



# CLOSING THE GAP

Plan International UN Office in Geneva  
Annual Activity Report 2015 – 2016

# ADVOCACY FROM THE GROUND UP

## GLOBALLY

### ABOUT PLAN INTERNATIONAL

Founded in 1937, [Plan International](#) is one of the oldest and largest child rights and development organisations in the world. Plan International strives for a just world that advances children's rights and equality for girls. To achieve this, we seek to empower children, young people and communities to make vital changes that tackle the root causes of discrimination against girls, exclusion and vulnerability.

### OUR ADVOCACY

Through our advocacy, Plan International drives change in practice and policy at local, national and international levels through our reach, experience and knowledge of the realities children face. We use our experience on the ground and position as an authoritative global voice to influence those with power or responsibility, in order to promote the rights of boys, girls and young people. At the international level, Plan International has two offices representing the organisation at the United Nations Headquarters in [Geneva](#) and New York. Additionally, Plan International has two regional liaison offices working with the [European Union](#) and the African Union.



## IN GENEVA

### SHAPING THE DISCUSSION IN GENEVA

[Plan International UN Office in Geneva](#) works to improve the situation of children through strategic advocacy activities by influencing the agenda on issues relevant to children and their rights at the [UN in Geneva](#), with a particular focus on girls. The Office also acts as a human rights expertise hub for Plan International's policy and strategy development, and supports the organisation's teams and offices in their engagement with the UN.

### INFLUENCING POLICY AND PRACTICE

Plan International UN Office in Geneva actively advocates for child rights and equality for girls to be included, promoted and respected in key processes and debates taking place in Geneva, including the [Human Rights Council](#), the [Committee on the Rights of the Child \(CRC\)](#), the [Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#), and the Special Procedures. Across all of our advocacy initiatives, our office works in close partnership with other international NGOs, UN agencies and Permanent Missions.

### COUNTRY-SPECIFIC ADVOCACY

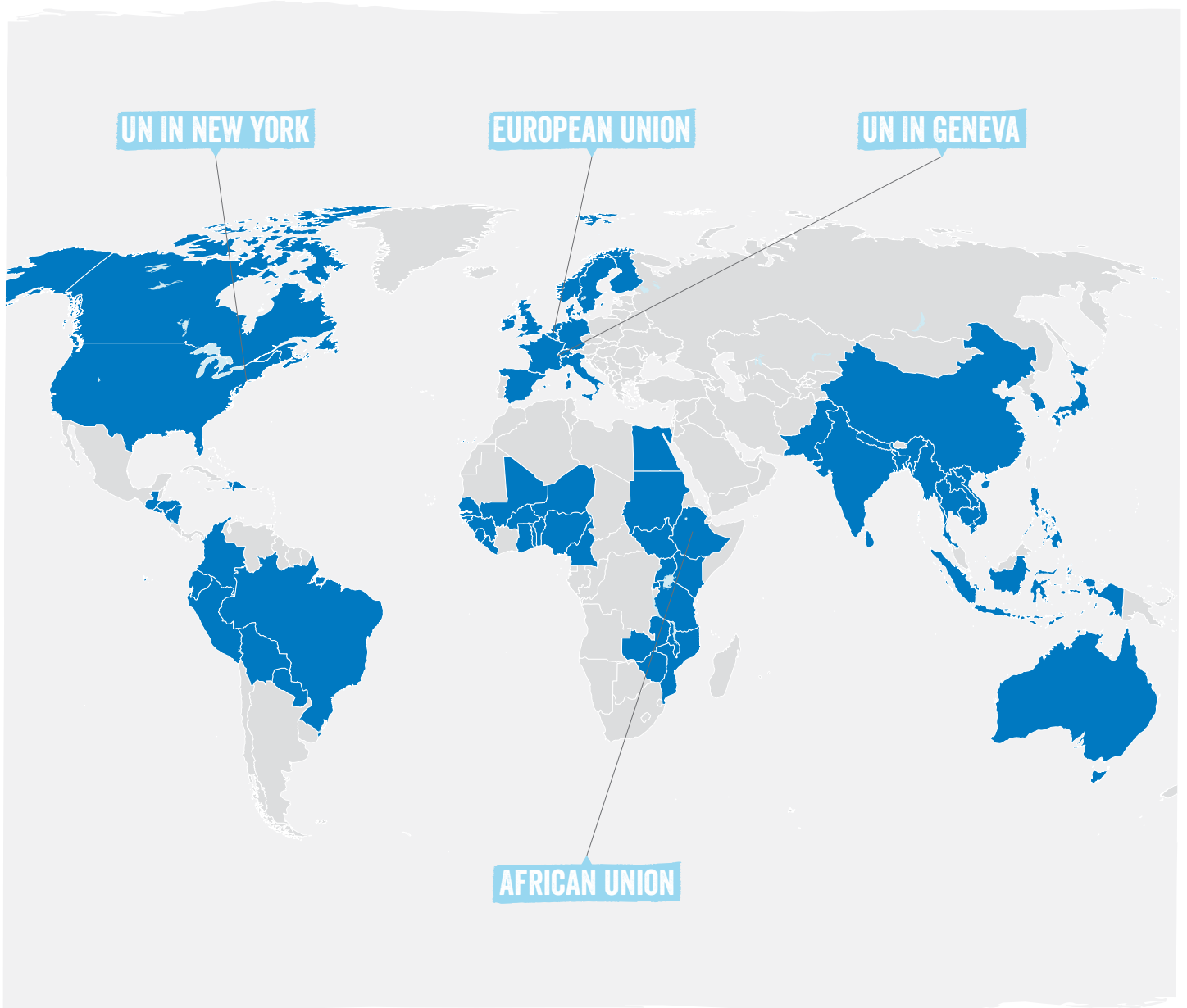
Plan International uses the tools of the international human rights system to ensure that every country promotes, respects and fulfils the rights of all children, and to hold governments accountable to their obligations. The UN Office in Geneva supports Plan International's offices around the world to engage with UN processes that review the human rights situation in their country. These include submitting NGO reports for the monitoring and reporting processes for the CRC and CEDAW, and the [Universal Periodic Review \(UPR\)](#) of the Human Rights Council.

REACHING

**100.5 MILLION  
GIRLS AND BOYS**

WORKED IN

**85,280  
COMMUNITIES**



INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY THROUGH  
**4 LIAISON  
OFFICES**

ACTIVE IN  
**71 COUNTRIES**

*Preschool children from Indonesia playing in playground made using locally-sourced materials.*



# FROM THE UN REPRESENTATIVE

Dear friends,

2015 was a historic year. In September 2015, the world's Governments unanimously adopted [the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). These global goals represent an [unparalleled achievement](#). They range from ending poverty and ensuring everyone's rights to health and education, to creating more just and equitable societies and combating climate change.

The SDGs are also revolutionary because they are [grounded in human rights](#) and have at their core that [no one should be left behind](#). This includes every girl and every boy, as well as the most vulnerable and marginalised.

Plan International will strive to translate the commitments of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda into new, bold actions for children's rights, and to create a world in which all girls can learn, lead, decide and thrive.

As the world's human rights hub, stakeholders in Geneva have started thinking about how we can make the promises of the Global Goals a reality, and in particular how we can [make use of the existing human rights system](#) to track progress and keep Governments accountable to the commitments they made to the 17 Global Goals.

Achieving these 17 ambitious goals by 2030 will be no easy task. It will require [political will and commitment, resources, and the participation of all actors](#) of society: Governments, UN agencies, the private sector and civil society, including children and young people.

By working together, we can indeed create the future we all want, and create a more equitable world in which every child can realise his or her rights and live to his or her full potential.

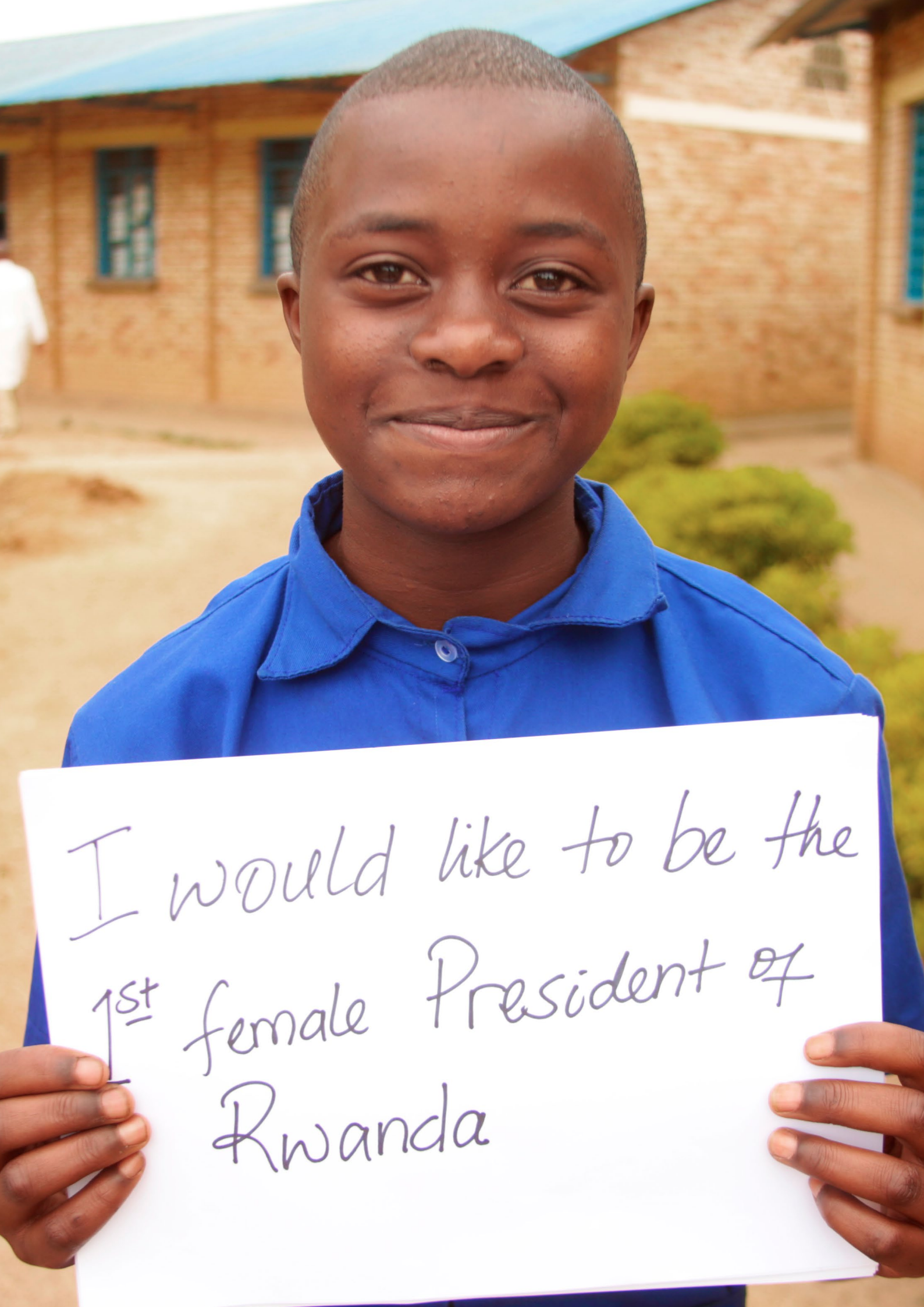


Ms. Anne-Sophie Lois  
UN Representative and Head of Office



Plan International plays a crucial role in collaborating with the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, by raising the profile of critical issues before policymakers, and mutually strengthening advocacy internationally. Civil society provides key information to the Special Rapporteur for thematic reports and country specific reports by creating partnerships on the ground and essential links with children.”

*Ms. Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography*

A young boy with short-cropped hair, wearing a blue polo shirt, is smiling and holding a white sign. The background shows a brick building with blue window frames and a blue roof. The sign contains the following text:

I would like to be the  
1<sup>st</sup> female President of  
Rwanda

# CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND THE 2030 AGENDA

On 25 September 2015, **193 countries adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, also known as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 17 goals and 169 targets adopted were the result of many years of negotiation between Governments, consultations with millions of people around the globe, and advocacy from civil society groups, including Plan International and others, to ensure that the **rights of children and equality for girls** were front and centre in the goals.

That advocacy was successful, with 21 targets specifically about children and youth, including breakthrough targets related to, for example:

- **Eliminating all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation (5.3)**
- **Ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children (16.2)**
- **Providing legal identity for all, including birth registration (16.9)**

But the 2030 agenda also has many other goals and

targets that are inextricably linked to the fulfilment of the rights of all children, including:

- **An entire goal with 9 targets devoted to “achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls” (Goal 5)**
- **Ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels (16.7)**
- **Guaranteeing equal and accessible education by building inclusive and gender-sensitive learning environments and providing the needed assistance for persons with disabilities (4.5 and 4.a)**

Now that the goals have been adopted, the hard work of implementing them starts. Plan International is committed to pushing for Governments to live up to their commitments. The SDGs are not legally binding, and compliance is voluntary. But by linking the Global Goals to existing international human rights obligations and by using the accountability mechanisms of the human rights system it has set up, Plan International and other civil society actors will strive to ensure that Governments are working hard to make the SDGs a reality.

“

Important policy frameworks adopted by the United Nations in 2015, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, form a universal roadmap for humanity to help us achieve peace, rights and well-being. Civil society alongside other actors should be fully on board to transform our ambitions into reality. Plan International's work will be crucial to ensure that children are an integral part of our plan to leave no one behind and equipped with the necessary tools and knowledge to make our planet a better place.”

*Mr. Michael Møller, United Nations Under-Secretary-General, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva*

“

I believe that academic institutions like Leiden University, and CSOs like Plan International should work closely together in order to further the enforcement of children's rights globally in a more effective way. Not only can we both benefit from the cross-fertilisation of our expertise and experience, we can also join forces in the education and training of a new generation of professionals in the field of international children's rights.”

*Prof. Dr. Ton Liefwaard, Professor of Children's Rights, Leiden University*

# YEAR AT A GLANCE

Influenced United Nations report on protecting children from bullying

Influenced [policy development](#) on adolescents at the United Nations

## INFLUENCING INTERNATIONAL POLICY

Made joint statement at Human Rights Council on children's rights in family environments

Highlighted the gender perspective in an event leading up to the Global Consultations for the World Humanitarian Summit

## GENDER

Co-organised high-level event to celebrate International Day of the Girl

Ms. Anne-Sophie Lois among first NGO representatives to become a member of the International [Geneva Gender Champions](#) initiative

2015



Scan here to see child-friendly poster of the CRC

Actively engaged in UN open door event in Geneva, informing children of their human rights

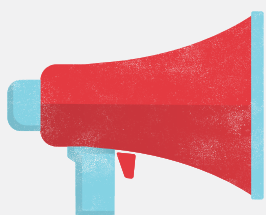
Acted as expert on panel of jury for the selection of the 2015 Future Policy Award

## PROMOTING CHILD RIGHTS

Influenced outcome of [First African Girls' Summit on Ending Child Marriage](#)

Made joint statement at Human Rights Council on budgeting for children

## BUDGETING FOR CHILDREN



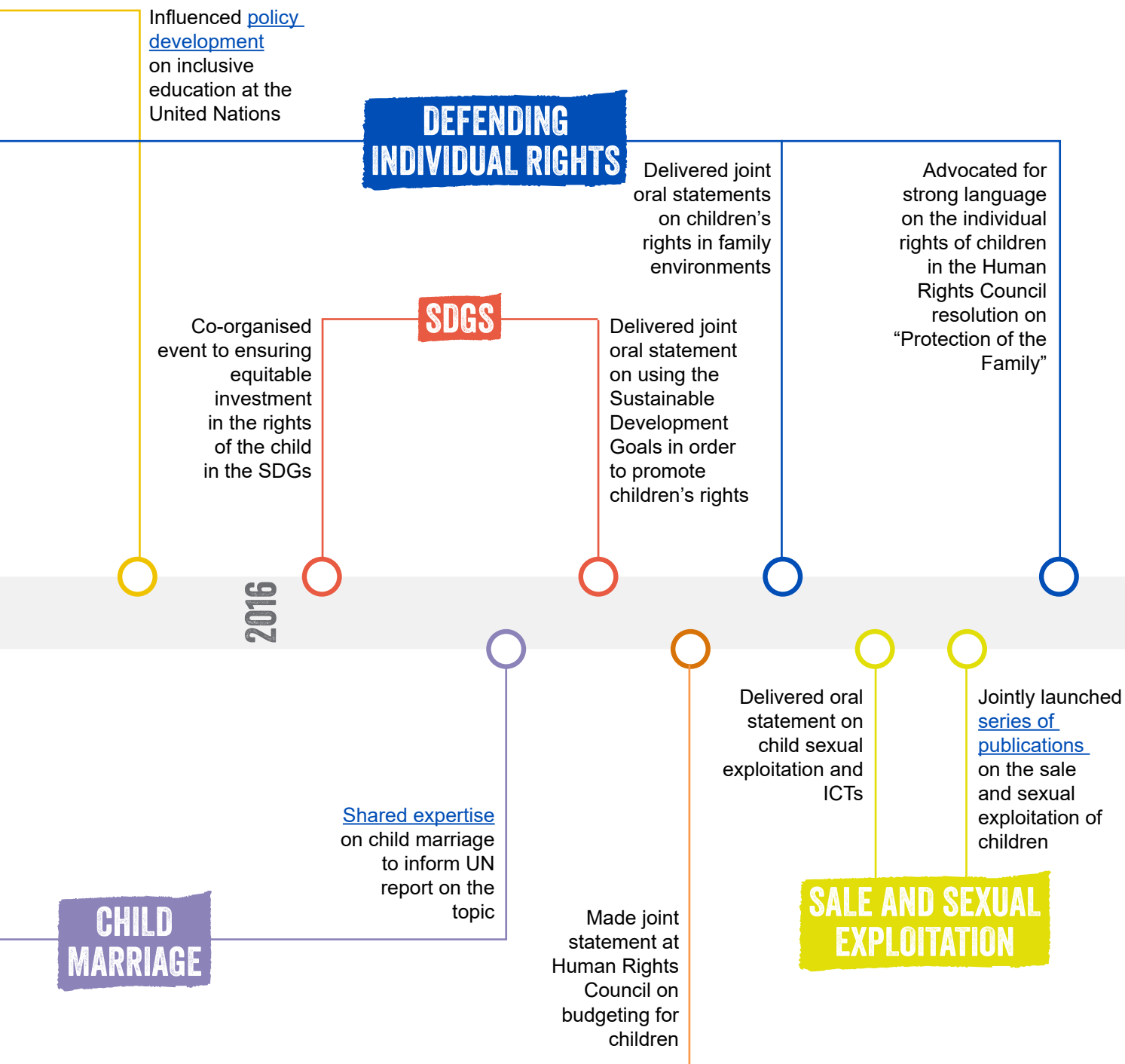
# OUR OFFICE IN NUMBERS

# 10

## ORAL AND WRITTEN STATEMENTS

delivered to the Human Rights Council and its members





**8** **EVENTS ORGANISED**  
or co-organised at UN fora

**5** **SUBMISSIONS TO INFORM**  
UN reports

**32** **COUNTRIES SUPPORTED**  
in their engagement with international human rights mechanisms

# HIGHLIGHTS



## THE ISSUE

Each year, **15 million girls marry before the age of 18**. At the current rate, more than 140 million girls will become child brides by 2020. **Child marriage is a violation of children's rights**. Despite being prohibited by international law, it continues to deny girls their right to make vital decisions about their own life, including their sexual health and well-being, often forces them out of education, and increases their risk of violence, abuse and ill health.

## WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

Plan International works to **combat** child, early and forced marriage **at all levels and across multiple sectors**, including education, health, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), economic empowerment, child protection and gender equality. This year, the organisation has used its field expertise to inform and influence several international processes, including the first [African Girls' Summit on Ending Child Marriage](#), as well as the UN Secretary-General's report on child marriage.



Scan here to read Plan International's submission on child marriage



## THE ISSUE

The "protection of the family" [resolution](#) was first adopted at the UN Human Rights Council in 2014. The resolution fails to recognise individual rights holders and **potential human rights violations against family members**, including child marriage, FGM, domestic and sexual violence, among others. Additionally, the resolution does not acknowledge **the existence of different forms of families**, opening the door for exclusion and discrimination of children based on the activities or status of their families or caregivers.

## WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

Together with a taskforce established under [Child Rights Connect](#), Plan International, along with other international NGOs, academia and experts, has conducted advocacy at the international level to ensure that the individual rights of children are at the forefront of any discussion or international policy document concerning families and caregivers. This advocacy focused on the importance of **supporting and strengthening families** in order to ensure the fulfilment of the **rights of all its individual members**, including the rights of children, women and girls.



The Geneva Gender Champions have made a pledge to strive for gender parity in their activities and organisations.

Plan International launched publications with the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography to empower adults and children to speak out against the sale and sexual exploitation of children.

## THE ISSUE

Plan International is committed to creating a world in which all girls and boys can fulfil their potential equally. **Gender equality is a key priority** for the organisation, and we aspire to achieve progress towards this in all areas of our work. However, we believe that working towards gender equality with and for children in the countries in which we work is not enough; **we must walk the talk.**

## WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

On 1 December 2015, UN Office in Geneva's UN Representative and Head of Office Ms. Anne-Sophie Lois became one of the **first NGO representatives of the Geneva Gender Champions initiative**, a network of over 100 senior leaders in Geneva working to advance gender equality in the executive management of their institutions and their programmatic work through concrete and measurable [commitments](#).

Scan here to read the publications on the sale and sexual exploitation of children

## THE ISSUE

Every year, between 500 million and 1.5 billion children around the world experience violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect – often from people they know and trust. One of the key issues is that this type of **“hidden violence”** all too frequently **goes unreported**. Children can be afraid of getting in trouble with the adults around them, feel ashamed of what they have experienced, or worry that it is their fault.

## WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

Plan International has been working with the UN Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography to produce a number of tools, including a **child-friendly booklet** to inform children and adolescents of how they can use the Special Rapporteur to report exploitation and conduct advocacy on the issue. The objective is to support the mandate of the Special Rapporteur in its mission to **raise awareness at the international level of issues of violence** against and exploitation of children, and to hold Governments accountable for the protection of children. These publications were launched in Geneva to be used by civil society, UN agencies and Governments.



This report details some of the activities undertaken by the Plan International United Nations Office in Geneva between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016.

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