



**58<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discriminations Against Women**

**HALF-DAY OF GENERAL DISCUSSION ON GIRLS'/WOMEN'S RIGHT TO EDUCATION - 7<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2014**

**Oral Statement by Plan International Inc.**

*Check against delivery*

Thank you Madame Chair.

Plan International commends the CEDAW Committee for the organization of this half-day of general discussion, aimed at initiating global consultations on the drafting of a General Recommendation on Girls/Women's Right to Education, and is extremely proud to see our Global Advisor on Education, Vernor Munoz among the panellists today.

Plan International works for the realisation of children's rights in 50 countries across Africa, Asia and the Americas. We are committed to promoting the right to quality education for all children without discrimination. We also do so through our *Because I Am A Girl Campaign*, which focuses on ensuring all girls are able to realise their right to education in a safe and supportive environment.

Today we would like to draw your attention to an area which we consider to be very important and which we believe is accorded too little attention in the concept note, namely that of early childhood care and education.

With regards to the legal framework, early childhood care and education is referred to in a variety of international and regional human rights instruments.<sup>1</sup>

Plan's experience on the ground has shown that investing in early childhood – defined by the Committee on the Rights of the Child as the period from birth to eight years of age – is of vital

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<sup>1</sup> These are the General Comment 7 to the Convention on the Right of the Child, the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All and the Dakar Framework for Action on Education For All (EFA) - developed at the World Education Forum in 2000 -, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, the African Charter on the Rights and Wellbeing of Children, the Cultural Charter for Africa, the American Convention on Human Rights and the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.



importance, as a critical foundation for realising children's rights and enabling them to reach their full potential.

Hence, we firmly believe in the need to ensure early childhood care and education for all children, especially the most marginalised and excluded, including girls who often suffer discrimination from birth.

There is increased recognition and evidence that children's physical, cognitive and emotional development from birth and during their earliest years is critical in providing the foundation for their future learning, well-being and prosperity. Learning begins at birth and early childhood care and education is crucial to enable children to get the best possible start in life and to enable them to learn and thrive.

Girls who benefit from early childhood care and development programmes are more likely to be healthy and ready to learn, and better equipped to attend and stay in school.

Comprehensive and gender-sensitive early childhood care and education can also build the foundations for gender equality and foster socially inclusive and equitable societies.

We therefore urge the Committee to recognise the importance of timely and comprehensive early childhood care and education from birth to eight years of age and its critical role in enabling the realisation of girls' human rights.

Based on our extensive programmatic experience in the field, Plan International would like to recommend that:

- 1. The CEDAW Committee consider the importance of comprehensive early childhood care and education in its discussions and consultations, in order to provide guidance to States Parties in this area which is critical for the realisation of girls' rights**
- 2. The Committee gives consideration to the beneficial impacts that gender-sensitive early childhood care and education has on both girls and boys, and its importance for the realisation of human rights and in reducing gender-discrimination and inequalities**