



RESEARCH AND EVALUATION AGENDA

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ACRONYMS

AoGD	Areas of Global Distinctiveness
CBCPMs	Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms
CEFM	Child, Early and Forced Marriage
CLAC	Community-Led Action for Children
CP	Child Protection
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IQE	Inclusive, Quality Education
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organisations
LLDT	Learn, Lead, Decide and Thrive
MERL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning
PfV	Protection from Violence
RACI	Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed
R&E	Research and Evaluation
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights
ToR	Terms of Reference
YEE	Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship

1 INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

This document outlines the Research and Evaluation Agenda 2018-2022 (hereafter the Agenda) for Plan International. Under the umbrella of Plan International's Global Strategy 2017-2022, including the Global Theory of Change, the Areas of Global Distinctiveness (AoGDs) and the Global Advocacy Priorities, it identifies areas to best focus our efforts and resources in generating relevant evidence that will fill sectoral knowledge gaps and enhance our influencing and programming.

The development of this document was facilitated by the Monitoring Evaluation Research and Learning (MERL) Team at International Headquarters (IH), and included a three-day workshop with IH, National Organisation and Regional Office subject matter experts, and consultation with Country Offices and the AoGD technical networks. Annotated bibliographies were commissioned during the period to support the identification of knowledge gaps on each of the AoGDs taking the Global Advocacy Priorities into account. The final Agenda was drafted by a core group of programme and influencing specialists together with the MERL team.

PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

The Agenda has been developed to support the achievement of the Global Strategy, contributing to our target of reaching 100 million girls to help them learn, lead, decide and thrive. It aims to promote collaborative effort around agreed priorities; enhance understanding of the realities of children, adolescents and youth – particularly girls - and their priorities and perceptions; and support knowledge on the effectiveness and scalability of our gender-transformative programming and influencing work.

The objectives of the Agenda are as follows:

- 01** To drive alignment of research and strategic evaluation (R&E) studies with global priorities under the Global Strategy and Global Advocacy Priorities
- 02** To increase efficiency and effectiveness of Plan International's R&E by reducing duplication and encouraging enquiry into new areas
- 03** To highlight where Plan International can contribute to an evidence base on the effectiveness, sustainability and scalability of certain gender-transformative programming and influencing approaches through strategic evaluations of what works
- 04** To generate evidence that enables Plan International to make meaningful contributions to dialogues and decisions on children's and girls' rights and gender equality
- 05** To galvanise the commitment to quality and relevant evidence that will position Plan International as a thought-leader in girls' rights

SCOPE

The Agenda outlines R&E priorities which all offices should consider when wanting to undertake a research or strategic evaluation study. In this regard:

- **RESEARCH** is defined as original investigation, undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding about issues critical for programme and influencing priorities, through the use of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.
- **STRATEGIC EVALUATION** is a study to understand if and how a particular intervention or set of interventions, approach or programme design works in different contexts in order to improve practice and promote learning both within the organisation and externally within the sector.¹
- **PROJECT EVALUATION** is a study of a specific project or programme to assess its objectives, implementation, outputs and outcomes. This type of evaluation is not in the scope of this document.

The Agenda provides a framework of R&E ideas linked to the 6 AoGDs under the Global Strategy and acknowledges cross-cutting issues of inclusion, gender equality, girls' rights and emergency/humanitarian settings. It is not intended to be prescriptive, but there are some 'dos' and 'don'ts' linked to its intended purpose, and what it can realistically contribute to the organisation. This is outlined on page 4.

The Agenda is organised in three parts. After the introduction, section 2 outlines the R&E priority themes at the global level for each AoGD. Section 3 provides an overview of our commitment to quality and ethics in our R&E work, including links to more detailed resources.

¹ Different types of evaluations such as formative, summative or developmental evaluations, process, outcome or impact evaluations, midterm or end evaluations, evaluative assessments, meta-evaluations and global reviews.



Girl makes her way through rubble from collapsed buildings in Khairallah slum in Cairo, Egypt.
(©Plan International)

THE AGENDA DOES

✓ Support the development or refinement of R&E ideas

✓ Support proposal writing on R&E

✓ Inform R&E aspects of annual and strategic plans

✓ Provide a preferred list of R&E priorities for all offices

HOW DOES IT DO THIS?

For example, if you need to generate evidence for an upcoming advocacy moment, you can review the Agenda to identify the most relevant angle/priority for Plan International

If you are applying for grant funding that involves research, the Agenda themes can help with what topics we should be seeking funding for, and the conceptualisation of the research or strategic evaluation proposal

Annual and strategic plans should incorporate R&E, and the Agenda can be consulted during this process to refine topics linked to strategic priorities

Under each AoGD, the Agenda sets out what our subject matter experts have considered the most appropriate R&E topics to be explored to further build evidence of relevance for the Global Strategy

THE AGENDA DOES NOT

✗ Provide guidance on how to do R&E, R&E methodologies or standards for R&E

✗ Cover monitoring or project evaluation

✗ Provide specific research questions, objectives or content for Terms of References (TORs)

✗ Provide information on roles & responsibilities for R&E

✗ Respond to context

✗ Limit and restrict the R&E that you may need to do. For example, grants might require R&E of a topic not included in the Agenda, and the Agenda doesn't limit or prohibit this

✗ Provide a comprehensive assessment of knowledge gaps

WHERE CAN I FIND HELP THEN?*

Consult the MERL policy and standards and guidance on conducting R&E (under development).

Consult the MERL policy and standards and guidance on conducting M&E (under development).

These will still need to be developed, but help can be found in relation to the development of TORs

A competency and RACI framework for MERL is under development

The R&E priority themes identified in the Agenda are high-level and need to be adapted for country context.

The MERL team at IH is available to support as required.

You must consult other sources for this, such as the Annotated Bibliographies on the AoGDs. You can also consult guidance on conducting a literature review, which is under development.

* For links and more information on how to access these resources, see Section 3 'Foundations for Quality'

2 R&E PRIORITY THEMES

This section outlines the R&E priority themes and the criteria for inclusion.

The R&E priority themes were identified by our subject matter experts and technical networks and are organised by AoGD. They will be subject to regular review to ensure they are kept up to date. In each case, themes have been identified taking into consideration the priorities of each AoGD, Global Advocacy Priorities, Plan International position papers, as well as the key cross-cutting priorities for work across all AoGDs:



PROMOTING GENDER NORMS CHANGE



PROMOTING GIRLS' RIGHTS



DISASTER, CONFLICT-AFFECTED AND HUMANITARIAN CONTEXTS, INCLUDING FORCED DISPLACEMENT



INCLUSION OF MINORITY OR EXCLUDED GROUPS

The symbols above are used to highlight where a priority theme includes considerations of those cross-cutting areas.

There is recognition that many priorities connect to, or fall between, two or more AoGD areas. Where this is the case, a decision was made in terms of where to include it, with the links to other AoGDs clearly marked.²

CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION

In deciding what the most appropriate R&E priority themes were, the following criteria were applied:

- Fill a sectoral knowledge gap
- Align with the programme priorities defined in the AoGD Theory of Change/narrative, and/or policy and advocacy priorities defined in the AoGD overview and/or Plan International's position paper and the Global Advocacy Priorities
- Reflect Plan International's broader ambitions around gender transformation, equality for girls and inclusion
- Generate evidence to improve programming and/or influencing.

In addition, there might be areas of enquiry on trends which affect Plan International's beneficiary population, or the way that Plan International operates (such as migration, urbanisation, extremism or digitalisation). For example, programming in urban spaces is a topic which could be investigated across all six AoGDs. It is not possible to outline these in the Agenda as they are more opportunistic and linked to the specific strategies of one office or department. Where there are opportunities to do that kind of innovative research and strategic evaluation, and where they clearly link to the Global Strategy or a local priority, they should be embraced. As part of this and as far as possible, efforts should be made to incorporate the priority themes included in this Agenda into these other lines of research.

² The AoGD 'Girls, boys and youth as active drivers of change' is referred to as LEAD.

INCLUSIVE QUALITY EDUCATION

*Girl from Port Loko District
is now back in school thanks
to the Girls' Education Challenge.*
(©Plan International)

1 STRATEGIES FOR NGOS TO INCREASE ACCESS TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

There is much existing evidence on out-of-school children in general, but little on strategies to increase access for the most marginalised at all levels of education. R&E should focus on understanding the role of NGOs, including Plan International, in improving access for out-of-school children and youth to education which is relevant and high quality. In particular, there should be consideration of children in emergency settings; children with disabilities; child mothers; children from ethnolinguistic minorities; children living in extreme poverty.

Evidence is needed on how NGOs create change for out-of-school groups. This could focus on: demand side support from NGOs (such as social protection programmes); supply side support (such as non-formal education or accelerated learning programmes); and how NGOs can influence governments to improve education policies and systems.

→ ECD



2 APPROACHES FOR GENDER- TRANSFORMATIVE, QUALITY INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY

Promoting quality and gender-transformative education has been identified as a key investment area for IQE (and ECD). This R&E theme relates to gender-transformative pedagogical approaches applied by Plan International and other NGOs in both development and humanitarian settings. The value and effectiveness of gender-transformative approaches could be assessed at all levels of basic education, from pre-primary to secondary school. R&E should focus on:

- assessing the effectiveness of Plan International's existing gender-responsive quality education approaches
- investigating effective methods for implementing and sustaining gender-transformative and inclusive pedagogical approaches, including training and support to educators.

→ ECD



3 UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS IN KEEPING GIRLS SAFE AND PROTECTED

This topic looks at three critical aspects of safety and protection in schools:

- disasters and emergencies
- targeted attacks in conflict settings
- Gender-based violence (GBV) in school and community, and the role of education in preventing CEFM.

There is some existing evidence on each of the themes, but looking at the links between them would be a unique and valuable angle. R&E studies can look at:

- how schools and education systems can act to keep girls safe (through governance, disaster risk reduction, infrastructure, planning and budgeting, referral systems and sensitisation), including challenging harmful gender norms
- the relevance and relative added value of such approaches in relation to other protection programming.

→ PFV
→ SRHR



4 DEVELOPING RELEVANT DIGITAL SKILLS FOR GIRLS THROUGH EDUCATION

This topic is particularly focused on how to develop relevant digital skills amongst girls, young women and other vulnerable groups, which are relevant to employers and the private sector including in digital and green jobs. There is a wide gender gap in digital skills, often caused by gender norms and other barriers. R&E should focus on assessing what are effective models and methods of developing digital skills to improve learning in school and for maximising career opportunities beyond school, supporting transition from education to the workplace.

→ YEE



5 EFFECTS OF GIRLS' PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE ON INCLUSIVE QUALITY EDUCATION AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

There is little existing evidence on methods or effects of girls' participation in school governance. This theme has three key focus areas:

- How can girls be supported to participate in school governance?
- What effect does girls' participation have on making the school space more inclusive and conducive to learning for all pupils?
- To what extent does engagement at school level encourage active citizenship in adulthood?

Each of these aspects can be the focus of an R&E study, but looking across the themes at the linkages would provide particularly rich and useful insights.

→ LEAD



YOUTH EMPLOYMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Young woman working as tailor after receiving vocational training.
(©Plan International)

1 IMPACT OF ECONOMIC MIGRATION ON WOMEN AND COMMUNITIES, ESPECIALLY YOUNG WOMEN

This theme focuses on the increase in the number of women migrating, and growing concerns regarding their security and human rights in the locations in which they are moving to. At every stage of their migratory experience, women migrant workers may be more exposed to human rights violations such as discrimination, exploitation and abuse compared to their male counterparts. R&E studies could focus on:

- gender-specific division of labour (migration for domestic work, sex industry, marriage) and related risks and consequences
- opportunities, safety nets and challenges for economic empowerment of young female migrants
- opportunities, safety nets and challenges for economic empowerment of young female returnees.

→ PFV
→ SRHR



2 PLAN INTERNATIONAL'S ROLE IN INFLUENCING PRIVATE SECTOR PRACTICE FOR EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Plan International is in a strong position to bridge the gap between young women and the private sector. However, there is little evidence on how to overcome barriers to decent work for young women. R&E studies could focus on testing interventions with different private sector actors, especially in terms of:

- influencing practices and outcomes for gender equality
- women's labour force participation in traditionally male positions
- inclusion of people with disability.

Studies may also include a review of practices by other NGOs, assessing effective modalities for addressing the barriers to participation of women, including those with disabilities in decent work. Studies could also look at the methods, benefits and costs of incorporating gender-responsive and decent work principles into business operations.



3 ECONOMIC RECOVERY FOR COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY DISASTER OR CONFLICT, WITH A FOCUS ON GIRLS

To inform our work on YEE in emergencies, there is a need to assess gender-responsive economic recovery for communities affected by disasters or conflict and how such recovery specifically affects girls, young women and marginalised groups. These assessments should focus on factors like household resilience, social protection and economic empowerment. It is important to understand how interventions can be implemented across the humanitarian–development nexus in order to contribute to emergency recovery and to longer term development goals in communities.



4 TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE GRADUATING FROM NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

This theme is focused on the equitable transition to work for marginalised groups, and specifically those who have followed alternative routes in training or education. There is little comparable data on alternative learning programmes. In particular, R&E studies should seek to understand whether qualifications from non-formal provision:

- are comparable to formal qualifications
- are valued by employers
- are accessible to women and marginalised groups (given opportunity costs with unpaid labour, social isolation, restricted mobility, etc.)

Studies could also focus on how provision of skills could be made more relevant, or how demand for such skills could be increased through employer sensitisation. Relevance to young women may also focus on additional skills required for work, such as job search techniques or self-confidence.



5 BARRIERS AND ENABLERS TO YOUNG WOMEN'S ASSET CREATION AND LABOUR FORCE ENGAGEMENT

This topic seeks to investigate how cultural contexts and the influence of gender norms affects women's asset creation or labour force engagement. This is particularly relevant in largely informal markets, looking at social and structural barriers or blockages to women's mobility to better jobs, and the roles of family, peer groups, communities and workplaces in maintaining or transforming the status quo. R&E studies could focus on norms, practices and behaviours that either discriminate against or empower girls and young women.



GIRLS, BOYS AND YOUTH AS ACTIVE DRIVERS OF CHANGE

*Youth reporter, 18,
interviews children
about gender equality.*

©Plan International /
F. Struzik - simple human

1 REDEFINING YOUTH LEADERSHIP

This theme seeks to create evidence on how youth-led organisations structure their work, leadership models and key behaviours in light of different political contexts. Studies should seek to understand:

- to what extent and why youth-led organisations choose non-hierarchical structures or replicate hierarchical structures of adult-led organisations
- which obstacles non-hierarchical youth-led organisations are facing and what their opportunities are, especially with regards to making social change gender-transformative
- how INGOs, and specifically Plan International, can most effectively partner with youth-led organisations, especially when they are organised non-hierarchically.



2 METHODS OF INFLUENCING DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

This explores the different types of youth-led and adult-led methods of influencing decision-making processes on a local level and assesses their effectiveness. R&E studies should focus on:

- to what extent youth-led and adult-led methods of influencing decision-making processes serve the interest and needs of young people, and especially young women
- the gender dynamics behind the different methods of influencing decision-making processes
- how youth-led methods for engaging in decision-making processes can be gender-transformative.

Furthermore, R&E studies should identify good practices that Plan International could apply and scale up when supporting youth-led organisations.



3 YOUTH ACTIVISM IN THE CONTEXT OF SHRINKING CIVIL SPACE

Studies on this theme would aim to generate a better understanding of the obstacles and repercussions that young human rights defenders, and especially young female human rights defenders, face in light of a shrinking and more hostile civil space, and especially in conflict- or crisis-affected conflicts. The research studies could look at three critical aspects of this:

- To what extent do youth activists, especially youth activists that are working for transgender and gay rights, face GBV and discrimination in various political contexts and systems?
- What coping mechanisms do youth activists, especially female youth activists, develop in order to minimise the threats and in order to continue to carry out their activism?
- How can INGOs, and especially Plan International, effectively support young human rights defenders in hostile situations?



4 YOUNG WOMEN'S PATHWAYS TO POWER

Studies on pathways to power would take a closer look at the factors that enable young women, and especially vulnerable and excluded young women, to get into positions of power in society. This could include young women who are or have been living in societies affected by protracted crises. R&E studies should aim to create more evidence on the following:

- What barriers are young women facing when seeking positions of power and what are the specific enabling factors throughout their life course?
- What is the leadership style of young women in power and to what extent do female leaders adopt a gender-transformative agenda?



5 THE EFFECT OF YOUTH MOVEMENTS ON POLICY AND GENDER NORM CHANGE

Most youth movements that are dealing with gender equality aim to influence policies and gender norms through advocacy campaigns, public actions and lobby work. The following questions are most relevant:

- Which advocacy and influencing actions by youth groups are most effective in influencing policy makers?
- How do youth movements contribute to changing gender norms amongst adults and young people?
- What are the contextual factors that make youth movements succeed or fail in influencing policy change?



SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS



Girl wears t-shirt reading:
"Education about menstruation
changes everything!"
(©Plan International)

1 UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING THE SRHR NEEDS OF 10-14 YEAR OLDS

There is a gap in SRHR research on the needs and priorities of young adolescents, aged 10 to 14. In addition, there is a lack of guidance for policies and programmes to reach this age group as well as a lack of evidence on the effectiveness of interventions targeted at them. R&E can look further at:

- availability and sources of SRHR information for 10-14 year olds and their perceived information gaps
- effective approaches to reach 10-14 year olds with information, support and services in development and emergency contexts
- innovative approaches for meaningful participation of young adolescents in SRHR programmes
- understanding transition from childhood into early adolescence and decision-making pathways related to sexual activity and marriage.

→ IQE



2 ACCESSIBILITY TO QUALITY AND INCLUSIVE SRH SERVICES FOR CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

This topic seeks to investigate and identify promising practices in youth-friendly health services, and support a better understanding of the experiences that adolescents (both unmarried and married) and pregnant girls have while engaging with sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. It seeks also to identify good practices in delivering SRH services that are more inclusive for the different needs of children, adolescents and youth; as well as research to investigate the sustainability of youth-friendly health services. R&E should:

- explore successful approaches to improving access to and uptake of contraception for adolescents (both married and unmarried), including in emergencies
- investigate experiences that adolescents (both unmarried and married) and pregnant girls have while engaging with SRH services
- assess effective approaches to deliver SRH services that are inclusive for children, adolescents and youth living with disabilities, with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, and other excluded groups.



3 APPROACHES TO SUPPORT MARRIED ADOLESCENTS, PREGNANT GIRLS AND YOUNG MOTHERS

This theme aims to explore the experiences of pregnant adolescents or adolescent mothers to better understand their needs and perceived barriers to accessing health services. R&E should consider differences between adolescents whose pregnancies are intended vs. unintended and look into societal and family pressures to early marriage and pregnancy. R&E should focus on:

- effective programming for supporting pregnant adolescents and young mothers to reduce the multiple risks associated with early pregnancy and motherhood, including physical, economic, educational and psychosocial challenges
- generating evidence on how married adolescents, pregnant girls and young mothers would like to be engaged, including in prevention efforts and support to other adolescent caregivers
- identifying effective ways of engaging boys and men as participants in pregnancies and parenthood.
- test innovative ways to work with young mothers to space/delay second pregnancy.

→ ECD



4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLICY, NORMS AND PRACTICE ON CEFM

Important progress has been made in understanding what it takes to address child, early and forced marriage (CEFM), but we know that there is a gap between policy and practice. This theme would explore whether changes in policy at national level are conducive to changes in social norms that drive child marriage in communities, where there is high prevalence of CEFM. It would also explore the enablers and barriers to translating changes in law from symbolic milestones to prompting changes in norms and practices around CEFM. R&E could explore how policy is reflected in norms at the individual, family, community and society levels.



EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT



Young woman gets her daughter, 5, ready to go to the ECCD centre.
(©Plan International)

1 MEN'S ENGAGEMENT IN ECD

The importance and benefits of fathers' and male caregivers' engagement in the care and development of young children in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), including in humanitarian settings, is still not well-substantiated.

Research should focus on demonstrating how important men's engagement is and the factors that mediate positive impact on children's development during their early years. Strategic evaluations should focus on understanding the effectiveness and scalability of interventions which seek to:

- transform gender norms which underpin the gendered distribution of care work and child-rearing
- engage men in reflections on family relationships, women's rights and the prevention of intimate partner violence
- strengthen couple relationships and maternal wellbeing (as opposed to exclusively focusing on parenting practices).

→ PFV
→ SRHR



2 UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING THE IMPACT OF GENDER SOCIALISATION ON YOUNG GIRLS AND BOYS

This theme aims to generate evidence around the extent to which children in LMICs learn and internalise harmful gender norms in early childhood, and the impact that this has on their development and potential, in particular for girls. It also seeks to generate evidence on what are effective approaches to challenge typical gender-socialization processes, focusing on:

- identifying to what extent young girls and boys in LMICs are learning and internalizing gender norms and expectations
- understanding the importance of parents, caregivers, other actors (e.g. educators) - as well as children themselves - as "agents" of gender socialisation throughout early childhood
- identifying effective and scalable approaches for gender norm change and for working with parents and caregivers on gender-equal socialization.

→ IQE



3 SUPPORTING PARENTS/ CAREGIVERS IN ALTERNATIVE FAMILY STRUCTURES TO PROVIDE NURTURING CARE

Studies should examine how strengths-based, gender-responsive parenting programming for nurturing care can be adapted and enriched to effectively meet the needs of different parents/caregivers, recognising that too often, parenting/caregiving work adopts a 'one-size-fits-all' approach which may not be effective for all.

R&E should focus on how approaches can be adapted to be relevant for:

- adolescent mothers and young fathers
- contexts where other caregivers, including grandparents and older siblings or the community, plays a significant role
- working mothers and fathers
- families with children of different ages, recognizing children's changing needs over the course of the early years and the importance of timely and relevant messaging.

→ PFV



4 EFFECTIVE PARENTING/ CAREGIVING PROGRAMMING IN HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

The particular vulnerability of young children to the immediate and long-term impacts of emergencies is well-documented. Nevertheless, the response to their needs in emergencies is often insufficient and fragmented and the critical role of caregivers neglected. This theme will aim to strengthen the evidence base on the importance of supporting parents/caregivers to continue to provide nurturing care in different humanitarian settings (including in complex emergencies), focusing on identifying:

- the extent to which building resilience and supporting caregiver capacities to provide nurturing care has been addressed in disaster preparedness and emergency responses – including in food insecurity crises
- what family and community interventions are needed and effective to support parents/caregivers to in turn support their children in different humanitarian settings –and whether psychosocial support for the parents/caregivers themselves represents a critical component influencing effectiveness
- opportunities or entry points for addressing gender inequality or capitalising on potential greater fluidity in gender roles in parenting in emergencies programming.

→ PFV



5 LEARNING FROM IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAN'S CLAC APPROACH IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

This focuses on assessing Plan International's community-led action for children (CLAC) model and its application in different settings. Whilst individual CLAC projects have been evaluated, there have been limited strategic evaluations/ broad reviews on how it has been applied in different settings. To understand the potential of CLAC as a cost-effective and scalable programme 'model' - including in emergency contexts - strategic evaluation could focus on:

- identification of core components that need to be ensured during replication/up-scaling
- the extent to which CLAC supports gender-transformation
- CLAC's replicability, scalability, sustainability and cost-effectiveness at scale
- potential for adaptation to humanitarian settings.



PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE

Girls take part in child friendly awareness raising session to learn about their rights .
(©Plan International)

1 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CBCPMS IN PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM VIOLENCE

Community-based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMS) are a core investment area for Plan International under our work to protect children from all forms of violence. However, there is insufficient global evidence to back up assumptions that CBCPMS are an effective and sustainable programming model. Strategic evaluations should be conducted into the effectiveness of CBCPMS in protecting children from all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. R&E should cover the full spectrum approach, from development to humanitarian settings.

R&E studies could also particularly explore CBCPM's potential for addressing gender-based violence (GBV) and promoting gender-transformative change. This could include through understanding the role that CBCPM's play in fostering an enabling environment for gender equality and challenging harmful norms at the community level.



2 THE EFFECT OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND FAMILY VIOLENCE ON GIRLS AND BOYS

This theme focuses on how intimate partner violence (IPV) and family violence differently affect girls and boys. In particular, how gender roles in the household contribute to the individual's experience of different forms of violence should be explored. Such studies could also include investigating the diverse needs of children who witness IPV.

R&E should also focus on the strategies which are most effective in:

- preventing IPV, including inter-generational cycles of IPV
- supporting girls and boys in situations of IPV and family violence.

How these issues are exacerbated in, and how strategies need to be adapted to, humanitarian contexts would also be relevant to explore.



3 INVOLVING CHILDREN IN THEIR OWN PROTECTION

To support and strengthen Plan International's participatory approach to protection, this theme takes a closer look at the extent to which involving children in their own protection 'works'. R&E should focus on three critical components:

- the effectiveness of Plan International's own participatory child protection methodologies
- the gender-responsive nature of the approach, and the extent to which it strengthens girls' agency
- unpacking the complex dynamics that exist in balancing children's participation in their own protection with ensuring that duty bearers take responsibility to effectively combat and respond to violence against children.

→ LEAD



4 POWER DYNAMICS AND GENDERED SOCIAL NORMS

A robust evidence base is needed to back up our assumptions about the ways in which child protection interventions can be gender-transformative. This theme seeks to explore the overlapping systems of power that affect children in different ways. In particular, studies should look at how gendered power dynamics and norms underpin experiences of violence and sustain children's under-reporting of violence.

R&E studies under this theme should also address the two intersecting topics on positive norms where appropriate:

- Which norms promote positive practices and wellbeing outcomes for girls and boys?
- What specific intervention strategies are most effective in the long-term in transforming harmful social norms into positive norms and practices?

Another area of investigation that could be explored is the childhood and adolescent relationships between boys and girls and how this affects violence. Specifically, research should focus on which aspects of girl and boy interactions create and promote non-violent relationships.

→ ECD



5 GENDER AND THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR

Worst forms of child labour represent some of the most egregious rights violations and forms of exploitation of children. This theme seeks to generate findings and recommendations to support Plan International's emerging programming and influencing work in this area. R&E studies should explore relevant topics, specific to and refined by local context, such as:

- the gender and age dynamics behind the different worst forms of child labour, particularly in humanitarian contexts (disasters, conflict and post-conflict, displacement contexts)
- the complex relationship of risk factors for the trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of adolescent girls, especially in online spaces
- effective gender-responsive interventions to reduce the risk of and address the worst forms of child labour.

→ SRHR



3. FOUNDATIONS FOR QUALITY

The Agenda focuses on the priority themes for R&E, rather than methods and quality of R&E.

However, some issues around methods and quality are inextricably linked to the priority themes, and we have therefore identified four foundational issues which need to be incorporated in the design and execution of any R&E study to ensure it meets

quality standards/expectations. In addition, all R&E must adhere to the following policies, which are available on Planet:

- [P&IQ policy](#)
- [Data privacy policy](#)
- [MERL policy and standards](#)

Identifying knowledge gaps

Before you begin an R&E endeavour, you must identify existing evidence and confirm knowledge gaps. R&E must not duplicate evidence from within Plan International or elsewhere in the sector. We seek to maximise efficiency and spend our resources in the areas where they will make the most impact.

Note: there may be areas where evidence exists on a topic, but an evaluation of what Plan International is doing or has done may still add value to our work.

Resources that you can refer to:

- [Annotated bibliographies](#)
- [EBSCO database](#) of full-text journals and books
- [Global Technical Network pages](#)

Methodology and ethics

It is important to first establish the R&E concept, including R&E questions and plans for data use. Once finalised, the most effective methodologies to provide the best answers to those questions can be identified. A number of quantitative and qualitative tools are available, and mixed method approaches often give stronger results. We encourage innovative use of methodologies.

Plan International is committed to conducting ethical data collection, upholding industry standards when working with human subjects and recognising the specific requirements for working with children.

Resources that you can refer to:

- MERL standards (updated standards forthcoming)
- [Ethical approaches to R&E studies](#)
- R&E guidelines (updated and additional guidelines forthcoming)

Using existing data

New R&E questions can be applied to existing data, drawn from within the organisation or external sources. This saves resources and time in terms of data collection, as well as maximising the use of large, rigorous data sets. We encourage you to look at whether existing data sets could be used in an innovative way to respond to R&E questions.

Resources that you can refer to:

- Sponsorship data ([BI Online](#))
- External resources
- Existing Plan International R&E reports (accessible via the [Programme Library](#) in Planet, or on the [Publications](#) section of Plan International's website)

Management

Good planning and management of R&E projects are critical to their success, whether being conducted by Plan International staff or consultants. Responsibilities will vary by office and by project but should include data collection as well as subject matter as well as R&E expertise. It is also vital to ensure that the information is analysed, shared and used. External consultants should be closely monitored to ensure they meet expected quality and ethical standards.

Resources you could refer to:

- Competency framework for R&E (forthcoming)
- Guidelines on how to conduct R&E studies (updated and additional guidelines forthcoming)



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About Plan International

Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children's rights and equality for girls. We strive for a just world for children and young people, working with them and our supporters and partners to tackle the root causes of discrimination against girls, exclusion and vulnerability.

We support children's rights from when they are born to when they reach adulthood. Using our reach, experience and knowledge, we drive changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels and enable children and young people to prepare for and respond to crises and adversity. We have been building powerful partnerships for children for over 80 years, and are active in more than 70 countries. We are independent of governments, religions and political parties.

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