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AREA OF GLOBAL DISTINCTIVENESS:
PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE

The Areas of Global Distinctiveness (AoGD) Overview provides an introduction to Plan International's future programme ambitions under its global strategy "100 Million Reasons". It defines the most important strategies we want to focus on as an organisation at global level and the most important areas of work where we want to invest to build coherent, gender transformative programming. It is a living document that will be regularly updated in line with new insights and trends, and feedback from Plan staff.

PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE

The Protection from Violence AoGD covers our work in child protection as well as our work to prevent and respond to family violence affecting children and violence against young women, particularly sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) in emergencies. Our work to strengthen the child protection sector remains integral to our Protection from Violence AoGD and a systems strengthening approach is vital.

THE ISSUE AT STAKE

Every child has the internationally recognised right to grow up living a life free from violence and fear.[1] Yet worldwide, recent data show that more than half of all children aged 2 to 17 years (1.7 billion children globally) have experienced emotional, physical or sexual violence in the previous year.[2]

Children and adolescents are affected by violence directed at them and by violence that occurs in their immediate environments. Violence may occur within the privacy of their home or family; it could affect their communities through armed conflict or forced displacement; it could affect them in the upheaval following natural disasters – as the statistics show.

- Six in ten children between the ages of 2 and 14 worldwide are subjected to physical violence by their caregivers on a regular basis.
- Armed conflict affects 250 million children
- One in four children (176 million) under the age of five live with a mother who is a victim of intimate partner violence (IPV).[3]

Girls are particulary affected. An estimated one in ten girls worldwide has been subjected to sexual violence.[4] The most common form of gender-based violence is that perpetrated against girls and women by an intimate partner. Girls also suffer violence when they are subjected to child, early and forced marriage (CEFM), female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), and sexual harassment

Boys too experience sexual violence. The scale of this remains under-researched largely because sexual violence against boys is shrouded in stigma and taboo – particularly in patriarchal systems, due to social norms around masculinity.

Emergencies both exacerbate pre-existing protection concerns and create new ones. The nature of forced displacement settings can also increase the exposure of girls and young women to risks of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and harmful practices such as Child, early and forced marriages (CEFM).

[1] UNCRC Article 19
[2] Know Violence in Childhood (2017) *Ending Violence in Childhood: Overview; Global Report 2017*, New Delhi: Know Violence in Childhood
[3] United Nations Children's Fund (2017) *A Familiar Face: Violence in the lives of children and adolescents*, New York: UNICEF
[4] UNICEF (2014) *Hidden in Plainsight: A statistical analysis of violence against children*, New York: UNICEF.

ROOT CAUSES OF VIOLENCE

Violence against children permeates all social institutions: families, education and work settings, care and justice systems, and communities.[5] The causes lie in complex interactions between several risk factors at individual, family, community and societal levels.[6] At Plan International, we address the causes by first separating them into three broad categories.

Norms, attitudes and behaviuors

Social norms are shared beliefs or informal rules about how we are expected to behave. They can protect children from violence, but they can also help to create an environment that tolerates, normalises and even encourages the victimisation of children, especially girls, and the use of violence by adults and peers.[7] Certain social norms particularly affect how children are treated:

- **age-related norms** - where children are seen as the 'property' of parents or caregivers, not as individuals with their own rights;

- **gender-related norms** - which influence how a girl or boy should behave and how they should be treated. For instance, masculine norms have a strong correlation to violence, with boys often being raised to use violence to assert their masculinity.

[5] Pinheiro, P.S. (2006) Report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children, www.unviolencestudy.org/
[6] Violence Prevention Alliance, WHO (2019) www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/ecology/en/
[7] WHO (2016) INSPIRE: *Seven strategies for Ending Violence against Children*, p.16.

In many societies, adults believe that physical punishment is necessary when raising children. Violence is used to discipline 'bad' behaviour, both at home and school. It is also used to control girls' sexuality through deeply violent practices like FGM/C, and through CEFM. Violence is also used, including by peers, to 'punish' or marginalise those who don't comply with gender norms, such as LGBTIQ+ young people.

Social and economic assets and safety nets

Where there is economic poverty, high unemployment or a lack of social and community services, the risk of violence against children often also increases. This may be violence in the home, neglect or exploitation. Marginalised families – ie, those living in extreme poverty, with disability, ethno-linguistic minorities, remote communities – often can't access social protection networks and services, further heightening children's vulnerability.

Major social trends such as urbanisation and migration for work also can increase children's exposure to violence. Families may be separated during migration, depriving children of traditional protection, or children may need to work, thus risking exploitation.

Policies, laws and budgets

To stamp out violence against children, child protection systems need to be strongly gender and age-responsive, as well as inclusive. Formal and informal structures must work together to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against children.

An effective child protection system comprises the institutions of government, a range of professionals, and coordination mechanisms between them all. It must include the children themselves, their families, communities and wider civil society.
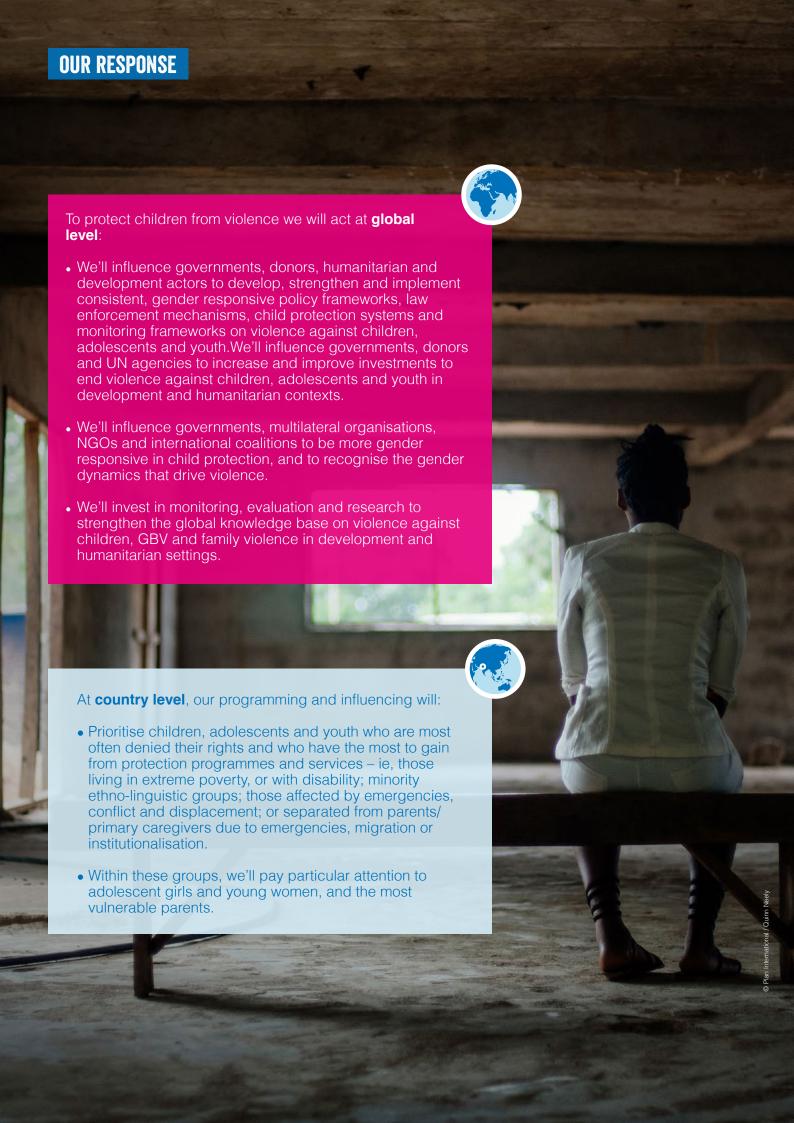
Yet in many societies, there are significant gaps in these systems. In emergencies, disasters and crisis situations, child protection systems may be non-existent.

All this matters because it leaves children with both immediate and life-long consequences. Violence in childhood can result in many forms of mental and physical disorders and affect behaviour and social adaptability. Children who experience violence are more likely to use or tolerate violence in later life, perpetuating the cycle.

Pathways for change that we'll pursue are: a systems-strengthening approach to addressing violence; gender and age-responsive, inclusive services; communities creating a protective environment; parents and caregivers providing protective family environments; children and adolescents protecting themselves from violence and influencing social and gender norms.

Results we want to achieve include:

- Children, adolescents and youth live their lives free from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect.

- Violence against children, adolescents and youth is not socially acceptable in families and communities.

- Survivors of violence receive the best quality gender and age-responsive support services available for rehabilitation and re-integration.

- CSOs, government systems and multi-sectoral actors at different levels work together and function effectively to prevent and respond to protection issues.

- Government policy makers and authorities develop budgeted child protection legal frameworks, policies and programmes.

To protect children from violence we will act at **global level**:

- We'll influence governments, donors, humanitarian and development actors to develop, strengthen and implement consistent, gender responsive policy frameworks, law enforcement mechanisms, child protection systems and monitoring frameworks on violence against children, adolescents and youth.We'll influence governments, donors and UN agencies to increase and improve investments to end violence against children, adolescents and youth in development and humanitarian contexts.

- We'll influence governments, multilateral organisations, NGOs and international coalitions to be more gender responsive in child protection, and to recognise the gender dynamics that drive violence.

- We'll invest in monitoring, evaluation and research to strengthen the global knowledge base on violence against children, GBV and family violence in development and humanitarian settings.

At **country level**, our programming and influencing will:

- Prioritise children, adolescents and youth who are most often denied their rights and who have the most to gain from protection programmes and services – ie, those living in extreme poverty, or with disability; minority ethno-linguistic groups; those affected by emergencies, conflict and displacement; or separated from parents/primary caregivers due to emergencies, migration or institutionalisation.

- Within these groups, we'll pay particular attention to adolescent girls and young women, and the most vulnerable parents.

OUR GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE AND INCLUSIVE APPROACH

A key root cause of violence against children and women is that victimisation of girls and use of violence by boys and men are socially accepted. In many societies this stems from social norms about gender and masculinity. Changing these norms is an essential strategy to eliminate violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children. Marginalisation and exclusion heighten children's and adolescents' vulnerability to violence of all kinds, and limit their access to protection.

Being gender transformative…

…involves helping communities to reflect on negative gender norms, aiming to progressively change norms that underpin cycles of violence. We'll work with men and boys to support them in taking an active role in creating protective environments, and to champion gender equality and non-violent behaviour. We'll support adolescents and youth to reflect on the gender and social norms and the gender dynamics that drive violence and we'll support them to make positive protection choices and decisions, and to lead changes in negative social and gender norms and gender dynamics in their communities. We'll work on ensuring that protection services, related policies, laws and government programs are gender responsive, recognizing the age and gender specific needs of children, adolescents and young people. This work will be complementary to and in line with work under our other AOGDs,

Being inclusive…

…involves ensuring that our protection from violence programming meets the needs of girls, boys, young women and young men who are vulnerable and excluded. Marginalisation and exclusion take many forms- those living with disability or those identifying as LGBTIQ+, indigenous or ethnic minority people, migrants, refugees or people living with HIV/Aids are often excluded. Programmes will be designed, monitored and evaluated to address the root causes of exclusion and discrimination and meet the needs

KEY INVESTMENT AREAS

1. Strengthening protective family environments

We'll invest in strengths-based interventions that build the skills of parents and caregivers in positive parenting approaches. These aim to decrease harsh parenting and violent discipline, improve parent–child interactions, reduce the risk of violence against children and adolescents and Intimate partner violence (IPV) at home. Parent/caregiver programmes will engage men to champion gender equality and non-violent behaviour and to challenge negative norms that promote violence.

We'll invest to enhance access to formal services and informal support networks such as community-based mechanisms, including for parent/caregiver psychosocial wellbeing.

We'll work with parents to prevent harmful practices (FGM/C and CEFM) and violence and sexual exploitation online. Where appropriate, we'll complement positive parenting programmes with family economic-strengthening interventions – both for all families in general and targeted to vulnerable families.

2. Strengthening response services for children, adolescents and youth who have experienced violence

In areas where Plan International programmes are implemented, we'll ensure children and adolescents who have experienced violence get the best quality support services available. We'll work with partners and government service providers and will emphasise accessibility of services at community level, in cooperation with community based child protection mechanisms.

Key steps we'll take on this are:

- identifying particularly vulnerable and excluded groups
- mapping and assessing existing service providers
- supporting safe, child-sensitive reporting and referral pathways and standard operating procedures
- supporting government social workers, para-professional social workers, and other well-trained community actors to manage and respond to cases of violence
- working to improve the gender responsiveness of protection services and ensuring services are age appropriate and inclusive.

3. Child protection in emergencies (CPiE)

Our CPiE programming will be linked with our protection from violence programming in development as much as possible. We'll invest in two areas: child labour in emergencies; and sexual and gender-based violence in emergencies, with a focus on harmful practices.

We'll complement this by focusing on two target groups: adolescents in emergencies, and children on the move.

We'll invest in two key approaches to tackle this work: community-based child protection in emergencies; and integrated programming, because in emergencies, child protection risks are inseparable from other sectors.

PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE CORE COMPONENTS

Core Foundational Component

FAMILY & COMMUNITY PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENTS*

Priority interventions:

- Support parents and caregivers through group discussions, social support groups, training, informal awareness raising to build positive parenting skills, strong parent-child and couple relationships
- Support or provide community-based psychosocial support for parents and caregivers
- Facilitate community critical reflection and dialogue to reduce social acceptance of violence including engagement with traditional and religious leaders
- Training and support to formal and informal child and youth groups to build life skills, resilience, self-protective capacity and provide psycho social support to children, adolescents and youth (CAY)

Core Complementary Componet

PROTECTION SERVICES FOR CAY WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE**

Priority interventions:

- Training, mentoring and technical assistance to the social service workforce to improve the quality of protection services for children and families, including psychosocial and legal support services
- Support community-based protection services that are accessible, age appropriate, gender responsive and inclusive
- Training, mentoring and technical assistance to staff and managers across multiple services incl. protection, education, health, law enforcement to improve child and gender sensitive reporting of violence
- Provide direct protection services in humanitarian contexts, particularly to adolescent girls who experience GBV

MULTI-SECTORIAL & COORDINATION, POLICIES & LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOR PROTECTION

Priority interventions:

- Support community-based child (and family) protection mechanisms (formal and informal) to function effectively as part of the national system through training, mentoring and technical assistance
- Training and technical assistance to law enforcement agencies and other allied services to support them to effectively contribute to the child and family protection system as per their mandate
- Support multi-sectoral collaboration, coordination and referral mechanisms for child and family protection
- Advocate for gender responsive, costed national policy frameworks, plans, and strategies and accountability for their implementation and efficacy

CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAMMES ADDRESSING SPECIFIC RISKS***

Priority interventions:

- Support Child and Adolescent Friendly Spaces with recreational activities, psycho socio support and access/ referral to multi-sectoral services for children and adolescents in emergency settings
- Provide Psychological First Aid to assist children, adolescents, adults and families in the aftermath of disaster and crisis.
- Support improved case management, care and services for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) and children on the move (including IDPs and Refugees)
- Facilitate the reintegration of children associated with armed forces or groups, particularly girls
- Education, awareness raising, family economic strengthening activities and direct interventions to prevent and respond to the Worst Forms of Child Labour- particularly in humanitarian contexts

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*Key Investment Area: Strengthening protective family environments
**Key Investment Area: Strengthening response services for children, adolescents and youth who have experienced violence
***Key Investment Area: Child Protection in Emergencies