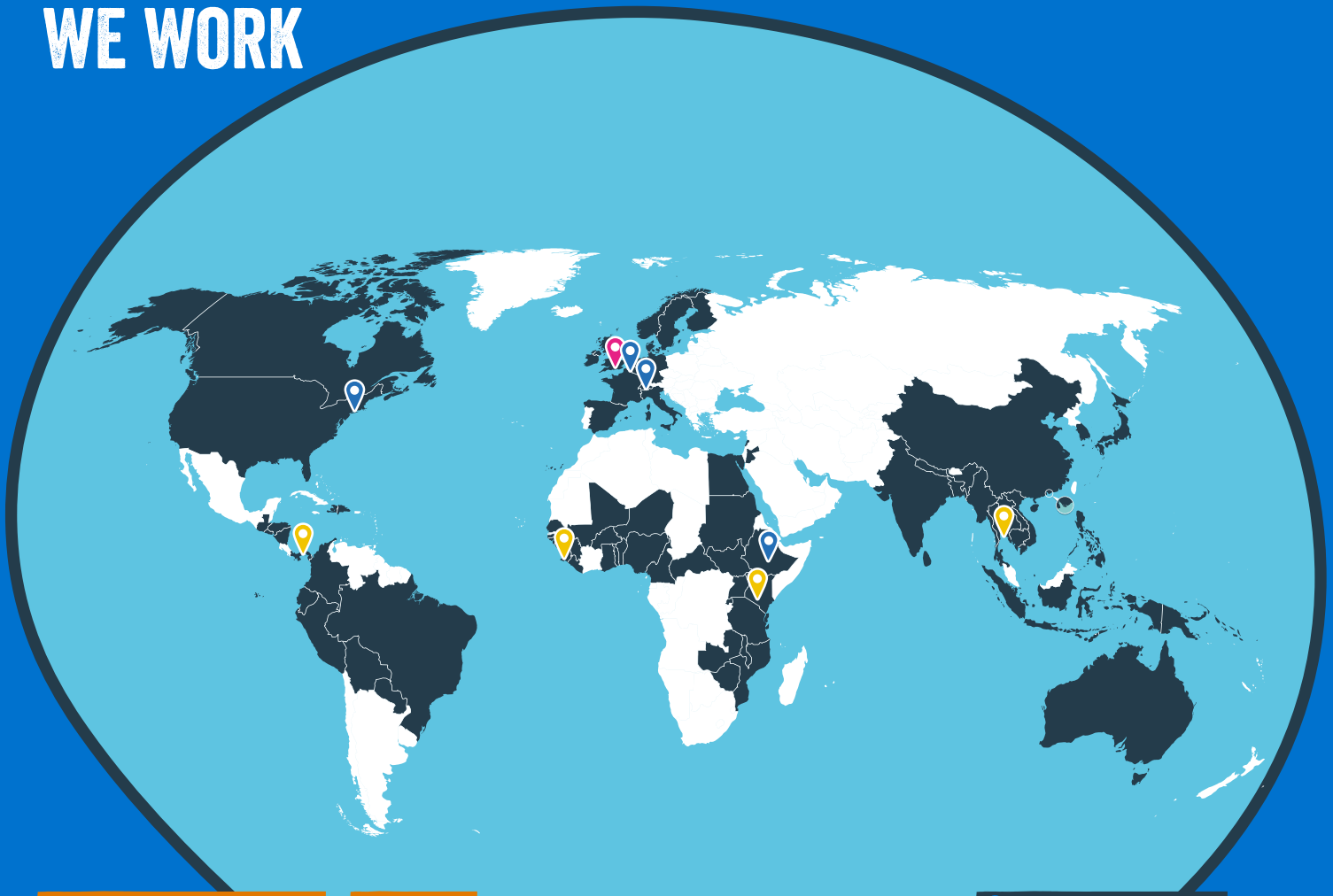
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WHERE WE WORK



AFRICA AND MIDDLE EAST

Benin
Burkina Faso
Cameroon
Central African Republic
Egypt
Ethiopia
Ghana
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau
Kenya
Jordan
Lebanon
Liberia
Malawi
Mali
Mozambique
Niger
Nigeria
Rwanda
Senegal
Sierra Leone
South Sudan
Somalia**
Sudan
Tanzania
Togo
Uganda
Zambia
Zimbabwe

AMERICAS

Bolivia
Brazil
Canada
Colombia
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
El Salvador
Guatemala
Haiti
Honduras
Nicaragua
Panama
Paraguay
Peru
USA

ASIA

Bangladesh
Cambodia
China
Hong Kong, SAR of China
India
Indonesia
Japan
Korea
Laos
Myanmar
Nepal

Pakistan
Philippines
Sri Lanka
Thailand
Timor-Leste
Vietnam

EUROPE

Belgium
Denmark
Finland
France
Germany
Ireland
Italy
Netherlands
Norway
Spain
Sweden
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OCEANIA

Australia
Papua New Guinea
Solomon Islands

ADVOCACY OFFICES

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Geneva
New York

REGIONAL OFFICES

Bangkok
Dakar
Nairobi
Panama City

GLOBAL HUB

OUR PURPOSE

We strive for a just world that advances children's rights and equality for girls, and we motivate our people and partners to:

- empower children, young people and communities to make vital changes that tackle the root causes of discrimination against girls, exclusion and vulnerability
- drive change in practice and policy at local, national and global levels through our reach, experience and knowledge of the realities children face
- work with children and communities to prepare for and respond to crises, and to overcome adversity
- support the safe and successful progression of children from birth to adulthood

INTRODUCTION

In the few months since the COVID-19 pandemic started, it has already created disruptions in societies across the globe and has instituted challenges on how we relate and operate on a daily basis. Exacerbating pre-existing manifestations of gender inequality and social exclusion, it has the potential to stop or even reverse the progress made towards gender equality, inclusion, and girls' rights.

With its global strategy, [100 Million Reasons](#), Plan International has committed to adopt a Gender Transformative Approach (GTA) in all its programming and influencing work to be able to sustainably contribute to gender equality and inclusion. With this approach, the organisation is aiming to address the root causes of gender inequality and exclusion and reshape unequal gender and power relations between all children, young people and adults regardless of their gender.

So, while it is pivotal that we as an organisation effectively manage and learn from our short-term humanitarian response to this pandemic, staff are at the same time reflecting on the medium and long-term social and political impacts from COVID-19 and developing flexible and context-specific interventions to address these. This includes creatively finding ways to continue to engage with different actors, partners and organizations (both public and private) every step of the way for implementing a gender transformative approach. Staff are also using the opportunity the pandemic is offering for continuing to advance their strategic work, for example, in changing gender norms, building individual and collective agency, protecting especially vulnerable groups and strengthening gender and youth-friendly responsive services. We believe that the COVID-19 epidemic should not be an excuse to put on hold our gender transformative approach and our commitment to tackling the root causes of gender inequality and social inclusion.

This publication was developed by the **Plan International's Global Gender and Inclusion Team**, with support of the Gender and Inclusion Group (GIG).

The GIG is Plan International's global community of practice on gender equality, intersectionality and girls' rights.



PLAN INTERNATIONAL'S GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH

Together with partners, Plan International is taking action so that 100 million girls learn, lead, decide and thrive. We have committed ourselves to implement a gender transformative approach in our programming and influencing. Our GTA aims to remove the barriers that hold girls back from achieving their full potential and exercising their rights. It also aims to break the barriers that prevent men and boys from embracing gender equality, exercising their rights and being champions of change.

There are **six key elements** to our GTA, which combined will help us achieve gender equality. These are:

- 1** Understand and address how gender norms influence children throughout their **life-course**, from birth through to adulthood.
- 2** Work to strengthen girls' and young women's **agency** over the decisions that affect them, as well as by building their knowledge, confidence, skills and access to and control over resources.
- 3** Work with and support **boys, young men and men** to embrace positive masculinities and to promote gender equality, while also achieving meaningful results for them.
- 4** Consider **girls, boys, young women and young men in all their diversity** when identifying and responding to their needs and interests.
- 5** Improve the **conditions** (daily needs) and **social position** (value or status) of girls and young women.
- 6** Foster an **enabling environment** where all stakeholders work together to support children and youth on their journey towards gender equality.



AIMS OF THE BRIEFING PAPER

This briefing paper provides a concise overview of Plan International's GTA highlighting its unique features and why these are important to consider while we face and adapt in face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments, academics, and development institutions alike have largely ignored the intersection between sex, age, inclusion and the pandemic. As a result, young people (especially from vulnerable and excluded groups such as ethnic minorities, LGBTIQ+,¹ living with a disability) are at risk of being overlooked in interventions that are aimed at 'older' persons - similarly, adolescent girls (especially between the age of 10 to 18 years) are at risk of being left out of responses aimed at 'women.' As an organisation committed to realising children's rights and equality for girls, Plan International recognises that the gendered impact of the pandemic has potential to derail and even reverse the gains made towards gender equality and girls' rights in the last decade – if not addressed systematically using a gender transformative approach.

In addition, and most importantly, this briefing paper also brings forward examples of good practice that show how our gender transformative approach is being implemented by Country Offices (CO) across Plan International during the changing environment of the pandemic. Therefore, this paper is further envisioned as an internal resource to inform programme adaptation processes and be integrated into related frameworks and global guidance, as well as an external resource for peer organisations on how to build a GTA into the COVID-19 response.

Built with the direct collaboration by colleagues who work at CO level, it is conceptualized as a collective statement on how we can and should take into account a gender transformative approach when implementing our work as a response to COVID-19. The paper thus also intends to showcase and celebrate the incredible work of adaptation and innovation already taking place at field level and staff's commitment to Plan International's gender transformative approach.

STRUCTURE

The briefing paper is structured around the six elements of Plan International's Gender Transformative Programming and Influencing Approach. The examples included in the paper are those which can be assessed (using our Gender Transformative Marker²) as a high potential under each one of the six elements:³

¹ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex or Questioning

² Plan International's Gender Transformative Marker is a tool which is used to assess the extent to which programme and influence work contributes to gender transformative and inclusive change. The Marker gives an indication of how gender transformative and inclusive a project is by integrating an analysis of potentiality to contribute to change, with four levels ranging from no potential to high potential.

³ To facilitate and articulate a clear vision of what and how to implement a gender transformative approach, Plan International has identified six key elements which are interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

1. Gender norms;
2. Agency;
3. Condition and position;
4. Working with boys and men;
5. Diversity; and
6. Enabling environment.

For more details on the characteristics of each element at high level potential, please refer to page 8: Description of High Potential for Each Element of our GTA.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

This briefing paper has been developed by the Global Gender and Inclusion Team as a direct response to the expressed need of staff for inspiration and support on how to live up to our organisational commitment to gender transformative programming and influencing during this time of crisis. Thus, the primary audience for this paper is Plan International staff and implementing partners working in programming and influencing. A secondary audience is peers within various Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), academia, and other stakeholders.

UNIQUE FEATURES OF OUR GTA

Plan International's GTA and its related six key elements are applicable to development and humanitarian settings.⁴ The approach elaborates our commitment to gender equality, inclusion and girls' rights and also holds us accountable in times of crisis.

One of its characteristics is that it takes an integrated gender, age, and inclusion approach. We are already seeing the risk, that the COVID 19 pandemic will intensify pre-existing levels of discrimination and exclusion, if the intersection of gender, age and inclusion is not addressed from the beginning. Girls and the most vulnerable children and youth are already impacted in their well-being by not being able to access vital services when schools are closed, from school meals, the disruption of continuous education opportunities to social protection. While children's health appears to be less affected by COVID-19, the outbreak is deeply affecting the world in which they grow up. The economic fallout of this crisis will heavily impact girls and women in the most deprived communities, with a sharp rise in the burden of unpaid domestic care work and millions driven into child marriage, trafficking and survival sex due to poverty and economic recession. Abuse and complications of teenage pregnancy will add to the health crisis caused by the virus especially in countries with already weak health systems and infrastructure.

⁴ Our six elements help to improve the quality and sustainability of our programming and influencing work; they accelerate change and tackle the root causes of gender inequality. These elements are relevant and applicable for all our work, in both our development and humanitarian work.

The GTA, moreover, is designed to tackle the root causes of gender inequality, exclusion, and discrimination. The approach explicitly addresses unequal gender and power relations. It aims to improve the condition of girls and women while advancing their position and value in society. It supports girls and women to be able to make informed choices and decisions and to act upon these free from fear or threat of punishment. In addition, the GTA advocates for the allocation of more national resources to gender issues – with girl's voices and their priorities considered in these budgetary processes – as well as policies that adequately protects girls' and women's rights, tackles the barriers they face and meets their particular needs. The COVID 19 pandemic, for example, shows how gender norms around care work is increasing the burden that women are facing when working from home while also having to support their children who would usually been in day care or school.

Plan International additionally is working with a multi-level approach across a person's life course (engaging our stakeholders as individuals, within family and relationships, as communities, institutions, and societies) – promoting equal power relations between the different levels. This, for example, includes supporting the continuous engagement of girls, boys, women, and men, and people of other gender identities with decision makers.

To be able to address the complex challenges and rights violations children and youth in all their diversity are facing as a consequence of the pandemic, the creation of spaces for critical reflection, questioning and challenging of gender norms is also pivotal. Plan International is, for example, opening dialogues around unequal distribution of care work and how this is aggravated by the crisis. As shown in this briefing paper, COs from across the organisation are creatively adapting to the changing environment, while maintaining a gender transformative approach to the work they do.

GOOD PRACTICE HIGHLIGHTS

In the spirit of celebrating successes and learning, a set of case studies (brought forward by CO colleagues from across the organisation) have been curated under each of our 6 elements of our Gender Transformative Approach. For more information about each initiative, please be in touch with the main contact person listed under each case study.

DESCRIPTION OF HIGH POTENTIAL FOR EACH ELEMENT OF OUR GTA

ELEMENT 1. GENDER NORMS

The project influences discriminatory gender norms and how these affect different groups, in particular gender expectations about capabilities, roles, decision making, and representation as these relate to the thematic focus and wider society.

ELEMENT 3. CONDITION AND POSITION

The project works to improve equality of the conditions of children, adolescents and youth in families and communities (wellbeing, equal care, support, resources, opportunities) and the position (equal value or social status, respect and access to power) of girls and/or young women.

ELEMENT 4. WORKING WITH BOYS AND MEN

The project works with and supports boys, young men and adult men to increase their understanding and involvement in promoting gender equality, changing power dynamics, to explore and develop non-violent, positive and diverse masculinities.

ELEMENT 5. DIVERSITY

The project addresses the different needs of children, adolescents and youth in all their diversity (gender, age, disability, ethnicity and other exclusion factors relevant to the project scope and context).

ELEMENT 2. AGENCY

The project works with girls and/or young women to improve their agency including building their knowledge, confidence and critical consciousness, their ability to speak out about issues, and to identify risks and self-protect; and to engage in mobilising and influencing others for gender equality and inclusion.

ELEMENT 6. ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

The project strengthens societal structures, systems as well as civil society to enable gender equality and inclusion; and promotes joint, aligned efforts for gender equality across the 5 different stakeholder groups of individuals, community, civil society, service providers and policy makers.

ILLUSTRATED BY SONAKSHA

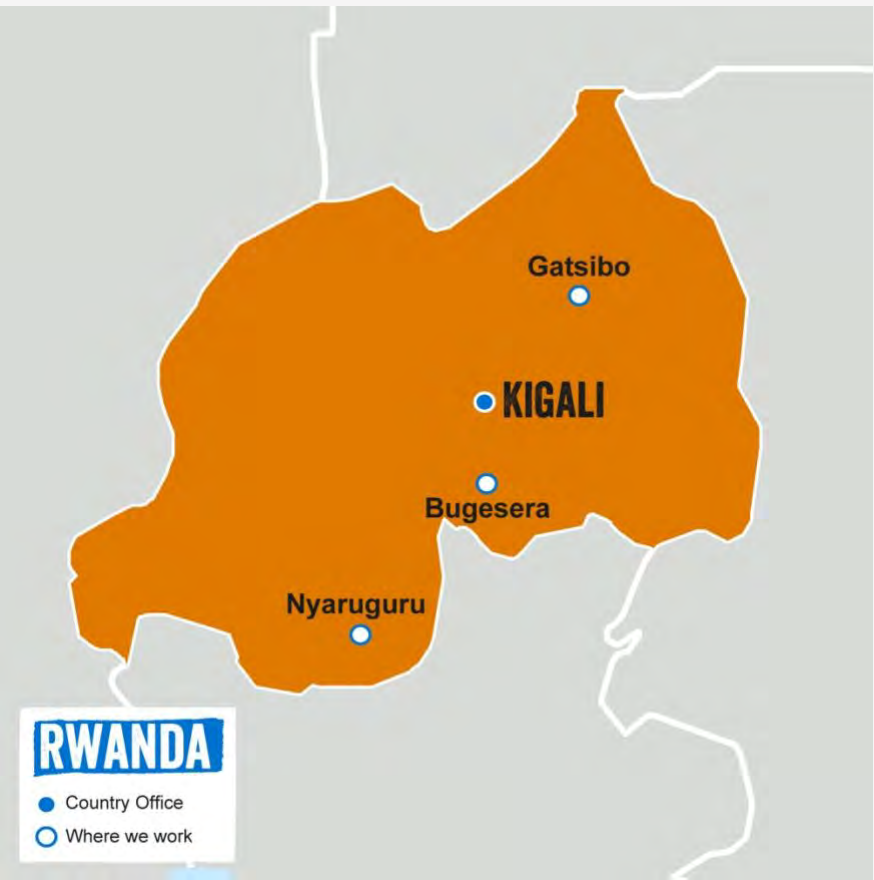
Key Element of GTA:

GENDER NORMS

Plan International Rwanda has designed a country-wide initiative for responding to gender inequality during the COVID-19 pandemic. The strategy has indentified specific thematic areas for continuos work on gender norms, even during lockdown situation, such as child abuse, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, and parenting.

A special focus of the interventions, since the start of the pandemic, is on how to effectively tackle discriminatory gender norms. In line with Plan International's GTA, the office is addressing **gender expectations about capabilities, roles, decision-making, and representation**. To do this, Plan International Rwanda has developed **targeted messaging** which are being mainstreamed in communication and programmatic materials on key **gender norms, barriers and/or drivers** within a specific thematic focus.

General **awareness raising** is being done by showing specific messaging during national news segments during prime time. In addition, Plan International Rwanda is working with radio stations and engaging national celebrities to **tailor dialogues with families and communities** on specific topics such as tackling the ‘culture of silence’ (*Umuco wa ceceka*) that sorrounds gender-based violence in the national context. Engagement with the **media, political representatives and policymakers** in support of norm change has also been pivotal. Plan International Rwanda, for example, is working with the Ministry of Health to engage famous artist musicians for composing popular songs to tackle gender norms in times of COVID-19. In addition, other topics that have been included in interventions are linked to **gender steorytypes** and have targetted the increase of the burden carried by girls and women in domestic chores, unpaid care work and the effects of toxic masculinities.



Plan International has been advancing children's rights in Rwanda since 2007.

Throughout our development and humanitarian work, we create long-term change in the lives of the most vulnerable children, especially girls.

For more information, please contact:
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Key Element of GTA:

AGENCY

To strengthen the agency of young people, especially young girls, Plan International Peru has effectively coordinated the establishment of a dedicated youth group for informing its COVID-19 emergency response. This initiative is part of a larger organisational strategy on youth mobilisation which aims to promote **leadership and collective action** by young people themselves, emphasising the role of young women and girls in particularly in **social movement building**. The initiative is based on the results of a thorough risk analysis and capacity building processes which were part of projects that were being implemented before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This youth group is currently composed of eight young activists (aged 11 to 22 years – four young men and four young women) who have worked with Plan International Peru and partner youth organisations in the past. The initiative has also considered diversity and inclusion in the selection of its members. The group has been key in providing feedback in an ongoing basis to the emergency response.

The group has been supported to develop specific and **targeted political advocacy** asks to influence different actors in the country. The initiative works with **young women** for supporting them **to take action and influence change** on thematic issues, gender equality and inclusion in emergency context. In addition, the initiative is aiming to develop the youth group members' **self-confidence** to participate in spaces for influencing (for example, at UNHCR/IOM Refugees and Migrants National Working Group, clusters of humanitarian response groups, spaces for dialogue with sectoral authorities, etc.).

Plan International Peru is in this way **amplifying the voices** of young women for effectively communicating the effects of the crisis on their lives, from their own perspectives, to **different audiences** such as local authorities, decision-makers and Peruvian society as a whole. The youth group has developed communiques, digital events and materials to engage wider audiences as well as **further building their skills to mobilise and influence others**.



Plan International began operating in Peru in 1994 to have a positive impact on the lives of the most vulnerable children and young people.

We support children to learn, lead, decide and thrive in to reduce poverty, gender inequality and exclusion.

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Key Element of GTA:

CONDITION AND POSITION

As part of a Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) project titled “Enfocáte”, Plan International Bolivia is improving the equality of the conditions of children in families and communities as well as the position of girls, **focusing on social status, respect and access to power**. To combat the spread of COVID-19, the Bolivian government has instituted a total lockdown. These measures, together with harmful gender norms, have contributed to the intensification of domestic and gender-based violence, and cases involving girls and young women have increased dramatically. Therefore, the project has pivoted and the project has opened up **digital spaces to support girls and women** who are experiencing violence at home has been prioritised. In addition, with support of a local feminist partner (Casa de la Mujer), Plan International Bolivia has developed a contingency plan to guarantee the **provision of legal assistance, psychosocial support and personalised services**, with an immediate response program available at all times.

The online services that have been enabled during lockdown include a digital tool for **providing legal information and emotional support as well as creating ways for reporting** and prevention of acts of violence. Moreover, the virtual tool also promotes SRHR, addresses **myths about sexuality and provides information** in the event of an unwanted pregnancy, safe abortion, and contraceptive. This virtual tool is also linked to a platform for making appointments for specific guidance from lawyers and psychologists, free of charge. The local partner also offers shelter for survivors of gender-based violence and their families. In tandem to this initiative, Plan International Bolivia has launched a nation-wide campaign (#CuarentenaSinViolencia) to address **specific gaps and inequalities** and create awareness of the alarming gender-based violence rates in the country.



Plan International has been working in Bolivia since 1978 to promote children’s rights and equality for girls. Our work focuses on supporting children and young people to live free from poverty, violence and injustice. To achieve that, we work with a number of different partners as well as children, young people and their communities.

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Key Element of GTA:

WORKING WITH BOYS AND MEN

Plan International Colombia has taken the current crisis as an opportunity for innovation and is currently pushing the envelope for achieving transformational change. The organisation has recently launched an initiative titled “Transformative Masculinities in times of COVID19.” This initiative aims to prevent gender-based violence (GBV) through the establishment of **spaces for reflection around power disbalances and gender roles** which have, in turn, contributed to the rise of GBV during the pandemic.

As part of this initiative, Plan International Colombia has designed and implemented key actions for **actively engaging and working with boys and men** during emergency response. These key actions include, for example, the development of internal and external communication pieces aimed at **diverse men of all ages**, particularly adolescent and young men. The materials developed are based on effective pedagogical approaches that **tackle power relations** from the start and topics covered include self-care, emotional management, peaceful conflict resolution, parenting, and gender roles. Plan International Colombia has produced an online test for engaging boys and young men on issues related to **toxic masculinity and traditional gender roles** during the COVID-19 pandemic and also developed an interactive checklist for identifying “transformative masculinities” in action. All of these materials have been promoted on social media and also used in other online platform, including targeted online dialogues, in Colombia, since the start of the pandemic. These actions have served as vehicles for strengthening the commitment of boys and men to gender equality and inclusion during and beyond the crisis.

In addition, Plan International Colombia, in coordination with the United Nations and other partner organisation have established a **national reference group on masculinities** to determine the feasibility of setting up a helpline for men who have been or are at risk of becoming aggressors against women. It is aimed that this helpline will offer counselling, crisis response and referrals to available services for men.



Plan International has worked in Colombia since 1962 to support the country’s most vulnerable children.

We work towards positive social change and a future where children can grow up in fair, violence free communities where girls are equally valued.

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Key Element of GTA:

DIVERSITY

Plan International Honduras has been effectively **addressing the needs of children and youth in all their diversity** through the sustained support to an initiative called ‘GOJoven Honduras’ and its youth network on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), even during times of COVID-19. The network supports capacity-building, collective advocacy and focuses on guaranteeing SRHR for all youth in Honduras. The network is composed of 18 young activists (9 young women and 9 young men) who are all volunteers and come from 4 different Departments in the country, representing 3 different regions. In addition, the network represents a **diverse group** of young people as 15 of its members identify as individuals with diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC). The network also includes members who are indigenous and afro-descendant.

As lockdown measures continue to intensify in Honduras, to contain the spread of COVID-19, Plan Honduras has supported the network to adapt several of its face-to-face activities to virtual methodologies. The organisation has worked with the youth network to coordinate tailored webinars to address **the different needs based on gender, age, and other multiple exclusion factors**. One webinar of the series, for example, focused on the specific "Sexual and reproductive rights of black people in Honduras" which was led and facilitated by a Garifuna woman who addressed the cultural particularities of this ethnic group, starting with the use of appropriate language to establish relationships based on respect, difficulties in accessing sexual and reproductive health services, sex education hyper-sexualisation of black bodies, structural racism, among other issues. The series of webinars which are currently being organised are proving to be very successful in online fora and attendance and engagement is very high.

Adaptation plans of activities also include specific work with youth on addressing SRHR and disability as well as immigration status through the coordinating of online workshops. Plan Honduras, in partnership with local organisations, is also informing the development and adaptation of activities, that have been interrupted by lockdown measures, by conducting comprehensive research initiative on gender-based violence, including violence motivated by perception of sexual orientation and gender identity.



Plan International has been supporting communities and children in Honduras since 1973 .

All of our work focuses on gender, inclusion, participation and citizenship. We operate in Lempira, Copán, Santa Bárbara, Choluteca, La Paz, Intibucá and San Pedro Sula.

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Key Element of GTA:

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

In Brazil, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted vulnerable groups disproportionately, putting in risk the enjoyment of rights of children, particularly those who belong to afro-Brazilian communities, sexual minorities and disfranchised backgrounds.

In line with Plan International's GTA, Plan International Brazil is working to **strengthen societal structures, systems as well as civil society**, engaging and promoting joint and aligned efforts for gender equality and inclusion. To work on the visibility, prevention and reporting of domestic violence during lockdowns, a campaign has been launched (#QuarentenaSimViolenciaNao) to visibilise group-specific vulnerabilities, generate awareness and prompt collective reflection and discussion in online fora. Plan International Brazil has utilised platforms such as Instagram and Twitter to engage with **stakeholders from different sectors and levels** (including civil society, service providers, activist networks, policy makers, community members, and the academia) to strengthen a movement for gender equality and support even during the pandemic, harnessing the power of technology and social media. A total of 35 organisations are currently working with Plan International Brazil to this end and coordination among different sector and actors is being managed. In addition, specific communication material to influence also those who do not have access to the internet have been developed and a total of 132 cities in the country have been reached and messaging in these areas disseminated around demands for **infrastructure improvements, capacity building of service providers, participatory monitoring and follow-up support as well as efforts to improve current policies and budget allocation** for facing the pandemic.

Plan International Brazil is supporting the enabling environment for gender equality and strengthening a social movement in time of crisis



Plan International has been working in Brazil since 1997 to promote children's rights and gender equality.

We operate in the states of Maranhão, Piauí, Bahia and São Paulo to create communities that are free from violence where girls and boys have equal opportunities.

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CONCLUSIONS

Plan International is committed to continue strategic work to contribute to gender equality and inclusion. The COVID-19 pandemic has not stopped gender transformative work. Country Offices (COs), in close partnership with local actors, have continued to address the root causes of gender inequality and exclusion and have persevered in supporting the reshaping of unequal gender and power relations between all children, young people and adults regardless of their gender. As this briefing paper highlights, Plan International is developing and adapting its interventions to address this pandemic, reflecting on its medium and long-term social and political impacts. Across the world, our organisation is working for changing harmful gender norms, building individual and collective agency, addressing the specific needs of children, strengthening gender and youth-friendly responsive services, and working with boys and men for gender equality.

Plan International's GTA can support and inform planned responses to COVID-19 by providing a framework that takes into account the multi-dimensional and intersecting forms of inequalities, discrimination and marginalisation that puts particular groups of people at increased risk. As an organisation, we are recognising this complexity and are developing specific specific strategies to mitigate and address root causes of inequality. **We will continue to strive for a just world that advances children's rights and equality for girls, and motivate our people and partners to join us in the journey towards gender transformation – COVID-19 will not stop us!**





About Plan International

We strive to advance children's rights and equality for girls all over the world. We recognise the power and potential of every single child. But this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination. And it's girls who are most affected. As an independent development and humanitarian organisation, we work alongside children, young people, our supporters and partners to tackle the root causes of the challenges facing girls and all vulnerable children. We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood, and enable children to prepare for and respond to crises and adversity. We drive changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels using our reach, experience and knowledge. For over 80 years we have been building powerful partnerships for children, and we are active in over 75 countries.

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