



Second World Summit for Social Development
4-6 November 2025, Doha, Qatar

Addressing Structural Inequalities Through Girls' Education for Inclusive Social Development

Solutions Session Concept Note

Organizers: Plan International, ChildFund Alliance, Save the Children International, SOS Children's Villages International, Malala Fund

Co-sponsors:

- Government of Ireland
- Government of Finland (tbc)
- Office of the SRSG on VAC (tbc)

Date and Time: Wednesday, 5 November 15:00-16:15 Room 12, In-person. Doha, Qatar.

Context

The Second World Summit for Social Development (WSSD 2025) marks a historic opportunity to reaffirm global solidarity and action toward inclusive, people-centred development. Thirty years after the Copenhagen Declaration, the world is at a crossroads: progress on the social dimension of sustainable development remains slow and uneven, while overlapping crises — rising inequalities, fragile peace, climate change, and economic shocks — threaten to reverse hard-won gains.

Children, who make up nearly a third of the global population, are among those most affected. Their specific needs and rights are too often overlooked in policy and decision-making, leaving millions trapped in cycles of deprivation. Structural inequalities — rooted in gender, age, disability, race, and geography — deny children equal opportunities to thrive. Girls are particularly disadvantaged, facing barriers such as gender-based violence, early marriage, and heavy care responsibilities, all of which restrict their access to education and employment and perpetuate intergenerational poverty. For example, Plan International's research¹ in nine countries found that girls spent more than twice as much time on unpaid care work as on schoolwork.

The climate crisis multiplies these risks. More than one billion children live in areas highly vulnerable to climate-related shocks, and girls often shoulder the heaviest burdens, including

¹ <https://plan-international.org/publications/out-of-time/>

fetching scarce water and fuel, caring for family members, and helping secure food. These responsibilities further limit their opportunities to learn and develop, reinforcing exclusion.

Against this backdrop of deepening inequalities, shrinking aid, and weakened multilateral cooperation, it is clear that poverty eradication cannot be achieved without tackling the structural barriers that drive exclusion. Central to this is girls' education; Quality, inclusive, and gender-transformative education is not only a fundamental right but also one of the most effective levers for social development. Each additional year of schooling can increase a girl's future earnings by up to 20%, delay marriage and childbirth, reduce maternal and child mortality, and strengthen civic participation and leadership. Educated girls are more likely to invest in their families and communities, acting as powerful agents of change.

This side event will bring together governments, civil society, and partners to highlight how child-sensitive and gender-transformative policies can dismantle structural inequalities, advance social justice, and place children at the heart of global commitments to poverty eradication. In particular, it will explore how investing in girls' education expands decent work opportunities, builds resilience to crises, and fosters more cohesive, inclusive societies.

Event objectives

- **Raise awareness** on how child-sensitive and gender-transformative policies and programmes can tackle structural inequalities as a prerequisite for achieving the Summit's three pillars.
- **Demonstrate how** gender-transformative education contributes to poverty alleviation, employment, and social inclusion.
- **Create a multi-stakeholder dialogue** on how governments, civil society, the private sector, and children themselves can work together to dismantle structural barriers and deliver social justice for all.
- **Elevate the voices of children and youth, especially girls**, as agents of change, including in shaping education and development policy.

Expected Outcomes

- **Stronger political and financial commitments** to child-sensitive social protection and gender-transformative education as levers for poverty eradication, decent work, and social inclusion.
- **Shared evidence and scalable solutions** from governments, civil society, and youth on dismantling structural inequalities and advancing inclusive social development.
- **Amplified voices of children and youth, especially girls**, shaping the WSSD discussions and influencing global policy conversations on education and poverty eradication.

Target audience

- Government representatives and policymakers
- UN agencies and multilateral organisations
- Child-focused and broader civil society organisations

- Youth- and girl-led organisations and networks

Agenda

The event will be a **75-minute panel discussion** designed to encourage interactive dialogue.

- **Welcome and Opening Remarks (10 mins):** A representative from Plan International Executive Leadership and a senior official from the Government of Ireland will provide brief opening remarks.
- **Roundtable Panel Discussion (45 mins):** The moderated discussion will feature the following speakers:
 - A government representative
 - A Plan International representative
 - A Save the Children representative
 - A Malala Fund representative
 - A representative from a UN entity (WFP, SRSG-VAC, or Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights)
 - Two youth or child leaders.
- **Audience Q&A (15 mins):** This interactive session will allow for questions and contributions from Summit attendees, civil society, and youth delegates.
- **Closing Remarks (5 mins):** A representative from Save the Children Executive Leadership will provide closing remarks.