Response to Senate inquiry into the human rights issues confronting women and girls in the Indian Ocean – Asia Pacific Region.

Plan International

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Introduction

Plan International Australia (Plan) is pleased to provide this submission in response to the Joint Standing Committee's inquiry in to the human rights of women and girls in the Indo-pacific region. The submission draws on our extensive experience as a child-focussed and girl-focussed international development organisation.

About Plan

Plan International is one of the world's oldest and largest children's development organisations. We work in 50 developing countries globally, including Asia, South East Asia and the Pacific. Plan is independent, with no religious affiliation.

Since 2007, Plan has produced a global annual report entitled *Because I am a Girl* that maps the state of the world's girls with a particular focus on their needs and rights. The reports provide the evidence, including the voices of girls themselves as to why they need to be treated differently from boys, men and women so that girls can reach their full potential. The report has looked at a range of topics including economic empowerment, girls in disasters and girls' education. In recent years, girls' education has become a key focus of Plan's development work as a powerful means of addressing disadvantage and eliminating child marriage.

Plan's approach to development is rights-based, which means that we use the principles of child rights to plan, manage, implement and monitor programs with a view to improving children's access to their rights and also with the aim of supporting communities to acknowledge and respect children's rights.

Plan's work in the Indo-Pacific

Plan programs in 50 countries around the world. In the Indo-Pacific, Plan International has a number of programs in the following countries:

- Timor Leste
- Cambodia
- Pakistan
- Bangladesh
- Indonesia
- Solomon Islands
- Myanmar
- Sri Lanka
- Nepal
- Vietnam
- Laos
- India
- Philippines
- Papua New Guinea (PNG)
- Tuvalu
- Thailand
- China

Plan's programs cover a range of thematic areas including early childhood care and development (ECCD), education, water sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and youth and women's economic empowerment. Plan International also provides disaster relief in the Pacific through programs which focus on disaster risk reduction and resilience.

Through Plan's development work, we see first-hand the range of human rights that cannot be accessed due to the day to day realities of poverty, exclusion and gender inequality. The non-fulfilment of the right to an adequate standard of living, to healthcare and to protection from harm and abuse affects whole communities. The particular kind of discrimination faced by women and girls means that they often face a double or compounded disadvantage in many of the countries where we work.

As Plan works with the most vulnerable and marginalised, we also see the particular impact that poverty and disadvantage has on children with disabilities who face additional disadvantage and exclusion.

The Right to Education

In this submission, we focus on the right to education for a number of reasons. First, education programs including pre-school and vocational training programs, are an important area of expertise for Plan. Second, through our work we see both the benefits of education and the barriers which girls face completing their schooling. Third, schools and the education system are often one of the locations in a community where the intersections between different human rights become visible, The knock-on effects that being unable to access one particular right has on access to other rights, can be particularly evident in institutional settings such as schools.

We know that education, particularly the completion of a quality secondary education, is a key mechanism for addressing poverty and disadvantage.[1] We also know that poverty, gender discrimination and gender-based violence in and around schools lead to many girls dropping out of school before they have finished their education. The practice of child marriage, itself an abuse of children's rights, contributes to girls dropping out of school early and exposes them to a heightened risk of physical and emotional harm.

This submission also emphasises the rightful place of human rights in the planning and implementation of our overseas aid and development program. Plan believes that a children's rights based approach must be mainstreamed within Australian Aid's sectorial policy and programs in order to help girls reach their full potential. Internationally, Plan calls on Australia to continue to advocate for girls' rights to be prioritised within the post-2015 agenda. In Plan's experience, putting rights at the front and centre of development represents the most effective path to addressing the diverse needs, aspirations and unequal status of girls.

1. Barriers to enhancing human rights

1.1 Education and girls

Boys and girls share a fundamental human right to free, compulsory and quality primary education, and to the progressive availability and accessibility of free pre-primary, secondary and higher education.[2] Governments have a duty to promote, protect and fulfil the rights of all children to education without discrimination or exclusion.[3] As well as being a fundamental right, formal and informal education is an enabling right (meaning that it is instrumental to children claiming other rights like the right to health and to work) and one of the main drivers of economic and social development.

Access to quality education has the potential to dramatically improve women and girls' lives and to increase their capacity to contribute to their local and national economies.[4] Giving girls equal access to school is also crucial to reaching gender equality in the workforce as well as within families and communities. Although there is no simple causal relationship between the level of schooling and labour market outcomes, evidence from many countries suggests that schooling increases an individual's prospects of finding meaningful employment.[5]

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[1] See in general: Plan, 'Because I am a Girl: the state of the world's girls 2012: Learning for life' (2012).

[2] The right to education is enshrined in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 28 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, and Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights, among others.

[3] See CRC art 28.

[4] For example see: World Bank,'Gender at work' (2012).

[5] UNESCO, 'Education for All Global Monitoring Report' (2012), 2.

Women and girls face significantly higher barriers than boys in accessing education. Girls are more likely than boys to drop out of school because of:

- poor quality and gender biased curricula and teaching that excludes and alienates girls;
- poverty;
- violence at school and on the way to school;
- child marriage;
- a lack of gender inclusive facilities (including toilets); and
- the difficult transition from primary to post-primary education;
- limited access to gender transformative Early Childhood Care and Development; and
- deficiencies in measuring and monitoring the progressive fulfilment of girls' right to education.

These gender-based barriers, which are for the most part recognised within prior AusAID development policy,[6] will be discussed in turn below.

1.1.1 Family and community attitudes

In much of the Indo-Pacific families and communities often value boys' education much more highly than girls'. This prejudice usually originates from the widely held and discriminatory belief that the primary role of women is to produce children and care for the household rather than become a skilled worker or leader in the community.[7] For example, in the Highlands Region of PNG, girls are often kept at home and denied the opportunity to attend school since it is assumed that they will become homemakers following marriage at an early age.[8] In other Pacific nations such as Vanuatu, '[m]any families consider that girls will be 'lost' to them by marrying out of the family and therefore are more willing to "invest" in their son's future than their daughter's.'[9]

1.1.2 Poor quality and gender biased curricula and teaching

All girls have a right to a quality education which can help them reach their full potential. Despite more girls participating in primary school than ever before, this seldom leads to girls finding meaningful employment.[10] This is largely because both globally and within the Indo-Pacific, millions of girls leave school without basic

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[6]AusAID, 'Better Education: A policy for Australian Development Assistance in Education' (2007).

[7] Plan, 'A girl's right to say no to marriage: working to end child marriage and keep girls in school' (2013), 25.

[8] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 'Consideraiton of reports submitted by States parties under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: Papua New Guinea' (2009), 66.

[9] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 'Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: Vanuatu' (2005), 89.

[10] Plan International ,Plan, 'Because I am a Girl: the state of the world's girls 2012: Learning for life' (2012), 11, 14.

literacy and numeracy skills.[11]   Education quality often suffers due to severe shortages of teachers, poor training and working conditions.[12]

For girls, the poor quality of education is compounded by teaching practices and curricula informed by discriminatory gender norms.   Throughout the Indo-Pacific, both male and female teachers often play a role in reinforcing negative gender stereotypes in their teaching practices and interactions with students which can lead to girls feeling like they do not belong in school.[13] For example, in-depth analysis of the views of teachers and students in Pakistan, found that female and male teachers accepted and reinforced gender stereotypes and that most were unaware of the concept of gender, or its impact on learning and the school environment.[14] Curricula and school books also play a part in entrenching discriminatory gendered stereotypes such as the need for girls to focus on domestic chores, to be mothers, or to not excel in certain academic subjects.[15] In cultural contexts such as Pakistan, the combination of a lack of female teachers coupled with a fear of male teachers or the belief that it is inappropriate for male teachers to teach female students, also deters girls from going to school.[16]   Schools which expel girls who fall pregnant also act as a barrier to female students' right to education.[17]   This problem is compounded by the lack of practical sexual reproductive health education on offer in Indo-Pacific schools.[18]

Reliance on assessment methods which favour boys also contributes to gaps in learning outcomes, with boys more likely to do well in multiple choice and short answer tests.[19] While research suggests that discussion and collaborative learning are linked to higher achievement, particularly for girls,[20] unfortunately, teacher-led methodologies, still widely used throughout the Indo-Pacific, leave little space in classrooms for collaborative learning.[21] If gender biased teaching and curricula are

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] See in general: Catherine Atthill and Jyotsna Jha, *The gender-responsive school: An action guide* (2009).

[15] Unless teachers themselves have been educated about gender and power issues, they are likely to model behaviour that reflects their own experiences and those of the wider community, which are often deeply unequal and even violent. See in general: Karen Moore Nicola Jones, Eliana Villar-Marquez, 'Painful lessons: The politics of preventing sexual violence and bullying at school' (Plan and Oveseas Development Institute, 2008); Plan, 'Girls' Learning: Investigating the classroom practices that promote girls' learning' (2013).

[16]'Girls Access to and completion of lower secondary education in Pakistan' (Plan International and Royal Tropical Institute, 2011), 35.

[17] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 'Consideraiton of reports submitted by States parties under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: Papua New Guinea' (2009), 66.

[18] See for example: Shamima Ali, 'Expert Paper: Violence against the girl child in the Pacific Islands region' (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2006), 10.

[19] Plan, 'Girls' Learning: Investigating the classroom practices that promote girls' learning' (2013), 1.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

left unchallenged, schools in our region will continue to be just another environment where girls are discriminated against just for being young and female.

1.1.3   Poverty

Girls in the poorest households are at greatest risk of being denied the right to go to school.[22]   Even in countries on track to meet global targets for gender parity in enrolment, 'girls from the poorest, hardest to reach, and most discriminated against communities are still left behind.'[23] In Cambodia, families are more likely to educate their sons than their daughters, who 'face great pressure to drop out of school early to go to work and contribute to their families' incomes.'[24] In Pakistan poor girls living in rural areas are 16 times less likely to be in school than boys from the wealthiest households in urban locations.[25] When poor parents make a decision about which of their children is more likely to gain from education, they will weigh up factors such as a girl's worth as a bride, or the potential contribution to domestic or other labour that would be lost if she were to go to school. These immediate factors often outweigh the chance of the more uncertain and delayed benefits of an education.[26]

School fees represent a further barrier to girls' access to education. In Thailand, for example, the poorest families spend almost 50% of their income on their children's education every year.[27] Given the low value parents often place on girls' education, the odds are stacked against girls from poor households attending school.[28]

1.1.4   Violence at school and on the way to school

It is well recognised that the home is often a site of physical vulnerability for women and girls. However, in its work globally, Plan has developed a strong understanding that women and girls also face a heightened risk of gender-based violence both at school and on the way to school. Within schools, sexual harassment and violence appear to be overwhelmingly carried out against female students by male students and teachers.[29] In Indo-Pacific nations including PNG, Vanuatu, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Nepal,[30] it is not uncommon for male teachers to sexually assault or rape

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[22] Anthony Lake, *UNICEF Executive Director, Anthony Lake, opens the UNGEI global conference on girls' education, Opening Ceremony Remarks by Anthony Lake - DAKAR, Senegal, 17 May 2010* (2010) <http://www.unicef.org/media/media_53665.html> at 21 May 2014

[23] Plan, 'Because I am a Girl: the state of the world's girls 2012: Learning for life' (2012), 36.

[24] Nicole Sayres, *Equal Access to Education for Women in Rural Cambodia* (2011) <http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2011/03/02/equal-access-to-education-for-women-in-rural-cambodia/> at 21 May 2014 .

[25] UNESCO, 'Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011 ' (2011), 13.

[26] Plan International. 'Because I am a Girl: The State of the World's Girls 2009, Girls in the Global Economy: Adding it all Up', (2009), 3.

[27] USAID , 'Financial Issues' Equip. http://www.equip123.net/ webarticles/anmviewer.asp?a=566 (last accessed 24 May 2012).

[28] Plan, 'Because I am a Girl: the state of the world's girls 2012: Learning for life' (2012), 47.

[29] Save the Children Alliance, 'Global Submission by the International Save the Children Alliance to the UN Study on Violence Against Children' (2005).

[30] IRIN, *NEPAL: Risks of child sexual abuse growing* (2008) at 21 May 2014 http://www.irinnews.org/report/76342/nepal-risks-of-child-sexual-abuse-growing; and Save the

female students.[31] In some schools in PNG, girls are also forced to share toilets with boys which leaves them vulnerable to sexual abuse.[32]

Legitimate concerns about safety on the way to, from and at school (including gender-based violence from male students and teachers) often result in girls quitting school early; a study conducted by Action Aid in Bangladesh revealed that almost half of all girls surveyed and three quarters of their parents considered ceasing their education due to concerns about sexual harassment on the way to school.[33] In Pakistan, in research interviews conducted by Plan International, girls highlighted teasing and receiving "bad eyes" going to and from school as a major source of girls' insecurity when traveling between home and school.[34]

UN research also suggests that the further a girl has to travel to get to school, the higher her risk of assault.[35] Travel is likely to be especially risky in conflict or post-conflict contexts and particularly in areas where children need to walk past army checkpoints and are subject to possible attack by military personnel.[36] In Pacific nations such as Vanuatu, where girls usually have to live away from home to attend secondary school, legitimate parental concerns for their safety increases their reluctance to support their female children to continue their education.[37] Sexual abuse is also common when girls leave their family to live with relatives in order to continue their education.[38] In Fiji, for example, 'a survey of children who were living with their extended families while attending school found that, of girls who dropped out of school, 26 percent reported having been sexually abused by male relatives while living away from home.'[39]

Children,'Mapping of Psychosocial Support for Child Sexual Abuse in Four Countries in South and Central Asia' (2003).

[31] UNICEF Papua New Guinea, 'Development Programming and the Well-being of the Girl Child: Report to Accelerate Human Rights-based Approach to Development Programming in Papua New Guinea' (2006), 31.

[32] Ibid.

[33] 'Gendered Violence in Education: Realities for adolescent girls in Bangladesh' (Action Aid Bangladesh, 2007).

[34] Plan International and Royal Tropical Institute, 'Girls Access to and completion of lower secondary education in Pakistan' (2011), 45.

[35] Tassew Woldehanna, Nicola Jones and Bekele Tefera, 'The Invisibility of Children's Paid and Unpaid Work Implications for Ethiopia's national poverty reduction policy' (2008) 15(2) *Childhood* 177.

[36] 'Global Submission by the International Save the Children Alliance to the UN Study on Violence Against Children' (Save the Children Alliance, 2005) cited in: Karen Moore Nicola Jones, Eliana Villar-Marquez, 'Painful lessons: The politics of preventing sexual violence and bullying at school' (Plan and Oveseas Development Institute, 2008); Plan, 'Girls' Learning: Investigating the classroom practices that promote girls' learning' (2013), 9.

[37] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 'Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: Vanuatu' (2005), 89.

[38] Shamima Ali, 'Expert Paper: Violence against the girl child in the Pacific Islands region ' (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2006), 9.

[39] Save the Children, 'The Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse of Children in Fiji: A Situational Analysis' (2004) cited in Shamima Ali, 'Expert Paper: Violence against the girl child in the Pacific Islands region' (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2006), 9.

1.1.5   Gender inclusive facilities

School facilities can also play a major role in impeding or promoting women and girls' participation in education. The availability of hygienic toilets for girls is important – in countries such as PNG the lack of toilets for girls at school deters many from completing their education.[40] UNICEF and the World Bank have both stressed that providing girls-only toilets or additional toilets at school can increase girls' attendance by cutting down the number of days missed due to menstruation.[41] Toilets are clearly vital in making the lives of children in schools more comfortable, and they enable girls to go to school without some measure of shame, or risk to their health.[42]

1.1.6   Additional access issues for girls with disabilities

Challenges faced by girls within the education system on the basis of gender are further exacerbated and compounded by disability. In Cambodia, for example, literacy rates among the disabled population (62.3%) are significantly lower than among the general population (78.3%). This is particularly marked for women with a disability, among whom the literacy rate (51.5%) is far lower than that of women in general (73.1%) and that of men with a disability (70.5%)[43] – reflecting the extent to which disabled women are excluded from educational opportunities by a range of overlapping attitudinal and environmental barriers.[44]

1.1.7   The difficult transition from primary to post-primary education

This 'transition' period from primary to post-primary education often represents a precarious moment in the lives of girls, due to their shift into puberty and into an age where their primary value is often considered to be that of a domestic worker and/or a mother and wife.[45] A lack of support for girls at this stage of their lives results in a widening gap between girls' and boys' participation as they progress through secondary education. For example, research conducted by Plan International in Pakistan demonstrates that while the overall completion rate at primary level is 61% with 71% boys and 51% for girls, only 41% girls enroll in elementary schools as compared to 58% for boys. The situation is worse in rural areas.[46] Similarly, in PNG, education statistics reveal that while a relatively even number of boys and girls

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[40]UNICEF Papua New Guinea, 'Development Programming and the Well-being of the Girl Child: Report to Accelerate Human Rights-based Approach to Development Programming in Papua New Guinea' (2006), 31.

[41] The World Bank, 'Toolkit on Hygiene Sanitation and Water in Schools' (2005).

[42] Plan International,Plan, 'Because I am a Girl: the state of the world's girls 2012: Learning for life' (2012), 74.

[43] Kingdom of Cambodia, 'General Population Census of Cambodia, (2008), Chapter 4.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Plan, 'Because I am a Girl: the state of the world's girls 2012: Learning for life' (2012)

[46]Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 'Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: Vanuatu' (2005) 8. For the situation in Bangladesh see: Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 'Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women:' Bangladesh (2006), 6.

commence secondary school, significantly less girls than boys complete secondary education.[47]

When girls drop out of school in the Indo-Pacific, there is often no second chance for them to go back to school or to engage in vocational training or other forms of informal education.[48] In Cambodia, by the time rural young people reach the 15-24 age bracket, 18.8% of young women have never been to school (compared with 13.8% of young men) and only 17.7% of young women will actually complete lower secondary education (compared with 23.5% of young men).[49]

So, in recent years, while significant advances have been made towards gender parity in primary education enrolment and participation rates in the Indo-Pacific,[50] this progress has often not been replicated for adolescent girls. This slow progress is partly due to domestic and international ODA commitments which fail to recognise adolescent girls as a distinct group with specific needs.[51] For example, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) remain silent on the specific educational needs of adolescent girls,[52] as does current Australian development policy. While in countries where Australia delivers ODA (such as PNG), it has commonly adopted a strategy with the key objective of gender equality in secondary school attendance, Australian ODA strategies have not considered how to respond to the gender-based barriers to education commonly encountered by adolescent girls.[53]

1.1.8   A lack of focus on gender transformative Early Childhood Care and Development

Early childhood (usually defined as the age between birth and eight years old) Care and Development (ECCD) programs represents a missed opportunity for gender transformative education interventions within the Indo-Pacific region. While Plan recognises that Australian Aid has previously funded ECCD projects in East Timor and Uganda amongst other pre-primary programs,[54] Plan believes that, given the

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[47] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women,'Consideraiton of reports submitted by States parties under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: Papua New Guinea' (2009), 17.

[48] For example, see: Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 'Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: Vanuatu' (2005), 90.

[49] Kingdom of Cambodia, 'General Population Census of Cambodia, (2008), Chapter 4.

[50] For example, see: Committee on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 'Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: Indonesia'(2011), 28.

[51] Plan, 'Because I am a Girl: the state of the world's girls 2012: Learning for life' (2012), 14.

[52] In the area of education, MDG 2 is concerned with universal primary education but does not extend to universal access to other levels. While MDG 3 aims to increase the proportion of literate young women and the numbers of women holding seats in national parliaments, it makes no clear commitment to secondary and higher education (without which it is not clear how countries can achieve these aims).

[53] In general see: AusAID, 'Gender Assessment of the Australian Phillipines Aid Program' (2012); AusAID, 'Australian Support for Basic and Secondary Education in Papua New Guinea 2010 - 2015' (2010); AusAID, 'Better Education: A policy for Australian Development Assistance in Education' (2007).

[54] AusAID, 'AusAID-NGO Cooperation Program Agreements: Interim Report' (2013).

gender transformative potential of ECCD (discussed below), these interventions warrant additional support through Australia's ODA program.

ECCD programming involves 'the inter-disciplinary series of mutually reinforcing interventions required to support the child's optimum cognitive, social, emotional, language and physical development.'[55] While program designs vary across NGOs and countries, Plan's usual approach includes four components: parenting education; community managed ECCD centres for early learning; support for smooth transition to primary school; and advocacy, partnerships and collective action to help improve ECCD policy and practice.[56]

ECCD provides a crucial, foundational opportunity for gender transformative programming inclusive of both children and their parents through its capacity to address gender norms and inequality which can benefit girls (and their families) from the beginning of girls' life cycle.[57] Monitoring and evaluation of Plan's gender transformative ECCD programs suggest that they are leading to an improvement in:

- girls' attendance at school;
- awareness among adult women of a range of issues including harmful cultural practices; and
- men's awareness of the importance of their involvement in caring for their children.[58]

1.1.9   Child marriage

Child marriage is a significant barrier to education for many of the 75 million girls globally who do not go to school. Girls already in school are often forced to end their education in preparation for marriage[59] or as soon as they get their first period (due to the fear that they may enter into a relationship with or receive unwanted attention from male classmates or teachers).[60] Once married, child care responsibilities, restricted mobility and pregnancy hamper their ability to return to school.[61] The children of women who marry young are 'also less likely to attain high levels of education, perpetuating cycles of low literacy and limited livelihood opportunities.'[62]

When families struggle to afford the cost of educating their children, Plan's experience is that many parents prioritise their boys' education due to the expectation that their daughter will soon marry.[63] Finally, many schools across the world refuse enrolment of girls and women who are married, pregnant or have

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[55] Di Kilsby, 'Sythesis Report: Research into Gender in ECCD in six countries' (Plan International, 2013), 2.

[56] Ibid, 2.

[57] Ibid, 3.

[58] Ibid, 3.

[59] Plan, 'Breaking Vows: Early and Forced Marriage and Girls' Education' (2011), 10.

[60] Women living under Muslim laws, 'Child, Early and Forced Marriage: A Multi- Country Study: A Submission to the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OCHCR)' (2013), 13.

[61] Saranga Jain and Kathleen Kurz, 'New insights on preventing child marriage' (ICRW, 2007), 8.

[62] IPPF, 'Ending Child Marriage: A guide for global policy action' (2006), 14,

[63] Plan, 'A girl's right to say no to marriage: working to end child marriage and keep girls in school' (2013), 34.

children. As an East Timorese women married at 15 told Plan, "When my family found out that I was pregnant, my uncle, a teacher at my school, asked my parents to take me out of school. If I continued my studies then I would have embarrassed my school."

Quality education, which is relevant to the needs, rights and aspirations of girls, is a critical factor in empowering girls and women to make free choices and decisions about marriage. Education is also instrumental to enabling girls to acquire the skills, knowledge and confidence necessary to protect their sexual and reproductive health and rights, to protect themselves against unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (including HIV), to delay childbearing and to decide on whether, when and how many children they have.[64]

In countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage, '[t]he education a girl receives is the strongest predictor of the age [at which] she will marry.'[65] Women with more education tend to marry at an older age and are less likely to have children while still in their teenage years.[66] ICRW has found that 'girls with no education are three times as likely to marry before 18 as those with secondary or higher education.'[67] Access to primary education can also reduce the likelihood of child marriage. A 2005 UNICEF study of 42 countries, found that women who attended primary school were less likely to marry by 18 than women without any primary education.[68]

Schooling can protect against marriage in several important ways. First, just being at school helps support the perception that a girl is a child and therefore not ready for marriage.[69] Secondly, when girls stay in schools longer, this helps challenge ideas about the normality of child marriage as well as harmful gender beliefs about girls' inferiority to boys. Thirdly, when schools have a gender transformative curriculum, when combined with broader community engagement strategies, this may help girls improve their social networks and improve their ability to negotiate what they want including when and to whom they will marry.[70]

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[64] Sanyukta Mathur, Margaret Greene and Anju Malhotra, 'Too young to wed. The lives rights and health of young married girls' (2003) ; Robert Jensen and Rebecca Thornton, 'Early female marriage in the developing world' (2003) 11(2) *Gender & Development,* 9; UNICEF, 'Early Marriage: A Statistical Exploration' (2005)United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); Saranga Jain and Kathleen Kurz, 'New insights on preventing child marriage' (ICRW, 2007); Saranga Jain and Kathleen Kurz, 'New insights on preventing child marriage' (ICRW, 2007), 9.

[65] ICRW, Education and Child Marriage and Education http://www.icrw.org/files/images/Child-Marriage-Fact-Sheet-Education.pdf at 22 May 2014 citing: Saranga Jain and Kathleen Kurz, 'New insights on preventing child marriage' (ICRW, 2007).

[66] Jeffrey Edmeades and Robin Hayes, 'Improving the Lives of Married Adolescent Girls in Amhara, Ethiopia: A Summary of the Evidence' (ICRW, 2014), 2.

[67] Ibid, 2.

[68] UNICEF, 'Early Marriage: A Statistical Exploration' (2005).

[69] UNFPA, 'Marrying too young: End child marriage' (2012), 51.

[70] UNFPA, 'Marrying too young: End child marriage' (2012), 51; Plan, 'A girl's right to say no to marriage: working to end child marriage and keep girls in school' (2013), 31; and UNFPA, 'Marrying too young: End child marriage' (2012), 51.

1.2 Measuring and monitoring women and girls' right to education

The way in which Australia's ODA program currently sets targets for improvement in women and girls' status and measures progress against these goals restricts the program's capacity to fulfil girls' right to a quality education in the Indo-Pacific. While Australian Aid policy often promotes targets such as an increased number of boys and girls enrolled, the increased retention of boys and girls in school, or a female to male student ratio of 1:1,[71] progress against these measures cannot give a full picture of girls' experiences at school including the gendered challenges they encounter.

Given the barriers to girls' education outlined above, in order to adequately respond to barriers to women and girls' education, DFAT's monitoring and evaluation processes must be capable of measuring indicators such as:

- economic security of families with school age children;
- access to contraception or sexual health information or services;
- personal safety and security of girls and boys both on the way to school and at school;
- working conditions of teachers;
- gender sensitivity of teachers in the classroom;
- incidence of child marriage;
- gender sensitivity and relevance of teaching and learning methods; and
- sex-disaggregated learning achievements and participation of children and parents in education governance and management.

In keeping with a children's rights based approach to development (discussed below under section 1.3.1), these monitoring processes must give boys and girls a genuine opportunity for their views to be heard and to influence decision-making impacting upon their right to education.

1.3 Developing policies and setting targets to improve the human rights of women and girls

Human rights and children's rights have a powerful, yet largely untapped role, to play in empowering women and girls within the Indo-Pacific. This section considers how the absence of a child and women's rights-based approach in development programming, policy and goal-setting represents a barrier to women and girls' social and economic empowerment at both a domestic and international level.

1.3.1 The need for a children's rights based approach

At present, with the exception of the AusAID Child Protection Policy,[72] children's rights appear to play a limited role in directing the sectorial and programmatic focus of DFAT. Adopting a child rights-based approach (CRBA) to DFAT's programming

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[71] AusAID, 'Promoting opportunities for all: Gender equality and women's empowerment' (2011), 19; and AusAID, 'Australian Support for Basic and Secondary Education in Papua New Guinea 2010 - 2015' (2010) 59.
[72] AusAID, 'Child Protection Policy' (2013).

and systems-based interventions is the most effective way to bring about positive and lasting changes for girls in the Indo-Pacific. This is because adopting a CRBA represents a means of responding to the needs, vulnerabilities and aspirations of girls which result from the intersection of their gender and age. The approach also requires explicit engagement with state actors to address state accountability in relation to rights realisation.

Adopting a child-focused approach also makes sense in light of the 'youth bulge' in developing nations in our region. Children between the age of 5 and 14 make up about 20% of the global population.[73] In Indo-Pacific countries such as Timor Leste, Cambodia, PNG, Fiji and Samoa close to half the population is aged under 18.[74] The foundation for an individual's health and productivity is laid during childhood so it is the most crucial time to stop inter-generational poverty to enable children to reach their full potential while at the same time contributing to their country's development and stability.

A CRBA to development work is based on fundamental human rights principles and standards which bind Australia and our neighbours in the Indo-Pacific region. Child rights approaches to development draw upon the following principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (*CRC*):

Accountability	Accountability is the lynchpin of any human rights-based approach.[75] Human rights impose a duty on the State to protect and secure rights for individuals under its jurisdiction for which it is accountable.[76] In the case of children, Article 4 of CRC imposes an obligation on State Parties to 'undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of rights' and commits these States to the progressive realisation of economic, social and cultural rights 'to the maximum extent of their available resources.'[77]
Participation	Participation is another core principle underpinning a CRBA.[78] This principle is modified in the case of children; CRC maintains

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[73] UNICEF, 'State of the World's Children in Numbers: Every Child Counts' (2014).

[74] UNICEF, *At a glance: Timor-Leste* (2014) <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Timorleste_statistics.html> at 21 May 2014 ; UNICEF, *Samoa Statistics* (2014) <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/samoa_statistics.html > at 21 May 2014 ; UNICEF, *Papua New Guinea: At a glance: Statistics* (2014) <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/papuang_statistics.html> at 21 May 2014.

[75] John Tobin, 'Understanding a Rights Based Approach to Matters involving Children: Conceptual Foundations and Strategic Considerations' in Antonella Invernizzi and Jane Williams (eds) *The Human Rights of Children* (1st ed, 2012), 7.

[76] Ibid.

[77] With regard to the concept of 'progressive realisation' under Art 4, see: UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *General Comment 5*, Un Doc CRC/GC/2003/5 (2003).

[78] Tobin argues that the normative basis for this principle can be found in Art 25 of *ICCPR* and is complemented by 'the rights of freedom of expression (Art 19), freedom of association (Art 22) and freedom of peaceful assembly (Art 22)': Tobin, John Tobin, ' Understanding a Rights Based Approach to Matters involving Children:

	that children have the right to be heard in judicial and administrative decision-making processes which affect them and that their views should be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.[79]
Non-discrimination	The principles of non-discrimination and equality before the law 'constitute a basic and general principle relating to the protection of human rights.'[80] In the case of young people, this specifically requires that States Parties 'respect and ensure' that the rights set out in CRC are enjoyed by children without discrimination[81] including on the basis of ethnicity, disability or gender.[82] Where such discrimination persists, this may necessitate affirmative action on the part of the State to eliminate its causes.[83]
Best interests of the child	*CRC*'s keystone provision, article 3, maintains that in all decisions affecting children, a primary consideration is the 'best interests of the child.'[84] When brought to the context of youth justice, the *CRC* Committee holds that the 'best interests' principle requires that traditional punitive goals of criminal justice 'must give way to rehabilitation and restorative justice.'[85]
Survival and development	CRC obliges State Parties to 'ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.'[86]
Respect for parental/guardian duties and	A CRBA also incorporates the core principle that States must uphold the 'responsibilities, rights and duties'[87] of parents and

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Conceptual Foundations and Strategic Considerations' in Antonella Invernizzi and Jane Williams (eds) *The Human Rights of Children* (1st ed, 2012), 9.

[79] Art 12.

[80] John Tobin, ' Understanding a Rights Based Approach to Matters involving Children: Conceptual Foundations and Strategic Considerations' in Antonella Invernizzi and Jane Williams (eds) *The Human Rights of Children* (1st ed, 2012), 8.

[81] Art 2(1).

[82] Art 2(1).

[83] Human Rights Committee, General Comment 18, [10].

[84] This requires that when a decision is made concerning a child, the child's best interests become 'a consideration of first importance amongst other considerations' but do not necessarily trump other factors: Michael Freeman, *Commentary on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 3*, (1st ed., 2007) at 61.

[86] Art 6 (1).

[87] Art 5 *CRC*.

evolving capacities	guardians in the exercise of their care responsibilities for the child'[88] in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.[89]

A CRBA to development means using the principles of child rights to plan, manage, implement and monitor development programs with the overall goal of improving the position of children so that all boys and girls can fully enjoy their rights and live in societies that acknowledge and respect children's rights. Mainstreaming a child rights approach means adopting certain ways of working that are grounded in human rights and child rights principles.

In Plan's view these key processes are:
- facilitating girls' and boys' meaningful participation at every stage of the program cycle;
- working with the most vulnerable children and countering discrimination;
- creating a rights climate through redressing power relations in favor of children and the protection and fulfilment of their rights;
- working and enabling development partner countries to establish protective environments for children; and
- empowering civil society and encouraging community involvement.

1.1.1 Mainstreaming human rights and children's rights in Australia's ODA policy goals
In addition to adopting a CRBA, Australia's ODA program will achieve little if its strategies and goals are not aligned and harmonised with global commitments to end gender inequality and respect, protect and fulfil children's, women's and girls' rights. Accordingly, Plan recommends that the Australian Government align the goals and indicators contained within its ODA agenda with its pre-existing commitment to women's and children's rights and to the post-2015 goals and targets (addressed directly below) which promote these rights.

1.3.2 Mainstreaming human rights in the post-2015 goals and targets
While the MDGs attempted to attach some quantitative targets to address gender inequality, they failed to systematically address the ways in which persistent gender inequality and discrimination hinder progress across all MDG goals and targets and the progressive realisation of women and girls' human rights.

These omissions resulted in significant gaps in the MDG framework, including the failure to take all life stages of boys and girls into account, including adolescence - a crucial stage of development and a time of rapid physical, cognitive, emotional,

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[88] John Tobin, ' Understanding a Rights Based Approach to Matters involving Children: Conceptual Foundations and Strategic Considerations' in Antonella Invernizzi and Jane Williams (eds) *The Human Rights of Children* (1st ed, 2012), 13.
[89] Art 5.

psychological, and social changes (see section 1.1.7 of this submission). As recognised within these submissions, young and adolescent girls often face specific social, legal, political, domestic and economic barriers to the enjoyment of their human rights, simply because they are girls. They are subject to discrimination and gender-based violence and are often denied their sexual and reproductive rights and their right to sexual and reproductive health. This is especially true of girls from the poorest and most marginalised groups, who are at greatest risk.[90]

Consequently, there is a growing international consensus that the post-2015 development agenda should be grounded in existing international commitments to gender equality and the advancement of the human rights of women and girls, in line with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (*CEDAW*), *CRC*, and other fundamental human rights conventions. Embedding a rights-based approach throughout the post-2015 agenda would recognise the responsibility of governments, as primary duty bearers, to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, and the inherent dignity of people as rights-holders. It is essential that any new global development agenda embraces the critical role gender equality can play in poverty reduction and the realisation of human rights for all people.[91]

1.3.3   Australia's role in supporting the Global Partnership for Education

Since 2002, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) has allocated nearly US$3.8 billion to 59 countries in support of education.[92]   According to the GPE, this has helped nearly 22 million more children go to school, increased the global numbers of girls completing primary school from 55 per cent to 72 per cent, and paid for the training of around 300,000 teachers.[93]   Importantly, the GPE estimates that approximately a third of their work is carried out in the Indo-Pacific Region.[94]

In our view, the GPE fosters an inclusive and coordinated approach, bringing together developing country governments with donor country governments, civil society, the teaching profession and the private sector, to pool resources and knowledge in support of education, both globally and nationally. This approach helps support nationally led education plans, with efforts to deliberately prioritise the most marginalised children.[95]

However, with close to US$1.3 billion in grant requests from country partners to support the implementation of their education sector plans in 2013 alone, the GPE is facing higher than expected demand that is far outstripping its supply of funds. As

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[90] Plan, 'Policy Recommendations for the 58th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women' (2014), 1.
[91] Ibid, 1.
[92] Global Partnership for Education, 'How the Global Partnership for Education Adds Value' (2013).
[93] Ibid.
[94] Alice Albright, Speech given at ACED high-level Education Symposium - 'Transforming Learning Futures' on 21 May 2014, Melbourne, Australia.
[95] Plan, 'Briefing Paper: Financing the right to education' (2014), 3.

well as raising additional resources to meet the existing demand at the June 2014 Replenishment summit, the GPE must raise enough money to be fully funded over the 2015 to 2018 period.[96] Accordingly, Plan calls on the Australian Government to play its part in ensuring that GPE is able to meet its total funding needs of a total of US$4 billion between 2015 and 2018.

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[96] Ibid.

2. Implications for economic and social development in the Indian Ocean - Asia Pacific region of promoting women and girls' human rights

2.1 Economic and social implications of barriers to education

Investing in girl's education makes economic and social sense. A number of studies have shown that increasing the number of girls benefiting from education has a positive effect on a country's per capita economic growth. This is true for both primary and secondary education.[97] Education of women not only benefits national economies but also children, households and communities.[98] Other studies show the vast social, economic and health related advantages of secondary education for girls and women themselves.[99]

Educating girls and young women also has a beneficial effect on alleviating poverty; not only for the girls themselves but for their families, their communities and their countries. Globally, improved girls' education has been linked to improved maternal health, reduced child mortality and improved nutrition within the home. Improved education for girls and women also has the potential to increase a countries' workforce and opportunities for economic growth and so represents one of the most effective tools for development.[100] In India, it is estimated that if the ratio of female to male workers were increased by only 10%, total, per capita output would increase by 8%.[101]

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[97] See in general: Elizabeth M. King and Andrew David Mason, 'Engendering development through gender equality in rights resources and voice. Summary' (2001).

[98] See in general: Mercy Tembon and Lucia Fort, *Girls' education in the 21st century: gender equality, empowerment, and economic growth* (2008).

[99] See in general: Plan, 'Plan Children in Focus. Paying the price: The economic cost of failing to educate girls' (2008); UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2011-Executive Summary: Adolescence an Age of Opportunity* (2011); and UN, 'Millennium Development Goals: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Progress Chart 2010' (2010).

[100] For example see: World Bank,'Gender at work' (2012), 40.

[101] 'Protecting the Future: Keeping girls in school', *Economic Times* (India), 2010*.*

The table below shows the cost to individual countries in the Indo-Pacific of failing to educate girls to the same standard as boys:[102]

Country	% Girls enrolled in upper secondary education	Education gender gap (percentage points)	Total GNI ($million)	Estimated lost growth ($million)
Cambodia	20	11	6,906	**227**
Indonesia	48	3	315,759	**2,841**
Laos	31	12	2,879	**103**
Papua New Guinea	5	2	4,637	**27**
Solomon Islands	13	5	331	**4**
Timor Leste	33	1	865	**2**
Vanuatu	24	17	369	**18**
Nepal	22	4	8,051	**96**
Pakistan	12	10	122,295	**3,668**
Sri Lanka	69	3	25,731	**231**
Afghanistan	4	11	8,092	**267**
Bangladesh	32	3	69,921	**629**
India	40	12	906,537	**32,635**

2.2 Long term workforce implications of inadequate or incomplete education

In Cambodia, low or late enrolment, early school drop-outs and persistent low levels of literacy in remote areas limit young people's opportunities to access further training and skilled jobs. It also means that both women and men are more likely to end up in exploitative work. For women, this can also mean work places that are physically unsafe.

For many rural women, formal paid employment opportunities are limited to unskilled or low skilled work in the garment industry (based primarily in Phnom Penh), piece work in the construction industry, or seasonal work on agricultural plantations. Young women face significant risks through dangerous work, lack of awareness of safety and human rights protections, limited or no opportunities to participate in unions, and exploitation or abuse by male employers; one study in 2007 found that 16% of female employees had been abused or raped by their employer and 31% had never received their salaries.[103]

A growing number of young Cambodians, particularly from rural areas such as Siem Reap that are close to international borders, are now migrating to other provinces or neighbouring countries. Two patterns of migration have been identified: long-term (not seasonal) migration and shorter-term (seasonal) migration, with the latter occurring mainly after the farming seasons (March-May and October-December). For the most part these young people are not equipped to work for high wages due to

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[102] Costs were calculated using Dollar and Gatti's findings, the latest UNESCO figures showing the gap between boys' and girls' secondary schooling: UNESCO, 'Education for All Global Monitoring Report ' (2008).
[103] UN, 'Millennium Development Goals: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Progress Chart 2010' (2010); CAMBOW, 'Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women In Cambodia' (2010), 53.

their poor education and lack of technical skills. Migrating women also face a multitude of challenges, including health issues, forced employment, punishment, murder, pressure to engage in prostitution, trafficking, drug abuse, immigration issues, language barriers, confiscation of documents and dangerous working conditions. Workers who migrate overseas may also encounter difficulties in seeking help from law enforcement agencies and nongovernmental organisations in the countries where they are working.[104]

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[104] Ibid.

3. Achievements to date in advancing women and girls' human rights

3.1 Parity in girls' and boys' school attendance

While within many Indo-pacific nations there has been a movement towards gender parity in primary education enrolment,[105] this does not go far enough. As discussed above, development policies and priorities need to shift to better recognise the barriers to education faced by women and girls, particularly during the transition from primary to post-primary education as well as the necessity for continuous improvement of the quality of education which boys and girls receive.

3.2 Australian Aid's work on gender equality and women's empowerment

Plan recognises Australian Aid's policy initiatives to integrate gender equality measures into its education initiatives in partner countries in the Indo-pacific (such as PNG and the Philippines)[106] including its commitment, in cooperation with development partners, to promote gender equity in education completion rates for boys and girls, education policy and gender inclusive curricula in the Indo-Pacific.[107] Although it is noted that this work has been limited in scope and according to AusAID's Office of Development Effectiveness, has rarely led to significant improvements in practice.[108]

In particular, Plan notes that Australian ODA education policy and strategy to date has not explicitly addressed the following factors:

- key barriers to adolescent girls continuing their education such as violence at or on the way to school or child marriage;
- children's rights-based life skills education for both boys and girls;
- supporting girls' transition from primary to post-primary education; and
- integration of a children's rights-based approach to education premised on boys' and girls' active participation in fulfilling their right to education and setting the education agenda.[109]

3.3 International momentum towards ending child marriage

Plan applauds the Australian government's commitment to addressing violence against women and working towards gender equality in the Post-2015 agenda. In particular Plan commends Senator Michaelia Cash for her commitment (made on behalf of the Australian Government) to ensure that 'gender equality is a cornerstone of the post-2015 agenda, and advances the human rights of women and girls in all

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[105] UNICEF, 'State of the World's Children in Numbers: Every Child Counts' (2014), 54-59.

[106] AusAID, 'Better Education: A policy for Australian Development Assistance in Education' (2007).

[107] AusAID, 'Promoting opportunities for all: Gender equality and women's empowerment' (2011) 43-44 .

[108] AusAID, 'Gender Assessment of the Australian Phillipines Aid Program' (2012), 65.AusAID, 'Australian Support for Basic and Secondary Education in Papua New Guinea 2010 - 2015' (2010), 21-22.

[109] For example see: AusAID, 'Promoting opportunities for all: Gender equality and women's empowerment' (2011).

countries.'[110]   It is Plan's hope that the Australian Government both follows through with this commitment and aligns its ODA program with the realisation of this vision.

3.4 Recognising the role and achievements of international NGOs

International NGOs, such as Plan, are making a real difference to the lives of girls through programs in the Indo-Pacific accredited by the Australian Government under the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).[111]

As recognised in the recent ACFID report *Reach, Relations and Results*, international NGOs have the capacity to dramatically improve girls' lives through gender-transformative education, including by:

- adopting a children's rights based approach which emphasises children's participation in learning;
- reaching previously unreached and isolated geographic locations;
- working across and within in cooperation with the whole education sector but targeting 'the gaps'; and
- building long-term relationships at a community level and empowering civil society in a way which facilitates change at both a community and systemic level through bringing a gender-transformative approach to education.[112]

The capacity of international NGOs to empower girls through education is illustrated below through case studies drawn from Plan's work in the Indo-Pacific.

3.4.1   Cambodia - Plan's 'Empowering Families Project

In Cambodia, Plan's Empowering Families Project works with Parents and other caregivers to strengthen parenting skills, support for education and understanding of child rights and works with schools and provincial education departments to improve the quality and accessibility of local education services and empowering children to participate in child clubs and leadership networks. The project has enabled more children to access education services and improve educational outcomes.

3.4.2   Bangladesh - Non formal education: Pakistan

Plan's non-formal education projects, which sit under its Girl Power Programme, are educating over 11,000 girls aged 10-24 across Pakistan. As part of the project, Plan has set up a series Non-formal Education Centres in various communities that aim to fast-track the girls' education to Grade 10 so they can get a school leaving certificate, as well as receive education on basic life skills such as health and sanitation, as well as sexual and reproductive rights.   Many girls drop out of government schools because of poverty or distance. However Plan's NFE centres are free to attend and close to the communities. The centre even provides a female caretaker to accompany the girls to school to ensure their safety. The NFE centres

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[110] Machaelia Cash, '58th session of CSW: Statement', 2.

[111] ACFID, 'Reach, Relationships, Results: Case studies of NGOs' work in education' (2014).

[112] Ibid.

are also a safe haven for girls who are married at a young age. Rather than being subjected to a life behind closed doors the NFE centres provide a protective environment where girls can access education safely. As of 2012, Plan's NFE centres have educated over 11,000 girls and women across Pakistan.[113] The centres believe that they play an important role in delaying child marriage as well as supporting girls who are already married - in 2012 about 800 married girls attended Plan's NFE centres. One 15 year old NFE student said to Plan, "Education is very important. The teachers at the NFE are good and I enjoy going there. Through education, we can gain awareness and learn the basic skills for life."

4. The effectiveness of Australian Aid programs

Plan would like to make the following recommendations with regard to improving the effectiveness of Australian Aid programs to support efforts to improve the human rights of women and girls in the Indo-Pacific region:

4.1 Education

The Australian government can help women and girls access quality and gender transformative education through ODA by supporting partner governments to:

Bringing a gender inclusive and transformative approach to education
- improve the working conditions of teachers, attain gender parity of qualified teachers, and develop/implement teacher ethics and gender-sensitive codes of conduct;
- ensure that education is inclusive and is grounded in, and promotes, non-discrimination, gender equality and respect for human rights, children's rights (including children's participation in education policy decisions which affect them) and fundamental freedoms;
- ensure that curricula, textbooks and teaching are free from gender-bias and are in fact gender transformative;
- develop mandatory school and teacher codes of conduct that clearly articulate a zero tolerance policy for gender-based violence in schools and actions to be taken if the codes are violated;
- ensure that education includes:
  o quality, practical, comprehensive, age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health content; and
  o rights-based life skills education for both boys and girls which includes modules related to identifying and overcoming gender inequality and practical skills to maintain healthy relationships free from violence.[114]

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[113] Plan, *Pakistani Girls Take a Stand Against Violence, Poverty, and Child Marriage* (2013)
<http://www.planusa.org/contentmgr/showdetails.php/id/3066075> at 21 May 2014.
[114] Judith Mirsky, *Beyond victims and villains: Addressing sexual violence in the education sector* (2003).

Making school a safe place

- prioritise child protection to address the barriers to education by adopting policy targets and implementing systems to end child marriage and gender-based violence;[115]
- train youth leaders and peer educators to tackle school violence, especially empowering children and young people to stand up and report violence;[116]
- ensure that learning environments prevent and respond to all forms of violence against children, including corporal punishment;
- ensure that schools are learner-friendly, gender inclusive, safe (including from natural hazards and conflict), secure and healthy places for all children; and
- introduce mandatory reporting requirements for teachers/school administrators for cases of abuse involving students.

Giving girls a second chance

- Support policies and programs which provide women and girls who have dropped out of school (including due to marriage or pregnancy) with a second chance to recommence their education and get back on track with their peers[117] or to take up informal education opportunities such as vocational training or other forms of economic empowerment.[118]

Improving monitoring and evaluation of the quality of education

- conduct independent, child-inclusive participatory evaluations of learning achievements of boys and girls (producing sex-disaggregated data) and of teaching and curriculum quality.[119]

Reaching the most marginalised

- adopt measures to identify the poorest, most marginalised and excluded children and implement targeted policy measures to remove all barriers to education and reduce inequalities in access, transition and completion of a quality education

4.2 Adopting a children's rights based approach

Plan calls upon the Australian Government to:

- integrate a CRBA into DFAT's strategies, policies and programming and systemic interventions; and
- in furtherance of its commitment to girls' rights in the Indo-Pacific, continue to put its support behind the International Day of the Girl.

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[115] AusAID, 'Better Education: A policy for Australian Development Assistance in Education' (2007), 11.

[116] J. H. Kim et al, 'Unsafe schools: a literature review of school-related gender-based violence in developing countries' (US Agency for International Development, 2003).

[117] Plan, 'Because I am a Girl: the state of the world's girls 2012: Learning for life' (2012), 46.

[118] Ibid, 85.

[119] Plan, 'Girls' Learning: Investigating the classroom practices that promote girls' learning' (2013), 14.

4.3 Setting the Post-2015 Agenda

We encourage Australia to lobby Member States participating in the Post-2015 development agenda process to:

A rights based framework

- ensure the post-2015 development framework is universal, rights-based and people-centred and that it addresses the structural drivers of economic and social inequality and promotes gender equality;
- develop a framework which:
  - o clearly grounds the post-2015 framework in existing human rights principles and standards, and links the framework to existing human rights accountability mechanisms;
  - o empowers all rights holders including women and girls to participate in their own development;
  - o explicitly reflects the rights and needs of adolescent girls in the framework; and
  - o gives equal emphasis to both equality of opportunity and of outcome.

Goals and targets related to women and girls' rights, education and child marriage

- commit to the following goals and targets:
  - o a transformative stand-alone goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the post-2015 development agenda, supported by the mainstreaming of gender equality as a core principle across all other goals.
  - o a stand-alone goal on education within the post-2015 development agenda that, all girls and boys have equal access to, and complete, a quality primary and lower-secondary education in a safe and supportive learning environment that is free from gender-bias, with opportunities for life-long learning with the following targets:
    - **Target 1**: All girls and boys start school on time and ready to learn, with progressive and equitable improvements in the availability of, and access to, quality pre-primary education;
    - **Target 2**: All girls and boys complete a quality primary and lower-secondary education with the requisite knowledge and skills to fully develop and participate in the political, economic and social progress of their societies; and
    - **Target 3**: All girls and boys are supported to transition to secondary education, with progressive and equitable improvements in Secondary Net Enrolment Ratios.
  - o a target on the elimination of all forms of violence against girls and women, including ending harmful practices such as FGM/C and child marriage.

For a full outline on Plan's position on the Post-2015 framework, please see (**Appendix A**).

4.4 Financing education

The Australian government can also help women and girls access quality and gender transformative education through ODA by:

- ensuring that at least 10 per cent of ODA is allocated to basic education in low and middle-income countries;
- playing its part in ensuring that GPE is able to meet its total funding needs of a total of US$4 billion between 2015 and 2018; and
- taking up more of an active role in the partnership.