

GIRLS ACTION PLAN

GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN'S PRIORITIES FOR

THE EU'S GENDER ACTION PLAN III **IN GHANA**

SEPTEMBER 2020



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We would like to thank all young respondents to the survey who invested their time, shared their experiences and ideas to contribute to girls' lives and advance gender equality. We also thank Plan International offices in Ghana, Ethiopia and India and all GAA and Plan International Netherlands staff involved, as well as the EU office team.

About Plan International EU Office

Plan International is an international development and humanitarian NGO. The EU Office strives to advance children's rights and gender equality for girls in the EU's external action. Find [here our earlier GAP position paper](#) (April 2020), written with inputs from 11 national offices and in collaboration with Equal Measures 2030.

About Plan International Ghana

Plan International is an international development and humanitarian NGO that strives to advance children's rights and equality for girls all over the world. The Plan International Ghana office based in Accra has been working to support children, particularly the most marginalised, to exercise their rights for over 25 years. The aim is to ensure children are free from all forms of violence and that they have the opportunity to access quality and inclusive education, with a focus on girls and young women who are most disadvantaged.

INTRODUCTION

The European Union's Gender Action Plan II is coming to an end in 2020. As an organisation working with and for children and youth with a focus on girls, Plan International believes that it is essential to consider age and not only gender in the next Gender Action Plan (GAP III). Girls, in all their diversity, have specific needs that are distinct from those of adult women, and their priorities should be heard and integrated in the GAP III, as "nothing should be decided for girls without girls!" (young woman consulted). In order to identify their needs and expectations, we conducted a consultation with girls and young women in three countries¹, including in Ghana. **This brief presents the results of the consultation in Ghana, and lays out girls and young women's priorities on several themes for the implementation of the next GAP III in their country through the European Union Delegation.**

The overarching themes for the consultation were chosen based on the European Commission's consultation with civil society on the GAP III conducted in April 2020, namely digitalisation, voice and participation, social and economic rights, sexual and gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health and rights, peace and security, and climate. On each topic, the young people told us about their experiences, the challenges they face, the solutions they would see fit, and their priorities. **The top three overarching priorities for girls and young women in Ghana are addressing gender norms (for 74% of young people), supporting girls and young women's social and economic rights (for 74% of young people) and their participation in decision-making (for 70% of young people).**

Through the consultation, the young people were introduced to the European Union and the Gender Action Plan, and the role of the EU in their lives. Several participants to the survey expressed their enthusiasm at being consulted and having their voices heard. They also mentioned that they believe the GAP III can make a difference for gender equality and girls' lives in their countries.

83% of the young people in Ghana think that the EU can achieve change thanks to its values including gender equality, as well as through its support for and consultations with activists and CSOs (68%), and through its global presence in the EU delegations (50%).

“ The Gender Action Plan by the European Union is a great initiative to ensure gender equality globally. **”**
YOUNG WOMAN, GHANA

METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS

The consultation is the result of a collaboration between the Plan International European Union Office, Plan International Ghana, Ethiopia and India offices as well as the [Girls Advocacy Alliance](#) (GAA). The GAA is an initiative of Plan International Netherlands, Terre des Hommes Netherlands and Defence for Children - ECPAT Netherlands, in cooperation with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It engages with young advocates from 14 to 24 years old in all their diversity, in 10 countries, with a focus on gender-based violence and economic empowerment.

The COVID-19 pandemic altered the original plan to conduct face-to-face workshops with young people that would allow both to build their knowledge about the EU and the GAP II and to identify their priorities. Hence, an online consultation using a youth-friendly survey was organised. The top three priorities per theme were identified through multiple-choice questions while the rest of the data was pulled together from trends in open-ended questions. This brief presents the results of the consultation. In India and aims to support the GAA youth in their own advocacy at country level.

¹ Please find the Girls Action Plan presenting the results from the three participating countries on <https://plan-international.org/eu/Girls-Action-Plan>

WHO ARE THE YOUNG PEOPLE CONSULTED IN GHANA?

In Ghana, a total of 69 young people took the survey. We aimed to ensure inclusivity by reaching a wide group of diverse youth, and in particular to have a rural / urban balance among the participants. For these purposes and taking into consideration digital and language barriers, data packages and devices were provided to the participants with the support of the GAA staff from Plan International Ghana office.

In addition, 2 young people with disabilities took part in the survey and are calling for greater consideration of girls and young women with disabilities in the EU priorities on gender equality.

20% of the young people identified as male and they responded to the survey as advocates for girls' rights and gender equality. Therefore, the results are presented in this brief as "girls and young women's priorities for gender equality".

ABOUT THE YOUNG PEOPLE CONSULTED IN GHANA

69 GIRLS AND BOYS



GIRLS AND BOYS COMING FROM RURAL AREAS MADE UP ABOUT 1/3 OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE CONSULTED



OF THE GIRLS AND BOYS CONSULTED 22% DID NOT HAVE ACCESS TO INTERNET

80% GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN

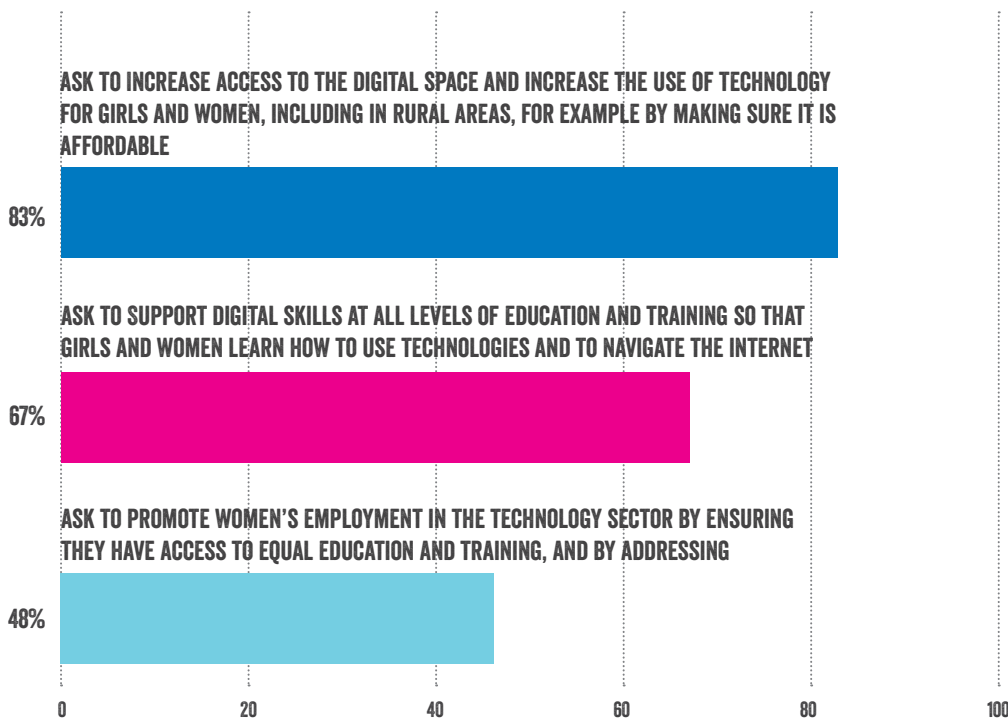
12% WERE UNDER 18 YEARS OLD

GIRLS AND DIGITAL

The young people indicated that the internet plays an important role in girls and young women’s lives, in particular to access information and for their education. While 22% have no access or no stable access to the internet, 41% of the participants in Ghana expressed that they face challenges in accessing or using the digital space. The first challenge is affordability for 23% of the participants, that is to say that girls and young women are not able to buy data or a device to access internet due to the high cost and the fact girls and young women lack financial resources. This is reflected in the first priority presented in the graph below, with a high percentage of young people asking to increase access to the digital space. The second barrier is connectivity for 20% of the participants, meaning that there are network issues that prevent girls and young women from accessing the digital space, especially in rural areas. Some of the participants also mention other barriers such as the lack of digital skills to go on the internet and use devices confidently, safety online, as well as gender norms in the family and community.

“ Due to high cost of data, sometimes I am not able to complete my online courses. Data should be less expensive for us to be able to purchase ” YOUNG WOMAN, GHANA

TOP 3 PRIORITIES FROM GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN GHANA



“ Socialisation of girls in families and communities regarding technology and internet play a big role. Boys are introduced to it at early ages and it is made to be like more of their thing or area unlike girls, which makes it difficult for some girls to confidently explore it. ” YOUNG WOMAN, GHANA

GIRLS' VOICE AND PARTICIPATION

Girls' voice and participation is about ensuring that nothing should be decided for girls without girls. Girls' voices need to be heard to bring to the table the unique and diverse needs girls have. That is why girls and young women are powerful actors of positive change. Even though there is growing space for girls and women to lead and participate worldwide, they still face many obstacles in their everyday life to have their voices valued as much as those of boys and men.

“Girls are not able to partake in most of the decisions and this is affecting most of the girls in my community since they are not given the chance to express themselves and I think what can be done about this is that decision makers in the community should include or involve girls in decision making so that they can also express themselves.”
GIRL, GHANA

79% of young people in Ghana recognise that girls' participation is a challenge, and many of them told us about instances where they felt their voices were not heard, either at home, at school, or in the community. 30% of young people expressed that opportunities for girls and young women to participate in local decision-making and their ability to make their own choices are restricted due to gender norms. And 14% indicated that they have faced community and family pressure when choosing a school subject, a career or when to marry. In response to that, 32% wish to open up space for girls and young women in decision-making, including in the household. The participants also pointed out other barriers to their participation such as lack of confidence among girls and young women, and backlash, that is to say that girls and young women face negative consequences when they speak out or take part in decisions.

TOP 3 PRIORITIES FROM GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN GHANA



“There often times decisions affecting young people especially women are taken without representation. The situation is even worse amidst COVID-19 where physical engagements are least advised, and only few women have access to smart devices and internet connectivity (...). This needs special attention, because many women are not even aware of their role in participating in town hall meetings and others.”
YOUNG MAN, GHANA

GIRLS AND SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

Social and economic empowerment is when girls and women have equal access to the tools and resources that enable them to lead a successful life. It is about access to quality inclusive education, and about opening up opportunities for girls and young women to build the skills they need to pursue the professional career of their choice, such as through practical training or higher education. In addition, it is about ensuring young women have access to decent jobs and to resources that would allow them to start a business.

COVID-19, LIVELIHOODS AND THE ECONOMY

28% of young people in Ghana to our question on the impact of COVID indicated that their livelihood had been affected, either due to loss of income or loss of employment. They call on the EU to support young women-led businesses, young women entrepreneurs and start-ups, and access to employment.

“Many young women like me have halted their economic activities due to the pandemic [...] I believe European [Union] could help by providing relief packages for female owned economic venture.” Young woman, Ghana

TOP 3 PRIORITIES FROM GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN GHANA



COVID-19 AND EDUCATION

35% of young people in Ghana to our question on the impact of COVID indicated that their education has been affected, due to school closures, delays in exams and graduation, or difficulties in accessing education online. In particular, some of the youth indicated that the cost of data is a barrier to their access to online learning. They call on the EU to take action in the sector of education to ensure all girls can continue to learn and can go back to school. In addition, close to 20% of the participants suggested that the EU should be involved in awareness raising around COVID-19, including preventing stigmatization and false information.

“Because of corona virus there is a break in education and now we are doing everything online. The buying of data bundle to write exams online and doing of assignments is a big problem to me. So therefore, data should be made affordable for students.” Young woman, Ghana.

In Ghana, the biggest barrier to education is financial for close to 30% of young people. For example, girls and young women cannot afford school material such as textbooks, and tuition fees without scholarships. The second biggest barrier is the lack of support from their family to pursue their studies or a specific field of study for 21% of young people. Girls and young women indicated that they were not always able to choose.

“ When I got admitted in the senior high school, I chose to [pursue] general science as a course but everyone was like science is not for girls, science is very difficult and so therefore I was asked to change my cause to home economics and I refused. [...] what boys can do, girls can do it even better **”**

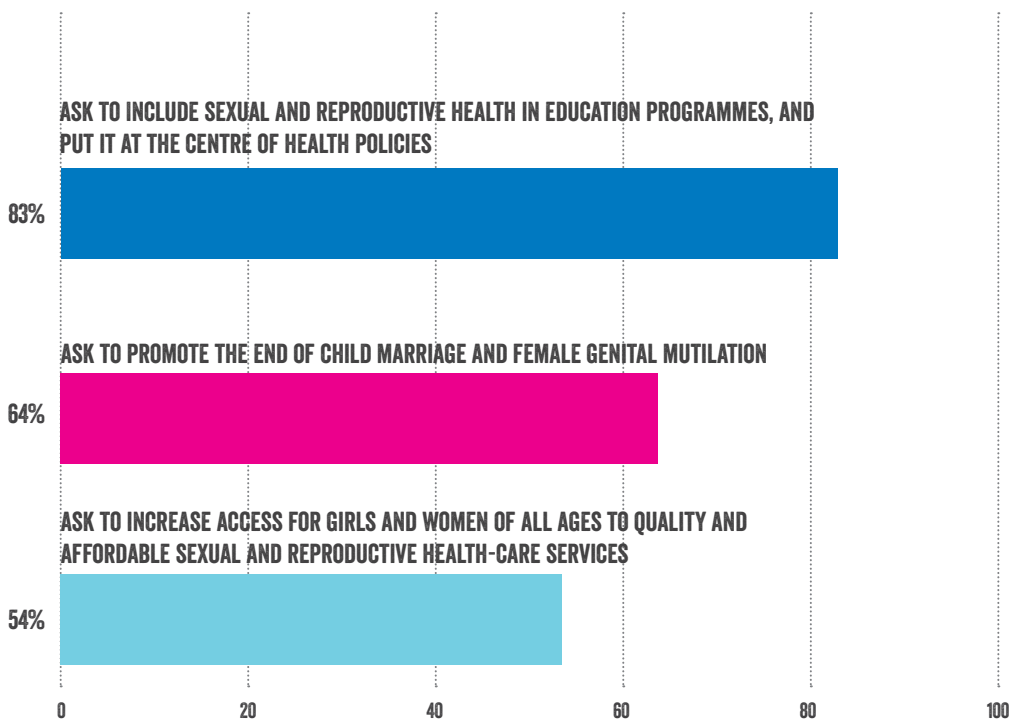
YOUNG WOMAN, GHANA

GIRLS' SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE & SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

Every girl has the right to grow equally valued and cared for, free from discrimination, violence and fear. Tackling sexual and gender-based violence is about preventing violence and discrimination, and protecting girls and women who have gone through violence and trauma. In addition, Sexual and reproductive health and rights is about ensuring girls and young women are able to make their own choices and to have control over their bodies.

For safeguarding reasons¹, the young people were not asked to elaborate on their experience of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in the survey. However, they were given space to highlight some key issues and their priorities on the topic. Some participants made comments about harassment being a problem for girls and young women, and some highlighted the importance of involving boys and men in the discussion and of fighting rampant impunity through proper legislation and access to justice.

TOP 3 PRIORITIES FROM GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN GHANA



“ Increase access for girls and women of all ages to quality and affordable sexual and reproductive health-care services. This is important because it prevents girls from using reproductive health drugs and services without the advice of professionals. ”

YOUNG WOMAN, GHANA

“ Promoting end child marriage is important to me since most girls in my region are forced into marriage which is a huge discrimination they face. ”

YOUNG WOMAN, GHANA

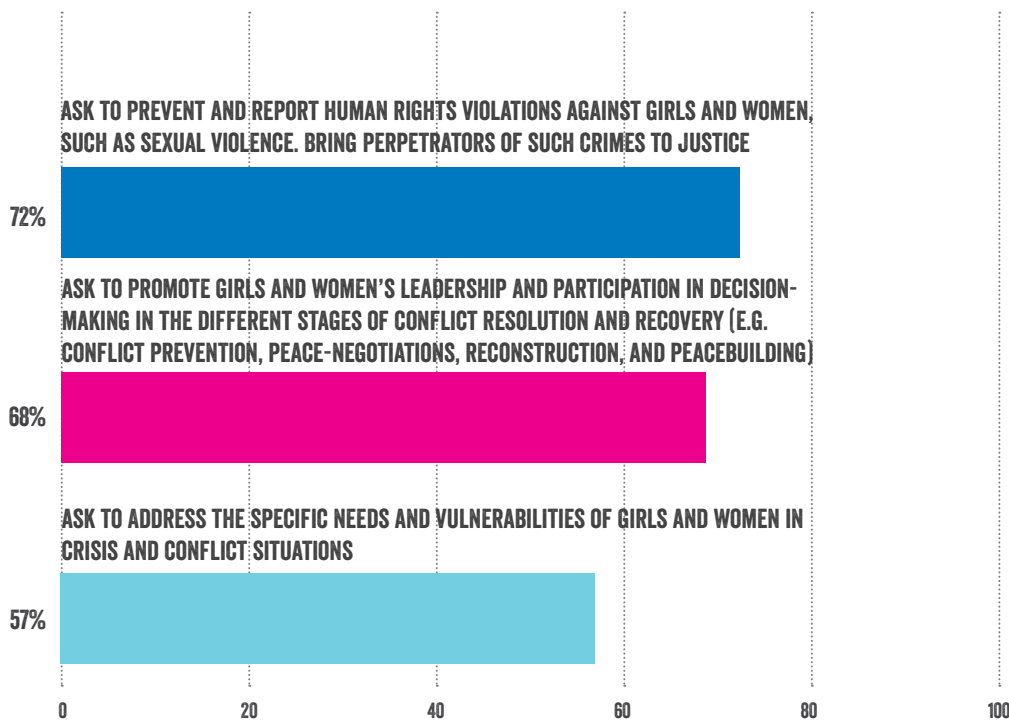
² As per Plan International global policies on safeguarding children and young people, consultation initiatives should always prevent re-traumatisation or traumatisation of young individuals from recounting painful or traumatic experiences.

GIRLS IN CRISIS

A crisis or emergency situation can be the result of violent conflict, a natural disaster, a health crisis, or any other situation where country or community capacities are overwhelmed and external help is needed. In those contexts, it is essential to respond to the specific risks faced by girls and women to ensure they are safe and continue living the life of a child or adolescent but also to ensure they are included in peace building and in recovery processes.

It should be noted that a large majority of the young people consulted do/did not live through a crisis or conflict. However, a few of the participants in Ghana mentioned that they experienced community conflicts such as tribal disputes. In addition, some of the young people talked about the issue of sexual and gender based-violence in times of conflict and peacekeeping, as well as the necessity to educate girls and women on conflict and recovery processes.

TOP 3 PRIORITIES FROM GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN GHANA



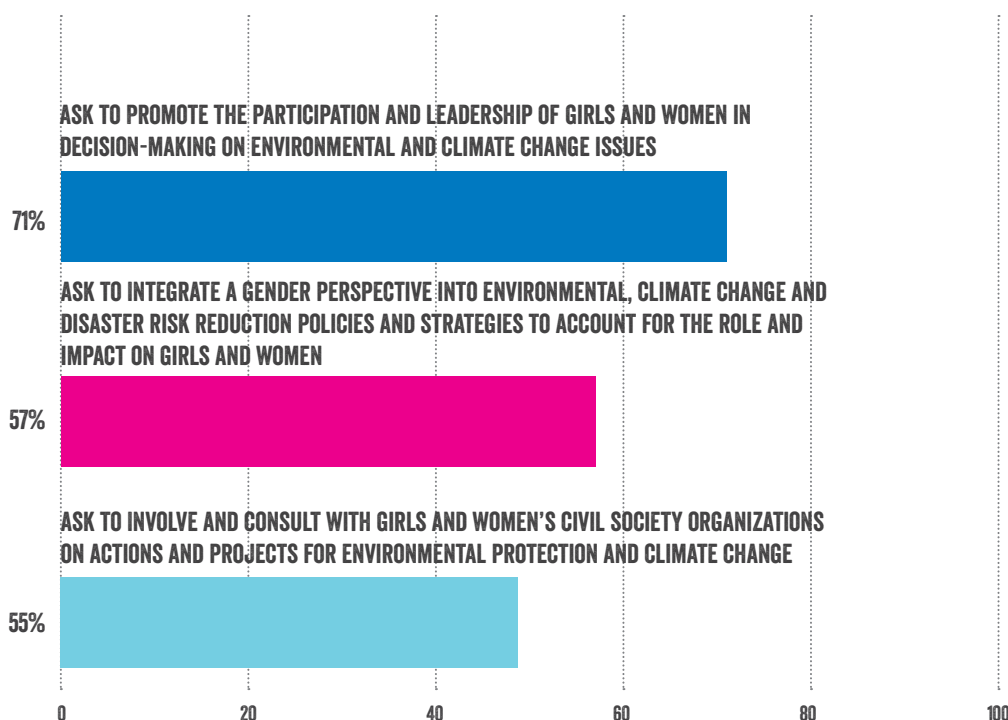
“ Women and girls need to be educated on conflict resolution, conflict management and peace building so that when there is violence in the community they would be able to protect themselves. ”

YOUNG WOMAN, GHANA

GIRLS, CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Almost all young people in Ghana (97%) believe that caring for the environment is important and 35% of them either take part in climate activism or wish to be involved. In fact, their biggest priority for EU action concerning this topic is to promote the participation and leadership of girls and women in decision-making on environmental and climate change issues. 28% of young people expressed that environment protection is a collective responsibility, with some of them already taking action and engaging in awareness raising in their communities. The main sectors for action mentioned by the participants are: reducing pollution, fighting deforestation, and developing green skills such as organic farming.

TOP 3 PRIORITIES FROM GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN GHANA



“The concept of girls as ambassadors of Climate Action will be good for driving more female forces to lead community activities and national and global policies on environment.”
YOUNG MAN, GHANA

“I believe a lot of my peers are indifferent and ignorant about the need and our simple actions and inactions that can help protect the environment. I can therefore contribute through campaigns to educate my generation and also to hold accountable stakeholders entrusted with the power to play key roles in protecting our environment.”
YOUNG WOMAN, GHANA

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