

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE REPORT FY2019

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 the 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 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.

Plan International continues to prioritise improving its safeguarding culture as an approach to achieving deep, sustainable and long-term change in safeguarding. We, along with many other INGOs, have operated a strong safeguarding policy and framework for a number of years. However, despite robust policies and frameworks, safeguarding challenges still exist across the sector and there can never be a room for complacency or compromise. We are committed to ensuring our safeguarding policies and practices continue to meet the highest global standards.

Plan International has progressively evolved an intersectional approach to safeguarding. This requires us to recognise the impact and implications of privilege, power and bias as we uphold our safeguarding commitments and create a safeguarding culture. We understand that strengthening our approach to safeguarding requires we recognise the structural inequalities within the organisation, in our own social spheres (staff and partner staff) and within the communities where we work that contribute to inequality and discrimination. Consequently, we are taking a firm stand in an attempt to root out the causes of abuse of power, which involves looking at how it manifests itself and how we contribute to the problem, intentionally or unintentionally and what we can do to address it.

In FY2019, we conducted various workshops and trainings to continue building awareness and understanding, amongst all tiers of the organisation. We completed safeguarding inductions and capacity building with over 320,000 individuals. In same the fiscal year, we also revised our safeguarding standards to include indicators grounded in our intersectional safeguarding approach with a strong emphasis on creating a safeguarding culture.

Other key initiatives include roll-out of Safeguarding in Programming and Influencing tools and increasing our safeguarding human resources – including appointing staff who are dedicated to strengthening safeguarding in our humanitarian responses and programmes.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE INCIDENT REPORT FY2019

Safeguarding, as defined by our policy, is the responsibility we bear to protect children and young people - ensuring that no child or young person is subject to any form of harm as a result of their association with the organisation.

This includes ensuring that their contact with us and those associated with us is safe. And where there are concerns over a child or young person's welfare, or where a child or young person has been subject to violence, appropriate and timely actions are taken to address the concern.

Plan International has a dedicated global policy on safeguarding which sets the standards and procedures for keeping children and young people safe and protected. This includes the preventive, response and referral measures we implement, and mechanisms to deal with safeguarding breaches.

It is critical that safeguarding incidents and their reporting are understood in the appropriate context. Plan International has close to **10,000 staff** in the more than **75 countries** where the organisation is active. In **fiscal year 2019 (1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019)** alone our programmes benefited nearly **22 million girls** and almost **19 million boys**.

Zero or low safeguarding cases would be a huge cause for concern as reporting of cases and response to them indicate 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 young people, and their families affected by safeguarding breaches, Plan International provides support sensitive to their needs and circumstances. For example, this includes supporting victims to access services that provide medical, psychosocial and other support.

During fiscal year 2019, Plan International managed 77 safeguarding incidents involving individuals associated with the organisation. This includes staff members, representatives of partner organisations, community volunteers, consultants and sponsors.

Of the 77 incidents:

- 14 incidents were found not to be safeguarding breaches.
- 11 incidents were confirmed as sexual exploitation and abuse as defined by our policy. These involved five Plan International staff and six associates. In all instances, the cases were

referred to the authorities for investigation and engagement of the individuals involved with Plan International or the implementing partner was terminated.

- 8 incidents were confirmed as sexual harassment as defined by our policy. These involved four Plan International staff and four associates. All instances of criminal sexual harassment were referred to the authorities for investigation and engagement of the individuals involved with Plan International or the implementing partner was terminated. In two cases the behaviours of the staff/associate were non-criminal and resulted in disciplinary measures being applied.
- 38 cases involved other inappropriate conduct such as neglect, physical violence, emotional abuse and other safeguarding policy breaches such as unsupervised/inappropriate contact or communication with children. These involved six Plan International staff and 32 associates. Seven cases resulted in the termination of engagement of the individuals involved. In the remaining cases, formal warnings were given and/or gaps in operations were addressed and additional safeguarding measures put in place where required.
- 6 cases involving other inappropriate conduct perpetrated by associates were still under investigation and are thus open at the time of this report.

As a standard practice, Plan International carries out internal investigation or review 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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