

Safeguarding Children and Young People report FY2017

Violence against children has no place in our world, and certainly not among those who serve the most vulnerable. As a child rights organisation, our foremost priority is protection of children and young people we work with. Nothing trumps this.

Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen, CEO Plan International

Plan International has a zero-tolerance policy towards violence against children and young people¹ by our staff, associates and visitors. We are fully committed to providing a safe, protective and supportive environment for all children and young people, and promoting their welfare, regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and other differences.

Our **Global Policy on Safeguarding Children and Young People**, and the procedures and training that support its implementation, ensure:

- our staff, associates and visitors understand their responsibilities for safeguarding children and young people, and that they are skilled and confident in meeting these responsibilities and engaging positively with children and young people;
- we have robust procedures in place to prevent, report and deal with safeguarding incidents which arise due to the actions/behaviour of our staff, associates and visitors;
- we actively prevent unintended harm to children and young people caused either directly or indirectly by our work; and
- children and young people we work with are aware of our responsibilities to prevent and respond to any harm to them arising from the actions and behaviours of our staff, associates and visitors and are aware of the routes for reporting such incidents.

Our framework for keeping children and young people safe and protected ensures a holistic approach to safeguarding children and young people. The framework requires:

- provision of core guidelines and tools for implementation;
- creation of a culture of awareness for staff, associates, and the children and young people that we work with and their families;
- building the safeguarding capacity of staff and associates including ensuring that they are aware of the problem and risks of violence, including sexual violence and exploitation, of children and young people;
- ensuring all are aware of how and where to report safeguarding concerns;
- application of strict child and youth safe recruitment processes,
- inclusion of safeguarding in our risk management processes;
- identification of managerial and staff responsibilities for ensuring the implementation of safeguarding,
- having in place a set of standards which guide the embedding of safeguarding in all aspects of our work
- regular monitoring and evaluation of safeguarding measures to ensure their effectiveness, including audits involving staff, associates, children and young people we work with on their awareness of and attitude towards safeguarding; and
- ensuring visible and committed leaders who role model our values and principles related to safeguarding children and young people



¹ The term 'children and young people' includes girls, boys and children and young people of other gender identities. 'Children' refers to those aged below 18 years. 'Young people' refers to those aged 18 to 24 years as well as to 'children' aged 15 to 17 years.

In FY2017 we increased our focus on strengthening our culture of safeguarding to ensure we continue to uphold the highest standards in keeping children and young people safe from harm.

Our completed safeguarding initiatives for FY2017 include:

- revision of our Global Safeguarding Children and Young people policy
- development of an online safeguarding children and young people induction – available for use internally to staff and externally to associates and members of the public
- continuous improvement of our ‘Creating Safe Organisations’ training series – now including modules on ‘Understanding and addressing how Dominance, Power and Biases impact safeguarding’, ‘Supporting Partners to develop their Safeguarding Policy and Procedures’ and ‘Safeguarding Case Management’
- commitment to address gaps identified in our annual organisation wide safeguarding self-assessment exercise
- delivering pro-bono Safeguarding capacity building workshop to partners and our peers on request

Safeguarding Children and Young People incident report FY2017

Safeguarding incidents, as documented by Plan International, cover a range of breaches besides just sexual violence. They include physical violence, neglect, inappropriate conduct and incidents which may be legal locally but are in contravention of our global policy. For example, where the national age of consent is 16, a staff or associate could legally marry a 16-year-old. However, this would still be seen as child marriage as our policy clearly states that anyone under the age of 18 is a child. It would be recorded as a safeguarding incident.

It is critical that safeguarding incidents and their reporting are understood in the appropriate context. Zero or low cases should be a huge cause for concern as reporting of cases indicates that the systems in place are working and people feel confident to report breaches. A robust safeguarding system and high awareness about reporting are pivotal to a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of exploitation and abuse.

For children and their families affected by safeguarding breaches, Plan International provides support sensitive to their needs and circumstances. For example, this includes linking victims and their families with services to provide medical, psychosocial and other support.

During FY2017, Plan International managed 29 safeguarding incidents involving individuals associated with the organisation. This includes staff members, representatives of partner organisations, community volunteers and sponsors.

Of these 29 incidents:

- 6 incidents were found not to be safeguarding breaches.
- 6 incidents were confirmed as sexual exploitation and abuse, according to our policy. These involved one Plan International staff and five associates. A further 6 cases in the same category are currently under investigation. These involve two Plan International staff and four associates. In all instances (i.e. confirmed and breaches under investigation), the engagement of the individuals involved with Plan International or the implementing partner was terminated.
- 11 incidents included breaches such as physical violence, neglect and other safeguarding concerns – none involving Plan International staff. Of these, 8 resulted in termination of contract or engagement with 4 also referred to the authorities. In the remaining 3 incidents individuals received formal warning.

Additionally, internal investigations or reviews were carried out in each case to identify and address any gaps in safeguarding. Due to their sensitive nature, we provide details of individuals safeguarding cases to the appropriate authorities only.

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