Until every girl is free

Brussels, 33/06/2025

Q&A - Terms of Reference

Exploring the Role of Gender Transformative Education as a Response to Anti-Gender and Anti-Rights Movements: Case Study of Ecuador to Inform Belgian Development Cooperation

To ensure transparency and equal treatment of all applicants, we are publishing an overview of all questions received regarding the Terms of Reference (ToR) and our corresponding answers. This information may be useful to all potential applicants, including those who did not submit individual queries.

1. Application requirements

Q: Do we need to submit two written recommendation letters, or are names and contact details of references sufficient?
Q (similar): We're applying as a team of three. Do we need to provide two references per person, or two for the whole team?

A: Formal letters of recommendation are not required. Please provide the names, position titles, and contact information of two reference persons who can speak to your work. If you are applying as a team, it is sufficient to submit two references for the group, ideally connected to the lead consultant.

Q: Do we need to include a Police Certificate of Good Conduct in the proposal?
Q (similar): Is a criminal background check required at the time of application?

A: No. The requirement for a Police Certificate of Good Conduct has been removed from the ToR. This change has been reflected in the updated version now available on our website.

2. Required expertise

Q: The research topic is very specific. Is deep expertise in gender-transformative education a strict requirement?

A: While direct experience in gender-transformative education is not mandatory, applicants should have relevant experience in at least one of the following thematic areas: gender equality, girls' rights, gender-transformative programming, education, or anti-gender/anti-rights movements. A strong grasp of the relevant frameworks is important, and due to our timeline, candidates should be able to demonstrate familiarity with the topic area early in the research process.

3. Timeline and travel

Q: Can the proposed timeline be adjusted to account for summer holidays or travel planning?

A: The overall timeline is guided by our objective to use the study's findings for advocacy related to the International Day of Education (24 January 2026). While this timeline is relatively fixed, we are open to co-creating a more detailed schedule with the selected consultant to ensure feasibility and timely delivery of outputs.

Q: Will travel to Ecuador be required only for the youth exchange in October 2025, or also for data collection?

A: This will be determined in collaboration with the selected consultant. Travel to Ecuador may coincide with the youth exchange in October 2025 or take place at another suitable time for key informant interviews. Participation in the youth exchange is not mandatory. Travel planning should be flexible and aligned with the research needs and availability of stakeholders.

4. Inception report and methodology

Q: What should the Inception Report include?

A: The Inception Report should include:

- Final research questions
- Analytical framework
- Proposed methodology
- Ethics review application form (to be completed collaboratively)
- Safeguarding risk assessment (to be completed collaboratively)

In addition, the report should outline the approach to:

- **Desk Review:** Include a proposed list of key documents (annexed), demonstrating triangulation of sources and diverse perspectives.
- **Mapping Exercise:** Identify recent and relevant initiatives, including diverse actors and approaches. Plan International Ecuador will support identification of relevant local initiatives.

Q: Where will key informants be located? Are they all based in Quito?

A: Key informants have not yet been identified and will be determined in collaboration with the Plan International Ecuador Country Office. While many may be based in Quito, others may be located elsewhere, such as in Bolívar Province. Remote interviews can be arranged to accommodate geographic and accessibility constraints.

5. Payment and invoicing

Q: If applying as a team, can payment be made to an individual or entity based outside of Belgium or Ecuador?

Q: If applying as a team, can payment be made to an individual or entity based outside Ecuador? We are asking in order to correctly calculate applicable taxes.

A: Yes. The ToR define the consultancy as a single service (one lot). If a team is applying, a lead consultant (either an individual or a legally registered entity) must be designated to sign the contract and issue a single invoice. This person or entity can be based in any country, not necessarily Ecuador. The designated lead will be responsible for ensuring compliance with the tax laws and registration requirements of the country in which they are based.

Payment process: Plan International Belgium uses a financial transfer agency (Stone X) to process payments. The full invoice amount will be paid in the specified currency directly to the beneficiary's bank account. Plan International Belgium covers the transfer fees.

Note: A clarification regarding VAT has been included in the updated ToR now available on the vacancy page.

6. Access to supporting documents

Q: Some links in the Safeguarding in MER and Framework for Ethical MER documents are not accessible. Could you provide alternate access to these documents?

A: Thank you for highlighting the issue. The *Safeguarding in MER* and *Framework for Ethical MER* documents serve as high-level reference materials. The most relevant documents at this stage — the **ethical review application form** and **safeguarding risk assessment form** — are attached below this Q&A. Additional documents can be provided upon request and all necessary documents will be shared with the selected consultant or team.

7. Other clarifications

- **Proposal deadline:** The deadline for submission has been clarified as **22 June 2025**. This is reflected in the updated ToR available on our website.
- **VAT Inclusion:** The ToR has been updated to clarify expectations around VAT inclusion in the proposed budget.

Please consult the updated Terms of Reference on our website for the latest details. If you have any further questions, feel free to contact us prior to the submission deadline.

PLAN INTERNATIONAL ETHICS REVIEW APPLICATION FORM:
SUBMISSION TO THE ETHICS REVIEW TEAM (ERT)

1. Background and General Information

1.1 RESEARCH DETAILS			
a) Full title of MER initiative:			
b) Type of MER initiative:	Baseline ☐ Needs Assessment ☐ Other ☐ Evaluation ☐ Rapid Gender Analysis ☐ Monitoring ☐ Research ☐		
c) Which ethics review process does this initiative follow? *See the 'How to Apply to the ERT' doc for further guidance on criteria and timeframes.*	Standard application process ☐ Sensitive application process ☐ Urgent humanitarian application process ☐		
d) Initiative start date:	(dd/mm/yy)	**Initiative estimated completion date:**	(dd/mm/yy)
e) Estimated start date of data collection *No primary data collection activities should commence prior to receiving ethics approval.*	(dd/mm/yy)	**Estimated completion date of data collection:**	(dd/mm/yy)
1.2 APPLICANT DETAILS			
a) Applicant's details (name, role, Plan International office/ external organisation, contact details)			
b) *If applicant is not a Plan staff member provide*: **name, role, office and contact details of Plan staff member**			

2. Ethical Reviews

2.1 LOCAL APPROVAL
a) Briefly outline national or local ethics approval processes, and any additional requirements for primary data collection such as data collection permits, for the country/countries where you are planning to conduct the MER initiative (if applicable). *See list of laws, regulations and guidelines to regulate research and ethics for 133 countries.* *It is also advised to liaise with focal points from the Country Office/ National Office/ Regional Office where data collection is planned to better understand local and national laws and requirements.*

b) Did you apply for ethics approval from a national or local ethics committee? If yes, to whom did you apply and what was the outcome? If no, please explain <u>why you did not</u> seek ethical approval from the country/countries in which you are conducting the initiative.
2.2 APPLICATION TO OTHER ERCs
a) Have you submitted this application to any other Ethics Review Committees (ERCs)? If yes, please explain to which ERC you applied and provide details of the outcome. *Please note, if you have already received ethics approval from a recognised university, a national ethics committee or a recognised Institutional Review Board (IRB) with a rigorous ethics review process you <u>do not</u> need to gain additional ethics approval through Plan International's ERT, we do kindly ask you share the approval confirmation with us via research@plan-international.org. Please note, Plan International's ERT now has IRB status.*

3. Methods for Data Collection and Data Analysis

3.1 SAMPLING
a) List the country/countries and sites where the data collection is being conducted.
b) Please give details on the expected size and composition of your sample. *Include general details of the group of participants, such as age, sex, gender identity, disability and migratory status of participants involved in the data collection.* *Please note, primary data collection with participants 15 years old and younger meets the criteria for the 'sensitive application' process.*
c) How will you sample your participants?
d) Will your sample include any of Plan International's sponsored children? If so, please describe.
3.2 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS METHODS

a) Briefly describe the methods that you intend to use for data collection. *Include whether you intend to use a qualitative, quantitative or a mixed-methods approach, as well as specifics of the methods – such as focus group discussions, interviews, surveys/questionnaires or key informant interviews.*	
b) What methods will you use for the data analysis? *For example, describe whether you will use a data analysis software package (such as Stata or NVivo), how and by whom data will be entered, coded, grouped, anonymised and reported.*	

4. Data Collectors

4.1 Who will be collecting the data? *Please include details on the number of male and female data collectors, their age bracket, their experience and which organisation they work for. If not known yet, please include the criteria for hiring data collectors.*
4.2 How will data collectors be trained? *This should include training on: ethical issues; gender-sensitive and inclusive data collection and child and young people safeguarding.*
4.3 Are there any risks posed to the data collectors? If so, what are they and what are the measures and support mechanisms that will be implemented to ensure their safety and wellbeing? *It is important that you keep in mind different vulnerabilities, such as gender and disability of data collectors.*

5. Risks to Respondents and Vulnerable Groups

5.1 Are any of the following groups involved as participants? Please tick
1. Children under 18 years old **2. Religious/ ethnic/ language minority group** **3. Forcibly displaced persons** **4. People with disability** **5. Survivor of violence, abuse, exploitation, or neglect** **6. LGBTIQA+** **7. Elderly; sick people; people living with HIV/AIDs** **8. Sex workers** **9. People who receive goods, services or other benefits from Plan staff or programmes** **10. Others, specify:**

5.2 If yes, please explain how they will be involved as participants? *Please describe the level and intensity of their involvement.*
5.3 Please describe the potential risks posed to respondents. Pay particular attention to the vulnerable groups listed under 5.1 a).
5.4 What special measures have you put in place to ensure respondents' safe participation in data collection? Pay particular attention to the vulnerable groups listed under 5.1 a).

6. Informed Consent

6.1 **How will you obtain informed consent from participants – including parents/guardians and children?** *For example, will you obtain written, verbal, group or remote consent? See guidance documents on obtaining consent from* adults , children and adolescents and parents/guardians , *and on* remote consent and online survey consent.
6.2 How will you ensure that participants (including parents or guardians) have sufficient time to consider and decide whether they want to take part in the data collection? *For example, will you distribute the information sheet in advance of primary data collection?*
6.3 How will you make the informed consent process accessible to children and young people, illiterate participants and participants with disability and other vulnerable groups?

7. Compensation and Reimbursements

7.1 Will participants incur any costs from taking part in the MER initiative? For example, travel costs, refreshments, data bundles. If so, will they be reimbursed? How will they be reimbursed?
7.2 Are you offering any incentives or compensation to children, their families and communities for taking part in the data collection?

8. Research Use

8.1 How will the study be used to inform Plan International's future work and benefit children, families and communities?
8.2 Who will have access to the findings? Will any material be publicly available on an external website?
8.3 Will study results be shared back with participants? If so, how?

9. Confidentiality and Data Protection

9.1 CONFIDENTIALITY	
a) What arrangements are in place to ensure that the identity of each participant and their individual responses remains confidential in draft and final publications?	
b) Do you intend to use any of the following recording devices as a means of collection information for this research study? If so, please explain how.	
i) Audio/sound recorder	
ii) Photography[1]	
iii) Film/video recordings[2]	
c) If yes for any of the above, how will specific permission be obtained for this?	
d) Will any personal data be collected? Please explain. *For example, are you collecting any information that can lead to the identification of individuals - including names, ages and gender, address - in any part of data collection, including in recruiting participants or obtaining consent?*	

[1] As a standard, photographs should NOT be taken during a MERL initiative. If it is absolutely necessary for the success of the research methodology to take photos or videos of participants are taken you must use the global consent form for media use in addition to the consent form for MERL initiatives.

[2] As above, videos or film should not be taken during data collection, unless it is part of the methodology.

e) If you are collecting personal data you need to submit a Data Privacy Impact Assessment (DPIA) to the Data Privacy team at Global Hub. *If you have already completed this, please provide details below including where you are in the process.* ***If you have successfully completed a DPIA and made all required revisions, please skip to section 10.***
9.2 DATA MANAGEMENT
a) How will data be securely managed and stored? *Include information on how data will be recorded during data collection, transported to and held in the office, and transferred to other individuals involved in the study. Consider digital data (e.g. audio recordings) and non-digital data (e.g. signed consent documents, hand-written notes taken during interviews).*
b) How long will data be stored for, and who will be responsible for destroying the data at the end of the period? *You can consult Plan International's Data Retention Policy and Data Privacy Policy for guidance Consider digital data (e.g. audio recordings) and non-digital data (e.g. signed consent documents, hand-written notes taken during interviews).*

10. Safeguarding, Risks and Mitigation Measures

10.1 It is important that Plan International's Global Policy on Safeguarding Children and Young People are upheld throughout your initiative. Please attach a copy of your signed-off 'Safeguarding Risk Assessment for MERL' and, if any risks have changed, please describe below.

11. Document Checklist

11.1 Have you attached the following documents to your ethics application form? Please send the completed application to research@plan-international.org
• Terms of Reference / Concept note • Filled in and signed MER safeguarding risk assessment • The consultant's research proposal/expression of interest/ inception report (if available) • Information sheets and consent forms (for adults, children/adolescents and/or parents/guardians and different methods – where applicable) • Primary data collection tools (for different methods – where applicable)

12. Signatures

Signature(s) of applicant(s)	Submission date

We are there to help

In case you have any questions, are unsure how these guidelines apply to your work, or want to discuss an ethical concern, please get in touch. Anything you feel uncomfortable about is worth discussing!

research@plan-international.org

July 2023

Section 3: Risk Assessment and Mitigation		
1. What is the activity?	**2. What are the risks?**	**3. Who is at risk?**

Conceptualise & Design

Add more rows as appropriate		

Plan

Add more rows as appropriate		

Implement

Add more rows as appropriate		

Use

Add more rows as appropriate		

STEP 7: Decisions and Justifications

Please note that if any of your risks score high or very high, the MER initiative will need t

Have you thought through all the possible risks and inputted additional actions as necessary?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Please give a final justification for the risks associated with this MER activity	

STEP 8: Sign-Off*	
MER initiative lead from Plan International	
Name and Job Title:	
Safeguarding Focal Point	
Name and Job Title:	
Director	

By signing off this risk assessment, I confirm that I have reviewed the contents of this document ar
International to take in line with its commitments and principles and that the agreed mitigating ac

Name and Job Title:	

** As well as inserting signature, approval can be given by email and attached with the risk assessm*

4. What measures are in place to mitigate the risk?	5. Risk Rating		
	Likelihood	Impact	Net Risk Rating
	1 = Very Low, 2 = Low, 3 = Medium, 4 = High, 5 = Very High (See Tab 2: Guidance for Risk Assessment for full Explanation on risk scores).		*This will be autocalculated below*
			0
			0
			0
			0
			0
			0
			0
			0

o get ethics approval. For the full list of when to apply for ethics approval, see

Signature:	

Signature:	

ıd I am satisfied that involving human subjects, including children and young people, in this
tions noted in the assessment are adequate and fully resourced.

Signature:	

ent.

6. Additional actions to mitigate the risk (only if necessary and for medium, high or very high risks)	Action owner	Action Target Date
Cells that turn black indicate that it is a low or very low risk and you do not need to add additional actions to mitigate the risk		

Which MER Initiative needs ERT approval

Date:	

Date:	

MER initiative represents a reasonable and justified step for Plan

Date:	