Plan policy

Child Protection

Functional Area: Child Protection Policy Unit
Owner: CEO
Approved by: Members' Assembly
Date of Approval: 15/06/13
Date of next review: 2016
Language: English, Spanish and French
Applicable to: All Plan Staff, Plan Associates and Plan Visitors; Plan International, Inc, branch offices and subsidiaries; National Offices, Global/NO Standard
Related policies: Global Code of Conduct
Whistle Blowing Policy
Procedures: Sponsor Visits to the Field
Reporting and Responding to Child Protection Issues in Plan
Plan’s Child Protection Policy Implementation Standards
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Child Protection Policy

Say ‘YES!’ To Keeping Children Safe

As an international child-centred community development organisation whose work is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Plan is committed to ensuring the fulfilment of children’s rights including their rights to protection. Plan is committed to protecting children from harm and ensuring children’s right to protection under Article 19 of the UNCRC is fully realised. We take seriously our responsibility to promote child safe practices and protect children from harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation in any form. In addition, we will take positive action to prevent those who abuse children from becoming involved with Plan and take stringent measures against any Plan Staff, Plan Associates, Plan Visitors or Plan Managers who abuse a child. Our decisions and actions in response to Child protection concerns and breaches of this policy will be guided by the principle of ‘the best interests of the child’.

A. Definitions under the Child Protection Policy

1. In line with the UNCRC, for the purposes of this policy, a Child is defined as any person under the age of 18 years (UNCRC Article 1).

2. Child abuse is defined as all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that result in actual or potential harm to a child. Child abuse may be a deliberate act or it may be failing to act to prevent harm. Child abuse consists of anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do, intentionally or unintentionally, which harms a child or damages their well being, dignity and prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood.

3. Child protection is defined in this policy as the responsibilities and preventative and responsive measures and activities that Plan undertakes to protect children ensuring that no Child is subject to Child abuse as a result of their association with us, their contact with Plan Staff, Plan Associates and Plan Visitors and/or their participation in any Plan activity, including our projects and programs.

   In addition, it incorporates our responsibility to ensure that where there are concerns over a Child’s welfare or where a Child has been subject to Child abuse, actions are taken to address this; concerns are reported and responded to appropriately and in line with the relevant global and local procedures; and incidents are analysed so as to ensure continued learning and growth in the field of organisational child protection.

4. Plan Staff refers to individuals who receive a regular salary for work in any part of Plan International Inc, including all Country Offices, Regional Offices and International Headquarters and Plan National Organisations.

5. Plan Associates refers to a range of paid and non paid individuals who have committed to work with or support Plan. It includes, among others, members of boards, volunteers, including community volunteers; interns; sponsors; researchers; donors, consultants and contractors; staff and/or representatives of partner organisations and local governments (when operating in partnership agreement with Plan).
6. **Plan Visitors** refers to a range of persons who are visiting our programs and may come into contact with children through Plan, including journalists, media, researchers, and celebrities.

7. **Plan Managers** refers to Plan Staff who have responsibility for line managing or supervising the work of Plan Staff or Plan Associates.

**B. Scope of the Child Protection Policy**

The Child Protection Policy applies to all Plan Staff, Plan Associates, Plan Visitors and Plan Managers who must comply with its requirements and understand the sanctions that may be applied for breaches of the policy. It is intended that this policy will set a minimum global standard for all Plan Staff, Plan Associates and Plan Visitors; Plan International, Inc, Country Offices and subsidiaries as well as National Organisations. Where required by law or local practices, Plan International, Inc, Country Offices and subsidiaries as well as National Organisations may enhance the standards as set out in this policy. This commitment will be evidenced through signing the policy.

**C. Principles**

This policy is informed by a set of principles that are derived from the UNCRC and include:

1. All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation.

2. Each child has a fundamental right to life, survival and development. Plan’s child-centred community development approach provides a basis for ensuring the realisation of children’s rights to be protected from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation.

3. All children should be encouraged to fulfil their potential, and inequality and discrimination should be challenged.

4. Children will be assured the right to express their views freely and this will be given ‘due weight’ in accordance with their age and level of maturity. We will not discriminate against the child. The child will be treated with respect irrespective of gender, nationality or ethnic origin, religious or political beliefs, age, physical or mental health, sexual preference and gender identity, family, socio-economic and cultural background, or any history of conflict with the law.

5. Everybody has a responsibility to support the care and protection of children.

6. Plan has particular responsibilities to children who come into contact with us. No child must come to harm as a result of their engagement with Plan as a sponsored child, a participant in a Plan program or as part of any Plan fundraising or advocacy campaign.

7. These particular responsibilities extend to those individuals or organisations who are associated with Plan. Therefore, **everyone** working for or associated with Plan’s work must be aware of and adhere to the provisions of this policy.
D. Plan’s vision for Child Protection

Plan creates safe environments for children in all aspects of its work whether fundraising or program implementation, where children are respected, protected and empowered as their capacities evolve to contribute actively to the development of Child protection measures within Plan.

This policy aims to ensure that Plan Staff, Plan Associates, Plan Visitors and Plan Managers, as appropriate to their engagement with Plan, are skilled, confident, understand, accept and are well supported in meeting their Child protection responsibilities and engage positively with children and communities in ways that enhance the achievement of Plan's overall program goals and commitments.

E. Responsibilities for those covered by the scope of the Child Protection Policy

Everyone who works with and engages with Plan has a responsibility to ensure that children are protected. The responsibilities detailed below are mandatory for those who fall within the scope of the policy.

Plan Staff, Plan Associates, Plan Visitors and Plan Managers must:

1. Never abuse and/or exploit a Child or act/behave in any way that places a child at risk of harm.

2. Report any Child abuse and Child protection concerns they have in accordance with applicable local office procedures and this policy. Plan Staff may also use Plan's Whistle Blowing policy in this event.

3. Respond to a Child who may have been abused or exploited in accordance with applicable local office procedures and this policy.

4. Cooperate fully and confidentially in any investigation of concerns or allegations of Child abuse.

5. Contribute to building an environment where children are respected and encouraged to discuss their concerns and rights.

6. Always treat children in a manner which is respectful of their rights, integrity and dignity, considers their best interests and does not expose them to, or place them at risk of, harm. For example: when taking images/pictures during visits, interacting with children or generating stories of children, ensure that this is done in a manner consistent with the appropriate Plan policies and procedures.

7. Never ask for or accept personal contact details (this includes email, phone numbers, social media contacts, address, webcam, skype etc) from any Child or family associated or formerly associated with Plan’s work or share their own personal contact details with such individuals. [For Plan Staff and partner organisations, the exception is where this has been explicitly authorised for business purposes in a manner which is in line with local Plan policies and procedures, has the consent of the Child’s parents or guardian and is supervised by the relevant line or supervising manager].
8. Never disclose, or support the disclosure of, information that identifies sponsored families or children, through any medium, unless that disclosure is in accordance with standard Plan policies and procedures and/or has the explicit consent of Plan. Media include paper, photographs and social media.

9. Never make any contact with a Child or family members associated with Plan’s work that is not supervised by a (or another) member of Plan Staff. Such contact may include but is not limited to visits and any form of communication via social media, emails and letters.

Plan Staff must:


11. Only arrange visits by sponsors to meet with sponsored children in a protected space as chosen by the Plan Country Office. This may include in their homes with the consent of the Child’s family and on the advice of the Country Office staff who always accompany the visit.

12. Only provide the personal contact details of sponsors to former sponsored children aged 18 or over (not the other way round) to enable them to make direct contact after the Child’s graduation from the sponsorship scheme with the prior approval of the sponsor, the former sponsored child and a favourable risk assessment collated and approved by the Country Office

Plan Managers

13. All Plan Managers must ensure that, whilst engaged with Plan, Plan Associates sign up to either Plan’s Code of Conduct\(^1\) or to guidance on appropriate behaviour towards children that is appropriate to their engagement with Plan and is developed by a Plan Manager using the Code of Conduct as a guide.

14. All Plan International Inc/Limited Directors and National Directors must ensure that each Plan entity has in place local procedures that are consistent with this Child Protection Policy and with the document *Reporting and Responding to Child Protection Issues in Plan* to respond to incidents of Child abuse. Local procedures should be developed with the assistance of local advisers in accordance with local law. It should also be ensured that this policy and local procedures are made available in local languages and child-friendly formats.

15. All Plan Managers must ensure that Plan Staff who have reported Child protection concerns or are accused of Child abuse are given appropriate care, support and protection in dealing with all aspects of the case including any safety concerns and potential reprisals which may arise from the incident or from the reporting of such concerns.

F. Personal Conduct Outside Work or Association With Plan

Plan does not dictate the belief and value systems by which Plan Staff, Plan Associates, Plan Visitors and Plan Managers conduct their personal lives. However, actions taken by them out of working hours that are seen to contradict this policy will be considered a violation of this policy.

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1 For certain categories of Plan Associates the Code of Conduct requires this
Plan Staff, Plan Associates, Plan Visitors and Plan Managers are required to bear in mind the principles of the Child Protection Policy and heighten their awareness of how their behaviour may be perceived both at work and outside work.

**G. Implementation, Monitoring and Sanctions**

The Boards of Plan International, Inc./Limited and Plan National Organisations are ultimately accountable for this policy. The CEO and executive directors of Plan International, Inc./Limited and the National Directors are responsible for its implementation.

The monitoring of adherence to this policy is made through the mandatory tracking of the Child Protection Policy Implementation Standards and Plan’s Code of Conduct by all parts of Plan.

Breaches of this policy and failure to comply with these responsibilities may incur the following sanctions:

- For Plan Staff or Plan Managers - disciplinary action leading to possible dismissal.
- For Plan Associates or Plan Visitors - up to and including termination of all relations including contractual and partnership agreements with Plan.
- Where relevant - appropriate legal or other such actions.

Where concerns exist about the conduct of Plan Staff, Plan Associates, Plan Visitors and Plan Managers in relation to Child protection and/or where there has been a breach of the Child Protection Policy, this will be investigated under this policy by consideration of referral to statutory authorities for criminal investigation under the law of the country in which they work; and/or by Plan in accordance with disciplinary procedures. This may result in disciplinary action for Plan Staff and Plan Managers.

Be aware that if a legitimate concern about suspected Child abuse is raised, which proves to be unfounded on investigation, no action will be taken against the reporter. However, appropriate sanctions will be applied in cases of false and malicious accusations of Child abuse.

*This policy has been reviewed and is recommended for approval by:*

Nigel Chapman (signed): 
Chief Executive Officer

*This policy has been reviewed and is approved by:*

Ms Ellen Loej (signed):
Chair of the International Board and Members Assembly