

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND PROGRAMME PARTICIPANTS REPORT FY2022

As an organisation that upholds human rights and believes in the inherent dignity of people in all their diversity, our foremost priority is the safety and protection of the children and programme participants we work with. Nothing trumps this.

Plan International recognises that violence is prevalent throughout the world and in all societies. Furthermore, children and adults may be vulnerable and at greater risk of violence due to their intersecting identities, for example, due to their gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, disability, age or illness.

We have a Safeguarding Policy, which covering preventing the sexual harassment exploitation and abuse (PSHEA) of children and programme participants we work with, in place to ensure we uphold our commitments to providing a safe, protective and supportive environment for all children and young people, and promoting their welfare, regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and other differences.

We are fully committed to:

- *Creating a safe and inclusive culture that allows children, programme participants, staff, associates and visitors to thrive and feel secure while engaging with Plan International; and supports people to understand, exercise their rights and report any concerns. We promote the active involvement of children and programme participants in their own protection.*
- *Addressing the drivers of gender inequality and unequal power relations that can lead to harm and violence, including sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (SHEA) through gender responsive intersectional safeguarding of all children and programme participants from all forms of violence by staff, associates and visitors.*
- *Strengthening, cultivating and sharing the capacity of all staff, associates and visitors so they understand, and are supported in meeting, their safeguarding roles, responsibilities, and their duty to do no harm. We take positive action to prevent anyone who might be a risk to children and programme participants from becoming involved with us.*
- *Promoting child and programme participant safe practices, approaches, interventions and environments which respect, recognise and respond to the specific safeguarding needs and the different protection risks faced by children and programme participants based on their gender and other identities. We will challenge and do not tolerate inequality, discrimination or exclusion.*
- *Encouraging, facilitating and receiving all reports related to safeguarding or SHEA concerns. We are committed to ensuring appropriate, adequate and accessible mechanisms for reporting are in place for staff, associates, children, programme participants and communities at large.*
- *Responding in a timely, effective, safe, comprehensive, procedurally fair and confidential manner to all Safeguarding complaints, allegations and incidents, ensuring victims'/survivors' perspectives, voices and best interests are central to any efforts to prevent and respond to any safeguarding concern and providing necessary support to victims/survivors. We have zero tolerance to inaction on safeguarding and SHEA reports.*

Our policy is underpinned by the principles of:

1. **Indisputable rights:** All children under 18 years have equal rights to protection from all forms of violence as declared in Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises fundamental human rights, the dignity, worth and equal rights of people at any age.
2. **Zero tolerance for inaction:** Plan International believes that any form of violence is unacceptable and inaction on reports of any Safeguarding concern will not be tolerated.
3. **Survivor-centred:** All decisions and actions in response to safeguarding concerns and allegations and breaches of this policy will be survivor-centred.
4. **Equality and inclusion:** Plan International recognises that imbalances in power and gender and social inequality are key drivers for violence and SHEA.
5. **Shared responsibility:** All staff, associates and visitors have a responsibility to prevent harm, violence and SHEA, and must take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously.

6. **Open and accountable:** We are committed to openness and transparency. Our leaders will set clear expectations and take personal and organisational responsibility to create safe and inclusive environments to ensure a culture of equity and inclusion.

Our Safeguarding and PSHEA framework promotes a holistic approach which requires:

- Provision of core guidelines and tools for implementation.
- Creation of a culture of awareness for staff, associates, and the children and programme participants that we work with and their families.
- Building the safeguarding and PSHEA capacity of staff and associates including ensuring that they are aware of the problem and risks of violence, including sexual violence and exploitation, of children and programme participants.
- Ensuring all are aware of how and where to report safeguarding and SHEA concerns.
- Application of safe recruitment and engagement processes.
- Inclusion of safeguarding and PSHEA in our risk management processes.
- Identification of managerial and staff responsibilities for ensuring the implementation of safeguarding and PSHEA.
- Having in place a set of standards which guide the embedding of safeguarding and PSHEA in all aspects of our work.
- Regular monitoring and evaluation of safeguarding and PSHEA measures to ensure their effectiveness, including audits involving staff, associates, children and programme participants we work with on their awareness of and attitude towards safeguarding and PSHEA.
- Ensuring visible and committed leaders who role model our values and principles related to safeguarding and PSHEA.



Plan International's safeguarding and PSHEA work for FY2022 has focused on the analysis and circulation of our global safeguarding survey, a review of the last five years of safeguarding to inform the development of a Safeguarding Operational Plan 2023 to 2027, and the review and revision of our Global Safeguarding Policy.

Key highlights

- **Global safeguarding survey** – every five years we carry out an anonymous global safeguarding survey targeting staff and programme participants. Our 2021 survey sought views on our safeguarding culture and interventions from an intersectional perspective. The results showed a high level of understanding, awareness of, and commitment to safeguarding, the policy documents and Plan International's values by both staff and programme participants. The overwhelming majority of staff and associates and programme participants agreed that safeguarding measures prevent risks for diverse programme participants including issues of abuse of power, inequality and discrimination. Areas identified for improvement included working with programme participants to understand the barriers to psychological safety and ensuring reporting routes took into account risks to people with diverse identities.
- **Operational Plan 2023 to 2027** - we reviewed safeguarding implementation in Plan International over the past five years and developed an Operational Plan 2023 to 2027 which ensures the organisation takes leadership in and continues to uphold high safeguarding and PSHEA standards. The plan also addresses areas of concern identified from as annual self-assessments, case management reviews and the findings of the safeguarding survey.

The resulting operational plan has three distinct themes:

- I. Safe Culture
- II. Safe Programmes and Interventions
- III. Safe Reporting

- **Review and revision of the Global Safeguarding Policy** – We started our 5 yearly review and revision of our Global Safeguarding Policy. The focus was on ensuring the policy continues to fully reflect current best practice in the area of safeguarding and PSHEA; supports organisational development and interventions; and remains robust enough to address new and emerging safeguarding risks within the sector and within the organisation. The finalisation and circulation of the revised policy took place in FY2023. FY2023 will also see the start of work on the review and revision the safeguarding standards and other key documents and materials (such as the Global Safeguarding and SHEA Reporting and Responding Guidelines and the Global Safeguarding Implementation Standards and Manual and Safeguarding Essentials course materials).
- The development of a specific module focusing on **Masculinities for Prevention of Violence (including the Prevention of Sexual Harassment, Exploitation, and Abuse (PSHEA))**. This module aims to provide a space to discuss and reflect on the power and privilege of manhood and how this may contribute to an enabling factor to this kind of violence; and explore and challenge unquestioned beliefs, biases and attitudes safely
- **Strengthening our Safeguarding and Case management investigation pool** – FY2022 saw the revision of our investigation and case management workshop to ensure its robustness and inclusion of survivor entered and trauma focused lens. Annual Investigations and Case Management workshops resumed – post COVID lock down - in FY2023 (pre-requisites to all workshops is completion of all Safeguarding and PSHEA foundation workshops
- **The Power, Privilege and Bias (PPB) workshop for Leaders and staff** – these continue to strengthen awareness on how this plays out in the sector, organisation and at an individual level, the impact on physical and psychological safety and inclusion and contributes to long term sustainable mindset and behaviour change.
- **Strengthening the Safeguarding - with an intersectional lens - in our programming and influencing interventions** - we continue to strongly socialise our safe programming and influencing guidance and tools which ensures the embedding of safeguarding approach – with an intersectional lens - in the design and delivery of our programming and influencing interventions. We also initiated the development of a Disability Inclusive Safeguarding addendum to the Safe Programming and Influencing tools. This, along with socialisation/training materials, were finalised and piloted in FY2023.
- **Strengthening Safeguarding with our partners** - we initiated a review of our Partner Safeguarding Assessment tool to develop a Safeguarding PSHEA assessment tool which will allow a more collaborative and equal approach with partners. This work will be completed in FY2023.
- **PSHEA specific initiatives** – we finalised and launched our mandatory self-directed PSHEA Essentials Plan Academy module.
- **Strengthening Safeguarding in Sponsorship**: we initiated the development of self-directed online on Safeguarding in Sponsorship.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND PROGRAMME INCIDENT REPORT FY2022

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

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

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

It is critical that safeguarding (including SHEA) incidents and their reporting are understood in the appropriate context. Plan International has more than **10,000 staff** in the more than **75 countries** where the organisation is active. In **fiscal year 2022 (1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022)**, Plan International was active in over 60,000 communities and our programmes benefited over 26 million girls and more than 24 million boys worldwide.

Zero or low safeguarding/SHEA cases would be a huge cause for concern as reporting of cases and response to them indicate that the systems in place are working and people feel confident to report breaches. A robust safeguarding system and high awareness about reporting are pivotal to a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of exploitation and abuse.

For children and programme participants, and their families affected by safeguarding and PSHEA breaches, Plan International provides support sensitive to their needs and circumstances and ensures a survivor centered trauma informed approach. For example, this includes taking their wishes into consideration and supporting them to access services that provide medical, psychosocial and other support.

During fiscal year 2022, Plan International managed 128 safeguarding incidents involving individuals associated with the organisation. This includes staff members, representatives of partner organisations, community volunteers, consultants and sponsors.

Of the 128 incidents:

- 42 incidents were found not to be safeguarding breaches.
- 17 incidents were confirmed as sexual exploitation and abuse as defined by our policy. These involved four Plan International staff and 13 associates. In all instances, the cases were referred to the authorities for investigation and engagement of the individuals involved with Plan International or the implementing partner was terminated.
- Eight incidents were confirmed as sexual harassment as defined by our policy. These involved two Plan International staff and six associates. In all cases, the perpetrators were dismissed, or the engagement of associate terminated. All instances of criminal sexual harassment were referred to the authorities for investigation except in one instance where the survivor exercised her legal right to not report and ask for non-reporting by Plan International.
- 53 cases involved other inappropriate conduct such as neglect, physical violence, emotional abuse and other safeguarding policy breaches such as unsupervised/inappropriate contact or communication with children (13 cases involving one Plan International staff and 12 associates) or poor implementation of procedures which could have led to the harm of a child or programme participant but resulted in no harm (40 cases). 14 cases resulted in the termination of engagement of the individuals involved. In the remaining cases, formal warnings were given and/or gaps in operations were addressed and additional safeguarding measures put in place where required.
- Eight cases were still under investigation and are thus open at the time of this report. This related to 6 cases of sexual exploitation and abuse allegedly perpetrated by staff (3) and associates (3), one case of other inappropriate conduct allegedly perpetrated by staff (1) and one case of alleged poor implementation of procedures which could have led to harm.

As a standard practice, Plan International carries out internal investigation or review in each case to identify and address any gaps in safeguarding. Due to their sensitive nature, we provide details of individuals' safeguarding cases to the appropriate authorities only.

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