



Statement of Deepali Sood, Head of Global Campaign, Plan International

With the deadline for the MDGs just 5 years ahead of us it is time to act and realize a lot still has to be done if we want to improve the situation of children and in particular girls as they face life-long challenges and barriers due to the double discrimination of being young and female. Indeed, girls are lagging behind in the progress towards the achievement of the MDGs: there are still fewer girls than boys in secondary education, girls are still facing negative cultural attitudes which result in Harmful Traditional Practices and early marriage and are more likely to be victims of gender-based violence than their brothers. The positive results in MDG progress that some countries show mask some important gaps because they do not always take into account the more vulnerable groups, especially girls.

That is why we ask of Member States:

- **Gender equality** has to be an overarching principle for achieving all the MDGs. As the Secretary-General has pointed out in his report '*Keeping the Promise*' we have to adopt a holistic approach given that the MDGs are interdependent and rely on each other for their advancement. The lack of advancement in one MDG will affect the progress of the other MDGs. This is particularly true for gender equality and it thus has to be seen as a catalyst for the achievement of all the MDGs.
- **Invest in expanding post-primary education for adolescent girls:** Let us bring renewed focus and international attention to quality and relevant post-primary (secondary) education for adolescent girls as this decade's key development priority. The transition to secondary school must become as natural and inevitable as entry into primary school. This requires girl-friendly learning environments and facilities that serve the needs of adolescent girls.
- **Strengthen opportunities for adolescent girls so they can make a successful transition into remunerative work.** Achievement of the MDG targets will only be possible if the world's girls are able to successfully transition from school to work. But it is not just a matter of getting adolescent girls into school—it's the kind and quality of education they receive which really makes the difference in terms of school to work transitions. Girls should see their future economic possibilities within both the books they read, and the career guidance they receive so that they are encouraged to learn skills in subjects that are more relevant to labor market opportunities, including ICTs.

- **Develop systematic data collection disaggregated by age and gender.** The lack of disaggregated and quality data on adolescent girls makes it difficult for governments, NGOs, donors to target adolescent girls effectively. These data are needed to know if programs are reaching the right target groups but it will also lead to increased accountability, better knowledge and thus more efficient programs.