

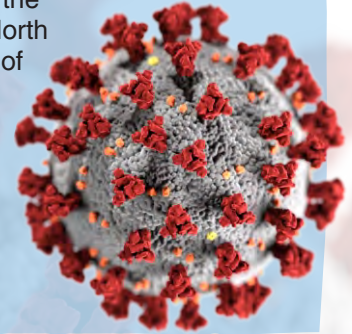


“Every girl has a right to an education!”

## COVID-19: My letter from the Lake Chad

### Dear friend,

The protracted crisis in the Lake Chad Basin region remains one of the most severe humanitarian emergencies in the world, affecting the North East of Nigeria, the Far North region of Cameroon, the Lake region of Chad and the Diffa region in Niger. More than 17 million people are living in the affected areas across the four countries. 10.7 million people need humanitarian assistance to survive and more than 6 million of them are children. The recent increase in Boko Haram attacks in the Lake Chad region, in addition to the **COVID-19** pandemic, is adding new challenges to the already overwhelmed populations living in the region, exacerbating their vulnerabilities.



### The impact of COVID-19 on girls in the Lake Chad

The impact of the protracted humanitarian crisis in the Lake Chad region is one of the most significant vulnerabilities for communities in general, but more specifically for girls. In 2018, Plan International carried out a study in the Lake Chad region on [Adolescent Girls in Crisis](#). This study highlighted many challenges for girls including early and forced marriage, lack of access to quality education, lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services and exclusion from decision making. Added to these significant challenges, we must now add congestion in internally displaced camps caused by lockdowns, closure of schools and therefore curtailments to educational activities; closure of child friendly spaces due to issues relating to social distancing, lack of access to water and sanitation, increasing burden of care for family members and disruption to household income. Even before the COVID 19 crisis, food security was a huge issue in the Lake Chad region.

In the North east of Nigeria alone. WFP estimates that the secondary impact of this crisis will be on the food security of an additional 7 million people.

Up until April 19th, there had been no reported cases of COVID 19 in the Lake Chad region where Plan International works. However, on April 19th the index case was identified in Borno State, Nigeria. While up until that point, many activities were still being implemented, the identification of positive cases meant the introduction of a lock down by the State authorities. Organisations providing essential services could apply for passes in order to be able to reach communities but unfortunately Plan International only received two passes and this has curtailed our work.








## We brave the odds despite the challenges

Up until this point, in the Lake Chad region, Plan International had been continuing many activities, all the while taking precautions to not put staff or the communities at risk. Hygiene messaging are being shared.

In the Far North region of Cameroon, community sensitisation sessions have been adapted from mass sensitisation to a door-to-door approach. The community volunteers go on a regular basis to visit the households to sensitize their members about hygiene and sanitation, and also on COVID-19. Our community volunteers have been provided with hand sanitizers, soap and hygiene kit items to ensure that before entering any household they can sanitize their hands. In-kind support is also provided to the household members to ensure that they take care of proper hygiene measures. Across the Lake Chad Basin, Plan International recognises the importance of continuing our ongoing life-saving work and will continue to do this. Plan International is also actively participating in the contextualisation of guidance notes and tools, such as the development of awareness messages to ensure they align with humanitarian principles and standards. For instance, in Niger, Plan International is working with local radio stations in Diffa to include the messages on COVID-19 in the existing MoUs.

### Plan International is responding in the following ways to support girls and their families:

-  Reviewing programmes to ensure that they are reflecting the particular needs of girls during this crisis;
-  Provide income support to women and girls where possible;
-  Ensuring that COVID 19 messaging is gender sensitive;
-  Ensuring that the community engagement teams are gender balanced
-  Provision of safe spaces for women and girls;

It is tough, very tough on girls who, as usual, are paying the bill of discrimination and violence as far as COVID19 is concerned.



My call to all is to support, resource and promote gender-responsive education policies, including education in emergencies, so that children, particularly adolescent girls in the Lake Chad region have access to safe, quality and inclusive education, including distance learning during the COVID 19 crisis, working with parents so they value schooling for girls – every girl has a right to an education!

