

222 Million Crisis-Affected Children Urgently Need Education Support

Plan International Global CEO Stephen Omollo and Education Cannot Wait Director Yasmine Sherif stress urgent funding need.

DUBLIN, IRELAND, February 3, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In a series of high-level meetings with Seán Fleming, the Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs with special responsibility for International Development and Diaspora and high-level panel discussions held in Dublin today, Plan International CEO Stephen Omollo joined the Director of Education Cannot Wait (ECW), Yasmine Sherif, in urging leaders to increase funding for education in emergencies and make good on promises outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the promise of education for all.



Plan International Global CEO Stephen Omollo and Education Cannot Wait Director Yasmine Sherif

In meetings with government representatives, Omollo and Sherif stressed the importance of Ireland's support at the Education Cannot Wait [High-Level Financing Conference](#), which will be held between 16-17 February in Geneva.

"Going to school is a lifeline for children, especially girls. Yet, around the world, children are being denied this fundamental right. We have heard about the near total ban on girls' education in Afghanistan and the catastrophic consequences of this. But the denial of girls' fundamental right to education goes far beyond Afghanistan. From Ukraine to South Sudan, conflict is disrupting girls' education as families are forced to flee for their safety – indeed, half of all refugee children are out of school," said Global CEO of Plan International Stephen Omollo, who hails from the Midlands.

"Right now, 222 million crisis-affected children and adolescents need urgent education support

and more than half of those are girls. It is critical that Education Cannot Wait is fully funded to ensure our global strategic partners, such as Plan International, are able to continue their impactful work to provide the safety, hope and opportunity of an education to the world's most vulnerable girls and boys," said Yasmine Sherif, Director of Education Cannot Wait, the UN's global fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises.

"In too many countries, education is being cut short by hunger or extreme weather linked to the climate crisis – or sometimes a combination of all of these. When girls are forced to drop out of school, it isn't just their education and life opportunities that suffer," said Omollo. "Adolescent girls, in particular, become even more vulnerable to violence, exploitation, early pregnancy and harmful practices, from child marriage to female genital mutilation. Indeed, the chances of a girl marrying as a child reduce by 6% with each year she remains in secondary education. We know that girls in crisis settings are nearly 2.5 times more likely to be out of school than those living in countries not in crisis."

Omollo and Sherif also took part in a panel discussion at the National Gallery of Ireland that brought together a panel of advocates, policymakers and practitioners to consider the role of Ireland in tackling this pressing global challenge. They were joined on the panel with Director General of Irish Aid, Michael Gaffey, Head of Social Programmes, Plan International Nigeria, Mr. Laban Onisimus, and Education in Emergencies Advisor, Plan International Ireland, Emilia Sorrentino. The event was moderated by Professor Aidan Mulkeen, Vice-President Academic, Registrar and Deputy President, University of Maynooth.

The event highlighted that conflict and climate change and other crises have tripled the number of crisis-impacted children and adolescents in need of education support from previous estimates of 75 million in 2015.

COVID-19 has shown, on a scale not seen before, the devastating impact health emergencies can have on learning for all children, especially girls. The pandemic has threatened decades of development gains, with children in crisis contexts being the most at risk. In all, 24 million learners may never return to school as we continue to recover from the pandemic.

Climate change is leading to more frequent and severe weather disasters, and perpetuating cycles of poverty, hunger, and displacement. In fact, the climate crisis is disrupting the education of 40 million children every year.

Conflicts lead to forced displacement and put children – especially girls – at grave risk of gender-based violence, child marriage and other violations of their human rights.

As new frontiers of violence and instability emerge, girls are more at risk than ever before of being excluded from education.

These trends put untold pressure on economies, education systems and international assistance. Nevertheless, education responses are severely underfunded in emergencies and

protracted crises. The total annual funding for education in emergencies as a percentage of the global sector-specific humanitarian budget in 2021 was just 2%.

When world leaders gather later this month in Geneva at the Education Cannot Wait High-Level Financing Conference, Plan International and Education Cannot Wait will urge donor governments, including Ireland, to increase humanitarian aid to education immediately. ECW's four-year strategic plan calls for US\$1.5 billion in additional funding, which will allow the Fund and its strategic partners, including Plan International, to reach an additional 20 million children.

Plan International programmes delivered with funding from Education Cannot Wait work to build stronger education systems and tackle gender inequality and exclusion, with girls' needs prioritised at every stage of programming, because girls' education leads to girls' equality.

During the high-level visit, Plan International and ECW also underscored the importance of ensuring refugee and internally displaced children aren't overlooked and made calls for concrete commitments towards inclusive quality education for displaced children and youth at the Global Refugee Forum in December of this year.

Education Cannot Wait
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