



FOCUS 'N GE

Plan International Canada | October 29, 2019



A MESSAGE FROM THE GENDER EQUALITY UNIT

Hello colleagues!

Fall is here and so is the 9th edition of **Focus 'n GE** featuring the work done over the past fiscal year by Plan International Canada's **Emergencies & Humanitarian Assistance Unit** in mainstreaming gender across programs. Plan International's Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Global Vision commits that by 2020, all DRM programs will promote gender equality and especially strengthen girls' leadership, and their position in their societies. Plan International Canada's *20 Million Reasons* strategy (2018-2022), echoes this ambition and clearly positions our determination to deliver leading edge, gender-transformative programs that tackle the root causes of gender inequality. Towards that end, this past fiscal year the Emergencies portfolio was prioritized to meet Plan International Canada's gender equality targets ensuring initiatives were integrated into current and new humanitarian projects supported by capacity building activities for the Plan International Canada Emergencies staff, and at several Country Offices in Africa and Asia to push forward the GE envelop within our humanitarian portfolio. Over the last year, significant progress has been made in integrating gender in the emergencies portfolio, however the work isn't done yet. It is only the beginning, but a very promising beginning! Read on to learn of the key GE achievements and lessons learned from the Emergencies & Humanitarian Assistance Unit; and the stories from the field showcasing real change in real lives in the humanitarian context. We have been truly inspired and hope you will be too! So, get yourself a pumpkin spice latte or equivalent and enjoy reading!

The Gender Equality Unit

DID YOU KNOW?

In July 1997 the United Nations Economic Council and Social Council (UNECOSOC) passed a [resolution](#) which stated the United Nations system should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective. Following this, the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, called upon heads of all UN departments and agencies to mainstream gender throughout their entire programs, policies, mechanisms and evaluation techniques. As a result, in November 1998 the Working Group of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) created a Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Assistance to develop these concepts for humanitarian assistance. In May 1999 it released its [policy statement](#) which commits to key action points to ensure that a gender perspective is fully integrated into humanitarian activities and policies. Since then, the Sub-Working Group has released a number of [guidelines and tools](#), including the [Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action](#), to support the advancement of gender equality in humanitarian action, which remains a leading global standard for humanitarian assistance.



VISION BY 2020

“PLAN INTERNATIONAL IS A GLOBAL LEADER AND THE NGO PARTNER OF CHOICE FOR PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND PROTECTING GIRLS’ RIGHTS IN DISASTER AND CONFLICT SETTINGS, WORKING AT THE NEXUS OF DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS.”

– Disaster Risk Management Global Vision 2020, June 2018

IN EMERGENCIES, ISN'T THE QUESTION OF GENDER A LUXURY?

One may think that in emergency situations, the focus should be only on urgent, life-saving responses, such as providing food and shelter, as well as access to clean water, sanitation and health services. Too often, in such circumstances, incorporating gender equality in the response may be considered a “luxury” or something that can be done later on. We argue that one needs to rethink! **Integrating gender equality considerations in all stages and types of humanitarian response is in and of itself lifesaving.**

Women, men, girls and boys in all their diversity, experience the impacts of humanitarian crises such as natural disasters and conflicts differently. Gender inequalities often exist before the onset of any emergency, as no place in the world is free of inequality and exclusion. **Emergency situations can exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities or create new forms of discrimination, especially against women and girls** because emergencies break down protective social norms and increase vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and other human rights violations such as Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM). For example, 1 in 5 refugee or displaced women in humanitarian emergencies experience some form of sexual violence. Estimates vary, but **child early and forced marriage rates among Syrian refugees are four times higher** today than prior to the crisis; underlining that displacement, instability and poverty are driving underage marriages, along with sexual exploitation and abuse.

Pre-existing and intersecting inequalities mean that women and girls are more likely to experience adverse consequences. For example, during the 2005 Asian tsunami, four times as many women died than men in one district in India. The men were away from home for work, and had the physical ability to escape by running, clinging to floating objects and swimming. However, women who were mostly at home with limited survival skills and knowledge to react in an emergency, perished while trying to save their children. There is no dearth of evidence suggesting women and girls invariably deal with more food insecurity and related health challenges such as malnutrition when faced with food scarcity and poverty in a humanitarian situation due to prevailing patriarchal norms and practices.

In armed conflict, although both women and men play roles as combatants, more boys and young men compared to women are at risk of being recruited. Women’s role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding are often overlooked in formal processes based on gender biases and attitudes. By ignoring gender equality in these and other circumstances, we are putting **the most vulnerable more at-risk**, and we jeopardize breaching the humanitarian principle of **Do No Harm**. Furthermore, we also risk undertaking initiatives that are essentially ineffective that can serve to perpetuate existing gender stereotypes and practices.

Adolescent girls and young women are among the most at risk in emergencies; they are vulnerable to CEFM, sexual exploitation and abuse, trafficking and intimate partner violence in the immediate aftermath of disasters, environmental crises and economic shocks. They can experience increased workloads to their existing burden of work when men migrate or are unable to access farming fields due to security risks. They may experience undue restrictions on their mobility or become confined to camps because of security concerns. They become primary or sole caretakers for the young and old. In armed conflicts, they can be systematically targeted with rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence and they are most often excluded from a say in rebuilding and reconstruction efforts.

However, an emergency also provides **opportunities to address pre-existing gender inequalities**. It is appropriate and possible for gender norms to shift during emergencies. Sometimes social upheaval caused by disaster and conflict opens up opportunities for transformative change, enabling women and men to take on more equitable gender roles such as men sharing more domestic chores in the household; women assuming non-traditional economic roles; women assuming more prominent peace-building roles. **Research in 2019** in Pakistan found that displacement of tribal populations with rigid gender norms and practices although proved traumatic and left most IDPs much poorer than before; many women felt that displacement was hugely positive for them in several respects – from domestic violence becoming less acceptable to more girls being educated.

These opportunities during emergency need to be well understood, seized with women and girls in the lead, and the gains made by women and girls supported. Women's and girls' active engagement in shaping humanitarian response is key to ensuring opportunities for progress on gender equality are identified and acted on. Thus, the question of gender being a "luxury" or nice to have in emergencies across the spectrum of responses can no longer apply – not only is it life-saving, but it is the essential building block towards gender equitable rehabilitation and development. And that is our foundational principle in action.



ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN CRISIS RESEARCH SERIES

Recognizing the limited analysis of the diverging needs of adolescent girls in crisis contexts, Plan International commissioned a series of reports. The Adolescent Girls in Crisis series looked at four Contexts:

- [Lake Chad Basin region](#) which is one of the most severe humanitarian emergencies in the world, having displaced more than 2.2 million people, half of whom are children.
- [South Sudan crisis](#) where almost 2 million women and girls are at risk of gender-based violence.
- [Rohingya Crisis](#) where, beginning in August 2017, almost a million Rohingya were forced to flee Myanmar, of which 52% are women and girls.
- [Central Sulawesi](#) where an earthquake and tsunami devastated 4 major districts in the province in September 2018. This report is being finalized.

The reports emphasize the experience, voices, and opportunities of adolescent girls in crisis contexts, and were designed to understand how the humanitarian sector can better listen to, learn from, and partner with adolescent girls. Click the links above to read the individuals reports and learn more.

SO WHAT IS PLAN INTERNATIONAL CANADA DOING TO MAINSTREAM GENDER: A GLIMPSE AT OUR GENDER INTEGRATED EMERGENCIES PROJECTS

Uganda: WASH & Child Protection interventions for South Sudanese refugees in Uganda

Myths and taboo have shrouded the issue of menstrual hygiene management (MHM) amongst South Sudanese refugee and host communities in northern Uganda due to prevailing cultural norms, low understanding of men on MHM and limited abilities of women and girls to access MHM products.

"Perotiapa", that is how menstruation is called in my language. Even publicly mentioning that word alone, you would almost become a social outcast in the community because to talk about it was a taboo," - Ms. Taban Silas, a community member and Village Health Team member in Bidibidi refugee settlement in West Nile, Uganda.

These cultural beliefs and practices regarding menstruation are major factors hindering women and girls from realizing their full potential, exercising their rights and contributing to their lower status in their societies. [48% of the South Sudanese refugees](#) in Bidibidi are girls and women of reproductive age who are estimated to be menstruating, and as a result, on a monthly basis, almost

all of these women and girls may miss out on school, work, fail to go to the market, community centers, access hospitals and many other social services or participate meaningfully and equally in community activities unlike their male counterparts.

"Even if you come to class you cannot concentrate on the lesson because you fear blood will come out on your skirt and boys will laugh at you" stated a 17-year-old girl explaining why it was often better to stay home and miss school during menstruation.

Plan International took a systematic approach to address the stigma surrounding MHM through targeted gender integrated education sessions and community mobilization. The results have been far greater in changing gender norms around MHM than expected. Men who underwent education sessions have become MHM champions in their communities. They are now Plan volunteers and engage fellow men and the entire community through presentations held at community events, door to door visits and dialogue sessions on MHM to create awareness on what menstruation is, good and bad MHM practice and why it matters especially in its impact on the lives of women and girls. These steps taken have collectively contributed to

increased knowledge about menstruation in the community thus debunking many of the taboos and myths that hinder women and girls from managing their periods with safety and dignity; has increased the number of men and boys participating in MHM related activities and supported positive change in community perceptions towards MHM.

“I would like to thank Plan very much for the work they are doing in supporting the community to challenge the negative attitudes that the community has regarding menstruation, a lot has changed ever since we started having these dialogues. The number of men attending has significantly increased meaning the words are starting to enter into their heads and working on their attitudes and perceptions,” says Ms. Lorna, Women’s Representative, Bidibidi refugee settlement, West Nile, Uganda.

Zimbabwe: Trail blazing Gender Transformative approaches in protracted emergency context

For several years, Mutasa district in Northern Zimbabwe has been facing cyclic food insecurity resulting in malnutrition and stunting of children. In addition, people are also experiencing “overlapped dangers” of, among others, high prevalence of HIV and AIDS associated with food insecurity. Among the adolescent and adult population HIV is fuelled by a number of gender related factors including harmful traditional practices such as polygamy, girl pledging and early marriages. Typically, men in these localities would not get engaged in the health and nutrition issues of children and women.

Through a World Food Programme (WFP) nutrition project Plan International raised awareness among women and men on key topics such as frequency of meals, how to use local traditional foods that are highly nutritious for complementary feeding as well as household hygiene and menstrual hygiene management. Leveraging these platforms, the project integrated pilot gender transformative approaches by conducting a gender assessment which explored gender dynamics and social norms and their differential impact on women, men, boys and girls in nutrition. Based on the assessment, the project undertook initiatives to address unequal participation of women in programming activities, increase awareness on key

gender issues, increase women’s decision-making in the production and consumption of food at the household and community levels and improve male engagement in the nutrition of children and all members of the household.

Working with well-known couples in 31 wards of Mutasa District, the project trained them as Gender Equality Champions for involving both partners in challenging prevailing gender norms around household chores, joint decision making in homes and community and equitable relationships. While this was a short project, as a result of gender specific interventions some changes in couple relationships and broader attitudes have been observed including improved couple communication. Gender Equality Champions continue to raise awareness and have become gender equality advocates in their communities.

“I am not a renowned man in this district neither do I have any tributes to my name but one thing I have managed to do well is to love my family with all my heart. I am not embarrassed to be involved in all the activities that improve the lives of my children and grandchildren. One of the things that gives me joy is attending growth monitoring and collecting the CSB++ (Corn Soya Blend—Super Cereal Plus) for my grandchildren. I have two grandchildren in the stunting prevention programme and I make it a point to support my daughters by escorting them to the food distribution point and helping them carry the porridge because it can be burdensome for them as one of them is lactating and the other is pregnant. Going to the food distribution point with my daughters also gives me an opportunity to bond with them as we discuss various issues to do with life and family. My hope is that other men in our village can emulate me and also support their wives as we strive to build a better community” - Mr. David Mapara, a resident of Mutasa District.

The project has demonstrated that while a lot still needs to be done to transform social and cultural norms that require resources, time and space to shift power dynamics, knowledge levels on gender equality have been enhanced. This means with greater investment, over longer periods of time, programming with targeted action can address the root causes of gender inequality and change the social position of the most vulnerable, even in an ongoing crisis situation.



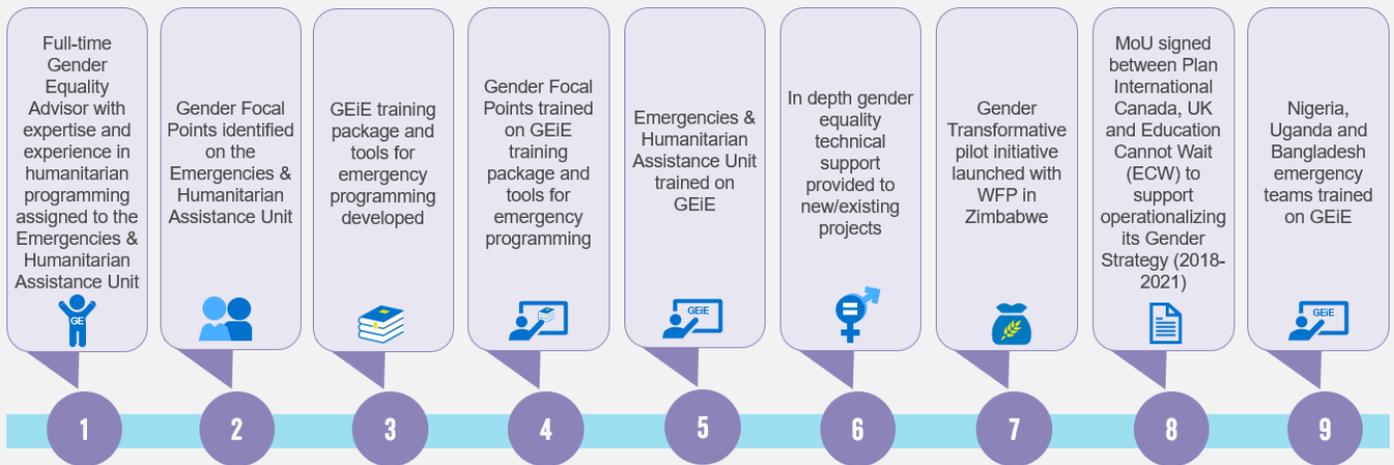
WHAT DID WE ACCOMPLISH? HIGHLIGHTS OF ACHIEVEMENTS

While gender equality has always been a key consideration in Plan International Canada’s humanitarian response programming, the last fiscal year has been pivotal in taking the standards of gender equality integration to higher quality and accountability levels. Taking a targeted and systematic approach to mainstreaming gender the Emergencies & Humanitarian Assistance Unit set an ambitious

set of goals and KPIs to kick off the last fiscal year. These were set as part of a Plan International Canada strategic initiative and as daunting as it seemed, this team did not shy away from the challenge. We’re happy to highlight the following incredible achievements which support delivering quality gender aware and/or transformative humanitarian programs!

GEIE JOURNEY

ACHIEVEMENTS IN PLAN INTERNATIONAL CANADA’S HUMANITARIAN STRATEGIC INITIATIVE



BUILDING GE CAPACITY IN EMERGENCIES SETTINGS

Training Highlight

Over the past fiscal year, Plan International Canada conducted three comprehensive Gender Equality in Emergencies (GEiE) trainings with the Nigeria, Uganda and Bangladesh Country Office emergencies teams in order to strengthen GE work in emergencies and to increasingly work with teams to lay the foundation for gender transformative programming. Featured below is the GEiE training which took place with Plan International Bangladesh’s Cox’s Bazaar team that benefited from the comprehensive Gender in Emergencies training based on the newly final-

ized GEiE guides covering the entire project cycle from gender assessments, proposal design, project implementation and monitoring and evaluation in emergencies.

The training could not have come at a better time: coinciding with the start-up workshop for the Government of Canada IHA-funded project titled *Child Protection for Rohingya Refugees in Cox’s Bazar*, the training provided the opportunity for the team to reflect on the gender-specific needs of the Rohingya refugees living in the world’s largest refugee camp.

In the training, Plan International staff took stock of how the refugee crisis has created new risks and vulnerabilities for the refugee population living in camps and what gender-related implications this has in our emergency response for the 21,000 beneficiaries of the project. The group discussed the GBV risks in this context, analyzing, to the best of their ability, the pre-existing risks before the emergency, during the emergency, and in the humanitarian space now that so many boys and girls, men and women are settled in the camps. This tied into a session analyzing gendered experiences that affect everyone in the emergency, and how this, in turn, affects the quality and reach of Plan's emergency response. Utilizing the Gender Equality DRM guides, the group worked through the project cycle and identified key actions for the project to ensure gender equality is mainstreamed throughout implementation, key risks were identified with mitigation plans and foundational gender transformative activities were laid. A key outcome of the review and utilization of the DRM guides and discussion was the decision to further focus project interventions to ensure the most vulnerable beneficiaries were targeted and were able to benefit from project activities. Research has shown that risks for adolescent girls in the refugee context, in particular, are very high. The majority of female refugees observe *purdah*, to cover oneself before leaving the home. Many families only have one set of clothing that females can use to leave the home, making it extremely difficult for girls, adolescent girls and young women to access services, seek assistance, attend activities, go to school, etc. This has been a major barrier to girls' and women's access to the services provided in the camp that impacts their health and their wellbeing.

Using the DRM guides, the team set practical actions to ensure we reach young girls and boys and adolescents, addressing identified gender barriers, and the team came up with concrete strategies to build the individual and collective agency of young girls and boys, in particular adolescent girls, through increased knowledge and infor-

mation about their rights, gender equality and services available to them and skills and opportunities to make decisions about their lives, to protect themselves and articulate their needs and wants, and to participate in the planning of their future.

As a result of the training, we now have a cohort of gender equality champions who, during the project's start-up workshop, challenged their colleagues to better incorporate gender equality considerations into implementation throughout the lifecycle of the project and now have a strong foundation for gender integrated programming in emergencies.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

- [One in every 70 people](#), the equivalent of more than 131 million people, around the world is caught up in crisis and urgently needs humanitarian assistance and protection.
- More people are being displaced by conflict. The number of forcibly displaced people rose from [59.5 million in 2014 to 68.5 million in 2017](#).
- Disasters and climate change have a high human cost. Disasters affect [350 million people](#) on average each year and cause billions of dollars of damage.
- Food insecurity is rising. In just two years between 2015 and 2017, the number of people experiencing crisis-level food insecurity or worse increased from [80 million to 124 million](#) people.
- The average humanitarian crisis now lasts more than [nine years](#).
- An estimated [1 in 5 refugees or displaced women](#) in complex humanitarian emergencies experience some form of sexual violence - a figure that is likely an underestimation - given the barriers associated with disclosure.
- Pregnancy-related deaths are the [second leading cause of death of women](#) in any context, and 60% happen in a humanitarian setting.
- [More than one-third \(36%\)](#) of children who are out of school globally live in war-affected countries. Adolescent girls in conflict zones are 90% more likely to be out of school when compared to girls in conflict-free countries. Girls are often kept out of school due to concerns about safety.

Conflict and disaster exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities; women and girls are often more likely to experience adverse consequences of crises. But did you notice that most of the data above is not disaggregated by sex, age or other factors of exclusion? Data disaggregation remains one of the biggest gaps and challenges globally. Why? Because undifferentiated data masks gender, age and other factors related gaps and can lead to undifferentiated programming response! Begging the questions: Who are the girls in conflict zones that are more likely to be out of school? Who comprise of the 1 in 5 women experiencing some form of sexual abuse in emergencies? Who is food insecurity affecting more? And so on...

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

As a sector committed to serving those affected by crises, actors have sometimes struggled to define how they can integrate and deliver on commitments to gender equality and inclusion, especially given the complexities of the contexts of humanitarian settings. On May 2nd, 2019 the Canadian Red Cross and Humanitarian Response Network (comprised of over 35 Canadian Humanitarian Organizations, including Plan International Canada) held an event on Gender Equality in Humanitarian Assistance to bring actors together in order to collaborate and share knowledge in order to strengthen their work. To learn more about this event as well the many other initiatives by Canadian humanitarian actors, visit the Canadian Council for International Co-Operation (CCIC) [web-site](#) or reach out to the Plan International Canada Emergencies & Humanitarian Assistance team.

GE AND ECW

Education Cannot Wait: A Strategic Partnership to Enhance Gender Equality in Education in Emergency (EIE) Programming

In 2015 alone, around 39 million girls were out-of-school because of war and disasters. Out-of-school girls are acutely vulnerable to exploitation during crises, and in danger of having their education ended permanently. Yet, funding to education in emergencies stood at only **1.4% in 2015**.

To respond to this unique and urgent need, Education Cannot Wait (ECW) was established in 2016 as the first and only global fund dedicated to supporting education programming in emergencies and protracted crises. Two of Plan International Canada's donors - Dubai Cares and Global Affairs Canada (GAC) - are funders of ECW, GAC being ECW's third largest donor.

With a strategic focus on putting gender equality, women/girls' empowerment and inclusion at the forefront of EIE work, ECW's commitment resonates well with **100 Million Reasons: Plan International's Global Strategy 2017-2022**, hence Plan's engagement in a strategic partnership with the fund. This strategic partnership has materialized through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Plan International Canada, Plan International UK and ECW signed mid-2018 and aims to strengthen gender equality throughout ECW funding windows and programs and advocates for increased EIE funding.

Further to the MoU with ECW, Plan International Canada and Plan International UK have joined the ECW Gender



Task Team (GTT) and co-chair the group along with United Nations Girl's Education Initiative (UNGEI). According to Keren Simons, co-chair and Plan International UK Gender in Emergencies Advisor, "ECW offers significant opportunities for Plan International to realize our mandate on increasing access and quality of gender-responsive EIE for both primary and secondary aged children, as well as a vessel to accelerate policy and advocacy globally."

To date, ECW has funded Plan International in implementing education in emergency projects in at least nine crises-affected countries through the First Emergency Response or The Multi-Year Resilience Programme. Plan International's leadership in gender transformative education programming focusing on the most marginalized groups such as girls was illustrated at the UNGA in September 2019 as the only NGO with a speaking role during a side event which mobilized major donors and governments to contribute to education, including ECW. See [event video](#) featuring our CEO, Caroline Riseboro at the UNGA!

More to come on this unique partnership!

GE UPDATES

- We welcome new members to the dynamic GE team including Khushbu Patel, Ajita Vidyarthi, Melanie Coutu and Alana Livesey!
- As emergencies is our topic this edition, we are looking forward to rolling out three gender transformative Education in Emergencies programs in Burkina Faso, Mali and Nigeria very soon. Stay tuned! These projects follow the historical announcement made by Government of Canada as part of its 2018 G7 Presidency and the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education for Girls, Adolescent Girls and Women. In collaboration with sister NGOs Plan International Canada spearheaded advocacy and engagement efforts with Government of Canada and submitted several inputs reflected in the Declaration for comprehensive, integrated, gender transformative and rights-based education for girls.
- Plan International Canada provided content featured in Promundo's 2019 *State of the World's Fathers' Report* released at the Women Deliver Conference in June 2019. New qualitative data was collected from four of five SHOW countries (Nigeria, Bangladesh, Haiti, Ghana) from men in the project's Fathers' Clubs, their female partners and their adolescent girls and boys. The content explores experiences of and perspectives on changes in fathers' household caregiving as a potential driver for gender equality and intergenerational change. Read the report [here](#).

FEEDBACK AND NEXT BULLETIN

We hope this was useful! But we would love to hear your comments, questions, thoughts and topics that you would like to see in the next **Focus 'n GE!**

Send a line to our amazing Technical Quality Officer, Daniela: DDonia@plancanada.ca