

# Hear Our Voices

Do adolescent girls' issues *really* matter?



BECAUSE **I am a Girl**

Cover photo: © Plan / Zack Canepari. The girl is from the 'Hear Our Voices' photo series featuring actors, is purely representative and is no relation to the 7,179 young girls and boys featured in 'Hear Our Voices' technical report or summary.

# Girls Empowerment Star and the School Equality Scorecard Practitioners' Toolkit, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2014

## Introduction

This document introduces a toolkit of materials for the Girls Empowerment Star and School Equality Scorecard, openly available for all to use.

Plan developed the tools to ask adolescent girls and boys about their experiences of girls' empowerment and gender equality in schools. They are based on 'participatory numbers' methodology. We used them as the basis for a major 11 country study in 2013, spanning four regions of the world. We learned a lot about using them. We are delighted to make our tools and working materials openly available, as a contribution to knowledge and practice in the sector. We hope that others will find them as powerful and inspiring as we have.

We hope that the tools will be of interest to: international development practitioners working with adolescent girls, monitoring and evaluation specialists, research specialists and others working in related fields.

The tools involve participatory dialogue with young people about sensitive issues. As a result, staff need training and support to use the tools appropriately. It is neither practical nor ethical to use the tools without training and support. This risks generating unreliable data and causing harm and distress to participants and staff alike. We urge practitioners not to cut corners around training and support.

Please let us know about your experience of using the tools, and how you adapt and improve them. We would like to keep learning with you and others about how to listen and respond better to adolescent girls, as we help them dream and reach higher. Stay in touch with our team at [alana.livesey@plan-international.org](mailto:alana.livesey@plan-international.org) or [sarah.hendriks@plan-international.org](mailto:sarah.hendriks@plan-international.org) or [alex.jacobs@plan-international.org](mailto:alex.jacobs@plan-international.org).

## The tools, guidance and reports

**Girls Empowerment Star** (available in English, French and Spanish)  
**School Equality Scorecard** (available in English, French and Spanish)

Each tool contains:

- **Tool:** Dimensions, key questions and response options, with two versions: a written table or drawn spider graph.
- **Process Summary:** One-page summarizing the five-step implementation process for quick reference.
- **Guidance Notes:** Tool discussion prompts and detailed instructions for implementation, documentation and reporting.

- **Observer Worksheet - Translation Workshop:** A table to organize translations of each key question and local examples to explain the response options.
- **Observer Worksheet - Focus Group Ratings Tally Chart:** A simple tally chart to document individual ratings from one focus group, and support quantitative data entry, analysis and reporting.
- **Focus Group Report Form:** A simple form to document focus group key themes, high and low scores, and variation in participants' responses.
- **Plan Programme Unit Report Form:** A simple form to document key reflections and action items from Programme Unit debriefings with all focus group facilitator and observer teams, and programme unit managers.

### Sample training agenda

Agenda for the 4 to 5 day training workshop for each country team that implemented the tools. The training covered background on the tools, results from pilots, and interactive group exercises to learn how to implement and report on the tools. It also included initial planning sessions so that country teams could begin the process immediately following the training.

### Sample training presentation

Notes and background on the tools and pilot results. Interactive exercises followed the training agenda using the tools and implementation guidance as appropriate. These included talks from advisors in child protection, gender, monitoring and evaluation, as well as: experiential learning, interactive group exercises to simulate the translation workshop, focus groups and using the report forms.

### Global "Hear Our Voices" Report

This technical report presents the tools' methodology and findings from the 11-country study conducted in 2013. It also includes research ethics materials adapted from the World Health Organization's informed consent and assent templates for conducting research with children.

- [Informed Parental Consent Form](#) (see Appendix I below)
- [Informed Children's Assent Form](#) (see Appendix II below)

### Global Youth Voices executive summary

This 13 page summary report communicates the key results and messages of the 11-country study for diverse audiences.

## Using the tools

The tools may be used to explore and document adolescent girls' and boys' views about girls' empowerment and gender equality in schools. Results can be used to inform projects that aim to strengthen girls' empowerment and gender equality.

To guide the process and ensure coherent management, Plan formed Plan managed their multi-country study by forming an international study team, including: senior management members, a lead research manager and a review group of relevant advisors. In each study country, Plan also formed a short term cross-disciplinary team with expertise in areas such as child protection and participation, gender, monitoring and evaluation, community development facilitation, and programme management. All this has clear budget implications.

The first time they are implemented, the tools can provide a rich snapshot of local insights. If implementation is repeated, the tools can allow trends to be considered across time. Either *non-probability* (purposive, convenience), or *probability* (random) sampling strategies can be designed to guide selection of communities, schools and participants. Results from studies with *non-probability* sample designs cannot be generalized to any wider population other than the study participants. Findings generated using a *probability* sample design may allow for generalization of results to a wider population. Statistical advice will be needed to achieve this.

Some ideas for adapting use of the tools include:

- Girls Empowerment Star: Apply with adolescent boys as well to inform a comparative analysis.
- Both tools:
  - Increase the range of participants interviewed to increase inclusion of the most marginalized adolescent girls and boys. Carry out 3-4 focus groups per single profile of participants.
  - Add a structured community or school debriefing and action-planning meeting between participants, parents, teachers and community or school leaders. This can help ensure that communities and schools use the results and support projects that are based on them.

# Appendix I Caregiver Informed Consent Form and Certificate



## *Caregiver Informed Consent Form and Certificate*

Caregiver Informed Consent is a required part of implementing the BIAAG program tools:

- **Girls' Empowerment Star**
- **School Equality Scorecard**

This Caregiver Informed Consent form is for primary caregivers of adolescent girls (or boys if applicable) participating in data collection using the BIAAG tools. The form consists of three parts:

- **Part 1: Information sheet,**
- **Part 2: Consent certificate,** and
- **Part 3: Statement by Plan staff member.**

The form provides a script for conducting a proper informed consent process with caregivers for data collection with children.

Please file and lock up in a secure cabinet all signed informed consent certificates in the Plan Program Unit Manager's office.

Thank you for your commitment to upholding ethics and child protection in Plan monitoring, evaluation and research activities.

PLEASE SEE INFORMATION SHEET, CERTIFICATE, and STAFF STATEMENT TEMPLATES ON FOLLOWING PAGES:



## Caregiver Informed Consent for Child Focus Group Discussion Participation

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Programme Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Community: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions: Please say the following in italics to the caregiver.**

*This Caregiver Informed Consent Form has two parts:*

***Part 1: Information Sheet*** (gives you information about the study),

***Part 2: Certificate of Caregiver Informed Consent*** (this is where you sign if you agree that your child can participate), and

***Part 3: Statement by Plan staff member*** (this is to document whether I completed this consent process with you).

*You will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent Form.*

### **Part I: Information Sheet**

#### **Introduction**

*My name is \_\_ (say your first name)\_\_\_\_\_ and my job is to ask girls or boys questions about their situation and fairness in their schools. We think this activity could help tell Plan how to make sure programs are best supporting children's development and rights.*

*I am going to give you information and invite your child to participate in Plan program monitoring activities. You can choose whether or not you want your child to participate. If you do say yes to allow your child to participate, we will discuss this in a conversation with your child as well. They will know that we asked for your agreement. If you permit your child to participate, your child also has to agree. But if you do not wish your child to take part in the activities, they do not have to, even if your child wishes to.*

*You may discuss anything in this form with anyone else you feel comfortable talking to. You can decide whether you want your child to participate or not after you have talked it over. You do not have to decide immediately.*

*There may be some words you don't understand or things that you want me to explain more about because you are interested or concerned. Please ask me to stop at anytime and I will take time to explain.*

**Purpose:**

*We want to find better ways to reach and serve adolescents during the transition to adulthood. We have a new campaign, "Because I am a Girl" to increase attention to adolescent girls' rights and development, and increase fairness between girls and boys.*

**Choice of participants:**

*We would like to invite your child to participate in a focus group discussion. Information from the discussion will be used confidentially to help us develop and test activities to better reach and serve adolescent girls.*

**Participation is voluntary:**

*You don't have to permit your child to participate in this activity, if you don't want to. It's up to you. If you decide not to allow your child to participate, it is okay and nothing will change in your or your child's interactions with Plan. Everything will stay the same as before. Even if you say "yes" now, you can change your mind later and it still will be okay.*

**Activities involved:**

*Your child's participation will involve 1-3 hours of time (ideally outside of school hours). During that time, the child will meet with 5-7 others similar in age and background. There will be two Plan staff members of the same sex to guide and supervise the conversation. The setting will be somewhere comfortable. In the group discussion, participants will each share their perspectives on issues that are important for adolescent girls as they grow into young women.*

**Risks: Is this bad or dangerous for my child, or for me?**

*Nothing bad or dangerous is expected to come from participation in the discussion. If anything unusual happens during or after the discussion, please tell us. You should feel free you to talk to us anytime about any concerns or questions.*

**Discomforts:**

*We may talk about some topics that your child, or you, may not find easy to discuss. If your child or you feel bad or uncomfortable, please tell us. Your child or you do not have*

*to talk about anything that causes any discomfort at any time. There should be no physical risks to your child's or your participation.*

**Benefits:**

*Participating in the group discussion can help Plan improve programs for the child and other children. However, Plan cannot promise to act on all recommendations for program improvement.*

**Reimbursements:**

*No reimbursements or gifts will be provided. There may be snacks provided to the child during the group discussion, but these are not given as an inducement or reason for participating. Plan does not encourage incentives.*

**Confidentiality:**

*We will not tell other people that your child participated in the group discussion. We won't share personal information to anyone who does not work directly with Plan. Information that we learn about your child's views or experiences will be put away and no one but Plan managers will be able to see it. Only the Plan staff may know of information that is specific to you or your child, and we will lock that information up securely. It will not be shared with or given to anyone except a Plan manager.*

**Sharing the Findings:**

*When we are finished with the activities, Plan staff will tell you and others who participate in the activities about what we learnt. Afterwards, we will be telling more people about what we learnt. We will do this by writing and sharing reports and by going to meetings with people who are interested in the work Plan does. Your or your child's name will not be listed in any reports.*

**Right to Refuse or Withdraw:**

*Your child does not have to participate in Plan program monitoring activities. No one will be mad or disappointed with you if you or your child say no. It's your choice. You can think about it and tell us later if you want. You can say "yes" now and change your mind later and it will still be okay.*

**Who to Contact:**

*You can ask me questions now or later. I have written a number and address where you can reach us or, if you are nearby, you can come and see us. If you want to talk to someone else that you know like a teacher or doctor or family member that is okay too.*

***If you choose to allow your child to participate in this Plan activity, I will also give you a copy of this paper to keep for yourself.***

***You can ask me any more questions about any part of participating in Plan Because I am a Girl activities, if you wish to.***

*Do you have any questions?*

**PART 2: Certificate of Caregiver Informed Consent**

I have been asked to give consent for my daughter/son to participate in this research study, which will involve her completing one interview and one questionnaire and engaging in small group discussion with peers. I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily for my child to participate as a participant in Plan annual program monitoring activities.

Print Name of Parent or Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent of Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Day/month/year

**If illiterate:**

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the parent of the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

Print name or mark of witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature or mark of witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Day/month/year

**Statement by the Plan staff member conducting informed consent process:**

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the caregiver of the potential child participant. To the best of my ability, I made sure that the caregiver understands that their child may participate in a focus group and that only generalized information across similar group discussions will be shared afterward.

I confirm that the parent was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by him/her have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been provided to the parent or guardian of the participant \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name of Plan staff taking the consent: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Next step: An “Informed Assent Form for Child Participation in Data Collection” must also be completed with the child.**

# Appendix II Informed Assent Form for Child Participation in Data Collection



## *Informed Assent Form for Child Participation in Data Collection*

**Child Informed Assent is required**, and should follow the Caregiver Informed Consent process as an integral part of implementing either of the BIAAG program tools:

- **Girls' Empowerment Star**
- **School Equality Scorecard**

This Child Informed Assent form is for adolescent girls or boys participating in data collection using the BIAAG tools. The form consists of three parts:

- **Part 1: Information sheet,**
- **Part 2: Consent certificate, and**
- **Part 3: Statement by Plan staff member.**

The form provides a script for conducting a proper informed assent process with children for their participation in activities related to the BIAAG tools.

Please file and lock up in a secure cabinet all signed Child Informed Assent certificates in the Plan Program Unit Manager's office, along with the Statements by Plan staff members.

Thank you very much for your commitment to upholding ethics and child protection in Plan monitoring, evaluation and research activities.

PLEASE SEE INFORMATION SHEET, CERTIFICATE, and STAFF STATEMENT FORMS ON FOLLOWING PAGES:



This **Child Informed Assent form** does not replace a Caregiver Informed Consent form signed by parents or guardians. Child Informed Assent is in addition to caregiver consent and signals the child's informed and willing participation in discussion activities related to the BIAAG program tools.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Community: \_\_\_\_\_

Plan staff name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions: Please say the following in italics to the child.**

*This Child Informed Assent Form has two parts:*

**Part 1: Information Sheet** (*gives you information about the study*),

**Part 2: Certificate of Child Informed Assent** (*this is where you sign if you agree to participate*), and

**Part 3: Statement by Plan staff member** (*this is to document whether I completed this informed assent process with you*).

*You will be given a copy of the full Child Informed Assent Form.*

### **Part I: Information Sheet**

#### **Introduction**

*My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and my job is to talk with groups of girls or boys about their well-being, safety, development and fairness. We think this activity could help tell us how to make sure Plan programs are best supporting children's rights.*

*I am going to give you information and invite you to participate in a group discussion related to the Plan Because I am a Girl campaign. You can choose whether or not you want to participate. We have discussed this with your parent(s)/caregiver and they know that we are also asking you if you want to participate. If you want to participate in the group discussion, your caregiver also has to have agreed before the discussion. **Even if your parents have agreed, you do not have to participate if you do not wish to.***

*You may talk about anything in this form with your caregivers, friends or anyone you feel comfortable talking to.*

*There may be some words you don't understand or things that you want me to explain because you are interested or concerned. Please ask me to stop at anytime and I will take time to explain.*

**Purpose of group discussion:**

*We want to find better ways to work with adolescent girls. We have a new initiative, the Because I am a Girl campaign, to increase attention to girls' rights and development. We would like to hear directly from children about their perspectives on their development.*

**Choice of participants:**

*Children, like adults, like to know why they are being invited to participate in program monitoring and evaluation activities. It is important to address any fears they may have about why they were chosen.*

**Participation is voluntary:**

*State clearly and in child-friendly language that the choice to participate is theirs. If there is a possibility that their decision not to participate might be over-ridden by parental consent, this should be stated clearly and simply.*

**Activities involved:**

*The activity will involve 1-3 hours of your time today. During that time, you would discuss with 5-7 other girls similar in age and background. I and my colleague from Plan are here to guide and supervise the conversation. The setting should be comfortable and people outside of the group should not be able to hear our conversation. In the discussion, you and other children would each share their perspectives on issues that are important as you grow into young adults.*

*Do you understand the setting and basic activities of contributing views and talking with other girls and a group facilitator? Do you want me to go through the activities again? Do you have questions?*

**Risks:**

*If anything unusual happens to you during or after your participation, we need to know. Please feel free you to talk to us anytime about any concerns or questions you may have.*

**Discomforts:**

*There are a few other things that I want you to know. We may talk about some topics that you may find difficult to discuss. If you feel bad or strange, please tell us. You do not have to talk about anything that makes you feel uncomfortable at any time. Do you understand that some of the topics may be difficult for you to talk about and you can stop your participation if you feel uncomfortable? Do you have any other questions?*

**Benefits:**

*Participating in the group conversation will help Plan improve activities for children. Please know, however, that Plan cannot promise to act on all recommendations for improvement.*

**Reimbursements:**

*Plan does not provide incentives for participation in the program monitoring activities. Participation is an opportunity to have a say in designing Plan program activities for now and the future for you and other children like you.*

**Confidentiality:**

*Information that we learn about your views or experiences will be put away and no one but Plan managers will be able to see it. Any information about you will not have your name on it. Only Plan staff may know of information that is specific to you and we will lock that information up with a lock and key. After the activity is finished, you and your caregiver will be told general results from across all of our conversations with children.*

**Illness during activity:**

*Please tell us if you feel ill during the activity and we will stop and try to help you.*

**Sharing the Findings:**

*When we are finished with the activity, Plan staff will tell you and others who participate in the activities about what we learnt. Afterwards, we will be telling more people about what we learnt. We will do this by sharing general written reports and going to meetings with people interested in Plan's work.*

**Right to Refuse or Withdraw Participation:**

*You do not have to participate in this activity. No one will be mad or disappointed with you if you say "no." It's your choice. You can say "yes" now if you want and change your mind later and it will still be okay.*

**Who to Contact:**

*You can ask me questions now or later. I have written a number and address where you can reach us or, if you are nearby, you can come and see us. If you want to talk to someone else that you know like your teacher or doctor or auntie, that's okay too.*

***If you choose to be part of this activity, I will give you a copy of this paper to keep for yourself. You can ask your caregiver to look after it if you want.***

***You can ask me any more questions about any part of the activity, if you wish to.***

***Do you have any questions?***

**PART 2: Certificate of Child Informed Assent**

I have read this information (or had the information read to me) I have had my questions answered and know that I can ask questions later if I have them.

I agree to take part in the Plan monitoring and evaluation activity for programs related to the Because I am a Girl campaign.

**OR**

I do not wish to take part in this Plan activity. I have not signed the assent below.  
(Child's initials or mark: \_\_\_\_\_)

**Ask the child to sign only if she or he gives their informed assent:**

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Day/month/year**

***If child cannot read or write:***

A witness who can read and write must sign if the child cannot read and write. The child should select the witness. The witness should not be a caregiver or a Plan staff member. Witnesses who are illiterate as well can sign with an "X."

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the Child Informed Assent form to the child, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the child has given informed assent freely.

Print name of witness (not a parent): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Day/month/year**

**Part 3: Statement of Plan Staff member conducting Child Informed Assent**

I have accurately read or witnessed the accurate reading of the assent form to the child, and she or he has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the child has given informed assent freely.

Plan facilitator name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Plan facilitator signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Day/month/year

Copy provided to the participant? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ (Please initial.)

Parent/Guardian has signed an informed consent? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ (Please initial.)