

**Eighth Meeting of the Open Working Group on SDGs
Co-Chair's meetings with the Major Groups and other Stakeholders**

**Friday, February 7, 2014: Promoting equality, including social equity,
gender equality and women's empowerment**

Intervention from Margaret Akello - Plan Uganda, Children and Youth MGs



Distinguished co-chairs,

Today I am speaking on behalf of Plan International but more importantly, children, both boys and girls, throughout the world and particularly those growing up in developing countries.

I am here to highlight the detrimental influence that inequalities continue to have on children and the critical importance of comprehensively addressing these inequalities in the post-2015 development framework.

Despite some progress since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, there is evidence that inequalities remain significant and in some cases have been growing.

Tackling inequalities – both of opportunities as well as outcomes – is fundamental to combating poverty and achieving sustainable development for all. Inequality undermines development, stability and prosperity, and harms not only children and their families, but also prevents the sustainable development of whole communities and countries.

Distinguished co-chairs,

Children, especially girls, are affected by poverty and inequality from birth, and its impacts often limit their opportunities for physical and cognitive development during these formative years. These in turn can negatively affect their entire lives and those of their own future children and families.

Besides experiencing age-based discrimination, girls and boys also often face discrimination due to their gender, race, religion, ethnicity, language or disability. Adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence, exploitation and discrimination. These factors often compound to cause multiple cross-cutting forms of exclusion.

In particular, such cross-cutting inequalities negatively affect the ability of children to safely access quality education. A lack of access to education results in limited skills, knowledge and opportunities – all of which trap boys and girls into a lifetime of poverty.

Distinguished co-chairs,

Plan International believes investing in children and their development, protection, empowerment and participation is essential to achieving sustainable development for all.

We urge Member States to agree on a development framework which puts children at its center and more specifically:

- 1) Systematically addresses discrimination, marginalization and inequalities in law, policy and practice;
- 2) Includes universal and zero-based goals that prioritize the most vulnerable and marginalized children, including by ensuring disaggregation of data on all indicators;
- 3) Comprehensively addresses gender inequality in a standalone goal and across all thematic goals; and
- 4) Ensures children and youth are able to meaningfully participate in the design, implementation and monitoring of the new development framework.

I Thank you.