

# GIRLS ACTION PLAN

GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN'S PRIORITIES FOR  
THE EU'S GENDER ACTION PLAN III **IN INDIA**

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### **Plan International EU Office**

Galerie Ravenstein 27/4

1000 Brussels

Belgium

T: +32 (0)2 2 504 60 50

## **CONTRIBUTORS**

Head of Office: Serap Altinisik

Authors: Alice Rostant, Policy and Advocacy Assistant and Salomé Guibreteau, Policy and Advocacy Officer

Design and final editing: Ischi Graus, Communications and Campaigns Coordinator

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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 India**

Plan International is an international development and humanitarian NGO that strives to advance children's rights and equality for girls all over the world. Since 1979, Plan India and its partners have improved the lives of millions of children and young people by enabling them access to protection, quality education and healthcare services, a healthy environment, livelihood opportunities and participation in decisions which affect their lives. Plan India is based in New Delhi.

## 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, India). In order to identify their needs and expectations, we conducted a consultation with girls and young women in three countries<sup>1</sup>, including the Republic of India. **This brief presents the results of the consultation in India, 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 India are addressing gender norms (for 79% of participants), supporting girls and young women's social and economic rights (for 77% of participants) and their participation in decision-making (for 50% of participants).**

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 young people 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.

**“Collecting the voice and opinion of girls and women in influencing the government is the best strategy for the EU.”**

YOUNG WOMAN, INDIA

Young people in India think that the EU can achieve change thanks to its values including gender equality (79% of participants), as well as through its support for and consultations with activists and civil society organisations (52%), and through dialogue with partner governments (44%).

**“I believe the European Union and its Gender Action Plan is very useful for my community which will make many voices heard.”**

YOUNG WOMAN, INDIA

## 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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 INDIA?

In India, a total of 48 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.

Only two 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 INDIA

48 GIRLS AND BOYS



GIRLS AND BOYS COMING FROM RURAL AREAS MADE UP 1/3

OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE CONSULTED



OF THE GIRLS AND BOYS CONSULTED

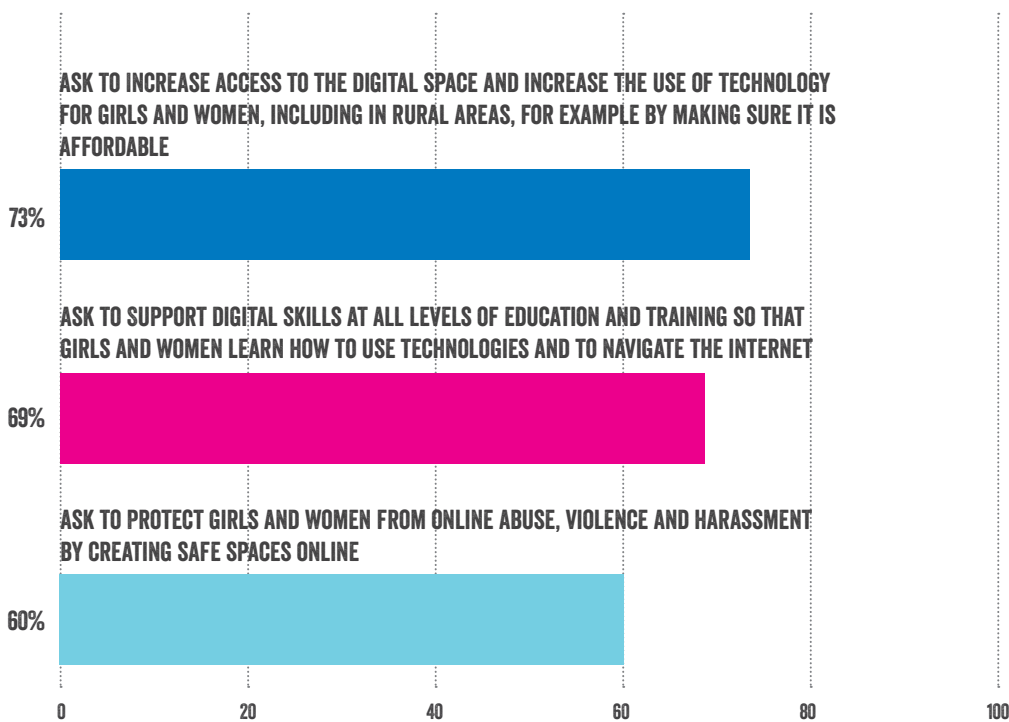
23% DID NOT HAVE ACCESS TO INTERNET

# GIRLS AND DIGITAL

About one in three (35%) young people indicated that the internet plays an important role in girls and young women’s lives, in particular to access information, to communicate with peers and for education. In India, girls’ safety online is an important issue that 29% of young people chose to highlight. Young people also raised access to internet and to devices (smartphones, laptops) as an issue. In fact, 11 of them (6 young people from rural areas and 5 from urban areas) did not have access to internet, or not stable access.

“ There is no availability of mobiles and internet in rural areas and some urban areas too. ” YOUNG WOMAN, INDIA

## TOP 3 PRIORITIES FROM GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN INDIA



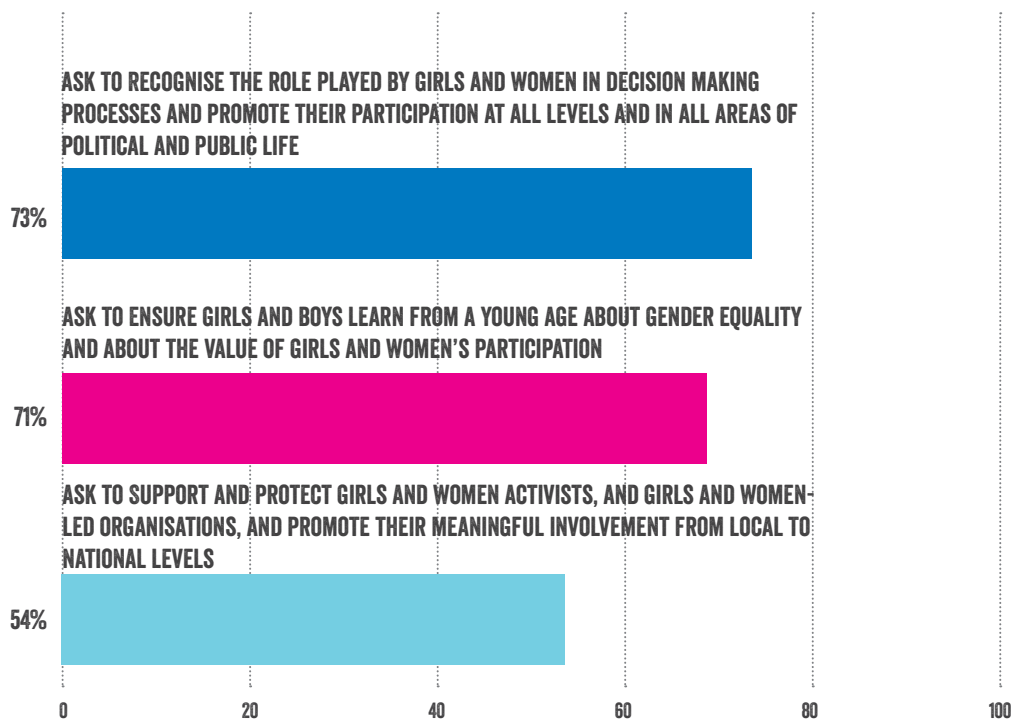
“ I [hear] in some of places especially in rural areas that girls should not use internet and they have to do domestic work. ” YOUNG WOMAN, INDIA

# 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. Girls and young women are powerful actors of positive change. Even though there is growing space for them 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.

81% of young people recognise that girls' participation is a challenge in India, and the biggest barrier is a lack of confidence, with 21% of them feeling that their voice would not be heard or fearing to say the wrong thing. In addition, one out of six young people mention that girls and young women face community and family pressure and cannot always make their voices heard when choosing a school subject or a career (for 19% of them), and when to marry (for 13% of them).

## TOP 3 PRIORITIES FROM GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN INDIA



**“** I think only girls know what they want for themselves...They have to get the chance to ask and express what is good for them and what is not. If we want a positive change from our community or country then we have to give a chance for the young women who can lead a group of girls for improvement of our country. **”**

YOUNG WOMAN, INDIA

# 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 allow them to start a business.

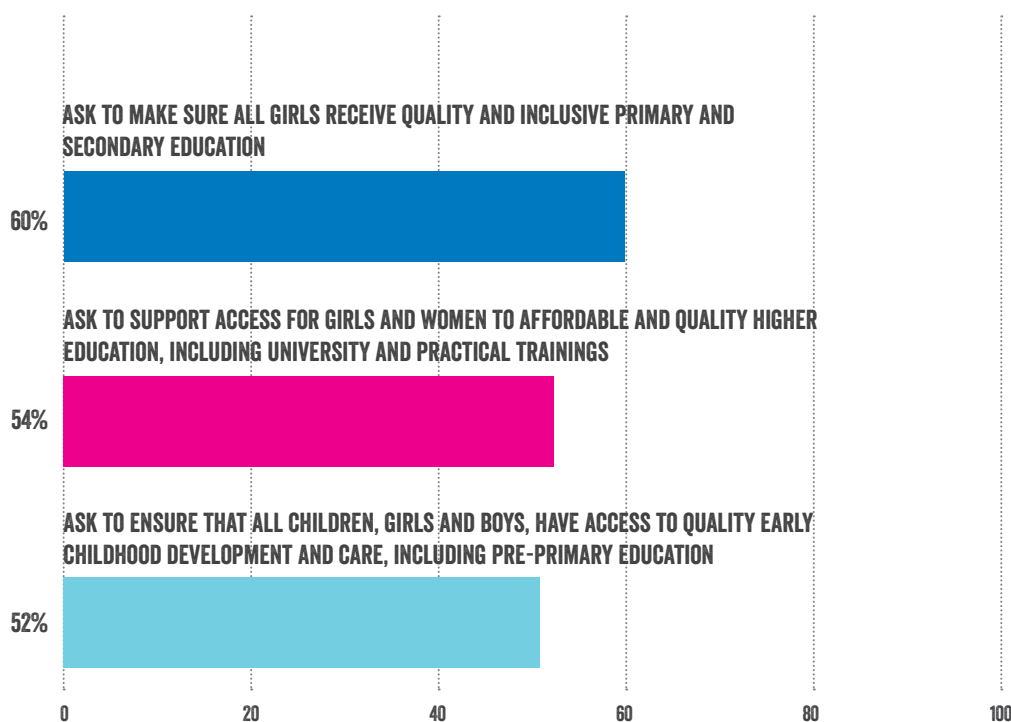
## COVID-19, LIVELIHOODS AND EDUCATION

30% of young people who answered 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 entrepreneurs, opportunities for start-ups, and access to trainings.

With regards to the impact of COVID-19 on education, 31% of young people indicated that their education has been affected, due to delays in exams and graduation, or difficulties in accessing education online. They call on the EU to take action in the sector of education to ensure all girls have access to education online through proper connectivity and platforms.

**“Covid-19 outbreak has shown impact on my studies. People like me has [been] facing problem to accessing online classes. In rural areas there is no proper internet connection. Making internet [accessible] can help me and my community.”** Young woman, India

## TOP 3 PRIORITIES FROM GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN INDIA



The biggest barrier to girls' and young women's education is the lack of support from their family to pursue their studies or a specific field of study. 15% of girls and young women indicated that they were not always able to choose. The second biggest barrier according to 10% of girls and young women is financial. For example, they cannot afford school material such as textbooks, and tuition fees without scholarships.

**“** Lack of quality education and opportunities are making girls and women to stay away from participating in decision making. Improving the quality education to girls, skill trainings and promoting the economic empowerment and sustainability sources for women would result in building the confidence of girls and women to raise their participation in decision making. **”**

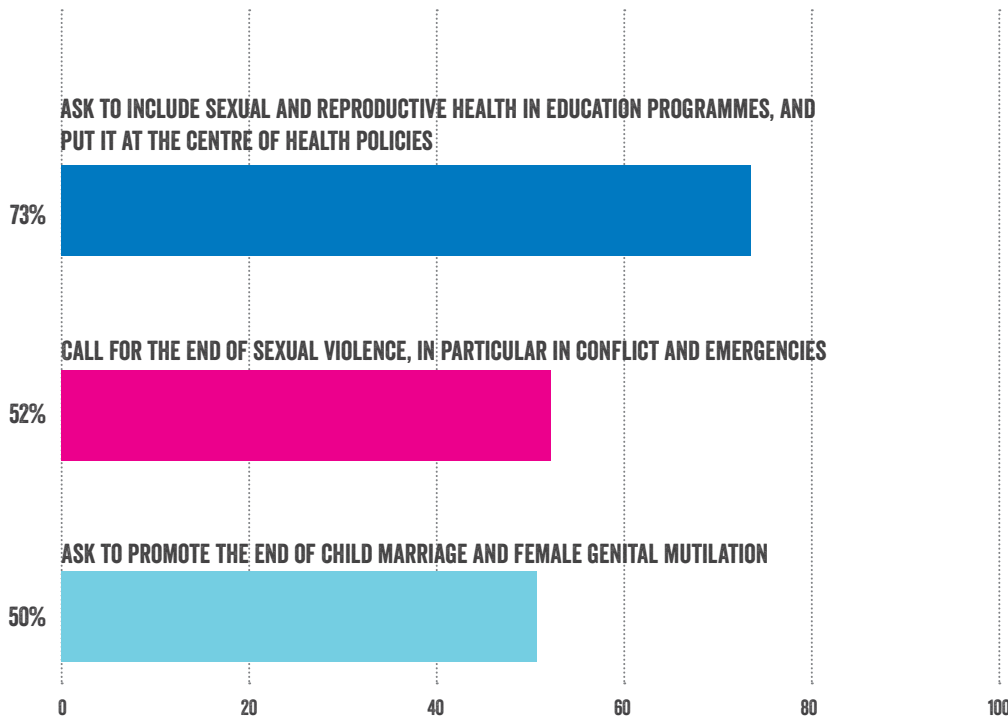
YOUNG WOMAN, INDIA

# 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 reasons<sup>1</sup> we did not ask the young people 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 the importance of learning self-defence, proper legislation and access to justice, as well as the need to include boys and men in discussions.

## TOP 3 PRIORITIES FROM GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN INDIA



“Through work on the prevention of violence, including by addressing inequalities between boys and girls, and involving boys in the discussions about violence girls and women [can] freely work [in] place”

YOUNG WOMAN, INDIA

<sup>1</sup> 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 do/did not live through a crisis or conflict. However, a few of them identified the COVID-19 pandemic as a crisis or referred to their experience of natural disasters.

## TOP 3 PRIORITIES FROM GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN INDIA



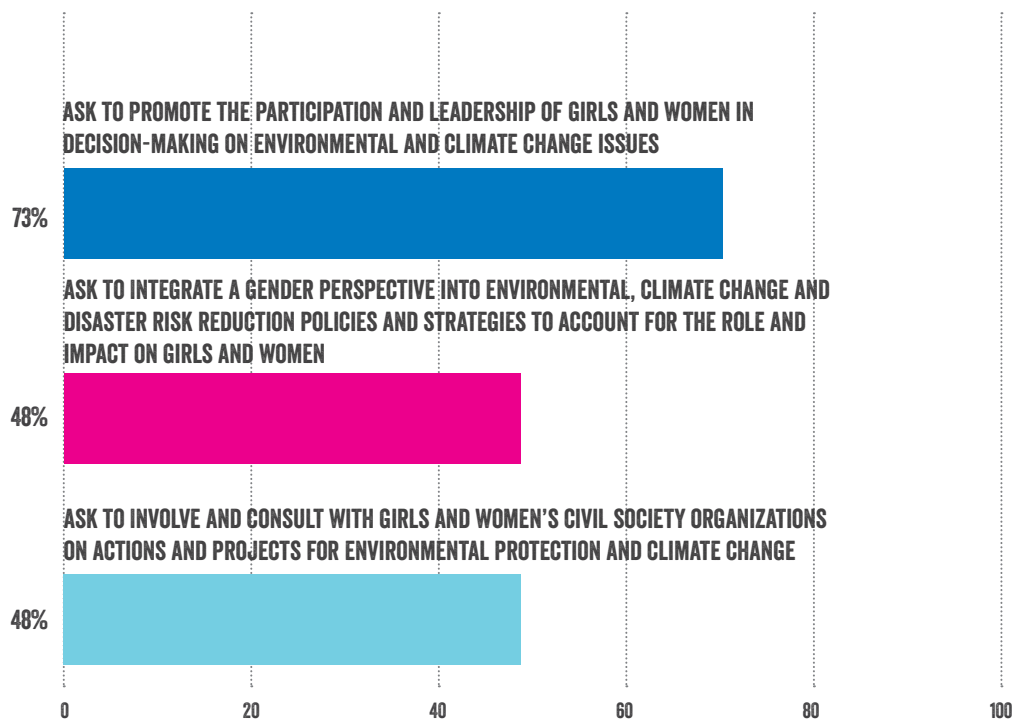
“Improving the digital knowledge and accessibility of girls and women, improving their knowledge on rights and legislations will help them to lead in emergency and conflicts.

” YOUNG WOMAN, INDIA

# GIRLS, CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

94% of young people believe that caring for the environment is important and 33% 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. A few young people mentioned the importance of developing green skills such as organic farming, but the main sectors for action they mentioned are: reducing pollution (21% of them) and fighting deforestation (19% of them).

## TOP 3 PRIORITIES FROM GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN INDIA



“ Yes, I want to take serious action regarding global warming, environment issues. The European Union needs to teach skills of plantation and greenery, pollution control aspects to the volunteers and girls. ”  
YOUNG MAN, INDIA

## CONTACT

**Shalini Prabhata**  
GAA project manager  
Plan International India  
[shalini.prabhata@planindia.org](mailto:shalini.prabhata@planindia.org)

**Alice Rostant**  
Policy and advocacy assistant  
Plan International EU Office  
[alice.rostant@plan-international.org](mailto:alice.rostant@plan-international.org)

**Salomé Guibreteau**  
Policy and advocacy officer  
Plan International EU Office  
[salome.guibreteau@plan-international.org](mailto:salome.guibreteau@plan-international.org)