Ms. Catalina Devandas Aguilar

Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

OHCHR-UNOG

CH-1211 Geneva 10

Switzerland

9 June 2016

**subject: Submission to UN Special Rapporteur on Rights of Persons with Disabilities for UNGA Report on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of girls with disabilities**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Plan International, Inc. is a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 1981 and in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 2011. Founded 80 years ago, Plan International is one of the oldest and largest rights-based children’s development organisations in the world. We strive for a just world that advances children’s rights and equality for girls. Working with children, young people, our supporters and partners in more than 70 countries around the world, we tackle the root causes of inequality faced by children, especially girls. In 2016, Plan International worked with 32.6 million children in 51’860 communities. Plan International is independent, with no religious, political, or governmental affiliations.

We welcome the forthcoming report of the Special Rapporteur on Rights of Persons with Disabilities focusing on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of girls with disabilities. We are confident that this report will enable a better understanding of the related laws, policies, practices for the improvement and realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights of girls with disabilities. **In response to the call for input by the Special Rapporteur, Plan International would like to share a number of publications that address, relate, and touch upon issues specific to girls with disabilities and their realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights**, which we believe could inform the preparations of the report.

Plan International works to ensure children and young people are aware of their rights and encourage them to engage with decision-makers, monitor children’s rights, and hold government and service providers to account. We focus on reaching vulnerable and excluded children, particularly girls, where their rights are most violated. We work substantially with both girls and boys for gender equality, focusing on impact, consequences and solutions to the issue that affect their lives.

The following is a list of resources that Plan International believes are of relevance on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of girls with disabilities, and that could inform the forthcoming report of the Special Rapporteur:

1. **Plan International Timor Leste and UNFPA,**[***Teenage Pregnancy and Early Marriage***](https://plan-international.org/tpem-report)**, May 2017:** With 19% of girls married before 18 and 24% already with a child by the time they turn 20, the Secretariat of State for Youth and Sports, UNFPA, and Plan International commissioned this study to investigate the decision-making pathways and experiences that lead to teenage pregnancy and early marriage in Timor-Leste, as well as to collect information on possible ways to prevent them. The research clearly shows that teenage pregnancies and early marriage have consequences for many aspects of young people’s lives—their (sexual and reproductive) health, education employment opportunities and overall general well-being. It also describes the stories and pathways of different girls with disabilities, highlighting its added layer of discrimination and stigma to their access to SRHR.
2. **Plan International Norway, *Uncovered realities: Exploring experiences of child marriage among children with disabilities [attached as a separate report]*, January 2017:** The vulnerability of children with disabilities in relation to child marriage is a largely neglected issue, so this research provides valuable insights into how the practice of child marriage affects children with disabilities, including having an impact on their sexual and reproductive health and rights. An important recommendation from the report is to explore the intersection with caste/ethnicity/age, including different forms of disabilities when looking at how child marriage affects children with disabilities.
3. **Plan International and Plan International UK,** [***A time of transition: Adolescents in humanitarian settings***](https://plan-international.org/publications/time-transition-adolescents-humanitarian-settings)***,* October 2016**: Plan International UK and Plan International commissioned this report to clarify and develop a conceptualisation of adolescence during emergencies, and to summarise the data available on adolescents, including those with disabilities, in humanitarian settings. It also addresses the sexual and reproductive health needs of adolescents in such settings. The report further maps out the work Plan International is doing with and for adolescents in humanitarian action, identifies trends in the work of other agencies, and proposes recommendations for Plan International’s future work. The report provides evidence, useful programming tips and key recommendations to strengthen targeting of adolescents during emergencies.
4. **Plan International,** [***Counting the Invisible: Girls’ rights and realities***](https://plan-international.org/because-i-am-a-girl/girls-rights-and-realities)**, 2016:** In 2016, in an effort to further the global understanding of adolescent girls’ rights, Plan International commissioned and undertook a three-country study (in Nicaragua, Zimbabwe and Pakistan) on a set of themes related to the SDGs. These themes, which can offer insight into advancing the rights of adolescent girls, included: girls’ enabling environment, care and domestic work in the home, education quality and value, early pregnancy, child and early marriage, violence against girls, safety in public places, social relations, and interpersonal communications. The researchers also interviewed girls with disabilities, reflecting their needs, realities and aspirations. This aim of this research is to understand not only the day-to-day reality for the girls interviewed, but also to gain insight into their thoughts on how things should be. Asked whether they thought they should have more opportunities to get on in life and achieve their life goals, the girls surveyed in all three countries overwhelmingly answered: “yes.”

In addition to the above sexual and reproductive health and rights-relevant reports, we are pleased to share the following reports which specifically reviewed the prevalence of violence against children with disabilities, and their access to education:

1. **Plan International,** [***Protect Us!***](https://plan-international.org/publications/protect-us)***,* June 2016:** Children with disabilities are experiencing extremely high levels of violence, compared to those without disabilities. In fact, 84% of children with disabilities questioned in this research study reported having experienced some form of violence at school in the previous week. The research commissioned by Plan International was carried out in Uganda and Malawi by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.
2. **Plan International,** [***Include Us!***](https://plan-international.org/publications/include-us)***,* December 2013:** This ground breaking report, produced in collaboration with London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, reveals that children with disabilities in developing countries are being held back from an education. Based upon Plan International’s dataset of 1.4 million sponsored children, the report compares sponsored children with a disability to those without, from 30 countries worldwide. The findings are aimed to improve responses to the needs of children with disabilities, particularly their health and education.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any further information.

Sincerely,



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