Plan’s Strategy for Youth Engagement in Internal Decision Making
16 May 2013

Youth Engagement in Plan’s Internal Decision Making
Priority Actions

Strategy submitted for approval to Members Assembly (MA) June 2013

2 Seats at MA for young people
Interim measure, fixed period 2-5 yrs

Youth trustees on National Office Boards, encouragement to send to MA

3 COs with Youth Steering Cttee members set up Youth Advisory Panel, with seed money & technical support from IH

Regional Workshops to develop relevant action plans for implementation

IH - in consultation - develop global standards for youth engagement

IH: Formation and support to global youth network: continuity, learning, representation

To be defined... as BOM evolves & Plan learns
INTRODUCTION
Plan has increasingly worked with young people and not just for young people, believing that they are a vital and largely untapped resource that can add value and legitimacy to our work. We recognise that by not including the voices of young people in our decision making and governance structures we are missing a huge opportunity, not only in terms of value and legitimacy but also in terms of learning from the unique perspective that young people can bring to our work.

Plan has a strong commitment to engaging children and young people in the programme cycle, as part of our Child Centred Community Development (CCCD) approach. We also have a new Strategy for engaging children and young people in the governance structures in their society, as part of our impact area ‘children’s right to participate as citizens’. However, we have less consistency in engaging young people in developing our own strategies, budgets and priorities i.e. in our own internal governance and decision-making and we are not the only ones. Engagement of young people in internal governance and decision making remains a challenging area for many organisations.

To enhance existing work and develop consistent practice across the organisation, Plan’s Members’ Assembly,1 through its Nominating and Governance Committee, asked International Headquarters to develop an organisational Strategy for engaging young people in Plan’s internal governance and decision making. This document responds to the request. It highlights Plan International’s position with regard to the engagement of young people in decision making, as well as a roadmap for moving forward. The Strategy is a working document and will evolve alongside Plan’s new Business Operation Model2, which is providing an important opportunity for Plan to enhance representation of young people in its decision making structures.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE STRATEGY
The Strategy has two purposes:

1. To build on existing initiatives to engage young people in internal decision making to enhance practice and consistency across the organisation.

2. To lay down time-bound strategic goals, objectives and priority actions for engaging young people in internal decision making.

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1 The Members’ Assembly is Plan’s highest decision-making body and is made up of the member National Organisations. Delegates from the National Organisations attend Assembly meetings twice each year. One of the main tasks of the Members’ Assembly is to elect the Board of Directors of Plan International, Inc. which reports to and is accountable to the Members’ Assembly. It also sets high-level strategy and direction for the global organisation and approves the financial budgets and audited accounts.

2 Annex 2 provides an illustration of youth engagement entry points within the current proposal for the Business Operating Model.
In terms of scope:

- The **Strategy is limited to** internal governance and strategic decision making and will not look at the specifics of project and programmatic decision making or at engaging young people in their community and national decision making processes.3

- The **Strategy focuses on young people and not on children**. Young people are defined in Plan’s Programme Guide as those aged between 10 and 24. This Strategy targets young people at the latter end of this age range, ideally those from the ages of 15-24 as per the UN definition of youth. We would also encourage national flexibility around these age groups on the basis of culturally appropriate definitions of ‘young people’.4 While ‘young people’ is a term used for clarification at the current time, the ultimate objective would be for different ages to work together in a spirit of collaboration without the need for age-related labels.

**Strategy: Development Process**

This document builds on a lengthy process of consultation and documentation of lessons learned by Plan and by other organisations. The strategy development process was based on a clear understanding of both the added value of engaging young people in decision making (see Box 1), as well as some of the enablers that facilitate meaningful, effective and appropriate engagement (see Annex 2).

A series of five briefing papers have been issued, providing a more detailed exploration of the process to date and of internal and external experiences of engaging young people in decision making. These documents can be found on Plan’s intranet.5 The briefing papers provided an evidence base for a two day strategic workshop held in February 2013. The workshop brought together: 8 members of Plan’s Members’ Assembly, including 4 members of its Nominating and Governance Committee and the Chair; 5 members of the global Youth Steering Committee6 from Sierra Leone, Indonesia, El Salvador, United Kingdom and the United States of America; 5 Youth Trustees from Plan UK, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway; and 10 staff members, including Plan’s CEO.

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3 These two complementary areas are already covered by Plan’s Governance and Citizenship Strategy, which focuses on supporting young people to engage in decision making in their communities and countries, and Plan’s Programme Learning and Accountability System (PALS), which lays down the approach to the participation of children and young people in project and programmatic decision making at country level. There may well be some overlap with some young people involved in country office level governance structures also involved in their own community level Plan related project and programme decision making as well as in village, district or national governance structures. It will therefore be important for International Headquarters to continue to engage with these mutually supportive components of youth participation/engagement.

4 ‘Youth Advisory Boards’ and the ‘Youth Steering Committee’ are already in place and for consistency purposes and for linguistic simplicity we will continue to use this language to refer to them, rather than referring to ‘Young People’s Advisory Boards’ for example. An explanation of terms is provided on page 8 of this document.

5 See [Youth Participation and Governance](#) (external link to be included)

6 The Youth Steering Committee is a body set up to work specifically on the development of this Strategy, see ‘explanation of terms, page 8’
PLAN’S STRATEGIC VISION FOR ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE IN INTERNAL DECISION MAKING

Plan’s strategic vision with regard to engaging young people in internal decision making is that:

Plan is an organisation where decision making at all levels is conducted with young people, in an environment of mutual respect and learning, to better realize our organisational vision and commitment to putting children at the centre of all that we do.

Plan will work towards ensuring that country, national, and regional offices engage youth advisory panels and youth trustees, where relevant mechanisms are in place. Governing bodies, including the Members’ Assembly, will have youth representatives involved in decision making. We will promote attitudinal and behavioural change amongst adults and young people to enhance collaborative working within a spirit of openness and inclusion. Working effectively together will lead to mutual understanding of the added value of joint working between adults and young people.

Plan has already established successful models for engaging young people in internal decision making, with defined and tested methodologies that have delivered results (see Box 2). These represent important precedents, good practice and learning and therefore form the basis of this Strategy. The Strategy also draws on learning from internal and external reviews of the added value of engaging young people in decision making as well as of the enablers that facilitate meaningful, effective and appropriate engagement. These are documented in Annex 2.

It is expected that the Strategy will place Plan in a strong position externally as a leader in this field as well as through the anticipated improvements in our overall impact.

STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Three broad strategic goals have been defined. It is expected that these goals will be met by 2020. The goals are:

1. **Plan’s Members’ Assembly engages young people** in decision making in a spirit of collaboration, transparency and mutual learning.

2. **Country and National Offices have Youth Advisory Panels** influencing strategic decision making, thereby helping to make programmes more relevant and supporting the strengthening of young people’s skills.

3. **A Global Youth Steering Committee of experienced, competent young people** is sharing learning and expertise, electing and supporting youth representatives to the Members’ Assembly, and disseminating knowledge and information amongst peers to enhance transparency and participation of young people in Plan’s decision making.

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**Box 1: Building on Experience**

**At a Global level**, Plan’s Member’s Assembly has been leading the organisation in exploring how best to engage young people in global decision making. An initial Youth Steering Committee of five young people from Plan Norway, Finland, Plan Sweden, USA and UK Plan advised Plan on how best to move forwards, including conducting a consultation with 1200 children and youths and 50 adults in 30 countries and 2 regional offices. Following this consultation period, the Youth Steering Committee was restructured and now includes youth representatives from Plan Uganda, Sierra Leone, El Salvador, Indonesia, Sweden, UK and the USA. They are supported by Plan’s Global Youth Engagement Officer.

**At National Office level**, Youth trustees are members of the Boards of Plan Norway, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and the UK. They provide a youth lens to Plan’s work, represent their Youth or Children’s Advisory panels and add value and legitimacy to the National Office’s governance. Ten National Offices have a Children’s Advisory Board or a Youth Advisory Panel. Members are engaged in various activities such as advocacy, campaigning and advising.

**At Country Office level**, El Salvador, Liberia and Egypt have established youth advisory panels. Other offices (e.g. Peru and Dominican Republic) are in the process of establishing child/youth advisory panels. Different governance structures in Country Offices, as compared with National Offices, has limited the entry points available for formal child/youth engagement in internal governance. However, in all programme countries, young people actively participate in designing, delivering and monitoring community level projects. In some countries, they help to develop the country strategic plans.

In all cases, by engaging young people on Youth Advisory Panels and Youth Steering Committees Plan is building a constituency of skilled future Board and Members’ Assembly members.
In order to meet these goals, this strategy lays down six shorter term objectives, to be met by 2015, in line with the timeframe for Plan’s organisational strategy: One Plan One Goal.

The visual on the cover page highlights priority actions for different actors.

Table 1 below highlights the strategic goals, objectives and associated priority actions.
### Table 1: Goals, Strategy Objectives and Priority Actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGIC GOALS (TO BE MET BY 2020)</th>
<th>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES (TO BE MET BY 2015)</th>
<th>PRIORITY ACTIONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRATEGIC GOAL 1: Plan’s Members’ Assembly engages young people in decision making in a spirit of collaboration, transparency and mutual learning.</td>
<td>1.1 Members’ Assembly, as an interim measure, allocates two youth representative seats in order to engage young people in Plan’s strategic decision making</td>
<td>1.1.1 The Nominating and Governance Committee presents this Strategy for the Members’ Assembly’s approval in June 2013.</td>
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<td>1.2 A number of National Offices nominate Youth Trustees as MA delegates.</td>
<td>1.1.2 Members’ Assembly allocates two youth representative seats (commencing at the November 2013 Members Assembly) for a fixed period of 2-5 years. These seats would have observer status with the ability to fully participate in discussions but with no voting rights. The youth delegates would be voted by their peers and would be drawn from the Global Youth Steering Committee (see Goal 3 and page 9).</td>
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<td>STRATEGIC GOAL 2: Country and National Offices have Youth Advisory Panels influencing strategic decision making. This leads to more relevant programmes and the building of young people’s skills.</td>
<td>2.1 Staff and young people in offices with Youth Advisory Panels and Youth Trustee systems are using globally defined and agreed standards for working together in an environment of mutual respect and learning to enhance programmes and mutually develop relevant skills.</td>
<td>2.1.1 Standards for meaningfully and appropriately engaging young people in decision making is developed by Plan’s International Headquarters with the Technical Network, Youth Steering Committee, youth trustees and members of existing youth advisory panels.</td>
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<td>2.1.2 Draft Standards are piloted with all country and national offices with existing or emerging youth advisory panels and youth trustee’s.</td>
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7 In order not to have to change existing by-laws, which would be a lengthy process and risk losing the current momentum, these seats would have observer status with the ability to fully participate in discussions but with no voting rights. The expectation is that a momentum would be created, whereby Boards and offices see the value of engaging young people, and choose themselves to nominate young people as MA delegates. The UK National Office is currently modelling this form of good practice, with noted benefits (see briefing paper 4). This proposed approach builds on decades of learning from engaging women in governance. A third approach could also consist of engaging a group of young people as MA observers, using virtual access and again with the right to actively participate except in voting.
| 2.1.4 | Regional representatives share experiences and expertise of engaging young people in decision making through participation in the strategy implementation reference group and other mechanisms. They are responsible for linking this Strategy with regional priorities. |
| 2.2.1 | Youth Advisory Panels will be established in Uganda, Sierra Leone and Indonesia (Country Offices with Youth Steering Committee members). |
| 2.2.2 | The three new Youth Advisory Panels, and existing Youth Advisory Panels in El Salvador, Egypt and Liberia pilot the use of the Global Standard (see point 2.1.3 above), with the aim that all country offices establish Youth Advisory Panels or integrate young people into advisory panels that may be set up, further to finalisation of the new Business Operating Model (see Annex 2 for an illustration of youth engagement entry points within the current model proposed). Plan’s International Headquarters and Regional Offices will provide on-going support to ensure that the Youth Advisory Panels are able to meaningfully influence decision making in their national and country offices. |
| 2.3.1 | International Headquarters will work with the Global Youth Steering Committee to develop a recruitment pack for offices with Boards of Trustees and develop options for youth engagement at International Headquarters. |
| 2.3.2 | National Offices are encouraged to engage young people in advisory panels, but also as trustees. Young people should be recruited on the basis of merit, not simply of age, and according to stringent and defined recruitment processes, as per the recruitment pack for youth trustees and the ‘Fresh Perspectives: how to set up a youth advisory panel’ guide (http://www.plan-uk.org/resources/documents/42604/). |

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8 Members of the Youth Advisory Panels will be recruited from youth networks Plan works with which could include sponsored children.

9 The recommendation from workshop participants was that other Country Offices will be encouraged to include young people in any country advisory body as full members, not as a separate ‘youth advisory body’ with young people only. It should be noted that recommendations from the Americas region suggest separate youth advisory boards might be better. Further exploration of the pros and cons might therefore be undertaken.
## STRATEGIC GOAL 3:

**A Global Youth Steering Committee of experienced, competent young people** is sharing learning and expertise, electing and supporting youth representatives to the MA, and disseminating knowledge and information amongst peers to enhance transparency and participation of young people in Plan’s decision making.

### 3.1 A Global Youth Steering Committee of young people will be set up, with its own work plan and will elect two representatives to the Members’ Assembly.

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<td>2.3.3</td>
<td>Regional workshops are held with Country Directors to build engagement, capacity and ownership of this Strategy. Discussions would include developing a mandate for the election of young people to Country Office youth advisory panels and developing regional networks (linking to existing participation networks).</td>
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<td>3.1.1</td>
<td>Global Youth Steering Committee members develop new Terms of Reference, recruitment and selection criteria at their annual meeting.</td>
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<td>3.1.2</td>
<td>Global Youth Steering Committee members develop annual work plan.</td>
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<td>3.1.3</td>
<td>Global Youth Steering Committee elects two representatives for the Members’ Assembly youth representative seats. One of these representative positions would be reserved for a young person from a Country Office. The other representative position would be open to all members of the Global Youth Steering Committee.</td>
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<td>3.1.4</td>
<td>Process Guidance issued, encouraging staff to enable youth advisory panel members to graduate to become youth trustees who in turn would graduate into Members’ Assembly representatives, based on competence and assessed through a rigorous selection processes.</td>
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<td>3.1.5</td>
<td>International Headquarters explores mechanisms for bringing together young people from youth advisory panels and boards in the North and the South to form regional youth networks to feed into a global youth network. The regions would encompass both National and Country Offices i.e. Plan India would be in the Asia region and Plan US would be in the Americas Region. There would need to be an additional region for Europe to include young people from Europe.</td>
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10 The reason for designating one seat for young people from a Country Office is that there is currently no other mechanism for their engagement in decision making at this level. In contrast, youth trustees from National Offices may be selected by their Board of Directors to attend the Members Assembly as a trustee (see 1.2 below).

11 This global youth network would be a pool for shared learning, for electing delegates to the Youth Steering Committee and for expertise. Members will be trained on effective networking, electing a Chair etc. as well as a dedicated budget. It is proposed that one young person from each region would be elected to form the network’s central committee.
EXPLANATION OF TERMS

**Youth Steering Committee (YSC):** The current YSC was set up in October 2012 specifically to work on the development of this Strategy. It is a group of young people (aged 17-23) drawn from National Office Youth Advisory Panels (Sweden, UK and USA) and Country Office youth groups representing the four regions of Plan's work; Uganda, Indonesia, Sierra Leone and El Salvador. The current Terms of Reference and recruitment and selection procedures will be reviewed and developed to ensure inclusion of young people from existing and emerging Youth Advisory Panels in August 2013 and will be reviewed again in 2015 (see diagram below).

**Youth Advisory Panel (YAP):** Although global definitions vary, a Youth Advisory Panel is a group of young people working as volunteers for a country or national office to provide a youth perspective to Plan’s work. These groups are engaged in various activities such as advocacy, campaigning and advising. Global guidance and definitions will be developed as part of this strategy.

**Youth Trustee:** A Youth Trustee sits on the National Office Board of Trustees as a full Board member. To date, all youth trustees have been recruited from National Office Youth Advisory Panels. The selection process mirrors the selection process of adult trustees.

The selection process for Youth Steering Committee members and Members’ Assembly representatives is demonstrated below. This will be reviewed in 2015.
RESOURCES

- The Global Youth Engagement Officer at IH is the focal point staff member for the implementation of this Strategy, supported by the Director of Policy, Advocacy and Campaigns.
- International Headquarters will provide a central budget for on-going global activities including the establishment of a global youth network and for regional workshops\(^\text{12}\). Budget indication: £100,000.
- International Headquarters will also provide seed money to countries with youth steering committee members; Uganda, Sierra Leone and Indonesia to develop Youth Advisory Panels. Budget indication: £90,000\(^\text{13}\). (El Salvador already has a Youth Advisory Panel, International Headquarters will be provided with technical support).
- Policy, Advocacy and Campaigns will work with colleagues in National and Country Offices to ensure that their core budgets include funding for supporting youth engagement in decision making.
- The youth strategy reference group will remain in place with new terms of reference revised to include the addition of regional focal points from RESA, WARO and ARO.
- A global youth engagement network (staff members) will be established and managed by the Global Youth Engagement Officer. This network will enable information sharing and cross learning across the organisation and act as a central resource in developing global standards. Budget implication: £8,000.
- We envisage an overall budget for FY14 of £198,000 reducing to an annual budget of £100,000 once we have completed the learning phase and youth engagement activities have been included in core budgets.

REVIEWING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Following approval of this Strategy:
- An annual work plan with quarterly targets will be developed by the Global Youth Engagement Officer.
- The Global Youth Engagement Officer will work with IH’s Knowledge Management team to develop a learning framework to support the implementation of the global standard for youth participation in organisational governance, building on the experience of countries with youth advisory panels and other mechanisms of youth engagement.
- A monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed. The framework is likely to include annual self-reporting to the Members’ Assembly on which Plan offices have Youth Councils, Youth Steering Committees and Youth Advisory Boards and the added value of these new youth bodies. The framework will also look to evaluate the impact of youth seats on the Members’ Assembly.

\(^{12}\) This is predominantly travel and meeting costs for young people and chaperones. Cost of the Youth Engagement Officer post is budgeted separately within the IH budget, which is being considered by the MA in June 2013.

\(^{13}\) Seed funding for FY14 only
Annex 1: Entry points for Youth Engagement in Decision Making within Plan’s new Business Operating Model

The diagram below highlights the current working proposal for the new Business Operating Model. In purple italics are suggestions for entry points for youth engagement.

Entry points within new Business Operating Model

1. Two Seats on MA for young people with observer status with the ability to fully participate in discussions but with no voting rights. One seat will be reserved for a young person from a Country Office.

2. Youth Trustees on Boards, with encouragement to attend MA.


5. Regional Youth Network, linking in to Global Youth Network. Supporting youth advisory panel members in the regions.


7. Expand CO accountability to local civil society
   - Develop local advisory councils which could include youth or separate youth advisory councils.

8. Enhance participation at IB
   - Develop criteria and process for COs to put forward delegates to International Board
     - Target 3-4 ‘Southern’ members, these could include young people
     - Delegates drawn from (youth) advisory councils or other local civil society and elected by MA

Plan International Headquarters will host and support the Global Youth Steering Committee to; develop a recruitment pack for offices with Boards of Trustees and develop options for youth engagement at International Headquarters (as per 2.3.1), and develop the recruitment and selection process for electing two representatives for the Members’ Assembly youth representative seats (as per 3.1.3).
Annex 2:

Enablers of Youth Engagement in Decision Making at All Levels

1. **Investing in adequate preparation for both adults and young people.** The initial training period, for both adults and young people, and the support needs for young people can be time intensive and need adequate resourcing. If this investment is not made, then it is not appropriate to continue. As with adult networks and committees, young people need opportunities to come together, share learning from their country and national offices and plan advocacy messages for governance meetings. For example, costs include translating documents into multiple languages (minimum of Spanish and French) and travel costs need to be covered.

2. **Providing the opportunity for young people and adults to work together effectively, as a team, in order to overcome adult scepticism.** A key challenge for young people is the requirement that they must continuously show their worth, in much the same way as women, persons with disabilities and minorities have had to do and continue to have to do. This detracts from team working and reduces the valuable opportunities for enhancing outcomes for people in poor countries and can also lead to frustration and disappointment for young people who are willing and able to engage in decision making.

3. **Adults use jargon-free, ‘people friendly’ language,** when talking and also in documentation, meeting spaces are reviewed to become more youth friendly environments and adult mentors are identified to support and encourage youth engagement.

4. **Ensuring that young people are recruited on the basis of competence and rigorous, transparent recruitment processes,** as is the case for adult decision makers. This avoids tokenism and reduces risks for both young people and adults. It involves defining recruitment and other criteria.

5. **Developing global guidance and putting appropriate mechanisms in place.** Developing a global framework with support mechanisms and expected standards will enable Plan to take a consistent approach, that respects the rights of young people and ensures that their engagement adds value to Plan’s decision making. It will lay down a process for moving from consultation to true engagement in governance and accountability.

6. **Monitoring the process, collating and learning from experience to enhance practice and also to monitor a) the impact of youth engagement and b) the extent to which the suggestions of advisory panels are given due consideration and adopted or not.**

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