

Plan International position paper

Locally-led, globally-connected

This paper sets out Plan International's position on locally-led, globally-connected work. It explains the dimensions Plan International considers as key enablers, as well as definitions we use.



Background

Plan International, in its Global Strategy "All Girls Standing Strong Creating Global Change", has set out its ambition to shift away from centralised decision-making, giving more power to colleagues, partners and programme participants in the countries we implement programmes to make decisions at the point of impact.

This is not only the "right" thing to do, but also needed for development effectiveness and greater impact and sustainability.

As an International NGO, active in over 80 countries across the world, Plan International will use and challenge its privilege, power and resources to stand in solidarity with local organisations and communities. Depending on the context we will adapt, step back and act as a convener and ally to local actors where it is possible to do so.

Our commitment

Plan International believes that we have a real privilege as an INGO, through the human and financial resources, connections, networks, programme models, research and evidence available to us. We want to use this global influence and power to strengthen and be part of locally-led decision making in development and humanitarian work, using a value-add approach when working with local actors and shifting more resources to them.

Plan International is committed to:

Ethical communications

Aware of the power, privilege and bias we have, Plan International will take active steps to ensure our language, narrative and imagery is Anti-Racist, ethical, positive and does no harm. We reject communications that perpetuate white saviourism and will speak out in solidarity. We'll focus on stories told by the people living the experience.

We'll use first-person accounts with authentic quotations, locally created and curated whenever possible and amplifying voices that need to be heard. We are also committed to make progress against the *Authentic Storytelling* commitments of the Pledge for Change.

A safe and inclusive culture

We are building a safe culture that provides an open, welcoming, inclusive, respectful and fair environment for all regardless of their respective identities in relation to staff and programme participants. Continuing our journey to become an Anti-Racist organisation and in line with our feminist leadership principles, we celebrate and cultivate diversity within all our entities and offices.

Equitable internal and external partnerships

We are building equitable and strategic partnerships, between the various parts of the Plan family as well as externally with partners and communities. We will deepen our partnership capabilities, sharing and challenging power and privilege responsibly by ensuring decisions are consistently made with the partners and communities we work with and increase resources allocated to partners.

We will focus on working with youth- and women led organisations, which is in line with our youth-centred approach and feminist leadership principles. We have already made progress on directly resourcing local organisations, using mechanisms such as the Equality Accelerator and Youth Challenge Fund. We are also committed to make progress against the *Equitable Partnerships* commitments of the Pledge for Change.

Influencing changes in the sector

We are committed to playing an active role in decolonising the sector. We will build alliances with our peers to influence donors and governments for more flexible funding, autonomy and power for local organisations and work with donors to reform the aid sector. As a global organisation, we can contribute to knowledge sharing around risk and compliance to change current donor practices, where change is needed. We are also committed to make progress against the *Influencing wider change* commitments of the Pledge for Change.

Representative Governance

We will reform our governance and decision-making procedures to rectify exclusionary structures that privilege white voices. In line with our values and behaviours, and growing commitment to decolonising, this will also create better and more informed decision-making closer to the point of impact.

We will ensure that this process goes deeper in all entities, to ensure that communities and programme partners are included in decision-making.

Adapting our ways of working

Plan International entities in countries where we mainly fundraise, as well as in countries where we mainly implement, will change their operating models so we can work effectively with partners, strengthen the capacities of local actors and be adaptable to the context. In some cases – dependent on the context – this may mean setting up subsidiaries in countries that we operate in.

At the same time, the organisation is on a journey to become youth-centred – having youth working within the organisation and being part in our governance shifting power, providing resources to youth-led organisations and supporting youth to access and influence decision makers at all levels.

Progress on the Pledge for Change

Plan International, as a family, is a signatory of the Pledge for Change. We are committed to this initiative and will take steps over the years to progress on the three commitments of the Pledge for Change, namely *Equitable Partnerships*, *Authentic Storytelling* and *Influencing wider change*.

How Plan views localization

The concept of localisation in the humanitarian sector is not new - the importance of strengthening local capacities and improving partnerships between international and local humanitarian actors has been widely recognised for a long time.

However, Plan International recognizes that progress against initiatives such as the Grand Bargain¹ has been slow and inconsistent. Plan International believes that it needs to play an active role not only in the humanitarian, but also the development setting to shift power. Through becoming more locally-led, globally-connected, Plan International can contribute to decolonisation of the sector. We acknowledge that decolonisation is needed within the work we do, but also within all the entities and offices that are part of the Plan family.

We believe that by all Plan entities and offices working on the commitments outlined above in a holistic manner, we can shift the needle on the changes that are much needed in our sector and contribute to development effectiveness. To Plan International localisation means reconfiguring power to define success to the point of impact. By ensuring the equal and active participation of local actors in the process of storytelling, programme design and implementation, as well as grants proposals and even governance.

How Plan International defines local actors

We acknowledge that whilst our staffing structures in countries where we implement projects are mainly local, rather than international staff, we are not a truly “local” organisation like the Civil Society Organisations we often partner with as we remain an international organisation by history even though we have worked with local actors and communities for many years.

Plan International considers local actors to include formal and informal civil society at national and local levels, including established civil society organisations (local and national nongovernmental organisations and civil society organisations, coalitions and networks of organisations) and ‘Informal civil society’ (e.g. community-based organisations, youth/women’s (and other) networks or movements, youth clubs, residents’ committees who are not registered formally); local and national private sector actors; and local or municipal government authorities .

Local actors may have a specific humanitarian focus/mandate, or may have a focus on, for example longer term development, human rights or peacebuilding. Local actors do not include national government authorities.

Our ambition

Through our Global Strategy and work on becoming more “locally-led, globally-connected”, Plan International aims to achieve the following results:

- Plan International contributing to the organisational strength of its partners and shifting more resources to partners hence contributing to Plan International’s ambition of fostering legitimacy of programmes as well as sustainability

¹ <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain>

- Partners co-creating and making joint decisions with Plan International on project design to drive impact
- Donors will have been influenced to use more equitable and locally led approaches, moving towards wider efforts to decolonise the aid sector
- Programme participants in all their diversity feel safe and confident to report safeguarding concerns
- Plan International staff feel safe to openly express their ideas and opinions
- Leadership role modelling of our values and feminist leadership principles
- Programme Participants and Partners are not harmed by Plan International's communications
- All Plan entities produce written and visual communications which are considered ethical, inclusive, and avoid reinforcing harmful stereotypes
- Quality of highest governance body's decision making and legitimacy enhanced through greater diversity of membership
- Plan International's authority is appropriately exercised
- All decisions are taken closer to the point of impact
- Progress made against the Pledge for Change commitments