Plan International

Protection from Violence

A snapshot of our evidence from 2024

Through our global strategy *All Girls Standing Strong*, Plan International works in over 80 countries and focuses programming in six priority thematic areas, as well as responding to humanitarian emergencies.

At the end of 2024, we reviewed the evidence available from projects and countries working in each thematic area – covering evaluations and results, research and annual reporting metrics. This short snapshot summarises some of the insights from our evidence this year in protection from violence and what we can learn from it.

Plan International's focus in protection from violence is on ensuring that children and young people, particularly girls, grow up free from violence, fear or discrimination. Core focus areas include:

- Family and community protective environments
- Protection services for children, adolescents and youth who have experienced violence
- Multi-sectoral capacity and coordination, policies and legal frameworks for protection
- Child protection programmes addressing specific risks

Learn more about our work *here*.

Key insights

- **Despite some progress, violence against children, adolescents and youth, especially girls and young women remains a significant issue globally**. It is estimated that one in two children aged 2 to 17 suffer some form of violence each year. Gaps in budgets, services, legislation, multisectoral coordination, and the impact of the increased use of technology, the climate crisis, conflict and other pressures all exacerbate root causes and hamper the availability and responsiveness of services.

- **We saw positive progress this year in work to build awareness of child protection risks and behaviours.** While the interventions were diverse, common enablers emerged in terms of community dialogues and diagnoses, work through existing support networks and platforms (including targeting community leaders), peer-to-peer forums for young people and using school as an entry point.

- **It's critical that programming approaches respond to the needs of children, adolescents and youth, especially girls and young women, in all their diversity.** This implies comprehensive consultations and needs assessments that inform the design and resourcing of tailored strategies.

- **Programmes must continue to intensify engagement of families and communities (including leaders) through norms and behaviour change processes, as a complement to work with young people.** This should include their involvement as active contributors not just passive recipients.

- **A focus on multisectoral capacity with government and service providers must continue to be a priority, to ensure sufficient resourcing and continuity of quality services.** This should include advocacy and work to strengthen the intersection and break down siloes in the provision of services to prevent and respond to violence against children and violence against women.

- **Girls and young people that speak out are at increased risk of violence, including because of increasingly restricted civic spaces, online and offline.** It's critical that this is factored into contextual analyses (including risk mitigation) when planning and implementing approaches to prevent and respond to violence.

2024 figures at a glance

Positive parenting

74% of the parents and caregivers we spoke to this year reported using positive parenting practices when asked, including 77% of women and 68% of men.

(Monitoring data from 516 participants of six projects)

Birth registration

93.5% of sponsored children had their births registered, with similar rates for girls and boys.

(Annual survey data from over 1.1 million sponsored children and families)

Our global footprint in protection from violence

Gender-sensitive protection for **6 million girls**

18.8 million children and adults reached with gender-sensitive protection from violence programming

366,474 community members and volunteers, and 25,714 staff in partner organisations and institutions trained in child protection

(Annual reporting, July 2023 to June 2024)

Advocacy for ending violence against girls

53 influencing successes reported in our work on ending violence against girls, including:

25 changes or developments in laws, policies, regulations or guidelines around girls' rights.

5 commitments on investment, budget, expenditure, systems or services which will contribute to girls' rights.

(Annual reporting against our Global Advocacy Strategy, July 2023 to June 2024)

What are some of the key issues? Selected findings from research

Despite some progress, violence against children, women and girls remains a significant issue. It is estimated that globally one in two (one billion) children, aged 2 to 17, suffer some form of violence each year.[1] In addition, one in three (736 million) women and girls have been subjected to gender-based violence in their lifetime, with adolescent girls being at increased risk of intimate partner violence.[2] Gaps in budgets, legislation, multisectoral coordination, and the impact of the climate crisis, conflict and other pressures all exacerbate root causes, and hamper the availability and responsiveness of services.

> " *It's… the lack of safety that we… girls, women, have to face. When we go out on the street at night, we are afraid because we're not sure of anything. There are a lot of bad people out there and we feel threatened, like… afraid of something happening, of… of a possible rape happening, or anything."*
>
> Bianca, 17, Brazil

Multiple Plan International research studies this year highlighted perceptions of the continuing high prevalence of violence, with heightened risks for groups such as those from rural and indigenous populations, on the move, and in crisis contexts. Gender-based violence was identified as one of the biggest challenges facing girls in their communities by the *Real Choices, Real Lives* cohort study. Violence, including violence against women and girls, and intimate partner violence, were also highlighted in several studies (including *Adolescent Girls in Crisis in Ciudad Juarez*) as significant issues in migratory and crisis contexts – including both as a causal factor for migration and a risk encountered along migratory routes.

Causes of violence against women and girls, including intimate partner violence, differed depending on context. For example, within a *study in Honduras* alcohol consumption, 'violent authoritarian masculinity', limited rights (including land titles of rural and indigenous women) and traveling to agricultural settings in the early morning were all seen as factors increasing the risk. In a *synthesis report from the Sahel*, increased rates of intimate partner violence were linked to food insecurity in Mali, while in both Mali and Burkina Faso the presence of combatants, the impact of conflict on infrastructure (meaning girls and women needed to travel farther to collect water or firewood), displacement, family separation, and poverty all increased girls' and women's exposure to different forms of violence.

Young people participating in the global study *Our Voices for our Tomorrow* were concerned with online violence, harassment and digital risks, such as online
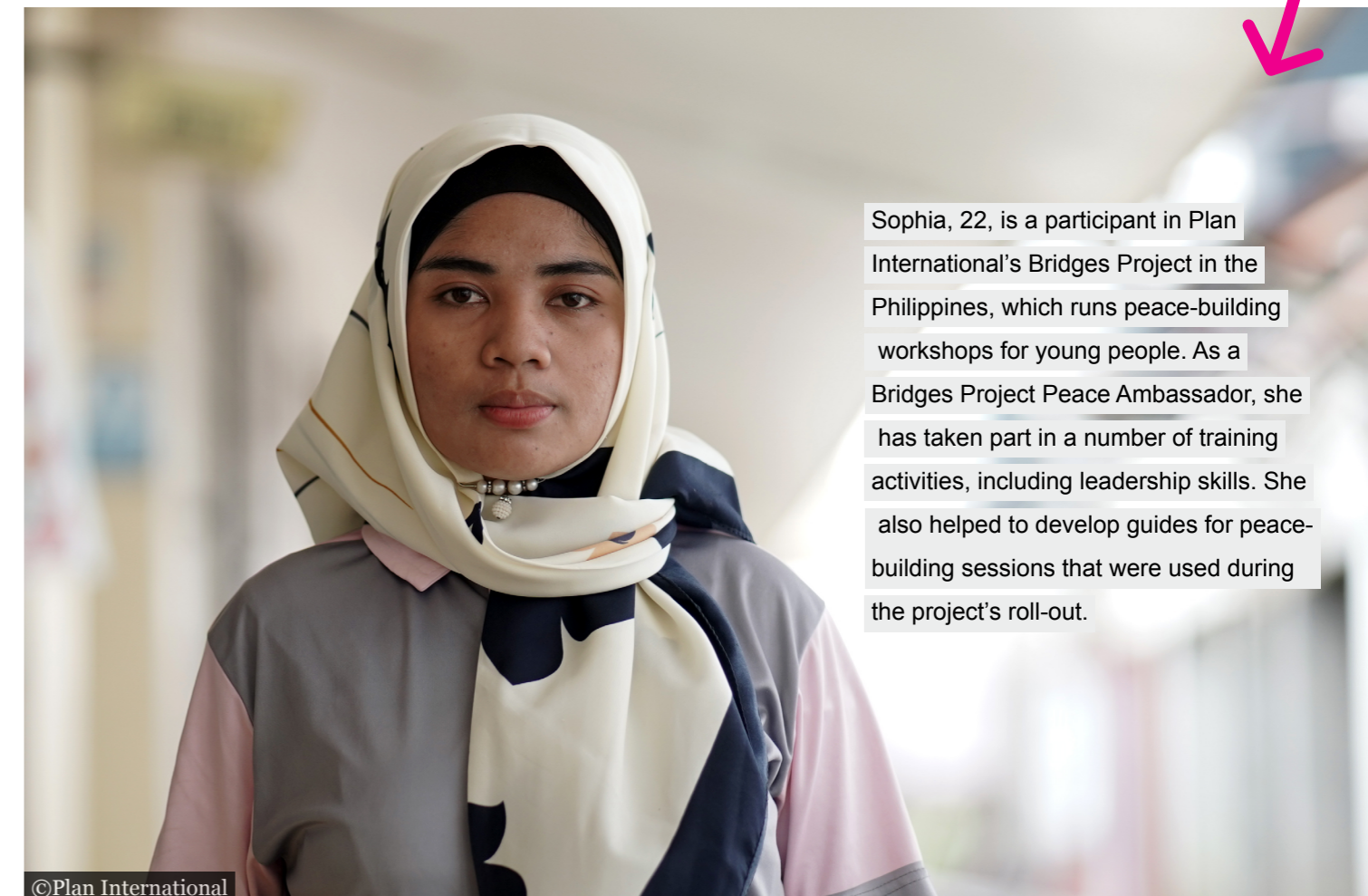
> " *Cyberspace can be a breeding ground for abuse, discouraging girls from expressing themselves freely and participating online."*
>
> Nala, 20, Sub-Saharan Africa

body shaming, artificial intelligence generated pornography, misinformation and anti-rights language about gender equality on social media, as well as the impact of the digital divide worsening gender equality.

While the research studies did not explore individual impact of violence against women and girls based on experiences, they reflected on some broader impacts. This included the immobilising effect that femicide has on the work that rural and indigenous women do to protect the land and environment, an inability to speak out within their communities and families, and feeling unsafe in their own homes. Specific concerns on the impact of child, early and forced marriage related to early pregnancy and childbirth, health problems, leaving or missing education, increased work responsibilities, and financial problems.

Sophia, 22, grew up in conflict-affected Maguindanao del Sur, Philippines. The violence forced her family to flee to Cotabato City, seeking safety and the chance for her and her siblings to pursue education without fear.

©Plan International

Sophia, 22, is a participant in Plan International's Bridges Project in the Philippines, which runs peace-building workshops for young people. As a Bridges Project Peace Ambassador, she has taken part in a number of training activities, including leadership skills. She also helped to develop guides for peace-building sessions that were used during the project's roll-out.

[1] https://www.paho.org/en/topics/violence-against-children

[2] UN Women. 2023. Facts and figures: Ending violence against women.

What have we learned? Selected findings from evaluations

We reviewed 28 evaluations of Plan's protection from violence programming this year, covering 19 countries in five regions.

From our work on the family and community protective environments, our evaluations this year found positive progress in many of the projects aiming to **build awareness of child protection risks and behaviours**. There was a lot of diversity in the types of interventions deployed, but common enablers were found to be a) community dialogues and diagnoses, and awareness raising or training, b) strengthening existing support networks and platforms, c) targeting community leaders, d) peer-to-peer forums for young people, and e) using school as an entry point. For example:

- In **Vietnam** a project focused on addressing needs of ethnic minority groups at risk exceeded its goals related to children and young people feeling equipped to protect themselves against child marriage (81 per cent at the end of the project) and against trafficking (78 per cent at the end of the project), as well as having the confidence to advocate for their rights and protect themselves from both risks.

- A school-based intervention in **Peru** found increases in the proportion of adolescents with practical knowledge on child protection and related services, particularly in girls where there was an increase from 32 per cent at the start of the project to 87 per cent at the end. The project also overachieved against goals in relation to shifting attitudes, with around 90 per cent of people – across groups of adolescents and adults – demonstrating positive attitudes towards ending gender-based violence.

Although the projects were fewer in number, outcomes were positive across domains of **personal feelings of agency of survivors of violence, knowledge and capacity of providers, and perceptions on quality of care**. Reports highlighted work at community level, for example, collaboration with child protection committees and violence prevention groups, provision of girl and adolescent friendly spaces, as well as training with service providers and the involvement of multiple actors. However, despite progress, both evaluations and research highlight continued barriers that women and girls face in accessing services, when they are available at all, including prohibitive norms and fear of stigma, lack of financial resources to cover care, and gaps in the responsiveness of authorities.

Projects were successful in their aims to **strengthen knowledge related to child protection services and referrals among multisectoral actors**. All of the projects targeting outcomes related to knowledge or confidence of protection actors (for example, teachers involved in child protection) reported high rates of achievement against targets for these domains, including in relation to child protection mechanisms and the responsiveness of services for preventing or responding to violence. However, the importance of strategies to address turnover of service providers was a prominent theme.

From an influencing perspective, there have been some important progresses this year, in different settings. For example:

- In **Liberia**, Plan has achieved a significant milestone by securing increased budget allocation from the government to support girls' and young women's empowerment. This funding, which will also help expand the Gender-Based Violence Management Information System, demonstrates the government's commitment to women's empowerment and protection.

- The children in armed conflict policies of the **European Union** contain stronger language on education, and gender-based violence and the need for an overall gender-responsive approach. To achieve this, the Plan Liaison Office consolidated inputs into the European Union Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict, ahead of their planned revision, and as part of dialogue and influencing activities. The office also met with the Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM) ministers who were negotiating the revision of the guidelines and participated in an exchange dialogue with United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Engaging children and young people in influencing in Vietnam, to reduce child marriage and human trafficking

- Engaging children, adolescents and youth in regular dialogues with policymakers via peer education, *Champions of Change* and children's clubs.

- Interactive radio policy dialogues between duty bearers and children, adolescents and youth, and integrating a digital platform with Voice of Vietnam programmes.

- Annual influencing workshops across provinces with engagement of authorities, teachers, youth and village heads.

©Plan International

Above, a youth delegate speaks at Vietnam's #GirlsTakeover event, where 33 participants united to pledge their commitment to empowering children and especially girls in decision-making.

Where we need to keep going deeper...

The evidence available this year has informed some insights which are relevant for Plan International but also the wider sector, in terms of how investment is targeted and how programmes are designed, to achieve gains in protection from violence:

- **We need to continue to prioritise work with parents, caregivers, and communities (including leaders) in protection from violence:** This implies intensifying engagement of these groups in behaviour change processes, as a complement to the scale of our work with young people. This should include their involvement as active contributors not just passive recipients.

- **We need to continue to strengthen how we respond to the needs of a diverse range of target groups, including through consistent use of needs assessments and consultations:** The evidence this year highlighted opportunities for continuing to strengthen how we target and differentiate programming approaches for underserved groups and those with specific needs (such as people living with disabilities).

- **We need to ensure upfront planning for sustainability:** In order to achieve longer term, sustained change at scale, clear strategies to engage governments and other duty bearers need to be a focus in projects aiming to achieve progress at this level – via advocacy and capacity building as well as joint planning and implementation where feasible. For all projects, sustainability plans and exit strategies must also be in place at an early stage, to inform our collaboration with stakeholders during implementation.

©Plan International

In Delhi, our Child Protection and Safety of Girls programme aims to protect girls and young women aged 14-24 from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect, and to teach them how to use the internet safely.

Read more from this year:

Real Choices, Real Lives: Research Series that has been following the lives of over 100 girls in nine countries around the world from their birth in 2006.

Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Research Series capturing the voices and experiences of adolescent girls in protracted crises.

The Girls' Pact for the Future: Adolescent girls and young people share their concerns, their vision of a positive future with gender equality at its heart, and recommendations for policy makers.

PLAN INTERNATIONAL

Until we are all equal

About Plan International

Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organization that advances children's rights and equality for girls. We believe in the power and potential of every child but know this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination. And it is girls who are most affected.

Working together with children, young people, supporters and partners, we strive for a just world, tackling the root causes of the challenges girls and vulnerable children face. We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood and we 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 over 85 years, we have rallied other determined optimists to transform the lives of all children in more than 80 countries.

We won't stop until we are all equal.

Plan International
Global Hub
Dukes Court, Duke Street, Woking,
Surrey GU21 5BH, United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0) 1483 755155
Fax: +44 (0) 1483 756505
E-mail: 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

Cover photo: Like many adolescent girls living in Adre's transit camps, 17-year-old Hanady spends her days praying, cooking and hanging out with friends. She longs to go back to school and misses her old life in Sudan. ©Plan International

Disclaimer: Images used throughout this report are not of research participants. Consent was received for the use of all images.