



## PRESS RELEASE

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### Zimbabwe and Mozambique facing catastrophe as millions trapped between hunger and COVID-19

While COVID-19 originated as a health emergency, its impact on food security is also providing fertile ground for a protection crisis in **Mozambique** and **Zimbabwe**, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable, especially girls. Rapid needs assessments revealed that food insecurity resulted in heightened protection risks for children, particularly girls, including sexual violence and exploitation, child labour and child marriage. The closure of schools, due to COVID-19, has further aggravated the risks for girls.

Maria\*, 14, from Mozambique, said: “Some of the people in my community are advising young girls to marry because they believe school will not open again this year and we will add extra costs to our poor families by remaining at home.”

Cynthia, 18, from Zimbabwe, said: “My wish is to go back to school to get an education so I can either get a job or learn skills that will give me a means of livelihood to feed, clothe and raise my child and sibling well.”

Plan International is raising **€100 million** to protect some of the world’s most vulnerable children and their communities from the impacts of COVID-19. The organisation’s response, covering more than 50 countries, **including Zimbabwe and Mozambique**, is focused on assisting children - particularly girls, who are disproportionately affected by the crisis.

The organisation’s response in Southern Africa focuses on providing economic support through cash assistance to help the most vulnerable meet their food consumption and basic needs as well as working to ensure children, caregivers and communities recognise, prevent and respond to any risk of gender-based violence.

**Stuart Katwikirize**, Plan International’s Regional Disaster Risk Management Manager, said: “In these challenging times, Plan International and other humanitarian organisations are doing everything possible to support the most vulnerable children around the world, but as key donor countries face economic shocks resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, humanitarian resources have continued to shrink further, just as the needs escalate. The most vulnerable, particularly girls and young women, are being hit the hardest by increasing funding gaps.”

Plan International is calling on authorities to ensure families are protected from hunger with cash assistance to vulnerable households and to ensure the security of food supply chains and essential services. The organisation is also urging donor nations to

increase humanitarian funding in light of COVID-19, with a specific focus on the needs of girls.

*Donate to Plan International's COVID-19 appeal and find out more about our response [here](#).*

\*name changed to protect identity

**To request an interview or for more information, please contact:**

Evelyn Wambui  
Regional Communications and Media Specialist (Kenya)  
Email: [evelyn.wambui@plan-international.org](mailto:evelyn.wambui@plan-international.org)  
Mobile: +254 793269706

### **About Plan International**

Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children's rights and equality for girls.

We believe in the power and potential of every child. But this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination. And it's girls who are most affected. Working together with children, young people, our supporters and partners, we strive for a just world, tackling the root causes of the challenges facing girls and all vulnerable children.

We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood. And we enable children to prepare for – and respond to – crises and adversity. We drive changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels using our reach, experience and knowledge.

We have been building powerful partnerships for children for over 80 years and are now active in more than 75 countries.

**ENDS**