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Abbreviations

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<th>Acronym</th>
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<tr>
<td>CCCD</td>
<td>Child Centred Community Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>Country Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>Country Office (including all PUs / Field Offices)</td>
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<td>CSP</td>
<td>Country Strategic Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>DRM</td>
<td>Disaster Risk Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCNO</td>
<td>Field Country National Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY</td>
<td>Financial Year</td>
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<td>IH</td>
<td>International Headquarters</td>
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<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<td>NO</td>
<td>National Organisation</td>
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<td>PALS</td>
<td>Programme Accountability and Learning System</td>
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<td>PPM</td>
<td>Programme and Projects Module</td>
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<td>PU</td>
<td>Programme Unit</td>
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<td>RO</td>
<td>Regional Office</td>
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Programme Quality Policy

1. Introduction

As stated in our mission statement, organisational values, and global strategy, Plan exists to make the greatest possible contribution to the realisation of children’s rights. We do this through our programme work at the global, regional, national and local level. Programme quality is essential for achieving our strategic objectives. It is at the heart of everything we do, and is a priority for everyone working in Plan.

This policy defines what ‘programme quality’ means for Plan, in order to establish a shared understanding across the organisation. It also establishes high level requirements for all Plan staff and entities to manage programme quality. Together, the definition of programme quality and high level requirements establish a consistent and coordinated approach to quality and accountability across Plan. This will enable Plan to become a more efficient, effective and credible organisation.

The policy has been developed through a major consultative process, involving many staff from all parts of Plan. It is based on Plan’s long experience of development and humanitarian work, and builds on existing good practices inside and outside of Plan. In particular, it draws on Child Centred Community Development (CCCD), Plan’s rights-based approach to programme work, in which children, families and communities are active and leading participants in their own development.

2. Statement of Purpose

The Programme Quality Policy provides the basis for a consistent approach to managing programme quality across the organisation. It does this by ensuring that all parts of Plan collaborate on the basis of a shared understanding of what programme quality means, why it is important, and how it can be achieved. This should be used to inform decision making at all levels and in all functions within the Plan Federation.

The policy creates a common foundation that enables better coordination across the Plan Federation and reduces the possibility of unnecessary duplication and bureaucracy.

The policy ensures that Plan uses the resources it has available to make the greatest possible contribution to the realisation of children’s rights, in line with its values, mission and strategic objectives. It responds to the major requirements of the key stakeholders in Plan’s programme work. This includes field staff, senior management, institutional donors and individual sponsors, and most important of all, the children and communities we work with.
3. Policy Statement

Programme quality is a **priority for all work** carried out by all Plan entities and is central to all strategies, functions, initiatives, policies, procedures, systems and other related organisational activities within Plan.

Staff and partners achieve programme quality by focusing on **four components**, when they manage and support our programme work: Child Centred Community Development (CCCD), outcomes, value for money and continual improvement.

The **12 high level requirements** set out in this policy ensure that staff and partners achieve an appropriate level of programme quality and accountability to all key stakeholders.

4. Defining Programme Quality

For Plan, programme quality means that our work makes the greatest possible contribution to the realisation of children’s rights.

Programme quality results from the processes that staff and partners use to manage every aspect of our programme work. These include processes that determine how we work as well as what we do.

Staff and partners achieve programme quality, and the greatest results for children, by focusing on four components:

- **Child Centred Community Development (CCCD)**
  CCCD is Plan’s rights-based approach, summarised in the CCCD Standards. All of Plan’s work should achieve the highest levels of the CCCD standards that are appropriate for their context.

- **Outcomes**
  Outcomes are the significant results that external stakeholders achieve by making use of a project’s outputs, in pursuit of strategic objectives. All of Plan’s work should focus on making progress towards specific outcomes that have been established in collaboration with external stakeholders.

- **Value for money**
  Plan should achieve value for money in everything it does. This means making the greatest contribution to the realisation of children’s rights with the resources available.

- **Continual improvement**
  Plan should constantly strive to improve our programme work, including what we do and how we do it.
When combined together, the four components ensure that Plan’s programme work:
• makes the greatest contribution to development and humanitarian efforts,
• engages effectively with local communities, civil society organisations, government officials and other actors,
• develops and implements effective partnerships,
• tackles exclusion and promotes gender equality,
• builds long-term capacity and empowering, sustainable solutions that can be scaled up,
• makes the best use of the resources available,
• builds on evidence of good practice within and outside Plan,
• responds to changes in the context and stays relevant, and
• contributes to learning for Plan and the sector as a whole.

More detailed descriptions of these components are provided in the Annex (see 9.1).

5. Requirements for Programme Quality

The following high level requirements are mandatory for all Plan entities and ensure that staff and partners achieve an appropriate level of programme quality and accountability to all key stakeholders.

Strategic

1 All Plan entities develop, implement and review strategic plans that are aligned with this policy.
   1.1 All COs and FCNOs develop, implement and review Country Strategic Plans which establish their strategic objectives.
   1.2 All other Plan International entities develop, implement and review appropriate strategies for their programme work.
   1.3 All NOs develop, implement and review programme strategies, which may be part of their wider organisational strategies.

Operational

2 All of Plan’s programme work is implemented through projects, which contribute to achieving relevant strategic objectives. All projects are designed, implemented and reviewed following Plan’s project management cycle.\(^1\)

3 Appropriate representatives of the people and organisations who may be significantly affected by each project, as well as other stakeholders who have a major influence on achieving project objectives, are kept informed about Plan’s intentions and activities, and play a substantial role in making all major decisions about the design, implementation, monitoring, improvement and evaluation of each project.

\(^1\) The project management cycle is defined in the procedures and guidance which support this policy.
All project activities and processes funded by Plan and carried out by Plan or Plan’s partner organisations meet the requirements of this policy, with the provision of additional support from Plan or elsewhere as appropriate.

When responding to disasters, Plan’s existing guidance and procedures are adapted in order to prioritise timely response, humanitarian aims and common sense, for the benefit of disaster affected children and communities.

Staff responsible for managing and supporting projects understand the priorities and requirements of the relevant donors who fund Plan’s programme work. They negotiate contractual requirements to achieve as much alignment with Plan’s priorities and requirements as possible, and ensure that contractual requirements are met, including accurate and timely reporting.

The level of programme quality being achieved by each project is systematically assessed and reported.

General

A specific member of staff is identified as responsible for ensuring that each project and each strategy is managed in accordance with this policy.

All guidance, procedures and systems within Plan that have a significant effect on staff in COs and FCNOs are: (a) aligned with each other and this policy, and (b) manageable and appropriate for staff in COs and FCNOs.

Entities across the Plan Federation provide support to COs and FCNOs to implement this policy that is: (a) relevant and practical to the COs and FCNOs that receive it, (b) coordinated with other sources of support and requirements from across Plan, and (c) minimises any additional demands on COs and FCNOs.

Plan routinely publishes information about our programme work and shares the lessons we learn with the wider development and humanitarian sectors.

All staff are actively encouraged to strive for programme quality and to maintain an appropriate understanding of this policy and the contribution their role makes towards implementing it, and are recruited, supported and managed accordingly.

6. Applicability and Scope

This policy, the high level requirements and supporting guidance and procedures, apply to all Plan staff and Plan entities involved in directly implementing and indirectly supporting Plan’s programme work. Particular focus is given to Plan’s Country Offices and Field Country National Organisations, where the majority of our programme work is implemented, with the support of ROs, IH and NOs.
The Programme Quality Policy therefore applies to all aspects of Plan’s programme work that are carried out or influenced by:

- all Plan entities, including PUs, COs, ROs, FCNOs, NOs and IH offices,
- all Plan functions, including programme and support functions,
- all working contexts, including development and emergency response,
- all programme activities and technical focus areas,
- all delivery mechanisms, including work implemented by Plan or Plan partners,
- all funding sources, including sponsorship, grants, corporates and others.

Compliance with the policy will be assessed on the basis of how well the high level requirements are achieved and the supporting procedures implemented. This will also be audited by Global Assurance.

7. Responsibilities under this Policy

All Plan staff and Plan entities across the Federation have a general responsibility for understanding this policy and aligning their work with it.

Specific responsibilities are identified within the procedures and guidance that support the policy, including identifying individual responsibility for all core aspects of programme quality.

Plan International’s Director of Programme Quality is responsible for developing, monitoring, reviewing and updating the policy. Plan’s senior leadership is ultimately responsible for implementing the policy.

8. Related Plan Documents

This policy has been developed in alignment with other relevant policies, strategies and frameworks including: Sponsorship Commitments, Technical Policies and Strategies, DRM Policy and Strategy, Global Advocacy Framework, Gender Equality Policy and Strategy, Youth Engagement Strategy, Knowledge Management Strategy, Cost Recovery Policy and emerging work on Grants Management.

The policy will be implemented through supporting procedures, guidance documents and systems. These include the strategic and project management cycle guidelines and IT system user guides. These incorporate other relevant procedures and guidance including the: CCCD Standards, Partnership Standards, Evaluation Standards, Research Standards, and others.
9. Annexes

9.1 Detailed Definition of Programme Quality

For Plan, programme quality means that our work makes the greatest possible contribution to the realisation of children’s rights.

Staff and partners achieve programme quality, and the greatest results for children, by focusing on four components, elaborated below:

- Child Centred Community Development (CCCD),
- Outcomes,
- Value for money, and
- Continual improvement.

**Child Centred Community Development (CCCD)**

CCCD is Plan’s rights-based approach, in which children, families and communities are active and leading participants in their own development. It is applied in all our programme work.

The CCCD Standards define performance levels for the five key areas of CCCD:

1. Working with children and communities,
2. Tackling exclusion and gender inequality,
3. Engaging with civil society,
4. Influencing government,
5. Strengthening Plan’s accountability.

These performance levels can be used to manage and assess the level of CCCD achieved. All of Plan’s projects should strive towards the highest possible performance levels that are appropriate for their context.

Further information on [CCCD is available on Planet](#).

**Outcomes**

All of Plan’s projects should focus on achieving outcomes.

Outcomes are defined as the significant results that external stakeholders achieve by making use of a project’s outputs. These include changes in behaviours, capacities and abilities.² These outcomes directly lead to improvements in the realisation of children’s rights.

All projects should identify specific, measurable outcomes, in collaboration with external stakeholders, which contribute to the strategic objectives set out in Plan’s programme strategies. Outcomes should be timely, particularly for disaster responses. Wherever appropriate, they should be aligned with: national government and donor agendas, international and national standards, and good practice and technical expertise that is relevant to the local context.

² This definition is developed further in the accompanying guidance and procedures.
Project plans should explain how a project’s activities are expected to deliver its outcomes. This is the project’s theory of change. Throughout project implementation, staff should monitor progress in implementing activities and progress towards outcomes.

Outcomes contribute to long term social change, sometimes referred to as ‘impact’. Long term social change is influenced by many factors that are outside Plan’s control. So, it is not appropriate for Plan to be directly accountable for achieving it. Our strategies should describe how outcomes are expected to contribute to long term social change and impact. Plan is accountable for achieving these outcomes.

**Value for money**
Plan should achieve value for money in everything that it does. This means making the greatest possible contribution to the realisation of children’s rights with the resources available.

Plan should always be able to explain the reasons why all our programme work represents good value for money.

Value for money is achieved by making careful decisions about four factors:

1. **Reach: are an appropriate number of intended people benefitting from our work?**
   Staff should ensure that an appropriate number of people benefit from our work, and that they are the people that we intend to benefit. This means considering reasonable estimates of the numbers of direct and indirect beneficiaries and the extent of exclusion they face in society. These figures should be disaggregated by age, sex and other factors. Some social groups will gain more from our work, some gain less and others may lose out. It is not always easy to compare these benefits, so careful judgements need to be made about who should benefit.

2. **Are the best outcomes being achieved with the resources available?**
   Staff should ensure that all of our work achieves the best outcomes possible with the resources available. This means designing activities and projects on the basis of the best techniques and evidence of how outcomes can be achieved. It also means considering the full costs of our activities, including both direct and indirect costs.

3. **Are the maximum quality and quantity of outputs being achieved?**
   Staff should ensure that the outputs from all of Plan’s activities are high quality and that as many outputs are achieved as possible, in a timely manner.

4. **Is all money being spent carefully?**
   Staff should ensure that the amount they pay for goods and services is an appropriate balance between cost, quality, timeliness and ethical considerations. Expenditure should be carefully controlled and costs kept as low as reasonably possible, in balance with these other factors.

These four factors align with the “4E” model that is widely used in the sector, comprising: equity, effectiveness, efficiency and economy.
Staff should use the four factors outlined above to compare the costs and benefits of all of Plan’s programme work. This includes making judgements about issues such as:

- Achieving a larger benefit for a smaller number of people, or a smaller benefit for a larger number of people.
- The higher cost of working with people who are more excluded, or the lower cost of working with people who are less excluded.
- The higher cost of piloting new interventions, or the lower cost of implementing proven interventions.

Decisions about value for money should be continually reviewed at the strategic and operational level, including during the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Plan’s programme work. Staff should communicate these decisions to relevant colleagues and external stakeholders.

**Continual improvement**

Staff should constantly strive to improve our programme work, including what we do and how we do it. They should regularly review all programme work against the four components of programme quality.

All of Plan’s monitoring, evaluation and review activities should generate learning that is used to make concrete improvements to our activities. This often requires careful negotiation with external stakeholders. Improvements should be supported by all functions within Plan including: finance, human resources and grant management.

Social issues constantly change, along with the contexts we work in. Our projects need to change with them, in order to stay relevant and achieve as much as possible for children. We also need to improve our programme work wherever we can, as staff learn more about the issues.

These processes should be based on structured reflection and dialogue, linked to concrete opportunities to change our programme work. We need to continually listen to different stakeholders and respond to what they say. Beneficiary feedback can be particularly powerful.

This kind of reflection is also part of the process of development. It helps all stakeholders to deepen their analysis of social issues. Carefully done, it helps people build up their skills and confidence to take more control over their lives.

Staff should also document lessons from their experience and promote them across Plan and to the sector as a whole. This can help all development and humanitarian agencies to improve their work together, in the same way that we draw from external experience when designing our strategies and projects.
9.2 Definitions

This policy defines key terms as follows:

**Project:**
A collection of activities designed to achieve one or more specific outcome(s).

Projects should directly contribute to achieving relevant strategic objectives. They should have the following characteristics:

- A project’s timeframe must be a minimum of 1 month and a maximum of 5 years. (Shorter timeframes may be more appropriate for emergency response).
- A project’s costs must be a minimum of €50,000, including all direct and indirect costs.
- A project must be linked to one funding bundle (defined in SAP as a collection of funding sources).
- A project can include multiple technical focus areas.
- A project can cover multiple field locations / PUs.
- A project can be funded by multiple funding sources.
- A project can be implemented directly by Plan or through Plan partners.
- A project can continue for more than one financial year (without having to end on 30 June)

Exceptions to the above must be approved by the CD or equivalent, on an individual, case by case basis.

**Programme work:**
All of Plan’s development and humanitarian work, undertaken in pursuit of our mission and strategic objectives. This includes all of Plan’s advocacy work.

**Technical focus:**
The specific technical area that Plan’s activities focus on. For example this may be: health, education, protection or other areas. These are also referred to as thematic / impact areas or sectors.

**Direct Beneficiaries:**
The people who benefit directly from Plan’s activities and are able to realise more rights as a result.

**Indirect Beneficiaries:**
The people who benefit indirectly from Plan’s activities, e.g. at the household / community level.

**External Stakeholders:**
People and organisations who are not employed by Plan or volunteering for Plan and who play a critical role in achieving Plan’s strategic objectives. They include: a) the people that our activities intend to benefit, b) local partners including implementing partners, c) other individuals and organisations who have a significant influence on the issues being addressed, including government offices, and c) donors who provide funding.
Plan Federation:
All Plan offices and entities that are managed by Plan International and Plan’s National Organisations, including: International Headquarters, Regional Offices, Country Offices, Field Country National Organisations, National Organisations and other Plan offices.

Exclusion:
The process through which individuals or groups are partially or fully excluded from the rights, opportunities and resources that are available to others in the society they live in. The term exclusion is used to cover related terms such as: marginalisation, at risk of exclusion, discrimination, inequity and others.

Funding source:
The source of funds that come in to Plan. This includes all income streams, such as: sponsorship, corporate funding, institutional funding, appeals and any others.

Direct costs:
The costs that relate clearly and directly to implementing a specific project or activity. Direct costs are incurred as the direct result of delivering a specific project or activity.

Indirect costs:
The costs incurred in order to support and administer a specific project or activity. They are not readily identified with a particular project function or activity, but are necessary for the general operation of the organisation and the activities it performs.