



PLAN INTERNATIONAL  
COVID-19 GLOBAL RESPONSE

AFTER SIX  
MONTHS,  
WHAT NEXT?





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# FOREWORD

The COVID-19 pandemic has had severe primary health impacts on people across the planet since the start of 2020, and associated lockdowns and disruptions have had substantial secondary socio-economic impacts. Through its global response, Plan International has been assessing the extent and severity of those secondary impacts on women and children, especially girls, since March 2020.

Many governments and organisations have focused their responses on disease mitigation and health measures. However, Plan International’s work shows that secondary impacts must receive adequate attention to prevent severe negative long-term repercussions on people’s livelihoods, education, rights and well-being.

While COVID-19 prevention and mitigation efforts save millions of lives, they drastically disrupt many more. Lockdowns and other containment measures have closed schools and caused unemployment, disconnection from social networks and essential services, rises in rates of early marriage and pregnancy, and isolation of children and women with their abusers.

Vulnerable groups such as children, girls and young women, people with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ+ community experience disproportionate

fallout from the pandemic. Historical denial of rights has prevented these groups from having full control over their health, safety, education and overall well-being. Isolation amid economic strife and social restrictions exacerbates this disempowerment.

Governments and humanitarian organisations must not forget the disadvantages these vulnerable groups face during the pandemic. Plan International has been identifying and measuring the needs of disadvantaged people by directly incorporating their voices in the response process through roundtable discussions, forums, community groups and interactive networks.

In collaboration with partner organisations and government entities, Plan International is working tirelessly to provide systems of support and guarantees of inclusion, gender equality and the rights of children—especially girls—in all areas of the response.

Beyond mitigating the disruptions caused by the pandemic and associated restrictions, Plan International aims to build back better. The spotlight this historic moment casts on broken systems provides an opportunity to foster long-needed changes.

# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

APAC	Asia-Pacific
CEFM	child, early and forced marriage
COVID-19	coronavirus disease
GBV	gender-based violence
IEC	information, education and communication
LAC	Latin America and Caribbean
MEESA	Middle East, Eastern and Southern Africa
PPE	personal protective equipment
SRHR	sexual and reproductive health and rights
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WACA	West and Central Africa
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This review marks six months from Plan International's launch of a global response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in March. It reports accomplishments to date and lays out urgent needs remaining. The rate of new cases of COVID-19 continues to climb, reaching a record high the last week of October 2020. Each region faces unique problems in fighting the pandemic and stopping the setback for girls, including pre-existing issues that COVID-19 and concomitant mitigation efforts aggravate.

## LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

### CONTEXT:

- » Leading all regions in COVID-19 cases and deaths
- » Pre-existing issues include significant refugee and migrant populations, weak health services, poor infrastructure, gender inequality and social exclusion

### PRIMARY ACTIONS TAKEN:

- » Promoting active and safe communication and participation of girls, adolescents and women in violence prevention activities in response to the COVID-19 crisis

## THE MIDDLE EAST, EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

### CONTEXT:

- » Experiencing a steady rise in cases and deaths after the lifting of some mitigation measures
- » Food insecurity has doubled in the region during the pandemic, especially affecting girls and women, who constitute about 60% of all chronically hungry people

### PRIMARY ACTIONS TAKEN:

- » Conducting advocacy with partners to assist communities in preparing for, preventing and responding to the impacts of the pandemic as well as ongoing issues in the region

## ASIA-PACIFIC

### CONTEXT:

- » Some countries are experiencing severe COVID-19 outbreaks, while others have the disease largely under control
- » The region has more natural hazards than any other, as well as grave humanitarian crises stemming from ongoing conflict and civil unrest

### PRIMARY ACTIONS TAKEN:

- » Working with governments and other partners to prioritise the needs of girls and women and other vulnerable groups by incorporating their voices into the response

## WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

### CONTEXT:

- » COVID-19 cases are on the rise again after a steady decline
- » The region is experiencing an increase in food insecurity and malnutrition worsened by climate shocks, political tensions and general insecurity

### PRIMARY ACTIONS TAKEN:

- » Conducting rapid gender analysis and roundtable discussions to understand the greatest risks that girls and women face
- » Launching appropriate prevention and response measures

## KEY LEARNINGS FROM THE PAST SIX MONTHS:

- » Violence against children and women has surged in quarantine, necessitating strategies to improve reporting routes, awareness, psychological care and victim services.
- » Safely returning children (especially girls) to school is vital to protecting their immediate and long-term health, as well as their educational opportunities.
- » Girls and women have suffered losses in economic security and social protection during the pandemic, making it crucial to promote initiatives and policies that support their empowerment.
- » Girls are experiencing even greater barriers to essential sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR); services in this area should be a budgeted priority throughout all phases of COVID-19 response.
- » Quarantine escalates prevailing cultural patterns that silence women and disregard their needs, making it imperative to include their voices—and their participation—in the response.

# CONTEXT

## GLOBAL OVERVIEW

Since COVID-19 began spreading around the world at the start of 2020, it has caused over 49 million confirmed cases and claimed more than 1.2 million lives.<sup>1</sup> Although the world has been fighting the pandemic for more than six months, COVID-19 continues to spread swiftly. The highest one-week tally of reported new cases was recorded in November; the first week of that month saw over 3.6 million new cases and 54,000 deaths, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).<sup>2</sup>

The socio-economic effects of the pandemic may become severe long-term problems if not addressed immediately. Mitigation measures such as lockdowns and school closures frequently lead to increased poverty levels due to unemployment, food insecurity, reduced access to health and nutrition services, and heightened risks of various forms of abuse suffered by women and children, particularly girls.

Children, girls and young women, people with disabilities and LGBTQ+ people are at disproportionate risk from these 'shadow pandemics' stemming from COVID-19. School closures alone have affected up to 1.6 billion children and young people.<sup>3</sup> According to a joint analysis by Save the Children and UNICEF, the pandemic has increased the number of children living in multidimensional poverty by 150 million.<sup>4</sup>

As households search for sources of income, girls and women are increasingly burdened with unpaid domestic labour and caregiving, likely causing the first worldwide rise in child labour in 20 years. The economic stress and emotional strain that come with isolation, job loss and economic slowdown also put girls and women at higher risk of suffering gender-based violence (GBV) at home, early pregnancy and child, early and forced marriage (CEFM).

## LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN<sup>5</sup>

Total cases: 20.2 million

Total deaths: 633,700

Case fatality rate: 3.14%

## ASIA-PACIFIC

Total cases: 8.3 million

Total deaths: 132,363

Case fatality rate: 1.59%

## MIDDLE EAST, EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA<sup>6</sup>

Total cases: 403,147

Total deaths: 10,972

Case fatality rate: 2.72%

## WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Total cases: 176,421

Total deaths: 2,830

Case fatality rate: 1.6%

Date of update: 30 October 2020



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## LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region currently leads the four Plan International regions in COVID-19 cases and deaths, accounting for nearly half (43%) of cases and over half (53%) of deaths globally. Over the next 24 months, pending the effective distribution of a safe vaccine, the region will likely experience recurring epidemic waves and outbreaks of COVID-19 interspersed with periods of low-level transmission, according to the Pan American Health Organization.

The pandemic exacerbates pre-existing issues in the region, including substantial refugee and migrant populations, weak health services, poor infrastructure, gender inequality and social exclusion. To support LAC's most vulnerable people and prevent the reversal of progress made in recent decades, Plan International is addressing migrant and refugee populations, child protection, GBV, CEFM and early pregnancies.



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## ASIA-PACIFIC

The countries in the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region, including South-East Asia and the Western Pacific countries, are experiencing mixed effects from the pandemic. Most South-East Asian countries — including Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal and Timor-Leste — have seen an overall gradual decline in cases and deaths since October 2020, with the exception of India, Indonesia and Nepal. Conversely, the Western Pacific countries — including Cambodia, China, Fiji, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, the Solomon Islands and Viet Nam — have been experiencing an overall steady increase in the rate and number of cases and deaths, despite accounting for the smallest number of newly reported cases globally.

The APAC region experiences more natural hazards than any other part of the world as well as grave humanitarian crises stemming from armed conflict and civil unrest.<sup>7</sup> Like those calamities, COVID-19 disproportionately affects girls and women. Plan International engages vulnerable people in decision-making so they can help ensure the pandemic response meets their needs.

1 WHO (2020). *WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard*. Retrieved from: <https://covid19.who.int/>.

2 WHO (2020). *Weekly Epidemiology Update – 10 November 2020*. Retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/weekly-epidemiological-update---10-november-2020>.

3 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2020) *COVID-19 and Children*. Retrieved from: <https://data.unicef.org/covid-19-and-children/>.

4 UNICEF (2020). *Impact of COVID-19 on Multidimensional Child Poverty*. Retrieved from: <https://data.unicef.org/resources/impact-of-covid-19-on-multidimensional-child-poverty/>.

5 Pan American Health Organization (2020). *COVID-19 information system for the region of the Americas*. Retrieved from: <https://paho-covid19-response-who.hub.arcgis.com/>.

6 Africa Union (2020). *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)*. Retrieved from: <https://africacdc.org/covid-19/>.

7 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2020, September). *Asia and the Pacific (ROAP)*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unocha.org/roap>.



## MIDDLE EAST, EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

New COVID-19 cases and deaths are increasing steadily in the Middle East, Eastern and Southern Africa (MEESA) region after a period of decline, partly because mitigation measures have been eased. Across the region, the number of people under threat of starvation has doubled to more than 265 million since the pandemic began.<sup>8</sup> About 60% of all chronically hungry people are girls and women.<sup>9,10</sup> In Africa, more than 26 million girls who once relied on school meals must now look for other sources.<sup>11</sup>

A Plan International and African Child Policy Forum report found that school closures have forced more than 120 million girls across the region to stay home, where they are isolated and potentially susceptible to abuse or peer-to-peer sex.<sup>12</sup> Several countries have reported spikes in teen pregnancies and early marriages that could prevent many girls from returning to school when schools reopen.<sup>13</sup> Plan International is helping communities and vulnerable groups throughout the region to mitigate and respond to the socio-economic effects of the pandemic.

<sup>8</sup> Harvey, F. (2020, April 21). Coronavirus crisis could double number of people suffering acute hunger. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/21/global-hunger-could-be-next-big-impact-of-coronavirus-pandemic>.

<sup>9</sup> The World Food Programme (WFP) (2020). *WFP Gender Policy*. Retrieved from: <https://www.wfp.org/publications/wfp-gender-policy>.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations (2020). *Policy Brief: the Impact of COVID-19 on Children*. Retrieved from: [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/policy\\_brief\\_on\\_covid\\_impact\\_on\\_children\\_16\\_april\\_2020.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/policy_brief_on_covid_impact_on_children_16_april_2020.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> WFP (2020). *Global Monitoring of School Meals During COVID-19 School Closures*. Retrieved from: <https://cdn.wfp.org/2020/school-feeding-map/>.

<sup>12</sup> African Child Policy Forum (2020). *Under Siege: Impact of COVID-19 on Girls in Africa*. Retrieved from: <https://girls.africanchildforum.org/>.

<sup>13</sup> Bhalla, N. (2020). Futures destroyed: COVID-19 unleashes 'shadow pandemics' on Africa's girls. *Thomas Reuters Foundation*. Retrieved from: <https://news.trust.org/item/20200820135640-yl2ii/>.



## WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

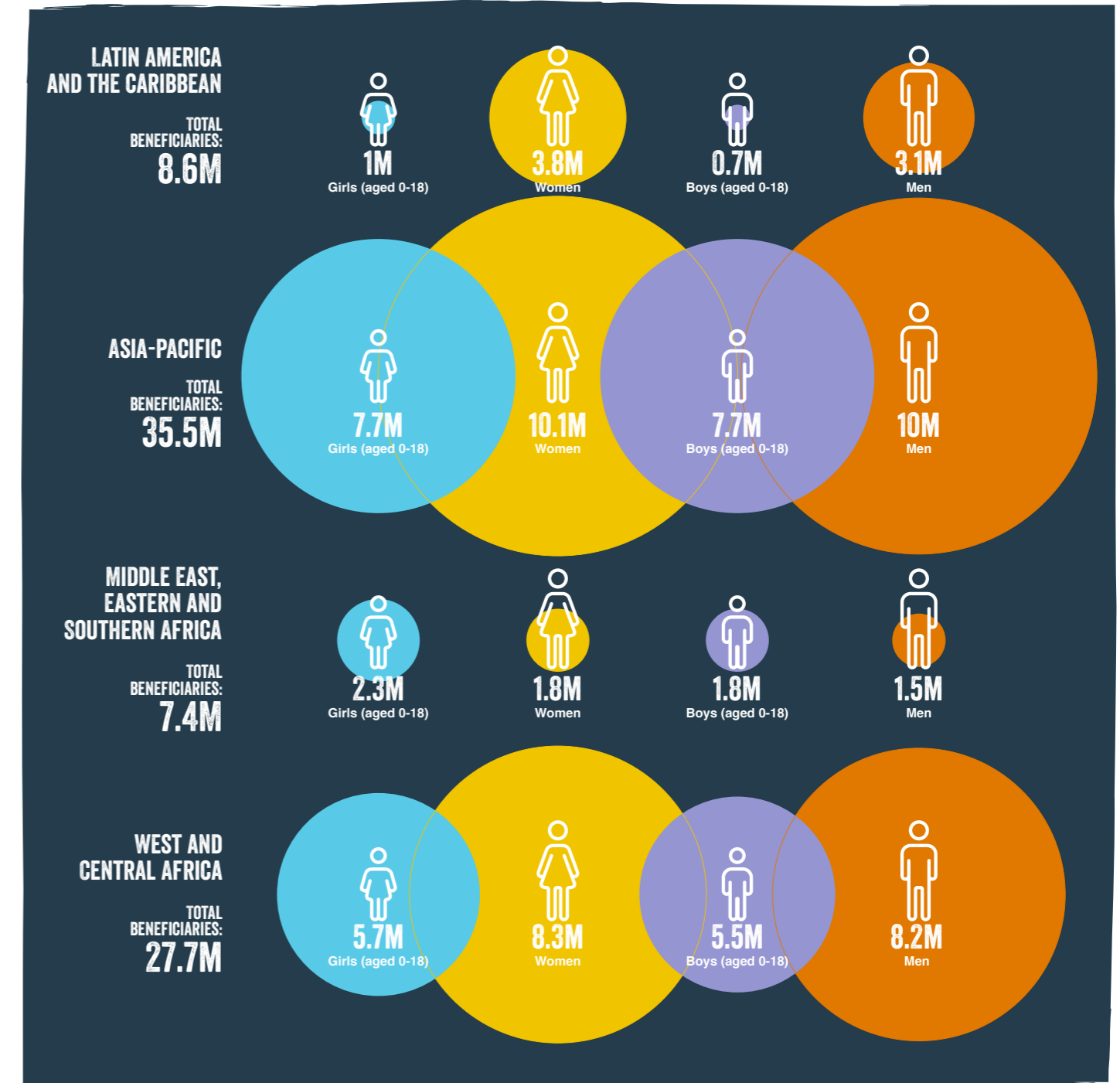
Despite reporting a decline in new cases after mid-July 2020, the West and Central Africa (WACA) region began experiencing a rise in cases in October. The pandemic, along with climate shocks and escalating tensions, has increased food insecurity and malnutrition. The number of food-insecure people in the region has risen by 135% since the pandemic began.<sup>14</sup> The United Nations warns of unprecedented child malnutrition; in the WACA region alone, the United Nations projects 15.4 million cases of acute malnutrition in children under 5 in 2020.<sup>15</sup>

Additionally, rates of GBV in Central Africa have been on the rise since lockdowns began in March 2020. Across WACA, adolescents have lost access to even minimum health services, including prevention and treatment of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, contraception, safe abortion and treatment of severe illnesses such as malaria. Plan International has organised rapid gender analyses and roundtable discussions to assess the risks that girls and women are facing and launch effective prevention and response measures.

<sup>14</sup> WFP (2020). *WFP to Assist Largest Number of Hungry People Ever, as Coronavirus Devastates Poor Nations*. Retrieved from: <https://www.wfp.org/news/world-food-programme-assist-largest-number-hungry-people-ever-coronavirus-devastates-poor>.

<sup>15</sup> WFP (2020). *West and Central Africa: More than 15 Million Expected Cases of Acute Malnutrition in 2020*. Retrieved from: <https://www.wfp.org/news/west-and-central-africa-more-15-million-expected-cases-acute-malnutrition-2020#:~:text=DAKAR%20%E2%80%93%2015.4%20million%20cases%20of,United%20Nations%20World%20Food%20Programme>.

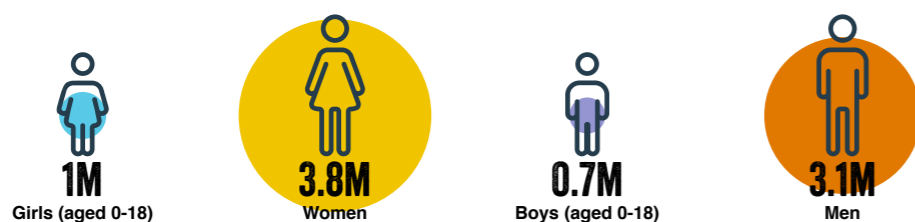
# IMPACT





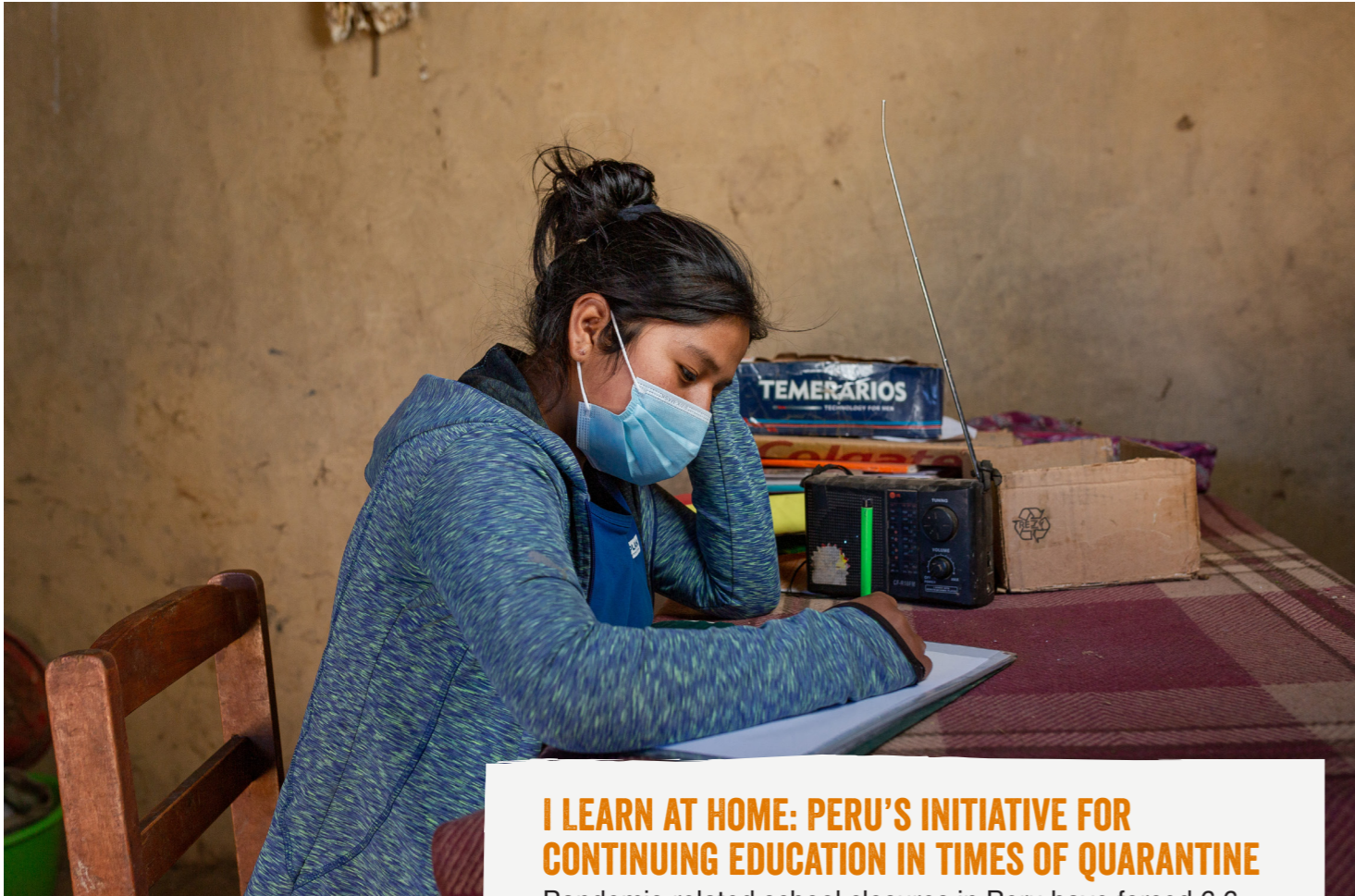
# LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

**TOTAL BENEFICIARIES: 8.6M**



SECTOR	STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED	TOTAL BENEFICIARIES
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	Promote active and safe participation of children, adolescents and young women in violence prevention	34,414
	Strengthening of community-based organisations	12,794
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47,208</b>
CHILD PROTECTION IN EMERGENCY AND GBV	Case management	1,141
	Cash transfer for GBV survivors	969
	Child-friendly spaces	875
	Community-based mechanism for child protection	24,349
	Information, education and communication (IEC) campaign to prevent violence against children	5,205,761
	Monitoring the situation of girls and adolescents in the communities	2,325
	Networking coordination	989
	Playful kits for children	18,175
	Psychosocial support	5,083
	Sensitisation and strengthening of institutional capacities	284,199
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,543,866</b>
EARLY RECOVERY/ LIVELIHOOD	Distribution of seeds and agricultural tools	9,920
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9,920</b>

SECTOR	STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED	TOTAL BENEFICIARIES
EDUCATION IN EMERGENCY	Campaigning for education continuity	11,147
	Unconditional cash transfers for students	96
	Gender and education influencing	777
	IEC campaign on COVID-19 prevention	298
	Influencing with education authorities	219
	Advice to children	11,569
	School kit for home education	1,013
	Training for teachers	337
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25,456</b>
FOOD SECURITY	Cash voucher assistance for food to families	248,882
	Food kit for families	447,641
	IEC campaign	55,344
	Support to the health system for surveillance of acute malnutrition	100
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>751,967</b>
SRHR	IEC campaign on COVID-19 prevention	67,310
	IEC campaign on SRHR	885,345
	Institutional capacity building	436
	Promotion of breastfeeding	474,266
	Provision to health institutions of personal protective equipment (PPE), masks, alcohol etc.	62,566
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,489,923</b>	
WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE	Cash voucher assistance for hygiene kits	2,796
	Hygiene kits for families	771,280
	Hygiene kits for girls	8,133
	Hygiene kits for institutions	222,173
	Hygiene promotion campaign	599,151
	Hygiene promotion in schools	38,356
	Institutional influencing	-
	Water distribution	6,035
	Water supply	17,683
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,665,607</b>
	YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMPLOYABILITY	Cash voucher assistance for entrepreneurship
Training and skills development		94
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>267</b>



### I LEARN AT HOME: PERU'S INITIATIVE FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION IN TIMES OF QUARANTINE

Pandemic-related school closures in Peru have forced 6.6 million schoolchildren to adapt to various remote education strategies. The Government of Peru implemented the national educational strategy *I Learn at Home* to help students across the country continue their studies remotely. However, students in many parts of Peru have limited access to the internet and distance-learning platforms. This limitation affects thousands of girls, including Ruth Nayda and her three younger siblings, who have trouble learning from home because the internet signal in their rural community is very weak.

**'I want to study law to help people who suffer from violence, and especially to help girls, just as they have helped me.'** Ruth Nayda, 16

To help young people like Ruth and her siblings, Plan International Peru is working with the Ministry of Education to strengthen the content and scope of the *I Learn at Home* initiative. Contributions include producing educational radio sessions and donating loudspeakers for the public playing of lessons. The combined efforts of Plan International and the Ministry of Education have reached over 200,000 students in peri-urban and rural areas in Peru who otherwise would have fallen behind.

Figure 1: Ruth in her dining room taking I Learn at Home strategy classes by listening to the radio. Cusco region, Peru. © Plan International / Fiorella Ramos

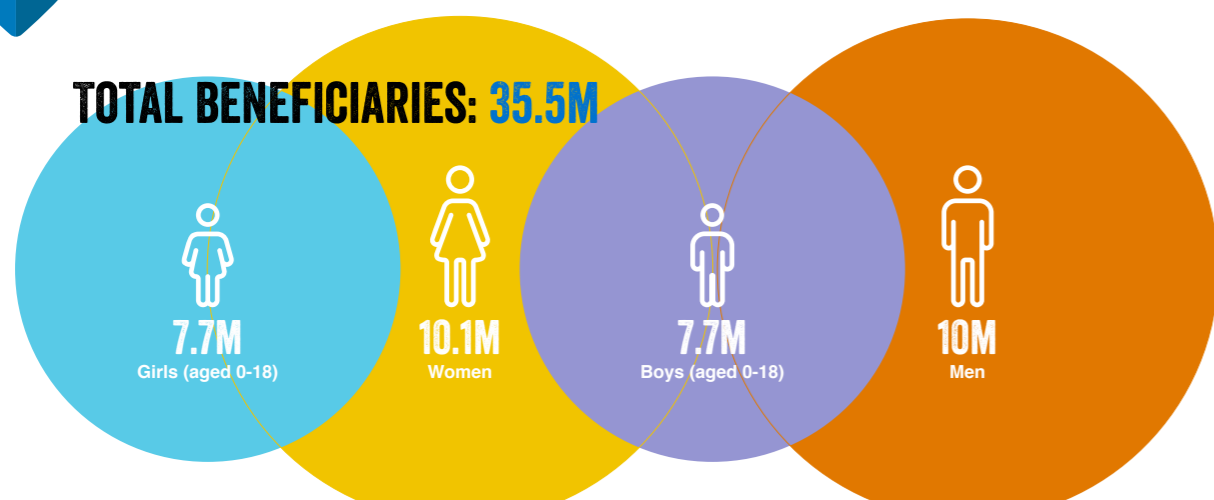


Figure 2: Ruth in a flower garden outside her home. Cusco region, Peru. © Plan International / Fiorella Ramos



Figure 3: Ruth and her younger brother help their mother peel beans in the courtyard of their home. Cusco region, Peru. © Plan International / Fiorella Ramos





RESPONSES PILLAR	CATEGORY	TYPE OF ASSISTANCE / INDICATOR	TOTAL
<b>WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE</b>	PPE	Total number of PPE distributed	1,302,791
	Hygiene supplies (including menstrual hygiene materials)	Total number of hygiene supplies (including menstrual hygiene materials) distributed	2,459,158
	Other materials	Total number of other materials distributed	136,771
	Non-food items	Total number of non-food items distributed	3,898,720
	Handwashing facilities	Total number of handwashing facilities (in households, communities and institutions) built or repaired	1,412
	Sanitation facilities	Total number of sanitation facilities (in households, communities and institutions) built or repaired	235
	COVID-19 awareness and knowledge	Total number of people reached with key messaging promoting COVID-19 prevention hygiene behaviours	6,301,920
<b>HEALTH AND NUTRITION, INCLUDING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES</b>	Healthcare facilities	Total number of primary healthcare facilities that have received essential supports to prevent, control and manage COVID-19	1,109
	Access to food distribution	Total number of vulnerable families that received food rations	106,329

RESPONSES PILLAR	CATEGORY	TYPE OF ASSISTANCE / INDICATOR	TOTAL
<b>CHILD PROTECTION</b>	Children participating in the 'Coping with COVID-19' support programme	Total number of children, adolescents and young people who participated in the 'Coping with COVID-19' support programme	367,262
	Parents participating in 'Coping with COVID-19' support sessions	Total number of parents and caregivers who participated in 'Coping with COVID-19' support sessions	395,558
	IEC materials	Total number of IEC materials produced and distributed	971,480
<b>EDUCATION</b>	Girls and boys engaged in distance-learning programmes	Total number of children who have engaged in distance-learning programmes and informal education provision during school closure and as schools reopen	461,266
	Parents/caregivers who received support to provide nurturing care to their young children	Total number of parents/caregivers who received relevant education and support aimed at strengthening their resilience and ability to provide nurturing care to young children	154,004
	Teachers who have received training to support learning	Total number of teachers who have received training to support learning	7,850
<b>SOCIAL PROTECTION</b>	People who have received assistance in the form of cash and vouchers	Number of people who have received livelihood support (including cash grants, unconditional cash transfers, conditional cash transfers, cash for work and vouchers)	57,431 (254 of which are people with disabilities)



Figure 4: A youth leader stands next to the sun ally symbol from the digital education and protection campaign. © Plan International

## MYANMAR'S DIGITAL EDUCATION AND PROTECTION CAMPAIGN: WHEN THEY GO QUIET, WE GO LOUD

In Myanmar, Plan International partnered with UNICEF to launch a youth-led digital education campaign aiming to encourage young people to protect each other from violence and abuse. Barriers in communities include the normalisation of harmful behaviours so that many people, especially children, do not recognise them as harmful. The innovative campaign to overcome these barriers is spearheaded by 125 young leaders and over 700 of their peers.

The first task of the campaign was to educate young people about child protection issues, including types and signs of abuse and stressors related to COVID-19. Because

young people often feel apprehensive about reporting abuse, the campaign encouraged them to support and protect one another through inspiring community-led action and advocacy. The initiative reached over 4 million people and caused discernible changes in the way they respond to questions about sensitive issues.

**'These issues are big and complicated. They won't go away overnight. That's why we need to start helping each other, starting from our community.'** – July Soe, Myitkyina representative, youth leader



Figure 5: A youth leader delivers protection and health information to his peer group. © Plan International

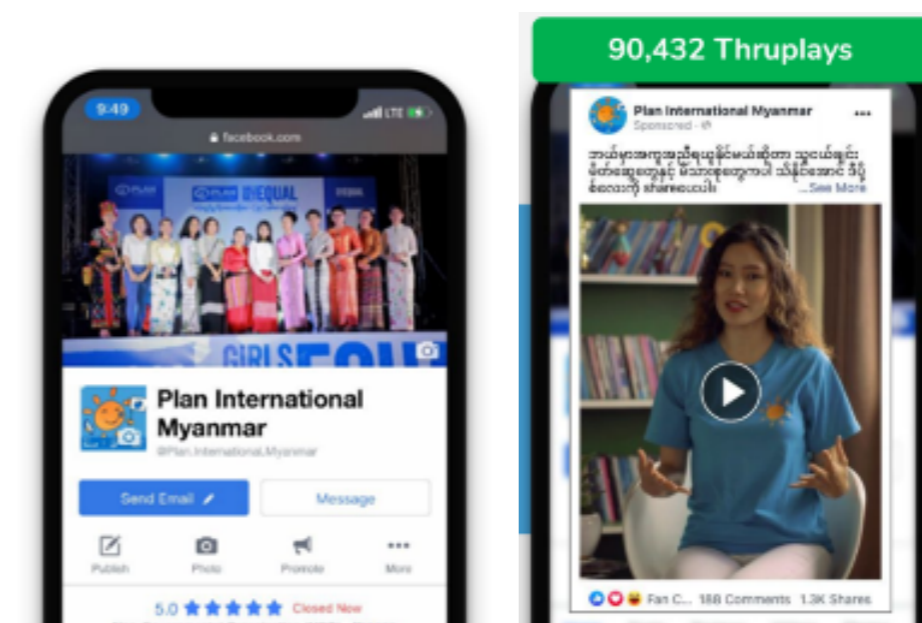


Figure 6: The campaign featured a strong social media element, with assets published on the Plan Myanmar Facebook page and shared by youth leaders. This aspect of the campaign reached over 4.5 million people digitally.



# MIDDLE EAST, EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

**TOTAL BENEFICIARIES: 7.4M**



**2.3M**  
Girls (aged 0-18)



**1.8M**  
Women



**1.8M**  
Boys (aged 0-18)



**1.5M**  
Men

## EAST AFRICA: SHOWERS FOR GIRLS INITIATIVE

For girls and young women living in informal settlements, menstruation is costly. Some cannot afford sanitary pads. In addition, many girls must pay to access showers. Most bathroom facilities in the area charge US 15 cents per use, requiring girls and women to spend about US\$1 a week to use the facilities once a day. Girls with limited means have trouble affording that, causing them additional financial strife.

**'Life was better before COVID-19 because we used to get the essential supplies we needed from our schools, but now we are all at home.'** – Jacinta, 15

Some girls resort to dangerous coping mechanisms such as using unhygienic clothing scraps or obtaining financial help from men. As part of the response to COVID-19, Plan International's *Safe and Inclusive Cities* project has launched the *Showers for Girls* initiative, which pays for girls to access bathroom services in settlements.

**'Plan International's gesture has greatly eased our burden. We are able to use the bathroom more than once a day, and this is a huge relief. My menstrual hygiene was at stake, and this was the case for many other girls.'** – Jacinta, 15

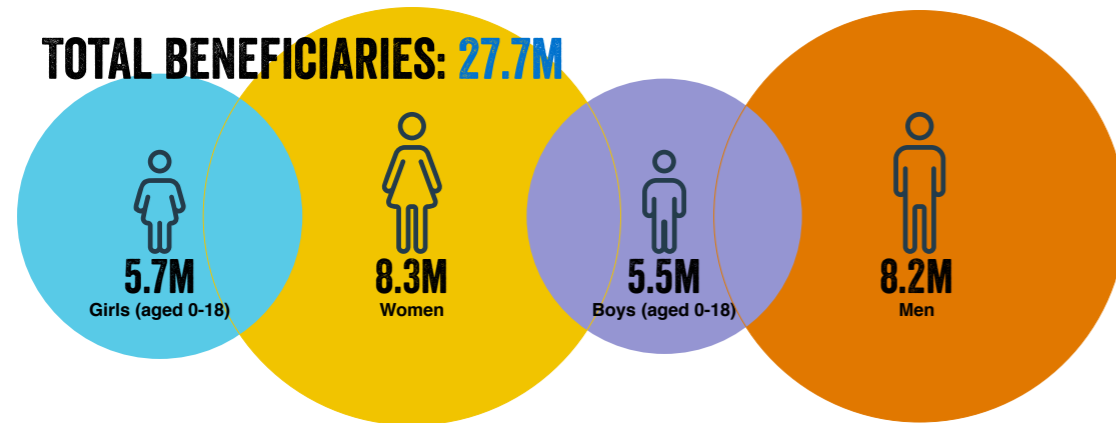


Figure 7: Jacinta, 15, lives in a densely populated informal settlement in Kenya's capital, Nairobi. For her, the challenge of menstrual hygiene management goes beyond accessing sanitary pads. © Plan International



## WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

**TOTAL BENEFICIARIES: 27.7M**



LOCATION	TOTAL BENEFICIARIES	NUMBER OF WOMEN	NUMBER OF MEN	NUMBER OF GIRLS (UNDER 18)	NUMBER OF BOYS (UNDER 18)	PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
BENIN	622,180	143,644	165,338	141,673	171,525	0
BURKINA FASO	592,593	208,013	132,607	117,548	134,425	393
CAMEROON	1,025,611	436,018	289,658	186,141	113,794	3,813
CAR	635,017	170,848	164,159	151,590	148,420	95,256
GHANA	2,382,896	1,079,042	1,000,247	161,122	142,485	27
GUINEA	3,997,477	1,034,255	916,121	1,043,461	1,003,640	175
GUINEA BISSAU	820,254	191,044	182,647	229,013	217,550	
LIBERIA	7,796	1,322	1,370	2,542	2,562	300
MALI	163,226	58,642	59,630	21,257	23,697	5,477
NIGER	1,311,245	333,863	268,169	377,410	331,803	21
NIGERIA	10,243,995	2,609,548	3,616,139	2,013,329	2,004,979	
SENEGAL	3,119,797	1,069,404	786,664	654,593	609,136	
SIERRA LEONE	213,286	45,419	44,717	64,973	58,177	425
TOGO	2,553,653	955,325	589,643	534,848	473,837	66
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27,689,026</b>	<b>8,336,387</b>	<b>8,217,109</b>	<b>5,699,500</b>	<b>5,436,030</b>	<b>105,953</b>



### SENEGAL: KHADYJA AICHA AND THE GIRLS OUT LOUD PLATFORM

When the pandemic began, residents of a community in Senegal showed reluctance to adopt prevention and mitigation measures. Twenty-three-year-old Khadyja Aicha, a student in her last year at college, dedicated her daily routine to creating awareness-raising messages that she disseminates through social networks.

**'We can help our communities stop the spread of this virus. We are able to do it—we have the tools, we have the will!' – Khadyja Aicha, a student in Senegal**

An active member of the Girls Out Loud platform of Plan International Senegal and a volunteer at the Ado-Jeunes centre, Khadyja Aicha is eager to take action and make a difference. Through images and video displays, she has encouraged her community to adopt handwashing and other protection measures and to protect girls from all forms of violence.

**'My main weapons: my smartphone and my voice.' – Khadyja Aicha, Senegal**

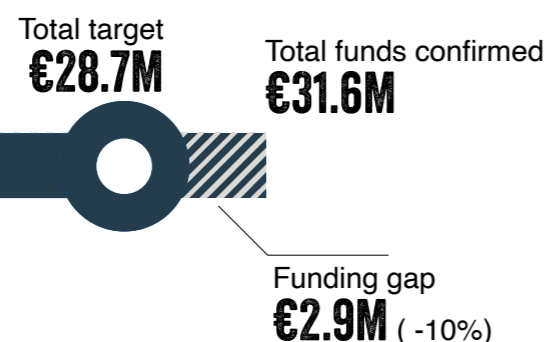
The impact of Khadyja Aicha's actions goes beyond virtual platforms. Because she is appreciated in her community, her district's representative invited her to join the management committee to help ensure that girls and other young people have a say in the pandemic response.

Figure 8: Khadyja, 23 (left), and her youth group demonstrates social distancing in Dakar, Senegal © Plan International

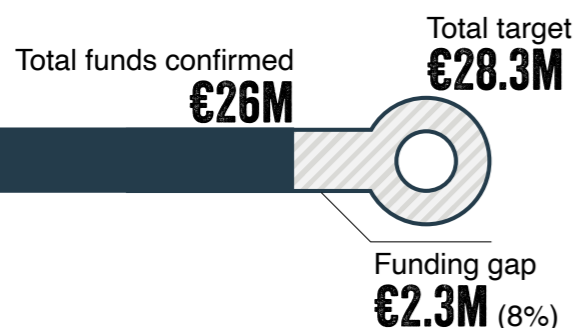
# RESPONSE IN NUMBERS

Each region reacted to the onset of the pandemic by determining how much funding would be needed to respond to anticipated problems. Funding sources include sponsorships, grants and funds redirected from previous services to the more urgent pandemic response.

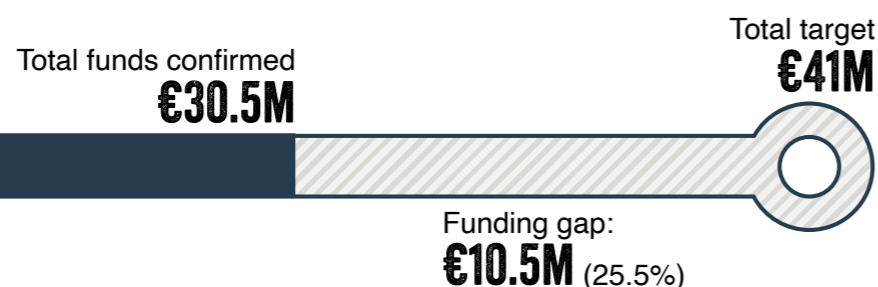
## LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



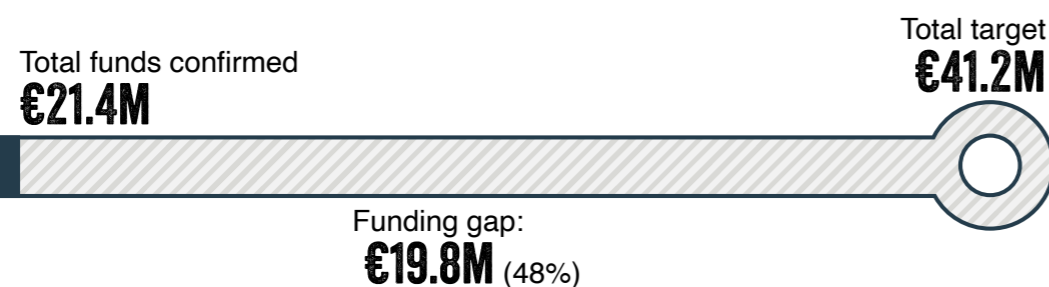
## ASIA-PACIFIC



## MIDDLE EAST, EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA



## WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA



# LEARNINGS

## PROTECT GIRLS FROM VIOLENCE

- » Staying home to avoid infection poses a risk to the health and safety of vulnerable people. Girls and young women experiencing abuse often live with or close to their aggressors, but reporting routes, awareness and psychological care have worsened or even disappeared during quarantine.
- » As the pandemic continues, the long-term well-being of girls and women will largely depend on measures to protect them from violence. Plan International's efforts will include educating parents about sensitive care, educating everyone about types of abuse and how to spot them, making services readily available to victims and making funding for these services a priority.

## PROTECT GIRLS' SRHR

- » SRHR, especially for girls, is a vital area that can determine an adolescent's entire future. Quarantine and business closures have stripped girls of many of the health services, social networks and educational tools that they previously used to maintain control of their bodies and futures.
- » Removing barriers imposed by the pandemic response will require strengthening the capacities of local services for adolescents, educating young people on SRHR and providing information on protection from violence.

## GET GIRLS BACK TO SCHOOL

- » Girls are at a disadvantage both for participating in remote education and returning to schools once they reopen. Increased burdens of unpaid domestic work prevent them from keeping up with their remote studies, and various factors—including early and unintended pregnancy and CEFM—may prevent them from ever continuing their education.
- » Plan International is working to emphasise the importance of girls' education, implement diverse distance-learning strategies, incorporate COVID-19 information into educational materials, train teachers for distance learning, return children safely to school and reduce dropout rates due to the pandemic.

## SUPPORT GIRLS' AGENCY AND VOICE

- » In many countries, prevailing cultural and social norms that grant men decision-making power have pushed many girls and women to assume silent, submissive behaviour during the COVID-19 crisis.
- » Girls and women need support in raising their voices and making their needs clear during the pandemic. Including parents and guardians in open communication will help sensitise them to the needs of girls, and holding roundtable discussions and social networks for girls can help them support each other and speak out to wider audiences.

## STRENGTHEN GIRLS' ECONOMIC SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

- » Before the pandemic, women and girls typically earned less, held more insecure jobs, provided more unpaid labour, had less adequate savings and lived closer to poverty than their male counterparts. The pandemic has worsened these conditions, pushing some women into dangerous, low-paying work that puts them at risk of violence, exploitation, pregnancy and early marriage.
- » Plan International's response aims to support girls' and women's empowerment in their economic security and social protection. Strategies include identifying and developing employment skills for women and youth, working to guarantee young women the right to decent and equal employment, and ensuring women's access to and participation in information and communication technologies.

# URGENT NEXT STEPS

COVID-19 is unravelling decades of progress toward achieving equality for girls; Plan International is working to Stop the Setback and Build Back Better during the response and recovery efforts. The complex interactions between disease prevention and socio-economic fallout require an in-depth, empathetic response that includes a concerted effort to Stop the Setback for those most in need.

**‘As the world rebuilds in the wake of this crisis, do we want to simply return to “normal” or can we create something better, together?’ Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen, Plan International CEO**

All Plan International regions are working under the assumption that the pandemic will continue at least through this fiscal year, which ends on 30 June 2021.

To address major needs and rights violations, Plan International has identified the following priority issues and goals:



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## NEXT STEPS TO STOP GBV AGAINST GIRLS AND ADOLESCENTS

- » LAC wants governments to make gender-specific protection services a priority when allocating resources in their pandemic responses.
- » In line with the thematic policy brief *Because We Matter*,<sup>16</sup> the APAC region is seeking to secure the commitment of regional and national leaders to invest in the protection of girls. All new projects in APAC over the next six months will include initiatives for providing this protection.
- » In MEESA, country offices will work to design programmes to mitigate GBV and prevent teenage pregnancy through the active engagement of children and especially girls.
- » WACA will continue to take a multisector and gender-transformative approach to address the causes of child marriage, model positive gender norms and strengthen community-level child protection mechanisms. This approach includes policy briefs such as *COVID-19 and Child Marriage in West and Central Africa*,<sup>17</sup> evidence-based interventions and the promotion of youth activists in several countries.

<sup>16</sup> <https://plan-international.org/publications/because-we-matter>

<sup>17</sup> Plan International (2020). *COVID-19 and Child Marriage in West and Central Africa*. Retrieved from: <https://plan-international.org/publications/covid-19-child-marriage-west-central-africa>.



## NEXT STEPS TO RETURN GIRLS TO SCHOOL

- » The LAC region is preparing for both the safe reopening of schools and continued school shutdowns through 2021. Both possibilities will require health measures, the implementation of flexible educational processes, dropout prevention, teacher training and efforts to sensitise parents and caregivers to the importance of girls' rights and education.
- » APAC will work with national governments and other partners, such as the Asia-Pacific Coalition for School Safety, the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education and the Norwegian Refugee Council, to promote inclusive back-to-school campaigns and disseminate resources such as *Safe Back to School: A Practitioner's Guide* across the region.<sup>18</sup>
- » As some schools begin reopening in the MEESA region, Plan International will sustain engagement with ministries of education, education sector officials, community leaders, teachers and school staff to promote law reforms that encourage re-enrolment of girls and appropriate health safety measures. For schools remaining closed, the focus will be on continuity and quality of remote and virtual learning through teacher training and student mentor programmes.
- » In WACA, Plan International will support the re-enrolment of girls into the gradually reopening schools through the provision of flexible and accelerated learning opportunities, elimination of school fees and prevention of discrimination based on disability, pregnancy, early marriage or emergency settings.

<sup>18</sup> Global Education Cluster (2020). *Safe Back to School: A Practitioner's Guide*. Retrieved from: <https://educationcluster.app.box.com/v/Safeback2schoolGuide>.



## NEXT STEPS TO STRENGTHEN GIRLS' ECONOMIC SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

- » The LAC region's goal for the next six months is to support initiatives and policies that promote youth employment and entrepreneurship, develop employment skills for young women and encourage women's participation and access to IEC technologies.
- » APAC will continue providing cash voucher assistance with a strong gender focus. It also will continue working with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, United Nations agencies, national governments, civil society organisation partners and other regional bodies to uphold and reinvigorate the monitoring and accountability of the Sustainable Development Goals for adolescent girls.
- » In the MEESA region, Plan International will work to build the economic capacity of youth through training on entrepreneurship skills and business management, as well as support for savings groups. Youth in agribusiness will receive support towards diversifying their livelihood options, while urban areas will receive cash injections to mitigate lockdown effects.
- » WACA continues to work with authorities at local, national and regional levels to implement measures such as cash and other transfers to prevent impoverished families and individuals from resorting to negative coping mechanisms that risk the health and safety of girls and young women.



## NEXT STEPS TO PROTECT THE SRHR OF GIRLS

- » In the coming months, the LAC region will focus on strengthening the capacities of municipal services to provide care for adolescents, raising awareness of the importance of menstrual hygiene, providing menstrual hygiene kits, providing information on protection from—and sources of help for—GBV, strengthening protections for girls and women and reinforcing education on SRHR.
- » In collaboration with regional bodies such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, APAC will continue its efforts to end child marriage despite complications stemming from the pandemic.
- » In partnership with local government entities and the United Nations, Plan International in MEESA is launching initiatives to tackle the growing issues of CEFM, early pregnancies, provision of menstrual sanitary supplies and scarce bathroom access for girls and young women.
- » WACA is working in close collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States to organise a six-month campaign to implement a roadmap to ending CEFM.



## NEXT STEPS TO SUPPORT THE AGENCY AND VOICE OF GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN

- » In the coming months, LAC will focus on virtual training with girls and youth organisations concerning basic rights and activism, risk evaluation and measures to decrease risk online, and assessments of access barriers for girls and youth.
- » APAC will work to ensure that young people continue to have voice and representation in government-led pandemic response by replicating and scaling up Youth Reporter interventions that have been successful in Nepal and the Philippines. The region will also create and leverage online platforms for risk communications and campaign advocacy among adolescents and young people, especially girls and young women.
- » MEESA is engaging youth across the region through the creation of the MEESA Youth Focal Point Network. The Network will motivate and support youth to become conduits of reliable and trustworthy knowledge and information about the pandemic, allowing them to interact directly with experts, reference pathways and safe spaces for help.
- » Through the Youth Challenge Fund initiative, Plan International WACA aims to boost and leverage innovation, creativity, diversity, leadership and youth collective actions to support girls' rights and tackle direct and indirect consequences of the pandemic.



## NEXT STEPS FOR REGION-SPECIFIC CHALLENGES

- » To address the LAC region's forced migration scenarios in Venezuela and the Northern Triangle of Central America, Plan International will incorporate pandemic response into migration response and funding, reinforce work addressing xenophobia and strategically review the balance of migration and non-migration projects.
- » APAC will continue working with country offices, the regional Migrant and Refugee Working Group led by the International Organization for Migration and regional COVID-19 working groups to prevent the transmission of the virus and reduce the social impacts of the pandemic on the most vulnerable communities, especially girls and young women in refugee camps and displaced settings.
- » Plan International in the MEESA region is mobilising resources to respond to issues of food insecurity, internally displaced persons and conflict, with a special focus on the associated impacts on girls and the ways in which COVID-19 exacerbates these issues.
- » The WACA region will continue incorporating gender-responsive strategies into the pandemic response and recovery, ensuring that communities and services can overcome future outbreaks, protect girls' rights, strengthen food security and dedicate special attention to fragile emergency contexts.







## About Plan International

We strive to advance children's rights and equality for girls all over the world. We recognise the power and potential of every single child. But this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination. And it's girls who are most affected. As an independent development and humanitarian organisation, we work alongside children, young people, our supporters and partners to tackle the root causes of the challenges facing girls and all vulnerable children. We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood, and enable children to prepare for and respond to crises and adversity. We drive changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels using our reach, experience and knowledge. For over 80 years we have been building powerful partnerships for children, and we are active in over 75 countries.

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