



PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE IS EVERY CHILD'S RIGHT

Plan International's Global Strategy for
Child Protection Programming 2015–2020

Presented here is Plan International's first ever global strategy on child protection programming that provides a clear direction and mandate for the organisation to actualise the right to protection from violence for all children, in development and emergency settings. The strategy sets out a robust agenda for the organisation to contribute towards strengthening of the national child protection systems in its programme countries, recognising that children, families, communities, civil society and government are an integral part of such a system. Grounded in the foundations of child centered community development, the success of this strategy will be measured by how individual countries contribute to their child protection systems and partner at various levels to combat violence against children. This strategy is a result of a highly consultative process that reached children and youth, Plan International staff, external specialists globally and the paper has been put in place with the joint efforts of the global child protection programming reference group.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Global Strategy for Child Protection Programming is the first time that Plan International has articulated its work on child protection as a distinct area of programmatic intervention. It represents the organisation's serious commitment to prevention from and elimination of any form of violence against children.

The strategy outlines Plan International's evolving approach to protection of children from violence and the programmatic direction as well as the priorities for the next five years (2015-2020). It identifies where the organisation can make the greatest contribution and where its energy and resources will be invested. The strategy provides a high-level conceptual framework for Plan International's engagement on child protection programming. It is intended to be useful for colleagues in Country Offices and National Organisations to develop, fund and implement programmes within a coherent global framework.

Building upon the recommendations of the UN study on Violence against Children in 2006, Plan International will work with governments, civil society organisations, communities and children to promote the development and implementation of strong and sustainable **national child protection systems**. In line with many other global children's rights organisations, Plan International recognises the inter-connectedness of children's rights and the complex causes and consequences of violence in both development and emergency settings. By adopting a systems strengthening approach to the work on child protection, Plan International will contribute to lasting social outcomes. The systems based approach is in line with best practice across the sector and positions Plan International strongly in relation to peer organisations.

Plan International's work to strengthen child protection systems will continue to be informed by the Child Centred Community Development approach. The work will focus on: strengthening the environment for children and families in their communities; measures to tackle exclusion and gender inequality; working with civil society organisations to enhance their role in child protection systems; supporting and influencing governments to assume their primary duty to protect children; and increasing Plan International's own accountability

to the children, families and communities Plan International works with. Plan International strongly believes that any form of violence against children is preventable and through this strategy commits to strengthen its efforts towards prevention across all Plan International countries.

To guide Plan International's child protection programming over the next five years, a Global Statement on Child Protection Programming has been agreed:

Plan International adopts a comprehensive systems approach to child protection that aims to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against all children and young people in development and emergency settings.

To this end, the child protection strategy establishes a common global agenda and ambitious framework for action. It defines key changes in four groups of actors that are fundamental for a systems approach (community, families, children and government) and focuses the organisation's work on these specific areas:

FOCUS AREA 1: COMMUNITIES WORKING TOGETHER TO PROTECT CHILDREN

The communities in which children grow up should be places of safety and protection, the 'frontline' of the child protection system. Plan International will work with communities to become havens of safety for children. Strengthening effective and tailored community-based child protection mechanisms will be a global priority in the next five years. Partnership at various levels will be crucial in achieving this.

FOCUS AREA 2: FAMILIES PROVIDING CARE AND PROTECTION

In order for Plan International to achieve change in children's lives, priority will be given to bolstering the care and protection children receive at home. Plan International will create partnerships with the state and local civil society organisations to support families to care for their children and will, as a second global priority, promote 'positive parenting' in the communities where it works.

FOCUS AREA 3: CHILDREN AND YOUTH CONTRIBUTING TO THEIR OWN PROTECTION

Children are at the centre of the child protection system. They are not simply beneficiaries of protection systems, but are active contributors to it. Plan International believes that, with the appropriate encouragement and support, children can contribute to their own protection in line with their evolving capacities. Plan International will promote active citizenship among children and help children to claim their rights to protection.

FOCUS AREA 4: GOVERNMENTS DEVELOPING INTEGRATED CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS AND SERVICES

Governments have the primary responsibility for appropriate legislation and the delivery of a wide range of services to ensure children are protected. Plan International will support local and national government institutions to implement good models of child protection practice, generate robust data collection mechanisms, and will support advocacy efforts at national, regional and global levels. Additional guidance will be prepared on pursuing this work in fragile states.

In support of these focus areas, Plan International strives to become a thought and practice leader on child protection in development and emergency

contexts. The strategy presented here has been underpinned by a robust and innovative research agenda. The strategy reflects Plan International's recognition of the importance of evidence-based programming: this will enable the organisation to tailor its programmes to the contexts Plan International works in and maximises the outcomes for children. Over the next five years, a comprehensive agenda for building the capacity and experience of Plan International's child protection staff will be developed as well as a resource mobilisation and investment plan, some of which has been spelled out as a part of this paper.

Overall, this strategy spells out a paradigm shift in the way Plan International approaches the 'right to protection of children from violence.' There is a big shift from an issue based approach towards preventing more and more children from falling out of safety nets by investing in effectiveness of child protection systems that are sustainable and that work in partnership with children, families, communities and the civil society.

At the end of this strategy, it would be desirable to see how each programme country has included a comprehensive review of national child protection systems in their child rights situation assessment and how each country strategic plan has reflected upon strengthening this system, backed up with both technical and financial resources. By following this path the organisation should be able to eventually measure the impact it is making in protecting children from violence in sustainable ways through better child protection systems.



INTRODUCTION

Together with other international agencies, Plan International promotes an ambitious vision for the global Post-2015 agenda: “by 2030, all girls and boys live a life free from all forms of violence, are protected in conflicts and disasters, and thrive in a safe, caring, family environment.”¹

The strategy is inspired by this vision and it confirms Plan International’s commitment to realising children’s right to protection, enabling them to live with dignity and develop their potential as members of society.

This five-year strategy is Plan International’s first global strategy on child protection as its own distinct area of programme work.² It is founded on Plan International’s Child Centred Community Development approach and builds on Plan International’s diverse programming experiences and particular strengths. As such, the strategy represents a milestone for the organisation and our work on Child Protection.

Purpose of Plan International’s global child protection programming strategy

The Global Strategy for Child Protection Programming establishes Plan International’s priorities in the field of child protection programming for the period 2015-2020.

Its purpose is to:

- describe what Plan International stands for in terms of child protection and establish a common agenda for this area of work across the entire Plan International family;
- set the overall direction for programming in order to promote a clearer focus and improve the consistency and quality of the programme work;
- identify specific areas where the global organisation will build expertise and invest particular effort and resources.

The strategy provides direction for those who are responsible for designing and implementing projects at the regional and country level. It is not intended to be prescriptive or inflexible. It aims to guide and support Plan International staff in the diverse

settings in which the organisation works, bringing greater consistency and quality to child protection programming.

The strategy identifies linkages between different areas of child protection work: Child Protection in Development (CPiD), Child Protection in Emergencies (CPiE) and Plan International’s “*Say ‘Yes!’ To Keeping Children Safe*” Safeguarding policy.

The strategy has been created after a comprehensive process of consultation with Plan International staff and other development partners, as well as children in eleven countries across all four of the organisation’s programme regions. The quotes in the text are cited from what children and young people told us during the consultations on developing the global strategy. The strategy has been guided by a global reference group of child protection specialists. It draws on a wide range of **assessments and resources**, including the Thematic Review of Plan International’s Child Protection Programming (2012).³



1. Plan International and other organisations are advocating to world leaders to adopt this vision as the specific goal on Child Protection in the Post-2015 framework. See Plan International (2013). Putting Children and Young People’s Rights at the Heart of the Post-2015 Agenda
 2. Child Protection is defined as one of Plan International’s eight impact areas. See Plan International (2010). Promoting Rights to End Poverty, Achieving lasting change through Child Centred Community Development
 3. Global Child Protection Services (2012). Plan International’s Child Protection Programming, Thematic Review

PART 1:

THE GLOBAL CONTEXT OF

CHILD PROTECTION

Global situation on child protection

The scale of violence against children is immeasurable, especially because so much abuse and exploitation often remains invisible, is not reported or is undocumented. The groundbreaking United Nations Study on Violence against Children in 2006 estimated shocking levels of physical and sexual violence and exploitation across all regions of the world. Despite international child protection initiatives since the study, the Global Survey on Violence against Children undertaken on behalf of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children in 2011 reports that every year over 500 million children around the world are affected by some form of violence. Violence often has a lifelong impact on children. It affects their physical, emotional and social development and destroys families and communities. Beyond the harm caused to children, violence undermines the economic development of a society due to the long term negative consequences on physical and mental health, education and employment, and social harmony.

The Right to Protection is defined in Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as: *'the right to protection from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence'*. Article 19 is complemented by several other articles that refer to specific protection issues such as economic exploitation, sexual abuse, trafficking, as well as the General Comment 13, which in 2011 added to article 19: *'the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence against children'*.

“WHENEVER WE TALK ABOUT SENSITIVE ISSUES IN SCHOOL, WE BECOME TARGETS FOR TEACHERS AND WE END UP LOSING SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES.”
- CHILD, SIERRA LEONE

Since 2006, Plan International has joined other international agencies working on children's rights to address the issue of violence against children. Through Plan International's flagship initiatives, the organisation is tackling some of the root causes of violence (Because I am a Girl campaign) and is creating non-violent environments (Learn Without Fear). This global strategy is aligned with the thinking and approach of other agencies such as Save the Children, World Vision, Terre des Hommes, ChildFund and UNICEF in finding solutions for the elimination of violence against children as part of the post-2015 agenda.



Understanding child protection in the context of other rights

“Once the teacher struck a child. He pulled his ears and it bled a little. The teacher said that his skin was dry and for that reason his skin split. And he hit a girl for not having done her schoolwork.”

Child from Bolivia

Plan International's impact area on Child Protection focuses on the specific right to protection from violence, neglect and abuse as outlined in Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This should not be confused with the term *'protection of children's rights'*. In this context, 'children's rights' covers the much broader concept of promoting achievement of all children's rights of the CRC, such as Right to Health, Right to Education and others. The 'right to protection' requires its own specific set of interventions. But child protection also reinforces and is reinforced by work on other rights. A child who grows up in a protected environment is more likely to be healthy, learn in school, and be able to participate in society.

For example, the rights to protection and education

- When school teachers demand 'sex for grades' from children, neither the right to protection from violence nor the right to a quality education are assured.
- When girls fear being raped on the way to school, they are less likely to make the daily journey or to enrol for secondary education.
- When school teachers physically beat children for poor school test results, this is a protection issue because they are more likely to drop out of school and have increased exposure to the labour market.

Ensuring children are protected from violence is essential for the fulfilment of other human and children's rights. A child who grows up in a protected environment is more likely to achieve core developmental, educational and health goals, among others, and will be better equipped to contribute to and participate in the development of his or her society.

A systems approach to child protection

Over the past decade, approaches to child protection have developed from focusing on specific categories of vulnerable children towards a more strategic and holistic effort to prevent and respond to all forms of violence. The recommendation of the UN study on Violence against Children in 2006 that 'all States develop a multi-faceted and systematic framework to respond to violence against children'⁴ provided the impetus for a number of international children's rights agencies to adopt a more comprehensive 'systems approach' in their programme strategies for child protection.⁵

There is currently no internationally recognised definition of a systems approach. However, based on the emerging consensus in the sector, Plan International defines a child protection system as:

A comprehensive, interactive and sustainable series of functions and structures including laws, policies, and services (at all levels) within a country with the purpose of preventing and responding to all forms of violence against all children in that country.

An effective child protection system comprises not only the institutions of government, but also the children themselves, their families, communities and the wider civil society. Each has their responsibilities and plays their role in protecting children.

Child protection systems have to be uniquely adapted to their context. Countries differ in terms of resources, current laws, practices, cultures and what can realistically be achieved within a certain period of time. However, most national systems will encompass some recognisable features such as:

- **A legal and policy framework** which likely provides: agency structures and mandates, service standards and regulations, and judicial responses for children in need of special protection. This framework may include local level, customary by-laws, as well as a penal code that stipulates offences against children.
- **Services for families and children** which are designed to promote child and family welfare and protection and to respond to child protection concerns. These may be overseen by a single

4. UN Secretary General, 2006. Report of the independent expert for the United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children. UN General Assembly.

5. UNICEF, 2008-2013. Global Child Protection Strategy; Save the Children, 2009. Building Rights-Based National Child Protection Systems: A concept paper to support Save the Children's work; World Vision, 2011. A Systems Approach to Child Protection: Discussion paper.

agency, but are often mandated across and provided by a number of different departments and agencies, including civil society organisations.

- **Family and community support mechanisms**, including forms of mediation, kinship care and restorative justice. These processes are often not formalised by law regulation.

These features of systems are often supported by:

- A range of professionals, volunteers and community actors (some mandated by law) who work to protect children. These may be social workers, lawyers, teachers and nurses, village committees, religious and community leaders, child peers, among others.
- Coordination mechanisms and networks charged with management of the child protection system, ensuring its effective functioning.
- Active civil society organisations which represent children, promote their interests and deliver services.
- Specialised budgets and funds for implementation of the system, aiming to make the system function at a maximum level for the protection of children.

A systems approach recognises the inter-connectedness of children's rights and the complex causes and consequences of violence. It seeks to contribute to comprehensive, lasting social change, led by governments that fulfill their primary responsibilities as duty bearers for all children in their country. The approach also recognises that a fragile state (e.g. in situations of emergency) needs support and necessary guidance to build back these mechanisms.

Individual child protection programmes or projects may still focus on specific instances of violence (e.g. child marriage, sexual violence) that are of particular importance. However, a systems approach emphasises the importance of placing specific issues within a broader perspective in order to contribute to long term, sustainable change.



Photo © Plan International

Understanding child protection in the context of safeguarding

This strategy describes how Plan International will promote and work towards fulfilment of the *'Right to Protection'* through our programme work. We must also make sure that all Plan International's internal processes, activities and behaviours do not put children at risk. Plan International's *"Say 'Yes!' to Keeping Children Safe"* policy ensures that no children are put at risk through their association with Plan International. This is known as 'safeguarding'.

The policy applies equally to all Plan International staff as well as to anybody acting on behalf of Plan International such as partners, consultants and visitors.

The *"Say 'Yes!' To Keeping Children Safe"* policy does not describe how a child protection project should be designed or how to address a particular issue of violence. However, a good understanding of the policy and code of conduct can help identify potential risks of harm involved in programming. The requirements of the policy may provide a good opportunity to discuss child protection issues with communities, partners, local authorities or others Plan International staff come into contact with as part of their work.

PART 2: PLAN INTERNATIONAL'S APPROACH TO CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAMMING



Plan International adopts a systems approach in its work on child protection in both development and emergency settings. This means that all Plan International's work on child protection aims to support, strengthen and implement effective national child protection systems. Plan International strongly believes that any form of violence against children is preventable and investment in the improvement of child protection systems is a key strategy to do so.

In our disaster response work, Plan International will take the opportunity to initiate or 'build back better' child protection systems. Nonetheless, in these settings, Plan International will find a balance between longer-term system building and rapid identification of and support for vulnerable children in immediate needs.

By applying a systems approach that considers the macro socio-economic context and aims to address the factors that perpetuate violence, Plan International's work will be more effective in contributing to long term approaches to prevent abuse and to respond to abuse. Overall, Plan International's approach will have a stronger focus on the preventative action, but will also comprise appropriate protection response and restorative care, also in disaster settings.

“OUR HOME PROVIDES US WITH PROTECTION, ESPECIALLY IF PARENTS SHOW THEIR CARE AND LOVE.”
- CHILDREN FROM EGYPT

Key areas of work include:

- **Internationally**, Plan International will work with others to advocate for stronger action on Child Protection; engage in the monitoring and reporting of commitments to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child⁶; and continue to pursue targeted advocacy work on specific protection issues.
- At **regional and national levels**, Plan International will support and influence the development of laws, policies and budgets on child protection and support civil society efforts on specific national and regional priorities.
- At **district and community levels**, Plan International will work with local institutions, organisations and with communities, families and children to develop and promote protective services, mechanisms and practices that contribute to creating a safe and supportive environment for children.

Adopting a systems approach to child protection requires a conceptual shift in programme design. It also requires increased investment in developing internal policy and guidance as well as professional competences and resources. This includes:

- Developing a strong research agenda to build our own knowledge and underpin advocacy efforts;
- Developing a clear monitoring and evaluation framework that can support consistent assessment and learning from the diverse experiences across the different contexts;
- Strengthening integration and embedding child protection across all programming areas;
- Developing specific expertise and innovative programming models in specific areas of child protection.

10. Please refer to <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/CRCIndex.aspx>

Plan International has defined Child Protection as priority within its Disaster Management strategies. Plan International will continue to build on its emerging expertise within this area and to strengthen the coordination and alignment between Child Protection programmes in Development and in emergencies. Within Child Protection in Emergencies, Plan International is focusing particularly on:

- Prevention by linking CPIE programming with Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and child protection in development programming, ensuring that children live in resilient communities where their protection is ensured by strong child protection systems at all levels.
- Responding to priority child protection needs in emergencies, as identified in the Child Protection in Emergencies Minimum Standards: dangers and injuries, physical violence and harmful practices, sexual violence, psychosocial distress, association with armed forces and armed groups, child labour, separation from parents and caregivers and justice for children.
- Community-based child protection mechanisms and Child Friendly Spaces are key strategies that Plan International uses to mobilise communities, provide key information and awareness messages to children and families and to provide non-specialised community-based psychosocial support. We focus the identification and support for vulnerable children affected by an emergency, either through our own services or through referral to other agencies.
- Mainstream child protection across different Plan International key program areas in disaster response (eg. nutrition, education, economic recovery, shelter, distribution, water and sanitation) to prevent further harm to children within these interventions.
- Children's participation and agency is an essential part of child protection in emergencies, both to strengthen the ability of children and young people to protect them and to reduce the impact of harm. Strengthening the coping skills of children and removing the risks within the family, school and community environments helps strengthen their ability to protect themselves and reduce the impact of harm.



Tackling exclusion and gender inequality in child protection

Marginalisation and exclusion exists in many forms and to varying degrees in most communities where Plan International works. Discrimination and stereotyping can be barriers for some children to access opportunities that others in society enjoy, as well as drivers of persecution and abuse. Exclusion may be based on gender or other characteristics such as ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, HIV status, migration status or caste. The more these intersect with each other, the worse the effects on the children involved. For example, girls often become the most excluded people within an excluded group. Plan International's experience in child protection work recognises that different girls and boys from the same community are subject to different kinds of violence and are affected in different ways by their experiences. We recognise that girls are disproportionately affected by violence such as domestic violence and child marriage.

One of Plan International's core CCCD standards is 'Tackling Exclusion and Gender Inequality'. This strengthens our ability to tailor interventions to the different needs of different girls and boys and allows us to address the causes and consequences of violence more effectively.

"Girls who get pregnant early get bored and become obligated to form a family and raise their children the same way." **Children from Peru**

"In our community there are many families, many homes where the husbands beat their wives and children. We also know that there are families where fathers rape their daughters. It is dangerous to be on the street at night in our community and so far, for this reason, we feel insecure. But in the daytime we can walk on the streets without danger. Many times one feels insecure in our houses because there is lots of violence. The husbands come home drunk and they beat their wives, and one has to watch your mother being hit. Also, many husbands leave home and the children live alone with their mothers, resulting in many having to go to work very young. One has to be careful not to upset the narco-traffickers or get involved with them because they are armed and do not respect persons, even if one is a child or a young person,"

- Children from Guatemala



Photo © Plan International

Applying CCCD in child protection programming

Child Centred Community Development (CCCD) is Plan International's distinctive approach to working with communities to help more children and young people realise their potential. As with all other programmes, Plan International's Global Strategy for Child Protection Programming is informed by and achieved through the CCCD approach which is built on two foundations:

Firstly, all children have the same universal human rights, which are set out in international treaties, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This includes the right to protection from violence. National governments have primary responsibility for ensuring that all children enjoy their rights.

Secondly, communities are powerful when they act together. Plan International supports groups of people to come together to tackle their own issues. When people take action together, they support each other to claim their rights and their children's rights, as active citizens.

Working with children & communities

- Children themselves are important agents of change, who can contribute to their protection by identifying risks of violence and influencing peers and adults to change unsafe and harmful attitudes and practices.
- Families and communities are the front line of the child protection system. They have key responsibilities for children's care and protection and can influence wider protection systems.

Starting from an understanding of the children's right to protection and its implications, Plan International supports children and community members to develop their own ways to address the factors that perpetuate violence in their communities; and to become part of the wider systemic efforts to prevent and respond to violence against children.

Tackling exclusion and gender inequality

- Discrimination or exclusion increases individuals' vulnerability and thereby risk of violence.
- Discrimination and exclusion on the basis of a wide variety of characteristics is often entrenched in social and cultural structures and values.

Plan International works with communities, civil society and government in a way that respects, but also where necessary, challenges stereotypes and practices in order to strengthen awareness of the causes and consequences of exclusion and inequalities; and to help ensure that interventions are tailored to the different needs of different girls and boys, women and men.

Engaging with civil society

- Civil society organisations play a crucial role in child protection systems. They deliver a wide range of services. They support families and communities to protect children and access support. They influence public policy, for instance, through monitoring actual performance and pressing for adequate budgeting.
- Civil society organisations also directly represent children and groups who are vulnerable to specific abuses. They provide these people with a collective voice, which makes them more influential in public debates.

“WE WOULD LIKE IF PLAN INTERNATIONAL GIVE MORE SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN COMING FROM VERY POOR FAMILIES, THOSE WHO DO NOT HAVE PARENTS, LIVING WITH SICK PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS.”
- CHILD FROM SRI LANKA

Plan International supports civil society actors to embed child protection in their own practice and to work together to promote and influence national and international child protection systems. Plan International supports civil society organisations to become stronger and more sustainable, so that different groups of people have a reliable means of pursuing their interests and protecting their rights.

Supporting and influencing government

- Government and its institutions are ultimately accountable for establishing appropriate laws, policies and services to prevent and respond to violence against all children in a country.
- Public offices and services also have a responsibility for ensuring effective and transparent governance that is responsive to the needs of all citizens.

Plan International will support and influence legislation and policy making, support improvement in service provision on child provision and promote linkages and dialogue between communities and government actors.

Strengthening Plan International's accountability

- Plan International must apply the Child Protection Policy (Safeguarding) in all its programmes and programming processes; whether carried out by Plan International directly or through partners.
- Plan International must also demonstrate the same transparent, responsive and participatory approach that it expects from others.

Plan International works in partnership with children and communities to design, implement and review programmes and makes sure that mechanisms for reporting and responding to incidences of violence are in place in all the locations where it works.

Key characteristics of good practice

This section summarises key recommendations for good practice based on Plan International's CCCD approach and experience within and outside Plan International.

- 1 Design projects on the basis of a strong understanding of national and local child protection systems.** We can only strengthen systems if we understand how they are designed to operate in theory and how they actually operate in practice. Project teams should understand the relevant national policies, laws, government structures, cultural norms and drivers of violence.
- 2 Collaborate with other actors.** Child protection systems are complicated and involve many different actors, from different sectors (such as the police, health, education and social services). Plan International is only one actor among them, with limited influence. Project teams should identify how to maximise the potential for change through co-operation and collaboration with all other relevant actors. This normally depends on Plan International demonstrating that it is serious about partnership based on mutual respect, and that we can add real value over several years.
- 3 Continuously listen to vulnerable children.** Review activities with children and communities to identify potential risks and unintended effects for all the children who might come into contact with or be affected by our work. Find ways of listening to children, that children can access easily and feel safe and comfortable to use. This is not always easy. Networks of peers and trusted adults can help, if they are developed consistently over time.
- 4 Engage with local authority figures** such as community & religious leaders, school head teachers and others, in order to encourage them to champion child protection. Their attitudes and practices can have a major effect on children's protection, particularly at the local level. Project teams should consider how they can engage in a constructive dialogue, striking a balance between challenging any harmful practices and taking a supportive approach to encourage engagement and reflection.
- 5 Encourage dialogue between service users** (such as children and community members) and authorities and service providers (such as government officials and teachers). Both sides have important roles to play. Service providers often lack resources or full awareness of the issues. The more that these groups can understand each other, the more likely it is that protection systems will work for all children. This can require delicate work to overcome misunderstandings and mistrust.
- 6 Consider the political aspect of enabling change in national systems** and use it to promote the fulfillment of all children's rights. Government decision making is inherently political. Project teams can ensure they understand the political agenda of important actors and are ready with constructive, practical proposals to influence their agenda when opportunities arise. They can also identify specific opportunities to influence decision making in advance.
- 7 Analyse and monitor the different protection needs and risks of different children** and tailor programme design and implementation accordingly. Excluded children can be unintentionally left out of Plan International's programmes. This can worsen their exclusion, reducing their status and making them more vulnerable.
- 8 Link local experiences to national and international advocacy efforts.** Support excluded children (and their representatives) to represent themselves as much as possible, to help them gain the skills and confidence to promote their own rights. Monitoring violence and child protection services can provide important evidence for advocacy. Project teams should consider how they can link up with international efforts to monitor how well governments are meeting their obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

9 Encourage other programmes to address child protection issues. Many other programmes work with vulnerable children and can promote key child protection mechanisms. Ensuring that child protection considerations inform all other program areas helps to maximise child protection and minimise the risks that could be inadvertently exacerbated by programs designed without proper consideration of children’s safety or wellbeing.

10 Ensure that all staff in all offices are familiar with Plan International’s safeguarding policy “Say ‘Yes!’ to Keeping Children Safe”, and follow it. Ensure that the staff understands the difference between it and Child Protection programming, as described in this strategy.

Further guidance to support child protection programming will be developed over the coming years.



PART 3: STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRAMMING

Conceptual framework

The framework for Plan International's Child Protection Strategy defines key changes in four groups of actors that are fundamental for a systems approach: community, families, children and government. This framework sets out a common agenda for Plan International's work on Child Protection programming. The framework recognises the importance of prevention from violence against children and aims at preventing more and more children from falling out of safety nets as well as building these safety nets.

The framework illustrates the inter-connectedness between different areas of change and the need for programming to combine different approaches and strategies in order to achieve sustainable results. There is no hierarchy or sequence amongst the different focus areas. Specific programmes should be designed and adapted to the local situation, resources and opportunities.

GLOBAL STATEMENT ON CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAMMING

Plan International adopts a comprehensive systems approach to child protection that aims to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against all children and young people in development and emergency settings.

Plan International will work to mobilise and strengthen the capacities of children, families and communities, and to influence and support key state actors in order to create sustainable systems that ensure a safe environment for all children.

Plan International's four focus areas for child protection programming



FOCUS AREA 1

Communities
working together
to protect children



FOCUS AREA 2

Families providing
care and protection



FOCUS AREA 3

Children
contributing
to their own
protection



FOCUS AREA 4

Governments
developing
integrated child
protection systems
and services

Both in development and emergencies settings



FOCUS AREA 1: COMMUNITIES WORKING TOGETHER TO PROTECT CHILDREN

The communities in which children grow up should be places of safety and protection. In a sense the community is the ‘frontline’ of the child protection system. It is within the community that protective measures can be enhanced to prevent any child from suffering violence.

Community members (such as leaders, teachers, elders and neighbours) continue to play a significant role in the lives of children. Despite the changes brought by modernisation, the well-known proverb ‘it takes a village to raise a child’ seems to still apply in most contexts. Community members play a host of functions in relation to child-rearing and childhood: nurturing and socialising children, educating and disciplining, caring and protecting.

Unfortunately, communities can also be environments that (either directly or indirectly) tolerate and perpetuate violence against children. Plan International will support communities to:

- Become havens of safety for children, ensuring that, for example, children can walk to school, bathe or fetch water without the risk of physical and sexual violence;
- Promote positive non-violent discipline in all community settings, especially in homes and at school;
- Promote local customs and practices that enhance the protection of children, while tackling those practices that are harmful and jeopardise a child’s attainment of other rights, including child marriage, child labour, and female genital mutilation / cutting;
- Are prepared for and able to protect children in times of adversity and emergency.



FOCUS AREA 2: FAMILIES PROVIDING CARE AND PROTECTION

Plan International believes that non-abusive and violence free family environments are fundamental to ensuring the holistic development of children. While the nature of families differs around the world, the role of parents, caregivers and extended kinship networks is central to all child protection systems. In order for Plan International to achieve change in children’s lives, priority will be given to bolstering the care and protection children receive at home. In line with Plan International’s thinking on family-based care, practices and services that maintain children with their own families and ensure reintegration and rehabilitation of children affected by violence will be promoted. Plan International will help children to thrive in their families by:

- Creating partnerships with local service-providers to support families to care for their children. These services might include livelihood assistance, counselling and advisory, legal aid, and respite care for parents / children. Support will be available on a premise of inclusion, making support available to those who are especially at risk of violence or who have less access to support.
- Promoting positive parenting/caregiving. Building on its existing experience, Plan International will engage with communities to explore the reasons for issues such as child neglect and physical punishment of children, supporting parents and families to find alternative positive ways of caregiving.
- Supporting caregivers, parents and families to care for and protect young children (in line with Plan International’s Early Childhood Care and Development strategy)⁷ so that children are given every opportunity to thrive in the first years and are thereby able to develop and fulfil their potential.
- Supporting wider Plan International programmes to help families access birth registration services with the aim of ensuring that young children are able to access protection, education and health services (among others).

7. Global Review of ECCD, Plan International 2013



FOCUS AREA 3: CHILDREN AND YOUTH CONTRIBUTING TO THEIR OWN PROTECTION

Children are at the centre of the child protection system. They are not simply beneficiaries of protection systems, but are active contributors to it. Plan International believes that, with the appropriate encouragement and support, children can contribute to their own protection in line with their evolving capacities. However, while they have a role to play, Plan International recognises that the ultimate responsibility for a child's protection lies with adults. Accordingly, this strategy is aligned with the main programmatic theme to 'help children help themselves', with the main intention of:

- Supporting children to articulate their experiences and concerns: through active citizenship within the community (and at other levels) they are made aware of their right to protection and are encouraged to advocate for them. By empowering children, Plan International enables them to identify and claim their rights, becoming a strong ally for changing patterns of violence and for affecting policy change.
- Encouraging peer-to-peer learning and support: children are also, in some cases, the perpetrators of violence, whether in classroom bullying, street gangs or in other circumstances. Plan International's strategy emphasises the importance of breaking cycles of violence, ensuring that future generations do not face the same risks. Instead children become the proponents of violence-free communities and families.
- Mitigating the effects of disasters and conflicts in many of the communities and countries where Plan International works. Programmes will be established to ensure that at the times of greatest adversity children are in a position to advocate for their protection rights and to keep themselves as safe as possible, especially when separated from their families and caregivers.



FOCUS AREA 4: GOVERNMENTS DEVELOPING INTEGRATED CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS AND SERVICES

Governments have the primary responsibility for appropriate legislation and the delivery of a wide range of services to ensure children are protected. We will work with national and local government institutions in a number of ways, including:

Plan International will focus on influencing the government in a variety of ways by: helping build knowledge and evidence to inform the government, collaborating to implement appropriate policies and supporting capacities on child protection issues. This includes:

- As appropriate to local context and priorities, provide support to implement and improve specific aspects of public legislation, systems and service delivery.
- Plan International will seek practical methods that can be demonstrated to bring about improved protection outcomes that are replicable, sustainable and can be scaled-up. Methods promoted by Plan International will be intentionally designed to be practical and affordable for government (and other actors) to replicate.
- Work with children, communities, civil society and government to develop channels and mechanisms to allow the voices and opinions of children and communities to be heard at the national, regional and global level and contribute to wider advocacy efforts.
- Work jointly with other civil society organisations nationally and internationally to promote children's Right to Protection, including initiatives such as: the Post-2015 framework, monitoring and reporting for the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), lobbying national and international institutions and governments, and developing global and local advocacy and campaign initiatives.
- Develop a clear research agenda and processes to identify and document promising programming models and practices in order both to build Plan International's own knowledge and expertise and to contribute to knowledge in the sector.

Work with state structures may not be possible in an emergency situation for a range of reasons (eg. weakened structures, lack of political will, the state itself might be abusive and negligent). In such situations, Plan International needs to assume part of the state's responsibility for service provision. Immediate system building efforts in this situation should focus more on the community level.

Global Priorities

Plan International's global One Plan One Goal strategy sets the ambition for Plan International to become a thought leader within the area of Child Protection. In order to achieve this, Plan International will have to engage purposefully in international advocacy, based on highly credible analysis and evidence. This should draw on innovative and replicable models and methodologies for programming. These activities will need to be supported internally with appropriate investments in developing policy, guidance and capacities. To progress towards that aim, Plan International has defined the following global level priorities. To a large extent, these build on work undertaken in Plan International's four regions, which will be spearheaded and strongly supported by the central organisation.

Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms (CBCPM)

Plan International is known for its long term presence in the communities. With this key strength Plan International can work closely with communities to strengthen child protection mechanisms, making them a key stakeholder in the child protection system and building safety nets for their children. A global project has already been initiated which includes research, piloting and documentation of adaptable models, advocacy development and capacity building.

Positive Parenting

Plan International will develop expertise in creating a positive family environment and its role in the holistic development of children. We will undertake research and develop practical approaches to promoting positive family relationships and care giving, with a particular focus on the early years and child neglect. This will include exploring and promoting alternatives to violence in the family and building resilience amongst caregivers in emergency settings.

Research and Evaluation Agenda

The overall purpose of Plan International's research agenda 2015-2020 is twofold:

1. To contribute to the global evidence and learning about child protection in development and emergency contexts; and
2. To provide the evidence-base for Plan International's child protection programming.

Through this dual function, Plan International will become seen as a thought-leader in international child protection. The ambitious research agenda demands (a) adequate investment, (b) a rising level of quality of research studies and (c) a review of how Plan International disseminates and advocates its research findings.



The following priorities for areas of research have been identified:

- Review of the effectiveness of different models of community based child protection mechanisms in development and emergency settings.
- Anthropological based study on the cultural values, beliefs and practices that enhance well-being within families.
- Study on the importance of promoting family care in order to enhance child protection systems.
- Study on the factors that create strong families, resilient in emergency settings.
- Study on positive peer relationships, focused upon good practices for promoting strong peer networks.
- A representative analysis of child protection budgets in different countries and regions, collated into a global report showing national investments on child protection.
- Studies on cutting-edge monitoring and evaluation techniques for quantifying child protection concerns and for measuring impact of global programmes and initiatives.
- A study on Cyber Crime with children in Plan International communities and suggest a way forward.

At the end of this strategy, it would be desirable to see how each programme country has included a comprehensive review of national child protection systems in their child rights situation assessment and how each country strategic plan has reflected upon strengthening this system backed up with both technical and financial resource. By following this path the organisation should be able to eventually measure the impact it is making in protecting children from violence in sustainable ways through better child protection systems.

Key outcomes and interventions

The following table presents key outcomes and interventions that should be considered in the design of Child Protection projects, in order to implement Plan International's systems approach.

It is not exhaustive or mandatory. It provides recommendations and practical guidance to inform project design and implementation.

FOCUS AREA 1: COMMUNITIES WORK TOGETHER TO PROTECT CHILDREN

Key outcomes	Key interventions
Community members understand children's right to protection and promote violence-free communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness and commitment of community members on the right to protection, including involving children in their own protection. • Strengthen capacities of community members and leaders to identify, prevent and respond to violence against children, including child protection measures in emergencies.
Community members take appropriate measures to ensure the care and protection of children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support collective action by community members against harmful practices and discrimination of specific groups or individuals. • Support community members to monitor issues and advocate for change at the level of local and national duty-bearers and service providers.

FOCUS AREA 2: FAMILIES PROVIDE CARE AND PROTECTION

Key outcomes	Key interventions
Families understand the causes and consequences of violence against children and adopt positive parenting practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen families' understanding of the causes and effects of violence against children (including harmful practices) and their commitment to tackle it. • Enhance the knowledge, skills and commitment of parents and caregivers on positive parenting.
Families have the ability to protect their children, including in emergency circumstances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with civil society and state partners and organisations to support vulnerable families and help them develop strategies to avoid all forms of violence (abuse, neglect and exploitation). • Support parents/caregivers, to identify, prevent and respond to incidences of violence in their homes and families. • Strengthen the ability of parents and caregivers to care for and protect their children in the early years.

FOCUS AREA 3: CHILDREN CONTRIBUTING TO THEIR OWN PROTECTION

Key outcomes	Key interventions
Children have the ability to protect themselves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen the knowledge, confidence and commitment of children to recognise, prevent and seek help for all forms of violence. Increase children's awareness of protection services and support mechanisms.
Children advocate for and participate in child protection initiatives and decision-making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support children to work together to prevent peer-on-peer violence including bullying and gender based violence. Support children to mobilise around child protection issues and to work in partnership with civil society and service providers. Invest in capacities of children to be able to protection themselves in situations of emergency. Strengthen children's capacity and opportunities to speak out and influence others about their right to protection.

FOCUS AREA 4: GOVERNMENTS PROVIDE INTEGRATED CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS AND SERVICES

Key outcomes	Key interventions
National and district level child protection legislation, policies, structures and budgets are in place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the development of a robust research agenda to provide evidence for appropriate government action. Support national and district authorities to establish, improve and enforce appropriate legislation and policies on child protection. Support and work with other civil society organisations to monitor and advocate for comprehensive, integrated child protection systems. Support and engage with regional and international bodies and networks to promote adherence to recognised international instruments and standards.
Local government institutions have the ability to prevent and respond to violence against children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen awareness and capacities of staff in child related services to identify, prevent and respond to violence against children (e.g. including education, health and social services, police/judiciary services). Support improvement of public monitoring and information systems on child protection issues. Encourage collaboration and dialogue between communities and child protection services, including identifying gaps and ways to improve services.

Integration with other impact areas

Child protection programming is a specific and distinct impact area, aiming to improve national child protection systems. It also overlaps with other impact areas, such as:

ECCD / Early health	<p>Protection as a component of interventions on parenting and care-giving.</p> <p>Child health can serve as entry point to discuss protection issues such as harmful practices, gender based violence.</p> <p>Making health institutions and services safe for children.</p>
Education	<p>Making schools safe for children.</p> <p>Child friendly teaching methods and alternative discipline.</p> <p>Education opportunities for children at risk or victims of violence to reduce vulnerability.</p>
Economic Security	<p>Support to vulnerable and excluded families or families under stress to reduce protection risks.</p> <p>Improve education and livelihood opportunities for parents to improve parenting skills, and self care.</p>
Disaster	<p>Child protection as part of disaster response and risk reduction by reducing vulnerability and resuming normal health and education services.</p>



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PART 4:

IMPLEMENTATION

This Global Strategy on Child Protection is a significant step in improving the quality and consistency of Plan International's work within this impact area. Implementing the strategy will require further organisational efforts for a number of areas:

Global network and community of practice

Plan International's global network and community of practice on Child Protection programming will be strengthened, to make it easier for colleagues to collaborate and learn from our collective experience. This will be a crucial tool in continuing to develop and implement the concepts laid out in this strategy.

Further guidance and planning

The strategy will be supported by additional guidance. A wide range of tools and guidance already exist and will be made available. The following documents will also be developed:

- Discussion paper on Plan International's approach to strengthening systems to further examine and articulate application of the CCCD approach and determine the inter-linkages between the different impact areas within Plan International's programming.
- Good practice guidelines and advocacy messages to support, in the first instance two of the areas identified as global priorities: Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms, and Positive Parenting.
- Monitoring and Evaluation framework to further define outcomes, identify relevant indicators for outcomes and approaches that can generate evidence for learning and accountability.
- Advocacy plan and communications brief to support wider promotion of key models and guide global level advocacy messaging and communications.
- Resource mobilisation and investment plan: Opportunities for additional funding will be explored to support internal capacity building and increased investment in specific priority areas.

Capacity building

The shift to a systems approach will require investment in increasing skills and competencies. There is a need for conceptual clarity to resolve confusion between the areas of children's rights, child protection and child participation. Plan International will also need a higher level of specialist among staff than currently exists in order to support a real improvement in quality as well as ensure credibility for a thought leader position. The Plan Academy as well as other professional courses will be a key resource.

**“PLAN INTERNATIONAL
ACTIVITIES MAKE A DIFFERENCE
TO ME BECAUSE I FEEL SAFER,
WE CAN SEE CHANGE, IT IS LIKE I
HAVE A GREATER HOPE.”**
- CHILD FROM PERU



Photo © Plan International

Terms and definitions⁸

Child: Consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is any person under the age of eighteen years.

Family: Family comprises those people who are related – usually through blood or marriage – and/or who provide emotional, physical and psychological care to children. This may refer to both a small nuclear family or household, or alternatively an extended kinship network.

Community: A group of interacting people who live in some geographical proximity to one another and usually shares common values and interests. The term refers to a social unit larger than the household. This definition applies equally to rural and urban settings.⁹

Violence against children: All forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, emotional or psychological violence.¹⁰

NB. This is an 'umbrella term' that includes all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation against children, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and General Comment No. 13 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Child protection: The measures that are taken to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against children in development and emergency settings.

Child protection system: A comprehensive, interacting and sustainable series of functions and structures including laws, policies, and services (at all levels) with the purpose of preventing and responding to all forms of violence against all children.

Safe communities and families: A community or family where children are safe or free from all forms of violence.

Community-based child protection mechanism:¹¹ A network or group of individuals at community level who work in a coordinated manner towards

protection of children from all forms of violence, in all settings. Such mechanisms can be indigenous or externally initiated and supported. They may be more formal or informal in their structure and functioning. CBCPMs are linked and contribute to child protection systems.

Inclusion: An approach that recognises and addresses the exclusion of some children, especially regarding discrimination based on gender, disability, minority status.

Excluded children: Children who experience exclusion and have a heightened risk of violence and multiple deprivations.¹²



Photo © Plan International

8. The definitions and terms used here were mostly developed in Plan International's Global Child Protection Thematic Review, 2012. A few have been written during the process of finalising the global strategy.

9. Child Centred Community Development: Standards ; Approved by Plan International's Members Assembly in Nov 2013

10. This stems from Article 19 of the CRC and was the definition adopted for the UN Secretary-General's Study on violence against children, 2006.

11. Agreed by the core management team of the Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms POLT approved project, globally implemented by Plan International.

12. Ray, P., Carter, C. (2007). *Each and Every Child: Understanding and Working with Children in the Poorest and Most Difficult Situations.*