

Human Rights Council
16th Session
9 March 2011

Annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child

Joint statement on behalf of Plan International, (and other NGOs including Defence for Children International-DCI) ***on the right of girls living and working on the street to be protected from violence***

Thank you

Girls working and living on the street are one of the most vulnerable groups in any city; less visible than boys, they are most at risk of violence, abuse, exploitation and sexual assault, and the least able to protect themselves.

Girls have the right to protection from violence and abuse. But for girls working and living on the street this right may seem like a distant dream. Adolescent girls in particular experience life on the street differently from their male peers and as they come of age society sexualizes and de-values them which increases the risks they face and increases their vulnerability.

Once on the street, girls experience staggering levels of violence, from assaults by passers-by, abuse through sex work, rape and assault by boyfriends and male street 'brothers', extreme mental and physical cruelty by pimps and drug dealers, to sexual harassment, assault and brutality by police, private security and prison guards.

In spite of the many policies, protocols and awareness campaigns, the scale and severity of violence against girls on the streets, in cities across the globe, remains underestimated by governments, donors and civil society. Plan therefore calls on States to:

- a) Introduce a target on ending violence against women and girls within MDG 3 and ensure adequate resources for this through multi-donor funding.
- b) Take concrete steps to prevent and punish urban violence against women and girls. This will require gender-sensitive social policies in crime prevention and community safety.
- c) Enforce a 'zero tolerance' policy on the use of violence by police against girls who are homeless, girls in slums, and especially street girls. Increase the number of female police officers, especially in units working in poor and slum urban neighbourhoods.
- d) Provide appropriate gender and child rights training for police, law enforcement and the judiciary who deal with street girls.

- e) Provide safe residential spaces, outreach programmes, legal services and help lines for street girls, where they can receive information, support, counselling and training.