



PLAN
INTERNATIONAL

THROUGH THE EYES OF A GIRL

MARCH 2022

CHILDREN'S LIVES IMPACTED BY THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE

WE MUST ACT NOW

Every day that the conflict in Ukraine continues, countless lives, homes and childhoods are being lost.

At Plan International, we know girls and young women are often disproportionately impacted in conflicts, and advances in girls' and young women's rights are often set back significantly as societies collapse.

Through this conflict, humanitarian needs are multiplying by the hour. The violence and bombing are forcing families to flee with little more than what they can grab. They urgently need shelter, protection, blankets, food, water and medical assistance, and emotional care and support.

Plan International is working closely with organisations in Moldova, Poland and Romania who are already providing round the clock relief. Together with local organisations, more support is needed to ensure that children and families receive immediate help as they cross the border from Ukraine.

Millions of children are witnessing the horror of this conflict. The violence will take a heavy toll on the mental health of young people, particularly adolescent girls, as crisis heightens their vulnerability to gender-based violence.

We are working alongside local organisations to provide psychosocial care for children, adolescents and their caregivers to help them begin to deal with the horrors they have witnessed and start on the path to recover from their distress.

Plan International is also concerned for the protection and safety of girls and children arriving in neighbouring countries.

We are concerned for the over 100,000 children who have been living in institutional care in Ukraine, children at risk of family separation, and we are particularly concerned for girls and young women who are more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and trafficking. The protection and safety of children on the move, particularly girls, children with disability and unaccompanied children, must be a top priority.

There has been a strong solidarity for those fleeing fighting and a generous welcome in neighbouring countries. As the number of people seeking refuge continues to multiply, we must do what we can to strengthen the capacity of local authorities, communities and organisations who are on the frontline in this response.

Plan International is calling for an immediate end to fighting and long-term peace and justice for the sake of all girls, children and young people.

Plan International stands in solidarity with everyone whose lives are being torn apart by the conflict in Ukraine. We must act now, before more lives are lost.



Stephen Omollo
Chief Executive, Plan International

“When you begin to see a crisis through the eyes of a child, you find clarity. Children should always be the first priority in humanitarian crisis settings.”

Dr Unni Krishnan, Global Humanitarian Director,
Plan International



OVER 3.7M*
people have fled to other countries and a further 6.5m are displaced with Ukraine.

2,083,854

Ukrainian refugees entering Poland

365,197

Ukrainian refugees entering Moldova

535,461

Ukrainian refugees entering Romania

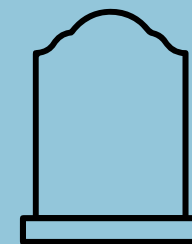


1.5M

children have fled Ukraine

75,000

new child refugees every day



At least

1,305

people killed, including

75

children



80,000

women will give birth in the next three months in Ukraine and neighbouring countries – many without critical maternal healthcare.



5.7M

children and adolescents affected by school closures in Ukraine

CHILDHOOD UNDER ATTACK IN UKRAINE

More than 1.8 million children have crossed Ukraine's borders, according to the UN. Since the conflict started, 75,000 children have become refugees every day. That means one child in Ukraine becomes a refugee almost every single second.

According to the UN, fighting has now caused 10 million people to flee their homes¹, either displaced within Ukraine or as a refugee to other countries, and some 13 million people are stranded in affected areas. These numbers will increase if the conflict and indiscriminate attacks do not stop immediately.

REFUGEES IN URGENT NEED

Children have witnessed shocking scenes as they have fled the fighting. They have had horrendous journeys, exposed to freezing weather conditions and at risk of attack.

They are in urgent need of shelter, blankets, food and water, protection and health services and education.

Refugees are arriving in neighbouring countries, particularly Poland with more than two million refugees, Romania, Moldova, Belarus, Hungary and Slovakia.²

Queues of families at the border seeking refuge are ever lengthening. Women and children account for the majority seeking to escape.

¹ Latest UN figures as of 25 March 2022

² https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine#_ga=2.260498829.1228437403.1646645342-820909445.1643724626

*UN figures for February to March 25, 2022



ROMANIA | MARCH 10, 2022

STORIES OF SURVIVAL

Until a few weeks ago, the ferry crossing between Isaccea in Romania and Orlovka in Ukraine was mainly used by truck drivers carrying freight across the Danube – it is now a vital lifeline to thousands of people fleeing the conflict in Ukraine.

More than 535,000 refugees have so far entered Romania, including 8-year-old Yarik, his mother Uliy, best friend Alexay, 10, and his mother.

They have come from Odessa, leaving their fathers, husbands, Yarik's grandmother and great grandmother behind. They decided to leave the city after hearing distant airstrikes.

"Luckily the children were sleeping at the time, although they are still frightened and cry a lot," Uliy explains.

The families have no idea where they will spend the night or the days ahead. Yarik and Alexay don't know when and where their education might continue.

Uliy distracts the boys by playing games with them, including their favourite card game UNO. For a few minutes they laugh

and play and allow themselves to be children once again.

Families arriving in Isaccea are directed towards a large orange tent, serving as a refugee processing centre. It is full of spaces to rest, tea and snack stations and a travel and accommodation hub. Women and girls can get sanitary products – when they are available – and there are nappies and baby wipes too.

Those waiting for their papers to be processed stay in tents kitted with blankets and heaters.

Sisters Katy, 15, and Yana, 12, and their mum Irina are traveling with 5-year-old Evelina, her teenage brother and their mother Veronika. They have also come from Odessa.

"In Odessa there are lots of sirens. The alarms go off more than five times a day, that's why we left. It's very sad. We have to go underground. The children are stressed, they don't want to eat. Odessa has a port, airport, military base and we're scared it will be bombed," Irina says.

"The schools have been closed since the



Plan International / George Calin

war started. At first the children had some online lessons, but now that has stopped and they have nothing. We had a good life before the war, but now it is scary."

The family drove through the night to reach Orlovka. "It's been very difficult. We haven't slept. We're going to try and rest, then maybe we will go to Bucharest, and then to Bulgaria."

For Irina, the hardest thing was leaving her husband, who will now fight to defend their city. "About half of our friends are leaving. Ukraine is our home, we want to go back."

Diana, her husband, Alexander, and their three children Julia, 5, Anna, 8, and 2-month-old Daniil don't have a car. They have had to carry all their belongings and Daniil too, as they have no pushchair.

"We have come from Izmail and plan to travel on to the Czech Republic to stay with friends. We have had to leave our parents behind in Ukraine," says Alexander.

This family at least know where they are going and have accommodation. This is not the case for many, who don't know where they will be spending the night, days or months ahead.



Andreea Alexandru/AP/Shutterstock

MILLIONS STILL HIDING IN FEAR

Persistent attacks are deepening the humanitarian emergency and making it difficult to evacuate more people, including the most vulnerable, such as unaccompanied and separated children or people with disabilities.

While the humanitarian community is attempting to scale up the response, operational challenges, particularly due to ongoing hostilities, continue to hinder efforts. Disruptions in supplies of water, electricity, food and medicines are making it difficult for humanitarian agencies to help millions of people still trapped in shelters.

We are deeply concerned for children and their caregivers who are hiding in fear in dark basements. With shelling and fighting taking place from street to street, more people are being killed, injured and displaced every day.

The daily death toll continues to rise, including scores of children.

CHILDREN, GIRLS AND WOMEN MOST IMPACTED

We know from our experience in warzones that children, girls and women will often be the most impacted in a crisis. This will be no different.

The conflict will have severe lasting consequences for children in all their diversity, concerned for family left behind, uncertain

about their future and their living conditions.

Girls and women are at increased risk of sexual exploitation and abuse, human trafficking and preventable maternal deaths. 80,000 women will give birth in the next three months in Ukraine and neighbouring countries – many without access to critical maternal healthcare.³

There have been attacks on schools, health centres, residential buildings and essential infrastructure. Schools across Ukraine have been closed, affecting around 5.7 million children and adolescents⁴ and heightening protection risks.

“The crisis will have severe and long-lasting consequences for children. They are vulnerable to physical, emotional and sexual violence and high levels of psychosocial distress.”

Anita Queirazza, Global Lead on Child Protection in Emergencies.

“We had a good life before the war. Ukraine is our home, we want to go back”

Irina, Ukrainian refugee

³ <https://www.unfpa.org/ukraine-conflict>

⁴ <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-humanitarian-impact-situation-report-300-pm-eet-6-march-2022>

OUR RESPONSE

Plan International is working with local and national organisations, the UN and governments to respond to the needs of refugee children. Child protection, mental health and psychosocial support, cash and voucher assistance, education and advocacy are our priorities.

As a global humanitarian organisation working for children's rights and equality for girls, we have considerable experience of the impact of conflict on children in all their diversity.

Our priority is to come alongside organisations in Poland, Romania and Moldova as they respond to this large-scale refugee crisis, bringing our significant technical expertise in age- and

gender-specific humanitarian responses.

We have humanitarian teams in these countries working with national or local organisations, and local authorities to support children, young women and their families and caregivers as they cross the border from Ukraine.

Plan International will focus on strengthening the capacity of national organisations working in refugee reception and transit centres, bringing our global expertise in child protection and psychosocial programming in crisis settings, with an emphasis on girls.

We have an inclusive approach that is informed by humanitarian values and principles, the Humanitarian Charter, relevant UN and inter agency standards and guidelines. Gender, conflict sensitivity and *Development-Conflict-Peace* informs our thinking and action. We adopt a 'do no harm' approach.

KEY ACTIVITIES

PROTECTION: SAFE FROM HARM

Plan International is working to strengthen an inclusive and safe, child-friendly environment at the border, in transit centres and refugee settings in Moldova, Romania and Poland. This includes:

- Provision of mobile teams of social workers and psychosocial specialists to provide care and support for unaccompanied children, and referral to support services such as legal, health, mental health and psychosocial support, cash and voucher assistance and the distribution of scholastic materials.
- Child protection and safeguarding training for frontline staff, volunteers and border officers especially in the identification of unaccompanied children and trafficking risks.
- Mapping services and strengthening child protection referral mechanisms.
- Help raise awareness of child protection risks, asylum procedures and rights by signposting children and caregivers to available services and through child-friendly information and helpdesks.

MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

Plan International will support local organisations to provide quality,

psychosocial care and support for children, adolescents and caregivers to help them recover from their distress. This will include:

- Group activities for children and adolescents in collaboration with mental health professionals using a combination of occupational, art and play sessions.
- Psychological first aid training for frontline staff and volunteers welcoming refugees at the border and reception centres.
- Technical support and training for professionals working with children, including psychologists.

Gender, age and disability considerations will inform our work.

EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

The conflict in Ukraine has disrupted the education of a generation of children. Getting children back to learning is critical to provide a protective space and a sense of normality.

We are working with government authorities and organisations in Poland, Romania and Moldova to support the integration of refugee children into local schools.

“Suffering goes on long after war ends in the minds of children in war and disaster zones, and refugee camps. Providing psychological first aid and psychosocial support is critical from day one.”

Dr Unni Krishnan, Global Humanitarian Director, Plan International



MOLDOVA | MARCH 17, 2022

Plan International has provided backpacks containing essential scholastic materials and school supplies such as pens, notebooks and hygiene kits to keep children safe during the ongoing pandemic. The backpacks were given to Chisinau City Hall to help local authorities manage the increasing number of child refugees being enrolled in local schools.



“We know in times of crises, childbirth can be a life-threatening experience, instead of a life-changing one. Women and girls can be forced to give birth in extremely dangerous conditions, without skilled healthcare providers or the safety of a health facility. Preventing unintended adolescent pregnancy is also critical. The health and wellbeing of women and children must be protected before, during and after crises.”

Alexandra Parnebjork, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Advisor, Plan International

ROMANIA | MARCH 5, 2022

‘MAMA WAS AFRAID THE BOMBS WOULD COME’

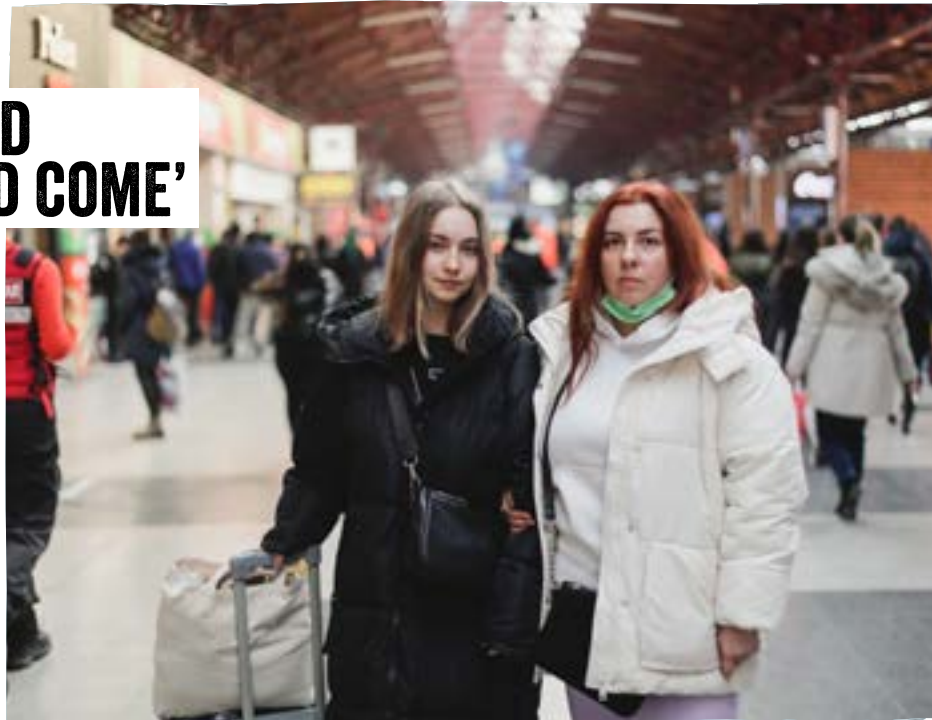
As Katy looks around the busy train station in Bucharest, she wonders where she will be sleeping. The 16-year-old has left Ukraine for the first time in her life and doesn't know when she will ever return.

From Chernivtsi, a border town in Ukraine, Katy explains why she and her mother left. "There were sirens in the city and the surrounding areas and my mama thought it was best to leave. Places around the city are being attacked. Mama was afraid the bombs would come."

"We've travelled for seven hours to get here. The train was busy. We had seats but many people didn't. But at least they are safe," she adds. "When we got off the train there were instantly people wanting to help, support organisations ready to help people."

Katy waits alone with just a few belongings while her mother queues to buy their train tickets. "We're going by train tonight to Budapest – we don't know anybody there. We hoped to go to America but the ticket was too expensive."

Before the conflict began, Katy was learning tattoo artistry. "I would like to go to university and also do an



Plan International / George Calin

apprenticeship to become a tattoo artist," she says.

She worries about people still in Ukraine, not knowing when she will see them again. "My best friend has stayed in our town because she has a brother and a father and they're not allowed to leave, so they decided to all stay together. My boyfriend has also stayed at home. He and his father fix army vehicles."

"It's a bit scary, but I believe everything will be okay. I want to go back home again."

“I would like to go to university and also do an apprenticeship to become a tattoo artist. It's a bit scary, but I believe everything will be okay”

Katy, 16, Ukrainian refugee



Plan International / Mikko Toivonen

will understand when he gets older. Sometimes he asks when we will see our father again, or when we can go home or what we will do.

"I want the war to stop right now. I want to call my mother and father and say I will come back."

POLAND | MARCH 10, 2022

FLEEING A TERRIBLE CONFLICT

In Chelm, 27-year-old Katarina waits to catch a train to the nearby city of Lublin. She and her 5-year-old brother and stepmother were dropped off by her father, who after saying an emotional goodbye, drove back to Ukraine to fight.

"When all of this happened I was in Kyiv. On the first day of the fighting my father called me at 5am and told me it's war and we have to go and stay in another village."

"My mother calls me every day because she stayed there and she can't leave the place. It's so terrible, it really is war. I can't explain it. You can't understand unless you've seen it with your own eyes."

"Every day when we went to sleep we heard the alarms and we were scared that something would happen. As soon as you hear a sound you think it's a bomb and

that we have to rush to safety.

"After a while it became a routine and we felt terrible that this was our life now. Whenever we hear something above our heads, it kills people. So many schools and hospitals are getting hit."

"I can't believe what has happened. I don't know when I will see my mother again."

"My sister lives in Lublin and they have a place. They will try to find something for us but it's not easy as there are so many people coming."

"Everyone back home has left their homes. I have just this one bag and me and my brother are homeless. But I believe that it will not be for a long time. I believe that and everyone else believes that."

"My brother doesn't understand what is happening. He knows something has happened, but doesn't know what. He



Plan International / Mikko Toivonen

ROMANIA | MARCH 8, 2022

CHILD'S SILENCE IS THEIR STORY

In a temporary reception centre in Galati, on the Ukraine-Romania border, 7-year-old Anna* arrives with her mother, Sofia, and grandmother after fleeing bombs in Odessa.

"It was an unending nightmare and nerve-wracking," says Sofia, referring to the journey, where the family encountered long delays. News about more bombings, potentially causing harm to civilians, only amplified their anxieties.

Worse, Anna has stopped talking. The child talks only in her sleep, hugging her mother close. Anna witnessed explosions and death back in Odessa – scenes a child should never see.

War and violence rob children of their childhood – and these things silence them too. A child's silence is often their story, and addressing the emotional needs of children and survivors of wars and conflicts should be a priority in humanitarian relief efforts.

In wars, conflicts and refugee settings, child protection risks and other factors amplify human suffering.

Now, with just three backpacks between them containing precious belongings, the three generations must find their way to safety.

Sofia is pulling herself together and making plans. "Life must go on. I have to take care of her," she says, pointing at her daughter.

*Name changed.

The patch of grass in front of Chelm train station is a hive of activity.

Each day, thousands arrive on trains and buses. Many are exhausted from long, difficult journeys and are grateful for the stalls providing hot food, water and baby goods.

Volunteer Justina cooks sausages on a barbecue. "I am a member of the Rural Housewives Circle. I'm here with my friends. It's very important for us to help the people coming from Ukraine."

The people of Poland are offering a warm welcome to refugees, from overflowing donation centres to offers of food, transport and accommodation around the country.

"Today I cried because I saw these young children coming to a new country, meeting new people, learning a new language," Justina adds.

Europe is facing its biggest refugee crisis since World War II. Officials are scrambling to expand housing, schools and social services for an influx of people expected to grow by the day.

"Children and their parents are

extremely anxious, they don't really know what is going to happen – both in their country of Ukraine, but also now in their country of arrival," says Lotte Claessens, from Plan International's emergency response team in Poland.

"For children, it's extremely important that we support them, through activities that can help them relax and feel normal. So, play activities that can take their mind off the situation at the moment. It's also really important that their parents are supported because if their parents are stressed, children feel that."

"Organisations are now preparing, together with the schools, to make sure Ukrainian children can join Polish children in the schools. There's a lot of preparation here for a long-term situation where potentially millions of Ukrainians are hosted in Poland."

Justina says she will continue doing whatever she can to help the families arriving.

"Now Poland is open to all Ukrainians, girls, boys, children, all the people. They are our friends."

“Going to school has significant emotional and psychological benefits. Education provides a safe environment where children and young people can continue to develop knowledge and skills, socialise with others and access other critical support services. Girls who are in school are also less likely to be exposed to dangers such as sexual exploitation, trafficking and domestic labour.”

Emilia Sorrentino, Education in Emergencies Specialist, Plan International

ACTION NEEDED NOW

AN IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE AND END TO ALL HOSTILITIES

It is crucial to find an immediate end to the conflict for the sake of the children and young people impacted by the fighting in Ukraine.

Plan International joins the worldwide demand for an immediate and durable ceasefire.

We encourage further diplomatic efforts to ensure a swift end to the conflict to protect civilians and prevent the loss of lives.

We want to see dialogue between the main parties to the conflict. The solution to this conflict cannot be a military one, but one promoting social cohesion and peacebuilding with the critical involvement of women in peace talks

SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS AND OTHER FACILITIES USED BY CIVILIANS SHOULD NEVER BE A TARGET

Attacks targeting civilians and civilian objects are prohibited under international humanitarian law.

Facilities children need such as schools, hospitals, water and electricity must never be a target in wars and conflicts.

SAFE AND NON-DISCRIMINATORY PASSAGE FOR ALL

Children and their caregivers must remain safe and be given safe passage.

All people affected by conflict have the right to protection, without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, country of origin, sex, age, ability, sexuality or other perceived differences. Treatment at borders must be equitable, prioritising the most vulnerable.

Discrimination has no place in any humanitarian response and it is vital there is **safe and non-discriminatory passage for all individuals fleeing the fighting.**

UNHINDERED ACCESS FOR HUMANITARIAN RELIEF ITEMS AND HUMANITARIAN WORKERS

Denial of access to humanitarian workers assisting children is prohibited under international humanitarian law and could be considered as a crime against humanity and war crime.

Rapid and unhindered access to allow safe passage of humanitarian personnel and relief supplies is non-negotiable.

SUPPORT FOR REFUGEES

Plan International supports the expansion of safe, legal routes for children, their families and caregivers, to reach a place of safety. Those forced to leave their homes must be allowed to seek refuge and support.

Neighbouring countries have opened their borders to those fleeing the fighting. All potential host nations must commit to their obligations under the UN Convention on Refugees. EU Member States should adopt a broad understanding of the scope of application of the Temporary Protection Directive and grant equal protection to any person fleeing Ukraine. **The principle of non-refoulement must be respected,** meaning that no one should be returned to a country where they would face harm.

PROTECTION FOR GIRLS, SEPARATED OR UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

As the situation continues to deteriorate, we are concerned for the protection and safety of girls and young women.

Separated or unaccompanied children are more vulnerable to abuse, and this may result in an increase in the trafficking of people, especially women and children. **The protection and safety of children on the move and in host countries, particularly girls, must be a top priority.** Plan International is committed to ensuring safe access for all children to child- and gender-friendly services, including safe and quality education, child protection and sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response services, psychosocial and mental health support and any other essential services.



Plan International / George Calin



Mikko Toivonen / Plan International

“The scenes of human suffering unfolding in Ukraine should remind us that there is never a bad time to talk about peace and how to give peace – and children – a chance”

Dr Unni Krishnan, Global Humanitarian Director, Plan International

THE NEED FOR FAST, FLEXIBLE FUNDING

Plan International is responding to many heartbreaking humanitarian crises around the world which impact the lives of children. Our efforts in response to the crisis in Ukraine should not stop us supporting children in other critical and underfunded situations.

We urge governments not to divert funds from all other active crises. Humanitarian funding in response to the conflict in Ukraine should be additional and not add to the funding gap.

Donors need to step up and fund all humanitarian emergencies so that more children and families can be supported.

Flexible funding will ensure our responses can adapt to a rapidly evolving humanitarian situation.

Donors should support local, national and international NGOs – including those led by women and young people – whichever is best placed to respond.

National and local organisations with good reputations, acceptance and access should be able to qualify for humanitarian funding.

Plan International welcomes the EU's rapid funding of a humanitarian flash appeal in Ukraine and neighbouring countries.

States should accompany

public statements on conflict de-escalation with flexible, multi-year and predictable levels of funding from the emergency phase onwards and apply a holistic approach to support welfare, education and protection systems.

FIND OUT MORE

For further information and to support Plan International's Ukraine crisis response please visit www.plan-international.org/emergencies/ukraine-appeal/



ABOUT PLAN INTERNATIONAL

We strive to advance children's rights and equality for girls all over the world.

We recognise the power and potential of every single child. But this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination. And it's girls who are most affected.

As an independent development and humanitarian organisation, we work alongside children, young people, our supporters and partners to tackle the root causes of the challenges facing girls and all vulnerable children.

We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood, and 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.

For 85 years, we have been building powerful partnerships for children, and we are active in over 75 countries.

CONTACT US

Plan International
Global Hub

Dukes Court, Duke Street, Woking,
Surrey GU21 5BH, United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0) 1483 755155

Fax: +44 (0) 1483 756505

✉ info@plan-international.org

🌐 plan-international.org

📘 facebook.com/planinternational

🐦 twitter.com/planglobal

📷 instagram.com/planinternational

🌐 linkedin.com/company/plan-international

📺 youtube.com/user/planinternationaltv